

Sister cities may be Chapel Hill reality

By **SONSERAE SMITH**
Staff Writer

Chapel Hill officials hope to promote international brotherhood by establishing relationships with cities in Central America and the Soviet Union through the Sister Cities International program.

Sister Cities International, based in Washington, D.C., is designed to promote communication and understanding between nations such as the United States, Central America and the Soviet Union by pairing cities in the various countries.

Joe Straley, who has been active in the town's efforts to adopt the Nicaraguan city of San Jorge, said many Chapel Hill residents were interested in renewing trust and faith between Central America and the United States.

"The sister-city concept has caught on like gangbusters," he said.

"We want to show a new face. There are a lot of people who want to stop this continual stance that the United States has carried on with Central America, especially Nicaragua."

The mayor of San Jorge, a small agricultural town with a population of approximately 10,000, has

expressed particular interest in establishing a relationship with Chapel Hill, Straley said.

Chapel Hill is also exploring the possibilities of establishing a sister city in the Soviet Union. Mayor Jonathan Howes has formed a committee to work with Sister Cities International in finding a compatible Soviet city.

Chapel Hill is considering making the Soviet city of Tartu, a small college town in the state of Estonia, its sister city, said Dirk Spruyt, a member of Howes' committee.

However, according to Spruyt, Estonia is currently struggling to declare its independence from the Soviet Union.

"If they don't identify with the Russians, then problems are created for our chances of improving East-West relations," Spruyt said.

A public hearing was held last week to determine whether Chapel Hill residents support the sister city program and to hear suggestions on how Chapel Hill can assist San Jorge.

More decisions will be made regarding sister-city relationships with Tartu and San Jorge at the April 19 town council meeting.

Shelter

apartment. "When you are making \$3.75 an hour, that is a lot to save. Chapel Hill is a tough town to live in if you do not have a good income or a lot of support."

People come to the shelter for diverse reasons, including drug and alcohol abuse and mental illness, Barnes said. The shelter connects residents with existing community programs such as mental health services or Alcoholics Anonymous.

Some at the shelter cannot make it on their own or hold a job because of past chronic drug use, but they do not give up, he said.

"Even they are trying. I cannot think of half a dozen people at the shelter who do not try."

Some of the shelter's residents are patients at North Carolina Memorial Hospital (NCMH) who come to Chapel Hill for medical treatment but cannot afford temporary housing, Barnes said.

A man recently came to NCMH seeking treatment for his leg, Barnes said. After hitchhiking from Morganton, the man was told the treatment would take two days instead of one and was referred to the shelter for housing.

"He was up the creek for a place to stay and something to eat until he could get home."

Another guest at the shelter was a woman separated from her husband and traveling around the state with her two children looking for work, Barnes said. She ran out of money and was sent to the shelter for

assistance. Moran said women and children represented one-third of the nation's homeless population, and their numbers are growing.

While the shelter's first priority is to provide a safe, healthy place to stay the night, Barnes said the shelter was not a flophouse.

The shelter is a temporary place for people to stay while getting back on their feet, he said.

According to IFC statistics, more than one-third of those who stayed at the shelter last year went on to find adequate housing.

Barnes and about 75 other volunteers work once a month and essentially run the shelter, Moran said.

Monty Laycox, a shelter volunteer and a UNC physics graduate student, said he worked at the shelter because he wanted to make a difference.

"I'm one of those guilty liberals with lofty pretensions," Laycox said. "One day I asked myself what I did about them and I said, 'nothing.'"

Moran said he was satisfied with the town's involvement with the shelter.

"We feel the town is truly committed to this program," Moran said. The town pays the shelter's utilities and does not charge rent for the use of the old municipal building.

Chapel Hill is also providing \$200,000 for the shelter renovation and the IFC is raising the rest, Moran said. The IFC has already raised

\$280,000 of its \$400,000 goal.

Moran said the only opposition to the shelter site came from downtown merchants who would like the problem to be less visible and who do not want it to be dealt with downtown.

The argument that the renovated IFC shelter will increase the town's homeless problem is a myth, he said.

Most large cities, including Raleigh and Durham, have homeless shelters, so homeless are not being drawn to Chapel Hill because of the IFC shelter, Moran said.

"More people are aware that we are here, we run a better program than we used to, and certainly there are more homeless. It is not a problem of recidivism; it is a problem of more people needing help."



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