A HEALTHY DOSE OF PREPARATION

THE COLLEGE HAD ONE CONFIRMED CASE OF THE so-called swine flu. Then two. Then seven or eight. By the time the news hit that there were 12 students with the virus, it was all over the news. And yet, on the front lines of the bug, things couldn’t have been calmer. There was no frenzy, no alarm, no worries or freak-outs. That’s because, by the time the H1N1 virus arrived in the Office of Student Health Services last month, it was already old news.

“We knew it was coming. We’d been preparing for it since May,” says Jane Reno-Munro, director of health services, explaining that— as soon as they realized the potential severity of an outbreak—they formed the H1N1 Core Planning Committee and got to work.

“Everybody on our staff was involved with the planning, and, through a tremendous amount of work over the summer, we were ready.”

And so, therefore, was the rest of campus. Duly informed by health services, the relevant departments knew to expect the virus and understood their roles in preventing, containing and managing an outbreak. From student affairs and residence life to Physical Plant and auxiliary services, the College was on guard.

“I’m proud to say that our efforts have been multi-departmental from the beginning,” says Reno-Munro, adding that, without campuswide cooperation, the number of flu cases at the College could have doubled, even tripled. All the work that went into developing educational materials, installing hand sanitizers and building a separate health services waiting area, for example, “is definitely keeping things under control. I can only imagine where we’d be without that help.”

And, while health services has extended its hours to accommodate the number of flu cases, some departments are simply on standby—ready to jump to action if and when the time comes.

“Our goal is to keep this campus running— to minimize the impact on campus operations. We want to keep our responses in check with what’s actually going on at any given time,” says Reno-Munro, explaining that there’s no reason to set up a triage center, for example, unless an extremely high number of students gets the flu at the same time.

That, however, is seeming less and less likely—especially since the College is hoping to receive 12,000 doses of the vaccination in mid-October.

“We have every intention to vaccinate everyone on campus. We are student health services, and the students are our main focus, but we all work here, and we have to be healthy for the students,” says Reno-Munro. “We’re going to do everything we can to keep everyone healthy.”

Contingent on how many doses of the vaccination the College actually receives, the plan is to hold a weeklong vaccination blitz, prioritized in “waves,” with the highest-risk people first and lowest-risk people last. Students, faculty and staff will be able to go online, find out what wave they’re in and print a ticket to the event.

“Everybody is getting behind the whole idea of the blitz—and we need that kind of support, because it’s going to be five days of 10 people getting vaccinated every minute,” says Reno-Munro. “It’s going to be a lot of work. And it’s not just giving the vaccines, it’s more in the organization, the crowd control.”

Keeping things calm and under control is important, emphasizes Reno-Munro, not just during the vaccination blitz, but for the duration of the H1N1 virus’s time on campus.

“There’s a lot of hysteria about this, but it’s just a flu,” she says. “It has a funny name, but it’s not much more than that. So we’re reminding people to stay calm, keep it in perspective.”

Oh, and don’t forget to wash your hands. 🧼

For more information about the H1N1 virus and for updates about the vaccination blitz, visit emergency.cofc.edu/h1n1/index.php.
As the director of Greek life, Kissinger says, “You have to have a sense of humor, and a confidant, an advocate, a mentor. And, importantly – I’m here to support the students,” she says. “I enjoy being their sounding board, but it can be hard because you want to swoop in and make everything OK. You have to remind yourself that this is their chance to learn how to solve their own problems. When else are they going to learn? This is their time.”

It’s also their time to have a little fun. “This is supposed to be the most fun time of their lives, and I hope I can facilitate that for them, too,” says Kissinger, although she admits that it’s usually the other way around. “The students make it fun. They’ve taught me to lighten up and not take things too seriously. Mean, we’re not curing cancer.”

Still, she fears that the role of Greek life isn’t given the consideration it deserves. “I think people underestimate what a contribution Greek organizations make to the campus: the service they provide to the community, the energy and color they bring to student life, even the money they provide to the foundation,” says Kissinger.

But, she stresses, the impact Greek life has on campus doesn’t compare to the impact it has on students. “The moment students get involved, they make a commitment to live according to the values of the organization – and, for four years, they have this family looking out for them, letting them know when they’ve stepped out of line, holding them accountable,” she says. “It keeps them grounded and reinforces their values so that, when they struggle with difficult decisions in their journey through life, they already have a roadmap to refer to.”

Of course, it’s not just about preparing for the struggles in life – it’s also about preparing for success.

“The whole goal of Greek life is to develop students into social human beings who are comfortable interacting with their communities,” explains Kissinger. “They’re learning to make connections and to work together – essentially, they’re learning how to be successful citizens.”

And, for Kissinger, that’s the most exciting part.

“We are impacting lives. It’s our responsibility to make their college experience the best, most well-rounded it can be. That’s why I love it – because we’re making these years count.”

