THE DAILY CLIPS

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Holtz undecided on immediate future

BY NATHAN SUMMERS
The Daily Reflector

Skip Holtz said Tuesday he hasn’t decided yet where his immediate future lies.

While Syracuse University appears poised to make Holtz its next football coach, it remained unclear Tuesday whether the East Carolina head man would remain in Greenville.

Holtz said in a text message after 9 p.m. Tuesday night he had not made a decision about the Syracuse coaching vacancy, and that there was nothing to report yet from New York City, where he was attending father Lou Holtz’s induction into the College Football Hall of Fame.

Holtz, nearing the end of his fourth season with the Pirates, met with Syracuse Athletic Director Daryl Gross Monday while both were in the city.

The elder Holtz told Syracuse’s Post-Standard newspaper he had seen his son briefly Tuesday but had not had the opportunity “to get his thoughts and feelings” about the meeting with Gross.

Other names connected with the Syracuse job have included New Orleans Saints offensive coordinator Doug Marrone, New York Giants offensive coordinator Kevin Gilbride, Buffalo head coach Turner Gill and Temple head coach Al Golden.

Contact Nathan Summers at nsummers@coxn.com or (252) 329-9595.
Live Healthy 100-day challenge kicks off in January

BY MIKE GRIZZARD
The Daily Reflector

Get ready Greenville. It’s time to get moving.

A 100-day Live Healthy Greenville challenge kicks off in January as part of Live Healthy America, a team-based weight-loss and activity program aimed at creating healthier lifestyles. East Carolina University men’s basketball coach Mack McCarthy pitched the idea to the Greenville-Pitt County Chamber of Commerce, which hopped on the opportunity to encourage the community to not only shed some pounds but also — hopefully — shed an image as a home of unhealthy eaters.

A 2006 article in Fortune magazine tabbed Greenville as the nation’s No. 1 market for heavy users of fast food, with 59 percent of its fast-food customers eating burgers and fries 12 or more times a month — compared to the national average of 42 percent.

That translates into costs for the business sector and strains on the medical community in the form of increased risks for obesity and heart disease. So any effort to promote a more fit workforce has the chamber’s support, said Scott Senatore, the chamber’s vice president of marketing and technology.

“Part of our mission statement is to enhance the quality of life and enhance the business community in Greenville, and we think a healthy work force definitely does that,” Senatore said. “We think being able to brand and market Greenville as a healthy city to work in can be beneficial to all the businesses here, whether you’re recruiting folks to come here or whether you’re just trying to improve the environment in your particular business.”

Here’s how Living Healthy Greenville works:

Local businesses or organizations form teams of two to 10 people to compete from Jan. 14-April 23 in one of two divisions: minutes of activity or weight loss. Progress is reported weekly online, and prizes will be awarded throughout.

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the 100-day event.

A grand prize for the winning team is in the works, Senatore said. The cost of $18 per person includes a T-shirt, one-year magazine subscription and other online benefits.

Senatore said he hopes local businesses will engage in “a friendly competition.”

“I would hope that the banks would want to compete against each other, and the Realtors would want to compete against each other just because that’s just the nature of human beings,” said Senatore, team captain of the chamber’s team. “They’re already competing somewhat in work every day, so why not add something else?”

McCarthy could relate to that as a coach and brought the idea to chamber President Susanne Sartelle.

“I told her what I knew of it and told her I would do anything I could do to support it, if it’s something they were interested in and they thought could be helpful here in Greenville,” said McCarthy, who is filming a commercial this week to promote Live Healthy Greenville. “It looks like win-win with the medical community here and with the chamber of commerce’s goals of attracting businesses and other things to the area. It looks like a no-brainer from our standpoint. I have at least some visibility in my position, so I told them if there was any way I could be helpful, I would.”

McCarthy didn’t sit idle after his longtime friend Jim Hallahan called about getting Greenville involved. They had been on the same coaching staffs at Virginia Tech and East Tennessee State before Hallahan moved on to become executive director of the Iowa State Games. A program called Lighten Up Iowa grew out of that in 2002. Live Healthy America is modeled after the Lighten Up program.

Last year, more than 63,000 people and more than 250 businesses and organizations participated in the Live Healthy America program, losing more than 250,000 pounds and logging 136 million minutes of physical activity.

After reading about Greenville’s fast-food cravings, Hallahan contacted McCarthy.

“Because he and I have remained friends over the years, he got on the phone and called me and said, ‘Hey, what do you think about this?’” McCarthy said. “I didn’t see any downside to it in any way, either personally or as a member of the community.”

