

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Healthbeat

MDA honors Burlington man

Burlington's Josh Cranfill has been named the recipient of MDA's 2008 Robert Ross Personal Achievement Award for North Carolina.

Cranfill, 24, was selected for the honor because of his educational and professional accomplishments, his community involvement and his commitment to helping others.

Initiated in 1992, the national awards program recognizes the accomplishments and community service of people with disabilities caused by any of the diseases in MDA's program. The awards were renamed in honor of Robert Ross, MDA's longtime chief executive, who died in June 2006.

In May 2007, Cranfill graduated with honors from Elon University, earning a degree in leisure/sports management. Through an internship experience at Elon, he became vice president for the North Carolina Electric Wheelchair Hockey Association (NCEWHA), in which he had participated as a member of the Carolina Fury team. Cranfill travels the state advocating for disability sports and the support of people with disabilities.

For the past nine years, Cranfill also has served as a mentor and assistant coach to Elon's Western Alamance High School varsity football team. He gives inspirational speeches, focusing on playing with heart and passion, and was recognized for his contributions with the November 2007 WFMV News 2 "2 Those Who Care" Award.

At age one, Cranfill received a diagnosis of spinal muscular atrophy, a progressive disease that causes weakness in muscles closest to the center of the body, such as those of the shoulders, hips, thighs and upper back. He has used a power wheelchair for mobility since he was 2 years old.

The national honoree will be announced on the Jerry Lewis MDA Telethon on Labor Day weekend, Aug. 31 - Sept. 1.



Josh Cranfill

Sen. Burr pushes for better dental coverage for veterans

U.S. Senator Richard Burr recently introduced legislation that would provide veterans with access to dental insurance. The bill would allow the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) to establish a dental program for all veterans, surviving spouses, and certain dependent children who are enrolled in VA's health care system. The program, which is completely voluntary, would give veterans the benefit of VA's buying power in order to get lower premiums on dental insurance coverage.

"Healthy teeth are an important part of overall health, and our veterans should have access to affordable dental care," Burr said. "This legislation would provide veterans with access to group insurance rates they may not otherwise be able to get on their own. The Department of Defense runs a similar program that has given over a million retirees and their families access to dental coverage. With this kind of success, it seems only fitting that we offer the same kind of benefit to the 7.9 million veterans enrolled in VA health care."

Although VA does provide dental coverage under some circumstances, the vast majority of people receiving care from the department do not have access to dental care through VA.

"This legislation would ensure that servicemembers and veterans are well-served and get to reap the benefits of group rates and competition," Burr added.

Counseling professor honored

Donna Henderson, professor of counseling at Wake Forest University, won two national awards from the American Counseling Association (ACA).

The 2008 ACA Professional Development Award recognizes an ACA member who has "developed techniques and systems that have strengthened, expanded, enhanced or improved the counseling profession and benefitted counseling consumers." The award nomination noted several of Henderson's recent accomplishments. She has served as president of the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision, and the North Carolina Counseling Association. She has written one of the most widely used texts in the field for developmental counseling, "Counseling Children." She also worked as a disaster relief counselor following Hurricane Katrina and the Virginia Tech shootings.

Henderson and three other members of Wake Forest's counseling department were also awarded the ACA's Counselor Educator Advocacy Award. The award recognizes "involvement in legislative advocacy, training and development" and was awarded to Henderson, Samuel T. Gladding, professor and chair of counseling; Laura Veach, professor of counseling; and Debbie Newsome, associate professor of counseling.

The awards were presented at the ACA's annual convention in Honolulu. Founded in 1952, the American Counseling Association is the world's largest private, not-for-profit organization for professional counselors.

Henderson

PLAYING WITH FIRE

Doctor warns of firework dangers

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Think twice before you pick up that box of sparklers at the grocery store – and don't even give the Roman Candles or firecrackers a second look.

That is the message being sent this Fourth of July by a medical expert at UNC Hospitals in Chapel Hill.

"They are neither safe nor sane," Dr. Bruce Cairns, medical director of the North Carolina Jaycee Burn Center at UNC Hospitals, said of Roman Candles or firecrackers. His sentiments echo those of the National Fire Protection Agency, whose Web site calls fireworks the riskiest consumer product.

