THE DAILY CLIPS

November 26, 2008

News, commentary, and opinion
compiled by the East Carolina University News Bureau from:

The Greenville Daily Reflector
The Raleigh News & Observer
The New York Times
The Wall Street Journal
USA Today
The Charlotte Observer
The Fayetteville Observer
The Greensboro News & Record
Newsweek
U.S. News & World Report
Business Week
Time

East Carolina University News Bureau
E-mail to durhamj@ecu.edu Web site at http://www.news.ecu.edu
252-328-6481 FAX: 252-328-6300
Kathy Kolasa: Medical school dean talks about his favorite foods

Wednesday, November 26, 2008

Those who have followed my column for years know I use my unofficial “press credentials” to interview new university and medical-school leaders about their views on wellness.

At this Thanksgiving season, we are thankful for leadership at the Brody School of Medicine. We welcome Dr. Paul Cunningham as the Dean of the Brody School of Medicine, and he graciously visited with me about his own food habits as well as his concerns for the health of people in our region.

It’s been widely reported that the new dean hails from Jamaica and his wife, Sydney, was born in California and raised in North Carolina. So a natural opening question was to describe their upcoming Thanksgiving feast. Most Americans have fond thoughts of Thanksgiving and the dean’s eyes shone as he described the fusion of cultures and traditions. The Cunningham holiday table will sport the traditional American roasted turkey and fixings, North Carolina ham and also a specialty dish of the West Indies: rice and peas.

Since I know the food called “peas” conjures up very different images to people, I asked Cunningham to describe the mixture, and yes, indeed, some of us would call the dish rice and beans — red kidney beans, to be exact. The dean, like most surgeons I know, loves to cook, and he flavors this bean dish with coconut milk. If he is trying to reduce the saturated fat, he might use skim milk and coconut essence. But some days he enjoys it the traditional way.

Yes, Cunningham loves to eat high-flavored, traditional foods including soul food, and barbecue and foods seasoned with fat back. But he is keenly aware that some foods, when eaten in excess can, as he said, “cause a tremendous rebellion in the body.” He expressed concern that the food preferences and food-preparation techniques of past generations are not always serving us well and we need to make some changes to prevent obesity and chronic conditions.

He said they would also have macaroni and cheese — Jamaican style. This dish doesn’t resemble the school lunch or Kraft blue box dish, but instead is a crusty egg-based sauce with onions and tomatoes and thyme. And since holidays are for feasting, he said his wife will serve some awesome mousse or bread pudding.

Cunningham said we need to celebrate the wonderful colors and textures and flavors of fruits and vegetables and grains. He believes if we celebrate these foods with our children that they will naturally choose them over the processed foods that are contributing to obesity and chronic disease. More than once he told me he loves highly flavorful foods and laughed that his mouth was watering as he thought about Jamaican food. His descriptions were so inspiring I had to visit a Web site to see what some of these colorful dishes (like ackee and saltfish, a national dish) looked like.

Since people are always asking me what I eat, I also ask busy leaders how they manage their physical activity and food intake.

Cunningham said he tries to run very early every morning for about 20 minutes and does a series of strength exercises. And like many leaders who have lots of dinner meetings to attend, he has found a strategy to manage his caloric intake.

For breakfast, he has a bowl of high-fiber cereal, orange juice and coffee. He pulled a small jug of Ensure, a nutrition shake, out of his refrigerator and said that he has a small portion for lunch. He developed that habit years ago when, as a surgeon performing bariatric surgery here at ECU, he followed the post-surgical diet to see what it was like.
At that time, the diet was sipping small amounts of Ensure throughout the day. He found the drink to control his hunger. And like many busy health professionals, he supplements his diet with a multiple vitamin and a few other supplements and aspirin that are appropriate for his age and lifestyle.

The conversation turned serious as we talked about the obesity epidemic in eastern North Carolina.

He believes the women receiving prenatal care should be coached through their pregnancy on how to eat in a healthy fashion and feed their infants.

The schools need to be supported in their efforts to provide children the education as well as the opportunity to eat healthy foods in the appropriate portion sizes. He feels that this is particularly important for those who are the most vulnerable and may have come from situations where they experience socio-economic disadvantages.

Cunningham suggests that if we demonstrate healthy eating to our children, they will emulate our actions. We can celebrate our cultures, but we must come to grips with the ways our food preferences affect our health and make necessary changes.

Professor Kathy Kolasa, a registered dietitian and Ph.D., works with the Family Medicine Center, Brody School of Medicine at ECU. Contact her at kolasaka@ecu.edu, or C/O The Daily Reflector, P.O. Box 1967, Greenville, NC 27835.

Copyright 2008 The Daily Reflector All rights reserved. - -

COX
NEWSPAPERS
Some crisis

Based on what I have been reading in The N&O lately, the UNC system is having some financial problems. As UNC System President Erskine Bowles said, "We are in a crisis."

Schools in the system have been asked to cut their budgets by 5 percent; vacant positions will not be filled, some programs will probably be eliminated and tuition will increase.

However, Bowles received a 3 percent increase in his base salary, some UNC chancellors received raises as high as 8 percent and Mary Easley received a raise of 88 percent.

Am I missing something here?

J. Fred Watson
Sanford

And coaches, too?

I was impressed to read in the Nov. 23 article "College chiefs take pay cuts" that many university presidents are taking voluntary pay cuts in these difficult economic times. Now is a good time, also, for university football and basketball coaches to follow suit. Many of these coaches make far more than a university president.

C'mon, guys, who will be the first to sacrifice a little of his million-dollar-plus salary in recognition of the economic downturn?

Gene Eisen
Professor emeritus, N.C. State University
Raleigh