

STATE & NATION
Cary ranks in list of top 10 safe cities across the nation

Cary is the only Tar Heel town to make the top 10 list of safest cities in the country.

According to the Morgan Quinto study, Cary ranks third of 120 cities with a population of 75,000 to 99,999 residents and fifth in the overall ranking of 350 cities.

Town officials give credit to the demographics of the town as well as to the actively involved police force.

"We've got a well-educated, well-employed citizenry, and Cary is full of people that have jobs to go to, and they're making money and taking care of their family and homes," said Mayor Ernie McAlister.

"You don't have some of the high crime that usually goes hand in hand with the unemployed and disenfranchised."

Two-thirds of Cary residents have at least a college degree, 50 percent of Cary households have children and the median income is one of the highest in the states, said Susan Moran, public information officer for the town of Cary.

She also said the police department focuses on community policing and tries to end potentially problematic situations before they develop.

Moran and McAlister both praised the citizen-police program that trains community members for special events policing, which increases community involvement and allows the sworn police officers to focus on bigger issues.

Study emphasizes Charlotte airport's impact on region

CHARLOTTE — A new study reaffirms the centrality of Charlotte-Douglas International Airport to the regional economy, pegging the airport's annual economic impact at \$10 billion and crediting the facility with creating 100,000 jobs in the central Carolinas.

The analysis by Edd Hauser, director of the Center for Transportation Policy Studies at UNC-Charlotte, was released Monday and updates a 1997 study that said the airport had a \$4 billion annual impact and generated 72,000 jobs.

Hauser called the updated figures "conservative," adding that the previous study might have underestimated the airport's total economic impact. "We consider this to be a very accurate estimate that will stand up to any scrutiny," he said.

Though Charlotte and its surrounding suburbs are only the 37th largest metropolitan area in the country, a US Airways hub helps make Charlotte-Douglas the nation's 19th-busiest airport in terms of passengers. The airport had 524 daily departures in 2004, the vast majority on US Airways.

Ex-aide for DeLay pleads guilty to bribery conspiracy

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Michael Scanlon, a former partner to lobbyist Jack Abramoff, pleaded guilty Monday to conspiring to bribe public officials and agreed to cooperate in a widening criminal investigation of members of Congress.

Scanlon, a former aide to Rep. Tom DeLay, has been cooperating in the Justice Department probe since June, one of his attorneys, Plato Chacheris, said after the plea. Scanlon entered the plea before U.S. District Judge Ellen Segal Huvelle and was ordered to pay restitution totaling more than \$19 million to Indian tribes that he admitted had been defrauded.

In an eight-page statement of facts, Scanlon agreed that he and an unidentified person referred to as Lobbyist A "provided a stream of things of value to public officials in exchange for a series of official acts."

The items to one unidentified congressman or his staff included all-expenses-paid trips to the Northern Marianas Islands in 2000 and a trip to the Super Bowl in Tampa, Fla., in 2001.

WORLD BRIEFS

Prime minister says he split from party in name of peace

JERUSALEM — Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said Monday he gambled and broke away from his hard-line Likud Party because he did not want to squander peacemaking opportunities created by Israel's pullout from the Gaza Strip or waste time with political wrangling.

Sharon, whose split from Likud electrified Israeli politics and set the stage for likely March elections, ruled out unilateral withdrawals from the West Bank, however. He also said he remains committed to the internationally backed "road map" plan, calling for a negotiated peace deal culminating in a Palestinian state.

Sharon's decision to form a new party he described as liberal cemented his transformation from the hawkish patron of Israel's settler movement to a moderate peacemaker reconciled to the inevitability of a Palestinian state.

— From staff and wire reports.

Charity organizers dance in success

Marathon signees reach all-time high

BY WHITNEY KISLING
STAFF WRITER

Billy Idol might be dancing with himself, but the 2006 UNC Dance Marathon participants won't have to.

More than 850 people have registered to dance at the marathon—the highest number for the eighth annual event, which consists of 24 straight hours of dancing to raise money for the N.C. Children's Hospital. The event kicks off at 7 p.m. Feb. 24 in Fetzer Gym.

This record is probably the result of the new option of team dancing,

said Chris Walker, public relations director for dance marathon.

"Now, you can actually register as a team," he said. "Dancers can sign up ... as a class — even as a floor of friends in Hinton James (Residence Hall)."

Not only has team dancing raised registration numbers, but Walker said he thinks it also will increase the amount of funds raised.

"Hopefully it will encourage fundraising because the teams will be able to fundraise together," he said.

Organizing activities such as car washes to raise funds is diffi-

cult for just one person and can be executed more efficiently by a large group, Walker said.

