

Coming out with knowledge during Coming Out Week

By Meg Holden & Charlotte Hudson
FEATURES EDITOR & STAFF WRITER

Coming Out Week, a week dedicated to discussion and awareness of LGBTQA issues, occurred Oct. 24 through 29. A collaboration between CAB and Guilford Pride, the week culminated with the Coming Out Ball, held annually on Halloween weekend. The theme of coming out unified the many events throughout the week.

"It's important to highlight (coming out), both to celebrate and reflect on our own journeys and to show others who haven't come out yet that coming out is very rewarding," said junior and Pride member Taylor Seitz in an email interview.

The week began with the Vigil for Equality held on Tuesday evening. The vigil focused on the legislation to be voted on in May that will make same-sex marriage illegal under the North Carolina state constitution. The legislation will also nullify existing same-sex partnerships and benefits to unmarried couples.

"The vigil was very encouraging," said senior Grant Gross. "There were a lot of people who were very enthusiastic about supporting the cause."

According to senior political science major and Pride Vice President Nicole Guilfoyle, opposing the proposed amendment is important because it will be voted on during the primary, when more Republicans will be voting to determine the GOP's candidate for the 2012 presidential election. Democrats are less likely to be voting, so the amendment has a higher chance of passing due to the higher percentage of conservative voters.

Also on Tuesday evening, a talk was given by transgender activist, singer and songwriter Angelica Ross. Ross, who also met with students the next afternoon, spoke of her trials and tribulations as a trans individual. During the talk Tuesday night, she spoke of a woman in the audience whose son is going through a transition, and also of her own experience when coming out.

Members of the Guilford community were invited to the Greenleaf Wednesday evening to share their coming out stories and for allied members to speak of when they became aware of the issues and decided to stand up for LGBTQA people.

"This week has become a lot about activism," said Pride President Kim Parmenter, senior. "It's been a lot about the struggles (in) the (LGBTQA) community that have been going on. (We want) to urge people to pay attention."

During lunch on Thursday, Pride hosted Table Talks in the cafeteria. Signs at each table showed a question, statement or word, meant to encourage discussion among those sitting at the table.

"People don't realize what an impact a conversation could have," Parmenter said. "I want for us to take advantage of that."

On Friday, the first Fabulous Film Friday was held, with the showing of the documentary "The Celluloid Closet." The film is about the treatment of LGBTQA characters in Hollywood films. A discussion was held after the film, with questions ranging from "what makes a man or a woman?" to "is a negative representation of LGBTQA characters is better than none?"

The Week ended with the Coming Out Ball, the annual fall dance at which people could "come out" as their ideal selves.

"There was lots of cross-dressing," said first-year Alexandria Smith.

Senior Bennett Christian expressed dissatisfaction with the costume restrictions and the presence of Public Safety officers at the dance.

"They should move (the dance) to the Community Center," Christian said. "It's a more intimate space."

Nevertheless, the Coming Out Ball and other Coming Out Week events were a massive effort by Pride and other community members to not only recognize but embrace the differences in our community.

"(The Coming Out Ball) is important because it allows people to be who they want to be, at least for a night," Smith said. "Guilford is very open and welcoming to the LGBTQA community."

GULLAH/GEECHEE

Gullah/Geechee Nation visits Guilford

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which she put to use when she made the Gullah/Geechee Nation Facebook page.

The fact that the ancestors of the Gullah/Geechee were victims of slavery is a part of the history of this people, but it is not the entire story. Queen Quet refers to the stigma attached to this part of their history as "Post Traumatic Slave Disorder."

To help spread their culture and history, Queen Quet founded De Gullah Cunneckshun, a traveling group of presenters. Guilford College hosted the travelers Oct. 25-28. The events offered an opportunity to learn about a culture.

"We wanted to bring (Queen Quet) here so she, a Gullah person, can impart that knowledge for us and have it be an experience," explained Jada Drew, Africana Community coordinator.

"(This was) a chance for the community to really be involved and enriched."

"This is a way to expose students to a different culture," said James Shields, director of community learning. "It is something outside of the comfort zone."

The opening ceremony in Bryan Auditorium on Oct. 25 began with a student film titled "Uprooted," which tells the general history of the Gullah/Geechee culture as well as the challenges they face.

This was followed by a question-and-answer period with Queen Quet.

