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Pioneer

July 27, 2005

Air show a chance for alumni to gather

For over a century now, Ferris alumni have looked to the heavens to carve out their paths on earth. Graduate after graduate, class after class, generation after generation, have set lofty goals that have been surpassed only by their lofty achievements.

It's as if their individual and collective achievements have been, and continue to be, well, written in the stars.

About 250 members of the Ferris State University Alumni Association (FSU) gathered at the Muskegon Airport on Saturday where they once again found themselves looking to the heavens - this time, though, to catch even an eye-blinking glimpse of the U.S. Navy's world-famous Blue Angels flight missing in action.

"That's something," Eisler said, his voice soft and broken. "That really tugs at you to watch something like that. It makes you think and appreciate all that we have. More importantly, it helps you to remember all those who gave us everything we have, today."

Rick Duffett, vice president of Administration and Finance at FSU, was also mesmerized by the skills of the pilots.

"My father flew for the Royal Canadian Air Force and I grew up hearing about such stories," Duffett said.

"So, as I sit here and watch these pilots do their thing, it reminds a bit about my youth, and of the conversations I used to have with my father."

Jeremy Mishler, director of Alumni Relations at FSU, said that organization has grown to include about 90,000 members.

"The Alumni Association is really quite active," Mishler said. "It's grown a lot over the years. Those who belong to the association are proud to (be from FSU), and they enjoy getting together for gatherings like this (air show)."

"We have alumni with us here today who go demonstration team."

Members of the FSU Alumni Association sat in a chalet-type enclosure, almost directly in front of where the famed aviators parked their bright blue F-18 fighters, from where they had a bird's-eye view not only of the Blue Angels, but of all the other featured aerial acts, as well.

It was a day, and an air show, few will forget.

"It was amazing, absolutely amazing," said FSU President David Eisler. "The skill it takes to fly and maintain these jets, the dedication and education of their pilots and support crew, is remarkable."

Pausing to watch a fly-over of four aircraft from the World War II era - better known as "war birds" - Eisler removed his ball cap and held it close to his chest as one of the time-honored airplanes broke from formation to fly straight up, away from the others.

Called the "Missing Man Formation," this type of fly-over honors all those military personnel who either died in action, or who are back all the way to (the class of) 1950. We even have a few who only graduated last year. Raw cool is that?"

And you didn't have to look far to see future: graduates - further FSU alumni - in the mix, as well.

Ken Hoexum, a 62-year-old retired banker from southern Michigan and a graduate of the Class of 1965, sat with his 3-year-old grandson, George.

As the elder Hoexum watched the air show directly overhead, his grandson played with a small model of a Blue Angels' jet.

"We're having a wonderful time, just wonderful," Hoexum said. "It's awesome. It's really quite incredible what America can build -jets like these. And the brave people who fly them, you can't say enough about them."

Earlier, as he held his grandson tight in his arms, Hoexum also watched as the four war birds flew what seemed like within arm's reach, only to have one of the planes break off and fly straight up in honor of the "Missing Man."

"That's heartbreaking," Hoexum said. "I hope we never forget the significance of what that means, of what that stands for."

Pioneer

July 27, 2005

Ferris' Rankin Gallery hosts Trilobite exhibit

Big Rapids- "Trilobite Treasures: Arthropods of the Ancient Seas" is one exhibit at Ferris State University's Rankin Art Gallery through Aug. 28. Admission to the gallery is free and hours of operation are Monday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The artifacts are included in The Kchodl Collection, which is organized by Joe Kchodl of Midland.

Trilobites lived in the ancient seas of the Cambrian explosion of life and became extinct at the end of the Permian Period some 250 million years ago, according to exhibit information. There are eight genera that include more than 15, 000 species of Trilobites, with more being discovered each year.

A Trilobite is aptly named as its body is divided into three lobes- cephalon (head), thorax (body) and pygidium (tail). Each body had a pair of legs for movement and respiration and many of the animals were adorned with spines and protrusions.

