

The Banner

Marijuana petition gains support on campus

Ordinance would ban enforcement of laws against cultivation, possession or use

By Johanna Luks
Staff Writer

Over 200 UNCA students signed a petition on Oct. 15 that could lead to the creation of an ordinance that prevents the Asheville police department from enforcing laws against marijuana.

"We know a lot of medical patients that benefit from smoking marijuana, and it is also ecologically compassionate."

-Dixie Deerman, member of Community for Compassion

The ordinance would ban enforcement of state and federal laws against personal cultivation, possession, and use of marijuana, according to the petition.

"UNCA has quite a reputation for being open towards these types of things," said Dixie Deerman, a contact for and member of Community for Compassion, a group of citizens whose main focus is hemp awareness. Members of the group have come to UNCA several times to get student signatures for a referendum petition.

"We've been going to UNCA a lot lately, and it's been very positive. Three Fridays ago we must have registered close to 200 students in four hours to vote and subsequently sign the referendum petition," said Deerman.

"I don't know if getting students' signatures would hold a lot of weight," said Steven Ingram, a senior computer science major. "A lot of the students who live on campus don't live in Asheville."

In order for the referendum to pass, 15 percent of registered Asheville city voters, about 7,500 people, would have to sign the petition. The Asheville City Council is then required to adopt the ordinance within 10 days or place it on a ballot and hold a special election, according to Deerman.

"Decriminalization of marijuana would attract a lot of pot heads to Asheville," said Andrew Hauer, a senior creative writing major. "I'm not saying that's a bad thing, but the city isn't interested in that. The city's goal right now is positive economic growth. That's not going to happen if something like this goes through."

"I would be surprised if it passed in Asheville. In many ways, Asheville is too conservative," said David Hopes, professor of literature.

"We felt like Asheville was the perfect place and had a lot of support for this sort of thing," said

Deerman.

"The decriminalization of marijuana would not affect UNCA students' academic performances any more than underage drinking, according to Nick McGinty, a junior psychology major.

"It might attract a different kind of student here," said McGinty. The referendum petition, if passed, would enact three significant changes, according to Deerman.

"It would establish a watchdog committee of citizens whose sole interest is in monitoring the police's activities and the harassment of citizens in the drug war," said Deerman.

"The ordinance would redirect funding away from drug-related programs and allow for the recreational, spiritual, medical, and industrial uses of marijuana within the city limits, according to Deerman.

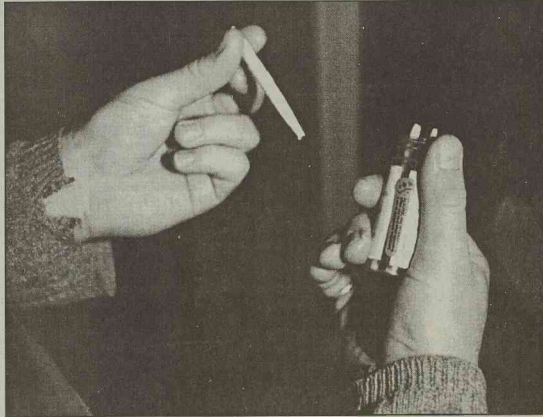
"It doesn't change the law, but it does institute a city law on top of pre-existing laws that in effect makes marijuana arrests the lowest priority," said Deerman.

"I don't know if (the referendum) will pass. If it happens any place, it will probably happen here," said Ingram.

The ordinance, if passed, would not necessarily cause more students to start smoking pot, according to Ingram.

"I think there would be a big uproar about the whole thing, but I don't think it would cause any problems in the end on campus or in town," said Ingram.

"Those students who want to smoke pot already do," said Hopes.



The city ordinance would allow the use of marijuana medicinally and recreationally within the city limits, if the petition is signed by 7,500 people.

If the police stop enforcing marijuana laws, a student's academic performance wouldn't be any more affected by smoking marijuana than it already is, according to Hopes.

"The majority of the teachers at this school can, somewhat, tell what someone looks like when they are stoned, simply from going through the college system at the time they

did," said Hauer.

"If (smoking pot) is an open issue, and you're going to start coming to class stoned, (the professors) should be allowed to say 'get out of my class, you're high,'" said Hauer.

"Most freshmen are not legally old enough to buy alcohol, but that doesn't prevent drinking," said Jim Michaels, a UNCA alum-

nus and psychology major. "The ability to legally obtain something doesn't factor in (to performance). It gets done. It doesn't matter if it's legal or illegal."

Community of Compassion holds protests against the drug

See DRUG page 10

Flood relief effort falls short of expectations



PHOTO BY TRAVIS BARKER

As Hurricane Irene threatened more flooding on Oct. 17, the Outer Banks began to evacuate the islands. The Hatteras Island town of Waves was already under inches of water as more rain set in.

