

Staff Editorial

Letters to the Editor hope to facilitate future conversations

No man is an island. And neither is this news organization.

Community involvement is how and why we do what we do. That is the reason that The Guilfordian gives you two avenues for getting involved — Letters to the Editor and the comment sections on the website.

The purpose of our news organization is a varied and fluctuating one. We inform. We excite. We incite, at times. One purpose that is not specific to The Guilfordian, but one that we are constantly working towards, is to start dialogues.

That is why we offer those two forums for you to react — whether positively or negatively — to our coverage.

Both forums are intended as spaces for the community to address something that was printed, to continue conversations.

So in the spirit of encouraging conversation and of making every word in our print edition as powerful and relevant as possible, Letters to the Editor should be responses or commentaries on previously printed articles.

This small change was prompted by some of the extraordinarily helpful letters we received last year. One letter in particular stuck out to me.

After running an article criticizing the appropriateness of allowing ROTC cadets to table at our historically non-violent Quaker school, we received a letter from an ROTC cadet who was also a Guilford student. In this letter, the student pointed out that his fellow ROTC cadets would quickly change out of their uniforms after class so as not to offend anyone.

The aspect of this letter that was most valuable was that it showed that even though we may have differing views doesn't mean we all can't greatly appreciate our Guilford community.

This is the kind of differing but respectful dialogue that we hope to foster through Letters to the Editor.

If you want an even more open and immediate dialogue, then the comment section at the bottom of every article on our website is the best avenue for conversation. These comment sections offer more than just an immediate response, though. They offer you the chance to have the back-and-forth that will take your conversation to exciting new places. That will hopefully take your conversation to a place of understanding for all involved parties.

Whichever form you choose, we hope you converse with us, with the rest of the community, and with anyone else that cares, as often as possible. Even though you may not have a hand at producing the news every week, you are still an integral part of the process. And we would love to hear from you.

A prisoner is a person no matter what



By Emily Cooper
STAFF WRITER

Nestled in the East River, between Queens and the Bronx, is where Rikers Island stands. At 413.17 acres large, it is home to more than 12,000 prisoners. The only way to access the island is by the Francis R. Buono Memorial Bridge, where ten prisons are located. The island contains prisoners for an array of offenses, and even housed Lil' Wayne.

The penitentiary has multiple juvenile programs and specific prisons for adolescents. People who are awaiting sentencing and cannot afford bail are housed there.

The island is similar to a community. There are schools, grocery stores, gyms, and multiple other businesses.

The threat of Hurricane Irene brought to light the unfair treatment of the Rikers Island prisoners. The surrounding areas were all advised to evacuate, yet there was no evacuation plan for the prisoners of Rikers.

In fact, there has never been an evacuation plan for Rikers Island. For a government-run facility with 12,000 some residing prisoners, numerous employees and working civilians, not having an evacuation plan is irresponsible and embarrassing.

Though the storm did not cause any damage to the prison, the underlying issue still exists — the obvious lack of respect for prisoners.

No matter the crime, a person does not deserve to be forgotten and have the government dismiss their lives. At Rikers the majority of prisoners have not committed violent crimes; many prisoners

are mentally ill.

Even a person who has been convicted of a crime punishable by the death sentence does not deserve to die in a natural disaster due to the fact that the city decided their lives are disposable. A person who is on death row or is critically injured or ill should not be abandoned. They will be sent to the hospital and nursed back to health so they can serve out their sentence the way the court sentenced it to be. This should be no different.

Our country prides itself on being humane and just. We pride ourselves on the way we treat our prisoners compared to the rest of the world. Therefore it would seem hypocritical for one of the largest penitentiary systems in the country to not have an evacuation plan for a natural disaster.

Clearly, New York State, Mayor Michael Bloomberg, and our government have more important issues to attend to. Maybe they are pre-

occupied with pressing issues such as our failing economy, which they seem to be doing such a "spectacular" job with. It seems rather silly that someone could not take the time out of their day to create an evacuation plan — even hire someone to make one.

