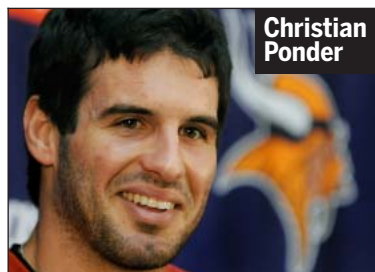


Vikings rookie Ponder familiar with Panthers' Newton **Sports**



BIG AND BOXY
Fashionable sweaters can be quite forgiving **Style**

The Charlotte Observer

THURSDAY ■ OCTOBER 27, 2011 ■ 75¢

1886 125 2011

@ charlotteobserver.com

C D E F ■ +

Alternative energy: 9,000 hogs plus a high-tech waste digester equals methane



"I was kind of curious myself how it was going to do," said farmer Loyd Bryant, 71. The paperwork's "not going to be no big thing. And it might bring my power bill down."

PIG WASTE PROVES POWERFUL



PHOTOS BY JOHN D. SIMMONS - jsimmons@charlotteobserver.com

Tatjana Vujic, director of Duke University's carbon offsets initiative, walks between the aeration basin, left, and an anaerobic digester on Loyd Ray Farms in Yadkin County. Nearly 9,000 hogs are in a pilot program with the university and Duke Energy to turn hog waste into electricity.

BY BRUCE HENDERSON
bhenderson@charlotteobserver.com

YADKINVILLE — The old saw about using every part of a pig but the squeal now includes its droppings, which are producing electricity on a Yadkin County farm.

Duke University is a partner with Duke Energy and Google in testing a system that captures methane, a potent greenhouse gas, from manure. The gas fuels a small power plant that makes enough energy to run the waste-processing system and part of the farm itself.

Loyd Ray Farms joins a handful of North Carolina hog farms that have become energy innovators. They're prompted by state laws aimed at boosting renewable energy and phasing out open waste pits that can taint water and release harmful ammonia into the air.

"I was kind of curious myself how it was going to do," said farm owner

Loyd Bryant, who at 71 is part of the old guard. Bryant first raised hogs in the 1960s. More than 8,600 now fatten up in his row of barns.

"There will be a few more records to keep, but it's not going to be no big thing," he said. "And it might bring my power bill down."

The powerful troika collaborating on the project will also benefit. The university and Google, which owns a data center in Lenoir, score credits to offset their carbon emissions. Duke Energy gets help in

SEE HOGS, 4A



Bryant

HOG POWER

Watch a slideshow from the farm at charlotteobserver.com/photos.

IN BUSINESS

Apple quietly begins work on a solar farm in Catawba County. **3B**

Obama speeds student debt aid

The president will start a program that will help millions of borrowers two years earlier than planned.

BY DAVID PERLMUTT AND MEGHAN COOKE
dperlmutt@charlotteobserver.com
macooke@charlotteobserver.com

President Barack Obama unveiled a plan Wednesday that could give millions of young people, including thousands of recent N.C. college graduates, some relief on student loan payments.

Obama will accelerate a measure passed by Congress that cuts the maximum required payment on student loans from 15 percent of discretionary income annually to 10 percent. He will put it into effect in 2012, instead of 2014.

In addition, the White House says the remaining debt would be forgiven after 20 years instead of 25. About 1.6 million borrowers could be affected.

The move would help recent graduates such as Alison Wadsworth.

The 25-year-old set out on a job search after graduating this year from Campbell University with a law degree and an MBA.

But now the student loan bills are piling in, and Wadsworth, who's licensed to practice law, is working in retail in Charlotte to help pay off the crippling debt she racked up in school.

"It's kind of tragic when you've worked so hard for your future," she said.

An estimated 30,000 current students would be able to lower their monthly payments through the "pay as you earn" program, according to a state-

SEE STUDENTS, 4A

Romney joins GOP push to flatten tax code

Republican presidential candidates' plans would simplify taxes and benefit wealthy Americans.

