

The BLUE BANNER

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The News in Brief

Officials to scale down Bele Chere

Asheville City Council members cast a unanimous vote earlier in the week to recommend that Bele Chere, the region's largest free street festival, be scaled down.

City officials said they want more bands and artists from Western North Carolina, also wanting to make vending booths cheaper for these local artists. City officials also voted for a budget cut of 20 percent, accepting feedback from community forums. Council members said the community wants the festival to return to its more humble roots, though some stress the change must take place slowly, or Bele Chere may fizzle out completely.

Last year, more than 300,000 people attended Bele Chere, according to reports. This year, the festival will occur July 27-29.

The legacy lives on in Bindi Irwin

The work of late "Crocodile Hunter" Steve Irwin will live on through his eight-year-old daughter's new television show, "Bindi: The Jungle Girl."

Bindi Irwin began filming the new cable show with her father early last year with the hope of interesting more children in wildlife and conservation.

The show, which will launch in June on the Discovery Kids Channel, features Bindi exploring wildlife and addressing her audience from a tree house in the rain forest, will also be graced with guest appearances from Irwin, according to a statement from the Discovery Channel.

Irwin was killed nine months ago when a stingray barb pierced his heart. His family continues his legacy of wildlife conservation at Australia Zoo in Queensland, Australia.

Strive Not to Drive event to emphasize environment

By Dylan Schepps
GUEST WRITER

With the 17th annual Strive Not to Drive event taking place April 18-29, many still feel there is room for improving the city's assistance in alternative means for transportation.

"As someone can see by looking at our transportation network here in Asheville, there's not a lot of bike lanes. Greenways are still

being developed, and the bus system, even though it's improving, still leaves a lot to be desired," said Yuri Koslen, UNC Asheville's transportation planner.

The Strive Not to Drive program is a community-driven campaign which aims to persuade the public to take part in the effort to cut back on commuter pollution, according to Koslen.

This is the first year the city of

Asheville is taking a leading position in the organization of the program and the events supporting it.

"It's a great program that is really giving back to the community," said Tiffanie Tatum, UNC Asheville alumna and intern for the City of Asheville.

Other events include the fifth annual Strive Not to Drive film festival held at 7 p.m. in UNC Asheville's Highsmith Student

Union, in Alumni Hall.

There are two contests for filmmakers in regards to the festival. The short film contest invites area middle school, high school and college students, as well as independent filmmakers, to submit videos based on three alternative transportation themes listed in the video contest application.

Last week, officials recognized Libby Rice, senior mass commu-

nication student, and her fellow group members' 30-second public service announcement as the winner in the Strive Not to Drive contest for local filmmakers.

The public service announcement will air on local television promoting the campaign message.

"It's a good thing," Rice said. "I have a car that I drive, but I try to

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Elections ruled void after mishap



SGA senators Nick Ladd, Carrie Jordan, Harry Johnson and Andrew Johnson along with vice presidential candidate Erica Little and presidential candidate Greg Goddard sit in on the meeting Monday. SGA officials made the decision to meet throughout the week and meet finally today to make decisions regarding Ben Walsh, elections commissioner.

Behind the confusion of recent SGA election upheaval

By Brenda Weigel
COPY EDITOR

After a week of controversy surrounding the Student Government Association election campaigns of Alex Lanahan/Nick Ladd and Tristyn Card/Erica Little, Student Body President John Noor announced new elections will completely be re-held and an investigation will look into allegations of bias on the part of the elections commissioner and Elections

Commission.

"Basically, this whole thing is a big mess and everyone realizes that, so they're taking shortcuts to try and get out of it. They're making presumptions of guilt left and right," said Ladd, candidate for vice president and senior environmental studies and philosophy student.

Friday, March 16, 2007

On Friday, March 16, Ladd pur-

chased chalk and went to the Quad with the intention of chalking the library steps for his and Lanahan's campaign.

Little and Harry Johnson, commuter senator candidate, appeared on the Quad as well, also with the intention of chalking the steps, but for the Card-Little campaign. A short time later, Card arrived, and Card and Ladd came to an agreement, deciding they would split the stairs down the middle, accord-

ing to minutes from an SGA hearing.

According to Ladd, he began to outline letters on the steps with the intention of filling them in at a later date.

Saturday, March 17, 2007

On Saturday, Card and Little decided to chalk the entirety of the steps, discovering the library steps is a non-reservable space, accord-

ing to Card.

At this time, Anna Lange, commuter senator candidate, Johnson and Steven C. Quinn, resident senator candidate, were all present, according to minutes from an SGA hearing.

According to Card, neither she nor Little, Lange, Johnson or Quinn were aware of Ladd doing any chalking or campaigning on

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Elderly crime victimization trend hits home

By Trevor Worden
STAFF WRITER

In recent months, the Asheville Police Department received reports that a man and woman targeted three elderly people in the Asheville Mall area.

"There are two or three cases of pickpocketing in town. These two individuals work as a tag team. The woman talks and engages the victims, taking all of their credit or debit cards. The man immediately uses all of the cards with the money on them before the victims even know that their things are stolen," said Lieutenant Kevin West, who works in the criminal investigations sector of APD.

The pair of thieves work so quick, senior citizens lose everything by the time they realize their wallets are gone, and the department does not have much of a lead on the two suspects other than a few photos, according to West.

"We actually have pictures of those folks and are actively engaged in searching for them," West said.

John Dankel, APD's public information officer, said there

could be a problem with criminals targeting the elderly as victims, but he said it is impossible to tell how much these crimes affect people.

"I don't have any information that senior citizens are victimized at a higher rate than the average citizen, but when they are victimized, it is much harder on them," Dankel said. "Fraud, theft and other crimes are harder for elderly people to cope with because they have to deal with insurance claims and so forth. Particularly, if a person is quite old, it makes the process even more difficult, so while it may be true that they are not victimized at a higher rate, they are affected much worse."

These crimes follow a growing trend, brought to the media's attention earlier in the month when a mugger attacked a 101-year-old woman with a walker and snatched her purse after punching her several times in the face in New York City. A nearby surveillance camera caught the entire attack on tape, and the event sparked a citywide manhunt for the attacker, accord-

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Conference highlights queer studies and growing community

By Annabelle Hardy
STAFF WRITER

Over 150 people from 17 colleges and universities attended "Queer Today, Where Tomorrow?" the 2007 Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Studies Conference held at UNC Asheville last weekend.

"This conference is good for UNC Asheville because we are a liberal arts university and queer studies is the most interdisciplinary field. Classics, philosophy, the sciences - all these subjects have links to queer studies," said Sophie Mills, co-chair for this year's conference and chair of UNC Asheville's classics department.

Students and alumni from UNC Asheville and other institutions presented scholarly research on topics like queer identity in the South, aging in the GLBTQ community, ancient sexuality and

queer representations in film. In addition to topics discussed, the conference included several film screenings, a drag king performance and other performance art.

"It's great for people to be exposed to queer studies through performance and academics. I think the performance aspects of the conference make the information more accessible for people," said UNC Asheville sophomore Casey Ellingsworth, conference intern.

UNC Asheville hosts the GLBTQ conference every two years and attendance this year nearly doubled since the last event in 2005, according to Mills.

"This event has a stronger sense of community than other conferences I've been to. The university and the community both seem represented. There's a real sense of place," said Brooke Campbell,

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Donna Hackney, two-time UNC Asheville alumna and active member in the Reuter Center, plays bridge with fellow students.

MEGAN WILDMAN - STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER