

The BLUE BANNER

Volume 46, Issue 12

Serving the University of North Carolina at Asheville since 1982

Thursday, April 26, 2007

SGA elections finalized

Kristen Marshall, News Editor
Aaron Hillberry, Entertainment Editor
Aaron Dahlstrom, Staff Writer
Brian Gallagher, Staff Writer

After officials voided two Student Government Association elections, administration continues to investigate claims of fraudulent voting and possible misuse or theft of students' Banner numbers.

"We started receiving complaints from students that when they logged in and tried to vote, they had already voted. We thought it was a software problem, but after further investigation with Information Technology Services, we determined it voter fraud," said Bill Haggard, vice chancellor for student affairs. "We have significant evidence to believe that someone had access to student IDs and Banner numbers and was using them to vote fraudulently."

Rather than approach the voter fraud as identity theft off-campus, administrators will consider the suspect as a violator of the student code of conduct.

"We're investigating it as a conduct code violation," Haggard said. "We're looking at it in terms of conduct instead of laws."

The third election took place Monday and Tuesday, confirming Tristyn Card and Nick Ladd as new leadership.

After the second election, Robert Straub and John Noor analyzed a report from Information Technology department, which revealed a pattern of attempted logins.

"We started seeing the same ID number typed in," Noor said. Then 30 seconds later the only thing that had changed was the date, the two things needed to log in to vote. The way that it was done, because it was alphabetical, just showed that someone went down the list. We felt this was someone who got a hold of a list. There is just no telling who or what got a hold of it."

Senator hopefuls Ashley Horne, Georgiana Lanus and Larry Johnson and presidential candidates Clary Tedford and Greg Goddard dropped out of the elections due to mounting frustrations over the elections process.

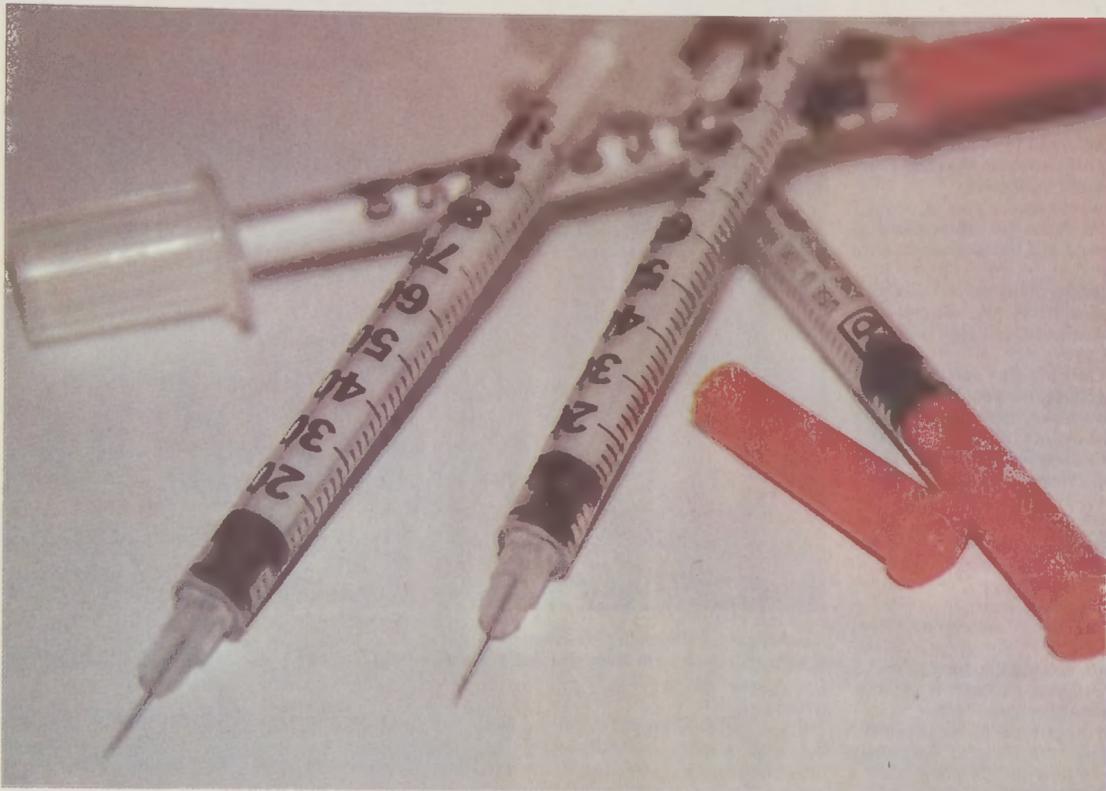
Goddard said he resigned his candidacy, citing his passivity and calling the association disorganized.

