

# Holiday travel reduces county accident count

By TJ Hemlinger  
Staff Writer

Because many Orange County residents traveled during the Fourth of July holiday weekend, police officials reported fewer traffic accidents locally than in other counties in the state.

Orange County Sheriff Lindy Pendergrass said he thought it was a good Fourth of July weekend because there were no murders and no one was shot.

"We're fortunate in that a larger part of Orange County vacates on holidays," he said. "People go to the beach and so forth. We had a lot of houses to check is all."

Chapel Hill police officers use directed patrol and are assigned to specific areas in town to enforce traffic laws where problems have occurred in the past.

"We know there's a pattern based on officer assessments, citizens' complaints and history," said Jane Cousins, Chapel Hill police spokeswoman.

But through the Fourth of July weekend in Guilford County, 23 people were killed in car accidents, compared to a total of 19 in all of 1992. If accidents continue at that rate, the fatalities for 1993 will have increased 142 percent.

First Sgt. R.P. Simon, of the N.C. State Police, is coordinating Operation Eagle in Guilford and Rockingham counties to crack down on motorists who drive while impaired, with revoked licenses or without wearing seat belts.

"We feel those are the areas where people are in danger of injuring themselves," he said. "We are going into problem areas and taking vigorous enforcement actions to protect life and property."

Across the state, Operation Eagle began June 4 and will continue through Sept. 11. The program supplements the patrols of the state, county and local police.

"We're not really seeking press coverage," Simon said. "We will try to target areas to make people comply with state laws."

Police officers are giving up weekends off to increase patrolling, he said. "We're asking troopers to get one less weekend off to build the forces up, and we're canceling days off."

Although Operation Eagle is not run in Orange County, Simon said the county was not being ignored.

"Orange County has not been specifically mandated for this operation," Simon said. "This is a special, in-addition operation to regular patrols, but Orange County is not being overlooked. There could be additional operations there."

Cousins said Chapel Hill did not need to participate in an added program to keep its roads safe.

"One reason we didn't participate in Operation Eagle on the Fourth of July is because in Chapel Hill, it's not a particular problem," she said. "People leave town on that weekend, and it's not a time we felt it was worth to put an effort into."

"The peak (driving while intoxicated) risks are when students come back to town in August and September and at the end of the school year."

Capt. John Butler, of the Carrboro Police Department, said the department runs a traffic program with the help of the Jim Crisp Insurance Agency.

"We pass out literature he provides, such as a checklist for safe teenage driving," Butler said. "Crisp also donated a hand-held breath detector to take passive readings."

Butler said Carrboro police officers made "two or three" DWI arrests during the holiday weekend.

"We like not to have to make arrests, but if people are foolish enough to drive drunk, we'll arrest them," Butler said.

Pendergrass said the sheriff's department didn't have enough personnel or equipment to specialize in pursuing DWI arrests.

"We only have enough people to patrol certain zones," he said. "We really help the highway patrol by getting behind a DWI (suspect) and pulling him over and then getting the troopers to take over."

# Police to rehabilitate drug offenders

By Jada Overton  
Staff Writer

Beginning in the fall, the Chapel Hill Police Department will use rehabilitation instead of prosecution to treat first-time drug offenders.

Project Turnaround will be a year-long intensive supervision program for first-time drug offenders and for residents who commit property crimes to buy drugs.

"The project will be an alternative to prosecution," said Jane Cousins, Chapel Hill police spokeswoman.

Cousins said Project Turnaround will function as part of the law enforcement crisis unit, while the Violent Crime Task Force will serve as an advisory committee.

## Airport

made available for that purpose at this point.

John Sanders, chairman of the Buildings and Grounds Committee, said the University had advertised for a consulting firm to study the site. In the next few weeks, the committee will recommend to Chancellor Paul Hardin the top three qualified firms. Hardin then will pass his recommendation to the Board of Trustees, probably by its July meeting.

Because the airport only occupies one-fourth of the available land, Sanders said, it would be interesting to study ways to develop the land even before the University resolves where to move the airport. "We cannot sell that land," he said. "It was given to us by a person who said it had to stay with the University forever."

Jones said the University would involve the town council and residents who live near the airport to determine the best use for the facility. If the University were to build affordable housing for the University community, it could free up housing in town for non-University residents, he added.

"(Affordable housing) would be a long-term objective," Jones said. "How soon and to what extent is a question."

The University will have to study what role housing availability plays in a prospective employee's decision whether to work in Chapel Hill, Jones said.

Boulton said he had worked with the Orange County Housing Corporation and the Triangle Housing Authority to determine the region's affordable housing needs. He said the town and the University had not yet been able to provide its residents with truly affordable housing.

"The best we have been able to find is a unit that costs something around \$93,000," Boulton said.

He said part of the problem was that

land in Chapel Hill was so costly. He said building housing facilities on the Horace Williams tract made sense because the University already owns it.

