

Teacher pleads guilty to charges

BY EREN TATARAGASI
STAFF WRITER

A local elementary-school teacher pled guilty Thursday in Orange County District Court to five charges related to child abuse and assault.

Kathleen Yasui-Der, a former teacher at Frank Porter Graham Elementary School, was arrested Aug. 24 and charged with two counts of assault on a handicapped person, two counts of contributing to the neglect of a minor and one count of child abuse.

Yasui-Der had taught at Frank Porter Graham for 12 years and was the school's 2002-03 teacher of the year.

The charges were brought against her by parents of two former students.

"This wasn't an easy decision," said Thomas Maher, Yasui-Der's attorney, referring to her choice to plead guilty.

Maher said the plea quieted Yasui-Der's main concern: having a criminal record.

"I wish this had been resolved without a criminal trial to begin with," he said.

"I feel it is a good outcome," said Jacqueline Perez, the prosecuting attorney for the District Attorney's office. "If the parents hadn't been satisfied with the arrangement, we would have proceeded with the trial."

Barbara Kuller, mother of one of the alleged victims, testified Thursday. Kuller's son was diagnosed with autism several years ago while attending Frank Porter Graham. He was placed into Yasui-Der's class after the traditional classroom did not meet his needs.

"My son is a really sweet and wonderful child," Kuller said.

Mary Hopson, whose 10-year-old son was the other alleged victim in the case, also testified.

Erin Casey, who was an in-class facilitator for children with special needs at the school, testified that she witnessed Yasui-Der hit Kuller's son.

After demonstrating what she had witnessed for Judge Charles Anderson, the court recessed and came back with a plea agreement that many might not have expected.

Yasui-Der pleaded guilty under the Alford plea — not an admittance of the charges, but an acknowledgment that there is sufficient evidence for a conviction.

The agreement states that Yasui-Der will have an inactive teacher's license for one year, undergo psychological analysis and write a letter of apology to the parents.

"In the long run it's a good result," Maher said. "If she does what she is supposed to do, it will be dismissed."

Friends of Yasui-Der came to court ready to testify but were unable to because the agreement had already been reached.

"This is a sad, sad day," said Ginny Berg, former principal of Frank Porter Graham. "We've lost a truly outstanding teacher, and it's getting increasingly difficult to get teachers of her caliber."

Others were satisfied with the final decision made by the court.

"I'm pleased to hear she's pleaded guilty to all five charges," Kuller said. "I wish that everyone would have heard the rest of the testimony because there was so much to be said."

Yasui-Der will have to appear in court in one year, and the presiding judge will decide whether to dismiss the case.

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6 schools outpace growth expectations

BY ERIC JOHNSON

ASSISTANT STATE & NATIONAL EDITOR

Six of the seven schools designated as part of the UNC system's Focused-Growth Initiative shattered the program's goal of expanding enrollment by 20 percent in five years.

On average, the participating campuses grew by more than 36 percent between the fall terms in 1999 and 2004.

Anticipating a surge of high school graduates during the next decade, UNC officials in 1998 drafted a 10-year plan that called for dramatically expanding capacity across the system.

The plan designated seven institutions that presented the greatest potential for growth, and in 1999, the state legislature appropriated \$10 million in recurring funds to initiate the focused-growth program.

Universities with relatively low enrollment — UNC-Pembroke, Elizabeth City State University, N.C. Agricultural & Technical State University, N.C. Central University, Winston-Salem State University, Fayetteville State University, and Western Carolina University — received millions to improve facilities, add new degree programs, hire and retain faculty and intensify university advancement programs.

"These campuses now — they have blossomed," said Michelle Howard-Vital, UNC-system associate vice president for academic planning. "They now are much more attractive to a wide variety of North Carolinians."

Officials at numerous schools said the large-scale infusion of funding has broadened their appeal.

"It really is just changing the face of the university," said Philip Cauley, director of admissions at WCU. "We think that being named an enrollment growth institution has raised the awareness of Western across the state."

Among the programs attracting attention at WCU, Cauley cited new majors in construction management and athletic training. The school also has added master's programs in community counseling and social work, among others.

The result of more than \$8 million in extra investment at the school has been a 27.6 percent increase in enrollment from 1999 to 2004.

Winston-Salem State has seen the most striking enrollment jump, opening its doors to an additional

2,018 students — an increase of 72.4 percent.

"There's been a lot of physical growth on our campus," said Daniel Lovett, associate vice chancellor for academic affairs for enrollment management.

The school also has increased class size to handle the enrollment boom. "We've also significantly increased our faculty," Lovett said, adding that the school is working to streamline scheduling and to introduce more evening and weekend courses.

Growth has been driven by a more aggressive recruiting campaign and the draw of 11 new degree programs, many at the master's level.

The only institution to fall short of the 20 percent goal was FSU, where enrollment expanded by 11.5 percent over the five-year period.

"We've been hampered a little bit by just not enough (private) scholarship funding," said Jon Young, senior associate vice chancellor for enrollment management at FSU.

The school received nearly \$8.7 million in additional funding during that time, adding undergraduate majors in general music, nursing, banking and finance, and birth-kindergarten education.

"We have done a lot of work with funds to assist with marketing and student recruitment," Young said, adding that more degree programs were in the works.

