



UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA ASHEVILLE The Blue Banner

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Law enforcement squares off on drug legalization

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Buncombe County Sheriff Van Duncan and Major Earl Barnett, former Greenville County Sheriff's Officer, debated marijuana legalization and the U.S. prison population in a Lipinsky auditorium discussion April 2 in front of

approximately 40 students.

"We have been in the so-called 'War on Drugs' for the past 40 years, and if it is a real war, then I have to say that we've lost in about every community in the country," Barnett said during the debate. "Drugs and drug dealers have infiltrated every state, city and county in our country. This makes me question whether or not public pol-

icy and criminalization are the best approaches."

Barnett went on to cite the billions of dollars the U.S. government spent during the War on Drugs, which was implemented by President Nixon in the late 1960s to decrease illegal drug trafficking into the country.

The policy has resulted in hundreds of thousands of drug related

arrests, according to Barnett.

"What have we gained from the War on Drugs? We haven't substantially decreased the cost of drugs so people can't afford to buy them, nor have we reduced the number of users or increased their chances of being arrested," Barnett said. "Myself and many others favor education and rehabilitation other than criminal enforcement."

Legalization of drugs is not the correct path to take, according to Duncan. Instead, a balanced approach consisting of prevention, enforcement and treatment should be used to combat illegal drug use.

"Illegal drugs are illegal because they are harmful," Duncan said. "The legalization of drugs will lead to an increased level of drug use as well as a higher level

of addiction. It would make accessibility easier, and it is the wrong course of action."

Duncan repeatedly cited a Drug Enforcement Agency document entitled "Summary of the Top 10 Facts on Legalization," which states that significant progress has been made in recent years concerning the fight against illegal drugs.

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UNCA submits plan for new track

By Ben Smith
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The athletic department has submitted plans to the State Construction Office for the \$2 million Karl Straus project.

The plan includes a new track, field event facilities and a stadium with bleachers.

"The plans were sent back to us with corrections and our architects are now correcting those," said Athletic Director Janet Cone.

The State Construction Office has to approve all university building projects. Local firm Camille-Alberice Architects will adjust the plans before the university resubmits the plans to the state.

The athletic department set several tentative dates since launching the UNCA Track Pledge Web site to raise money for the project. In November the athletic department said the project would start early this year.

"We're moving along, we're about on schedule," Cone said. "We've been working on getting the plans approved for six to eight weeks now. The state has to go through projects with a fine tooth comb and make sure everything is in accordance to state regulations with plumbing, electricity or fire codes. It's not uncommon that they send the project back to fix a few things."

When the plans are approved, the university will put the project to bid for a construction contractor.

The university has raised around \$1.2 million for the project, including \$500,000 from Buncombe County, which is awaiting approval for the 2008-2009 budget set to come out in June.

An anonymous donor has pledged another \$500,000 but is waiting until the county approves their funding to finalize the donation.

The current track is over 25 years old and does not meet NCAA standards for competition. Two athletes on the team have stress fractures. Natalie Pearson has a pulled hamstring. Many athletes attribute the injuries to the track's unrelenting surface.

For information on the UNCA Track Pledge, visit uncatrackpledge.com



Top, Glen Edward Chapman sits in Carmichael Hall on Friday. Chapman came to UNCA to meet with students, faculty and others instrumental in his exoneration from death row last week. Bottom, Chapman walks with litigation specialist Pam Laughon on the UNCA campus.

After 15 years on death row, Glen Edward Chapman is finally free

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It starts to rain as Glen Edward Chapman walks from the library steps to the Highsmith University Union.

While the rest of our group of four complains, "Ed" quietly relishes the small token of freedom.

"I can't get enough of it," he says. "They used to make us go inside when it started raining."

Chapman spent 15 years in prison for a murder he did not commit until District Attorney Jay Gaither dismissed the charges a week ago.