Other exhibits featured at The Rankin Gallery in the coming months include "All-Michigan All-Media 2005" Aug. 30 through Sept. 23. This juried art competition will feature works submitted by Michigan artists. Awards will be given for first through third place.

The juror for the event, which is in its second year at Ferris, is award-winning painter Boyd Quinn, a full-time professor of fine arts at Kendall College of Art and Design in Grand Rapids. Quinn earned a bachelor of fine arts from Aquinas and a master of fine arts from Eastern Michigan University.

Also featured will be "Toward Not Knowing" Paintings and Drawings by Mary Penn" and "Paul Nehring" Silences and the Spaces Between," Oct. 4 through 28; "Freeze Frame: AIGA Student Photo Show," Nov. 2 through 11; FSU and KCAD faculty, Nov. 15 through Dec.9; Wade Eldean, Jan. 10 through Feb. 3; Julie Seregny Mahoney: Recent Work and Kathleen Vandermark, Feb. 7 through March 3; "People, Places, & Things: Photography by Bill Bitzinger," March 14 through April 8; and FSU Artwalk Academy, April 11 through 28.

Pioneer

July 29, 2005

Broadening horizons: Ferris State summer camps expose students to new health care fields

BIG RAPIDS - Summer camps allow students to discover all sorts of new things - be it outdoors, athletics or academics. Ferris State's Allied Health Sciences camps live up to that mantra, but go one step further.

Instead of teaching campers how to canoe along the river or box out an opponent on the basketball court, FSU's camp opens the door for high school students to get a look at different health care careers.

"The purpose of the camp is to expose more young people to the variety of health care careers," said Jason DaDay, recruiting officer for the College of Allied Health Sciences.

"There is so much more than just doctors and nurses."

The camp gives students a hands-on lesson in several health care professions, including clinical laboratory sciences, dental hygiene, diagnostic medical sonography, nursing, medical record sciences, nuclear medicine technology, radiography and respiratory care.

"It shows the student's jobs that maybe they aren't aware of," DaDay said. "Our hope is to pave interest in these jobs."

The campers echoed DaDay's sentiments.

"I wanted to discover different things out there and make sure this is what I want to do," said Morley Stanwood High School student April Welch.

"I wanted to see what other (fields) were like," said Chelsey Barsan of Alpena High School. The second annual camp, which is in its final week, has 21 campers, most from northern Michigan who are on scholarship. DaDay said the camp was started because of the shortage of health care professions in northern Michigan. The CAHS developed the camp with a focus on recruiting and educating the next generation of health care professionals to serve in northern Michigan.

The Allied Health Sciences camp is not the only program at FSU this summer. FSU has already held a CAD and Manufacturing Academy and Computer Technology camp, while Biotechnology camp is just wrapping up today.

The Grand Rapids Press

July 31, 2005

University funding a matter of priority: Tax reduction tactics have starved state budget for years

The recent big tuition increases should be no shock to university students and their parents, because those increases are inevitable given the fiscal choices that have been made since 1999.

Given a choice between cutting taxes and funding higher education, politicians in Lansing have chosen budget-starving tax reduction.

Double-digit and near double-digit tuition increases approved for the fall simply reflect years of state funding cuts, coupled with a belief by university presidents that Michigan's fiscal priorities aren't going to change.

If lawmakers won't reconsider a half-decade of tax reduction in order to boost state aid for colleges, the universities believe they have no choice but to raise tuition and fees.

The academic missions of their institutions shouldn't be compromised just because Lansing has become an unreliable partner in educating Michigan's young adults.

Universities have absorbed three straight years of state aid reductions, and for fiscal 2006 school officials are staring at still another decline. A proposed 2 percent cut next year would drop per-student funding to \$5,700, down \$1,200 since 2002.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm believes the tuition increases that seek to recoup some of that funding loss are unacceptable. Michigan State University's Lou Anna Simon and the University of Michigan's Mary Sue Coleman believe it's unacceptable for the state to disinvest in its once prized public institutions.