By Greg Sessoms
Staff Writer

Organizers of UNCA's Hurricane Floyd Flood Relief fundraiser for East Carolina University (ECU) are pleased with student and faculty contributions to the effort, despite falling short of its \$5,000 goal, according to the organizer of the fundraiser.

"What I was really hoping for was a high participation rate, not necessarily a lot of

bucks, but just people giving a little something. So over \$3000 out of 4000 students and faculty is not bad for a week," said Pam Laughon, associate professor of psychology and the primary organizer of the fundraiser.

The fundraiser took some time to gain momentum and worried her initially, according to Laughon.

"We started on a Monday, and as of that Wednesday we had \$600, at which point I was totally depressed," said Laughon. "I went back into

my class and said 'I am never doing anything like this again. If I get anymore harebrained ideas, talk me out of it.'"

However, as of Oct. 11, the flood relief effort had raised \$3,055 and garnered praise from the administration.

"I was very pleased both by Dr. Laughon's initiative and by the student response. With all the demands on their resources, our students again showed their willingness to help out those in

See FLOOD page 10

Lack of on-campus childcare frustrates students, professors

By Holly Beveridge
Staff Writer

A UNCA professor asked a student to remove her 5-month-old son from Lipsinsky Auditorium during a humanities lecture on Oct. 1, bringing the issue of childcare at UNCA to the forefront once again.

Jan Hinson, a senior industrial and engineering management major, said she was asked to leave the lecture hall by Garland Kimmer, visiting assistant professor of literature.

"This kid made one tiny little peep," said Hinson. "It really

hurt my feelings."

Hinson said she was standing in the rear of the auditorium holding her baby, when Kimmer asked her to leave.

"It's not a single day issue," said Kimmer. "We asked a couple of folks to leave the lecture that day because, for whatever reasons, they had migrated toward the back of the room over the course of the semester."

Kimmer said noises from Hinson's baby and the child of a male student, who also stood at the rear, interfered with his students' abilities to hear the lecture.

"It was simply really distracting. The kids were making a

lot of noise, and my students who sit in the back three rows were starting to turn around and stare," said Kimmer.

According to Kimmer, he just asked the students to step outside with the children until they stopped making noise.

Hinson said that her humanities professor, Mark Gibney, encouraged her to bring her son to the lectures.

"He didn't have a problem with it, and I really didn't think anybody would," said Hinson, "so it was really a shocker when it bothered somebody."

Kimmer said he could sympathize with the students.

"I would have been really

angry if I had been in their shoes," said Kimmer. "I understand it completely from their point of view."

According to Kimmer, no official policy regarding students bringing children to class or lectures exists at UNCA.

"I don't see why it should be up to each individual professor to decide whether they're going to be nice to you or not," said Kelley Lane, a junior mass communication major.

Lane, who has a 20-month-old daughter, said she has en-

See CHILD page 10

Students rate teachers online

By Breandan Dezendorf
Staff Writer

A new national Web site that allows students to log in anonymously and rate teachers and classes has prompted reactions from both students and faculty.

The Web site, at www.teacherratings.com, has had close to 1,500 visits since June 6, 1999, and has 1,233 schools indexed from all the states of the nation, according to John Swapepcinski, operator of the site.

The site allows students to comment on teachers, and their respective merits. The

system allows ratings from one to five on easiness, friendliness and quality.

"With an evaluation of faculty, I am always concerned by numerical ratings," said Gwen Ashburn, assistant professor of literature. "I am interested in the fact that the three parameters, two have to do with personality rather than what is being taught and how it is being taught."

Some students, however, feel that this Web site looks promising.

Casey Jackson, an undeclared sophomore, commented that it is good to have an outside mechanism to rate professors and get a basic feel for them before taking their class.

Professors have said they have approached the site with skepticism.

"I'm surprised it hasn't happened sooner," said Leigh Atkinson, an associate math professor.

"I can see how there might be some real benefits, but also, it certainly lends itself to abuse. Student criticisms are useful, but not always," said Atkinson.

Much of the concern about the site comes from the anonymity of the reviewers. There is no method available to find out who is rating the professors.

Margaret Downes, the director of the humanities program, said she is wary about

the unknown nature of the reviewers, as well as the small quantity of them, as compared to the mandatory in-class student evaluations conducted at UNCA.

"I think that's not quite right. I think in the same way that a letter to an editor has to be signed, they need to have the name of the person who is expressing the opinions," Downes said. "This system allows all kinds of abuse to take place. I am all for a system where someone expresses an opinion and says who they are."

Alison Sweetser, an unde-

See RATING page 9