



Scenic views and lush valleys line the 217 miles of the Blue Ridge Parkway that run through North Carolina, including Asheville and the surrounding area. Photo by Lou Murrey - Contributing Photographer

Students seek to develop green infrastructure in Asheville

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Asheville's youth need to participate more in the creation of the city as a prototype in ecological awareness, according to members of environmental organizations in the area.

"I would personally like to see Asheville become a hub of green infrastructure for the world. I would like to see a green revolution throughout the world where we can turn to sustainable energy instead of oil," said **Graham Calabria, a junior at Asheville High School.**

Calabria, who also takes classes at Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College, works with the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy, a nonprofit land trust organization that aims to protect the mountains and their inhabitants.

"Basically, they buy the developmental rights of a property so that you can't build on top

of it, so that they can preserve the natural native species and the diverse plant arrangement," Calabria said.

The SAHC recently started recruiting members for its junior board of directors.

Calabria is currently the only member.

"Our closing deadline is April 1 for application acceptance," said Calabria, an Atlanta native. "We would like to have 5 to 20 (members)."

Asheville hosts a large number of people who tend to live environmentally friendly lifestyles, but simple issues, such as turning off a light switch when leaving a room, continue to persist, said **Eowyn Lucas, a UNC Asheville freshman.**

UNCA has some student organizations that focus on promoting environmental awareness, including Active Students for a Healthy Environment and the Botanical Society at UNCA.

"The Botanical Gardens at Asheville is dedicated to the study and promotion of the na-

tive plants and habitats of the Southern Appalachians," said **Jay Kranyik, the garden manager of the Botanical Gardens at Asheville.**

Although Asheville does well in encouraging its residents to strive for a greener lifestyle, consumption remains an issue, said Kranyik, a board member of the Botanical Society for 11 years.

"There are many people involved in the environmental movement, but on the opposite side there are many people completely unaware of the reality of climate change and what they can do to help," said Lucas, the co-chair of ASHE.

ASHE focuses on bringing awareness to some common environmental issues such as energy consumption, Lucas said.

"I'd like people to understand that a lot of the conflict we have in this world comes from energy, and that can be very readily and easily solved," Calabria said. "If SAHC sets a model youth group and other organi-

zations choose to create their own youth groups, we could have, No. 1, a bunch of youths that are aware of what's going on in their community, and they could also, No. 2, be very influential in their committee meetings at town hall."

The Botanical Gardens at Asheville sets an example for eco-friendliness in both its diverse array of plants and animals and in the construction of the gardens, said Kranyik, an Asheville resident.

"When we built our upper parking lot, we designed it so that water run-off, rain, etc., cannot directly enter the streams in the garden. We have never contributed a single drop of parking lot-polluted water into the streams, because it is physically impossible by design," Kranyik said.

The SAHC has a farmland preservation program which ensures the piece of land, including its resources and water, will be preserved and maintained for the use of growing

fresh food and distributing it to local communities, according to SAHC officials.

"I would like to have wider sidewalks, smaller streets," Calabria said. "So that people walk more. Bigger bike lanes, green roofs, photovoltaic windows. I would like to just see that we release our addiction on oil."

Aside from hosting a varied array of plant and animal species, the Botanical Gardens at Asheville offer educational classes at the garden that focus on its inhabitants, the infrastructure of the garden and plant identification, said Kranyik.

"We have regular visitation by bobcats and black bear. Green herons and belted kingfishers use the streams. We have all of the woodpeckers species for the mountains nesting in the garden," Kranyik said.

UNCA students' opportunities to engage in environmentally focused activities on and off campus provide them with valuable experiences Calabria said.