



The Blue Banner

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The News in Brief

Firefighters battle wildfires across Western N.C.

More than 85 fires burned in Western North Carolina last weekend, destroying an estimated 1,000 acres of land.

Firefighters battled a 200-acre brush fire burning 35 miles southeast of UNC Asheville Monday. The fire was under control by early Tuesday, and posed no threat to campus.

Also Monday, firefighters battled a 500-acre fire that destroyed several homes in McDowell County. High winds toppled power lines last weekend, sparking several of the fires and cutting off power to several thousand WNC residents.

President answers recession with tax rebates

President Bush signed a \$145 billion economic stimulus plan Wednesday which will provide rebate checks of up to \$600 for most people who made at least \$3,000 last year.

College students whose parents claimed them as a dependent on tax returns will not receive a rebate.

Rebate recipients should begin receiving checks in late spring or early summer.

By implementing the bipartisan plan, Bush hopes to energize a slumping economy.

Restaurant chain closes up shop in Asheville

Cheeseburger in Paradise, the tropical-themed Tunnel Road restaurant frequented by many UNC Asheville students, closed last week.

The restaurant, which opened in early 2005, was part of a 39-restaurant chain operating in 18 states.

WNC universities see significant rise in applications

UNC Asheville received 2,240 applications this year, compared to 2,350 last year, a drop of five percent.

Other WNC universities saw significant increases, including a 63 percent jump at Western Carolina, from 3,908 to 6,388.

The number of applications to Appalachian State rose 22 percent, from 11,628 to 14,206.

Gaining admission to a university anywhere in the country has become more difficult over the past few years, as universities raise their standards to counterbalance consistent annual rises in the number of applications they receive.

Compiled by Jon Walczak



Students gather on the Quad as weather warmed up last week. Most students spend their nights and time in between classes at part-time jobs.

Finding the right path

Five hundred seniors apply for graduation, but are they ready?

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The time clock was broken, his boss was withholding tips and he came home every night smelling like chicken parmesan and pizza sauce.

Pierce Johnson, 2007 graduate of UNC Asheville, quit his job at Nona Mia's Italian Kitchen before he found a new job, but knew it was his only choice.

"It got really dull, really fast," he said, referring to his position last summer as a waiter for the Italian restaurant on Patton Avenue.

Johnson began his job search by scanning the listings of jobs related to his skills. He checked local publications and the Internet, submitting his résumé for positions all over WNC, but one resource he failed to take advantage of was UNCA's Career Center.

The Career Center is a campus-based resource that provides networking and outreach services to

both students and alumni. Headed by Eileen Buecher, the center hosts two jobs fairs annually featuring 80 to 90 employers, as well as 30 workshops and programs a year such as walk-in resume clinics, graduate school practice tests and many other services.

"The goal of the career center is to help students make educated decisions about their prospective career choices," said Buecher, who has 18 years of career development experience. "We want the students to trust us and be comfortable with using the services."

The Career Center is a valuable resource for UNCA students and graduates alike, but Johnson found a way nonetheless.

A couple weeks after quitting the restaurant business, Johnson sat at his desk, peering through the squeaky-clean glass windows of his new office at the Carolina Financial Group in Brevard.

He credits his current employment status with the

investment banking company as a stroke of luck and good timing, but makes little mention of his credentials as a factor.

Johnson graduated with a Bachelor of International Economics and a Bachelor of Political Science from UNCA and he did it in four years.

"Looking back, it was the best four years of my life. Every year was different and I learned so much," Johnson said. "At the end, I felt really well-equipped to continue my education if I wanted to, or go ahead and jump right into the job market."

He jumped right into the job market and works as a financial analyst for the nationally recognized company. He has many duties, but primarily focuses on maintaining financial security for the company and their business partners.

One such duty is to check all outgoing and incoming e-mail correspondence for Carolina Financial Group's employees.

Johnson ensures there is no insider trading, fraud or other corrupt business practices going on amidst the company workers.

"Generally it's not a problem, it's just something that is mandated by the Securities and Exchange Commission and someone has to do it," Johnson said.

Johnson is happy with his post-graduation position in the community, but does not intend to stay long.

