Pirate Volunteers Enjoy ‘Extreme’ Experience

By Christine Neff

They gave up Spring Break for an experience that could only be described as extreme.


Students in ECU’s Construction Management program made up most of the university’s volunteers. Seventy-five to 80 students from the department volunteered at the site. About six students in the program served as project team leaders. Construction Management Instructor Bryan Wheeler and graduate West Overman acted as project managers.

They joined Edenton Builders and more than one thousand volunteers from around the region to work 12-hour shifts and 24-hour days building a new home for the family of Jeff Cooper, a veteran who suffers from Gulf War Syndrome. (Photos by Cliff Hollis)

The double-wide trailer where they had been living had faulty wiring, a sinking roof and a rotting wheelchair ramp, according to a press release from the family of Jeff Cooper, a veteran who suffers from Gulf War Syndrome. (Photos by Cliff Hollis)

Volunteers working with ABC’s “Extreme Makeover Home Edition” maneuver a wall into place for a new home construction in Jamesville. ECU faculty and students joined more than a thousand volunteers to build a new home for the family of Jeff Cooper, a veteran who suffers from Gulf War Syndrome. (Photos by Cliff Hollis)
Atkins Attends Historic Presidential Inauguration

By Christine Neff

While many in the ECU community watched the inauguration of President Barack Obama from home, Kemal Atkins, vice provost for Student Affairs, and his family braved the cold and the crowds to witness the historic moment in person.

Atkins, his wife, Julia, and 16-year-old daughter, Asha, were standing just beyond the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool with a clear view of the Capitol Building when Obama took his oath of office.

“It was a thrill,” Atkins said. “We just had to be there. We didn’t want to think back and say we wished we had gone.”

The opportunity came by way of close friends who live in Washington, D.C. They offered the Atkins family housing for the night and tickets to the “silver” viewing section for the inauguration ceremony.

Atkins, his wife and daughter drove to D.C. the day before the inauguration. On Tuesday morning, they left their Capitol Hill apartment by 6:45 a.m., ready to make their way through security and to their viewing spot. Already, crowds had begun forming, and people were positioning themselves for a better view of the events to come.

But even with freezing temperatures and massive crowds, the mood in the city stayed festive and friendly, Atkins said.

“People were shoulder-to-shoulder and back-to-back, but it was still a good feeling. There were lots of smiles,” he said.

While waiting for the ceremony to begin, they listened to live music, danced with the crowd and met people from around the world. A family from Canada, a couple from Las Vegas and a group that spent two days traveling to attend the event all shared their stories with them. “I was kind of amazed at where people came from to see this historic event. It was truly representative of the country,” Atkins said.

The mood became more serious when the ceremony started. During Obama’s oath, the crowd went, cheered and quietly contemplated what had just occurred. Atkins was moved by the speech that followed: “It was appropriate for the occasion. Obama knew it was a time to celebrate the historical significance of it all and a time to realize that important work needs to be done. He conveyed that.”

Atkins and his wife were especially glad to have shared the moment with their daughter, who became interested in politics during the last presidential election. “She was exceedingly excited,” Atkins said of Asha. “She had tears in her eyes.”

That excitement rubbed off on the couple’s three-year-old daughter, Kamille, who became interested in seeing a presidential inauguration. “She was exceedingly excited,” Atkins said of Asha. “She had tears in her eyes.”

The Atkins family came home with far more than a key chain. They left with memories that will last a lifetime, and a bit of inspiration for challenging days ahead.

“It’s a very important time in the history of our country,” Atkins said. “Change has occurred, and must occur, to get us back on track. We have to address some tough issues head-on, and a lot of that starts in our homes, in our communities and where we work.”

Event Showcases ECU Research

continued from page 1

of continuous service at ECU.

Another special event is the 2008-2009 Scholar-Teacher Awards and Symposium, which recognizes outstanding faculty members who integrate scholarship in their teaching and mentor others to do the same. This event is kicked-off with an awards luncheon for winners and their guests at noon on April 2, and is followed by presentations by the recipients.

This year’s Scholar-Teacher Awards for ECU faculty recognized Tarek M. Abdel-Salam, Technology Systems; Craig M. Becker, Health Education and Promotion; Bob Edwards, Sociology; Archana V. Hegde, Child Development and Family Relations; Elizabeth M. Hodge, Business Information and Technologies Education; Monica Strauss Hough, Communication Sciences and Disorders; James M. Kohlmeier III, Accounting; David Knox, Sociology; Peter Standleish, Foreign Languages and Literature; Nancy L.N. Stephenson, Undergraduate Nursing Science; and Christine Lettang Zoller, Art and Design.

“The Research and Creative Achievement Week symposium is a great opportunity for students to reveal their findings and display their creative works to the university and surrounding community,” said Ron Newton, co-chair of the event and assistant vice chancellor, Administration and Finance.

“We have an increasing number of faculty members, graduate and undergraduate students who are conducting very interesting research, as well as a great number creating performance activities and producing very creative projects. They are all very excited about the opportunity to showcase what they are doing,” Newton added.

A mini-symposium will highlight research by international students and faculty. Additional features include faculty recognition for new patents; workshops in presentation and research ethics and compliance; and a student visualization challenge competition.

Student oral and poster sessions are scheduled throughout the week. Graduate and undergraduate presentations will be judged by selected faculty, with monetary awards going to the winners in 10 categories, including biomedical sciences, education, fine and performing arts, human health, humanities, natural sciences, business, technology/computer science and social sciences.

Co-sponsors of this event include the Division of Academic and Student Affairs, the Division of Health Sciences, the Graduate Student Senate, Office of University Honors, and the Office of Undergraduate Research.
Researchers Aim to Help Cancer Survivors, Partners

By Doug Boyd

Researchers at East Carolina University are looking at whether providing coping skills training or comprehensive disease education to African-American prostate cancer survivors and their partners will help them better manage side-effects and improve their quality of life. ECU’s Procare study will evaluate a telephone-based coping skills training program tailored to black prostate cancer survivors and their intimate partners. The study is funded by a four-year, $1.5 million grant from the National Institutes of Health. Researchers at Duke University are also participating in the study.

