THE DAILY CLIPS

December 15, 2010

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
The people of North Carolina are getting a different kind of gift this holiday season. Instead of precious metals wrapped in pretty paper, archeologists are offering fragments of history enveloped in silt and brine.

The latest artifacts from the presumed Queen Anne's Revenge, flagship of the notorious pirate Blackbeard, were previewed Tuesday at the state project's official conservation lab at the West Research Campus of East Carolina University.

Expeditions at the shipwreck take place near Beaufort each fall, depending on funding, for ideal water temperatures and prevailing winds. About half of the site's estimated 700,000 artifacts have been brought up from the water since the wreck was found in 1996 and recovery began in 2006.

Most of the artifacts go to the N.C. Maritime Museum in Beaufort, the official repository for shipwreck items. A new exhibit opens at the museum next year with full recovery, including the ship's hull, expected to be complete in 2013. A complete exhibit, including an expansion of the museum, is planned for 2018, the 300th anniversary of the ship's sinking.

“We're excited about looking ahead and moving forward,” Linda Carlisle, secretary of the N.C. Department of Cultural Resources, said in Greenville on Tuesday.
“Today we wanted to show the whole cycle,” project director Mark Wilde-Ramsing said. “There's a lot of excitement when everything is brought up, but there is a lot of detailed work that goes into conservation. It's a debris field out there, we're really like CSI.”

Among the 122 artifacts recovered this fall were a sword hilt that may have been used to carry out Blackbeard's bidding, and panes of glass believed to be from the captain's quarters through which Blackbeard himself may have gazed out to sea. Other items ranged from small buckles, buttons and pewter plates to a large cannon from a previous expedition being readied for its move to the museum.

While the recovery is an initiative of the Underwater Archeology branch of Cultural Resources with funding from the N.C. General Assembly, it is carried out with help from the N.C. Department of Environmental and Natural Resources, East Carolina University, the University of North Carolina Institute of Marine Sciences at Morehead City, the U.S. Coast Guard, the Maritime Research Institute and other partners.

Intersal, a private search and salvage company that located the wreck under a state permit, continues to be involved with the project.

“It's gratifying to see the push to get this up and out of the water,” John Masters, director of operations at Intersal, said.

All of the artifact conservation has taken place at the lab at ECU, run since 2003 by three full-time staff members and two to five graduate students.

“It is very appropriate that Blackbeard's recovery is part of pirate nation,” Deirdre Mageean, vice chancellor for graduate studies, said. “ECU takes seriously its mission of service, education and outreach, and this partnership exemplifies that mission. We bring the resources of a research university and a great experience is afforded our graduate students.”

The shipwreck has garnered national attention as one of the oldest discovered in waters off North Carolina. Officials say the ongoing excavation has increased tourism and they expect that to continue.

The 2009 “Knights of the Black Flag” exhibit at the N.C. Museum of History in Raleigh, which featured the largest collection of artifacts from the ship to date, drew record attendance of more than 135,000 visitors from 72 countries and all 50 states.

Contact Jackie Drake at jdrake@reflector.com or (252) 329-9567.
GREENVILLE, N.Y., Dec. 14 (UPI) -- Pet owners are shelling out big bucks for Christmas presents, including a New York Web site's $378,000 collar, because there is no "obligation," experts said.

Tracy Tuten, an associate professor of marketing at East Carolina University in Greenville, N.C., said she conducted a survey recently indicating pet owners experience "pure joy" when giving gifts to their animals, the New York Daily News reported Tuesday.

"When you exchange gifts with people, there is always baggage associated with it," she said. "But with pets, there is no obligation in the giving. Animals have an incredibly important role in people's lives, so for pet owners, it doesn't matter how much something costs."

Stacy Braverman, owner of the Merrick, N.Y., Web site Bitch New York, said her business offers pet gifts including a $160 canine party dress and a $378,000 diamond dog collar.

Braverman said one of this year's most popular gifts is a $30 bottle of "canine wine" called Sauvignon Bark.