What's worse, said Cairns, is that children are most often injured by firework-related accidents.

"We tell kids not to play with lighters, not to play with fire, but it's OK to play with this? It just doesn't make sense to us," Cairns said. "It's really unclear what benefit there is to using a pyrotechnic device as a toy."

The American Burn Association reports that close to 10,000 people suffer from fireworks injuries every year. According to the NFPA Web site, the risk of fireworks injury was two-and-a-half times higher for children between the ages of 10 and 14 than for the general population.

Cairns said every year several people are admitted to the Jaycee Burn Center, and many others are treated in the Emergency Department, after the Fourth of July for firework-related burns and the statistics don't lie. "It's always kids, and more males than females."

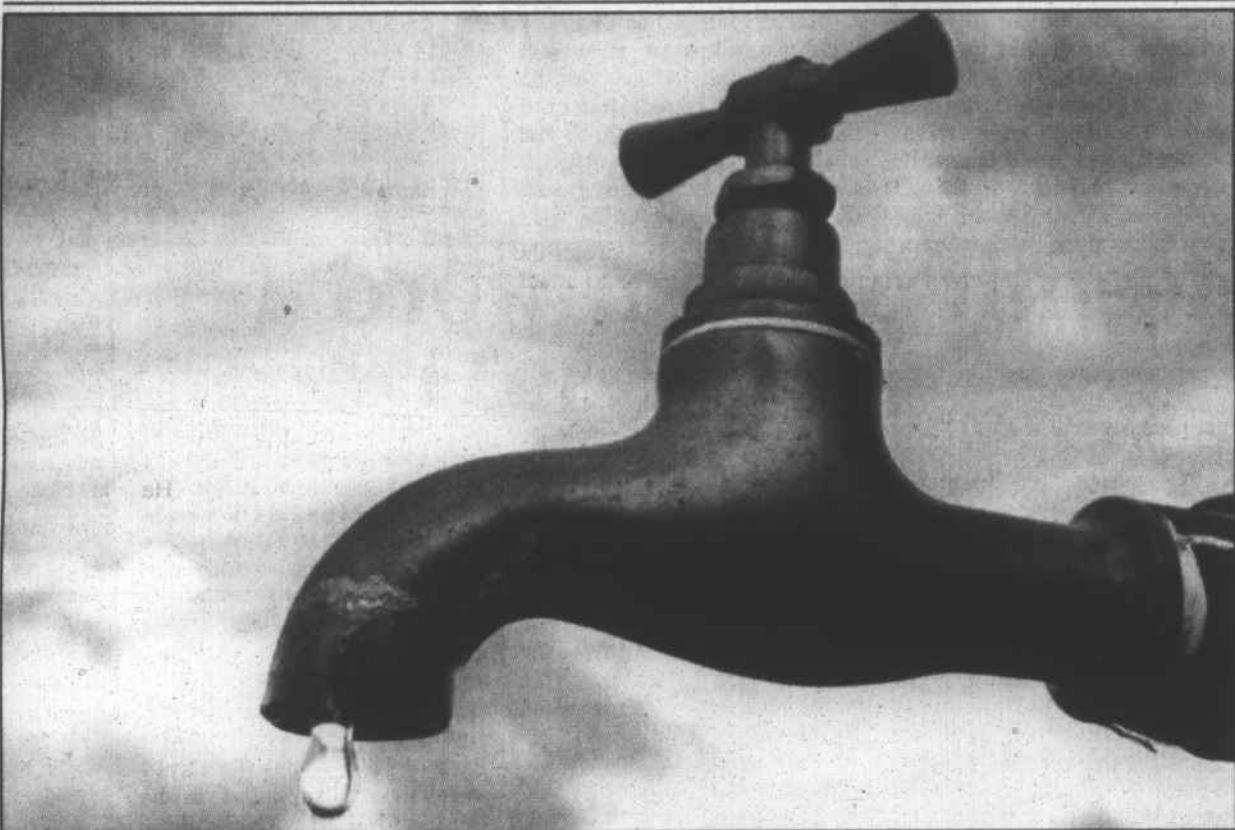
The most dangerous fireworks are also the most common. Firecrackers, sparklers and Roman candles accounted for more than 50 percent of all firework-related injuries in 2006, according to the NFPA.

