

# The BLUE BANNER

## Men's Basketball

Bulldogs go undefeated so far this season, see page 4.



## Travelogue

Grab a croissant and read about a student's trip to France. see page 11.



compiled by Sandy LeCorte and Gina Douthal



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## THE NEWS IN BRIEF

### Wildfires inspire new e-mail scam

A new e-mail scam soliciting donations to California wildfire victims emerged in the wake of the tragedy, the Internal Revenue Service warned Friday. The scheme, known as "phishing," attempts to lure recipients to a fake IRS Web site, where users enter their personal and financial information.

The e-mail could also contain malware, or malicious software, which steals passwords and other private information from the victims computer, the IRS said.

### Landmark court case remembered

Today UNC Asheville hosts "Brown v. Board of Education: Fifty Years Later," a one-man performance by award-winning actor Mike Wiley.

In the performance, Wiley transforms himself into multiple characters, recounting the court case, the judge's decision and the consequences of the ruling. The performance counts as a Humanities Cultural Event credit and takes place from 12:20 to 1:20 p.m. in Lipinsky Auditorium.

### Suspects tracked to ECU campus

Authorities charged Charles Frederick Collins and Justin Benjamin Graham with first-degree murder Sunday for the murder of a Hendersonville woman and her son. Authorities found the suspects on the East Carolina University campus, where they fled in their car to a nearby cemetery where they abandoned the car.

compiled by Aaron Dahlstrom

## Asheville climate ignites concern



JESSICA BLYTHE - STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Asheville city firefighters work to clean up the rubble after Ashley Furniture Store burned to the ground last Monday. No one was hurt in the fire on Patton Avenue, but nearly all of the city's fire trucks reported to the scene to try to squelch the blaze that started around 9:30 p.m. and continued to burn well into the night. Officials said the fire only reminded them of the country's ongoing drought problems.

## Water shortage brings attention to dangers of statewide drought

By Jon Walczak  
STAFF WRITER

Severe wildfires, similar to the ones recently seen in California, might one day burn in the million acres of public forests and lands surrounding UNC Asheville, according to Gary K. Cornett, Asheville Fire Department assistant chief of operations.

"I don't know if we would ever be as severe as California, but the potential is here for devastating fires," Cornett said.

Dozens of wildfires scorched California over the past few weeks, forcing the evacuation of hundreds of thousands of people. Southern California is more prone to massive wildfires than Western North Carolina because of a higher concentration of dry, combustible brush and also because of the Santa Ana winds, which helped the fires rapidly expand, Cornett said.

"It's just two different topographies and climates," he said. "But under the right circumstances, we can have fires of that nature."

Asheville, like much of the Southeast, suffered from the effects of a blistering drought in recent months, raising the likelihood of wildfires.

"We are included in what's called an extraordinary

drought," Cornett said. "That's the most severe drought classification there is."

To prevent wildfires, Governor Mike Easley enacted a statewide ban on open fires, except camp fires or cooking fires within 100 feet of an occupied structure, Cornett said. The City of Asheville also enacted a burning ban.

The Asheville Fire Department recently fined Nick Heling, senior literature student, for starting a small fire in his backyard.

"It was a small wood fire in an enclosed pit intended for grilling," Heling said.

He was previously unaware of both the state and city bans on open burning, according to Heling.

"My backyard seemed appropriately damp at the time, but closer inspection and consideration proved me wrong," he said. "My fire was indeed in a pit, but knowing what I now know, I no longer experience the sense of comfort that I once did. I have been humbled by the dangerous power of fire without having to get (physically) burned."

The official brush fire season in Western North Carolina began Oct. 15, and ends May 15.

"It progressively gets worse as the winter goes," Cornett said. "When we get complete leaf-fall, it will get worse. The absolute worse time for brush fires in Western North

Carolina is around March, when it starts warming up and we get a lot of winds and low humidity."

The most common cause of brush fires in the Asheville area is carelessly discarded cigarettes, Cornett said.

To conserve water, the City of Asheville requested that citizens voluntarily reduce their daily consumption and be mindful of wasteful activities, such as washing cars or watering lawns.

"The last I heard, those restrictions, voluntary conservation, have saved about a million gallons a day," Cornett said.

UNC Asheville also implemented voluntary measures, asking both students and faculty to do their part to conserve water, according to Vollie Barnwell, director of Housing Operations. A recent e-mail to students included suggestions on how to save water.