"It's really like a gravy you pour over the dog food," she said.
Outsider managed UNC football crisis

BY ERIC FERRERI - Staff Writer

CHAPEL HILL With the NCAA's investigation into its football program escalating, UNC-Chapel Hill turned for help in late August to a national public relations firm skilled at crisis management.

UNC-CH hired New York-based Hill & Knowlton on Aug. 25. The next day, the university announced that the probe, which until then centered on improper relationships between athletes and sports agents, had taken a new turn. New evidence suggested some athletes might have cheated on course work.

Though UNC-CH is a high-profile university accustomed to the spotlight and scrutiny, the football investigation proved foreign territory for campus communications experts.

"An NCAA investigation is just so different than anything we'd dealt with before," said Nancy Davis, UNC-CH's associate vice chancellor for university relations.

"It was really the outside perspective we were looking for," she said. Hill & Knowlton is a communications firm with offices in 44 countries. One of its areas of expertise is in managing crisis situations. It "advises clients on how best to navigate serious or complex issues while keeping their reputations intact," according to its website.

The consultant the firm deployed, Michael Kontos, worked with university officials prior to that Aug. 26 news conference and in the subsequent months. He consulted largely through phone calls but did come to Chapel Hill once for a daylong meeting, Davis said. UNC-CH paid the firm $14,092 and severed ties Nov. 30, Davis said.

The firm was paid from private foundation funds, not taxpayer dollars, she said.
The investigation derailed a team with high hopes in the preseason. Two seniors, defensive lineman Marvin Austin and receiver Greg Little, never played. Neither did junior defensive end standout Robert Quinn.

In all, 14 players missed games as the result of investigations by the school and NCAA into off-field issues. Seven missed the entire season, and four players were ruled permanently ineligible by the NCAA.

The program's second-in-command, top recruiter and associate head coach John Blake, resigned amid questions about receiving money from an agent.

**Overwhelmed**
As the NCAA and the university investigated, tidbits of news trickled out all fall. They made headlines each time and often prompted questions the university could not answer.

Kontos is a senior vice president with Hill & Knowlton. His previous clients include the International Olympic Committee, which enlisted his firm's help following irregularities with Salt Lake City's bid for the Winter Olympics. He has also worked with several cities bidding for the Olympics, as well as the Big Ten Conference and the World Anti-Doping Agency.

In Chapel Hill, he helped a university very cognizant that its handling of the situation was being scrutinized, said Steve Kirschner, director of athletic communications.

'This was a big deal'
"The reputation of the University of North Carolina is paramount," Kirschner said. "Those of us who work in communications and public relations are caretakers of that. This was a big deal."

Erskine Bowles, president of the UNC system, endorsed the hire.
"You need outside help when you get into something like this," Bowles said.

"You had a crisis. You want to make sure you're able to run the university but you want to still manage the crisis. [Chancellor Holden Thorp] couldn't spend full time on football. He has a multibillion dollar operation to manage and 30,000 kids he's responsible for."

eric.ferreri@newsobserver.com or 919-932-2008
Laser tag, karaoke keep finals from being a test of nerves

With students facing a sour economy and job worries, universities are taking extra steps to keep them from overstretching at the end of the term. Yoga, anyone?

By Larry Gordon, Los Angeles Times
December 12, 2010

It was just before midnight and hundreds of students in the Caltech cafeteria were digging into plates piled high with eggs, bacon, doughnuts, French toast and fruit. Nearby, several top administrators, including President Jean-Lou Chameau, whipped up omelets for the noisy crowd of future physicists and engineers.

The idea was to make it easier to swallow the next item on the menu for these students: final exams.

Caltech junior Jessica Davis, who was about to launch into a four-hour take-home exam in quantum mechanics, said she appreciated the social interlude and free food at the "midnight munchies" party last week. "It certainly is a way of forcing students out of their rooms and de-stressing before taking their finals," said Davis, 21, an astrophysics major from Kansas.

Lowering student stress during end-of-term exams, scheduled for this week at many colleges, is the goal of a growing number of serious and wacky events at campuses in California and across the nation. College students have always tensed up during finals, but school officials say the bad economy and scary job market are increasing the pressure...
even more this year.