Officials at N.C. A&T, which has seen growth of more than 36 percent, said recruitment had been stepped up in an effort to promote the school's new offerings.

"Some of the funds have been used to beef up staff," said Lee Young, associate vice chancellor for enrollment management. "We've been attending more high school and community college programs both in-state and out."

Like many schools in the focused-growth program, N.C. A&T has worked to raise its stature as a research institution. The school won a \$4.8 million grant to open a genetics research center and has partnered with NASA to work on propulsion systems.

Willie Ellis, vice chancellor for business and finance, said the school is expecting steady growth to continue over the next several years.

"It's a very nice challenge to have," he said.

Contact the State & National
Editor at stntdesk@unc.edu.

POLICE LOG

FROM STAFF REPORTS

■ Chapel Hill police are investigating two reports of attempted sexual assault at Chapel Hill High School, police reports state.

In one incident, the suspect pushed a female victim into a bathroom and tried to force her to perform sexual acts, said police spokeswoman Jane Cousins.

Police do not have information on the other report yet, but the suspect is the same, she said.

Cousins said both incidents occurred before Christmas break. The investigation continues.

■ Three reported break-ins occurred in parking lots off Melville Loop about 8 p.m. Wednesday, Chapel Hill police reports state.

According to reports, the driver-side windows of all three vehicles were pried open, and in two of the break-ins, a stereo was stolen.

The vehicles were late-'90s Hondas — an Accord and two Civics — and the stolen property totaled \$1,200.

Police spokeswoman Jane Cousins said the incidents might be related.

Police are still investigating.

■ More than \$3,000 in property was stolen Wednesday night from a UNC student in a vehicle break-in, Chapel Hill police reports state.

According to reports, the incident occurred about midnight at 321 W. Cameron St.

Items stolen from the 2002 Volvo S40 include a laptop, MP3 player,

watch and adapter, reports state.

■ A UNC student was charged with an alcohol violation and resisting arrest at 1:15 a.m. Thursday after police responded to a noise complaint at the Warehouse Apartments, Chapel Hill police reports state.

According to reports, Casey Keith Shandley, 19, of 316 W. Rosemary St., Apt. 306, was charged with resisting arrest after he gave a false identification to police officers on three different occasions. He also was given a citation for underage possession of a malt beverage.

Shandley was released on a written promise to appear Feb. 21 in Orange County District Criminal Court in Hillsborough.

■ A UNC building at 206 W. Franklin St. was broken into Wednesday night, Chapel Hill police reports state.

The office is listed as the location of part of UNC's Carolina Population Center, according to its Web site.

According to reports, the cleaning crew came in to find several open drawers and scattered material.

Police do not know how the office was entered, and nothing was reported stolen.

■ More than \$2,000 in medicine was stolen from an unlocked car at 79 S. Elliot Road, Chapel Hill police reports state.

According to reports, an unknown suspect entered the white 1989 Jeep Wagoneer at 8 a.m. Wednesday and stole prescription drugs.

Tape from Iraqi terrorist promises long struggle

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Iraq's most feared terror leader called on his followers Thursday to show patience and prepare for a long struggle against the Americans, promising in an audiotape posted on the Internet that "ferocious wars ... take their time" but victory was assured.

Elsewhere, U.S. troops launched fresh raids around the city of Mosul, killing five suspected insurgents, in a bid to rein in guerrillas and safeguard the Jan. 30 national elections. Iraqi forces sealed off main routes into Baghdad a day after a wave of deadly car bombings.

The 90-minute message, purportedly from Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, appeared to be aimed at rallying his forces following the loss of their base in Fallujah and at marshaling support as Iraqis pre-

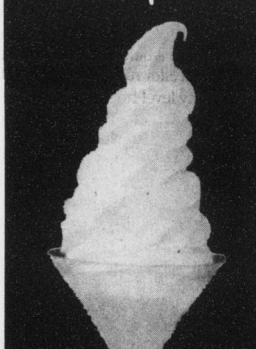
pare for their first poll since the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime.

"Fighters who have taken the path of jihad have to realize the nature and the demands of the battle toward the required goal," the speaker said. "This group has to be patient in the path that it has taken and ... not to hurry victory. The promise of God will be fulfilled no matter what."

The authenticity of the tape could not immediately be verified. It appeared before President Bush was sworn in for a second term that begins under the shadow of a continuing insurgency in Iraq.

The speaker also acknowledged that a leading al-Qaida commander in Fallujah, Omar Hadid, had been killed fighting the Americans when the city fell to a U.S.-Iraqi assault.

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Every Friday morning, Peter Gulliano, our roast master, roasts a batch of what he feels is the coffee of the week.

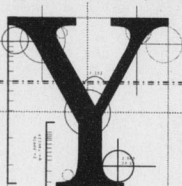
This Friday, it's El Salvador Santa Ana from the Finca Mauritania farm. The coffee from Finca Mauritania is intoxicating - aromas of brown sugar and honey top a gentle body bursting with flavors of butterscotch and tangerine. The aftertaste lingers and suggests a perfectly clean bitter-sweet chocolate.

We'll have it ready for you by 3 PM Friday and available all day Saturday - so you have impeccably fresh coffee until next Friday.

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