

The BLUE BANNER

Volume 45, Issue 2

Serving the University of North Carolina at Asheville since 1982

February 1, 2007

The News in Brief

By Sarah Fantle
STAFF WRITER

U.S. landmark threatened

Yosemite National Park faces its biggest challenge yet as the battle over whether access should be limited to certain parts of the park to ensure environmental protection continues. The numerous waterfalls and rising peaks shaped by the Merced River draw millions of spectators each year.

In November, a federal judge, siding with a small group of environmentalists, banned crews from finishing \$60 million in construction projects around the park valley. The government is appealing, in fear that the ruling could force the park to limit the number of visitors allowed in each day.

Mind over matter

With an estimated 3.5 million Americans battling Alzheimer's disease and the numbers continuing to rise, easy measures can be taken to help minimize the risk.

Keeping the brain mentally sharp by playing chess, computer games and doing crossword puzzles is at the top of the list. Also, exercising the body, eating plenty of vegetables and partaking in a Mediterranean-style diet where amounts of vegetables, fish, fruits and olive oil make up the majority of the meal have all been marked habits of keeping a healthy brain.

Derby winner euthanized

Medical staff euthanized last year's Kentucky Derby winner Barbaro on Monday after complications from his severe accident at the Preakness Stakes.

A series of injuries, including laminitis in the left rear hoof and a recent abscess in the right rear hoof, proved too much for the bay colt, who became a hero of the sport when he only lost one race in his seven-start career.

Student anti-war movement fuels rally

By Annabelle Hardy & Sara Pardys
STAFF WRITERS

An anti-war rally sponsored by United for Peace and Justice drew 500,000 protesters to the streets of Washington D.C. Saturday.

"We are here today to deliver a united message from the Iraqi people and from the American people. We want this war to end and we want the troops to come home now," said Raed Jarrar, project director at Global Exchange and half-Shiite, half-Sunni Iraqi.

Damien Riech, a University of Maryland student and anti-war activist was one of thousands of students who joined the national rally in Washington D.C. on Jan. 27. Though many have accused today's youth of being apathetic and politically disengaged compared to the young people of the Vietnam era, Riech and other campus activists disagree.

"Students on our campus are motivated and informed about the issues and they're out on the streets," said Riech.

Riech, who became involved in the anti-war movement as a high school student in Baltimore, took over the leadership of the campus anti-war organization as a sophomore.

Jarrar spoke alongside 42 other speakers throughout the rally, including the Rev. Jesse Jackson, several government officials, such as Rep. Dennis Kucinich and several celebrities, including actors Susan Sarandon, Tim Robbins, Sean Penn and Jane Fonda.

Fonda, who said she was speaking at an anti-war rally for the first time in 34 years, said she was speaking out because it is time for the silence to end.

"A lot of press people have been asking me today, 'What's the difference between now and during the Vietnam War?' And I'll tell you one huge, crucial difference. It took six years for Vietnam veterans, active duty servicemen, Gold Star mothers and military families to come



ASHLEY HORNE - COPY EDITOR



ANNABELLE HARDY - STAFF WRITER

Hundreds of thousands of protesters gathered in Washington D.C. Saturday for a rally organized and sponsored by United for Peace and Justice. Protesters of all ages took to the streets to voice their stances on the Bush Administration, the war in Iraq, how the government handled the Gulf Coast after Katrina and many other issues. Several UNC Asheville students attended the event.

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New religious studies program adds to liberal arts

By Aaron Dahlstrom
STAFF WRITER

Students hoping to study religion will be able to do so at UNC Asheville as it prepares its new department of religious studies.

"A vision is being started here that is very exciting, a religious studies program," said Darby Ray, a professor at Millsap College and one of three candidates UNC Asheville is considering to lead the new department.

The fact UNC Asheville lacks a department of religious studies goes against the school's liberal arts focus, according to Hean Lee, a sociology professor UNC Asheville.

"I want to stress the need for this department at UNC Asheville as a liberal arts university," Lee said.

The school commissioned a task force with assessing the need for a major in religious studies. The team, which included Lee and five other UNC Asheville professors, also searched for qualified professors to fill the department.

Other faculty members said they share Lee's views, saying adding the department makes the school more attractive.

"Most people agree that it is something we ought to do. It is kind of surprising that we haven't done so in the past," said Grant Hardy, humanities professor at UNC Asheville. "Lots of schools that we would like to compare ourselves to, private liberal arts schools, have departments of religious studies."

Of the 16 universities in the



SHANNA ARNEY - STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Associate professor of philosophy Duane Davis talks with Professor Roger Payne, chair of philosophy and religious studies at Louisiana State University and one of the three professors up for the chair of the new religious studies major at UNC Asheville.

North Carolina system, only three offer independent religious studies majors, according to the report filed by the UNC Asheville task force. Despite the lack of education on the subject, the study of religion remains crucial in today's world, Lee said.

"Even right now, in many different parts of the world, there is con-

flict, fighting and people killing each other. It's very much related to religion," Lee said.

Many of the world's problems come from not understanding other people's faiths, according to some students.

"The majority of the world's conflicts are deeply rooted in people's religious beliefs," said Kevin

Roberts, freshman student.

As the world economy grows and changes, understanding others' religions becomes an essential element for success, according to Roberts.

"Because of the globalizing world, inevitably we experience people with different religions," Lee said.

Religion is an integral part of what it is to be human, according to Hardy.

"For perhaps most people in the world, religion is a major component of their identity," Hardy said. "It helps them think about who they are and what their relationship is to the rest of the world and to God."

Understanding other people's religions provides clarity in events unfolding around the world, according to Hardy.

"A better understanding of religion will help us even today understand the world we live in," Hardy said. "Iraq is a good example of people not understanding."

The professor chosen for the position should not only be a good teacher but also a good administrator who has performed research in the field, according to Hardy.

"We are looking for somebody who would make a good department chair," Hardy said.

UNC Asheville received over 100 applications for the position, selecting 20 and narrowing it down to three. The final decision is determined by a series of lectures given by each of the candidates.

"The three candidates are well established with lots of scholastic accomplishments and records," Lee said. "They are not recent Ph.D.s or just entering academics. They are well-established achievers and would love to come to UNC Asheville."

Not only must the candidates be experts in their fields, but they

must also provide input to UNC Asheville's other academic programs, according to Lee.

"The one thing we look at very carefully is in what ways they can contribute to our liberal arts education," Lee said.

The three candidates for the position are Ray, Rodger Pane, professor at Louisiana State University and Gerald Boodoo, professor at Duquesne University. All will be giving lectures on their particular areas of expertise at the school in the next week.

Currently, UNC Asheville offers only a minor in religious studies, according to the task force's report. The proposed major requires 36 hours within the department and 12 hours of language courses.

The task force's report calls for a five-person staff for the department. It should take three to four years to build the department, according to Lee.

The school wants students studying religion from a systematic and analytical point of view, where no teacher promotes one form of religion over another, according to Lee.

"The reason we call it department of religious studies instead of department of religion is because it provides comparative analysis of religions," Lee said.

The classes offered will look at religion from many different angles, according to Lee. The school wants experts in different areas of religion, such as eastern and western religions, Lee said.