

## Capital roll call

A look at how our area's state legislators voted in Raleigh during the past week.

## N.C. House

HB231 — Education Revenue Act: Eliminates the marriage tax penalty for the standard deduction, increases the tax credit for children to \$100 per child, authorizes a local-option half-cent sales tax, adds a new tax bracket with an additional 1/2 percent on taxable income above \$200,000 for three years, equalizes taxation on health maintenance organizations and medical service corporations at 1 percent, applies the same sales tax rate to spirituous liquor that applies to other alcoholic beverages, eliminates the special tax break for luxury vehicles and exempts certain items purchased during a specific period of time from sales and use tax. Introduced by Rep. Gordon Allen, D-Person. Adopted 62-56. Sent to the Senate for consideration.

NO: Mitchell Setzer, Frank Mitchell.

SB61 — Continuing Budget Authority (Conference Report): Provides that the present level of state spending shall continue until

Sept. 28 and appropriates federal block grant funds for the 2001-02 fiscal year unless a new budget is enacted. Introduced by Sen. Howard Lee, D-Orange. Adopted 79-39. Sent to the governor for approval. NO: Mitchell Setzer, Frank Mitchell.

SB165 — Revenue Laws Technical Changes (House Version): Makes clarifying and technical changes to the state's revenue laws, including reporting and payment requirements of wholesale dealers and changes the manner that tax credits for created jobs are calculated. Introduced by Sen. Fletcher Harrell, R-Cabarrus. Adopted 109-1. Sent back to the Senate for concurrence.

YES: Mitchell Setzer, Frank Mitchell.

SB199 — Managed Care Patients' Bill of Rights (House Version): Provides that persons under health benefit plans shall receive continuity of care from health maintenance organizations, access to nonformulary and restricted access prescription drugs, establishes standards for independent review and holds managed care entities liable for harm caused by the failure to exercise ordinary care in making health care decisions.

Introduced by Sen. Allen Wellons, D-Johnston. Adopted 115-0. Sent back to the Senate for concurrence. YES: Mitchell Setzer, Frank Mitchell.

SB646 — Harm/Hinder Law Enforcement Animals (House Version): Makes it a criminal offense to harm or attempt to harm a law enforcement agency animal or an assistance animal, or to obstruct, delay, tease or harass the animal in the performance of its duties as a law enforcement or assistance animal, and makes it unlawful to restrain a dog by a chain or wire that is grossly in excess of the size necessary to restrain the dog safely. Introduced by Sen. Tony Rand, D-Cumberland. Adopted 112-0. Sent back to the Senate for concurrence.

YES: Mitchell Setzer, Frank Mitchell.

N.C. Senate

SB61 — Continuing Budget Authority (Conference Report): Provides that the present level of state spending shall continue until Sept. 28 and appropriates federal block grant funds for the 2001-02 fiscal year unless a new budget is enacted. Introduced by Sen. Howard

Lee, D-Orange. Adopted 22-12. Sent to the governor for approval. YES: Cal Cunningham, NO: Jim Forrester.

HB170 — Mulch Blower Fuel Tax Refund: Allows a fuel tax refund for off-road use of mulch-blowing equipment. Introduced by Rep. Trudi Walend, R-Transylvania. Adopted 41-0. Sent to the governor for approval. YES: Cal Cunningham, Jim Forrester.

HB280 — Convene Session Earlier (Senate Version): Amends the North Carolina Constitution to limit the length of legislative sessions to 135 calendar days beginning in 2003 and provides for an earlier convening of the General Assembly for organization on the first Wednesday. Introduced by Rep. David Redwine, D-Brunswick. Adopted 40-1. Sent back to the House for concurrence. YES: Cal Cunningham, Jim Forrester.

HB1431 — Car Property Tax Credit: Prevents double taxation of motor vehicles which have a change in tax year because of a change in registration. Introduced by Rep. Joe Hackney, D-Orange. Adopted 41-0. Sent to the governor for approval. YES: Cal Cunningham, Jim Forrester.

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## Mystery disease

## Group works to heighten awareness of skin ailment

By MITZE BENDER

In North Carolina, 6-year-old Alex Young, who had recently recovered from a bout of mono, was watching TV when his father, Ronny, noticed a bald spot on the back of his son's head about the size of a quarter.

"Then there was another spot and another and another," remembers Ronny. "As it got progressively worse, we had visions of something really bad."

