

The Blue Banner



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NEWS BRIEFS

BY CHRIS CANTOS
Staff Reporter

CAMPUS CRIME

Campus Police received a report of a hit-and-run accident in lot 5 in front of Governor's Village March 5. On March 15, another accident reported vehicle damage in resident parking deck.

Campus Police believe this damage occurred from another vehicle, but could not be certain of a hit-and-run situation in that particular case. Also March 15, a student reported a bike theft in Governor's Village.

UNCA

On Feb. 23, Chancellor James Mullen announced the establishment of the National Environmental Modeling and Analysis Center (NEMAC) at UNCA. Mullen announced that the center will receive \$1.28 million grant to fund its first major project, the largest grant received by UNCA in its history.

NEMAC will focus on environmental and health issues relating to air, land and water interrelationships.

Mullen hopes that the center will strengthen the economy of the region, as well as enhance undergraduate research in areas such as atmospheric sciences and environmental studies.

The \$1.28 million grant will fund the infrastructure for the commercialization of current and future environmental data held at the National Climatic Data Center (NCDC).

NORTH CAROLINA

Washington and Beaufort counties, along with three environmental groups, filed lawsuits against the U.S. Navy in an attempt to stop the military branch from building a runway for fighter pilots to practice their landings.

The proposed area for the runway resides less than five miles away from the heart of Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, where thousands of snow geese, tundra swans and other waterfowl migrate each year.

Residents of the two counties and members of the environmental groups believe that having fighter aircraft land on the proposed runway and use airspace over the refuge will not only cause harm to the birds, but will unnecessarily endanger the pilots of the aircraft in the event of striking a bird.

Under federal law, the Navy may buy the land through condemnation, and protestors have not convinced the Pentagon to stop the production. The only way to stop the project is through lawsuits.

FRESNO, CALIF.

In Fresno, Calif. police charged Marcus D. Wesson with murdering nine of his children March 12. Police found the bodies of six of Wesson's daughters and three of his sons in Wesson's home in a Fresno neighborhood.

Three of the children were one year old and four others were younger than the age of nine. A 17-year old daughter and 24-year old daughter were also among the victims found in piles in a small bedroom.

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COURTESY OF JOE TACKETT



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UNCA student Neil Richie (above) was among the 11 same-sex marriage activists arrested at the Family Values and Sanctions of Marriage Rally March 6. Police charged Richie with two counts of trespassing. Police said in a statement that they arrested those who refused to cooperate.

Police formed a barrier between the opposing groups of protesters in attempt to control opposition protesters (left).

Conservatives promoting family values and current marriage laws raise their hands in protest to same-sex marriage (below).

Protesters disrupt rally Asheville police arrest 11 at City Plaza

BY TERRI FISHER & ADAM McMULLIN
Staff Reporters

Asheville Police arrested 11 people at a 'Family Values and Sanctity of Marriage' rally at Asheville's City County Plaza March 6.

Swannanoa Independent Missionary Church organized and held the Family Values Rally in support of a constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage.

Around 200 people showed up at the rally to pray, sing and listen to local pastors and Western North Carolina Congressman Charles Taylor speak out against same-sex marriage.

"We are here to support the sanctity of marriage and what we believe in the principles our country was founded on," said Brian Powell a UNCA alumni.

The purpose of the rally offended many gay rights activists who also showed up to the rally.

"I felt angry because I couldn't understand why people wanted to have a rally against us," said Robert Platt, an undeclared sophomore.

"When the cops got there, I was scared that

it was going to get crazy, that someone was going to get hurt, or someone was going to go to jail."

Tensions rose as Asheville police began moving the protesters away from the Family Values Rally.

Among the 11 protesters arrested was UNCA student Neil Richie, charged with second degree trespassing.

"We were originally mingling with the crowd when the cops set up a line to separate the two crowds," said Richie.

The protesters reacted passionately to topics heard from speakers located on stage in the middle of the plaza by area speakers and representatives.

"Some chants were, 'One, Two, Three, Four open up the door! Five, Six, Seven, Eight don't assume your kids are straight' and 'We're queer, we're here, we won't disappear,'" said Brian Davis, a UNCA sophomore. "The chants are my favorite."

Halfway into the rally, Asheville police decided to take action on the counter-protesters, as they felt the rally was getting too loud.

"Based on everything I could see, hear and take

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Nader tries again as independent

BY JAMES RICHARDS
Staff Reporter

Ralph Nader's second presidential campaign will only marginally affect the 2004 presidential race, according to William Sabo, political science professor.