“The Procare study is an effort to address the needs of African-American prostate cancer survivors in a couples context,” said Dr. Lisa Campbell, a psychologist and associate director of the ECU Center for Health Disparities Research. Campbell described how prostate cancer affects couples by quoting a survivor: “If I’ve got it, she’s got it.”

In North Carolina last year, an estimated 6,543 people were diagnosed with prostate cancer, and more than 800 died from the disease, Campbell said, citing data from the North Carolina State Center for Health Statistics. From 2001 to 2004, black men with prostate cancer in North Carolina died at nearly three times the rate of white men, 73 per 100,000 compared to 25 per 100,000, she said.

In the Procare study, 189 early stage African-American prostate cancer survivors and their intimate partners will be randomized to one of three conditions: a six-session partner-assisted coping skills training intervention; a cancer education intervention of equal duration; or usual care. The study will measure quality of life, depression and relationship quality pre- and post-treatment among survivors and partners.

Campbell spoke during a Feb. 19 presentation on health disparities research at ECU for SEANC District U.S. Rep. G.K. Butterfield, held at the East Carolina Heart Institute at ECU.

News in Brief

Lung Transplantation To Be Topic of Upcoming Lecture

By Doug Boyd

A nationally known transplant surgeon will talk about the latest trends in lung transplant surgery during the eighth annual Will Camp Sealy lecture at East Carolina University.

Dr. Alec Patterson, Evarts A. Graham Professor of Surgery and chief of cardiothoracic surgery at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, will be the speaker. Patterson is the director of lung transplantation at Washington University and president-elect of the American Association for Thoracic Surgery. He has served as associate editor of the Journal of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery, the American Journal of Transplantation and the Journal of Heart and Lung Transplantation. He has written more than 375 papers and 60 book chapters.

Patterson will also address recent changes in cardiothoracic surgery training.

The lecture will be held April 1 at 8 a.m. in the education center of the East Carolina Heart Institute at ECU.

Sealy was a pioneering cardiothoracic surgeon who taught for many years at Duke University and was on the faculty at ECU when he died in 2001. The Sealy Lecture is co-sponsored by ECU, the ECU Department of Cardiovascular Sciences and the ECU Department of Surgery.
ECU Seminars Promote Dialogue on Humanities

By Christine Neff

A new program seeks to foster fellowship and collaboration among East Carolina University faculty members working in the humanities.

Sponsored by the Division of Research and Graduate Studies, "Downtown Dialogues" will bring together ECU scholars from history, literature, languages, music, art, philosophy, religion and related fields to talk about their research in a relaxed setting. "We feel that the humanities play an important role in fostering the intellectual community of a university," said Purificación Martínez, associate professor of Hispanic Studies at ECU and one of the series' organizers.

Our main objective is to create a community of researchers within the humanities. Martínez said organizers modeled "Downtown Dialogues" after another successful ECU seminar series, "Science At Starlight," which showcases faculty research in the sciences.

Downtown Dialogues will be held twice a semester. An advisory board selects the speakers for each event, bringing together scholars from a variety of disciplines. "This way, people get to know each other and they get the opportunity to discuss their interests," Martínez said.

The first discussion will be held March 24 from 5 to 7 p.m., at the Starlight Café in Greenville. The topic is, "The Humanities in the Modern United States: Building Bridges from Research to Real Life."

Speakers will be Jelena Bogdanovic (Architectural History), Nicholas Georgalis (Philosophy), Joyce Irene Middleton (English) and Mary Nyangweso Wangila (Religious Studies). Opening remarks will be made by Peter Green, Whichard Distinguished Visiting Professor, and Gerald Prokopiowicz (History).

Panel members will discuss the value of humanities to society, Martínez said. "We have given them a set of questions to think about, such as, ‘Is it true there is a dichotomy between humanities and science?’ What kind of questions does your research answer, and why are those questions important to society?" she said.

All faculty members are welcome to attend and participate in the dialogue over complimentary refreshments and hors d’oeuvres.

Martínez said faculty members already have responded positively to the new series. "We have received enormous interest," she said. People are already asking, ‘How do I RSVP?’ Obviously, there is a need for this type of gathering."

The second discussion will be held April 21, and will be titled, "Money, Markets and Migration."

For additional information about the seminar series, to propose future topics and presenters or to RSVP for the March 24 event, visit http://www.ecu.edu/downtown.

SCHOLARS ACADEMY: East Carolina University’s new Engagement and Outreach Scholars Academy, a unit of the Office of Engagement, Innovation and Economic Development and part of the Division of Research and Graduate Studies, held its first workshop Feb. 9. An inaugural class of 10 scholars was selected competitively from a pool recommended by the deans. Scholars are Jeannie Golden (Psychology), Jane Painter (Occupational Therapy), Michael Harris (Management), Kylie Dotson-Blake (Counselor and Adult Education), Rebecca Dumlao (Communication), Sharon Rogers (Health Education and Promotion), Kim Larson (Nursing), Paige Averett (Social Work), Gene Dixon (Engineering) and David Collier (Pediatrics). The scholars will attend five, three-hour workshops to learn about community-based research and the resources available to them on campus. Academy coaches will support candidates as they develop their own research plans. Pictured above, engineering professor Gene Dixon studies distributed paperwork during the first academy workshop. (Photo by Cliff Hollis)

CyberKnife Brings ‘Heaven-sent’ Advance in Cancer Care

By Doug Boyd

Arlene Glisson is a believer in East Carolina University’s newest tool against cancer.

“It’s just a blessing,” she said. “It gives you hope.”

The 71-year-old was talking about the CyberKnife, which began operation this month at the Leo W. Jenkins Cancer Center on the campus of the Brody School of Medicine at ECU. On Feb. 11, she became the first patient to be treated with the device that projects high doses of radiation at tumors with pinpoint accuracy.

Glisson has had two previous radiation regimens for her cervical cancer. One required 21 treatments over five weeks. Another required a hospital stay for radiation implants where she had to lie motionless for three days and take intravenous fluids.

“This is so much better,” said Glisson, of Greenville. “No needles, no fluids, it doesn’t affect my appetite. This is a heaven-sent machine.”

With built-in X-ray imaging and computers that can make minute adjustments to compensate for tumor or patient movement, the CyberKnife can deliver its radiation with minimal damage to surrounding healthy tissue. It also eliminates the need for invasive head or body stabilization frames. ECU’s machine has additional upgrades for even greater accuracy and speed.