Granholm said July 21, just hours before MSU and U-M both raised tuition, that schools were balancing their budgets on the backs of students. Rather, Lansing has cut taxes on the backs of students. Michigan isn't spending too much on education; it's just not collecting the tax revenue to support the kind of education system people claim they want.

Steady annual tax reduction since 1999 has carved a \$1.5 billion hole in the state budget for discretionary spending. The amount is more than the state is spending on operational funding for the 15 universities combined.

The trade-off

Has trading off higher tuition for tax cuts been worth it? It depends on whether taxpayers plan on sending their children to college.

An upper-middle-class family with an adjusted gross income of \$100,000 will pay \$500 less in income taxes this year because of the 1999 tax cut that dropped the rate from 4.4 percent to 3.9 percent. An incoming freshman at Michigan State will pay \$945 more in tuition this fall.

Of course, do the math for a family making \$50,000 a year - \$250 in tax savings - and the trade-off is far worse.

But it's a trade-off that will stand for now.

Granholtz isn't going to boost aid for universities if it means shredding the safety net for the poor who depend on the state for monthly cash assistance or medical care.

Republicans, on the other hand, aren't about to support a general tax increase.

Universities could count on tax receipt growth that a marginally improving state economy seems to be producing this summer. Too bad, they may be last in line for that money as well.

Any new revenue Granholtz and lawmakers have at their disposal as they work to complete the budget in coming weeks appears to be already obligated for Medicaid, K-12 education and business tax reduction.

Universities employ enough lobbyists to see that handwriting on the wall. Besides, a university state aid budget might not even be completed until the Sept. 30 deadline, more than a month after classes start.

Changing the law

By then, a petition drive to take school funding decisions out of the hands of the governor and lawmakers could be well under way.

A coalition of K-12 schools, community colleges and universities is seeking a public backed budget law guaranteeing annual inflationary increases for school operations. It's sort of a financial safety net for schools.

If lawmakers, presented with a successful petition drive, won't pass it themselves, the funding guarantee will go on the 2006 ballot, where voters will decide.

Anti-tax opponents probably will assert that such funding guarantees have to be paid for somehow, most likely through tax increases.

Given the alternative approved this month on university campuses across the state, voters could well consider that a trade-off worth taking.

Pioneer

August 1, 2005

Big Rapids' past celebrated at Artworks show: FSU fossil presentation part of historical retrospective

Big Rapids has a rich and varied history, some of it dating back 550 million years. The only records of that time are those preserved in rock; more recent history is a little easier to "get at."

But both are being celebrated at Artworks on downtown Michigan Avenue. The gallery - in conjunction with Ferris State University - Saturday hosted a fossil workshop for area residents. The workshop featured dozens of rare fossil finds as well as information on the proper technique to use when attempting unearthen and clean fossils.

The workshop was part of a larger Artworks show celebrating the history of Big Rapids as the city approaches its 150th birthday.

According to Artworks representative Julie Martin, the show is as varied as the city's history.

"We have art works from artists depicting scene from Big Rapids," said Martin. "We have photos, pictures, paintings, and also some antique pictures on loan from the Pioneer."

Some of the other items included in the show are antique bottles and other paraphernalia associated with earlier cultures in the area. A favorite of Martin is a custom-designed Afghan on loan from Carlleen Rose, owner of the Old Pioneer Store and Emporium. "It has historical images on it," said Martin. "(Rose) had it specially made."

A beautiful rendition of the historical downtown drinking fountain is one of the other highlights of the show. Created by local artist Gene Connelly, the picture is being marketed as a framed print as well as in postcard and note card sets.

The show is slated to run through Aug. 26. According to Martin, the show is one which should be close to the hearts of any Big Rapids resident or visitor even remotely interested in the history of the area.

"We have a lot of really nice artwork from local artists here," said Martin.