

Friday
Partly Cloudy
72/52

Saturday
Chance of Storms
66/41

Sunday
Partly Cloudy
55/32

going native

Spring Gardening
Special Section Inside



PHOTO BY KEN MOORE
Harbinger of spring: flowers of Hepatica

FLORA By Ken Moore

Marking the emergence of spring

You have to take care to avoid stepping on the Hepaticas when you approach the bench to sit and enjoy the sights and sounds along New Hope Creek at the old mill site. It’s springtime on Triangle Land Conservancy’s Johnston Mill Nature Preserve; Hepaticas and other spring wildflowers are emerging.

Johnston Mill Nature Preserve is just one of several that Triangle Land Conservancy (TLC) manages throughout Chatham, Durham, Johnston, Lee, Orange and Wake counties. It is well worth your investigating the website, www.tlc-nc.org, for site descriptions and a schedule of seasonal interpretive walking and canoe excursions in these preserves.

The 296-acre Johnston Mill Nature Preserve is my favorite because it has so many diverse habitats and there are some really interesting botanical features there. Those Hepaticas are one of them. *Hepatica americana*, commonly called Liverleaf, usually occurs on mature forest slopes above the flood plain. Here in the Johnston tract, they are scattered among the carpets of Trout Lily, *Erythronium americanum*, and Spring Beauty, *Claytonia virginica*, on the low-lying areas bordering the creek. The traditional first sign of spring is the emergence of the Hepatica flower just above the forest leaf litter. The blue color of that flower is indescribable. When you spot the flowers, look for the three-lobed evergreen leaves, which turn deep burgundy before they decompose to make way for the new leaves.

Another spring harbinger, Spicebush, *Lindera benzoin*, is easy to spot throughout the flood plain; look for tiny lemon-yellow flowers on the bare branches of head-high shrubs. Those inconspicuous flowers produce brilliant red berry-like fruit in late summer.

A second interesting feature for me is the warty bark of *Celtis laevigata*, commonly called Hackberry or Sugarberry. The smooth trunk of this tree is usually covered with wart-like corky growths, but a particular grove of trees near the old Johnston Mill

SEE FLORA PAGE 12



Freshmen Julie Ivey (left) and Caitlin Hughes at last week’s candlelight vigil for Eve Carson.

PHOTO BY ISAAC SANDLIN

Campus Mourns

Arrest comes a week after Carson’s death

by Kirk Ross & Emily Burns
Staff Writers

In the recorded history of this community, few stories have been sadder. With barely a week having passed since the murder of Student Body President



Eve Marie Carson, emotions are still raw; and as campus gears up after its spring break, there will be time again on Tuesday to remember a bright and personable student leader whose life ended violently near the intersection of Hillcrest Drive and Hillcrest Circle in the early-morning hours of Wednesday, March 5.

Police said Carson, an Athens, Georgia native who came to Carolina as a Morehead-Cain scholar, was shot multiple times, including at least once in the head. Days into the investigation, police released photos of two “persons of interest” seen using Carson’s ATM card and driving what appears to be her 2005 Toyota Highlander.

Yesterday (Wednesday), Durham police arrested and transferred into Chapel Hill Police custody Demario James Atwater, 21, who was charged with first-degree murder in the case. Police also issued a warrant for Lawrence Alvin Lovett Jr., 17, whom they believe to be the man seen driving Carson’s vehicle in an ATM surveillance video. Lovett, who has also been charged with first-degree murder, had not been apprehended at press time and is the target of an intense manhunt.

SEE CARSON PAGE 7

Downturn felt sharply by local homebuilders

[Editor’s note: This is part of an ongoing Citizen series on how debt and mortgage problems and the slowdown in the economy are affecting local markets.]

by Kirk Ross
Staff Writer

As the subprime mortgage crisis morphed into a debt crisis and led to a slowdown in housing markets across the country, many here were optimistic that the area would once again be insulated from the fallout.