Glisson lay in a custom-fitted mold for each treatment, which lasted about an hour from the time she walked in the room until she left, with only about 30 minutes of actual radiation treatment. Other radiation therapies can last hours because the beams must be of lower intensity to spare neighboring tissue.

The CyberKnife can treat benign tumors, malignant cancers and other medical conditions anywhere in the body.

The CyberKnife is critical for several reasons,” said Dr. Ron Allison, professor and chair of radiation oncology at the Brody School of Medicine and director of the cancer center. “First, in a rural population many cancer patients are so far from a radiation oncology clinic that they won’t get treatment. They can’t make the 10 to 45 visits required due to distance, gas costs and being away from home. For most of these patients, the CyberKnife is able to treat in one to five visits."

The CyberKnife is also an advanced educational tool for physicians, medical students, radiation therapists and others. “This sort of advanced training is critically important to our educational endeavors,” Allison said.

The accuracy is also a benefit. “This sort of precision – does everybody need it? No, but it’s really great for those who do need it,” Allison said.

One measurement of the success of Glisson’s treatment, Allison said, would be if she felt less pain from her tumor, indicating the radiation beams did their job. That result is exactly what happened. “I don’t have as much pain as I did have,” Glisson said.

ECU expects to perform about 500 treatments each year with the CyberKnife. The total project cost to acquire the CyberKnife and install it, along with renovations to the space it occupies, was $5.2 million.

The technology for the CyberKnife was conceived in 1990 by Dr. John Adler of Stanford University. It features a small linear particle accelerator that generates the radiation beam and a robotic arm that aims and delivers it at any part of the body from any direction.
**ECU Professor Unravels Riddles**

By Jeannine Manning Hutson

Today’s crossword puzzles have a distinguished literary pedigree, tracing their beginnings to acrostics and other word puzzles from centuries ago. East Carolina University English associate professor Gregg Hecimovich has unraveled word puzzles from Victorian England with his new book, “Puzzling the Reader: Their eighteenth- and nineteenth-Century British Literature.” (Peter Lang, 2008) and a second work focusing on Jane Austen’s “Emma.”

For his research, Hecimovich trolled through periodicals and parlor game books of the time at the British Library. Queen Victoria even created a double acrostic, “Windsor Engima,” for a parlor book; her puzzle’s answer was a reference to the glories of the British Empire.

Riddles and word puzzles were the parlor games of the 19th century. “They were a product of the oral tradition as it entered mass produced culture in the 19th century,” Hecimovich said.

That growing literate population, the Victorians, created different word puzzles, such as rebuses and acrostics, for entertainment in the evenings. Hecimovich explains that the Victorians’ love for rebuses, acrostics, and charades led them to invent the double acrostic, a complex combination of all three—the steam engine of literary parlor games.

Hecimovich also points out the important role of riddles, especially in the interlocking courtship games, in his

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**Golden Corral Culinary Center Dedicated**

By Christine Neff

With the smell of smoky cheese, potatoes, pan seared sea scallops and other gourmet treats wafting through the halls of the Rivers Building Feb. 26, Robert O’Halloran couldn’t help but note, “It smells great when you walk in here, doesn’t it?”

The chair of ECU’s Department of Hospitality Management was standing in the new Golden Corral Culinary Center, a state-of-the-art kitchen lab that resulted from a partnership between ECU and Golden Corral. The restaurant chain, a long-time supporter of ECU’s hospitality management program, contributed $200,000 to the renovation project.

“In tough economic times like these, it’s great to celebrate this partnership between industry and education that is going to provide new leaders in our industry,” O’Halloran said.

Irwin Roberts, a vice president for Golden Corral, called the project a “labor of love.” Both he and James Maynard, founder of Golden Corral, graduated from East Carolina and started a business partnership here that has lasted more than 40 years.

“We owe a lot to ECU,” Roberts said.

He led the effort to secure donations and discounts from vendors for the high-quality kitchen equipment found in the laboratory. Vendors such as American Food Service Company, The Delfield Company, Dormont Manufacturing, Canyon Marketing, Wildwood Marketing, Winston Industries, AC Furniture, Captive Air, Garland Range Company, Hobart Corporation, InterMetro Industries, Newell Rubbermaid, International Storage Systems, and Security New Age all participated in equipment selection and procurement.

James Maynard said his company, a leader in the hospitality industry, was proud to contribute to the new culinary facility. “I’m expecting to see many new leaders come out of this hospitality program,” he said.

The kitchen laboratory has eight cooking stations with professional quality convection ovens and gas ranges. At the dedication, they were put to good use by guest chefs from Golden Corral, Sysco, ARAMARK, Biltmore Estates and Hilton Green- ville who prepared hors d’oeuvres and sweets.

The facility is a big upgrade from the previous lab, which had 1970s equipment, said Will Forsythe, chair of the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics.

The new facility will enhance the learning experience for students and provide new opportunities for the community, he said. The center will host cooking classes for adults and children. Demonstrations will be captured on video and broadcast online. ECU’s FoodMaster program, which seeks to teach kids about math and science through food, will also use the facility.

“We’re going to be able to use this laboratory for so many programs that will benefit our students and ECU. I’m excited to see the things that become possible with this laboratory,” he said.

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**Filmmakers Document Life in Eastern North Carolina**

By Christine Neff

Erick Yates Green and Bernard Timberg, colleagues in ECU’s School of Communication, open a window to rural North Carolina communities through documentary films.

Two recent projects, “The New Country Cookbook” and “Bunny Saunders: The Mayor Who Stood Up,” examine the struggles of local towns, and the residents fighting for change.

“In just getting off this campus, a whole world opens up,” said Timberg, an associate professor at ECU who co-wrote and served as associate producer on the documentaries. “We use the term ‘under-the-radar.’ These stories are unreported. These stories are ‘under-the-radar.’ These stories are unreported.”

The filmmakers interviewed more than a half dozen physicians before discovering their main character, a fourth generation rural family doctor and ECU medical graduate. “As soon as we met Mott Blair, we thought, ‘OK, this is the physician who can best tell this story. He is a southern gentleman, but he is also a devoted idealist who doesn’t mind expressing his opinions,’” Green said.

