

# County mental health merger will increase services

By Chelsey Dulaney  
Staff Writer

A merger between two mental health care management entities could bring more quality health services to county residents.

Judy Truitt, director of the OPC Area Program that serves Orange, Person and Chatham counties, said the program began seeking a partner after the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services began requiring smaller programs to merge on April 1.

Truitt said OPC, which manages publicly funded mental health, developmental disability and substance abuse services, has decided to merge with Piedmont Behavioral Healthcare, which serves Cabarrus, Union, Davidson, Stanly and Rowan counties.

OPC and other local management entities that don't fit the new regulations were given until May 20 to find a partner before the state intervened.

Truitt said her group moved forward in negotiations with PBH

because PBH is the only group in N.C. that uses the Medicaid waiver.

"We've been looking at PBH and how they run the waiver, and we've been very impressed with what we've seen," Truitt said.

All programs will be required to use Medicaid waivers by January 2013.

PBH spokeswoman Deanna Campbell said although her program meets the state's minimum service population of 300,000 required by July 2012, the group looks forward to the merger.

"We could have continued by ourselves, but we didn't really want to," Campbell said. "We wanted to partner with other entities and teach them how to do (the waiver) the way we do it."

Campbell said using the waiver allows her organization to control its provider network by enforcing more stringent rules.

"(The waiver) allows us to ensure that consumers get the right amount of service, for the right amount of time with the right provider," she said.

Campbell said the merger will allow the programs to provide a greater variety of services to residents in a cost-efficient manner.

"In today's society we really have very limited dollars," she said. "When you have lots of little offices with duplicative administrative positions, you have money that could be used for services."

Bernadette Pelissier, chairwoman of the Orange County Board of Commissioners, said some residents are concerned the merger could cut services.

But Pelissier said she does not believe this will be the case.

"You'll have everything under one roof," she said. "You can really look at the spectrum of services and make sure it's the right kind of services that are right for the residents."

The board will vote on the merger, which could be completed by mid-2012 if approved, at its May 17 meeting.

Contact the City Editor  
at [city@dailytarheel.com](mailto:city@dailytarheel.com).

## GRADUATION

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"We have become a part of UNC just as much as it's become a part of us," Deane said.

In his closing remarks, Thorp said that, while the class is heading in different directions, its members share a common bond — the University.

"No matter where you go in the huge world you are changing, you are a Tar Heel," he said.

As thousands of students end

their undergraduate careers, the University expects them to be entering a stronger job market than the previous two classes.

Tim Stiles, associate director of University Career Services, said UNC has seen an increase in the number of employers at career fairs, holding interviews and posting jobs.

"That was definitely a positive of this year's class versus last year's," he said.

Stiles said the University is also emphasizing to students

the importance of flexibility and networking when looking for jobs.

"Part of that is simply we've got to help them approach people about their job searches," he said.

Stiles added that he thinks the number of students entering graduate school will decrease this year, as opposed to the past two years.

Regardless of the routes the class of 2011 takes after graduation, Thorp said students can still consider the University a welcoming place.

"You can come home again — and again and again and again," he said.

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## WILSON

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EW: The environmental problems that have been worked out — from global warming to resource depletion to species extinction and ecosystem destruction — they are real. And they're all documented. It's curious that people remain skeptical. There's sort of a state of denial in which they really would prefer to think that they can hold off making any big decision about it into the future or just ignore it or deny it and life will go on. It's not going to be like that. Right now there are two small island nations in the Pacific that are beginning to evacuate and have their people move to New Zealand as the sea rises.

You know, when all else fails, people turn to reason.

DTH: You did grow up in the South — Alabama — and your passion for biology was somewhat borne out of your natural surroundings. Do you miss what life was like in the South?

EW: Yes. I've been in New England for 60 years — at Harvard. New England is the price I paid in order to go to a great university. But my heart is still in the South. In fact, I've written one novel that is centered around my hometown of Mobile, Alabama. And I've just finished (writing) a history of Mobile. So yes, I've remained a southerner.

DTH: And in other interviews, you've described adventures that you've had in pursuit of ant species. Having grown up in the last 20 years or so, I've experienced the impression that there are no new oceans or new frontiers to conquer or to explore in the natural world. How do you counter that?

EW: I point out that we only know 10 percent of the species that actually exist on the planet. And each one of those species can be looked at as a kind of frontier. No, this is a little-explored planet

that we live on. It's out there waiting to be explored, particularly at the biological level.

DTH: You co-authored an article last year in Nature, a scientific journal, that pointed out the limitations of the kin selection theory, which has served as grounding for sociobiology since its beginning. Can you briefly summarize your view on this and the disagreement from other scientists that has arisen?

EW: Not only was kin selection theory stumbling in its application and how much sense it really seemed to make, but it also turned out that the foundations were unsound. So that's essentially what our Nature article stated, and we proposed a much more straightforward theory called multilevel selection theory, which is somewhat of a return to traditional population genetics.

None of the responses (that have been made) have yet challenged the main critique that we presented. I have complete confidence that we are correct on this and that the genetic theory that we have provided will be one that stands scrutiny in the future.

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