On the opposite side of the U.S., it was Christmas-time as 12-year-old Stacianna Stitts sat combing her silky-smooth brunette hair when she looked down to see tons of locks tangled in the bristles of her brush. With each stroke, more and more strands fell out.

"At first I thought I was really sick," Stitts said. "It was one of the most frightening days of my life."

It wasn't long after that the Stitts and the Young families learned all about alopecia areata.

Pronounced al-oh-pe-shah air-ee-ah-tah, this autoimmune skin disease causes a person's body to mistakenly attack its own hair follicles, resulting in the loss of hair on the scalp and body. As in Stitts' and Young's cases, the disease usually starts with one or more small, round bald patches on the scalp, but it can progress to total scalp hair loss, known as alopecia totalis, or complete body hair loss, alopecia universalis.

Alopecia areata affects approximately 1.7 percent of the population overall, including more than four million people in the U.S. It affects both males and females, and people of all ages and races. The disease has dermatologist and researchers mystified.

"We went from dermatologist to dermatologist until we found Dr. Amy McMichael in Winston-Salem who is a specialist in the area," explained Ronny.

But medical professionals are still uncertain as to what causes the disease.

Some speculate alopecia areata is triggered by a stressful event, while others suggest it could be hereditary.

"Alex had mono right before this started which put a lot of stress on his immune system," Ronny conjectures.

"A boy down the street, Billy Long, had been real sick before he started, and each time he gets sick with the flu or something, the symptoms return."

In some cases, the hair slowly grows back, often as gray or white before returning to its original color. Although the disease is not life-threatening, the psychological trauma can be devastating and most certainly life-altering.

"I spent a year wearing hats and scarves and hiding from it," admits Stitts. "I was pretty much in denial. I wasn't thinking that I just needed to be myself. I felt like I was always hiding from everyone. I always wondered who was staring at me."

Alex has experienced similar feelings. "It has been tough," said his father. "Alex has never gotten back to a full head of hair. We had to get permission for him to wear hats in school, church, scouts ... because he feels more comfortable."

Equally puzzling about alopecia areata is the possibility of recurring episodes, something else Stitts experienced. For a brief period in the eighth grade her hair grew back, but as is often the case with the unpredictability of alopecia areata, it soon fell out again.

Stitts, who tied for second in the 100-meter breaststroke, was third in the 200-meter breaststroke at the 2000 NCAA Championships, first in the 100-meter breast and 400-meter Medley Relay and finished second in the 100-meter breast and 400-meter MR at 1998 Goodwill Games, is now a spokesperson for National Alopecia Areata Foundation (NAAF).

"Our goal is to educate as well as do fund raising for research," said Ronny.

The NAAF was created to support research to find a cure or acceptable treatment for alopecia areata, to support those with the disease and to educate the public about alopecia areata by fund-raising events, providing local support and education for people with alopecia areata and their families, informing the public about alopecia areata, and distributing educational materials so everyone can better understand the disease.

The Youngs believe the recent publicity in area papers has not only helped

others realize they have the disease, but brought alopecia areata sufferers forward.

"Since the articles have come out, more and more people with alopecia areata are coming out," said Ronny, whose wife Kathy is the leader of the alopecia areata support group.

On Sept. 29, NAAF will host its Second Annual National Alopecia Areata Golf Tournament at Birkdale Country Club in Huntersville. The entry fee is \$125 per person and all proceeds go to NAAF.

In addition to the tournament, there will be a silent auction and a raffle for a week in Cancun for two (airfare included). Also, Stacianna Stitts will conduct a swimming clinic for children at 9 a.m. at a pool in the Lake Norman area (location TBA), as well as speak during the barbecue luncheon following the golf tournament.

"Seven to 10 years!" Alex responded, somewhat disappointed.

"Alex, think of the next kid that comes along. He won't have to go through what you have to go through," Ronny explained.

After a few moments of silence, Alex said, "Dad, thanks for doing this."

The entry fee for the tournament is \$125 per person, and all proceeds from the event will go to NAAF. Contributions can be made to "The National Alopecia Areata Foundation, in care of Rose and Richard Dest, 1838 Cassamia Place, Charlotte, NC 28211.

Alopecia Areata support group leader Kathy Young can be reached at 704-875-0772.

"Why are you doing all of this?" Alex asked them.

"We are trying to get enough funding so that maybe seven or 10 years down the line, they will find a cure," said Ronny.

"Alex, think of the next kid that comes along. He won't have to go through what you have to go through," Ronny explained.

After a few moments of silence, Alex said, "Dad, thanks for doing this."

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