

THE NEWS & OBSERVER

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SATURDAY, MAY 29, 2010

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MORE NEWS

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BLUE CROSS MAY OUTSOURCE WORK

The state's largest health insurer is testing a plan that could send some information technology work to India. **1B**

TRIANGLE JOBLESS RATE FALLS TO 8.6%

There are still more than 70,000 people out of work in the area. Economists say the struggle to create jobs will endure. **1B**



COUPLE CHARGED IN CHILD'S DEATH

Marcus Isaiah Wills, 18 months, died from dehydration after hours in a hot room. His parents are accused of involuntary manslaughter. **2B**

U.S. TOLL IN AFGHANISTAN: 1,000

The 1,000th death occurred in a roadside bombing Friday – just before the Memorial Day weekend when America honors the dead in all its wars. **3A**

SENATE SET FOR FIGHT OVER GAY BAN

Defense Secretary Robert Gates told the military not to be distracted by the debate over gays in uniform. Gates said he wanted to assure troops that their views matter. **6A**

■ Stocks close out their worst month in a year. **4B**



FORMER CHILD STAR GARY COLEMAN DIES

He began as the sassy kid on the 1970s sitcom "Diff'rent Strokes." He ended his life on Hollywood's D-list. He suffered a brain hemorrhage at 42. **3A**

WEATHER

Today: Stormy today, partly cloudy tonight. High 81, low 67.
Sunday: Partly sunny and hot. High 90, low 67. **10B**

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UP, UP AND OVER THE CHANNEL



American cluster balloonist Jonathan Trappe is questioned by French police after landing near a cabbage patch in Moeres, France, on Friday after his record-setting trip.

GARETH FULLER - AP

By JAY PRICE
STAFF WRITER

Just before he reached the English Channel, Jonathan Trappe of Raleigh saw that he was about to fly over the White Cliffs of Dover, so he stabbed a couple of balloons and cut loose others. It was OK. There were a few dozen more in a pleasing mix of colors to keep him aloft.

Out hissed helium. Down he drifted, to within a few hundred feet of the chalk cliffs where he could enjoy the view from a few hundred feet, nothing between him and the scenery except sky.

Then Trappe dumped some water ballast and began climbing again as he headed for France and the odd place in history that he claimed Friday morning: first person to cross the English Channel dangling under a cluster of small balloons.

"It was so beautiful," he said by phone. "Sure, there's a sense of accomplishment, a sense of adventure, but it was also just beautiful, a beautiful sunny day of flying over these green fields, that really deep English green, and these little villages and old stone churches, the cliffs and the Channel, and just this silence."

SEE **BALLOONS**, PAGE 14A

ONLINE

Balloon guy: See more photos of Jonathan Trappe's balloon flights at newsobserver.com



Trappe, center in white, gathers with his crew before taking off for a past flight.

2008 NEWS AND OBSERVER FILE PHOTO

State may cap UNC's growth

The House budget would hold enrollment to a 1% increase.

By ERIC FERRERI
STAFF WRITER

A state House spending plan unveiled this week dares to consider an idea that North Carolina higher education leaders have opposed for years: limiting access to public universities.

Restricting growth to 1 percent across the 17 UNC campuses would likely mean no room for thousands of potential students. And it would be an unprecedented change for a university system that has long prided itself on its accessibility.

"Limiting access goes against everything we try to do within our university," said Hannah Gage, chairwoman of the UNC system's Board of Governors. "It looks like a big step backwards."

A special provision in the House's education spending plan would set the 1 percent enrollment growth limit in 2011-12. It would be a cumulative cap, so the UNC system would have to figure out how to balance growth among its individual campuses, officials said.

The measure, if enacted, could greatly decrease the number of new students. For example, UNC planners expect to add about 4,900 new students across the system this fall. If the system faced the 1 percent limit then, just 2,200 of them could enroll.

William Friday, the UNC president emeritus who spent 30 years running the system, said North Carolina has never considered enrollment limits and shouldn't start now.

"We put a very high premium on advanced work, and you don't get that by limiting ac-

SEE **UNC**, PAGE 14A

Plumes may wreak havoc under water

By JUSTIN GILLIS
THE NEW YORK TIMES

IN THE GULF OF MEXICO – The ocean caught fire.

As it blazed, a dense column of black smoke rose toward the sky. Oily water, the color of strong tea, slopped up the sides of boats. The breeze carried an acrid smell, like gasoline fumes.

Aboard the research vessel F.G. Walton Smith, anxiety was growing.

Five scientists and six students had come to study the oil leak and its effect on the sea. They brought flasks and gloves, refrigerators and freezers, tiny tools and huge cylinders of gas.

They were not looking for oil on the surface, where it was so thick in places that it was being burned off, but for plumes of fine oil droplets far beneath the waves.

The stakes were high. Two weeks earlier, when some of these scientists had disclosed evidence of undersea plumes, the government greeted their claim skeptically. The scientists'

SEE **SPILL**, PAGE 18A



Scientists say this spill may show that oil plumes don't always float to the surface.

BP VIA AP

STOPPING THE OIL

There was some evidence Friday that the top kill effort to clog the leaking oil line was working. But BP warned that it could be a couple of days before we know for sure. **Page 18A**

Trooper kills a kitten and loses his job

By MICHAEL BIESECKER
STAFF WRITER

A state trooper who wanted to stop animals from climbing on his vehicles trapped his neighbor's 5-month-old kitten and shot it to death.

Former Trooper Shawn C. Houston was charged in October with cruelty to animals and injury to real property, both misdemeanors, according to court records. The Highway Patrol dismissed him in January.

Houston, 39, declined to discuss his firing this week. But in an appeal of his dismissal filed May 10, the former trooper contends that he was treated unfairly and that he deserves his job back.

SEE **KITTEN**, PAGE 14A



Houston



Rowdy

Hospital will pick up tab for man who foiled kidnap

By MARK SCHULTZ
STAFF WRITER

CHAPEL HILL – UNC Hospitals expects to pick up the bills for Joey Shelton, the Pittsboro man hit by a car trying to stop a kidnapping in Chapel Hill this month, a spokeswoman said.

Meanwhile, a fund at RBC Bank continues to receive donations daily from Boston, Atlanta, Washington, all over North Carolina and even the homeless shelter in Chapel Hill.

"The support has been unbelievable," said banking center manager Roger Badrock.

Shelton, a part-time barber and chauffeur, does not have health insurance. If UNC Health Care pays his tab, the fund can help Shelton with home care, medical supplies and missed work.

Last fiscal year UNC provided \$266 million in uncompensated care, said Karen McCall, a health system vice president. "We're

HOW TO HELP

Donations may be sent or brought to any RBC Bank. Make checks out to the "Joey and Freddie Shelton Fund."

working with Mr. Shelton to get him financial aid, which we think he qualifies for," she said. Shelton and his brother, Freddie, were driving May 12 when they saw a man dragging a jogger to a car.

Joey Shelton used his 1999 Cadillac Concours to block the man's car, and the brothers got out. The man let the woman go, got into his car and swerved around the Cadillac, spinning Joey Shelton onto the hood.

Shelton suffered fractured and compressed discs.

The suspect, Theodore James Walker, 26, is charged with second-degree kidnapping, assault on a female and assault with a deadly weapon inflicting serious injury.

Shelton said he's learning to trust "people who are showing their love."

"It's hard to believe," he said. "I'm really thrilled."



Shelton