

Watching hoops at the arena can be good experience

Continued from page 1B

see that this was a popular place for fans. Parents also have a chance to let the kids play, especially if they've grown bored with watching the Bobcats miss shots and forget to play defense. The Rufus Room has games for kids and some of the young ones I saw shooting the rock

should've suited up and around the team on the floor.

Too bad people didn't come down inside the arena, though. I'm sure there were more empty seats than management wanted to count. (And I was worried that this game was going to be sold out because of Houston star Tracy McGrady.)

Seeing the people milling around the arena, you almost get excited about finding your seat and watching the game, and then there's tip off. Oh well.

The most noise the Bobcats fans made was when it was time for the tee shirt toss. I seriously believe the Bobcats don't have fans. For a minute,

I thought that there was going to be some good clean trash talking when a group of young men sat beside us and started cheering for the Bobcats. But after about 10 minutes and 30 Rockets' points, they got up and left. I think they headed back to the bar.

The Bobcats also provided

pregame and postgame music by some band that played a lot of cover songs. They weren't particularly good, but the concept is. Local musicians have a chance to play for thousands, OK, hundreds of people and expose them to their music.

Strolling around the arena is almost worth the price of

admission. You never know who you may run into, an old acquaintance from college or a Carolina Panthers defensive lineman. But if you want to see competitive basketball, you might want to head down Beatties Ford Road and step into Brayboy Gymnasium and watch the Golden Bulls of Johnson C. Smith.

Food drive shows spirit of giving in one student

Continued from page 1B

some extra canned goods that he would end up with 207 of them.

"On the first day I got 102 cans from the grocery store and on the second day I got 105 cans from friends and family," he said.

The Sedgefield campus is awed by Antonio's commitment to the project and the way he exemplifies the December character trait of caring. This is especially meaningful because Sedgefield is a Focus school and students do not come

from wealthy homes. Ninety percent of the students at Sedgefield receive free lunch, according to school officials.

Principal Lenora Shipp said Antonio exemplifies what is being taught at the school.

"We've tried to instill good character in our students,"

she said. "We have an at risk population and they still want to give to others."

Shipp said students know there are other people who need help and they want to give to others. Antonio, Shipp said, got really excited about the canned food drive and

took it on as a personal mission.

"He's a quiet student, very reserved and one wouldn't have expected this from him," she said. "I think it says he has a giving spirit and a good heart."

According to Shipp,

Sedgefield students like helping others and always find ways to do so.

Following Hurricane Katrina, students raised \$800 to help the victims of the storm.

"People really want to give, especially when it's from a child his age," Shipp said.

Clafin student seeks to counter stereotypes one friend at a time

Continued from page 1B

"The news gives only the bad things happening," he said.

Incorrect assumptions, he said, range from Mexicans being short—Rivera is 6 feet tall—to Mexican cities being dirty and dangerous.

"I talk about cities that are safe and clean. We have really beautiful places, beautiful lakes," he said. He tells friends about cities' tradition-

al festivals "just to change their minds."

Rivera, who loves to cook spaghetti, said he misses authentic Mexican food. His friends treated him to a good-bye dinner at a Mexican restaurant last week, but the food is not the same, he said.

While earning A's for his own coursework, Rivera, a business major, also helped students learn Spanish.

As for stereotypes, "when

you meet Ramon, it shatters all that," said Clafin senior Brittany Jones, 21. "At first, I didn't understand a thing he was talking about. ... It's funny, because we made a friendship out of nothing."

He encourages friends to study a semester in his country. Rivera said he spent more

on books at Clafin than he spent on his entire college career in Mexico. There he spent the equivalent of about \$60 a semester to go to school.

"I want to learn a whole lot more and broaden my horizons on every race possible," said Clafin senior Brandis Francis, 21, whose travels so

far include only the East Coast.

"Ramon is really an ambassador for his country," said Ingrid Watson-Miller, director of Clafin's international studies program. "Americans need to get rid of their ethnocentrism."

Rivera is encouraging his

16-year-old sister to study in the United States, too.

"The personal experience, another point of view, helps you grow and mature and believe in yourself," he said. He's sad about leaving this week. "This is like my second family here."

Sex just a game today

Continued from page 1B

these sex party stories. And if the people who were interviewed about these parties are so proud of what they're doing, why were their names changed?

Casual sex should've died when the first case of HIV was diagnosed over 25 years ago. This isn't to be prudish, it's just being smart. Although the Essence article states the swingers use condoms, it doesn't negate the fact that black women are dying in growing numbers from AIDS.

According to blackaids.org, we're on the right road but are a long way from ending the epidemic.

"People who don't know they're infected are less likely to protect their partners and completely unable to receive treatment. ... Before we can get people into care, we must encourage the black community to take ownership of the disease, to understand the science of the disease and participate in comprehensive, age-appropriate and culturally-competent prevention methods," the site states.