As the project continued, they realized the story depended more on Blair’s patients. “I have to give credit to the patients. From the outset, we knew it was a story about a man committed to rural medicine and to contributing to his community. But, in order to articulate that story, we eventually knew that we had to go back to capture the voices of his patients as well,” Green said.

Filming and editing continue on the project, which is expected to be completed in April 2009.

The struggles of rural communities formed the basis of Green and Timberg’s next documentary collaboration, a film called “Bunny Estelle Saunders: The Mayor Who Stood Up.”

The idea came from a public hearing about the Outlying Landing Field (OLF) – the Navy’s controversial proposal to install a concrete landing strip for military planes. At the hearing, Green and fellow filmmaker, Hsiao Chu, an assistant professor in the School of Communication, discovered an “amazing personality” in an outspoken resident who opposed the project. Bunny Estelle Saunders, mayor of Roper, Saunders, they learned, had a rich history in public service. Her father had served as mayor; her grandfather worked with the NAACP. Her mission was to unite North Carolina communities in the grassroots fight against the OLF proposal.
Powell Digs Deep to Construct Community Walking Trail

By Judy Currin

One sure way to get the neighbors’ attention is to start digging in their backyards. That’s what Carita Powell hoped would happen when she began work on the labyrinth walking trail adjacent to the New Wynn Chapel Church Life Center in Bethel last fall.

“The walking trail was constructed to offer families in the community a venue for physical activity and fellowship,” said Powell, coordinator for after-school programs with the North Carolina Agromedicine Institute.

While the after-school program is primarily funded by the Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation, additional funds for the program were provided through a grant from Be Active North Carolina, the state’s leading nonprofit organization dedicated to the promotion of physical activity and wellness.

“These funds provided pedometers, jump ropes, a portion of salaries for student mentors and supplies for construction of the walking trail at New Wynn,” said Robin Tutor, education and outreach director for NCAI.

The physical project for the Bethel School after-school program was a written requirement for the 3-year grant. A 2008 ECU graduate with a bachelor of fine arts in theatre arts, Powell began her association with NCAI in the fall of 2007, as a member of New Wynn Chapel Church and a volunteer with the church-based after-school program in Bethel.

In January 2008 she was hired by NCAI as the coordinator and manager of Students Lead the Way/Growing Up Fit, a collaborative community partnership committed to developing sustainable programming to help children achieve and maintain a healthy weight. By July, plans for the physical project were under discussion.

“I noticed that many of the children that I worked with and their families enjoyed spending time out of doors,” Powell said. “I began to wonder how I could bring families and members of the community together through some type of physical activity that would draw them outside.” The children weren’t interested in gardening or really even getting dirty. “Then I thought about creating a labyrinth walking trail,” Powell said.

“A lot of people would shy away from such an arduous task,” said Tutor. “But Carita’s hidden talents include certification to operate a forklift, and the ability to organize and lead a small manual workforce.”

By October, after obtaining permission from the church and sharing a detailed draft of her plans for the walking trail, Powell began construction. She went to work on a brisk and sunny Saturday morning accompanied by three volunteer church members.

“I would work ten to 12 hours a day with a shovel, hammer, wheelbarrow and a garden rake,” she said. “I rented my own equipment to pick up and pour gravel and sand.” The volunteers, while dedicated, joined Powell after leaving their day jobs.

“There were days I worked alone and began to feel pangs of defeat,” Powell said. “But slowly the neighbors started inquiring about the mess I was making in their back yards and wanted to talk to me.” Maybe it was the afternoon she drove up on the forklift.

Before long, they would wait for Powell to show up, and one by one would hammer a nail, dig a hole, or throw some dirt. Relationships were built and friends made. Within a few months, the trail was completed and equipped with workout stations along the way.

“On Dec. 18, 2008 with my pastor, students, staff, mentors, families and friends we took an illuminated walk to bless the opening of the trail for the Bethel community,” Powell said.

The trail, aptly named Bridging the Gap, A Community for Change Walking Trail, is marked by a sign that “bears the hand prints of all the volunteers who inspired me to make a difference in one small community,” Powell said.

“Carita’s position with the NCAI will end with the close of the BCBS grant the first week in May,” said Tutor. “She has worked tirelessly with the public schools and church-based after-school programs located in rural areas of Pitt County to promote and conduct physical activities for the school children.”

EUCI Biologist Takes Bug-eating Passion to Television

By Christine Neff

Hal Daniel, professor emeritus of biology at East Carolina University, will appear in an upcoming Animal Planet show to discuss one of his favorite subjects – entomophagy, or the practice of eating insects.

Daniel, an anthropologist, biologist and chef, combined these three passions in his study of entomophagy. “In certain cultures, insects are a prized food,” he said. “There is no doubt, insects can be enjoyed, but Westerners often have a squeamish reaction to them.”

Adding insects to your diet as an alternative source of protein can benefit your health and the environment, Daniel said. Insects have high levels of protein and vitamins and, often, little fat. They are also abundant and environmentally sustainable.

Entomophagy can even benefit your tastebuds, he claims. “Take stink bugs, for instance. They are real spicy and wonderful,” Daniel said. “One general rule, though, is if it’s colorful, don’t eat it. That is nature’s way of warning you off.”

Daniel has created his own recipes, including some gourmet-inspired dishes like Cicada a la Romana. “Start with a nice piece of focaccia bread. Sauté garlic in olive oil. Add young cicadas, peas and tomato sauce. Put the mixture on the bread, and top it with grated Romano cheese. With a glass of red wine – it’s outstanding,” he said.

The Animal Planet show, “Bug Eating Man,” reflects a growing interest in the subject of entomophagy among mainstream media. Recent articles have appeared in Time magazine, NPR, various science journals and other news sources. The network has not yet released an airdate for the program.

Daniel feels that, through aware-
New Center Helps Diagnose, Manage Sleep Disorders

By Doug Boyd

Tony Worthington wants to get a few good winks.

“I didn’t sleep too well last night,” he said. “That was as he lay under the covers one February night at the new Sleep Disorders Center at East Carolina University.

Physicians at the center aim to help people get sufficient sleep and avoid acute and chronic conditions related to sleep disorders.