Jennifer McCartney, a visiting instructor and research associate in the Human Performance Laboratory at ECU, certainly welcomes an effort at healthier lifestyles.

She serves on a wellness committee at ECU and said the College of Health and Human Performance will encourage university employees to participate.

“I think it’s a great way to get Greenville as a city to kind of come together and become healthier and more active,” McCartney said. “The nice thing about the healthy living program is that not only can it track weight loss but it also encourages activity, which is what we’re all about here in the Human Performance Lab.”

McCarthy said accountability to teammates should serve as motivation.

“That’s a really nice part of it, too, is that, hopefully, having that team environment will encourage people to stay motivated,” she said.
Champions
Determination earns crown for Pirates

Fans welcoming home the East Carolina University football team on Saturday might have been misled. The Conference USA trophy held by players and coaches with so much pride was not won in Tusla, Okla., by matter of the Pirates' 27-24 victory that afternoon.

No, the championship was earned here, in the shadow of Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium, in the hot, humid practice sessions emphasizing fitness, endurance and determination. Those qualities enabled a battered club missing several starters to complete a magical season and win the conference crown.

Thirty-two years have passed since East Carolina captured the Southern Conference championship in football. But back-to-back upsets of perennial powers Virginia Tech and West Virginia to start the year made East Carolina the early story in college football, landing the team a national ranking and whispers of a berth in the Bowl Championship Series.

But smooth sailing for the Pirate ship ended quickly as key injuries and suspensions made for turbulent seas. An undefeated season disappeared at the hands of long-time rival North Carolina State. Losses to Houston and Virginia followed, and suddenly a dream season had turned into a nightmare.

At such a moment, so crucial in a season, a team learns its true character. It is when leaders emerge, and when the investment of time and energy — those long hours in the eastern Carolina sun — pay off.

Three conference victories, including two in overtime, put East Carolina on the path for a division title. And after a misstep against Southern Miss, the Pirates captured the East title by defeating the University of Alabama-Birmingham, landing the school in its first Conference USA Championship Game.

Most commentators believed that was the only title East Carolina could hope to achieve. The University of Tulsa's offense was the nation's most potent, and analysts predicted that an injury riddled Pirate defense could never dream of stopping it.

Yet again, the players and coaches would not be denied. The Pirates turned Tulsa turnovers into points, seizing a 24-17 lead. And when the Golden Hurricane responded, the Pirates marched down the field to set up a 36-yard field goal by Ben Hartman and to win the conference title.

The coaching staff deserves immense credit for a remarkable job this year. Coach Skip Holtz has been mentioned for other head coaching positions and he deserves the praise and recognition he is receiving — though the community hopes he stays, of course.

The Liberty Bowl awaits. And yet, regardless of the outcome, this will be remembered as a special season by the Pirate faithful across this region and beyond.
Student distress signals sought

UNC-CH hoping to fend off disaster

BY MANDY LOCKE
STAFF WRITER

CHAPEL HILL — Students with mental illness at UNC-Chapel Hill are being asked to describe how they look and what they need when they come undone, in the hope of avoiding the kind of bloody rampages seen on other campuses in the past year.

In a test project that's the first of its kind at an American university, the school is letting mentally ill students tell university officials how to care for them when their illness takes over. These “advance directives” allow students to state their wishes and put in place a “sick” plan while they are well.

“It's a way for your healthy voice to keep talking even when your illness gets in the way,” said Anna Scheyett, an academic dean at the university. “It gives university people clues.”

But it's been hard getting students to enroll in the program that was launched in October, a problem Scheyett blames on the stigma surrounding mental illness and the fact that many students are only beginning to grapple with their illnesses. Scheyett hopes to gather feedback and change the program to attract more students next year.

Scheyett launched the program after mentally ill students went on shooting rampages at Virginia Tech and Northern Illinois University. Scheyett, who is with the School of Social Work and spe-
ILLNESS
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cializes in mental illness, was also troubled about students who needed help who were quietly fading away.

“You e-mail and call and [some students] just don’t come back,” she said. “We’ve got to find a way to help people and their families get the care they need to be here and well.”

The form asks students to describe the signs that they are reaching a breaking point; authorize someone to make medical decisions for them, and even list which medicines work and which don’t. The directives can be filed anywhere the student wishes: the dean of students’ office, the university police department, or with a resident or faculty adviser.

The advanced directives are modeled after living wills and have been available to the mentally ill in North Carolina since the late 1990s. The document is legally binding and accessible to doctors in the event that a person has a psychological breakdown.

Despite the directives’ benefits, few mentally ill patients have taken advantage of them. Experts say barriers include poverty and a lack of access to advocates willing to help fill out the form.

