

Record Store Day attracts Asheville

Alex Milstein

amilstei@unca.edu - Staff Writer

Record Store Day encouraged local residents to support record stores and interact with other music lovers last Saturday in Asheville.

Matt Schnable, co-owner of Harvest Records in West Asheville, said Record Store Day is a growing partnership.

"Record Store Day started around 6 years ago to kind of refocus the public's attention on brick and mortar, independent record stores," Schnable said. "After the idea was thought up, bands and labels worked together with record stores to have specific products – LPs, CDs, 7-inch vinyls – to come out on a certain day, and have these products only available for independent record stores to get their hands on. It started out small, maybe around 20-40 different titles that were available to order, and it has exponentially grown since. This year there were around 300 different titles that were available."

Schnable said limited releases are a huge factor in drawing people out to Record Store Day.

"A lot of the releases that come out are limited to 500 or a thousand, so a lot of collectors, vinyl enthusiasts or just fans of certain bands come out because it's the only day to get that particular vinyl for whatever band they are looking for," Schnable said. "There are only a certain amount of them being made, and so a lot of die-hards come out to grab these releases. They know that record stores

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Hartwell Carson: Life of the French Broad

Local grassroots activist makes life on the river

Emily Kendrick

ekendric@unca.edu - Staff Writer

From a young age, Hartwell Carson displayed an unwavering love for the outdoors and wildlife. Since then, he turned his passions into a lifestyle, working to protect the environment as the French Broad Riverkeeper.

Carson works for the Western North Carolina Alliance, a local grassroots organization, in an office on the sixth floor of a building in downtown Asheville. His desk faces out toward the window, with his focus always on the environment. Maps of North Carolina's river basins hang on the walls alongside drawings from his 2-year-old daughter, Evan. His faithful dog, June Bug, stays by his side, in the office and on the river.

"My friends at home think all I do is go paddle down the river every day. I do that some, which is great because a lot of people don't ever get paid to canoe down the river," Carson said. "But there is a lot of sitting here writing grants, answering emails and being on conference calls – stuff people do at other jobs. We just talk about cooler stuff."

Before working with WNCA, Carson said he worked with RiverLink, a local nonprofit environmental organization aimed at protecting waterways. Although he supports their work, he said he wanted to center his efforts on monitoring coal ash and advocating for policy changes through WNCA.

The WNCA Riverkeeper program, founded in 2001, establishes a sole guardian and advocate for the French Broad River. The organization appointed Carson as the French Broad Riverkeeper seven years ago. His job involves monitoring water quality and keeping a look out for anyone disrespecting the Clean Water Act, enacted in 1972.

"Riverkeepers were (originally) founded on the Hudson River to be kind of the eyes and ears of the river," Carson said. "We've come a long way since the Clean Water Act but we still haven't fully met the goals of the Clean Water Act, which is to have all waters be fishable and swimmable."

Although Carson spends half his time in his office making conference calls and writing grants, he spends the other half outdoors as a watchdog for the French Broad River. He played a role in discovering illegal coal ash pollution from the Asheville coal-fired Progress Energy plant.

"We've spent the last three years really digging into the issue (of coal ash)," Carson said. "We've now issued two legal actions

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Hartwell Carson
French Broad riverkeeper

to force (Progress Energy) to clean that up."

During his childhood, Carson's innocence kept him oblivious to the issues facing the environment he loved. Although Carson grew up in Macon, Ga., he spent his summers at Camp Ridgecrest, 20 minutes from Asheville. His parents were not necessarily outdoor types, but Carson said it just came naturally to him.

"I remember being in the Boy Scouts and the only thing I really liked to do was go on campouts," Carson said. "I just liked being outside and camping. It was just a natural fit."

As Carson grew older, he recognized the potential harms to the environment he loved. He attended the University of Georgia and studied recreation and resource management. He then took a step further and earned a master's degree from the University of Montana.

Carson's academic adviser for his master's degree program in the College of Forestry and Conservation, Neil Moisey, said Carson positively affected everyone in their department with his friendliness and hard work.

"He's a very social kind of guy and the kind of individual that, within five minutes, you feel very comfortable with," Moisey said. "Whenever I think of Hartwell, I think he's the kind of person who is incredibly lucky."

While at U.M., Carson met Adam Liljeblad, who now works as the director of conservation awards for the National Forest Foundation, nonprofit partner of the U.S. Forest Service.

"We went to graduate school together and I kind of work with him professionally right now as colleagues," Liljeblad said. "We actually provide grant funding to the Western

North Carolina Alliance for one of the programs that Hartwell manages."

Once Carson finished graduate school, he and Liljeblad took a bicycle trip from Missoula, Mont., to San Francisco. The 1,200-mile trip took about a month because each day Carson took his time, stopping to soak in the scenery and read every interpretive roadside sign he saw, Liljeblad said.

Carson, a 33-year-old single father, spends much of his free time around the river he protects.

He brings his daughter and his dog canoeing whenever he can, hoping his little girl will grow up to love the outdoors as much as he does, he said.

"I ride her around on the bike and then I take her canoeing, so my theory is she's going to grow up to like it," Carson said. "When we drive over the river she says, 'Oh, that's daddy's river!'"

Both Carson and WNCA want to push Asheville and the surrounding region beyond coal use by working directly with the community on projects like the French Broad River Paddle Trail. The trail, which allows people to explore the river more easily, consists of campsites every 12 to 15 miles over a stretch of 140 miles, according to WNCA.

"Part of the reason I got interested in all this stuff is because I was out enjoying camping and hiking," Carson said. "So I do encourage folks to get out and enjoy the river, and that's what creates a sense of stewardship and folks wanting to take care of it."

With Carson's work for the French Broad River and the community as a whole, he said he hopes people start feeling a sense of urgency and commitment to the local environment.