Writing about suburban sex parties and making swinging a part of our popular culture is not the way to do this unless you

Height loss linked to heart disease, earlier death in men

Continued from page 1B

Height loss "may well be another marker of declining health in the elderly," said study co-author Goya Wannamethee, an epidemiologist at Royal Free & University College Medical School in London.

Height loss almost always occurs with other evidence of frailty, she said, such as loss of mobility, weight loss, breathing trouble and musculoskeletal problems, such as arthritis.

Other research has shown similar factors underlie both osteoporosis and heart disease, such as high cholesterol, inflammation and high blood pressure, she said. Inflammation and lipids in the blood may contribute to low bone mineral density, although the exact mechanism is unclear.

The findings, published in Monday's Archives of Internal Medicine, suggest that men should exercise to maintain the muscle strength needed to stand tall, said Dr. Anne Kenny of the University of Connecticut Health Center, who studies osteoporosis and frailty, but was not involved in the new study.

A small study has shown that yoga can increase height in women, Kenny said, and yoga may also help men.

"It points to the need to increase physical activity and try to maintain strength to ward off dis-

ability and mortality," Kenny said.

Researchers measured the height of 4,213 British men, first in the late 1970s when the men were between the ages of 40 and 59, then 20 years later, when the men were 60 to 79 years old.

About 15 percent of the men lost more than 3 centimeters in height. That's about 1.2 inches. Osteoporosis is usually associated with much greater height loss.

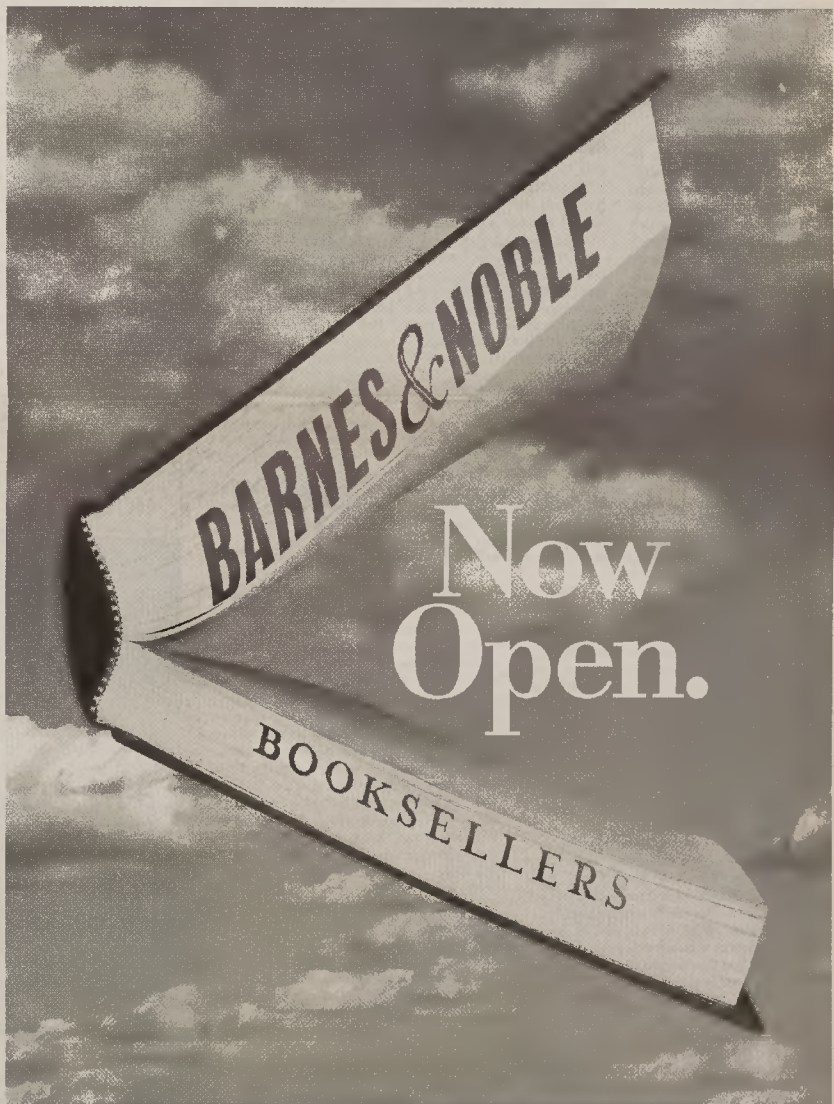
The men also completed a medical and lifestyle questionnaire, were weighed and gave a blood sample. The researchers followed the men for another six years, during which 760 of the men died.

The men who lost 3 centimeters or more in height were 60 percent more likely to die within six years than the men who retained their height, the researchers found.

When the scientists considered age, smoking, alcohol use and pre-existing health conditions, they still saw a relationship between height loss, earlier death and heart disease.

More research is needed to measure the importance of muscle mass and muscle strength in the aging process, Wannamethee said.

"It is unlikely that just maintaining one's height is the key to longevity," she said.



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