

East volleyball program off to a rough start.

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State sees slight drop in jobless rate

BY ELIOT DUKE
Staff Writer

North Carolina's unemployment rate may have dropped below 10 percent for the first time in 18 months, but experts still worry that the state isn't out of the woods quite yet.

According to statistics released by the Employment Security Commission of North Carolina on Friday, the state unemployment rate dipped to 9.8 percent in July, marking the lowest rate since last January. Total employment, however, decreased by 29,800 jobs as the

'The number of people missing from the labor market is at an all-time high and the state continues to lose jobs.'

—Alexandra Forter Sirota
N.C. Justice Center, Budget and Tax Center

state's labor force continues to shrink.

"The decline in the unemployment rate is masking the reality in the labor market," Alexandra Forter Sirota, a policy analyst with the North Carolina Justice Center's Budget and Tax Center,

said. "The number of people missing from the labor market is at an all-time high and the state continues to lose jobs."

North Carolina's labor force declined by 35,612 workers from June, which accounts for the decrease in the unemployment

rate, despite the loss of jobs. Since the start of the country's recession in December 2007, Sirota said North Carolina's labor force has declined nearly five times the national average. If more jobs are not created, the unemployment rate will inevitably go back up. Sirota added that the state's job shortfall, or the number of jobs needed to keep pace with the growth in the working age population and replace lost jobs, grew in July to more than 425,000 jobs.

"Without greater focus on pre-

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Free, reduced price lunch numbers on the rise

BY ELIOT DUKE
Staff Writer

One of the By-products of the lingering national recession is the growing number of children across the state who receive free or reduced-priced meals.

In Thomasville City Schools, 88.78 percent of all students received either free or reduced-priced meals during the 2008-09 school year, according to statistics from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI). Liberty Drive Elementary and Thomasville Primary School had more than 96 percent of its students qualify, as 1,219 out of 1,267 students combined got reduced-priced or free meals. Across the state, more than half of all students in public schools are in the same boat.

"Total enrollment in public schools in North Carolina is close to 1.5 million," Lynn Harvey, section chief of Child Nutrition Services for the DPI, said. "So to think 770,000 qualify for free or reduced-priced lunches is a huge number. It's sobering to see that."

DPI recently released the USDA policy on free and reduced-priced meals for children in public schools, and Brenda Watford, Child Nutrition Director for Thomasville City Schools, is making sure parents are getting their applications in time for the upcoming year.

"We've got the applications at the home office and at the schools," said Watford. "Parents are already filling them out, and they can come at any time. I'll call the parents who were on the list last year to make sure they fill out their applications. We do anything we can to make sure our students are eating."

One of the changes

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Simulator keeps driving mistakes off the road

BY ERIN WILTGEN
Staff Writer

Davidson County Community College began integrating its new, high-tech driving simulator into classes this month, seeking to offer students and professionals alike enhanced road safety techniques.

The computerized simulator, which the school purchased in June, will give law enforcement, firefighting, rescue, first response, and truck drivers the opportunity to practice and learn emergency driving skills without actually endangering themselves or others.

"The instructors can design a scenario that puts the students in a situation that they might not normally see, that we can't emulate in real life," said Randy Ledford, associate dean of the DCCC School of Business, Engineering and Technical Studies.

The simulator, valued at \$320,000 and purchased

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KICKING OFF THE SEASON

Above, the East Davidson Golden Eagles rush the field Friday night just before game time against Randleman to kick off the 2010 football season. At right, Ledford defensive back Deyonta Dow makes a move on a Trinity player for some yardage. See game stories, Page B1.

TIMES PHOTOS/FRANK RAUCCIO AND LARRY MATHIS



Dragonfly House to offer help to abused children

BY ERIN WILTGEN
Staff Writer

When it comes to children, parents rarely take shortcuts. So when Davie Domestic Violence Services and Rape Crisis Center in Mocksville — an agency working with adult victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse — noticed a gap in services for abused children, as well as the correlation between children who were abused and grow to become abusers, staff took action.

The idea for a Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) in Davidson and Davie Counties was born.

"As parents ourselves, we saw the need to work directly with children and begin educating them and offering safe services and resources for the child victims, because if they aren't helped now, then there is a strong possibility that this abusive pattern will be carried into their adult life," said Brandi Reagan, coordinator for the Davie and Davidson Counties

CAC.

Davie Domestic Violence Services and Rape Crisis Center wrote a grant from the Governor's Crime Commission Victims of Crime Act and received an award to create a local CAC. The center, named The Dragonfly House Children's Advocacy Center, will open Oct. 1.

"There is a great need in this district for that because right now, all of the children have to go out of county to get services," Reagan said, adding that the agency already has begun

helping a few Thomasville children.

CAC, a child-friendly center that gathers a multi-disciplinary team of community professionals to help abused children and their families work through the healing process free of charge, was founded in 1993 in Cumberland County, N.C. Centers now span across the state's 100 counties.

The Dragonfly House, operating under the same system

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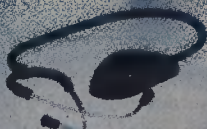
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