"I didn't want to be part of something so disorganized, and that's what the second election made me realize. I also dropped out of the election due to the fact that I had a very stressful week," Goddard said. "Being from Virginia, I knew a large amount of people that go to VT, I just didn't feel like in the next election I would be able to physically and mentally handle it." Goddard said he cast his candidacy for the first two elections just to offer competition for the other candidates and renounced SGA for disorganization.

"I never really was 100 percent into it to begin with," Goddard said. "It just took a couple of missed tries to make me realize it wasn't the thing for me."

The new Card-Ladd administration will take office for the next academic year.

"I'm happy there's finally a solution, and I hope that students will respect the new administration," Card said. "I regret the inconvenience suffered by the student body due to our lengthy process, but it is a process, one that has been given every opportunity to work in the best interest of the students."



MEGAN WILDMAN - STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

The needles used for the Asheville Needle Exchange are brand new and are exchanged with intravenous drug users' old needles to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. Currently, needle exchanges are illegal in North Carolina, but organizations are waiting on a legislation to pass that would allow and even fund the programs, which studies show help to decrease the spread of HIV.

Safety for drug addicts

Local organization awaits new legislation to legalize needle exchange

By Annabelle Hardy
STAFF WRITER

When a Swanaoa pharmacy denied a local man the opportunity to buy clean syringes because a pharmacist suspected the man might be an intravenous drug user, the man called Michael Harney, co-founder of the Asheville Needle Exchange.

"North Carolina's paraphernalia laws prevent people without a prescription from access to needles generally and pharmacists can use their discretion in deciding who may or may not purchase needles," said Harney, who is also the secretary of the North Carolina Harm Reduction Coalition.

Working as an HIV prevention counselor in the mid-'90s, Harney and co-founder Martin Prairie decided something needed to be done about the lack of access to clean needles that was endangering the lives of local citizens by exposing them to HIV and Hepatitis C. They began the work of creating the Asheville Needle Exchange Program, a community organization that collects dirty needles from local citizens and replaces them with new, clean needles.

More than 10 years later, Harney exchanges anywhere from 200 to 500 needles in Asheville each month, even though the operation is completely illegal.

"What we do is in violation of North Carolina law," he said. "Only licensed pharmacists are legally allowed to distribute needles."

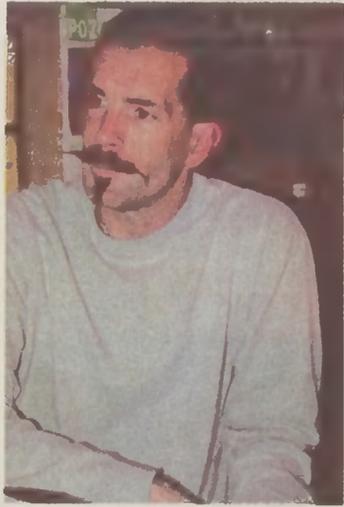
Two state congressional bills currently in the House and Senate, HB 411 and S917, would fund three needle exchange demonstration programs in North Carolina and take a step towards legalizing needle exchange programs across the state, which might allow outreach workers to reach significantly more people at risk and help prevent the further spread of HIV, according to Harney.

By June 2000, 36 percent of U.S. AIDS cases reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention occurred among intravenous drug users, their sexual partners and offspring, according to the Drug Policy Alliance. Approximately 50 percent of new HIV infections occur among IDUs, their sexual partners and offspring.

Some people oppose needle exchange programs, believing that providing substance abusers with the means to inject drugs is irresponsible and promotes increased drug use.

"An unlimited supply of needles will not alter behavior patterns of irresponsible and often psychotic addicts. The best answer for chronic intravenous drug users is abstinence-based and long-term treatment. Unfortunately, for most intravenous drug users, they will not volunteer but must be coerced into treatment," said Robert Miginnis of the Family Research Council.

Christine Jones, junior history student, said a needle exchange makes sense because it's a step towards keeping people from being at-risk of HIV.



MEGAN WILDMAN - STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Michael Harney, with the North Carolina Harm Reduction Coalition, helps run the Asheville Needle Exchange.

"It'd be great if people just stopped using the drugs all together, but for some people, that's not possible," Jones said. "And those people don't need to have HIV on top of all their other problems."