“If you can’t sleep, that’s a problem,” said Dr. Sunil Sharma, medical director at the center, a board-certified sleep specialist and an assistant professor in the division of pulmonary and critical care medicine at the Brody School of Medicine. “If you sleep too much, that’s a problem.”

The center is inside Moye Medical Center at 521 Moye Blvd. across from the Brody Medical Sciences Building.

Sleep disorders are common, according to Sharma. Five percent of the population has obstructive sleep apnea, in which people stop breathing for as long as a minute up to hundreds of times each night. The immediate result is their sleep is interrupted and they feel tired during the day. Long-term consequences include heart disease, high blood pressure and more. Sleep apnea can also induce seizures and can be fatal.

“Research has shown that individuals with sleep apnea are at an increased risk for heart attack and stroke, with the risk for stroke quadrupling,” Sharma said.

“Sleep apnea may also play a role in metabolic syndrome and diabetes by increasing insulin resistance. Sleep apnea also causes excessive daytime sleepiness and cognitive changes, which may significantly impact quality of life of patients.”

“Fifty percent of patients with atrial fibrillation and congestive heart failure have sleep apnea,” Sharma said. “It’s not just coincidence. There’s a direct link.”

Getting a diagnosis for his poor sleeping is what brought Worthington to ECU. His wife, a nurse, told him he snored and worried that he quit breathing during the night—a symptom of sleep apnea. Worthington recalled that the death of football star Reggie White was linked to obstructive sleep apnea and decided to take his wife’s advice.

“I told her once I turned 50, I’d check it out,” Worthington said. “You know how we (men) are. Anything that can make you better at 50, there’s nothing wrong with that.”

Worthington’s situation is typical. “Most of the time, this disorder is brought to our attention by the spouse,” Sharma said. “The wife or husband drops the spouse in and says, ‘I’m scared to sleep with this guy.’”

“Fearful the breathing won’t resume or it will lead to sudden cardiac death.”

The sleep center’s rooms are similar to a typical bedroom and not at all like a clinic or hospital room. “It’s important for all patients feel comfortable,” Sharma said. “You have to remember if the patient does not sleep, we don’t get the diagnosis, so it’s imperative the patient falls asleep.”

In a typical sleep study, called polysomnography, the patient spends the night at the center. Technologists place sensors on various sites on the head and body to record brain waves, muscle activity, limb movements, heartbeat, breathing and oxygen saturation during the night.

A physicist with special training in sleep medicine, such as Sharma, interprets the test results and develops a treatment plan.

Worthington’s study showed he has sleep-disordered breathing. He will undergo further studies to help doctors devise a treatment plan.

In addition to sleep apnea, physicians at the center can evaluate and manage other sleep disorders such as obesity hypoventilation syndrome, insomnia, narcolepsy, parasomnias (abnormal movements, behaviors, emotions, perceptions and dreams), restless leg syndrome and REM behavior disorders. The center also treats sleep disorders in children.

Sharma emphasizes that proper sleep does not always come naturally, and people shouldn’t hesitate to seek help.

“Sleep is an active process,” he said. “It’s not passive as people think. (In) very few people does sleep come automatically.”

Sleep studies are done nightly Monday through Thursday. For information, call 252-744-1712.

ECU sleep specialist Dr. Sunil Sharma checks on Tony Worthington, a patient in the new Sleep Disorders Clinic. (Photo by Cliff Hollis)

East Carolina University

ECU Research Sheds Light on Type 2 Diabetes Origin

By Christine Neff

A discovery made by East Carolina University researchers could change the way people understand and treat conditions related to type 2 diabetes.

The study, according to Darrell Neufer, research contributor and professor in ECU’s Department of Exercise and Sport Science and the Department of Physiology, provides evidence that insulin resistance—a precondition that leads to diabetes—is caused by a disturbance in the cell’s energy-producing machinery.

“We have found that the elevated production of hydrogen peroxide is a primary event that leads to insulin resistance in muscle,” he said.

To explain, Neufer compared the inner workings of a cell to an engine. Every cell has engines—or mitochondria—that are responsible for breaking down food to provide the energy consumed by the cell. However, when too much food is in the cell relative to need, the engine releases hydrogen peroxide. This signals to the cell that it is out-of-balance and leads to insulin resistance.

The researchers showed that by either blocking the production or preventing the release of hydrogen peroxide from the mitochondria, they were able to prevent the development of insulin resistance in rodents fed a high-fat diet. They also showed that after five days of a high-fat diet, lean, college-aged men experienced a dramatic increase in the production of mitochondrial hydrogen peroxide.

“Our hypothesis is that insulin resistance may not be a chronic disease state, but a state that the cell moves into because of the nutritional overload it is under,” Neufer said. “If you relieve the overload by reducing caloric intake or by increasing physical activity, the insulin resistance will quickly reverse.”

Ethan Anderson, lead author on the paper and research associate in ECU’s Department of Cardiovascular Sciences, said, “This paper represents somewhat of a paradigm shift in the way that the etiology of insulin resistance is viewed. We hope that it prompts rigorous follow-on studies to provide more information as to how mitochondrial hydrogen peroxide is connected to insulin signaling in skeletal muscle.”

In their study, the researchers also implemented a new molecule, an antioxidant that targets the mitochondria, which may lead to new treatments for insulin resistance and other types of metabolic disease. Anderson is currently exploring ways this molecule can be used to study human cardiovascular disease and as a potential therapy for patients recovering from cardiac surgery to alleviate postoperative complications.

“Cardiac disease, stroke, cancer—and all of these things and more could be potential targets for this molecule. There is the possibility for its use in numerous applications in both basic research and medicine,” he said.


Further studies were made by researchers from ECU’s Metabolic Institute for the Study of Diabetes and Obesity and other ECU departments, the Department of Molecular Physiology and Biophysics at Vanderbilt University, the Department of Pathology at University of Washington and the Department of Pharmacology at Weill Medical College of Cornell University.
Symposium Highlights UNC Tomorrow Report

By Peggy Novotny

More than 400 alumni, friends, faculty, and students of ECU’s College of Human Ecology attended the college’s Centennial Legacy of Leadership Symposium and Awards Dinner Feb. 6.

