

Workers face tail end of Pillowtex benefits

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
 CHARLOTTE — The unemployment rate in Cabarrus County, hit hard by textile shutdowns, is lower than it has been in three years. But that's no cause for celebration.
 Local officials said the change reflects not a reviving economy, but the fact that unemployment benefits are finally running out for former workers at Pillowtex, which shut down for good in the summer of 2003.
 The county's unemployment rate dropped to 4.6 percent in October, according to numbers released by the state last week. That is the same as the overall state rate and the lowest in Cabarrus since September 2001.
 Pillowtex employed about 3,650 of its 4,800 North Carolina workers in Cabarrus County, making sheets and towels. Unemployment reached 11 percent in the county after the company went out of business in July 2003.
 Carolyn Mays, who runs the state

Employment Security Commission office in the county, said Pillowtex workers no longer are included in the statistical count of the unemployed because they are not receiving benefits.
 Unemployment benefits can last a year or more, depending on whether a person returns to school for retraining. They began running out for some former Pillowtex employees during the summer and will end for hundreds more by the end of January, Mays said.
 She said hiring has been slow in the county; available service-sector jobs tend to pay in the range of \$8 to \$8.50 per hour, compared to jobs at Pillowtex that averaged \$11.60 per hour.
 Michael Walden, an economist at North Carolina State University, said the latest state data shows the overall size of the Cabarrus labor force — the people who are employed, plus those listed as unemployed — is shrinking.

N.C. loses business ranking

State slips to No. 5 in annual survey

BY ANH LY
 STAFF WRITER
 North Carolina was toppled from its top spot of having the best business climate this year, and some legislators say it's because the state is investing money in the wrong places.
 For three years, North Carolina ranked No. 1 as the "best place to do business" in Site Selection magazine.
 But the latest survey conducted by the business recruiting magazine says Corporate America is looking at Texas this year as its top choice to do business.
 The ranking partly is based on a survey in which corporate executives were asked to rank states according to the ease of doing business, costs, incentives and other factors.
 The other part of the ranking process is based on business expansion activity, according to Conway Data's New Plant database, which

tracks business developments in each state.
 In 2003, Texas established a \$295 million fund to lure projects to the state. Since then, it has attracted big-name companies such as Sematech, Home Depot, Citgo and Koyo Steering.
 The fund also allocates money to engineering and computer science programs at the University of Texas-Dallas and facilities such as the Center for Advanced Diagnostic Imaging in Houston.
 This flurry of economic activity has secured Texas as the No. 1 place to do business. North Carolina fell to No. 5 behind New York, Illinois and Georgia.
 But Rep. David Miner, R-Wake, said the recent \$242 million agreement with Dell USA to build a plant in the Triad area is a "better taking of the temperature."

As a result of the decision, announced in early November, more than 1,500 workers will be employed during the next five years.
 Corporations consider a number of factors when deciding where to locate. Greg Brown, professor of finance at the Kenan-Flagler Business School, said North Carolina consistently ranks high because of the cheap and reliable workforce.
 "The cost of living and cost of labor is low, which is an advantage for North Carolina," Brown said. "(The state) is a desirable place to live."
 But Rep. Ellie Kinnaird, D-Orange, said it's education that lures businesses to the state, and by approving hefty incentives packages, legislators are putting money in the wrong place.
 "Government handouts are flawed and manipulate the system," she said. "They advise corpo-

rations to use the system to their advantage."
 Kinnaird said the money should go toward education. "The \$242 million to Dell would have solved our education problems."
 Brown said the ideal place to locate really depends on the company.
 For Dell, the education system and proximity to a large and growing base of Dell customers were important factors in its decision to expand into the state, Chief Executive Officer Kevin Rollins stated in a press release.
 Despite the drop in rank, many legislators don't see it as a reflection of the economy.
 "Rankings at times are subjective," Miner said. "Sometimes the criteria used may not always tell the whole story. We can't always be number one."
 Contact the State & National Editor at stntdesk@unc.edu.

