

U.S. Air Force band performs with students

By Trevor Worden
STAFF WRITER

The UNCA Concert Band helped in bringing the U.S. Air Force Heritage Band to UNCA under the leadership of visiting professor in the music department John Entzi.

"We had people help with programs, stage set up and tickets," Entzi said. "It took about all our band just to man everything."

The Air Force band performed in Lipinsky Auditorium Thursday evening featuring their show 'A Century of Airpower.'

Six UNCA concert band students performed with the Air Force band in the "Black Horse Troup," written by John Phillip Sousa.

"I had seen the band twice before and knew that they were a wonderful group," said Amy Brown, senior student who performed with the band. "It is a really neat opportunity to get to play with a professional group like this, and it's something that we don't usually get to participate in."

The U.S. Air Force Heritage Band is one of the many military bands performing across the United States.

"Our group is based out of Hampton, Va.," said Lieutenant Michael Murray, band conductor. "Our coverage area is focused on Philadelphia, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina."

The band performed to a sold-out crowd. The show opened with a presentation of arms by the Asheville High School JROTC.

The band's second act consisted of their special presentation, including a media clip accompanied by interpretations of well-known favorites.

"This is a wind ensemble style of band, which means that they have one person on each part," Entzi said.

The band travels to certain areas in eight-day tours, and this week they travel to Western North Carolina.

"On this tour we will be visiting several colleges," Murray said. "We are playing at Western Carolina University, Appalachian State University as well as UNCA."

Joining the U.S. Air Force Heritage Band is a task all on its own.

The U.S. Air Force holds auditions multiple times a year for their different ensembles.

"We hold probably about 10 to 15 auditions a year for different instruments," Murray said. "We have about 60 people in our group now, and 43 of those performed tonight. Tonight we had a good crowd, and I was happy with the attendance."



MAGON HAGY - STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

A recent study by the Environmental Quality Institute indicates dangerously high mercury levels for women of childbearing age. Seafood is one of the most common mercury sources, as many fish are contaminated by elemental mercury from coal power plants and other sources.

EQI highlights mercury threat

Hair samples indicate unsafe mercury levels in 1 in 5 women of childbearing age

By Brian Gallagher
STAFF WRITER

The Environmental Quality Institute at UNCA highlights the threat of dangerous mercury levels in fish, as part of the results of the largest mercury hair-sampling project in the United States.

"Fish is really the predominant source of mercury in people's bodies," said Steve Patch, director of EQI and professor of mathematics at UNCA. "We see a dramatic difference between the mercury levels of heavy-fish consumers and non-fish consumers."

The project measured mercury concentrations in hair samples collected from 6,600 participants in 50 states. The study found that the hair samples of one in five women of childbearing age contained mercury levels above the Environmental Protection Agency's limits.

"In people that consumed eight or more servings of fish per month, their mercury concentrations were almost at the EPA limit for women," Patch said. "The people that consumed no fish servings in a month had a mercury level of almost zero."

The EPA sets standards for the amount of safe mercury exposure for men, women and children. Since mercury damages the brain

and central nervous system, pregnant women are especially in danger, according to Patch.

"Women that are exposed to mercury when they are pregnant, hurt their babies' neurological function," Patch said. "What is starting to become evident, although it is not known for a fact, is that mercury is associated with a risk of heart attacks."

The study helped identify high-risk areas of the United States for mercury contamination.

"We found higher instances of mercury problems on the West and East Coasts," Patch said. "Although we didn't have that many samples from Hawaii, our participants from Hawaii had a median mercury level twice the limit for pregnant women."

The mercury that contaminates fish comes from coal-burning power plants. These power plants can be made environmentally-friendly, like the Asheville Progress Energy plant.

The power plant built a new smokestack with environmentally-safe scrubbers in 2005. This new technology reduces the amount of toxins, such as mercury, that the plant produces.

Elemental mercury in the atmosphere, which can come from coal-burning power plants, is the beginning of the contami-

nation process for fish, according to Patch.

"In an elemental form, it's in the air. Then it gets deposited in the earth by naturally falling out of the air or being knocked down by precipitation," Patch said. "Once it reaches the ground, it is transformed by bacteria into methylmercury, where it works its way up the food chain."

This process results in bigger fish having larger concentrations of mercury, according to Patch.

"That's why animals that are predators have a lot higher concentrations of methylmercury," Patch said.

There is a way to limit mercury exposure by eating less predatory fish, according to Patch.

"With most toxins, you really can improve your situation by eliminating your source," Patch said. "In mercury, you would avoid eating the big fish. You would not want to eat any swordfish, and I'd recommend against eating tuna."

