



Ms. Patricia B. Locklear, left and Ms. Ponell Locklear

LRDA Receives a 2004 Youth Garden Grant

The LRDA has received a grant from the National Gardening Association. The garden program submitted by Ms. Patricia B. Locklear and Ms. Ponell Locklear was selected as a winner of the 2004 Youth Garden Grant. The LRDA Head Start Centers will receive tools, seeds, birdhouses and other outdoor items to beautify their properties and educate their youth about agriculture. Ms. Patricia B. Locklear, director of Child Services for the LRDA, stated "I am so excited about this opportunity for our children. We can open the doors of discovery through these extra activities." Ms. Patricia Locklear was also very excited about the inclusion of Ms. Ponell Locklear. Ms. Ponell Locklear is a Sandhills Community College student who is finalizing her degree in Human Services. She decided to complete her coop hours by learning more about the LRDA agency. "LRDA and Child Services Department has been an asset to me personally. They are a professional agency, but still they act like a family," stated Ms. Locklear. "If it hadn't been for LRDA I would never have had the opportunities I was allowed here. The garden grant was the 1st grant I worked on. I am so proud." The agency will begin to receive items through participating gardening centers this spring. For more information about the LRDA Child Services Department, please call (910)521-8602 or visit the website at www.lumbee.org



Shown is Accommodations Coordinator Misty Sykes.

Grant to upgrade technology for UNCP's disabled students

PEMBROKE, N.C. - Support for disabled students at UNC Pembroke just took a leap into the future. UNC Pembroke's Office of Disability Support Services (DSS) has received a grant to enhance accessibility to computer software that supports disabled students. The grant valued at \$19,200 and allows for a package of software to be installed on any computer on campus. The grant from Premier Assistive Technology Company is called "Breaking Down Barriers to Assistive Technology." The software performs functions such as enlarging computer text, reading textbooks and reformatting text documents into audio files. Dr. Roger Brown hailed the grant as a major step for the University's support for disabled students. "Disability Support Services at UNC Pembroke under Mary Helen Walker's leadership are serving our students extremely well," Dr. Brown said. "We are proud of our proactive and positive approach to making higher education accessible to every qualified student who desires it. The grant will help ensure that we employ the latest technology on their behalf." The Office of Disability Support Services (DSS) serves approximately 500 UNCP students, including more than 40 visually-impaired students. Accommodations Coordinator Misty Sykes applied for the grant. "This is a significant upgrade of our resources for students with disabilities," Sykes said. "I am very impressed with this software." Besides upgrading current software, students with disabilities are able to perform tasks that were previously unavailable to them. Sykes said. "For the first time, we have a talking calculator and a talking dictionary," she said. "And for the first time, audio files can be converted to popular formats that do not require the use of a computer to hear." "Also for the first time, we have a program that can read PDF files," Sykes said. "There were so many documents on the Internet that were not accessible to the disabled." Premier Assistive Technology's online tutorial program will save DSS time and money. "The free online tutorial is fast and easy. I did it in one night," Sykes said. "Before we received this software, students made appointments to get help, and it took many hours of tutorials." DSS Director Mary Helen Walker said the new software would increase the productivity of her staff. Disabled students will be the primary beneficiaries. "Accessibility of services and helping the disabled to become more independent is the bottom line in our office," Walker said. "This grant is a breakthrough for us." The grant allows UNCP to run assistive technology programs on as many personal computers as needed. Currently, assistive technology software is on four computers in DSS's office, five in UNCP's 24-hour computer lab and 20 computers scattered across campus. The grant also allows for full technical support and free upgrades for one year. For more information, contact the Office of Disability Support Services at (910) 521-6695.

Becoming fit can be a weighty issue

PEMBROKE - In the fall of 2000, at the age of 31, Katherine Locklear tipped the scales at more than 400 pounds. She suffered from painful arthritis, heart trouble and high blood pressure. She had a variety of prescription medications to manage from day to day. "I was merely existing," says Locklear. "I couldn't play with my two wonderful children, and I could barely keep up with my responsibilities as a mathematics teacher." In November of 2000, Locklear was hospitalized due to her heart condition. "I had no quality of life," she says. "I knew it was time to start fighting back." For Locklear, the best answer seemed to be weight-reduction surgery.

