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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
Buddhism's role in peace discussed at ECU event

Peter Mungan Schellin, a Buddhist monk, appeared at ECU as part of the Countdown to Peace collaborative art project.

By Josh Humphries
The Daily Reflector

Buddhism can be a vehicle for social change, said Buddhist monk Peter Mungan Schellin during a talk at East Carolina University Thursday night.

Schellin spoke about Engaged Buddhism, a practice that involves participating in political and social discourse for change.

Schellin described marching on Washington in protest of the Iraq war with other like-minded Buddhists earlier this year to a crowd of about 40 in Spelghit Auditorium in the school's art building.

"Engaged Buddhism maintains a non-violent approach in the tradition of Gandolf and Martin Luther King, without the attachment to the outcome," Schellin said.

Buddhist practices do not get wrapped up in outcomes, Schellin explained. Buddhists are more concerned with recognizing faults and problems and accepting the world as it is.

Schellin appeared at ECU as part of the Countdown to Peace collaborative art project recently displayed in the Mendenhall Gallery. He is a professor emeritus at California State University, Los Angeles, where he taught art theory and education.

Schellin is legally blind and was accompanied on stage by a guide dog, Nemo.

"I have eye disease and it is progressive," he said.

"My experience, inside of myself, is that I am content anyway," he said, explaining how his Buddhist beliefs have helped him through rough spots.

Schellin described the different schools and practices of Buddhism as it has evolved in various places.

Buddhist Monk

Peter Mungan Schellin speaks Thursday evening at East Carolina University on being engaged socially as a Buddhist.

Reflektor on his guide dog's harness were illuminated by a camera flash. Above, the audience participates in a five-minute meditation session Schellin led during the event.

Something to say?

Post your comment about this story at reflector.com like China, Japan and Vietnam. He encouraged the audience to research the practice further.

He lead the audience in about five minutes of meditation, telling them to concentrate on their breathing and repeatedly count to 10.

One audience member asked afterwards if thinking about his lungs filling with air was acceptable when he was supposed to be concentrating on his breath.

"That is it," Schellin said. "I bet you have never thought about your lungs filling with air before, unless you are a long-distance runner."

Schellin said many realizations are possible through meditation and even small ones can be important. Schellin described Buddhism as being the "Middle Way" between two extremes of reaction and repression.

"The middle way is observation — we have a joke — don't just do something, sit there," he said.

Josh Humphries can be contacted at jhumphries@coxnc.com and 329-9565.
Catholic theologian joins Duke Divinity

BY YONAT SHIMRON
STAFF WRITER

Duke Divinity School, one of 13 United Methodist schools that train Protestant pastors, has hired its first Roman Catholic theologian—a recognition of the growing presence of Catholics on the Duke campus and in the Triangle, and a greater willingness among Protestants to embrace their Catholic peers.

Paul Griffiths of the University of Illinois at Chicago will become the first to hold a new professorship specially funded by the William K. Warren Foundation. He will teach Catholic theology both to graduate students preparing for ministry in Protestant churches and to undergraduates interested in learning more about Catholic thought.

His appointment, beginning in January, is historic because the South traditionally has been overwhelmingly Protestant and suspicious of Catholics. Unlike parts of the North and Midwest, the South has few Catholic universities and are not well-understood.

As a result, Back said, many Catholics have a shallow understanding of their own faith.

“You need an adult understanding that matches your secular learning,” said Back.

A Catholic convert

That’s where the Catholic Diocese of Raleigh hopes Griffiths will help, too. An endowed professorship will mean more internationally known Catholic scholars will be invited to lecture at Duke, and lay leaders will have more options in taking classes about their faith. Griffiths may even be called on to help guide the creation of learning materials for adult Catholics.

Griffiths is not a priest. Born in England, he was an Anglican until 1996 when he converted to Catholicism. He is also well-versed in Buddhism.

Griffiths won’t be the first Catholic on the Duke Divinity School faculty. There are four others, but they teach Bible or World Christianity, not Catholicism.

The divinity school draws students from 30 Protestant denominations.

Funding for the position came from the William K. Warren Foundation of Tulsa, Okla., which has given millions of dollars to the University of Notre Dame, a Catholic school in Indiana.

