

Students sleep outside to increase awareness of homelessness

BY LAYLA FARMER
THE CHRONICLE

The members of the Delta Alpha Chapter of Phi Beta Sigma that gathered on the lawn of Winston-Salem State University Nov. 16 don't know what it's like to go hungry. Some of them had never slept outside for one night, much less a week or a month. Yet, the young men are taking steps to understand the plight of their homeless brothers and sisters, and to raise awareness on campus about the challenges that such individuals face.

"A lot of college kids don't know how it is to be homeless. Most of the people stay in the dorm so you always know you've got a roof over your head if you need it in college," pointed out 20 year-old Jachin York, president of the Sigmas. "It's good to get out here and really see how it is to be homeless, really sleep outside and see what homeless people go through and it'll change your perception about it."

To this end, fraternity members have participated in an annual "sleep out" on campus for the past 11 years, encouraging their brethren and other volunteers to sleep outside in cardboard boxes as a sign of solidarity with those who spend their lives on the streets.



Students construct a cardboard shelter.

Photos by Layla Farmer

"Traditionally, we get a lot of boxes and we construct makeshift homeless tents and homes," said Marcus Duffin, a Wake Forest student and Delta Alpha Chapter member who helped organize the project. "There's no fancy tents ... we try to make it as symbolic as possible."

This year's sleep out was part of a week long roster of events hosted by the frat, dubbed Homeless Awareness

Week. Among the week's activities were a Homeless Awareness Forum, a candle-light vigil and a blood drive.

"I'm trying to hit multi-facets within the problem because homelessness isn't just a single, flat issue," Duffin explained. "Outside of this, we try to be involved in the community ... and also volunteering at Samaritan Ministries whenever we can ... just to show them that someone does

care." Senior Kenneth Brown, who just became a Sigma last spring, was experiencing the first time.

"Being able to be a part of something like this has been very exciting for me," said the education major. "I'm just looking forward to everything, being able to stay outside, sleep outside, because I've never slept outside before."

Brown was hopeful that the sight of the fraternity brothers sleeping in a cluster of boxes would hit home for other students.

"A lot of people take a lot of things for granted. I know I was one of those people because I always looked at some of the things I wanted, you know, and not things I actually needed," he said. "This is something that a lot of people need to see, I believe - younger people as well as older people - to let us to know to appreciate it and to just look at the things and opportunities that we have that other people don't have."

Participating in homeless awareness activities on the WSSU campus over the past three years has changed the way

Duffin views the issue of homelessness.

"Prior to this experience, homelessness was a very distant and abstract idea ... it's something that you see but you aren't really connected with," he remarked. "I think (this project has) given me a chance to see the humanity in it all."

Though Homeless Awareness Week is over until next year, Duffin says he hopes its message will continue to resonate in the hearts and minds of those who participated.

"I think that our generation should see it as an opportunity to make a difference for our time and beyond," he remarked. "These people who we are helping today are shaping our community tomorrow."



Brown



York

Davis

from page A1

"I began to doubt myself as a writer because my first play was so successful, and as it started to wind down five years later, I had to write something else," he said. "My second play, 'Don't Let the Green Grass Fool You,' was nowhere near as successful."

Subsequent plays enjoyed more success than Davis' second attempt. He retained a full-time job, touring the country with his team of actors on the weekends.

When he was offered a two-year contract to go on tour from a well-known promoter, Davis was faced with a tough decision.

"This was the first major decision that I had to make in my life, because what it meant was I needed to quit my job," he said. "I go from being a program director and doing 30 dates on the weekends a year to now 'this is all you can do.'"

Nevertheless, the opportunity was too appealing to pass up. Davis and his supporters resigned from their respective jobs and hit the road. "I really thought this was the beginning - this was what I had worked



Carol Montague

for," he said. Less than two months later, the contract fell through and Davis was left with nothing.

"Needless to say, I was devastated for about a year, because it wasn't just me; it was those people who believed in me and who were a part of my group that had quit their jobs," he stated. "The cards just didn't line up for me."

Discouraged and disappointed, Davis gave up writing for more than a year, but the stories continued to build within him and finally he gave in. His next production, "If Loving You is Wrong," became the best selling play ever, with more than 20,000 DVDs sold.

Longing to be closer to his family, Davis scoured North

Carolina searching for a place that would suit his artistic needs.

"I wanted to move to a city that appreciated the arts and so Winston just stuck out," he commented.

Inspired by the legacy of the late Larry Leon Hamlin and the National Black Theatre Festival, Davis moved to the City of the Arts last summer and says that things have been falling into place ever since.

He met the love of his life, Carver High School Principal Carol Montague, whom he plans to wed next year, and found a church that satisfies both his spiritual and artistic needs.

"I'm 42 years old and I've never had the career, the spirituality and the geographic location all mesh together," he remarked with a smile. "I cannot begin to tell you the doors that have started to crack open since I have joined this church. I know I'm in the right place."

"The Real Meaning of Christmas" will be presented Saturday, Dec. 8, at Union Baptist Church at 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. For more information, call (336) 724-9305 or visit www.unionbaptistwvnc.org.

"Forsyth Medical Center is at the forefront of orthopaedic surgical techniques."

Bryan Jennings, DO
ORTHOPAEDIC SURGEON

Mary Anne Montagnico, RN
THE ORTHOPAEDIC UNIT

The orthopaedic staff at Forsyth Medical Center is dedicated to the development of new surgical techniques and rehabilitative programs to help orthopaedic patients resume healthy, active lives. We're also the first nationally certified Total Hip and Total Knee Replacement program in the Carolinas. We offer comprehensive care in sports medicine and surgery of the spine, foot and ankle, hand, shoulder and joints. For the remarkable medicine of tomorrow, turn to the remarkable people of Forsyth Medical Center today.

To learn more, contact us at 336-718-7000 or visit us online at www.forsythmedicalcenter.org.

Forsyth MEDICAL CENTER
Remarkable People. Remarkable Medicine.

WALTER
ROBBS
CALLAHAN
& PIERCE
Architects, PA

designers committed to
our sustainable future

Experience our New Green Headquarters during the First Friday Gallery Hop
Open House December 7th, 7-9 pm

530 North Trade Street, Third Floor
Winston-Salem's Arts District