The symposium brought together faculty, Legacy Leaders (100 alumni and friends), and 100 outstanding student leaders to explore solutions to the many challenges facing human ecology fields in the 21st century and identity qualities necessary for leadership.

At the heart of the symposium was the discussion of the UNC Tomorrow Commission Report, the document that will drive the mission and resources of the UNC system for years to come. A panel of faculty and alumni representing all of the college’s departments and schools addressed the report’s findings and discussed the implications for each area. Faculty members led round-table discussions on how the college might further align with the report’s findings.

Norma Houston, executive director of the UNC Tomorrow Initiative, delivered the keynote address, saying that ECU is held up as a model throughout the UNC system for being in touch with and serving the people of North Carolina. Houston also said, “Considering the difficult times we face in the state and the country, now is not the time for apprehension or passive observation. We each have the obligation to raise leadership within our realm.”

Chancellor Steve Ballard addressed the large crowd at the Hilton Greenville, stating that ECU is committed to building a culture of leadership that will give students an advantage in their chosen careers.

Dean Judy Sigauw presented Legacy Leaders with centennial medallions and praised the leaders in their fields. She invited Legacy Leaders to become mentors to students who are preparing for the demands of leadership in the 21st century. Sigauw announced that a mentoring initiative would become part of the leadership course offered by the college.

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ECU Russian professor Yelena Francis has opened a new photographic exhibit, “Gems of the Russian Wonderland,” which focuses on ancient Russian architecture, in the Digital Learning Center, first floor of Joyner Library.

Her exhibit is the third in a series, all focused on different aspects of Russian life and culture. Her first exhibit in 2008 featured books, music, films and snapshots of ancient and modern St. Petersburg. In January and February 2009, she presented, “Russia in Transition,” examining Russian life, history and mentality.

“Gems of the Russian Wonderland” will remain on display through late April. The exhibit examines Russian religious architecture through the ages, including temples, monasteries, and convents from 12th century to present.

Professor Unravels Riddles continued from page 5

“Austen’s Emma: A Reader’s Guide” (Continuum, 2008). In the novel, the slow-witted Harriet Smith is gathering riddles for a booklet. Included in the submissions garnered by Emma Woodhouse, who loves the word plays, are bits and pieces of several, one of a rather bawdy riddle of the times.

“Modern readers likely often miss many of the word plays in works such as Austen, William Blake or Charles Dickens; however, the 19th century reader would have been looking for these,” Hecimovich said. “For instance, the answer to the bawdy puzzle offered up in Austen is ‘a virgin prostitute.’ We don’t think of Austen telling those kind of jokes, but she does.”

In his reader’s guide to “Emma,” Hecimovich leads the careful reader of the novel to a point to render his or her own criticism of the last novel Austen published in her lifetime. He also explores the three main themes of the work, contemporary culture, and how each theme is played out under the broader rubric of games: word games and social games.

Since joining the faculty in 2002, Hecimovich received in 2006 the University of North Carolina Board of Governors Distinguished Professor for Teaching Award and the ECU Scholar-Teacher Award in Humanities.
First-generation ECU Grads
Focus of Oral History Project

As part of Founder’s Day celebrations, East Carolina University will focus on first-generation graduates of the school.

On March 26 at 7 p.m., ECU’s Centennial Task Force and J.Y. Joyner Library will sponsor a public program, “First in the Family: An Oral History of First-Generation Graduates of East Carolina University.” The program will showcase the results of an oral history project that documented the experiences of 20 ECU alumni who were the first in their families to earn a college degree. These alumni attended East Carolina from the 1930s through 2005—from its years as East Carolina Teachers College to today’s East Carolina University, and their stories reveal much about the university’s impact on them personally and on the region.

The program will include a keynote address by Mac Legerton, executive director of the Center for Community Action in Lumberton, and a panel discussion by the interviewers who conducted the interviews.

Members of the audience, including those who recorded their interviews for the project, will be asked to relate some of their experiences as first-generation students. Questions for participants will include details about family support, adjustment to college life and personal educational experiences.

The program will take place in the Teaching Resources Center on the second floor of the Joyner Library.

For more information, contact Maury York at Joyner Library at 328-0252 or e-mail yorkm@ecu.edu.

ECU students investigated volunteer opportunities during the Spring 2009 Service Fair held Jan. 28. Pictured above, students Bradley Cannon, left, and Aliana Worley hold baby chicks at a booth promoting volunteer needs at the Sylvan Heights Waterfowl Park and Eco-Center. (Photo by Cliff Hollis)

Spring Service Fair Links
Volunteers to Opportunities

By Christine Neff

ECU students had the chance to scope out volunteer opportunities in the local community at the Spring 2009 Service Fair held Jan. 28 in the Bate Building lobby.

Organized by ECU’s Volunteer and Service-Learning Center, the fair attracted more than 20 non-profit agencies with a variety of missions, such as helping children, animals, the elderly, the environment and more.

“This fair is helpful because otherwise students don’t know what is going on in the community,” said Deja Mitchell, a sophomore nursing student.

Mitchell’s love of animals led her to sign up to volunteer with the Pitt County Humane Society. It’s important, she said, for students to get involved with the community.

“You feel like you’re giving back,” she said.

Other students offered their talents to the Pitt County Memorial Hospital, Police Athletic League, Pirate Tutoring Center and the Little Willie Center after-school mentoring program.

Melissa Alston, volunteer coordinator for the Little Willie Center, said the program depends on volunteers to tutor and mentor children ages 3 to 14. “Most of our volunteers are students from ECU, high schools and Pitt Community College,” she said. Alston first got involved at the center while a student at ECU. She enjoyed it so much she transitioned to a fulltime job there after graduation. Now, she provides guidance to other students interested in volunteering.

“Fairs are the best way to reach students,” she said. “It’s best to talk to them in person.”

Help for Cancer Survivors
continued from page 3

“In rural communities, men have no idea of prostate problems,” Butterfield said. “They just don’t get it.”

Nine of the state’s top 10 counties for prostate cancer mortality are in the east, Campbell said: Hertford, Northampton, Tyrrell, Martin, Perquimans, Sampson, Robeson, Gates and Edgecombe, again citing data from the State Center for Health Statistics.

