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Health Watch



Influenza vaccine in greater demand

By Herbert L. White
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North Carolinians are getting flu shots in record numbers, which has state health officials scrambling for more supplies.

"The good news is that people responded to the statewide campaign, which began in October, urging them to get flu shots," N.C. Health Director Dr. Leah Devlin said. "Due to this wonderful public response, some providers have exhausted their supply of vaccine."

Mecklenburg County had about 1,500 doses of vaccine left as of last week, and that may be all for the season as the two largest manufacturers have exhausted their supply.

"The difference is that we're seeing these numbers much earlier than we did last year," said Dr. Stephen Keener, Mecklenburg's medical director.

Mecklenburg flu shots are \$20, \$25 for the pneumonia vaccine. Vaccinations are free for Medicaid and Medicare "B" patients, but must bring their insurance cards.

North Carolina, like many states across America, face shortages of influenza vaccine. Although supplies are dwindling, the state is trying to obtain more for people in high-risk groups such as children 6 to 23 months old and those with chronic health conditions like asthma and their close contacts. The state provides free shots for them.

"Every state in the union is seeing supplies dwindling," Devlin said. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that record numbers of doses — more than 83 million — have been distributed across the country. However, some vaccine is still available, so we are encouraging high-risk individuals to get vaccinated."

Healthy adults and children who aren't in high-risk groups are encouraged to take the live vaccine, which is administered by mist in order to conserve the traditional vaccination. Flu symptoms can appear suddenly and may include fever, severe headache, body aches, sore throat and cough. Influenza can also make people more susceptible to pneumonia, which puts a strain on the heart and lungs. Anyone with flu-like symptoms should drink fluids, rest and stay home to prevent spreading infection. Taking over-the-counter drugs like acetaminophen and ibuprofen is OK, but aspirin should be avoided because of the possibility of Reye's Syndrome, a swelling of the brain that occurs in children following viral illness.

The best defense is to take common-sense precautions. "Wash your hands often," Devlin said. "Cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing. If you are showing flu symptoms, stay home."

Can you keep this to yourself?



By Artellia Burch
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Secrets are almost as commonplace as a cold.

A secret is information kept from general knowledge or view. It's the exposure of such that wrecks relationships. The ability to keep a secret also seals bonds between individuals.

Sometimes people are married or in intimate relationships with people who are keeping secrets or withholding their own.

"There are no secrets worth keeping from someone you expect to have an open uninhibited relationship with," said Charles Rivers, author of "How To Be Your Spouse's Best Friend."

"Some people hold off in the beginning from telling things. They may feel their mate isn't mature enough to handle it."

According to Rivers, there are two types of secrets it's OK to keep from your mate until later.

"If a man or woman has been molested when the person was a child," he said. "There's nothing wrong with keeping that secret until a later time. People like that are keeping a secret until they can work enough courage up to tell the secret."

"If you're a person who has been raped I don't see anything wrong with waiting until they feel their mate can handle the information. If you're not over it I would recommend counseling because those secrets can create barriers for the person who keeps the secret. But eventually you need to tell your mate. Secrets like that are held for the honor of the mate."

Now some secrets can cost grave consequences for the person in a relationship with a secret keeper.

"There are secrets that can hurt a partner," said Rivers. "When you keep the fact you have a disease from your partner to keep the person. Another

See SECRETS/3B



PHOTO/GUCCI

Nadine Willis, 23, has gone from struggling economically to one of the world's top models.

Jamaican single mother, struggling to make ends meet a year ago, becomes top model

By Howard Campbell
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

KINGSTON, Jamaica — Just one year ago, Nadine Willis was a single mother struggling to make ends meet. Today the 23-year-old Jamaican rubs shoulders with supermodels, lives in London and graces catwalks from New York to Paris.

"It's been amazing but it's good so far. I'm enjoying

every minute of it," she said on a recent visit to her homeland for Caribbean Fashionweek.

With close-cropped hair, a wide smile and seductive pout, Willis has become a favorite of top photographer Mario Testino, who featured her in a recent layout for French Vogue. Testino also shot a new Gucci ad that features Willis in a white high-collared trench coat, a baby

in her arm. In the past year, Willis also has appeared in Spanish, French, Italian and Japanese Vogue and walked in Bill Blass' spring 2004 runway show in New York.

The Web site www.models.com rates her No. 24 on its list of the world's top 50 women models and calls her "Jamaica's hottest new export."

"I get to travel to Paris and

See JAMAICAN/3B

'dark' a delightful coming of age story

By Artellia Burch
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Looking for an interesting read? Want a different glimpse of Charlotte at the same time? Kenji Jasper's "dark" is just the ticket.

Since it's Christmas time and people are looking for gifts, I recommend "dark" to shoppers who can't seem to find something for a young black man.

BOOK REVIEW

Jaspers' book is a coming of age story of Thai Williams, a 19-year-old from Washington, D.C.

Jasper sheds light on the violence and genocide that fills the streets of this nation's capital. He allows the reader to see how a young man that has walked the straight and narrow can instantly take a walk on the dark side.

Before an event that will change the course of Williams' life he had never ventured too far from his

neighborhood. But one night Williams' jealousy and his need to represent Shaw, his beloved hood makes him have to pack his car and head South to Charlotte.

While in Charlotte, Williams is exposed to a new life outside of Shaw. He takes a taste of his first Heineken and meets white people who know how to play spades. More than that he is hit with the epiphany that there's another world he hasn't experienced in D.C.

Enrique, Williams' best friend who moved to a Charlotte a year earlier welcomes his kindred brother to the city with open arms. And gives his friend an opportunity to come back to the light.

Jasper's book is an easy read and it opened my eyes to what a great place Charlotte is for a person who has a dream and some determination.

This is Jasper's first book and it's great. I would recommend it to anyone who wanted to finish a book in a weekend.