The dynamic of a growing university, an attractive public school system and a market that by nature has a good deal of turnover remains. But the optimism that the local market would ride out the storm unscathed has waned. Even the most upbeat realtors will acknowledge some pain. Many are leading sellers through what Weaver Street Market’s Gary Phillips describes as “reality therapy,” telling them to expect much more time on

the market and a more modest assessment of the return one can expect.

But while realtors and sellers are being hard hit, the worst of the impact is being felt by homebuilders, especially mid-sized builders who have been riding the housing boom in Chatham County (see article this page).

Nick Tennyson, executive vice president of Home Builders Association of Durham, Orange and Chatham counties, said that the slowdown has created a large inventory of homes. Spec house builders and builders who need to keep large crews busy are finding more and more of their cash tied up and are having to make large monthly payments on homes they’d hoped to have sold by now.

Making that worse, he said, is that the glut is being seen in larger homes. “How many people want something priced \$750,000 to \$800,000? The pool of buyers is

Reflecting the slowdown in the national economy, development in Chatham County, both residential and commercial, is stuttering. While some projects are still moving ahead, many have slowed down and a few have been abandoned. New residential building permits for Chatham County, including Pittsboro but not Cary, which had been averaging 138 per quarter since the fourth quarter of 2004, dropped sharply in the fourth quarter of 2007, to only 62. This is despite the fact that more than 10,000 home sites have been authorized.

The one exception is in Cary’s part of the county, where the Amberly development is moving ahead

briskly. During the last half of 2007, Cary issued 198 permits for homes inside of Chatham County, while Chatham issued only 189 permits.

Residential developers selling only land seem to be doing better than those who are selling both lots and homes. Chapel Ridge’s original 660 lots, priced largely in the \$100,000 to \$150,000 range, are 98 percent sold, according to Jens Hoeg, Bluegreen Corporation’s vice-president of sales. His efforts are now focused on selling lots in The Estates at Chapel Ridge, which was originally approved as The Woodlands, before being purchased by Bluegreen. According to Hoeg, those 170 lots should be sold within the next 15 months.

SEE HOUSING PAGE 7

SEE CHATHAM PAGE 7



PHOTO BY VALARIE SCHWARTZ
Marianne Principe has reclaimed her life with Journey’s help.

Up and going out and abroad

RECENTLY . . .
By Valarie Schwartz

At first it seemed to her Dogwood Acres neighbors that Marianne Principe was an assistance dog trainer, as they were seen walking each morning. Usually the first with a greeting to others walking along, she clearly had her sight, though the beautiful Golden Retriever, with its harness and “Do Not Pet” sign, was obviously an assistance dog.

Assistance dog, indeed — “Journey” has been assisting Principe with her balance since going to live with her in October 2006, providing her with stability since her equilibrium was suddenly robbed in January 2005.

“It happened in an instant,” Principe said. She was fine one second and the next she was so dizzy she had to lie down — and ever since, she has not been able to get up without severe dizziness. She frequently must keep her eyes closed during conversations to control the vertigo and nausea that sweep through her body as the result of an infection-damaged vestibular nerve.

The only way to correct it is through a risky, low-success-rate surgery.

She stumbled upon the treatment that has brought her back a life — getting Journey.

“They thought I’d have a typical recovery after one year of physical therapy,” Principe said of the diagnosis of vestibular neuronitis. After a year, she was no better, and as she continued therapy a new test became available that indicated she had experienced all the recovery she would have. “In most cases, the other nerve compensates for the damaged one, but that didn’t happen. What’s left of the damaged nerve sends out erroneous, distorted messages that confuse the brain.” It leaves her spinning and nauseated.

She may seem familiar to many after working for 12 years as the nutrition department buyer at Whole Foods. She tried to continue her job there, which was also the center of her social life, but it was more than she could handle.

Life became PT, and when she could watch with

SEE RECENTLY PAGE 5

INSIDE

Guy B. Phillips Honor Roll

See page 9

INDEX

News	3
Community	4
Land & Table	5
Opinion	6
The JagWire	8
Schools	9
Sports	10
Real Estate	11
Classifieds	11
THE MILL, Water Watch	12