During his four years at UNCA, he was invested deeply in humanitarian work confronting the AIDS crisis in Africa.

Johnson, along with UNCA alums Ben Cox and John Stephens, started the Student Global Aids Campaign chapter on campus. The chapter was founded with the intention of raising money for a non-profit established by Stephens' parents, called the Amani Foundation. The venture was a success and students received the

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A Whole Lotta Love

SGA tackles taboos in second Lovefest

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SGA kicked off the second annual weeklong Lovefest on Monday complete with condom application demonstrations, HIV testing and lectures on "the history of love."

"It's a really great week because issues in society are addressed well by Lovefest both for sexually active people to learn about sexual health and then people with relationship issues to learn about communication," said Steven Quinn, SGA executive of public relations.

Lectures and activities will be held to inform students about safe sex, relationships and love.

"The response of Lovefest last year was really big and we are

hoping this year will be too. This year's Lovefest is more grab and go," Quinn said.

Free HIV screening provided by the Buncombe County Health Department, a blood drive and lectures on love and relationships are some of the events that will take place throughout the week.

"We started Lovefest to correlate events because some of the organizations have been overlapping each other. It is a week-long festival instead of competition between organizations going on," said Nick Ladd, SGA vice president.

SGA's three main events of the year are Greenfest, which takes place in the fall, Block Party, and Lovefest, which showcase the organization's hard work they do on campus.

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EMILY GRAY - STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Lovefest runs from Feb. 11 to 15 in the Highsmith Union. SGA sponsors the event, with activities all related to safe sexual practices.

FEATURES



PHOTO COURTESY OF GFNC
Hogan is just one of many animals Greyhound Friends of North Carolina helps save every year.

Shelter gives dogs a second chance

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Two greyhounds disembark from a white minivan and calmly stroll around parked cars, their tan and black striped coats glistening over sleek bodies honed by years of racing.

For spectators, the scene in the Staples parking lot on Merrimon Avenue last Friday night wouldn't have seemed special, but for the two dogs, Iris and Step, it was a matter of life and death.

"They're wonderful dogs," said Dan Griffin, president of Greyhound Friends of North Carolina. "The greyhounds, as a breed, are very gentle, docile creatures. Although they can run as fast as 45 mph, they should be kept indoors."

If it weren't for volunteers at GFNC, Iris and Step would have joined the thousands of greyhounds euthanized once their racing careers are over, a fate Sherry Painter, a volunteer in Asheville, seeks to prevent.

"I started doing this in a town with a track so I saw the condition of the dogs when they came right off the track," Painter said. "They were full of flea bites and muzzle sores, and their fur was ratty."

GFNC has rescued approximately 4,000 dogs since it was established in 1994.

"We were told all the time from people at the kennel at the track, 'Gotta get rid of this dog tomorrow or somebody's just going to have to kill it.' If they close down, then you're stuck trying to find homes for 50 or so dogs that they're just going to have to abandon otherwise," Painter said.

Most dogs are in top condition within a month after GFNC gets involved, a difference that's obvious at the meets and greets she hosts, according to Painter.

"You can say, 'See, this is her before and this is after.' They really do clean up pretty well," Painter said.

Saving greyhounds requires many volunteers, and the story of Iris and Step is a good example. Lisa Frances drove from her home in Oak Ridge to transport the greyhounds to

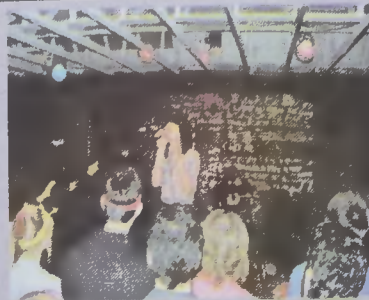
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This Week



Features

Indulge your sweet tooth this Valentine's Day at Sisters McMullen's Cupcake Corner, page 6.



Arts Etc.

The Fiery Furnaces rock The Grey Eagle with their psychedelic-inspired jams, page 8.

Weather

	THURSDAY		FRIDAY
55	25	60	30
	SATURDAY		SUNDAY
52	34	45	34