BY STEVEN THOMMA
McClatchy Newspapers

WASHINGTON — The Republican Party is catching flat-tax fever — and setting up an epic election-year fight with Democrats over whether wealthier Americans should pay higher taxes or get tax cuts.

Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney became the latest to punch the tax button Wednesday, telling a Virginia audience that he'll soon update his economic proposal to spell out ways to flatten the tax code.

His vow came just a day after rival Rick Perry grabbed headlines and talk-show chatter for a proposal for an optional flat 20 percent tax on income. Both followed Herman Cain's pitch for a flat 9 percent income tax as part of his 9-9-9 plan, which helped him jump to the top tier of candidates for their party's 2012 nomination. Newt Gingrich and Michele Bachmann endorse a flat

SEE TAX PLANS, 6A

Charlotte's ghost detectives are dead serious

Paranormal group uses scientific tools to prove or disprove your hauntings.

BY MARK PRICE
msprice@charlotteobserver.com

The Charlotte Area Paranormal Society — yes, there is such a thing — says it has found proof of hundreds of area hauntings over the past six years.

That means its teams have recorded, observed or photographed what they believe to be

unexplainable sounds, sights, touches and smells.

This is their busy season, too, owing to publicity surrounding Halloween.

But hundreds of hauntings does not add up to hundreds of ghosts being evicted, says Tina McSwain, who founded the group.

It seems not all clients want their ghosts removed, so the society has only done about 60 of its "ghost rescues," where specialists acted as "mediators" to persuade the dead to move on.

"Some people are terrified of the unknown thing in their house," McSwain says, "and then there are the people that think it's the greatest thing since sliced bread."



McSwain

They bring us in to determine who it might be: a George or a Martha."

National polls in recent years have shown more than one-third

of Americans believe in ghosts, a statistic reflected in the popularity of TV shows like "Ghost Hunters" and movies like "Paranormal Activity 3."

When the Observer recently asked readers for their personal ghost stories, a few dozen sent in tales of hauntings. They included

SEE GHOSTS, 4A

GHOST STORIES

See tomorrow's Observer for the first in a series of reader experiences with the paranormal.

76° 50°

Today: Partly cloudy.
Friday: Mostly cloudy, chance of showers, high 54. 12A



© 2011 The Charlotte Observer
Vol. 142, No. 300



Ask Amy.....5D
Business.....2B
Classified.....6B
Comics.....4-5D
Editorial.....10A
Horoscope.....4D
Lottery.....1B
Obituaries.....4B
Sports.....1C
TV.....3D
Delivery assistance or to subscribe800-532-5350
To subscribe to OnTV magazine877-800-1335

TODAY'S MUST-READS

Health: Hormones undermine dieters' struggle to keep the weight off. **9A**

Business: Real estate investment market will be erratic. **2B**

COMING FRIDAY

CLT: Your guide to Wells Fargo's free celebration day.



DAVID GOLDMAN - AP
Protesters link arms across Peachtree Street in Atlanta as police move in.

ATLANTA'S OCCUPY CAMP SHUT DOWN

Police arrested more than 50 protesters who had been there for about two weeks. They had been warned to vacate. **2A**

Official: Banks agree to 50% cut on Greek debt

Decision comes after marathon summit. **7A**

Moynihan fires off at BofA public critics

CEO Brian Moynihan said he's "incensed." **2B**

'Idol' winner releases new album

"Stronger" Kelly Clarkson belts out the hurt. **1D**



Clarkson



Fetch a Great Deal!
Bad Dog American Pub
50% Off
Food & Drinks
This deal is only available online.

See 'em.
Get 'em.
Love 'em.

DAILY DEAL

The Charlotte Observer
dealsaverTM



www.dealsaver.com/charlotte

facebook.com/dealsavercharlotte twitter.com/DealsaverClT