"As an overall committee we don't set monetary goals," said Peter Attwater, the marathon's overall coordinator.

"We're just trying to unite Carolina's campus behind our cause and help as many families as possible."

Event coordinators do not disclose the amount of money raised beforehand. Instead they opt for a surprise revelation at the event.

In addition to raising funds for the marathon, each dancer commits to raising \$75 for the N.C. Children's Hospital. But many choose to raise

much more, Walker said. Last year, the 600 dancers helped raise more than \$184,000.

Dancers participating in the grueling event receive support from moralers — volunteers who try to keep the 850 dancers awake and on their feet for the 24 hours.

Marathon committee members also are enlisting the help of the donors in the community and beyond.

"We'll need the support of local restaurants and businesses," Walker said.

Event coordinators are looking for food donations to serve every dancer six meals.

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"Now, you can actually register as a team. ... Hopefully it will encourage fundraising."

CHRIS WALKER, PUBLIC RELATIONS

ber of donations and maybe (the increase in dancers) will allow us to spread outside the immediate Chapel Hill area," Attwater said.

Team dancing also has led to more diversity, because many dif-

SEE MARATHON, PAGE 6

"There was no community effort just a year ago, but now you see involvement at various levels." DALE PRATT-WILSON, ACTIVIST



Dale Pratt-Wilson (left), an outspoken advocate against underage drinking and drug use, chats with Isabel Geffner, executive director of The Community Backyard, on Nov. 14 at Foster's Market. Pratt-Wilson remains resolute in her goals despite resistance from some locals.

UNC readies support for flu

Experts to help detect, monitor

BY RICHARD M. COE III
STAFF WRITER

In the event of a possible or imminent flu pandemic, Chapel Hill would be a center for preparation as well as a crucial player in restoring order throughout the state.

Specifically, the Department of Emergency Medicine at the UNC School of Medicine and UNC Hospitals would contribute to both the detection and the monitoring of an outbreak.

"The way we are going to discover that the flu is here is through the surveillance systems in the hospitals," said Debbie Crane, public affairs director for the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services. "They are going to be crucial from the very beginning."

The N.C. Hospital Emergency Surveillance System is the first surveillance system of its kind in any state and has enhanced North Carolina's ability to detect the presence of influenza, severe acute respiratory syndrome and other deadly viruses.

NCHES patient data from emergency rooms in hospitals around the state is analyzed at a central location — the Department of Emergency Medicine at the UNC School of Medicine, said Amy Ising, technical team lead for the NC DETECT System, the group that reviews the data.

Once members of NC DETECT have received the data, they are able to look for patterns that might indicate the beginning of a pandemic, Ising said.

"The analysis tools that we provide are used by epidemiologists at the North Carolina (Division) of Public Health," she said. "The communication is essential for containment efforts and monitoring."

The system transfers data every 12 hours on a regular basis but is capable of doing so every 15 minutes, Crane said.

The emergency medicine department wouldn't be the only operation in Chapel Hill working overtime in the event of an influ-

SEE FLU, PAGE 6

NO TURNING BACK

BY DANIEL JOHNSON
STAFF WRITER

In the year and a half since Chapel Hill resident Dale Pratt-Wilson decided to speak out about underage drinking, her home has been vandalized and her methods questioned, but she has been turning heads — and sympathetic ears — to her cause.

Pratt-Wilson's committee for alcohol- and drug-free teenagers has grown from one angry mom in May 2004 to a coalition of law enforcement agencies, mental health professionals, school administrators, town leaders, residents and parents, all sharing frustration about what they see as complacency in Chapel Hill and Carrboro toward what Pratt-Wilson calls an epidemic of underage drinking.

"Our community was in denial," Pratt-Wilson said, noting that Chapel Hill teenagers self-reported abusive drinking in excess of the national average, according to a Centers for Disease Control use risk behavior survey conducted in February in the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools system.

Pratt-Wilson isn't modest about what she sees as the group's success, pointing to increased parent awareness and collaborative efforts in the community to educate teens and adults about the dangers of underage drinking.

"There was no community effort just a year

ago, but now you see involvement at various levels, all working to bring people out of the dark," she said.

And the group's reach is poised to expand, thanks in large part to a grant provided by the Office of National Drug Control Policy and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to the Community Backyard, a group that coordinates youth mental health and substance abuse services for Orange and Chatham counties.

The funds will be used to support Pratt-Wilson's committee and the development of others like it, with special emphasis on expanding efforts into Latino and faith-based communities.

Isabel Geffner, executive director of the Community Backyard and a prominent member of the committee, said she sees the grant as an important resource for reaching at-risk communities.

