

Thursday, October 4, 2007

Organization takes on global pandemic



PHOTO COURTESY OF SGAC

Baby Sharon's new mother holds her after her adoption. UNC Asheville's Student Global AIDS Campaign sponsored three AIDS orphans, including Sharon, raising enough money to provide food, medical care and shelter. It takes \$1,000 to support an AIDS orphan for a year through New Life Home in Kenya.

UNC Asheville's Student Global AIDS Campaign opens the year with concert, jewelry sales

By Jon Waleczak
STAFF WRITER

The UNC Asheville chapter of the Student Global AIDS Campaign raised enough money last year to support three AIDS orphans in Kenya and hopes to sponsor even more children this year, according to co-founder and alumnus John Stephens.

"What we realized is that we are a bunch of students, and we need to use the resources in our community," Stephens said. "One of the resources we have at UNC Asheville is an enormous wealth of usable talent. We knew that we needed to tap into that, and that's one of the main things we've been doing."

SGAC enlists local bands for fund-raisers, according to Grant Carlisle, senior political science student and SGAC member. The organization sponsors a series of concerts each year, culminating with the "Big Day," an all-day music and arts festival at the end of the spring semester.

"Last year, with the help of UNCA students and the bands and everybody who helped us throw these events, we raised enough money to support baby Sharon, baby Annette and baby Kate," Stephens said. "What that means is we can provide food, care, medical attention, shelter and everything for one year for \$1,000. Eighty percent of babies get adopted within a year, so in effect, it's saving a baby's life."

At concerts SGAC members sell African jewelry to raise money. "We sell handmade beads made by single mothers in West Africa, and all the money goes directly back to them," Carlisle said. "Those are pretty popular. They are probably our biggest avenue of fund-raising."

Two years ago, a group of

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SGAC co-founder

UNC Asheville students visited Kenya through the Amani Scholars program. They toured an orphanage, the Kenya New Life Home, and fell in love with the orphans.

"When we came back, we wanted to continue the work we started there, so we founded this SGAC chapter because a lot of the children were orphaned as a result of HIV/AIDS, and had lost their parents to AIDS basically," Stephens said.

Students who traveled to Kenya saw first hand the devastating effect of AIDS, according to Stephens.

"AIDS is one of those diseases it never only affects one person. It affects many people our age," he said. "People our age are the ones who are having children and are working jobs. So it affects the people who have children, and they leave those children behind and, they can't work jobs. It's a particularly sinister disease in that regard."

Over the summer, Stephens said he received a phone call from Kenya on his birthday, telling him that Baby Sharon had been adopted.

"We got to see one of the babies we met and fell in love, and her mom is also adopting another baby there," he said.

Over 42 million people live with HIV and AIDS around the world, according to SGAC.

Every day, 15,000 become infected, and 8,200 perish from the disease.

The organization is a national movement with more than 85 chapters at high schools, colleges and universities across the United States, according to SGAC. Members focus on bringing awareness and an eventual end to HIV/AIDS around the world through education, advocacy, media work and action.

After seeing the orphaned babies, students felt the need to do something to make a difference, according to Stephens. "We felt morally obliged, and also we wanted to keep doing something," he said. "All of our efforts are now in honor of and in the hope of helping the children we met at New Life Home."

Student involvement is essential to support AIDS victims all over the world, especially children, according to Carlisle.

"Without us and without other organizations that help them, they wouldn't really have a chance," he said.

SGAC is stepping up to take care of those who are not fortunate enough to enjoy a standard quality of life, according to Scott Scerri, sophomore student.

"With SGAC, you don't give money just to make yourself feel better," Scerri said. "But it's good for good's sake, and you see real results."

Sigma Nu

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ty could conduct programs and even go into health classes to teach, according to Rolfe.

"I think it's great," said Evan Foote-Hudson, sophomore student and Sigma Nu member. "I just wish there were more programs like this mainstream. I just want to help somebody."

OurVOICE is also looking to start other programs on campus, according to Dutton. They are currently looking at having a women's empowerment class in October and forming a task

group on campus to talk about rape and sexual assault to raise awareness.

"I would really like to see some students get involved and maybe meet every month or every couple weeks and just raise awareness on campus and talk about the issue and that type of thing," Dutton said. "The sole purpose would be to actually talk about it."

Talking about the issue is one of the most important things students can do, according to

Dutton.

"It's just so prevalent, but people don't talk about it," Dutton said. "It's just one of those things people don't like to talk about, and if we're going to see a change in society and with this issue, then we really need to be able to talk about it."

To get involved in rape prevention, contact OurVOICE, Linda Pyeritz or Dietrich Rolfe.

University hosts panel educating on the privilege of the right to dissent

By Caroline Fry
STAFF WRITER

UNC Asheville and Western North Carolina chapters of the American Civil Liberties Union held a "Right to Dissent" forum last Thursday evening, where attendees discussed the rights and restrictions of the First Amendment when dissenting.

"The right to dissent is not a privilege," said Dwight Mullen, political science professor at UNC Asheville. "It is your obligation and your responsibility, not to the government, but to each other."

Along with Mullen, panelists included attorneys Frank Goldsmith and Bob Oast; Robin Cape, Asheville city council member; William Hogan, Asheville police chief; Van Duncan, Buncombe County sheriff; Kati Ketz, senior interdisciplinary studies student and regional coordinator for Students for a Democratic Society; and Clare Hanrahan, ACLU board member.

Goldsmith spent the majority of the event discussing where one can legally dissent. He described in detail the differences between public, designated public, limited public and nonpublic forums. Goldsmith addressed the recent flag case in Asheville, in which citizens Mark and Deborah Kuhn were arrested for pinning messages to an American flag and hanging it upside down.

