

The Blue Banner



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NEWS BRIEFS

BY ADAM McMULLIN
Staff Reporter

CAMPUS CRIME

Someone broke into a Mills dorm room April 20. The unknown suspect(s) stole CDs. Campus Police made a DWI arrest on campus April 21. The police took the suspect, with a blood alcohol content of .14, to the Buncombe County jail.

UNCA

UNCA Chancellor Jim Mullen named Janet Cone as UNCA's new Athletic Director. UNCA's Board of Trustees will approve Cone's appointment. Cone is currently Associate Athletics Director at Samford University in Birmingham, Ala. Cone also served as Head Women's Basketball Coach at East Hill College from 1986 and 1990 and at Western Carolina University from 1990 until 1993. Cone is expected to begin her duties at UNCA in mid-May.

NORTH CAROLINA

Great Smoky Mountain National Park officials say they're experiencing difficulty capturing wild hogs in the park this year. The non-native animals destroy native plants, nuts and animals.

The National Park Service traps about 300 each year. This year's success rate is frustratingly low.

The hog team removed only 62 hogs by early April. The ancestors of the animals are said to have been brought from Russia's Ural Mountains more than 90 years ago to be hunted.

CARROLLTON, GA.

Police arrested a 12-year-old boy April 27 and charged him with murdering a third-grade girl with his bare hands.

The girl was found dead in tall weeds April 26. She disappeared while riding her bike, which was found near-by.

Police refuse to disclose what led them to the boy's arrest or the boy's name, since he is a juvenile.

NEW YORK

A college student who says he spent eight months sleeping in a library basement has been given a three dorm room at New York University.

Steve Stanzak says he slept six hours a night in a basement at Bobst Library after he was unable to pay a \$1000 campus housing deposit.

University officials learned about the sophomore's sleeping arrangements when they discovered his on-line journal about his experiences.

IRAQ

An International Red Cross team visited Saddam Hussein April 27. The group visited Saddam to check on the conditions provided by the United States for the ousted Iraqi leader, according to U.S. Brigadier General Mark Kimmitt. The International Red Cross last visited Saddam in February.

Church protests "The Laramie Project" production

BY DEARBORN MCCORKLE
Advertising Manager

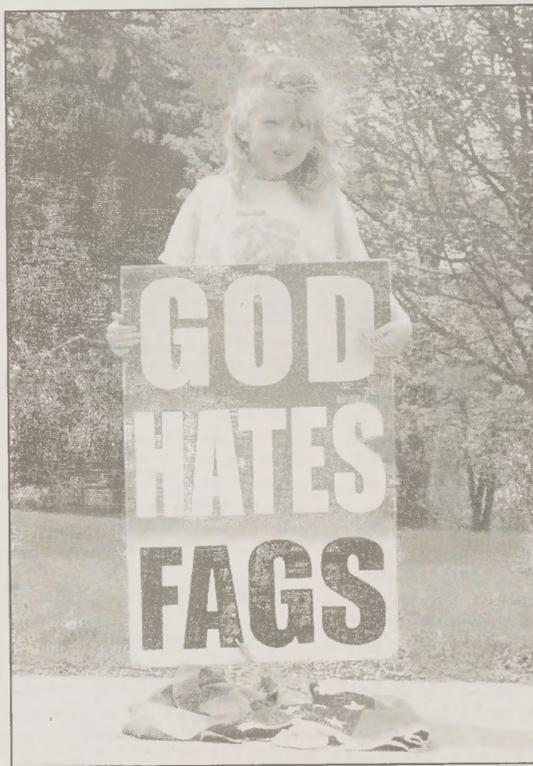
Members of the Westboro Baptist Church (WBC) traveled from Topeka, Kan. to protest Western Carolina University's (WCU) production of "The Laramie Project" and demonstrate at six local churches April 24-25.

"I had a family member that was gay, and he died of AIDS," said Jada Bryson, a UNCA undeclared freshman. "And in his honor, I wanted to come (to the protest) just to see where the hatred comes from and to understand it better. I think these people are just stupid. They have no earthly idea what God is really about."