Wednesday night, Oct. 26, Queen Quet shared the Gullah/Geechee history through song, dance and speech.

She corrected misconceptions about the Gullah people, Africans and slaves. One misconception is that these people are always depicted as not wearing

shoes in documentaries.

"Why would we make shoes for other people without keeping some for ourselves?" Quet asked.

The Caldcleugh Multicultural Arts Center on Orchard Street hosted De Gullah Cunneckshun on Thursday, Oct. 27.

The troupe was back in Bryan Auditorium for the closing celebration on Oct. 28.

Those who attended the event were blessed once again with songs from the Gullah/Geechee. Through conversational skits, De Gullah Cunneckshun gave a historical glimpse of life in the Sea Islands.

De Gullah Cunneckshun brought a unique cultural experience to Guilford. Audience members were able to learn of a people many knew nothing about, a people that are fundamental to both America's past and present.

Going beyond "Green and Beyond" with Piedmont Biofuels

By Natalie Sutton
STAFF WRITER

Lawnmowers. Buses. Emergency generators. What do these have in common? They can all be powered by biodiesel.

Piedmont Biofuels, a small renewable energy company in Pittsboro, produces biodiesel that can be used to power all of these devices and more.

The co-op does everything from researching sustainable ways to produce fuel to leading green workshops in order to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels.

"Given rising energy needs, as well as the impact energy production has on global warming and other environmental problems, our communities need new sources of less harmful energy, such as the energy produced by Piedmont Biofuels," said Kyle Dell, associate professor of political science, in an email interview.

Piedmont Biofuels collects waste fats, oils and greases from food service establishments and turns them into biodiesel.

Biodiesel is a vegetable oil- or animal fat-based diesel fuel that can be blended with or used in place of petroleum diesel to power transportation vehicles.

Lyle Estill, president of Piedmont Biofuels, values how easy it is for people to use biodiesel as an energy source.

"We make a product, biodiesel, that can be dropped directly into any diesel engine," said Estill. "You don't have to convert your car, you don't have to call your mechanic, you don't have to go under your hood; you just fill up and drive."



Truck drivers from Piedmont Biofuels do more than just drive. They collect waste products, such as used cooking oil, that can be converted into earth-friendly biofuel.

The nuts and bolts of producing biodiesel are complex, but Piedmont Biofuels is enthusiastic in educating as many people as possible about how the fuel works and how other people can get involved.

Tami Schwerin is the executive director of the Abundance Foundation, a non-profit organization that works with Piedmont Biofuels on sustainability education. Her job consists of hosting tours of the biodiesel plant and sustainable agriculture farm, putting on biodiesel workshops with Piedmont Biofuels and organizing community events to celebrate sustainability.

"We have all sorts of community events, including a Pepper Festival to highlight local food and sustainable agriculture; Pecha Kucha, a presentation format for folks to get ideas out to the public; and many gatherings and celebrations around sustainability successes," Schwerin said in an email interview.

Guilford collaborates with Piedmont Biofuels as well. Our cafeteria donates excess cooking oil to Piedmont Biofuels, who process it into biodiesel and distribute it all over the state for automobile use.

Snehal Deshmukh, director of dining services, appreciates Guilford's connection with the co-op.

"There are many benefits from our relationship with Piedmont Biofuels," said Deshmukh in an email interview. "Not only does it keep our cooking oil out of the waste stream, but it also helps create a renewable, clean-burning, North Carolina-grown fuel. Having a fuel source that is locally produced is a major step in creating a more locally-based economy."

Piedmont Biofuels is vehement about getting others, including the Guilford community, involved with the co-op and with sustainability in general.

Joseph Ezzel, a former member of the plant engineering and design-build teams for Piedmont Biofuels, hopes that people will seek out sustainable organizations and get involved.

"Most green groups welcome anyone who is interested in learning about or becoming involved with efforts to preserve our resources and protect our environment," said Ezzel, who has now formed a separate company that builds biofuel production equipment. "Make contact and show interest. That will get the ball rolling."

Schwerin agrees that a major step in becoming involved is to take initiative.

"All of the events and activities are to educate the public about the importance of local food and renewable energy," Schwerin said. "The objective is to give folks skills that they can use to help in their path to sustainability and make things fun. The message is: go do something."