

Hookah Joe's provides barhoppers a relaxed atmosphere to meet people, smoke shisha

By Daniel Hartis
STAFF WRITER

At Hookah Joe's, flavored tobaccos burn through glass pipes, sparking nightlong conversation among smokers in the lounge.

"It's a social thing," said Joseph McHugh, owner of Hookah Joe's. "People get together to smoke, talk and just hang out. It's very easy to meet other people."

The hookah originated several hundred years ago in Turkey before spreading to other Middle Eastern countries, according to McHugh. In recent years, hookah lounges became popular in the United States.

"It's growing," McHugh said. "Mostly it started out on the West and East Coasts. Usually you find hookah lounges in towns that have universities. It's more of a forward thinking community."

Hookah Joe's uses Egyptian water pipes, or hookahs, to smoke a tobacco called "shisha," which is a fruit syrup soaked tobacco. Many people enjoy smoking shisha because it allows them to socialize and meet with new people, according to McHugh.

"It's very common for a couple or group to be smoking one flavor, and there might be another couple or group smoking next to them that says, 'Hey, which flavor are you smoking?'" McHugh said. "Next thing you know they're all smoking together."

Smokers sit facing each other on plush couches, which provide a comfortable setting for discussion, according to McHugh.

"With the tables facing each other, it kind of forces you to interact with people across from you if you want to," McHugh said. "Some of the couches you actually have to share with other people. I've seen many times where two groups will actually combine into one group. It's just a nice social interaction."

Hookah Joe's atmosphere and large selection of shisha flavors drew Charlotte resident Art Viscray, 24, to the lounge when visiting friends in Asheville, according to Viscray.

"It's not like your typical bar, where you might be just staring at some bottles of liquor," Viscray said. "At Joe's, you actually sit and talk with perfect strangers."

A cigar shop where McHugh always met new people inspired him to arrange the furniture so as to encourage conversation, according to McHugh.

"With the couches, it's like a big living room," McHugh said. "There are no TVs here, so there's nobody yelling at the screen for sports, and the hookahs a very calming thing anyway. It's just a social hideaway. People that know what's going on here look at it as their own private getaway."

Currently, Hookah Joe's boasts 80 flavors of shisha, according to McHugh. Smokers may smoke these flavors alone or pair them with other flavors.

"With all the flavors there are thousands of combinations," said McHugh, who calculates preparing 14,000 hookahs since entering



Top left, a belly dancer entertains the crowd as they smoke their shisha and sip on a few drinks. Top right, Tom Marshall, owner of Asheville Vee Dub and a Hookah Joe's regular, partakes in a taste of his favorite blend. At bottom, Dave Chester and Hannah Oehl, Warren Wilson students, relax and enjoy the atmosphere.

"It's not like your typical bar. At Joe's you actually sit and talk with perfect strangers."

ART VISCRAY
Hookah Joe's patron

the profession. "Sometimes it surprises me and I'll make a combination I'd never thought of. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. I've had a lot of blends that work and a lot that don't."

McHugh designed honeysuckle, one of the lounge's most popular blends, about a year ago, according to McHugh.

"It's half honey, a quarter kiwi and a quarter pineapple," said McHugh, who also lists cherry jasmine, pink jasmine, mint cappuccino, strawberry banana and blueberry hazelnut as favorites among customers and staff.

Though the vast number of flavors and combinations intimidate many, McHugh recommends flavors to newcomers and seasoned smokers alike by asking them their favorite flavors of three categories: fruity, nutty or flowery.

"If they say fruity, well I just say, 'What's your favorite fruit?'" McHugh said. "Last time we had someone who wanted something nutty, but the rest of the group wanted something fruity. So I said, 'What about the blueberry hazelnut?'"

Shisha smoke contains fewer toxins than cigarette smoke, according to McHugh.

"Like anything you do in excess, it can still harm you," McHugh said. "But the tobacco we use has all been washed and stripped of all the tar that is normally found in the shisha. The tobacco we're smoking has 0 percent tar and only .5 percent nicotine. A cigarette might have 6, 7 or 8 percent, which will get you addicted."

In addition to containing fewer toxins, shisha gives off a more flavorful smoke than cigarettes, according to McHugh.

"It doesn't smell like smoke, it's much more sweet," McHugh said. "We've had as many as 14 hookahs going at one time and it still doesn't smell like smoke in here. Usually it's the tar that makes smoke linger and stink."

The pleasant smell of the shisha smoke surprises many

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JOSEPH MCHUGH
Owner of Hookah Joe's

people, according to Viscray.

"A lot of people think it'll just be this big room of smoke, with people coughing all around," Viscray said. "But it's not like cigarette smoke at all."

Currently Hookah Joe's resides downtown on Cox Avenue, but in a month or so they plan to move into a new, larger building shared with Club Hairspray on French Broad Avenue. The new location will sit among three dance clubs and feature an area for smokers age 18 and up. Currently the lounge only admits smokers 21 and up.

Hookah Joe's is open every night from 6 p.m. until 2 a.m., with half off hookahs until 8 p.m. The lounge also features events almost every night of the week, like bellydancing on Sundays and pajama nights on Thursdays.

UNC Asheville professor named as one of 16 to travel and study in Brazil

By Meredith Wagner-Hoehn
STAFF WRITER

The Fulbright-Hays Seminars Abroad Program will research various countries this summer, taking UNC Asheville's Assistant Professor of Economics Robert Tatum along for the ride in Brazil.

"Economists who focus their research on East Asia are really focusing their research on economic growth issues. People thinking about Europe are thinking about integration issues. People thinking about Africa are thinking about problems of development, and people who are thinking about Latin America, and their research, are really thinking about big macroeconomics and those problems," said Tatum, macroeconomist.

