

The Mouths of Babes

Teens use vigil to push for peace with Iraq

BY T. KEVIN WALKER
THE CHRONICLE

A group of more than a dozen peace-minded teenagers joined an equal number of adults last Thursday for a loosely structured candlelight vigil in Corpening Plaza. The vigil advocated a peaceful solution to the mounting beat of war drums in this country toward Iraq. PUSH (not an acronym) — a student-run interest group that got its start a month ago in a political science class — organized the rally.

"We feel the public has been misled somewhat about what the Bush administration is claiming to be the reason behind the war. We feel that oil is the real reason," said Sarah Moran, 17, one of the organizers of the event.

PUSH is also critical of the estimated \$100 billion it would cost for the nation to wage a war against the Middle Eastern nation. There are about 25 members of PUSH. All of the students involved in the group take classes at the Career Center. PUSH's coming-out party was a few weeks ago when members of the group wore armbands at their various high schools to raise awareness of peaceful alternatives and to draw interest for their newly formed group.

Last Thursday's rally was free-flowing. Participants cradled small white candles to protect them from cold winds;

sang popular protest songs; and shared their thoughts on the current situation in Iraq.

The Rev. Daniel Charles Davis, pastor of Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, found out about the rally through an e-mail. He was impressed that young people who can't even vote yet were taking such a strong interest in the future of the nation. Davis opposes a war with Iraq, not only for political reasons but spiritual ones as well.

"The Christianity I learned as a child was love your neighbors, love your enemies, and do unto others as you would have them do unto you," he said. "The government's policy of pre-emptive strike is essentially do unto others before they do unto you. I think it is a cowardly position, and we are too great of a nation to be acting like cornered dogs."

Carol Vogler, a teacher at the Career Center, was also impressed to see teenagers taking a proactive stance.

"I think it is wonderful to see students taking the initiative (to) tackle a topic that is not necessarily...popular with everyone," she said.

Vogler said the rally reminded her of the peace demonstrations of the '60s and '70s. But she is disappointed that peace rallies are still necessary in 2002. Vogler is hoping that peace will win out. She lived in the Middle Eastern nation of Jordan for

two years in the 1990s. She even visited Iraq for one week a few months before the Gulf War began. Vogler said her mind is on the effects a war would have on the people she met during her stay, people who were warm and generous to her and other Americans.

"I see the people there instead of the politics," she said.

PUSH member Kate Lowe said she also often thinks about people in Iraq.

"I know if I were a 15-year-old over in the Middle East, I would be scared daily that I would be sitting in school and somebody would drop a bomb. And I bet it is on their minds all the time just like it was on our minds after Sept. 11," she said. "I don't think it is fair for people to live in that kind of fear."

Vigil organizers know that their efforts alone will not resonate with policy-makers in Washington. That is why a list containing the names and addresses of everyone from Congressman Richard Burr to President Bush was passed out to participants. PUSH members also hope to combine their efforts with several other local groups advocating



Photos by Kevin Walker

Sarah Moran and Scott Taylor address the two dozen or so people who came to a peace rally last Thursday in Corpening Plaza.



peace. "I have been very impressed with the people in this city that have come together to support peace," said vigil organizer Scott Taylor. "I think if we all can work to combine our efforts and work together, we can send a very strong message to Washington."

WSSU tuition and fees will increase

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Winston-Salem State University officials say that despite an increase in tuition and fees approved by the Winston-Salem State University Board of Trustees Friday, the cost of a WSSU degree remains among the least expensive in the state.

Pending approval by the University of North Carolina Board of Governors, the \$250 proposed increase in WSSU tuition and fees would bring the total cost for 2003-2004 to \$2,765. Not reflected in the total tuition and fees are the costs for room and board. For those students living on campus, there

will be a range of increased costs associated with room rents and board. Those costs will range from \$664 to \$1,050, depending on students' room choices and availability.

Quality education requires quality facilities, libraries, laboratories and other resources, officials said. They added that public universities, such as WSSU, must rely heavily on state dollars, alumni giving and some student tuition and fee support.

Thus far, WSSU has been able to provide quality instruction at a reasonable cost. The proposed increase is marginal and necessary, according to university officials.



Police Chief Linda Davis helps give out toys.

Toy exchange will take place tomorrow at Sims

FROM STAFF REPORTS

The William C. Sims Recreation Center in Happy Hill Gardens will hold its eighth annual Peace Toys for War Toys program tomorrow beginning at 6 p.m. at the center, which is located on Alder Street. The event is designed to give young people the opportunity to exchange violent toys such as guns and violent video games for more peaceful toys such as sports equipment, dolls and jewelry.

Exchanges will be made on a first come, first served basis. The event has gained popularity in recent years, not only drawing participants from Happy Hill but sur-

rounding communities as well. Ben Piggott, the director of the Sims Center and founder of the event, has won a national award for the program. Peace Toys for War Toys is sponsored by a number of local agencies and businesses. The main sponsor of the event is the Forsyth County Chapter of North Carolina Against Gun Violence Education Fund.

The Winston-Salem Police Department and the Forsyth County Sheriff's Department are also among the sponsors of the event. Police Chief Linda Davis and Santa Claus are slated to make special appearances at the event.

For more information, call Piggott at 727-2837.

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