True to form, however, Kissinger refuses to detract from the students’ own achievement.

“This isn’t about me, it’s about them,” she says. “The students make me good at what I do. I’d be lost without them.”

It’s just what you’d expect the cool aunt to say.
It certainly sounds like a good time: dining on steaks, laughing with close friends, shagging and line dancing to live music — and, of course, singing karaoke.

“Karaoke is only one part of it, but I usually sing at least one song,” says Rivers, insisting that his singing can’t compare with that of some of the other regulars. “We have some phenomenal talent there, myself not included. Some folks say I’m pretty good, but I just do it for the fun — just to blow off some steam.”

Rivers was neither a singer nor a performer when his “friends coaxed and cajoled and pushed and prodded” him into getting in front of the karaoke machine for the first time in 2003.

“I sang Ray Price, ‘For the Good Times,’” he recalls. “People were shocked: Black guys don’t do country. But it came off pretty good, so I got some good attaboys that night.”

And he’s been getting them ever since — only now he has a repertoire of about 25 country songs, including Chris Young’s “Getting You Home” and Darius Rucker’s “Don’t Think I Don’t Think About It.”

“I love country music,” says Rivers. “I grew up listening to all kinds of music — and I do do a little R&B — but I’m always more comfortable doing country.”

Still, his only real criteria is that the song speaks to him.

“Sometimes you just hear something on the radio and you like what you hear, and certain songs just stick,” he says. “Sometimes I’ll think, ‘If I had the chance to say that to someone, to my wife, I would.’”

And so he does. From the karaoke stage. And if that isn’t romantic enough, just wait for him to perform a duet with his wife of 29 years.

“I can’t tell you how important it is for husbands and wives to have something like this they do together — it’s so good for the relationship to go out and relax together,” says Rivers. “Really, I encourage everyone to go out more. Get out, have some fun, forget all the stress from work!”

After all, that’s what weekends are all about!
CHAMPION OF LITERACY: Linda Fitzharris Fights the Good Fight

SHE’S SEEN WHAT SHE’S UP AGAINST.
She’s all-too aware of the challenges. And she knows it’s not getting any easier. Still, Linda Fitzharris refuses to back down – and she’ll keep on fighting until there’s nothing left to fight for.

“I’m a literacy advocate – that’s what I do,” says the associate professor of teacher education. “Everybody has their cause – the thing they really get behind. This is mine.”

As an elementary school teacher with a master’s degree in developmental reading, Fitzharris never questioned the value of being able to read. But when she moved to Charleston and began working as the reading/LD resources specialist at Fraser Elementary School in 1971, she was taken aback by the students’ poor reading skills. It was then that she realized literacy was something she needed to stand up for.

“I think, at that point, it became a mission,” she says.

Fast-forward 38 years, and Fitzharris is still on a crusade – her most recent battle against the effects that state budget cuts and decreased donations have had on the Trident Literacy Association, which operates six sites serving 2,500 functionally illiterate adults a year. As the co-chair of the association’s board, Fitzharris admits that when financial hardships threatened to shut down two of TLA’s sites last June, she wasn’t sure they had a fighting chance.

“We’d been anguishing over the budget and closing the sites for so long, we didn’t really see any alternative,” she says, explaining that it wasn’t until the association announced the closures publically that there seemed to be any hope. “Once we made it known that we were having this crisis, people stood up to help. I honestly don’t think we expected the outpouring we got. The community has been tremendous.”

The community’s generosity has kept the downtown site open, but the battle isn’t over yet. In fact, it’s only just begun.

“The donations bought us a year, but we’ll be in exactly the same spot a year from now,” says Fitzharris, adding that the TLA is exploring ways to secure the site’s future through fundraising and cost cutting. “Right now we are just taking it one year at a time.”

But she’s certainly not giving up. The site, known as the TC Drayton Center, serves 600 students a year. Within a one-mile radius of the center, nearly 60 percent of the people over age 25 do not have a high school degree. The low levels of education and high levels of poverty in the area make it one of TLA’s most critical sites.

“We’re fighting generations and generations of illiteracy, poverty and high crime rates in the area,” says Fitzharris, explaining that the idea that it’s OK not to learn how to read or graduate from high school or hold a steady job gets perpetuated with every generation. “We have to break this cycle.”

And, considering illiteracy is directly linked with welfare dependency and incarceration, “it’s almost like, pay now or pay later,” she continues. “Either way, it’s a community expense – which is why I personally think this is something that’s everybody’s business. Ultimately, it affects us all.”

That’s why she’s rallying the troops, encouraging the entire community to join the crusade in whatever capacity possible. Only with that kind of unified backup will the campaign ever stockpile enough ammunition – enough funding, manpower and commitment – to take out illiteracy in the area.

And so the fight is on.