In North Carolina, only 172 mentally ill people have filed electronic directives with the state secretary of state’s office. Marvin Swartz, a Duke professor and director of the National Resource Center on Psychiatric Advance Directives, has helped at least 400 people fill out directives, some of which are filed with a national registry. Swartz said two-thirds of the patients he’s offered to help fill out directives have agreed to do it.

“Mentally ill patients have repeated episodes,” said Swartz. “When they’ve recovered, they have a pretty good sense of what works for them and how they might avoid doing that again.”

‘We prefer to be proactive’

Since the October launch, Scheyett has stashed brochures in places students frequent. Administrators who deal with students they know to be mentally ill have encouraged them to fill out the directive.

Jim Kessler, director of disability services at UNC-CH, said he is relieved UNC is trying to ward off a catastrophe like those seen at other universities.

“People wring their hands and ask: What are we

TO GET THE DIRECTIVE

People who want the form and wish to file an advance directive with the state can visit ncifeelinks.org.

Students at UNC-CH who want to fill out a directive can send e-mail to Anna Scheyett at amshaye@email.unc.edu

going to do?" Kessler said. “They want a witch hunt. We’re not giving these students up, and we’d prefer to be proactive about helping them.”

Kessler’s office coordinates accommodations for students with disabilities. A year ago, 28 mentally ill students turned to his office for help.

But so far, only four UNC-CH students have filled out an advanced directive. Scheyett suspects students with mental illnesses might not have enough experience with their sickness to describe what’s happening to them. A study published in the Archives of General Psychiatry this month found that half of all college-age people had suffered a psychiatric disorder in the past year. While mental illness is prevalent in college students, many diseases such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder often emerge in one’s early 20s.

Scott Oates wishes he’d known enough about his sickness to have taken advantage of an advanced directive in 1994 when he was enrolled at N.C. State University.

“I think it could be very helpful to head off a catastrophe at the pass,” said Oates, 35. “I didn’t even have the wherewithal to drop my courses.”

Because he didn’t pull out of classes in time, Oates failed several courses, dragging down his grade point average.

Oates had long suffered from depression in his teens. In 1999, though, he began seeing and hearing strange things. A doctor finally put a name to his ailment: schizoaffective bipolar disorder.

Since then, Oates has been trying to finish his undergraduate degree. He is enrolled at UNC-Greensboro, where he can complete courses online.

Oates said he thinks that the directives are a good idea, but he worries about universities being able to maintain a student’s privacy.

“There’s a stigma attached with filling out something like that,” Oates said.

News researcher Brooke Cain contributed to this report.

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Today's debate: Medical care

Sleep-deprived residents still pose risks for patients

Our view:
‘Culture of expectation’ and lax enforcement thwart changes.

Few passengers would board an airplane if they knew that the pilot had been on duty for 30 straight hours. You don’t need a medical degree to know that sleep deprivation causes fatigue that impairs judgment and ability.

Unfortunately, that fact seems to escape educators at hospitals where the nation’s 108,000 medical residents — doctors in training who make critical decisions affecting patients’ lives — routinely work such punishing hours.

The long-standing but wrongheaded tradition in medicine is that young physicians need to toil around the clock to “toughen up” and provide continuity of care for patients. Never mind all the studies that show how exhausted physicians make substantially more serious medical mistakes, such as sticking a tube in the wrong vein or ordering 10 times the correct dosage of a medication. Or that going 24 hours without sleep is comparable with having a blood alcohol level of .10% — legally drunk in every state in the country.

To reduce the danger to patients, the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) required, in 2003, that residents work no more than 80 hours a week (down from 100-plus), averaged over four weeks, and no more than 30 hours straight.

Five years later, though, some hospitals aren’t following even these minimal rules. A report last week by the Institute of Medicine (IOM), an expert panel that advises the government on health issues, found rampant and underreported violations of the limits on duty hours, partly because the “culture of expectation, if not overt intimidation, results in pressure on residents to work more than their assigned hours.”

A prime reason for the lack of progress is ACGME’s weak monitoring of residency programs. The average program is reviewed once every 3.7 years, and the audits are announced in advance. Only 2.9% of the 8,804 citations it issued in 2006-07 were for hour-compliance issues. Instead of fining violators, the council gives them more time to comply. Monitoring must be strengthened with more announced visits. Tougher whistleblower protection is needed because residents worry that complaints will damage their careers. ACGME also needs to insist on overlapping schedules during shift changes to reduce the chances for error during the handoff of patients from one doctor to another.

IOM sensibly recommends that medical residents get at least five hours of sleep after working 16 hours. It also would increase residents’ days off to five per month, restrict moonlighting during off-hours, and demand greater supervision by experienced physicians and limit caseloads.