"I was devastated when I learned that I actually had to lose weight before the surgeon would operate," she says. On Jan. 6, 2001, Locklear joined the FirstHealth Center of Health & Fitness-Pembroke. Because of the chronic arthritic pain in her knees, her exercise options were limited. She chose to participate in water aerobics and attended the classes regularly. "I HAD TO go at my own pace, but with the help and encouragement I got from the staff, I finally felt comfortable being in the water," she says. By Feb. 14, Locklear's weight had dropped to 370 pounds, low enough to qualify for surgery. Although each individual approaches exercise differently, health issues are often the key motivation. A physician may recommend supervised exercise for patients recovering from strokes or heart attacks, people coping with serious injuries those who are working to manage chronic diseases such as high blood pressure or diabetes. Because the FirstHealth Centers for Health & Fitness are associated with hospitals and medical practices, they are uniquely qualified to assist individuals working to manage or prevent health problems. In fact, Kim Covington, manager of the FirstHealth Center for Health & Fitness-Pembroke, is an exercise physiologist. "A physiologist is trained to understand how the body responds to exercise," she says. "We know how to determine what heart rates during exercise are appropriate under a variety of circumstances. We help each individual establish fitness goals that are achievable and specific to their personal situation." Located on the West Third Street in Pembroke, the Center for Health & Fitness strives to offer recreational activities or exercises that appeal to a variety of taste and interests. Members can use state-of-the-art cardiovascular and strength-training equipment including treadmills, stationary bicycles, cross trainers and free-weights. Or they can take advantage of the indoor, heated pool for independent swimming or as a participant in special water exercise classes. Additional opportunities for group exercise - including low-impact aerobics, stretch clinics and kickboxing - are available. Families have access to on-site child care. To further maximize the emotional benefits of fitness and encourage personal comfort and satisfaction, FirstHealth also offers on-site massage therapy for additional fee. A fitness program is about more than just losing weight. It is an investment in one's health, but the payoffs can be huge. "I originally went to FirstHealth to help me lose weight, but I didn't realize how much more I would gain," Locklear says. "It became my refuge. The relationships I developed and the escape the exercise offered filled the void in my life after 'my food' was limited." "To really make a difference in your health, you have to be persistent about fitness," says Covington. "It is a long process, and you have to be willing to stick with it - even if you don't see immediate results. Too many people have unrealistic expectations and quit early on. But those who keep pushing forward feel better and get stronger. "Some of our members have been able to reduce their dependence on medication because of their commitment to exercise." For Locklear, her surgery was simply another step along the road to good health. Following her recovery, she resumed her exercise routine and carefully monitored her nutritional choices. Today, she is 215 pounds lighter and no longer suffers from chronic joint pain, high blood pressure or heart stress. Previously unable to manage a one-hour water exercise class, Locklear not only completes such classes regularly, but also works out 45 minutes or more using a cardio glide and weights. She is working to complete a certification that will enable her to become a part of the FirstHealth team, teaching water exercise for other members. "I have always felt everything happens for a reason," she says. "I know it is only through the grace of God I have accomplished what I have. Today, I continue to go to the fitness center. I have become an advocate for exercise and FirstHealth. More than ever, I am loving life and actively cherishing the moments I share with my children." To learn more about how exercise can make a difference in your life, call the FirstHealth Center for Health and Fitness-Pembroke at 521-4777. Or stop by for a free facility tour and orientation.



Weightless Lumbees: Dr. Tim Ritter, advisor; Charlene Locklear, April Oxendine and Brandon Locklear.

Weightless Lumbees begin raising funds to fly with NASA

PEMBROKE, N.C. - A group of UNC Pembroke science majors, who call themselves the Weightless Lumbees, will take a trip this spring aboard NASA's KC-135 aircraft. They will conduct a scientific experiment in zero gravity aboard the famous "vomit comet." This is the second consecutive year that a UNCP group was accepted to NASA's Reduced Gravity Student Flight Opportunities Program, headquartered in Houston, Texas. Project advisor is UNCP physics Professor Tim Ritter. "We are very fortunate to be accepted for a second trip," Dr. Ritter said. "Participants in this program come from very elite schools. The NASA folks like us because we are focused on the outreach side of the program." When they return, the Weightless Lumbees will package an educational program to take to local schools. "We have already made seven presentations, including Pembroke Middle School, Purnell Swett High School and Union Elementary School," said Brandon Locklear of Pembroke. "I will head up the outreach side." Last year, the Weightless Lumbees also made presentations at Lumbee Homecoming, the Festival of Flight in Fayetteville and at several other events and conferences. "Outreach is becoming more important to the project this year," Locklear said. "The kids were very excited at the schools we went to last year, and we have designed some new hands-on experiments for them." April Oxendine, who flew with the Weightless Lumbees last year, and newcomer Charlene Locklear will lead the scientific side of the project. "I'm probably going to be the one who gets sick," Locklear said. "We have designed an experiment on the rate of enzyme reactions in zero gravity." Oxendine said the experiment will be similar to last year's, but with improved laboratory equipment built by engineering students from UNC Charlotte. Dr. Ritter said the experience with NASA in Houston is memorable. One spin-off benefit from last year's is that team member Joe Oxendine was accepted to Navy Flight school after his graduation in May 2003. "Joe really became energized by his experience with NASA," Dr. Ritter said. "He wants to go all the way and become an astronaut." All three of UNCP's Weightless Lumbees for 2004 are double majors in biology and chemistry with a biomedical emphasis. From Lumberton, Charlene Locklear will graduate in May 2004 and was accepted to medical school at East Carolina University. Also from Lumberton, April Oxendine will graduate in December 2004 and plans to apply to medical school. An ex-Marine and Pembroke native, Brandon Locklear is a sophomore and also plans to attend medical school. There is work to be done before the UNCP and UNC Charlotte Weightless Lumbees travel to Houston. "Our first mission is to raise the money to get to Houston," Dr. Ritter said. Last year, the Weightless Lumbees were supported by UNCP's Office of Academic Affairs, the Health Careers Opportunity Program, the North Carolina Space Consortium, the North Carolina Biotechnology Consortium and the Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation in Science. "NASA pays for the plane and fuel," Dr. Ritter said. "We pay the rest."