The prostate is a reproductive system gland, slightly larger than a walnut, near the rectum that produces part of the fluid contained in semen. Sexual and urinary symptoms—such as impotence and incontinence—and bowel symptoms are common after surgeries remove a cancerous prostate and often persist well beyond the acute treatment and recovery period. Reducing symptom distress and increasing quality of life are important symptom-management goals.

Symptom-management efforts have traditionally focused on the patient. However, symptoms also affect partners and the relationship. Among African-American men and their partners, the burden may be even greater. Black men have a 60 percent higher incidence rate of prostate cancer, more advanced disease at diagnosis and higher mortality rates than white men.

Research also indicates that African-American men recover more slowly after treatment for prostate cancer.

For more information, contact Campbell at 888-442-8202 or via e-mail at procare@ecu.edu.

Appointments/Elections
Diane D. Kester (Education) was appointed to the Board of Program Reviewers for the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education.

Robert A. Chin (Technology Systems) was appointed an at-large representative to the Journal of Industrial Technology.

Pat Hodson (Allied Health) was appointed to serve a third term as member of the N.C. Board of Physical Therapy Examiners.

NewsMakers
Gregory Chadwick and James R. Hupp (Dentistry) in The Daily Reflector, on a free dental clinic held by the “Give Kids A Smile!” program, Feb. 6.

Jali Roshandel (Political Science), interviewed by Kurdish media in Kurdistan Nwe Newspaper, about the situation in the Kurdish region of Iraq, published in Kurdish language in their journal, Kurdistan Nwe, Feb. 8.

Derek Alderman (Geography) in The News and Observer, on his study of how North Carolina plantations represent slavery as part of history, Feb. 11.


Laurie Evans and Walter Hous- ton (Nursing) in The Daily Reflector, on diversity in education, Feb. 15.

Katie Brown (Nursing) in The Daily Reflector, on nursing careers as a bright spot in a down economy, Feb. 15.

Robert Chin (Technology Systems) in The Daily Reflector, on a program to help students learn to make homes energy-efficient, Feb. 16.

Charles Thompson (Education) in The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, on research regarding effectiveness of spending for supplemental programs outside the classroom, Feb. 16.

Anthony Britt (Admissions) in the News and Observer, on ECU’s increase in applicants during a down economy, Feb. 27.

Spring Service Fair Links
Volunteers to Opportunities
Committed to Education
continued from page 3

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Designation helps Students Identify Service Courses

By Christine Neff

East Carolina University students have long been passionate about serving their community. Now, thanks to a new course designation, students will be able to seek out clearly identified service-learning opportunities. This designation will help them identify those courses, said Sharon Ballard, associate professor in the Department of Child Development and Family Relationships and chair of the Faculty Service-Learning Advisory Committee.

The designation “SL” will appear in the course catalog next to classes and/or sections that have a service-learning component. After a student successfully completes the course, the SL designation will be recorded on his or her transcript.

This can benefit students as they enter the workforce, Ballard said. “Many employers are now looking for potential employees who have some experience in the community, so that can be very important,” she said.

Already, many faculty members at ECU include service-learning in their curriculum. To receive the SL designation, all courses must be reviewed by the advisory committee. “The advisory committee will make sure the course maintains the components of a high-quality service-learning course. We will be looking at how service activities help achieve course objectives,” Ballard said.

The process is completely voluntary. Service-learning is not a requirement for students or faculty members.

“It is just one mode of teaching that is effective for many courses and many individuals. We want to make sure our faculty members have the support they need, and that our students receive a high-quality service-learning experience,” Ballard said.

More on the criteria for service-learning and examples of service-learning pedagogy is available on the Volunteer and Service-Learning Center webpage, http://www.ecu.edu/vslc.

At a Feb. 16 luncheon honoring the legacy of ECU’s African-American Faculty and staff, Lola Thompson (Academic Programs) addresses attendees while panel members (from left) Kimberly Baker-Flowers, Mark Newell, Linner Griffin, Virginia Hardy and Paul Cunningham prepare to speak. (Photo by Christine Neff)

African-American Faculty, Staff Legacy Honored

By Antwan Staley


Following the meal, prominent ECU faculty and staff shared their success stories in a panel discussion. Among the speakers was Kemal Atkins, vice provost for Student Affairs, who spoke about his own personal heritage and how he came to the position he is in today.

“A number of people have shaped the person that I am today,” he said. Most influential, Atkins said, were his parents.

Additional panelists included Paul Cunningham, dean and senior associate vice chancellor for Medical Affairs at the Brody School of Medicine; Mark Newell, assistant professor in Trauma and Surgical Critical Care; Virginia Hardy, senior associate dean for Academic Affairs at the school of medicine; David Denndar, history professor and director of the African and African-American Studies program; Lathan Turner, senior associate dean of students; Kimberly Baker-Flowers, chief diversity officer; and Liner Griffin, associate vice chancellor for Academic Programs.

“We are just trying to make the African-American employees at ECU aware that there is a place they can come to discuss problems or issues on campus,” Thompson said. The organization is important, Thompson said, because it allows the opportunity “to share one’s own success stories and to hear about hardships they have faced in their lives.”

Membership is open to all ECU employees. For more information about OAAS, contact Lola Thompson at 328-5358, thompsonl@ecu.edu.

Artists Sought for Festival

The Fifth Annual Youth Arts Festival at East Carolina University is seeking artists to participate in its annual show that will be held on the ECU campus on April 4 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The goal of the festival is to promote the visual and performing arts to the children of our region. Artists from the university community, Greenville, the region and other states will present their work to the youth of Pitt County and Eastern North Carolina.

Some artists showcase their talents and demonstrate the media they work in, while others work with the children doing hands-on projects. The festival is geared towards elementary and middle school children, but all residents of Pitt County and the surrounding area are welcome, free of charge. The festival strives to feature multi-cultural and multi-ethnic artists.

Artists are not charged booth fees and no commission is taken on any work that is sold. However, the festival is not focused on being a sales event; it is geared towards teaching children and their families about the wonderfully diverse and creative possibilities available in our region.

Contact Dindy Reich, coordinator of the Youth Arts Festival, at reichd@ecu.edu or 328-5749 for more information or to sign up to participate at this event.
MARCH

FRIDAY 20
Salsa Dance, Willis Building. Lesson, 7 p.m.; Dance, 7:30 – 10 p.m.
Four Seasons Chamber Music Festival, A.J. Fletcher Recital Hall, 8 p.m.