A few years ago, Cindy Ho, humanities program director, sent an email to the faculty alerting them to this opportunity, according to Tatum. He looked up their website, and Brazil intrigued him.

"The topic and location drew me to it," Tatum said.

As an undergraduate, Tatum completed his research on sustainable development in Ecuador, another South American country.

"Sustainable development is basically economic development in the context of environmental constraints," Tatum said.

Although his field now is not sustainable development, the exposure is still useful to his current focus, according to Tatum.

"My main area of research is actually not sustainable development, but I hope to connect it. My main area is looking at how trade liberalizations are reducing trade barriers, impacting the macro economies of trading countries. South America has provided a lot of examples of where that's worked and not worked, and how," he said.

Although the program chooses multiple locations to visit each year, the group only visits one location. This year, the South American location is Brazil.

"For each program, they'll select up to 16 folks and it actually can be secondary education teachers and professors. Their idea is for curricular development, so getting out of the program some material that you'll be teaching here on out," Tatum said.

While in Brazil, the 16 professors will travel from Sao Paulo to Rio de Janeiro to Salvador to Brasilia and more, while communicating with locals and conducting research.

"We'll all connect in one place with, say, journalists, or environmentalists or experts in

"Sustainable development is basically economic development in the context of environmental constraints."

ROBERT TATUM
Economics professor

the field from the local university," Tatum said. "They expect an individual project coming out of this too. It could be a whole course coming out of this, or things that affect other courses. They want to know what that is, and they want to know what you're thinking about as you're going down through there, so the idea is that when you're meeting with these people, it's to help you figure out your project that you're working on."

Tatum expects the program to contribute specifically to the classes: Global Poverty, Money and Banking, Intermediate Macroeconomics and Economic Development.

Out of the 16 travelers, only two of them are economists. The rest cover a diverse number of teaching categories including art history, architecture and archaeology, according to Tatum.

The trip begins June 26 at an orientation in Austin, Texas. The group leaves for Brazil June 28 and will return June 28.

"It is actually, apparently, intensive that they don't even allow you to meet up with your family or your friends while you're there," Tatum said.

Tatum said his specialty currently a popular discussion topic in economics, according to Tatum.

"Basically if you think many of these places, farmers and local citizens, they don't have formal property rights and that might affect them of the land. If you don't have formal property rights, you might overuse the land. It's easier to get a loan or start a small business if you show and get a mortgage to the house on your house," Tatum said.

As Tatum researches Brazil this summer, Shoshana Fried, junior economics and Spanish student, will be working on simultaneous research here in Asheville.

"The plan now is to have actual true joint research that not only will be something that could go into classroom studies sort of thing, but we're going to try to get some conferences, publications," Tatum said. "Basically through the university, it's a paid opportunity to do research with a professor, and it costs

SEE TATUM PAGE 7

Pet of the Week: Marsha's job goes far beyond mere companion

By Hannah Doyle
STAFF WRITER

When Chris Spurrier accidentally drops his papers on a windy day, he doesn't have to worry about maneuvering around in his wheelchair to pick them up. Marsha saves him the effort.

A four-year-old golden retriever, Marsha assists the handicapped with everyday tasks, Spurrier said.

"She's trained to do different things, but the thing that's most beneficial to me is if I drop stuff or if something is out of my reach, she'll get it for me," Spurrier said. "I've had her get my coat with money in it out of the laundry basket before. If there's a rope on a door, like the fridge, she can open it for me."

In a car accident in 1995, Spurrier, 27, broke his neck and has since used a wheelchair. Now he attends Western Carolina University, where he is

a first-year graduate student, and half of the classes he attends are at UNC Asheville.

"I stayed in a hospital in Atlanta, and one of the outings we went on was to Canine Assistants," Spurrier said. "At that point in my life, I wasn't ready to get one, but when I did decide that I was ready, I called them."

At training camp in 2004, Canine Assistants introduced Spurrier to many helper dogs so he could choose which suited him best, he said. Marsha was the first dog Spurrier tried out.

"She's kind of a big dog, and she just jumped into my lap and was really excited to see me," he said. "We just seemed to click."

Since then, Marsha and Spurrier have lived together at his family's house.

"She sleeps wherever she wants," he said. "Sometimes she sleeps at the foot of my bed,

or sometimes she sleeps in her kennel, unless it's too hot. We don't close the kennel door or anything; she just likes it."

One reason Marsha is such a big help, is that she learns words quickly, Spurrier said.

"I'll say, 'Get my medicine case' or 'Get the phone,' and she gets it," he said.

In some respects, Marsha doesn't act like a dog, according to Spurrier.

"She listens very well. Dogs don't listen," he said. "When we go to a restaurant, she won't beg for food. She never begs. We don't give her any human food, though. If you don't give it to her, she doesn't know it's good. Instead, we give her dog treats, like Milk Bones."

Marsha often follows Spurrier around the house, he said.

"She follows me everywhere I go. If I go to the kitchen, she goes to the kitchen," he said. "If I'm out of her sight for more

than 10 seconds, she comes and finds me. It's like having a shadow."

He said for the most part, her tendency to follow him is comforting.

"It's kind of like having a kid," Spurrier said. "She's a very good friend, and she's very loyal. She's really emotionally dependent on me, too. It's kind of weird to know you're that important to someone."

Though Marsha generally performs well, Spurrier said she is less focused when people come up and pet her.

"When we're out in public and she's helping me, it's best that others interact with her as little as possible," he said. "When we're out, it's just us bonding, so it's better when people don't distract her from that."

At first, Spurrier said he had reservations about getting a helper dog.

SEE MARSHA PAGE 7



Chris Spurrier, 27, with Marsha, his 4-year-old golden retriever helper dog. Spurrier got Marsha in 2004, at a helper dog training camp.

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY CHRIS SPURRIER