

Tar Heel Town Offers Fans Pregame Activities

BY BRENT KINKER
Staff Writer

Two and a half hours before every UNC home game, a raucous crowd takes over Polk Place. Painted faces, live bands and even a goat become part of the scenery.

This is the phenomenon called Tar Heel Town, which has now been hyping up UNC fans for three years.

"This year it is bigger, and we've had greater turnouts," said Trish McHardy, a special events operations manager for Tar Heel Town.

"People are coming from the community to hang out even if they don't plan on attending the game."

Each week Tar Heel Town is different, with new clubs and organizations soliciting memberships and contributing to the spirited atmosphere.

"We had the rowing crew here a couple of weeks ago," McHardy said. "That was a great time."

"Each Tar Heel Town has a different theme," she said. "This week will be kind of a family day. We're hoping some kids will come wearing Halloween costumes."

Although it's a nonalcoholic event, sometimes dancing breaks out at Tar Heel Town.

"We have students out there dancing sometimes," McHardy said. "Once a more mature crowd even started to swing. We definitely encourage dancing."

"We have concessions, a radar pitch and a blow-up playpen for kids," McHardy said.

"We have been trying to get some University singing groups to come out," McHardy said. "We've already talked with the Harmonics, Loreleis and the

Tar Heel Voices."

It begins at 11 a.m. and lasts till 12:30 p.m. so the fans can fill the stadium.

At the end of Tar Heel Town, the UNC football players are unloaded in front of the Bell Tower for everyone to cheer. Then they walk down Stadium Drive to Kenan Stadium as the band lines up and plays for them.

"It really hypes up the crowd," said Alona Kalin, a clarinet player for the band. "People seem to really enjoy the band."

The General Alumni Association also arranges to have Rameses, UNC's mas-

cot, brought in from the Hogan Farm so it can graze among its loyal followers.

Sky Blue the Clown gratuitously paints faces for anyone who desires it said Stephanie Miller, a coordinator for the General Alumni Association.

"Tar Heel Town is great, it's fantastic," said Steve Kirschner the director of media for UNC football and basketball.

"We've always wanted a place like this for pregame activities," Kirschner said. "The campus is really spread out and this helps gather the fans in one place. It also helps pack the stadium before the kickoff."

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