"A memo went out from Residential Education last week," Barnwell said. "All resident students received it in addition to the flyers that were put up in the residence halls."

Suggestions include reducing shower time by two minutes, not flushing toilets multiple times and turning off all

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## Antibiotic-resistant infection spreads from hospitals to students

By Caroline Fry  
STAFF WRITER

A bacterial infection resistant to antibiotics has made its way to Western North Carolina, according to the Buncombe County Health Center.

"MRSA usually infects people who are in hospitals or long-term care settings, but over the past 10 years it has become more of a problem outside of health care settings," said Dr. Steve Swearingen, medical director at Buncombe County Health Center. "This type of MRSA is becoming more widespread throughout the nation, and is a real issue affecting communities everywhere."

MRSA stands for Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus. Swearingen said a MRSA infection is dangerous because it is resistant to certain antibiotics.

"Staphylococcus aureus, or staph, is a common bacteria; so common that 25 to 30 percent of us have it living on our skin at any one time," Swearingen said. "MRSA is a less-common variety of staph that isn't affected by common antibiotics, such as penicillin."

According to Swearingen, the

CDC does not require MRSA cases to be reported by physicians to local health departments, so no data has been collected about this infection. However, three cases were recently reported in Buncombe County schools, and the Buncombe County Health Department sent out letters containing information about MRSA to parents of school children, according to Deborah Gentry of the Buncombe County Health Department.

Students are at a higher risk for contracting MRSA, according to Linda Pyeritz, a specialist in college health nursing at UNC Asheville's Student Health Services.

"MRSA infections are becoming more common in community settings, including schools," Pyeritz said. "Staph and MRSA infections are spread by direct contact, as seen in athletic teams and residential facilities."

The most common symptom of MRSA is a small red bump that looks like a pimple or spider bite, but is red, swollen and painful to the touch, according to Swearingen. He said MRSA may

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Linda Pyeritz  
UNC Asheville Student Health Services

be hard to recognize because it can appear like a normal skin infection, but it can be dangerous if gone undiagnosed.

"Some infections can become more serious and cause pneumonia, or other hard to treat infections," Swearingen said. "Anyone with those symptoms should see a health care provider immediately."

MRSA is spread by direct physical contact with the bacteria, or through contaminated items such as shared towels, razors or gym equipment. Infections occur only when the bacteria gets into a break in the skin, and cannot be spread

through the air. Students who live in college dormitories are at a higher risk for getting MRSA because it is easily spread in places where people have close contact to each other, according to Pyeritz.

"Factors associated with the spread of MRSA include close skin-to-skin contact, open cuts or abrasions on the skin, contaminated items and surfaces, crowded living conditions and poor hygiene," Pyeritz said.

Athletes are especially at risk for contracting MRSA and therefore should be especially on the lookout for symptoms of the infection, according to

Swearingen.

"In Buncombe County and throughout the country, most outbreaks of MRSA in schools have involved athletes," Swearingen said. "Athletes are more likely to have broken skin, which gives the bacteria an easy way into the body. They are also likely to share personal items like towels in locker room situations or come in direct contact with other athletes who may have open or draining wounds on the playing field."

Aarika Converse, a senior literature student, was diagnosed with MRSA during the past summer.

"I was diagnosed in June and had not successfully gotten rid of the MRSA or the symptoms until August or September," Converse said. "I was on multiple oral antibiotics for weeks at a time. According to the health clinic, I had probably been suffering from MRSA for about a month, the symptoms escalating over that time period."

Converse believed she got the bacteria while spending a semester in Hawaii, after getting her car pierced and spending time in a vil-

lage contaminated with polluted water. She had never heard of MRSA until she was diagnosed.

"MRSA is deadly and easily contracted," Converse said. "It is also expensive to treat and has the potential to kill. Individuals on campus and in the community at large should watch open cuts and sores for any development of infection and keep their bodies clean."

Practicing good hygiene is a vital way to stop the spread of MRSA, according to Swearingen. He recommended not sharing items such as towels, sheets and clothing that might be contaminated with the bacteria. He also recommended covering up any open wounds with a clean and sterile bandage.

"The most important thing you can do to reduce the spread of MRSA and a lot of other infections like the flu and the common cold is to wash your hands thoroughly and often," Swearingen said.

If you have questions or concerns about MRSA and its symptoms, contact Student Health Services at 251-6520.