"It is perfectly OK to attach things to the flag or fly it upside down," Goldsmith said. "It is clear that the flag, like arm bands and other objects, can be used as symbolic speech. This has been recognized by the court a number of times."

Oast, who represents the city of Asheville, discussed the do's and don'ts of protesting. His main message was although citizens have a right to protest, they have to do it legally and cannot do things such as obstruct the street or sidewalks, disrupt church services or schools or incite riots while protesting.

"While citizens have the right to express their opinions on any subject, cities have the obligation to protect pedestrians and protesters from harm," Oast said. "We don't care what you say. We are just interested in the manner in which you say it."

One of the main topics the panel discussed was the difference between legal dissent and civil disobedience, outlined by Cape.

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We who dissent are not terrorists. We must speak out and stand up. Our challenge is nonviolent activism and to escalate morally, not destructively. Get up, stand up for your rights.

Citizens have to take responsibility for their actions, no matter what form of dissent they choose, according to Cape.

"The government is our government," Cape said. "It's not 'them' who are the bad guys. We have to take the obligation to stand up and start participating in the process."

Both Hogan and Duncan said the people misunderstand their departments, and their primary job is to protect the rights of Asheville citizens. Hogan said he is very willing to sit down and work with anyone to organize a protest in a lawful way.

"A lot of people don't believe this, but we protect your constitutional rights," he said. "We want to work with folks who want to protest and express themselves in a lawful way."

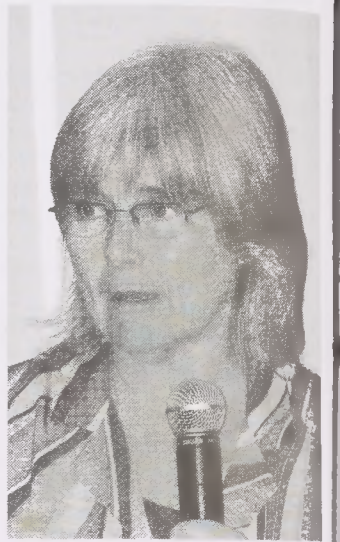
The panel also discussed the Iraq war, a topic led by Ketz. It is the people's duty to end the war by making their voices heard, according to Ketz.

"We are going on almost five years of war in Iraq," Ketz said. "This is unacceptable. Some might disagree with me, but I feel that as citizens, we need to stand up if we disagree with our government until they do something about it."

Hanrahan, also a community activist, discussed her view of militarism in America. She also discussed her time in jail as a result of protesting the School of America, and said the only way people can change the government is through protest.

"We who dissent are not terrorists," Hanrahan said. "We must speak out and stand up. Our challenge is nonviolent activism and to escalate morally, not destructively. Get up, stand up for your rights."

A variety of people attended the forum, including many UNC Asheville students. Paulina



Clare Hanrahan
ACLU Board Member

Mendez, senior political science student, said the panel was well geared toward a certain type of protester.

"The issues discussed were OK, but they were more pertinent to people who have the time and money to dissent within certain boundaries," Mendez said. "I appreciated the technical approach, but it was a little dry, and I thought that they could have appealed to more of a variety of people if done differently."

The panel was moderated by Professor Mark Gibney, who began the discussion by giving a brief history of the Supreme Court's decisions when dealing with dissent since the 1950s. Each panelist spoke for about five minutes, which was followed by a question and answer session.

"Public education about our rights is very important, especially today," said Zach Shitama, senior psychology student. "If we don't know our rights, they can and will be infringed upon."

Testing

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tem," deBeer said.

Still, standardized tests may be the most convenient way to look at massive quantities of applications.

"I don't see how you could design a test that wouldn't be biased against somebody based on experiences or previous knowledge," Schenck said.

As long as the tests are used for things that are consistent with that purpose, they are fine, according to Whately.

"It's a measurement of not only what you know but how you happen to be feeling on a particular day," Whately said. "There are a lot of factors that go into your performance. A lot of times, standardized tests can be pretty high stake."

However, many colleges consider test scores as a small part of the whole, looking at extracurricular activities and leadership abilities as well.

"Are they perfect? Absolutely not," Williams said. "There is no way you could measure a human with really any instrument and

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NANCY WILLIAMS
Coordinator,
professional education
programs

have that be perfect. But are they the best money could buy right now? I think they probably are."

"Some of the cultural bias and other kinds of issues people have had with them have been brought to the test development arena. That's why colleges use them as one part of the profile and not the whole picture," Williams said.

The SAT prep class meets Mondays and Wednesdays from Oct. 15 to 31 from 6 to 9 p.m. The course costs \$275 and includes study materials. The registration deadline is Oct. 8. Students regis-

tering late must pay an additional \$15 fee.

The GRE prep course will meet Tuesdays and Thursdays, Oct. 16 to Nov. 8 from 6 to 9 p.m. The GRE is a computer-generated test that is required by most graduate programs for admission.

Cost for the GRE course is \$325, which includes study materials and a practice disk. Registration deadline is Oct. 9, and students who sign up late will be charged an additional \$15 fee.

The LSAT prep class will meet on Wednesdays from Oct. 17 to Nov. 28 from 1 to 5 p.m. Cost for the course is \$400, including study materials and a practice disk. The deadline for LSAT prep courses is Oct. 8. Late sign-up will cost an additional \$15.

For more information or to register, contact Nancy Williams at (828) 250-2353 or nwilliam@unca.edu. Additional information is available online at www.unca.edu/distedu/ce.