



# 2,500 hands held in Raleigh

By CATHERINE COWAN  
Staff Writer

About 2,500 people joined hands to encircle the Capitol Building in downtown Raleigh Sunday in an effort to raise money for the hungry and homeless. Held in conjunction with Hands Across America, Hands Across the Capital was co-sponsored by the Food Bank of North Carolina and WRAL.

The day's events lasted from noon until about 4 p.m. with speeches, balloons, bluegrass and gospel music and children climbing on statues, in addition to the actual forming of the chain. For a donation of \$10 or more, participants could buy a commemorative T-shirt.

The chain was formed at 3 p.m., the same time Hands Across America formed its chain. People rocked back and forth and held their hands up in the air as they sang, "Hands Across America," "We Are the World," and "America the Beautiful," which were broadcast nationally over the radio.

"We got our idea to do this because Hands Across America was not coming through North Carolina," said Marilyn McNeely, community relations coordinator of the Food Bank. "Hunger is a problem here. We wanted to say we recog-

nized it and wanted to do something about it. We couldn't sit and twiddle our thumbs because we are not on the route," she said.

Before the chain was formed, the crowd listened to several speakers, including WRAL-TV news anchorman Charlie Gaddy, North Carolina Lt. Gov. Robert B. Jordan III, Raleigh Mayor Avery C. Upchurch and executive director of the Food Bank Gregory W. Kirkpatrick.

"Today we perform a ritual," said Kirkpatrick. "We join hands and pass peace with people all over America. We represent a wall of love and concern and a line of hope. Hunger has no home, no haven."

"What we are doing today is significant in several ways. First it has raised the issue again in people's minds. Second, it has raised money for the Food Bank in Raleigh. But the most important reason we are here is symbolic action. The role we play today is symbolic," Kirkpatrick said.

Kirkpatrick said hunger anywhere in North Carolina diminishes all of North Carolina. "We are here to express an abiding concern for North Carolinians who do not have what we have. We must together work creatively toward a long term solution to hunger in North Carol-

ina," he said.

In his speech before the chain was formed, Upchurch said everyone should take the event as a personal challenge to commit themselves to fighting hunger.

"I want to hear from you in the next few months what you have done and I'll tell you what I've done," he said.

Jordan said in his speech that the human chain around the capital was symbolic of touching and giving. "We have a reputation as a nation and state of people who care and give to others. Next year I'd like to see a chain not just reaching around the Capital but around a larger portion of this state," he said.

McNeely said she was very pleased with the turnout at the capital. "It really worked. People came and it was an unbroken chain. I couldn't be happier," she said.

Michael Robinson, a volunteer for Hands Across the Capital and Agency Relations Coordinator for Food Bank, was also excited by the day's events. "It's one thing to think of it and plan it. It's another for it to actually happen. It will help us tremendously, and not just the money but the awareness," he said.

Participants also seemed pleased with Hands Across the Capital. "It gives you a really good feeling to know that there are that many people who care," said Kathy Eckhardt of Raleigh. "I've been here since 11:30 and have enjoyed myself thoroughly," she said.

Susan Schrag of Raleigh said she was very excited by the event. "I'm wondering if they will all reach hands throughout the country. Here it's great to almost double around the capital."

"I think it's good," said Heidi Mabey, an exchange student from Germany living with Schrag.

While Hands Across the Capital was taking place in Raleigh, the Associated Press reports that other parts of North Carolina were holding their own events. Over 4,500 people joined hands to create a five-mile chain from Beavertown to Biltmore in Hands Across Asheville, while Hands Across Charlotte had 3,000 participants coming out despite rain and hail. 500 to 1,000 people joined hands in Dare County, but this number was far short of the 10,000 tourists and residents organizers had hoped would encircle Cape Hatteras Lighthouse and stretch for 2 miles down the beach.

The money Hands Across the Capital raised will be divided between the Food Bank and three other area social service organizations, Durham Urban Ministeries, the Capital Area Food Coalition and the Interfaith Council for Social Services in Chapel Hill, McNeely said. It will take Food Bank a couple of weeks to determine exactly how much was raised.

A food bank is a clearinghouse for donated food, Robinson said. Food Bank of North Carolina receives donations of surplus food from major food corporations and other donors and distributes it to 130 local social service organizations which distribute it to the needy and homeless. These organizations include soup kitchens, shelters for the homeless, orphanages, elderly feeding programs and churches that have programs for feeding the

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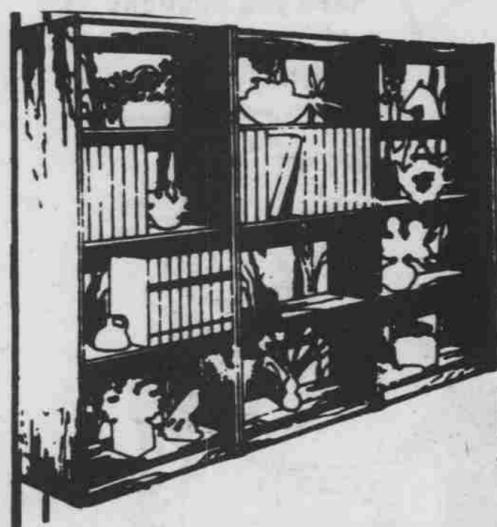
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