The group traveled between WCU and six Asheville churches, holding signs with such slogans as "God Hates Fags" and "Matt Shephard — 5 Years in Hell." Westboro Baptist Church, led by the Rev. Fred Phelps, travels across the United States protesting against homosexuality and

maintains two Web sites. "What brought us into the neighborhood was that down at WCU they were playing 'The Laramie Project,'" said Shirley Phelps-Roper, WBC member. "The Laramie Project" is a wonderful backdrop for our message. When Matthew Shephard died, we were sitting in Topeka, and like the rest of the whole round world, our eyes were on Casper, Wyo. and there was not one voice that would say, 'Over here guys, there is a God, there is a day of judgment, and it is not okay to be gay.'"

"The Laramie Project," a documentary-style drama, recreates the efforts of playwright Moises Kaufman and members of his New York-based Tectonic Theatre Project, who made six trips to Laramie, Wyo. over a one and a half year period and conducted more than 200 interviews with local residents for their reactions to the beating death of Matthew Shephard, a gay uni-



DEARBORN MCCORKLE/ADVERTISING MANAGER

Many of those present at the recent protest traveled all the way from Kan., bringing their children to bear signs (above).

SEE PROTEST ON PAGE 2

Local gas prices: high and rising

BY JAMES RICHARDS
Staff Reporter

UNCA students can look forward to facing abnormally high gas prices this summer.

"I try not to buy gas in Asheville," said Mary Macmanus, a junior literature major. "I live in Georgia so whenever I go home I always fill up in Georgia because it's so much cheaper."

Average prices in Western North Carolina could exceed two dollars, according to Davis.

As of April 23, the national average for a gallon of regular unleaded gas was \$1.81, according to AAA's fuelgauge.com, up seven cents from last month and up 25 cents from last year. Asheville's average regular unleaded gas price stands at \$1.76 per gallon, up 25 cents from last year.

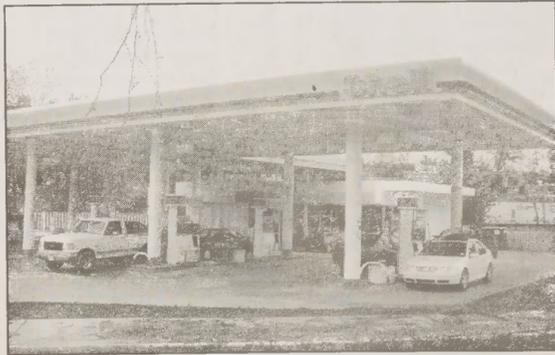
"Possibly at the end of the summer we could see a decrease, but right now, none of the factors we look at to estimate gas price look like they'll be going down anytime soon," said Davis.

Gas prices have soared for several reasons, according to Davis. The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) has cut back production of crude oil, reducing world supply. In addition, world demand for petroleum has increased, particularly in China.

China's booming economy has increased demand for petroleum based products by 25 percent, causing a big dip in supply, according to Davis.

"The U.S. is one of the biggest consumers of the oil market. Instead we have someone buying up everything as well," said Davis.

The summer driving season always introduces greater de-



LAURA COWAN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Drivers experience higher gas prices than ever. Prices are supposed to increase this summer.

mand for gas, according to Davis.

"There are more than 15 boutique blends of fuel refineries have to process for the summer to produce cleaner burning summer fuels, which hinders efficiency and increases the cost to the consumer," said Davis.

Although prices are high, in most areas they do not equal the prices facing the United States after the gas crisis of the 1970s, according to Shirley Browning, an economics professor. Adjusted for inflation, Americans would pay \$3 a gallon if prices reflected those of the early 1980s.

"There is increasing uncertainty about the continued flow of oil out of the Middle East," said Browning. "Even with all the noise of OPEC saying they're going to reduce production, the data shows that over the last six months they really haven't reduced production. They're still pumping about the same amount that they were before."

So where do UNCA students go to fend off high gas prices? A sampling of stations along Merrimon Ave. shows regular gas prices range from \$1.78 per gallon at an Exxon

in North Asheville to \$1.72 at an Enmark station near downtown. A number of students said Enmark has the cheapest gas closest to UNCA.