ORANGE COUNTY

Singer will speak to UNC graduates

CHAPEL HILL -- Soprano Jessye Norman, one of the country's most celebrated musical artists, will give the May 11 commencement address, UNC-CH officials announced this week. She will be awarded an honorary doctor of music degree.

Norman is known for bringing passion to recital performances, operatic portrayals and appearances with symphony orchestras and chamber music ensembles.
$7 million gift goes to law, med schools

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WINSTON-SALEM - Wake Forest University is getting a $7 million gift from an alumnus.

The donation comes from the estate of Ralph Wingate Bland, who practiced medicine in Goldsboro for 33 years before his death last year.

The gift will be evenly divided between Wake Forest's School of Law and the School of Medicine. It is the largest donation in the medical school's history.

The money will support scholarships in both schools beginning next fall.

Bland graduated from Wake Forest in 1948 and earned his medical degree there in 1952.

He became president of Wayne County Memorial Hospital and chairman of its surgery department. He also served as president of the N.C. Surgical Association and as a director of the N.C. State Board of the American Cancer Society.
BLOOD COURSING

Humacyte in RTP is developing engineered blood vessels

BY SABINE VOLLMER
STAFF WRITER

Growing spare body parts in the laboratory was a wild idea when Dr. Laura Niklason entered the field of tissue engineering. The former Duke University researcher who’s now at Yale University remembered that even colleagues laughed in her face.

In the 12 years since then, scientists have figured out how to coax cells into making skin, cartilage and even bladder tissue for surgeons to implant in patients. But other body parts have proved more difficult to make in the lab. Blood vessels, for example, are tricky because of their shape and function.

But Niklason and two former Duke students, Juliana Blum and Shannon Dahl, have been working on replicating blood vessels that can be used for dialysis patients and in heart bypass surgery. Now, three years after forming Humacyte, a Research Triangle Park company, to pursue their research, the three women are a year or two away from testing their blood vessels in patients.

“Humacyte created a human-based collagen tube, which is used as a vascular graft.”

“This is a huge deal,” said Dr. Alan Kypson, a heart surgeon at East Carolina University who has tested Humacyte’s product in dogs.

“It sounds sci-fi,” Kypson added. “This is something that really hasn’t been done before. But done appropriately, it would be of great benefit.”

Currently vascular grafts — pieces of blood vessel that reroute the flow of blood — are either made from synthetic materials or harvested from the patient. More than 500,000 patients in the United States each year have such grafts surgically implanted. They are used to bypass blood clots near the heart and in the legs and ease access for dialysis, a procedure that regularly washes the blood of patients whose kidneys have failed.

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HUMACYTE
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1D

But synthetic grafts and those harvested from the patient's body, usually the leg, have severe limitations. About half of all dialysis patients need replacements of their synthetic grafts every six months. Heart patients, who rely on harvested grafts, run out of options after six or seven bypasses.

Engineered vascular grafts promise to prolong lives, cut medical costs and reduce time in the operating room. And the company that offers surgeons such a solution could take aim at a $1 billion market, said Geoffrey Erickson, Humacyte's chief executive and a biomedical engineer by training.

Humacyte isn't the only company after that market.

Cytograft Tissue Engineering, a California company, is Humacyte's biggest competitor. It uses patients' own cells to grow vascular grafts.

Cytograft has begun to test its technology in a few dialysis patients. The company is also trying to develop a product that would be less expensive and more efficient than growing an individual graft for each patient.

Humacyte already has such a product. It can be stored at room temperature and used in any patient. So far, grafts made from dog cells and tested in dogs have worked for one year. The company is now testing grafts made from human cells in baboons.

Niklason expects their research will move to dialysis patients in about a year or two.

Tests on heart bypass patients could begin in five to seven years, she said.

It took persistence, dedication and hours in the lab for Niklason, and then Blum and Dahl, to get where they are.

"In a startup, you're never really off," said Dahl, who gave birth to a son a year ago. Blum had her first child, a daughter, a few weeks ago.

Niklason, who is the mother of two, counts the research as her third child.

"It's my life's work," she said. Niklason is a disciple of Robert Langer, a chemical engineering professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and one of the fathers of tissue engineering. She worked in Langer's lab from 1995 until she joined Duke in 1998. It was at MIT that her interest in blood vessels was piqued.

At Duke, she continued her research and began working with Dahl. The two, working off Niklason's previous work, developed a method to use human cells from blood banks to grow tubes of collagen, a protein that the body makes