

Sigma Nu works with Habitat for Humanity

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The Sigma Nu fraternity at UNC Asheville, working with Habitat for Humanity and the Biltmore Estate, plans to work on constructing a house this Sunday.

"We are members of the Asheville community, and thus have a vested interest in the development and growth of it," said Justin Newhart, one of the 12 Sigma Nu brothers working on the house. "Habitat for Humanity is a great way for the fraternity to help out a person in need."

Habitat for Humanity relies on community volunteer work to maintain their mission of providing houses to families in need.

"Habitat sells homes to families at cost, with no money down and a no-interest loan," said Beth Russo, the Habitat supervisor working with the fraternity. "Habitat can do this because of community volunteer support."

The project involving Sigma Nu includes installing deadwood, which serves as the support structure for the house. The Biltmore Estate is sponsoring the house, according to Newhart.

"Financial support for the building

project is still necessary, even though all the labor is provided for free," Newhart said. "Unfortunately, Sigma Nu doesn't have the financial means to fund a house itself."

Habitat pairs financial donations with volunteer work forces to build their houses. Habitat has built more than 350,000 homes worldwide, providing shelter to nearly 2 million people, according to the organization.

The Sigma Nu chapter at UNCA worked with Habitat in the past, helping build a home several years ago. Newhart, who worked on that project, joined the fraternity in the fall semester of 2006 and will graduate this spring. Next year, the new leadership decides whether or not the fraternity maintains its volunteer relationship with the organization.

In addition to their work with Habitat, the Sigma Nu brothers at UNCA worked with The Boys and Girls Club of Asheville in the fall.

"Last semester, we put on a 'No Shave November' event. Brothers and candidates were sponsored to grow a beard for the entire month of November, and the money was donated to The Boys and Girls Club of Asheville," Newhart said.

The fraternity's mission distinguishes

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itself from other fraternities, emphasizing in its mission statement, "We are not a drinking club." Sigma Nu also holds a strong anti-hazing policy in its mission statement. In the past, other fraternities and sororities garnered national attention and criticism for the abuses of hazing.

"I cannot imagine college without Sigma Nu," Newhart said. "The fraternity has benefited me in an innumerable amount of ways."

Green

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He also said his company is probably the only supplier of evacuated tube solar heating systems in North Carolina and the surrounding states. They install newer generation solar heating systems that are more efficient, easier to install and service, and are more cost effective than the flat-panel solar heating systems currently dominating the local market, Wei said.

Another local company jumping on the chance to promote green business throughout WNC is the WNC Green Building Council.

Peak Productions invited them to attend the home show.

WNC Green Building Company is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting green building in the construction industry and the general public, said Matt Siegel, green building director.

Siegel said they are the only organization to do what they do, which distinguishes them from the rest.

"We have been in business for nine years, and have been extremely successful in expanding our business. We have 500 members and 400 certified homes in WNC," Siegel said.

Crime

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cording to the FBI. Even though the rate decreased, certain types of property crime increased.

Nationally, burglary increased by 2 percent and larceny by 0.3 percent from 2007 to 2008, according to the FBI.

For Asheville's reported larcenies, the city had 133 more between the two years, according to the SBI. Burglaries dropped from more than a thousand in 2007 to about 900 in 2008.

"I think the property crimes are the things we really struggle with and that's so hard to keep a handle on because some of that is, I mean, some of it's probably symptomatic of the economy, although I wouldn't paint that with a broad brush," Splain said.

Police also arrest the same members

of the homeless community for property crimes too, according to Splain, but that is only a small segment of Asheville's homeless population.

"There's that other section of our population that are an addict population that are addicted to drugs that have resorted to break-ins and larcenies to further their drug habits, and that, we find, is always, at the root of most property crimes," he said.

Eads said another thing that raises flags is spikes of crime.

"But if all of a sudden you have a real big spike, that kind of suggests you have one person or a group of persons involved in more than one breaking and entering," he said. "And so I'll look at those trends and just kind of see if some-

thing catches my eye."

One person causing a lot of break-ins is another part of property crime that further makes it difficult to keep down, according to Splain.

"The other part of it is a person can break in and be successful at breaking in and stealing stuff from 20 places before we actually catch them, and if they don't admit to doing the break-ins and if there isn't some other forensic evidence or underlying evidence we have, a lot of these cases go unsolved."

Asheville police also meet every two weeks to discuss any new trends developing, and whether the crime rises or falls, in an effort to stop crime before it gets out of hand, according to Eads.

"They can make sure they're covering

their patrol areas where those (crime upswings) are happening," he said. "I think what we're doing is helping, so I think what we're doing is in the right direction, but I don't see it accounting for the big drop that we're seeing. I think that's the national trend."

Locally, aggressive efforts of the police contributed to the decrease in crime rates, according to Splain.

"At least locally, I credit our patrol officers, our drug suppression officers and our detectives who are out here aggressively working these violent crimes and violent crime activity, and also doing the community policing at the same time and gaining more trust, especially our low-income communities, and I think we're seeing the benefit of that now," he said.