So, along with extended library hours, extra counseling and quiet study spaces, colleges are offering bounce houses, laser tag, pajama runs, petting zoos, oxygen bars and chicken soup deliveries. There are karaoke sing-alongs, labyrinth walks, artificial snowfalls, comedy hours and miniature golf. And, of course, hot chocolate and neck massages.

At Harvey Mudd College in Claremont this week, 10,000 tiny rubber balls are scheduled to be dropped from a dorm roof to students waiting below. At Oberlin College in Ohio, the library sponsors single-song dance breaks. Johns Hopkins University in Maryland holds a gingerbread house decorating contest. Emory University in Georgia has a Harry Potter-themed snack night, with nonalcoholic "butterbeer." Cal Lutheran in Thousand Oaks ran a night of car decorating and caravanning to view Christmas decorations. And students at Illinois' Roosevelt University wrote their anxieties on postcards and mailed them to counselors.

Skeptics may see this as childish indulgence of a generation of college students who grew up pampered and overprotected. School administrators concede some of that is true. But they also emphasize that tough competition for jobs and graduate school admission, along with worries about higher tuition and loan burdens, are making today's collegians more anxious than previous classes about grades and their futures.

In addition, colleges have been paying more attention to students' mental health in recent years, several experts said. The exam week programs are part of that change and are healthy alternatives to alcohol and drugs for "getting through this tense time," said psychologist Keith Anderson, who is active in the American College Health Assn.

"More schools are willing to invest a little more in prevention along those lines," Anderson, a staff psychologist at New York's Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, said of exam-time activities. "That does not necessarily mean the students are more coddled, but they do have more options available."

Brian Van Brunt, president of the American College Counseling Assn., compared the pre-finals yoga and snacks to the bicycle helmets students were urged to wear in childhood. "It helps make a safer, easier journey," he said. And current college students do expect more services, he said: "The word I'm tempted to use is 'entitled.'"

Still, campuses should be genuinely concerned about student stress and offer good care with "some fun attached to it," said Van Brunt, director of counseling and testing at Western Kentucky University.

That was evident Wednesday afternoon at Pomona College as classes ended for the semester and a finals study period began. On a lawn at the Claremont campus, two fenced pens were set up, one with six bunnies and the other with 10 puppies. Over two hours, about 300 students took turns climbing inside and playing with the animals at the student-organized event.
Adam Griffith, a freshman at Claremont McKenna College, which is also a member of the Claremont University Consortium, said he had only seven hours of sleep over three days last week as he finished four papers for classes. “It was rough, but I got it done,” said the government major from Danville, Calif. So, he said, he was taking a break from studying for a Spanish exam to romp with the dogs.

"Stuff like this is a really, really good idea, especially since it doesn't take too much time," said Griffith, 18. "I appreciate seeing that from the faculty and staff, acknowledging that we are under stress."

Standing by was Neil Gerard, Pomona College's associate dean of students, who said the school also provides late-night breakfasts and free massages at the semester's end. Seniors particularly feel "an aura of pressure," as many worry about the possibility of moving home after graduation and competing with older people for entry-level jobs, Gerard said. But most students cope well and just need a break from studying, he said.

At Caltech's midnight breakfast, Tom Mannion, the school's senior director for student activities, agreed that such events might have been unthinkable a generation ago. "I think we know a little bit more of what is good for students now," he said as he prepared to help with the cooking. "It's not just about the grades. It's about becoming a whole person."

Across the San Gabriel Valley, meanwhile, Cal Poly Pomona held its once-a-quarter "midnight madness" event last week. About 1,000 students played laser tag, sang karaoke, ran a portable obstacle course and ate free hot dogs, kabobs and ice cream.

Organizer Pulkit Jain, a third-year biotechnology major from Diamond Bar, said he thinks the festival helps improve many students' performance on finals. But the 20-year-old conceded that some classmates are too anxious to attend.

"There are still students who really just want to study and don't care about anything else," he said.