MARKETING MIX

The second edition of the College of Charleston Brand Manual - Visual Identity and Style Guide is now available at marketing.cofc.edu. It contains updated letterhead standards, additions to the style guide, a guide to social media and information about our new Web standards, among other topics. As a companion piece to the brand manual, a quick-reference booklet highlighting the fundamentals of the College’s brand identity will be distributed to all employees this month.

The most up-to-date information available can always be found at marketing.cofc.edu.

Any brand-related or general marketing questions should be directed to marketing@cofc.edu.

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

- Storefront entrances were installed last month at the new science center, and the paving on Calhoun and Coming streets are complete, with work continuing in the courtyard walkways and cobblestone driveway. The finishing touches – including the installation of the exterior sunshades and interior equipment, bluestone and VCT flooring – will continue throughout this month.
- Flooring was installed on the second through fifth floors of the Cato Center for the Arts in September. Casework and equipment continues to be installed on the fourth and fifth floors.
- New stud partitions and gypsum wallboards were installed for the Craig Cafeteria conversion last month, and the above-ceiling work and systems rough-in continue. The courtyard paving will be complete early this month.
- Temporary safety fencing and scaffolding went up for the work to the exterior of Randolph Hall in September, and work is expected to progress westward from the east and south sides of the building.
- Renovations to all three levels of the porches at the Knox-Lesesne house are under way and should be complete around the end of October.
BIKE THE BRIDGE
Hop on your bike (or reserve a loaner bike) for this leisurely 16-mile ride across the Ravenel Bridge to the Pickett Bridge Recreation Area and back to campus.
Where: Meet in front of the Johnson Center
What: Meet in front of the Johnson Center
Fee: None
Contact: Gene Sessoms, 3.5559, sessomse@cofc.edu

STANDUP COMEDY AND AMERICAN JEWS
Larry Krasnoff, professor of philosophy, will explore the role of Jewish American comedians in establishing standup as a dominant form of comic performance.
Where: Jewish Studies Center, Arnold Hall
Fee: None
Contact: Enid Idelsohn, 3.5682, idelsohne@cofc.edu

HALSEY GRAND OPENING RECEPTION
Celebrate the Halsey Institute’s new home and tour the new space with the artist behind the collages and assemblage works in the gallery’s inaugural exhibition.
Where: Cato Center for the Arts, Halsey Gallery
Fee: None
Contact: Rebecca Silberman, 3.5680, silberman@cofc.edu

NEWS BRIEFS: News You Can Use
• Coach John Kresse was inducted into the New York City Basketball Hall of Fame.
• The open enrollment period for changes to insurance benefits with the Employee Insurance Program is Oct. 1-31. Changes can be made at eip.sc.gov/mybenefits. For more information, contact the Office of Human Resources at 3.5512.
• State Health Plan Standard Plan and Medicare Supplemental Plan subscribers may buy 63-90-day supplies of prescription drugs at mail-order prices when they visit local pharmacies within the Retail Maintenance Network. For more information, contact Medco at 800.711.3450.
• Dining Services offers employees a Block 20 meal plan – 20 meals at Liberty Street Fresh Food Company, the Faculty and Staff Dining Room, the Hungry Cougar and Einstein Bros. Bagels for $135 – as well as Dining Dollars, which can be added to Cougar Cards in any dollar increment and are accepted at any of the campus retail restaurants. For more information, contact Kate Nelson at 3.5354 or nelsonk@cofc.edu.
• The Center for the Documentary is offering free multimedia workshops, focusing on the fundamentals of videotaping, editing, graphic design and animation. The ongoing workshops are held on Tuesdays, 6-8 p.m., in the Education Center, room 207. For more information, contact Dave Brown at 3.7749 or browndl1@cofc.edu.
GUESS WHAT?

Take a look at the picture above. The object can be found on campus. Do you know what it is? The first person to submit the correct answer will win a tasty lunch for two at Liberty Street Fresh Food Company, compliments of ARAMARK. Good luck!

Send your submission to lutza@cofc.edu by Monday, Oct. 12, 2009. The contest is open to all College faculty and staff. One submission per person, please.

WORD ON THE BRICKS

As new employees, what has surprised you the most about working at the College?

BO KAI
Assistant Professor of Mathematics

"After several weeks of teaching, I have been surprised by the intelligence of students in the College. With such a group of smart students, teaching becomes pleasant work, and I am really enjoying it now."

JOSE CASAS
Visiting Assistant Professor of Theatre

"I am finding out how little I know about this region – its culture, politics and worldviews. In that same fashion, I am realizing that my students also have limited knowledge or insight into my culture and the region I am from. To me, the exchanges between my students as we get to know each other have been insightful in my own personal growth and, in some ways, have had a beneficial influence on the actual subject material I am teaching."

RENA PROVO
Administrative Coordinator, History Department

“When I began working at the College, I had expected to enter a friendly, caring environment, but the people here have been even friendlier. I am also surprised at the number of activities and events on campus that you can participate in. There is a lot of energy on this campus."