According to the Center for AIDS Prevention, the majority of current research shows needle exchange programs do not increase the rate of intravenous drug use. The report also said needle exchange programs have the potential to reduce the rate of

SEE EXCHANGE PAGE 2

The lead issue is that this is a public health issue. That's the concern, getting people access to the means to reduce their risk. Moral issues are secondary.

MICHAEL HARNEY
N.C. Harm Reduction Coalition

Judge speaks about bettering N.C. education

By Ashley Horne
COPY EDITOR

North Carolina Superior Court Judge Howard Manning Jr. defended his controversial decision in the Leandro Case, which forces the state to provide equal amounts of money to all school systems, to UNC Asheville students Friday.

"Our Supreme Court translated the (N.C.) constitution to mean that every single child that walks into a school is entitled to an equal opportunity to obtain a sound, basic education," Manning said. "Some people are not going to get it, but you have got to have the resources that enable the children to have the opportunity to do so."

The Leandro case began in 1994 in Hoke County, a poor district where student Rob Leandro did not have access to a proper science program and was denied equal access to educational extras. The North Carolina Supreme Courts gave Manning the case in 1997 and told him the case would require the rest of his life.

The case is important because it acknowledges the disparity found within the state, according to

Dolly Jenkins-Mullen, political science department chair and Asheville city school board member.

"People do not want to talk about the disparity that exists with these different funding levels," Jenkins-Mullen said.

In 2004, North Carolina provided districts with \$4,726 per student, according to the state's expense report.

Districts were left to raise property taxes in order to supplement this number, leaving many poor

districts with the minimum amount of funding. The Leandro decision requires the state to increase its current expenditure, which many opponents see as an unfunded mandate from the courts, according to Jenkins-Mullen.

Jenkins-Mullen said while she



Judge
Howard Manning

supports the Leandro decision as an acknowledgement of the disparity, many educators dislike the decision as it forces some wealthier districts to get rid of some extras they offer within their schools as a way to create an equal opportunity for all students, according to Jenkins-Mullen.

"It does threaten what is in place already," Jenkins-Mullen said. "If you have schools with arts and sciences and you spend money on nice athletic stadiums or advanced placement programs or any number of extras that have worked well for the students in the city and your funding comes down significantly,"

SEE MANNING PAGE 2

Asheville dines out to benefit charity

By Sara Pardys
STAFF WRITER

Eating at your favorite restaurant has never been so beneficial until now, when more than 90 Asheville restaurants will donate a portion of their proceeds to Dining Out for Life, a program to benefit the Western North Carolina AIDS Project.

"Last year's event raised \$100,977 to assist WNCAP in their mission of providing compassionate care to area men, women and children affected by the AIDS virus and increase awareness to at risk individuals through their education and prevention programs throughout 19 counties of Western North Carolina," said Harry Brown, special events chairperson for WNCAP.

Dining Out for Life takes place in 43 other cities across the United States today. Asheville's participation stretches across Buncombe, Haywood and Henderson counties to include restaurants in Black Mountain, Brevard, Hendersonville, Maggie Valley, Saluda, Waynesville and Weaverville, according to Brown.

The participating restaurants will donate 33 percent of their profits from breakfast, lunch and dinner to WNCAP's local AIDS service agencies, which help to assist those suffering from the effects of AIDS in the region.

"Each participating restaurant will be part of an intense marketing campaign to increase traffic on that day and to introduce people to new dining experiences," Brown said.

Ambassadors greet diners at participating restaurants to thank them for their participation and to answer any questions they have about WNCAP.

"Eating out is not something painful or hard work. Eating out is something we do anyway as Americans on a fairly regular basis, so why not go out on this particular day and indirectly make a donation," said Lizzie Pearson-McLaughlin, sophomore student.

This is Dining Out for Life's fifth year in existence, and Brown said the program's success has everything to do with the sponsors and participants.

"Last year, thanks to the generosity of our sponsors, expenses were only 5.4 percent netting us an incredible \$95,000, a fundraising record," Brown said.

Many UNC Asheville students said they will participate in the event.

"Everyone goes out to eat, so why not on Thursday? Eat some good food and give back by helping the AIDS community," said Brooke Barefoot, freshman student.

Jan Hayes, freshman student, said he plans on participating in Dining Out for Life.

"I love food, and I love helping people, so it's a great event for me to join in," Hayes said. "What a great combination of my two favorite things."

For participating restaurants, visit www.wncap.org