

The Banner

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UNCA officer indicted on federal charges Public safety officer Rathburn, former Woodfin chief, suspended without pay

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UNCA Public Safety Officer Darrell Rathburn has been suspended without pay after his Oct. 25 federal indictment on eight counts of assault and one count of illegal possession of a firearm, according to the bill of indictment. Despite a previous record of misdemeanor convictions from the late '70s and early '80s, including assault with a deadly weapon, Rathburn was hired by UNCA in 1998 as a full-time public safety officer, conducting routine patrols on campus. "The university is reviewing this situation," said Merianne Epstein, director of public information. "They are going to gather the facts surrounding his indictment, and

then they will make a determination about his status here."

After the grand jury indictment Oct. 25, Rathburn was suspended from duty as a UNCA officer.

"My understanding is that he can be suspended for a maximum of two weeks," said Epstein. Rathburn met UNCA's personnel criteria when the university conducted a standard background check, according to Epstein.

"When they hire in public safety they do their own background check," said Epstein. "They do it in conjunction with the N. C. criminal justice training standards department. So what happens is that the dept. must certify the police officer before they can come and work for us."

From 1995 to 1996, Rathburn was charged with eight separate counts of assault "resulting in bodily injury," according to the indictment. The assault charges occurred while Rathburn was acting as chief of police in Woodfin.

According to the indictment, when an allegation of assault is brought against an officer, the policeman has "deprived (the victim) of the right... to be secure in his person from the use of unreasonable force by one acting under the color of law."

More recently, Rathburn was charged with illegal possession of a firearm on Oct. 5, 1999.

To be certified to carry a handgun, an individual must be a sworn police officer and participate in at least four hours of training, according to Investigator Jerry Adams of public safety. Public safety officers must also provide their own weapon, and a particular caliber is not specified. Rathburn was allegedly found to have a Springfield .45 caliber semi-automatic handgun, according to the indictment.

Epstein declined comment on



PHOTO BY JASON GRAHAM

Darrell Rathburn, a UNCA public safety officer, was suspended after a federal indictment on nine separate charges dating from 1995 to October of this year.

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Youth center organizers face funding, space shortages

By Holly Beveridge
Staff Writer

The UNCA administration plans to resolve funding and location challenges surrounding the proposal of the new campus youth center, according to Chancellor Jim Mullen.

Mullen said he hopes to have a preliminary plan for the intergenerational center by the end of the academic year.

"We've got to have a game plan, and then we'll go to the foundations. We'll go to the elected officials and private donors, and we'll make our case," said Mullen. "I think we can make it, but only if we think big."

To reach this goal, Mullen recently appointed Gene Rainey, professor of political science, as chair of the Community Partnerships committee. The committee, consisting of about 30 UNCA faculty, staff and students, will explore options and make recommendations for the proposed youth center.

"Since I raised (the issue) in con- vocation, I've heard nothing but people saying 'Let's try it,'" said Mullen. "I've heard nothing but interest."

Mullen said he hopes to present a plan for the proposed youth center to the Board of Trustees in May.

According to Rainey, who has worked to set up youth centers across Western North Carolina for over eight years, the prospect of a youth center on campus is an idea "near and dear" to his heart. "This started when I was chairman of the county commissioners back in 1991," said Rainey. "Kids had been run off Patton Avenue, and the mall had been closed out to the young people unless they were with their parents or shopping. So I started having meet- ings."

While the construction of county youth centers appears hopeful, finding locations for a youth center within the Asheville city school

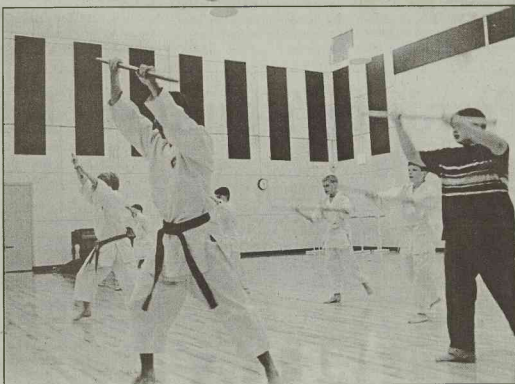


PHOTO BY ANTHONY GRECO

UNCA hosts classes for youth like this karate class in Justice Gym. A new youth center on campus would expand on existing programs as well as offer new choices.

district has presented more of a problem, according to Rainey.