These so-called "household" fireworks can reach temperatures exceeding 1200 degrees – several hundred degrees hotter than a match flame. The intense energy that creates the exciting effect of a firework or sparkler translates into very high temperatures and bad burns, said Cairns.

"People are just not aware of how dangerous it really is. If they knew they wouldn't want to take a chance with it," said Cairns. Even though the data is compelling, Cairns thinks awareness of firework danger has not made it to the level it needs to be.

"Don't buy them, don't play with them, don't light them," is the best advice Cairns said he can give.

See Fireworks on A12



Stock Photo

Water conservation is being urged by the state.

State is thirsty for rain

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

The state warned last week that current drought conditions in North Carolina are worse now than this same time a year ago. Unless there is significant rainfall, the state could face a more serious situation than in 2007, officials said.

Fourteen western counties, including Forsyth, are in exceptional drought, according to a federal drought map released last week. That is twice the number from the

Drought conditions worse than last year

same time last week. Ninety-seven of the state's 100 counties are in some level of drought.

"It is good that we started conserving a year and a half ago," Gov. Mike Easley said. "The drought conditions are worse now than they

were last year at this same time."

Rainfall in late May and through this month has been below normal, which means streams and groundwater conditions are not at the rates to keep reservoirs full.

In its May North Carolina Weather Review, the National Weather Service warned that the drop in rainfall is a "red flag" for the summer season.

According to the report: "If there are long periods without significant

See Drought on A11

The complex machinery of the immune system

Your immune system is a complex piece of machinery that serves as your body's defense against infection and disease. The biggest job of the immune system is to recognize what is part of your body and what is foreign. The immune system attacks foreign things in an attempt to rid the body of the object. Foreign materials that trigger the immune system, also called immunogens, can include things that cause disease (pathogens), such as viruses and bacteria, but also other things, like pollen. These immunogens provoke a reaction from the body, also known as an immune response. Let's talk about how the body responds when an immunogen enters.

What is an immune response?

An immune response is your body's way of fighting and eliminating foreign things that enter your body. There are different types of immune responses. In nonspecific immunity, the immune system attacks for-

eign things without distinguishing between them. In other words, it does not specifically target one thing or another but rather attacks anything that is foreign. For example, phagocytes are cells that "eat" foreign things and destroy them. Specific immunity means that your body can recognize certain immunogens and produce a response specific to that immunogen.

I've heard a lot of talk about the importance of antibodies. What is an antibody, and why is it important?

Before we can talk about antibodies, we first need to talk about antigens.

Antigens are a type of immunogen that react with the cells of the immune system and can produce an immune reaction. Antibodies are proteins that stick to specific antigens. By sticking to an antigen, antibodies enable the body to destroy that antigen. This is another

See Immune on A9

Wellness leader hired by NCDOT

Bob Nelson is a former Saint Augustine's professor

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

The N.C. Department of Transportation has hired Bob Nelson to serve as its first worksite wellness coordinator. He will head a new department-wide initiative that aims to improve the health of NCDOT employees.



Nelson

Nelson brings more than 20 years of experience in promoting fitness and healthy living to the department. He has worked with corporate wellness programs at Nike and FedEx, acquired clinical experience at several hospitals, and served as wellness director and adjunct professor at Saint Augustine's College in Raleigh.

"I look forward to building on the success of NCDOT's worksite wellness program," Nelson said. "One of my first goals is to reduce medical costs by encouraging our workers to adopt healthy lifestyles and take preventative measures to improve their health."

NCDOT's worksite wellness program was launched in November to motivate employees to stop smoking, eat healthier, exercise more and improve stress management. It is funded by a \$1.5 million grant from the charitable branch of pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca. The North Carolina State Health Plan secured the grant funding, and the statewide nonprofit organization N.C. Prevention Partners is providing program oversight.

Recent efforts to promote worksite wellness within the department have included distributing walking maps, conducting "Lunch and Learn" sessions to help workers identify healthy meal options, and including healthier items in both vending machines and the Transportation Building cafeteria. Building on these efforts, Nelson's plans for the program include using communication tools such as a Web site to increase awareness, as well as creating a points system to motivate employees and track individual progress.