"Our coalition is doing a great job reaching white, middle and upper-class stakeholders in our community, but we need to reach into public housing and organizations like El Centro (Latino) and El Futuro," she said, referring to two prominent nonprofits in the local Hispanic community.

Despite such shortcomings, committee task forces have been influential in changing the way institutions address the problem.

Stephanie Willis, health services coordi-

nator for the city schools, cites access to better resources such as blood alcohol content testing devices and more training for mental health counselors at high schools as proof that community efforts already have had an impact.

Willis recently designed a brochure for students and parents outlining districtwide policy and consequences for children caught using drugs or alcohol during school, but she said the problem is mainly a parent-kid issue, which she credits Pratt-Wilson's committee with addressing.

"(Pratt-Wilson) got out there and started rattling people's cages until they took notice," Willis said.

The Town Council, which formally endorsed several of the committee's core goals last December, included a keg registration policy among its most recent legislative requests.

Even with the increased attention, however, some students say they aren't seeing much change.

Al Mask, student body president at Chapel Hill High School, said he thinks more needs to be done to address the problem within the schools. He said students often are going off campus to drink or drink alcohol from water bottles they bring to school.

SEE PRATT-WILSON, PAGE 6

University power plant gets green light to build

Council attaches strings to plan

BY KAYLA CARRICK
STAFF WRITER

Town and University tensions mounted at the Chapel Hill Town Council meeting last night as the group approved UNC's application to upgrade power generation capabilities at its cogeneration plant.

The council was split between wanting to delay the discussion until its Jan. 9 meeting and proceeding with a decision.

Upon further discussion, officials struck a compromise.

The application for the special use permit modification for the plant was approved under a resolution that requires UNC to follow specific conditions including operation that promotes public health and general welfare.

Council members added another stipulation during the meeting requiring the University to partici-

pate in the town's carbon reduction program.

The stipulation was enough to sway opposing council members.

"The only reason to delay the decision is to make sure the University participates in carbon reduction," Mayor Kevin Foy said.

"This particular application is not about carbon. I think it's progress to support the University's request in exchange for support in efforts to reduce carbon levels."

The facility provides electrical and steam energy to campus.

The University applied to build a new steam-powered turbine generator, replace cooling towers and construct five new buildings to house equipment, among other items. The construction will allow the facility to use the steam produced to create additional electrical energy.

UNC officials pleaded with the council to approve the resolution, noting the project's time sensitivity.

SEE PLANT, PAGE 6

College depression sees spike

Experts say some not seeking help

BY JULIE TURKEWITZ
STAFF WRITER

"It's a hopeless feeling, you feel trapped. No matter what you do, there is no escape," says Nureena Faruqi, a junior English major from Durham.

Faruqi is battling clinical depression.

Since middle school she's dealt with overwhelming feelings of sadness, excessive crying and irregular sleep patterns.

"I know I'm not alone. I know a good amount of people in college suffering from depression," she says.

In 2004, 15 percent of college students reported being diagnosed with depression at some point in their lives, according to a report by the American College Health Association.

That is a 5 percent jump from 2000.

At UNC, the number of students seeking help from Counseling and

Psychological Service has risen every year for the past seven years.

Since the 2000-01 academic year, the number of students receiving services from CAPS has increased from 2,228 to 3,837 students in 2004-05, a 72 percent increase.

"It's frustrating because I reach a point every year where I have to go to my teachers and say, 'This is what I'm dealing with, this is why I'm missing class,'" Faruqi says.

Her depression extends beyond teen angst or moodiness.

"A lot of friends don't understand. They say, 'Just motivate yourself,' but at some points I can't even get out of bed."

Her academic performance has plummeted and her social life has been interrupted.

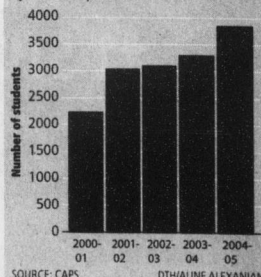
"I would love to be involved on campus," she says. "But I often don't because I get so overwhelmed."

Depression affects more than 19 million American adults. And suicide, depression's ugly byproduct, is the second leading cause of death among college-age people.

A number of factors, such as

CAPS demand rises

Student use of CAPS services has gone up by about 72 percent since 2000-01.



increasing academic pressures, have caused the rise in diagnoses, says Keith Anderson, a psychologist and member of the board of directors at ACHA.

But the primary force behind the increase, Anderson says, is that more students with pre-existing problems are applying to college.

"We're letting in more kids who have been depressed," he says.

Because of this, the number of

SEE DEPRESSION, PAGE 6