SUNDAY 22
Jones Distinguished Professor John Wustman (Music), Fletcher, 3 p.m. Also Monday, March 23 at 7 p.m.

TUESDAY 24
Film and discussion, “Iron Jawed Angels,” Joyner 2409 Administrative Conference Room, 7 p.m.

FRIDAY 27
Memorial United Methodist Church, Community Leaders Breakfast, Jarvis 103.

MONDAY 30
31st Anniversary Concert, ECU Gospel Jazz at Night, Hilton Greenville, 8 p.m.
Chamber Music, Fletcher, 8 p.m.
Giovanni, Wright Auditorium, 7 p.m.
Latino Community Forum, Willis Building, Vendor Fair, Mendenhall, 10 a.m.

THURSDAY 31
Premiere Performances, Fletcher Recital Hall, 8 p.m.

APRIL

TUESDAY 1
Premiere Performances, Fletcher Recital Hall, 8 p.m.

FRIDAY 3
Spring Holiday (through April 11), Good Friday. No Classes.

WEDNESDAY 1
ECU Percussion Ensemble, Fletcher, 6 p.m.

THURSDAY 2
“Thomas Harriot: New Worlds of an Elizabethan Scientist,” Science and Technology OC-307, 7 p.m.
Russian National Ballet, “Giselle,” Wright Auditorium, 7:30 p.m.
ECU/Loessin Playhouse: “All’s Well That Ends Well,” through April 7, McGinnis Auditorium, 7:30 p.m.

FRIDAY 3
ECU Relay for Life, Bunting Field, 6 p.m.

SATURDAY 4
Spring Open House, Wright Auditorium, 9 a.m.
Youth Arts Festival, University Mall, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

SUNDAY 5
Guest Artist Duo – Sole Nero: Jessica Johnson, piano and Anthony E. Di Sanza, percussion, Fletcher, 7 p.m.

MONDAY 6
ECU Jazz Ensemble B, Fletcher, 8 p.m.

TUESDAY 7
Symphonic Wind Ensemble, Symphonic Band, Concert Band, Wright, 8 p.m.

WEDNESDAY 8
TAG Lecture, featuring Marianne Gingher and Lawrence Naumoff, Bate 1032, 8 p.m.

THURSDAY 9
Premiere Performances, Fletcher Recital Hall, 8 p.m.

FRIDAY 10
Spring Holiday (through April 11), Good Friday. No Classes.

WEDNESDAY 15
ECU Percussion Ensemble, Fletcher, 8 p.m.

THURSDAY 16
Zamba Yawar, ECU Afro-Andean Music, Bate 1026, 8 p.m.
Contemporary Jazz Ensemble, Fletcher, 7 p.m.
Billy Taylor Jazz Festival (through April 19).

FRIDAY 17
Salsa Dance, Willis Building. Lesson, 7 p.m.; Dance, 7:30 – 10 p.m.

SATURDAY 18
Pirate Alumni Road Race and Fun Run, Reade Circle, 9 a.m.

SUNDAY 19
String Chamber Music Concert, Fletcher, 3 p.m.

MONDAY 20
ECU Jazz Ensemble B, Fletcher, 8 p.m.
“‘The Doctor-Nurse Game’ in the 1840s: To Play or Not to Play?” Martha Libster (Nursing), Evelyn Fike Laupus Gallery, Laupus Library, 4:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY 21
University Chorale, Wright Auditorium, 7 p.m.

THURSDAY 23
ECU/Loessin Playhouse: Dance 2009 (through April 28). McGinnis Theatre, performances nightly at 8 p.m. except Sunday performance at 2 p.m.

SATURDAY 25
Memorial Day Holiday

Exhibitions

A.R. Ammons’ Poetry and Art – A Documentary Exhibit,” Joyner Library Special Collections, through June 30.
Women’s Heritage Month Book and Video Exhibit, by Leigh Yonce (Joyner Library) and “Sweetening the Sour Apple: Celebrating Women’s Heritage Month,” by Susan Luddeke (Art). Joyner Library (through March).

“Gems of the Russian Wonderland,” Joyner Library Digital Learning Center (through late April).
ECU School of Art and Design 2009 Undergraduate Exhibition, Gray Gallery (through April 3).

In Memoriam

David S. Phelps Jr. (emeritus, Anthropology) died Feb. 21.
Leslie Holland Garner, second president of the ECU Pirate Club and song leader for Pirate baseball games renditions of “Take Me Out to the Ballgame,” died Feb. 23.
Filmmakers Document Eastern Carolina Life

which will be finished this spring.
Both films were screened at the University Film and Video Association in Colorado Springs, as well as at selective screenings at the Broadcast Education Association Conference in Las Vegas and The International Reminiscence and Life Review Conference in San Francisco.

Gould and Timberg plan to show their documentaries to the communities and individuals involved, as well as government officials, policymakers and general audiences. The hope, said Green, is to “open a window” into these small communities and their struggles through media.

Gould, the former student who assisted with the documentaries, said being part of the filming process was an invaluable experience. Gould said he learned, not only from the technical process of filming, but also from the content of the documentaries. “Both stories have been encouraging to me because they both show people making a difference in their community and the world around them,” he said.

Other film projects are in the works. In future documentaries, the filmmakers intend to continue calling attention to health and environmental issues that affect the underserved communities of eastern North Carolina.

The experience of working with local residents in rural towns has been rewarding, they agreed. “You learn so much more when you go out into the world of this region and listen to people,” Timberg said.

The colleagues have also enjoyed involving their students in film projects. In Spring 2008, they involved students in a service-learning project that produced public service announcements for HOPE Station in Greenville, a mental health center for peer counseling and support.

Tuition Raised

be $1,799. Combined tuition and fees for in-state, undergraduate students at ECU in the 2009-10 academic year will be $4,290.

AT A GLANCE
(Numbers reflect per year expenses for in-state undergraduate students)

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ECU School of Communication faculty Bernard Timberg, right, and Erick Green, center, along with ECU graduate James Gould, collaborated on documentaries that tell stories about rural communities in North Carolina. (Photo by Cliff Hollis)