Learning Together Spring Sessions Scheduled

The Robeson County Family Support Program has scheduled sessions for the Learning Together Project. This Project is a school readiness program that serves children (3.5 - 5 years of age) who have not had Pre-School, Head Start experience, or Child Care. Parents or other caregivers attend the sessions with their child and learn together (thus the name "learning together"). It is designed to prepare the parent and child to enter Kindergarten healthy and prepared for success. Learning Together will be operating at six elementary schools this Spring. The classes will be held for 11 sessions in the evenings and will run from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. March 22, 2004 through June 8, 2004. They will be held at those times on Monday at East Robeson, Rex Rennert, R. B. Dean, and Union Chapel Elementary. On Tuesday sessions will be held at Pembroke and St. Pauls Elementary. The Program prepares children and parents for Kindergarten. To register, call the Center for Community Action at 739-7851.

Program to Promote Homebuyer Education in Indian Country

What: The homeownership rate for Native Americans is half that of the general U.S. Population, about 33% - compared to almost 70% nationwide. An announcement of new partnership seeks to reverse this trend. The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) and the National American Indian Housing Council (NAIHC) announce a partnership to provide culturally relevant education materials using an Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation (NRC) model. Funders include: The Ford Foundation, Wells Fargo Housing Foundation, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Bank One, The Enterprise Foundation, Fannie Mae Foundation, GreenPoint Mortgage, Housing Assistance Council and Washington Mutual. When: February 23, 2004 (Monday) at 11 a.m. Where: Wyndham Washington Hotel, in the Woodlawn Room 1400 M. Street NW, Washington, DC. Who: Speakers: Tex Hall, President, National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), Russell Sossamon, Chairman, National American Indian Housing Council (NAIHC) and Executive Director, Choctaw Nation Housing Authority, Gary L. Gordon, Executive Director, NAIHA. Why Attend? Predatory lending is a major problem in Indian Country, according to government data 200,000 homes are needed immediately in tribal areas, according to recent government report. In tribal areas, 7.4% of homes are severely crowded, compared to 2.7% of general U.S. households. What To Do To Attend: For more information or to R.S.V.P., please contact Jason McCarty at (202) 466-7767.



Prospect UMC site for Annual Youth Rally

Prospect United Methodist Church at 3929 Missouri Road, Maxton (across the road from Prospect School - 7 miles south of Red Springs, 5 miles Northwest of Pembroke, 7 miles Northeast of Maxton) will be the site for the Annual YOUTH RALLY on Monday, March 1, 2004 at 6:45 p.m. All youth (grades 6-college) are especially invited to attend. Adults are welcomed and expected with their youth group. The Rally is sponsored by the Rams Young Christian Association, The Prospect UM Men, and Prospect Ladies' Fellowship. For more information, you may call Prospect UM at (910) 521-2111 during the day. There will be group singing, a dramatic presentation by the Drama Team of Tabernacle Baptist Church, Music Ministry, and preaching by The Reverend Kelvin Locklear, Pastor of White Hill Free Will Baptist Church. There will be awards given to the largest youth group, the youth group that travels the furthest, the oldest rallyer, and perfect attendance awards to those who have attended each of the Rallies since its beginning. Everyone will be treated to pizza after the rally and you should be on your way home by 9:00 p.m.