"If I'm buying in Asheville, I go to the Enmark," said Ben Walsh, a freshman political science major. Walsh drives a 1992 Oldsmobile Cutlass Sierra that gets about 28 miles per gallon on the highway. "I referee county soccer games on weekends so I do a lot of driving. Enmark is the only place I ever buy."

Other students fill their tanks at Enmark as well, even though their cars may get better gas mileage.

"I used to drive to Swannanoa to find cheap gas," said Lauren Woodard, undeclared freshman who lives off campus. She drives a Geo Metro that gets 44 miles per gallon and gets gas from Enmark. "It's usually five cents cheaper than any other place."

Enmark keeps its gas prices down mainly because of low overhead, according to an Enmark attendant who did not want his name used. With a closet sized monitoring station, eight pumps

and nothing else, Enmark does not have to maintain a larger convenient type store, said the attendant.

"We make most of our money selling cigarettes," said the attendant. "I see over 600 customers a day and UNCA students stand out because they're outgoing and pretty bright."

Despite the rumors, in the competitive gas market, lower prices do not indicate lower quality gas, according to Davis.

"All gas, regardless of octane, meets the same federal quality standards. It's illegal to water down gasoline," said Davis.

Yet, some gas may be watered down, depending on the station, according to the Enmark attendant.

"BJ's in West Asheville has the cheapest gas in town, but their tanks are rusty and as a result their gas is watered down," said the attendant.

Enmark takes great care to insure its gas remains water free, according to the attendant.

"It's all computerized," said the attendant. "We get temperature reports several times a day that indicate the level of water in the tank. BJ's has been around so long but they haven't updated their pumps or their tanks."

For some students, a parent's gas card still trumps Enmark's prices.

Kimberly Vestal, an undeclared freshman, who drives an Acura Integra, said she buys her gas at the Shell on Merrimon Ave. near Interstate 240.

"I go home to Winston-Salem once a month. I go to the Shell station because my parents pay for my gas," said Vestal. "My parents said if gas goes over \$2 per gallon I'll have to pay for my own gas. I'm dreading it."

Many local businesses struggle to keep up

BY CHRIS CANTOS
Staff Reporter

With insurance rates rising and large corporate owned businesses moving to the area, small businesses may feel more financial pressure affecting their operations.

While some of these businesses may find difficulty adjusting to high insurance and corporate competition, others may find ways to profit from businesses like Wal-Mart moving into Asheville and overcome increases in insurance.

"The popular conception is that the Wal-Marts of the world take the small businesses that only sell on price and drive them out of business," said Richard Lasher, executive director of UNCA's Family Business Forum. "What they have also done is created the opportunity for small businesses that want to emphasize special services and special products to actually grow and prosper."

Offering goods and services that businesses like Wal-Mart cannot provide remains the best way for small businesses and family-owned businesses to profit, according to Chris Bell, an associate professor of economics.

"The only way that small businesses can survive is by offering something that Wal-Mart doesn't, and can charge a higher price for it," said Bell. "They could offer more services, better services, more personalized service, services that Wal-Mart cannot offer."

Small businesses can also more readily adapt to changes in the market and consumer interests than can chain stores such as Wal-Mart, according to Glen Helms, an accounting professor.

"The smaller businesses can react quicker to changes in consumer demand than the larger companies which are under a tight corporate governance structure," said Helms. "Small businesses can add enticements to attract consumers, while that would take large corporate businesses longer to implement because of having to take dictates from their central point of governance."

Targeted consumers also remain a remedy from corporate competition and the effects of higher insurance rates, according to Helms.

"We have always had a lot of boutique type stores that have catered to higher income individuals," said Helms. "Asheville attracts higher income residents and retirees, so I still see a place for these boutique type stores."

"They are more high-end, but they have been around for decades and will continue to be around for decades simply because of the people who visit these types of boutique stores have money."

An increase in insurance rates will bring negative financial effects to small businesses, such as forcing them to increase the cost of their products and services. However, the higher

SEE BUSINESS ON PAGE 2