The development would be different from Odum Village, UNC's married-student facilities off Manning Drive, because University-related residents would have to demonstrate a financial need to live on the property. UNC built Odum Village in the late 1960s for married students who wanted to live on campus.

Under the plan, the University would grant the resident a mortgage to help the household save money. By helping to reduce monthly mortgage payments, the resident eventually would have enough saved to "sell" the property back to the University and buy his own home.

"It isn't the town's fault the land is so high-priced here," Boulton said.

Hardin said building affordable housing on the site is a possibility that has

been widely discussed. "A lot of conversation is taking place at the University and in the town," he said. "Affordable housing is a concern of ours."

"I have a subjective feeling that there is a need that probably needs to be studied before we invest millions of dollars."

No one has the slightest idea where the airport would be moved, he said.

"I'd like to know before I step down as chancellor if there will be an alternative airport," Hardin said. "I think we ought to plan on the contingency that it will be moved and that it will not."

Town council member Alan Rimer, who also is a visiting professor in the University's Department of City and Regional Planning, said it would get the town off the hook if the University built its own affordable housing community.

"The reality is we need more opportunities for graduate students close to campus," he said.

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Community Center's after-school tutorial program. The community center is located at 107 Johnson St.

"When there's lots of transients around, many people feel like it's someone else's problem to solve the problems," he said.

Parrish said the town of Chapel Hill has not kept up the Pine Knolls neighborhood as well as it has kept up more wealthy neighborhoods. "The town has never, ever provided recreational resources for our kids over here," he said.

The community center has been open since 1968, when the neighborhood fought the war on poverty.

The center holds after-school programs, community meetings and will act as a satellite police station to make the area safer at night, Parrish said.

"If we had not been doing these things, drug traffic would have taken over this community," he said.

**Problem unsolved**

Though the town in some cases has been able to make living in the Southern Part of Heaven more affordable, many still are unable to afford living in town.

Affordable housing units are geared toward residents who earn below \$27,600, or 60 percent of Chapel Hill's median income. The problem is that there are not enough units, so officials are left to watch the gap grow between low salaries and high land prices.

Linda Shaw, executive director of the Raleigh-based Low-Income Housing Coalition, said the group was cre-

ated in 1987 to study the state's housing needs and educate policy-makers about ways to ameliorate the problem.

"Housing costs are continuing to rise," Shaw said. "The affordable gap remains real serious. The supply has not been there."

The coalition works with local governments across the state to advocate plans for providing more affordable housing, she said.

"I think it's definitely cost beneficial," she said. "Building housing and rehabilitating housing creates jobs, which is an economic incentive."

Chapel Hill Town Council member Alan Rimer said that although the mayor and the council were interested in affordable housing, they had yet to develop a long-term set of goals.

"I think we would like to have more affordable housing," he said. "They're euphemisms at this point. The town has to stand up and be counted."

Salary increases for town employees are not the answer to the town's housing question, Rimer said. The town should try to provide more opportunities for its employees so that they could have more of a choice about whether to live in Chapel Hill, he added.

Chapel Hill Mayor Ken Broun, who has announced his plans to run for reelection in November, said he would discuss affordable housing strategies as part of his campaign.

"We decided to aim our affordable housing to the lower end of the affordable housing range, which is 60 percent

or less of the median-income range," he said. "I think we have an obligation to work with the community to provide affordable housing."

Broun said the town should take a leadership role on the issue but added that the town did not have funds for all of the community's housing needs.

"I don't expect this is a problem that is going to go away in 10 years," he said. "I think it's gotten worse as land values have gone up."

He said the town should work with the Orange County Housing Commission, community groups and the University to develop some kind of affordable housing plan.

**'Investing in the future'**

Michael Luger, a professor in the University's Department of City and Regional Planning, said Chapel Hill should concentrate more on affordable housing to avoid becoming an upper-income, predominantly white town.

"The housing stock and population in Chapel Hill is not diverse," he said. "There are not a lot of houses available at the low end of the spectrum."

Building affordable housing units in the middle of a middle-class neighborhood would not diminish property values, Luger said.

"All that Chapel Hill has undertaken is reasonably well-designed housing," he said. "They don't look too different from the low end of the private low-income housing market."

He said some studies have shown that public housing can diminish property values, but that affordable housing should be considered separately.

Luger and Michael Stegman, then-chairman of the City and Regional Planning Department, completed an academic study of the Tandler subdivision when the town was deciding whether to fund the project.

Luger said the development was innovative, but did not make a significant impact on answers for the town's affordable housing needs.

"We're talking about less than 30 units," he said. "It's a drop in the bucket."

Rimer said affordable housing would help to create an economically diverse population. "It is intuitively obvious to the casual observer that you've got middle and upper-middle class. To be able to let town employees live in Chapel Hill, it means affordable housing."

Shaw said affordable housing builds a community across economic lines.

"Chapel Hill has been so expensive for so long, people who work there can't afford to live there," she said. "Investment in housing is investing in the future."

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