Not all fish have mercury contamination problems, according to Patch.

"We did a study where we measured the mercury concentrations in farm-raised trout around the United States," Patch said. "In every single case, the mercury concentration in fish was

below our detection limit."

By eating smaller, less predatory fish, one can decrease their exposure to mercury, according to Patch.

"We feel pretty confident that farm-raised trout are going to be mercury free," Patch said. "If you want to eat fish to get your omega-3 fatty acids, then you can do that with some smaller species, like sardines and fish of that nature."

The mercury project at EQI started in the summer of 2004, and has coordinated efforts with larger organizations, like Greenpeace and Sierra Club. Patch co-authored the report with Richard Maas, a former UNCA professor who died in December.

"I was one of the co-authors," Patch said. "Maas was another co-author. Our student, Kimberly Sergeant, who is now a grad student at N.C. State, was one of the authors."

Dietary changes can be aided with the help of a hair-sample test. As part of the project with EQI, Greenpeace offers hair-sampling kits to test levels of mercury.

"Samples of hair tests more for long-term exposure than a blood test, plus it's very non-invasive test," Patch said. "I'd recommend it."

Key Center provides service opportunities

By Christa Chappelle
STAFF WRITER

The Key Center works toward enhancing UNCA's liberal arts education by providing service-learning opportunities and resources for students.

"Many people think, probably some don't, that liberal education is learning not just with the head, but with the heart and hands," said Merritt Moseley, literature professor and director of the Key Center.

The Key Center originated from a donation in 1998 by Adelaide Key, who wanted the university to remain connected with the community.

The center's mission bases itself on the importance of service learning, which includes volunteering within the community and learning from the experience, according to Moseley.

"Service learning is volunteerism or other kinds of community service education followed by reflection," Moseley said. "The learning part usually comes when students write about it, talk about it to other students or give an oral presentation."

Student interns at the Key Center help other students decide where they want to volunteer and what opportunity would benefit them the most, according to Jaimie Parker, student intern and senior political science student.

"I'm surprised sometimes how quickly I meet with a student," Parker said. "They come in and tell me they need to find a service-learning project, and in under five minutes they are out the door with the information."

"Also, the center provides them with a person who can give them guidance and counseling for what would be most beneficial for them, and what environment in which they can grow the most."

The center offers many service-learning opportunities that help students participate in the community, according to Sarah Hancock, another student intern and senior psychology student.

"There are lots of opportunities available in this area, and we'll be able to help students find these opportunities," Hancock said. "It's important for students to learn how to be really engaged in the community now, so they will continue this act for the rest of their lives."

The Key Center previously organized a trip to visit Atlanta for the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday and plans to organize more service trips, according to Parker.

"We are just assisting other groups, such as assisting Alpha Phi Omega, in promoting their trip

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Senior Profile

Classics student plans undergraduate research

By Alana Rade
STAFF WRITER

For senior classics student Allyson Blomeley, undergraduate research and a three-week trip to Bulgaria are mere stepping stones on the road to graduation in December.

"I decided to major in classics after taking fast track Greek with Sophie Mills, and I found myself very much drawn to the language," Blomeley said. "I really loved it, and I still really love it. I decided to devote my time in college to classics, especially Greek. I am doing the Latin and Greek concentration, but Greek is my favorite."

Blomeley had the opportunity to study with other students last summer in Greece and Italy, where she studied Greek literature and further cultivated her love for the Greek language, history and culture.

"I went to a lot of archaeological dig sites and a ton of museums," Blomeley said. "I think I had the best time in Greece, mostly

because I had more to do. I was doing a literature course about ancient Greek literature. I had a lot of fun in Greece because even when we weren't doing stuff, I would go around the cities alone and explore."

Blomeley plans to study in Bulgaria for three weeks this summer, where she will attend Cornell University through Varna, an American college in Bulgaria.

"It will basically be three weeks of going around and hearing a lot of lectures mainly about connections between ancient Greece, Rome and Bulgaria, and that was part of the attraction. But I've always wanted to go to Bulgaria," Blomeley said.

While Blomeley has made quite a name for herself in the classics department, her nickname, Olga, was made for her before she even set foot on campus.

"Olga is my baptismal name," Blomeley said. "My family is Eastern Orthodox, and when I was first communicating with my



MAGON HAGY - STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Senior classics student Allyson Blomeley has participated in many UNCA activities, including undergraduate research and study abroad.

roommate here we were just chatting online and I told her that was my baptismal name. She decided on her own that she knew too many Allyson's, but didn't know enough Olga's. So even before we

had met in person she was already telling her family and friends about her roommate named Olga. Mainly it's the people I roomed

SEE SENIOR PAGE 3