"There's just nothing there to put a youth center on. Whereas, out in the county, you have some space," said Rainey. "When you come to Asheville, there's just no free ground. There's no unused ground."

Asheville High and Asheville Middle Schools, according to Rainey, occupy "every inch" of their available space.

"Having it at UNCA is the logical place, obviously," said Rainey. Although he felt UNCA would be a perfect location for a youth center, Rainey said putting the center on campus presents a challenge.

"We're looking at a much larger building, obviously, because we need to house UNCA programs that are already successful," said Rainey.

Rainey cited UNCA's Citizenship, Responsibility, Empowerment, Excellence and Dignity (CREED) program, tutoring and

mentoring programs sponsored by the Education department and the Key Center for Service Learning as programs that might be housed in the youth center.

Designating a specific location for the center at UNCA represents another hurdle, according to Rainey.

"It's going to have to be accessible, but it shouldn't be located on the innards of UNCA because you're going to have kids coming in from high school and middle school," said Rainey, "and that's another problem. How are you going to get them here?"

So far, Rainey has come up with two possible locations for the youth center: one on Campus Drive near the future site of the North Carolina Center for Creative Retirement and the other at the corner of Broadway and W.T. Weaver Boulevard, adjacent to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Southern Research Station property.

Rainey said he presented the cen-

ter of the youth center and the two prospective sites last year to former UNCA Chancellor Patsy Reed, who liked the idea.

"The unfortunate thing, of course, was that she was on her way out," said Rainey.

According to Rainey, the Community Partnerships committee agreed that the youth center should serve UNCA students as well as teens from Asheville middle and high schools and should not detract from UNCA's high academic standards.

Additionally, Rainey said, the committee feels the center should be self-supporting and not drain funds from other university programs.

Rainey has asked members to bring specific ideas to a meeting of the committee on Nov. 4.

"By Mar. 1, we're going to give the chancellor a series of recom-

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Vandals break two passenger van windows

By Johanna Luks
Staff Writer

The vandalization of two UNCA passenger vans on Oct. 16 caused the cancellation of class field trips that day, according to Linda Harding, facilities management receptionist.

One van's passenger window was broken, and the other's rear window was smashed. Both looked like they had been entered and searched through, according to Investigator Jerry Adams of public safety.

"I think they both happened at the same time, but the van that was reported (vandalized) later was parked in a different location," said Adams. "When it was found, it was parked behind the dining hall."

One van was not discovered until Oct. 18, according to Adams. It is unclear how the van was moved to the dining hall, and whether the perpetrators, or someone else who didn't notice the damage, drove it to the dining hall, according to Adams.

The outdoor education club, a group of UNCA students, was supposed to use one of the vans for a hiking trip on Oct. 16, according to Harding.

Kent Richards, the leader of the hiking trip and employee of outdoor education, saw the broken window when he went to pick up the van for the hiking trip.

"Apparently the public safety (officers) had already seen it," said

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Exchange program requires dedication

By Sarah Wilkins
Staff Writer

A new foreign exchange program with France will provide opportunities for students willing to make the commitment, according to the chair of UNCA's French department.

"In my mind, it's obviously a tremendous opportunity for the person who wants to take advantage of it," said Paul McDonald, chair and associate professor of French at UNCA.

Yet, "there are going to be fewer people that are going to be willing to make a commitment," said McDonald. The program will require a basic knowledge of the French language.

"I think it's a good opportunity for students to see other parts of the

world," said Derek Meeker, sophomore computer science major.

A group of eight, including two representatives of UNCA, left for France about two weeks ago to try and set up an exchange program with Saumur and Angers, sister cities to Asheville.

McDonald believes that as long as the students and faculty have interest in the program, there can be several different kinds of development.

"If we get a handful of students" the program would be beneficial to the university, said McDonald.

"I think that there will certainly be enough (students) to justify doing it and to make it worthwhile," said Meeker.

Students can do internships in Saumur, regardless of which department it will be for. Each major

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