When it comes down to it, a person is a person, no matter the mistakes they have made. No one can say that they are perfect, therefore who are we to judge the mistakes of others?

Our society has made it clear that the law is allowed to be the judge and is the ultimate authority — the voice of justice. We grow up being told cliché sayings such as "you learn from your mistakes," "two rights don't make a wrong" and of course the golden rule to "treat others the way you want to be treated."

Yet, the law rarely takes this stance when it comes to crime and everything becomes very black and white.

Students seek to keep tradition ablaze



By James Williamson
STAFF WRITER

No more dancing or stomping around warm flames and no more nightly jamborees that separate Guilford from surrounding colleges and universities. One of Guilford's major social assets is being put out.

In a meeting last week, Campus Life and Public Safety expressed its no tolerance policy on bonfires. Unless the student body keeps in check with Campus Life policy, the pits will decay into nothing more than distant memories of once renowned community gatherings.

"With bonfires gone, we're losing one of the most vital parts of the community," said Rick Nallenweg.

Nallenweg, also known as "The Fireman" or "Rickalous," has been permanently banned from campus after putting together the first bonfire this semester.

As Nallenweg and others celebrated the coming year that evening, Campus Life approached. Like sitting ducks ambushed in the dark, students were cited for the bonfire on their first evening.

"Poured the keg on the fire, but the

alcohol doesn't matter," Nallenweg said.

Senior Bennett Christian stood in disbelief as the coals turned from red to black. Christian felt similarly to Nallenweg. A tradition specific to Guilford is being dissolved.

"Three of our four classes at Guilford are familiar with bonfires," said Christian "How are freshmen going to get a real introduction?"

One pit on campus has been designated for student use. Students coined it the "Wal-Mart pit" because it lacks the organic qualities that transcend the natural energies we feel from the woods' pits.

However, the "Wal-Mart pit" is currently inoperable. Unless students receive permission from Public Safety and a permit from the Fire Department, no one can use it. If caught without proper credentials, the Fire Department can charge a \$500 fine.

Due to a regional fire ban issued by the North Carolina Fire Service and general concerns regarding violence in the woods, our tradition will be silenced. Restricting bonfires is not new to Guilford policy and Campus Life has set a strict precedent so far.

As the drought climate forces the lake to sulk into its own abyss and the creek to shrivel into stones, Campus Life and Public Safety are cautious for the sake of student and residential safety.

"There has been an escalation of violence in the woods," said Jen Agor, associate dean for campus life. "And should a bonfire spread, our liability is huge."

Due to several violent occurrences over the last year and a regional drought, Campus Life's ban is set as permanent.

"The ban will be in perpetuity," said Aaron Fetrow, vice president for student

affairs and dean of students.

Such inevitable forces have quashed the student body, making them feel all the more socially clamped.

Several first years who attempted to visit Nallenweg's bonfire were aggravated as they walked the white pebble trail to find Campus Life and Hall Directors scribbling names on small note pads.

"I was pissed," said first-year Olivia Tibbs. Later that week she also sought out the guitar-plucking music that emanated from the North Apartments. Past quiet hours, she left in fear of a possible citation for just being there.

These two examples indicate a need for transparency between Campus Life and the student body.

We have done it before. Even a former student, Adam Pearman '09, created a Community Senate title known as the "Sheriff."

Amid the party atmosphere, the Sheriff would have reported to Campus Life, Public Safety, and those like Nallenweg, Tibbs, or the guitar-pluckers. He helped both sides of the situation to aid in any communication gaps.

"I made an effort to resolve a disconnect that began to grow between the students and Campus Life and Public Safety," said Pearman. "I was a grassroots liaison so to speak. Most people were responsive to a freewheeling student telling them to quiet down or disperse."

The Sheriff also attended Judicial Affairs meetings, collaborated with Community Senate, and helped reform various sections of the handbook.

"Nobody else picked up that title after me," Pearman said. "Seems like there's a call to action for the next generation."