Reform won’t come easily or cheaply. The cost for extra personnel to handle reduced resident work could be $1.7 billion annually. That’s a lot of money, but it’s half the $3.5 billion in extra medical costs of treating drug-related injuries resulting from errors that occur each year, not to mention the cost in malpractice lawsuits and patient suffering that could be prevented.

Allowing residents to get adequate rest isn’t a mushy-headed perk. It’s the right medicine to prevent injury to patients.
Teaching hospitals excel

Opposing view:
We're reviewing our standards to improve education, patient care.

By Thomas J. Nasca

The community of educators responsible for training America's future physicians appreciates the work of the Institute of Medicine (IOM) committee in preparing its report on resident physician duty hours.

Duty hours are one element within a complex matrix of educational and health care factors that the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) addresses in accrediting nearly 8,500 programs in graduate medical education in the USA.

ACGME will invite written comment on the IOM recommendations from individual educators and residents, program directors and their associations, specialty boards and societies, other interested persons and organizations, and the public. This collective wisdom will inform the actions of ACGME, which adopted uniform national accreditation standards for resident duty hours effective in 2003.

Concerns have been raised, both about failures of compliance with duty hour standards, and about unintended educational consequences of compliance with these same standards. ACGME's responsibility and challenge are to create and enforce accreditation standards that will enhance, and not detract from, the development of the knowledge, values, skills and behaviors required of physicians.

It is reported that the quality of care in America’s teaching hospitals (where resident physicians train) is higher than that in non-teaching hospitals (which do not have resident physicians). By learning to deliver high quality, safe patient care in our teaching hospitals, residents bring these advances to their communities after program completion.

Working with its colleagues in medical education, ACGME will continue to enhance its systems relating to compliance with resident duty hour standards, as well as standards for educational process and outcomes. This will be accomplished by furthering the goal of improving health care by training physicians who demonstrate the knowledge, values, skills and behaviors required to serve the American public.

Dr. Thomas J. Nasca, an internist, is CEO of the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education.
December 9, 2008

EDITORIAL

Napping During Hospital Shifts

No patient wants to be cared for by a sleep-deprived resident who has put in a brutal 30-hour shift within an 80-hour workweek. There is just too much chance that that the sleep-deprived doctor’s foggy mind or clumsy coordination would cause dangerous medical errors.

Of course, it was a lot worse a decade or two ago when residents — the young doctors-in-training who provide most of the medical care in teaching hospitals — routinely worked 110 hours a week, sometimes for 36 hours at a stretch. That degree of exploitation was curtailed by a 1989 law in New York State and by standards issued in 2003 by the accrediting organization for residency programs. Both called for 80-hour workweeks.

Now the Institute of Medicine, in a report requested by Congress, has decided that the reforms did not go far enough. It has proposed further revisions to lessen the chances of fatigue-related errors and to enhance training. The recommendations look strong in some respects but unrealistic at the core. The institute’s panel of experts did not challenge the 80-hour week but urged that residents work no more than 16 hours straight, at which point they could either stop work or take a mandatory five-hour sleep break as part of their 30-hour shift.

The panel acknowledges that there is not enough evidence to assess the degree to which tired residents harm patients, but there are studies that show errors rising when shifts exceed 16 hours. The report’s biggest weakness, according to some experts and activists, is the notion that a five-hour nap in the middle of a long shift is an adequate solution. That mandate seems impossible to enforce, and few residents are likely to get five uninterrupted hours of sleep. A ban on shifts longer than 16 hours seems preferable.

The panel estimates that it could cost $1.7 billion a year to hire health-care professionals to take over work now done by residents, if they can be found. That cost would be difficult for hospitals to absorb. Congress would be wise to provide the needed financing.

By most accounts, the current, weaker rules are widely ignored, so it will be imperative to make sure that any revisions are adhered to. The accrediting organization can’t be counted on to get tough. The institute’s panel wisely calls for oversight by the federal government and another private organization. If violations continue to occur, Congress may want to put federal regulators in charge of monitoring residents’ hours.
GREENVILLE -- Gov.-elect Beverly Perdue's "listen and learn" series of roundtable meetings with business, education and community leaders to gather suggestions on how to address the state's pressing issues made a stop Monday morning in Greenville, where she received an earful about education, infrastructure, economic development and agriculture.

Monday's meeting focused on rural development and Ms. Perdue had called on longtime friend and adviser Billy Ray Hall, president of the N.C. Rural Center, to organize the meeting because of his ties to the eastern part of the state. Hall, a native of Mount Olive, said his role in the meeting was as a volunteer and not a function of his office.