"People are just tired of him and they're not going to buy into it this time," said Emily MacMillan, a senior creative writing major.

Running as an independent, Nader entered the current race Feb. 22. Without the explicit support of the Green Party, people question Nader's decision to run as well as his effectiveness as a candidate.

"It's a total mystery," said Richard Maas, an environmental science professor. "The only reasons I can think of is one, he feels very strongly that the critical environmental issues of our time need to be put on the table as part of the election campaign."

"Secondly, since he has no support from his party, this has got to partially be some personal ego thing."

Nader claims he is running to mobilize citizens who are dissatisfied with republicans and democrats.

As a third party candidate, Nader says he can draw attention to issues he believes the two parties ignore such as a living wage, voter reform, and food hazards like mad cow disease, according to his Web site.

"I agree with Nader that, in practice, there's not much of a difference between democrats and republicans," said MacMillan. "He wants to attract attention to his policies, but he doesn't see that he's also hurting his own cause and the country."

Some democrats believe Nader took away the votes Gore needed to beat Bush in the 2000 election.

Nader claims 250,000 registered democrats voted for Bush in 2000 and that Gore's mishandled campaign cost him states like Tennessee and Arkansas, according to his campaign Web site.

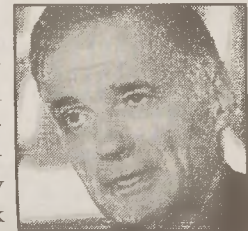
"The core of Nader's support (in 2000) came from attracting people who felt marginalized by the two party system," said Sabo.

"Three groups of people voted for Nader: disaffected voters who wouldn't normally vote any way, democrats who were disappointed with the direction of their party and disaffected republicans who refused to vote democratic on principal."

This year however, many voters seem to be uniting under the issue of ousting President Bush.

Estranged republicans have returned to the party and democrats believe that they have a clear alternative to Bush with John Kerry, according to Sabo.

"I think if it does have any effect it will be to raise real questions people want answered," said Aja Wright, a senior math major. "But in this kind of year, where everyone I've talked to just wants anybody to get George Bush out, they would never think of voting for an independent."



Ralph Nader

Asheville serial tire-slasher on the loose

BY LAUREN ABE
Staff Reporter

Asheville citizens and UNCA students reported 72 incidents of tire slashing between mid-February and mid-March, according to the Asheville Police Department.

"I was surprised by the number of cars vandalized when I walked down to the parking lot," said Andy Sharpe, an undeclared freshman.

"I felt that Campus Police would have had a better handle on issues like that. At a small campus, I feel more secure about leaving my car out of sight. While I feel like it was done by someone off campus, it still makes me think twice about where I park my car."

Students reported 29 incidents of slashed tires at the Founders Hall parking lot March 3 and seven incidents March 1 at UNCA parking lots C and 7, according to Jerry Adams, investigator/sergeant for the UNCA Campus Police Department. Campus Police are working with the Asheville Police Department on the investigation.

"This is pretty rare," said John Dankel, public information and crime prevention accreditation for the Asheville Police Department "I have only been at this depart-



MAX TAINTOR/PHOTO EDITOR

The tire-slasher left many cars in this condition.

ment for three years, yet I have not seen anything like this or remotely like this. After talking to some of the guys who have been here for a long time, I understand to have an uprising of tire slashing of this magnitude is very unusual."

The tire slashing incidents occurred along the north-south axis. The greatest number of incidents appeared along the Hendersonville road area in South Asheville, along Merrimon, in Montford, and at UNCA, according to Dankel.

"I think it's childish," said C. J. Walker, an undeclared freshman. "I don't feel safe parking at the Founders Hall parking lot anymore."

Outside of UNCA, 37 people reported incidents of tire slashing in Asheville. The

Asheville Police Department does not currently have any solid leads on who is behind the vandalism or how many people are involved, according to Dankel.

"There may be copycats, or there may be a group of people," said Dankel. "It's really hard to tell because when this kind of event happens, generally, there aren't any witnesses. There's no physical evidence to deal with except the tire, which doesn't tell you anything other than the vandalism has occurred. There's very little to go on."

To catch the people vandalizing the cars, the police or general public will have to catch the vandals in the act, unless someone turns them in, according to Dankel. However, the chance of a police officer catching the person or people in action is rare. It is a matter of being at the right place at the right time.

"It is almost going to take a witnessed event before we're able to bring this to a conclusion of an arrest," said Dankel. "That's not to say that there is no investigation possible. For example, there may be people out there who know who's doing this and decide to give them up. We may get a lead on it that way. Even then, we need corroborating evidence before we can make any

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