The decision comes after a court ruling to retry the case in November. Chapman and his mediation specialist Pam Laughon, also the chair of the psychology department at UNC Asheville, drove to Hickory to see Chapman's father after leaving Central Prison in Raleigh.

"We're standing on the back porch at my Dad's house and I hear a tree branch brush against the house and I got real spooked," Chapman said. "For so long I was inside, so now the sounds of crickets and trees are out of the ordinary."

Over the past five years, Chapman had seven hearings, and the press never showed up, according to Laughon. Things have changed. In

recent weeks, *The New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times* have featured stories on Chapman's exoneration within the past week.

"There was no interest in Ed," Laughon said. "He's not from a wealthy family, he grew up in the projects, he's black, he wasn't educated. My sense of it was that people did care about him much at the time. Everyone was white and he was black. They knew his family, but it was a bunch of white folks that were investigating the murder."

Chapman spent 15 years in prison after being arrested for the murders of Betty Jean Ramseur and Tenene Yvette Conley in 1992. The lead police investigator, Dennis Rhoney, is now on paid administrative leave and suspended from his job at the Burke County Sheriff's Office after Judge Robert C. Ervin found that Rhoney gave false testimony and withheld evidence.

"There was so much more in Ed's case that was faulty," said Frank Goldsmith, Chapman's lead attorney based out of Marion. "It wasn't a found flaw in the system that freed him, but officers who concealed evidence. I don't know how you legislate against that."

Since 2002, district attorneys in North Carolina have reheard 48

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Trey Bouvier - Staff Photographer

Obama campaign takes root in Asheville

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Illinois Sen. Barack Obama's campaign for the presidency inspired many of Asheville's politically minded to get involved in the closest race for the Democratic Party's nomination in recent memory, Obama supporters said.

"The depth of commitment (from Obama supporters) is something I've never seen before," said 69-year old volunteer Andrea Williams. "His character shines through and I think people are just grasping for that kind of leadership."

Others describe Asheville's culture as a perfect fit for Obama supporters.

"Asheville is such a progressive little pocket here in the mountains and I totally expected a lot of support for Obama, but I'm sure there are plenty of Clinton supporters in other areas of this state," senior sociology student Kylie Black said.

Obama currently leads Clinton 56 percent to 33 percent in North Carolina, according to a recent Rasmussen Reports poll.

Though Obama is strengthening his lead in North Carolina, Clinton leads 47 percent to 42 percent in Pennsylvania, according to Rasmussen.

Pennsylvania holds its primary April 22. Other states yet to hold primaries are North Carolina, Kentucky, Indiana, South Dakota and Oregon.

Obama is campaigning heavily in North Carolina and established an Asheville office at 107 Merrimon Ave. The office is a bustling one-stop location for Obama supporters and curious voters, according to its volunteers.

The office sells stickers, buttons and other Obama memorabilia. In addition, it provides voter registration sign-up forms, helpful volunteers and an assortment of refreshments.

"Aside from voting, I've never participated in an election or a campaign in my life and I am just so excited about this man," Williams said.

Williams, a licensed psychologist in Maryland and an artist in Asheville, volunteered and they put her at the front desk to answer questions, answer phone calls, sell merchandise and take donations.

"I've got no prior training, but have gotten it here on the job and it has just been a lot of fun," Williams said.

Visitors flocked to the office this past weekend. Some came in wishing to donate money and others simply wanted a button or a sticker.

"The push right now is to get

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This Week

Arts, Etc.
Telepath rock The Orange Peel with Middle-Eastern jams.
Full story on page 8

Poll of the Week

Are you registered to vote?

52% Yes 4% Yes, but I rarely vote
19% No 26% No, but I will be by election time

Visit thebluebanner.net to take this week's poll. Check back here next week for the results!

Weather FORECAST BY SANDY LACORTE

	THURSDAY 74 52		FRIDAY 70 50
	SATURDAY 64 45		SUNDAY 56 42