Other issues brought to Ms. Perdue's attention included more state support for homeless shelters, developing a strategy for rural counties, the need to improve the slow response time from state agencies, green energy, bio-technology, support for the state's military and the need for a dental school at East Carolina University.

The results of the meeting, and the others she is holding across the state, will be compiled for Ms. Perdue and her team to look at as she moves into office.

Ms. Perdue, who will meet with the banking community later this week on the state's mortgage and foreclosure crisis, said the sessions would continue after she takes office.

During the session and in a brief news conference following the meeting, Ms. Perdue appeared upbeat about the ability of the state and
nation to weather the current economic crisis.

Ms. Perdue said she is "very confident" the county will have a stimulus package in place shortly after President-elect Barack Obama takes office, and she hinted that she is working on her own stimulus package for the state.

"I intend to be a partner with the federal government," she said. "I don't believe that is a bailout or a handout, I believe it is a way to build a new economy and put our people back to work."

Ms. Perdue said she looks forward to working to reinvigorate economic development, but was also quick to point out that she is inheriting a state budget that could be hit by up to a $2 billion shortfall.

No one knows what the figure will be, she told the media.

"I have been very direct with people telling them I am going to have to make some tough choices. I probably heard several billion, possibly hundreds of billions of dollars of wants today," she said.

She added that the state cannot possibly grant every item on every region's wish list.

"But I am going to prioritize," she said. "It starts with education so our workers can compete in the 21st Century. You have got to have job creation."

Ms. Perdue said she has a time frame in mind in which she might spend possibly 40 percent of her time on the budget and 60 percent on core economic development and education.

"Wherever you go people are talking about the priorities of North Carolina, what the infrastructure issues are, how we meet those needs," she said. "I have not had a meeting yet where they didn't talk about dropouts, the time and capacity of community colleges to retrain and budget shortfalls. All of the sessions have talked about the economy, and the challenge from Wall Street to Main Street. What I heard here today is no different than in a rural community in the west or a rural community outside of Charlotte or Winston-Salem. It is all over the state. Folks need some help with roads and bridges and basic infrastructure money."

And with a rising unemployment rate, money for training is critical," she added.

"I heard the community college folks in there say it is an inverted curve.... when they need money the most to train people who have been displaced and need to get new job training there is no money for this. In a time of great budget challenges I understand from what I am hearing from people across North Carolina what the real priorities have to be."

The group had met privately for about an hour prior to Ms. Perdue's arrival to map out the course of the meeting.
"I thought it was important for the group to sort of think about the eastern region in terms of what is actually happening today with the numbers and opportunities for job growth as well as this recession that is playing its way out through the economy," Hall said.

Hall said Rick Newander, dean of the East Carolina University business school, gave a "great overview" of the economy and Leonard Kulik, assistant director for the North Carolina Eastern Region, had provided an overview of opportunities for job growth.

During his comments to Ms. Perdue, Newander spoke about infrastructure needs that transcend the traditional to include technology and education.

He noted that East Carolina University is leader in the state in business education and that up to three-fourths of the university's MBA students are getting their degrees online.

"However, we have a significant number of students who live where they cannot get high-speed Internet," he said. "It is not a matter of cost, but of availability."

Newander said the state must ensure access to high-speed Internet so its citizens can be productive, knowledgeable and learn about science and math.

Without that they "will be left in the dust," he said.

Norma Turnage of Rocky Mount, a member of the state Community College Board, said the state must work to keep students in school.

"We have a basic problem in dropouts in that it is a larger problem than schools -- it is a family and environmental problem. We cannot have a viable work force unless we have students in school."

Jordan Whichard III, chairman of the N.C. Economic Development Board, said education and work force development have always been North Carolina's first and most important investment.

He agreed that infrastructure is a key, including high-speed Internet, but that affordable water and sewer are vital.

"Poor eastern North Carolina communities, rural communities all over the state, have a real challenge in their ability to pay for that (water and sewer) infrastructure so the state needs to develop programs to help," he said.

Whichard also supports the concept of regional development hubs. He suggested a study to focus on regions perhaps of counties surrounding areas such as Greenville.

Local farmer Lawrence Davenport said the Golden Leaf Foundation is one of the solutions. It, he said, already has put "a lot of money" in worker training including $3 million in East Carolina University over past two years.
"Agriculture is a $74 billion industry in the state, but we in agriculture sometimes think we are taken for granted," he said.

In response to comments about finding ways to help small businesses, such as job or tax credits, Ms. Perdue agreed that the state needed to create an environment for small businesses while bringing in the "gorillas" of business.