Bureau aims to prevent uninformed donations

Scammers corral fraudulent cash



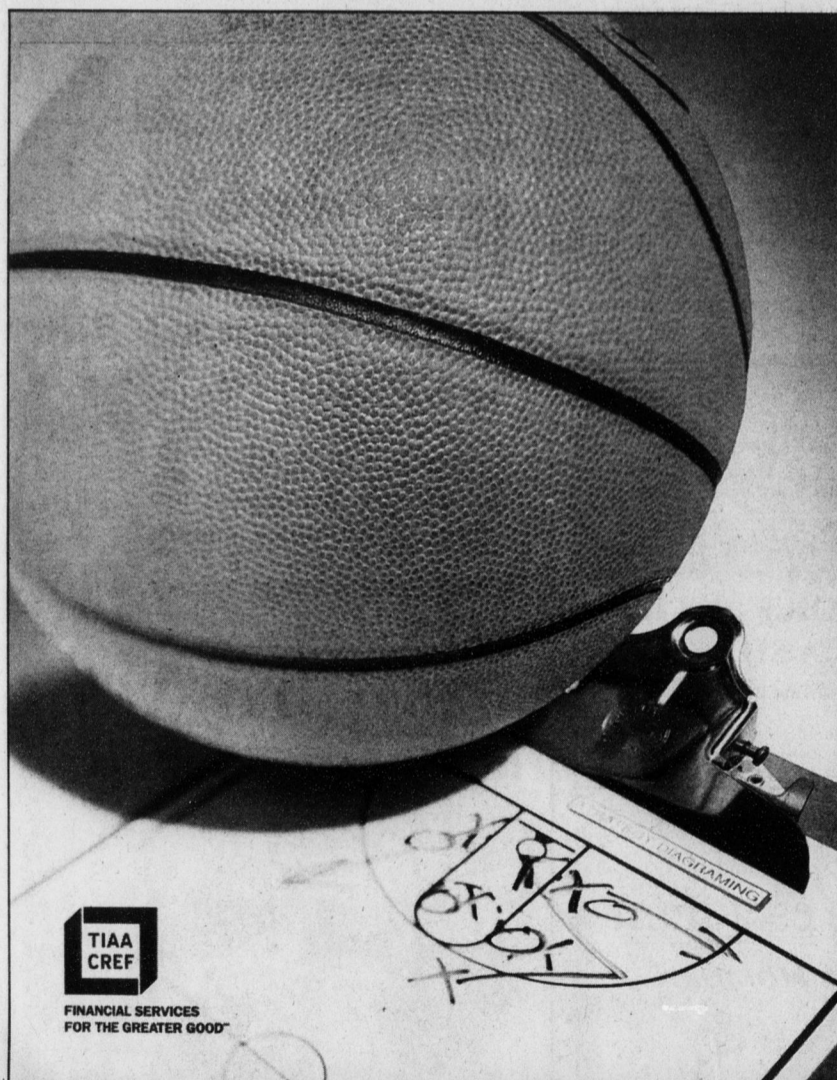
BY JON WEINER
 STAFF WRITER
 Although the holidays are about giving, for scam artists, the season is about taking what they can get.
 "This is the busiest time of year for most charities," said Bennett Weiner, chief operating officer of the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance. "Unfortunately, there are some that seek to take advantage of this."
 The BBB of Eastern North Carolina is warning people to make sure a charity is legitimate before donating money.
 Beverly Baskin, BBB president for eastern North Carolina, said people should be particularly aware of those appeals based on emotion and low on actual facts.
 "Many charitable appeals give no information about what the money goes to," she said. "This is a red flag people can look for."
 Weiner said individuals can

investigate the legitimacy of national organizations on the alliance's Web site at <http://www.give.org>, which indexes the top 300 national charities for easy research.
 If the charity claims to be a local group, the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Chamber of Commerce might be the best resource for authentication.
 "If they're members of the chamber, then we can let people know that they are in good standing and can be trusted," said Virginia Knapp, associate director of the chamber.
 Baskin said false solicitations can be performed through almost any type of communication. "(Scams) can come in any form, through the mail, over the phone, the Internet or to your door."
 She added that when people are approached in person or by phone, they often might feel more pressure to make a quick decision than if the solicitation comes via mail or the Internet.
 "Don't succumb to emotional pressure," Baskin said.
 The BBB receives many complaints about "sound-alike" charities, those that change the name of

a reputable organization slightly to confuse people into giving, Baskin said.
 "Don't be forced to give on the spot," she warns. "Legitimate charities will be more than happy to take your money tomorrow. You don't have to give today."
 Lt. Jim Phillips of the Carrboro Police Department said scams affecting the local area have not been a problem in recent years.
 "As far as any actual scams in our area, we have not had one," he said.
 If anything does happen, Knapp said, the chamber will be among the first to know.
 "We have a business alert network set up with the police department that goes out immediately to us and our members," she said.
 Although there are potential hazards from scams, Weiner still urges people to give to worthy causes during the holidays.
 "Problems are a possibility, but people should not use this as an excuse not to give."
 Contact the City Editor at citydesk@unc.edu.

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