

THE BLUE BANNER



VOL. 61, ISSUE 6 | WEDNESDAY, OCT. 1, 2014 | THEBLUEBANNER.NET

Students attend climate march

VALERIE McMURRAY
vmcmurr@unca.edu -
Asst. News Editor

Intending to put pressure on world leaders to take action to end climate change, approximately 400,000 people, including 25 UNC Asheville students, joined the People's Climate March on Sept. 21.

"I was really surprised about how peaceful everyone was," said **Jane Smith**, a senior environmental studies student. "Because usually at protests, especially protests about such a huge issue, kind of get tense, but everyone was very respectful. I waved at cops and they waved back."

Organized by activist coalition 350.org, the march took place in New York City.

Police read the protest signs and acknowledged their point, according to **Merry Hughes**, senior and Student Environmental Center coordinator.

"You never had a feeling of aggression," Hughes said. "It felt like a unified moment."

Indigenous people, the groups most affected by climate change, led the rally while many other communities of students, scientists and environmental organizations followed. Simultaneously, 2,646 rallies occurred in 146 countries worldwide.

Marchers split up into contingents ranging from a student group to a family group to those based on locality, ethnic origin or economic status -- demonstrating the diversity of the movement to confront climate change.

More than 1,000 organizations represented themselves at the march. Students exchanged views with people from



UNCA students Sarah Harrell, left, and Jane Smith, right, hold signs at the People's Climate March.

across the United States.

Attendees said it demonstrated that people are ready for change.

"I was very surprised at how much people are catching on and feeling betrayed by Barack Obama, by the Democratic party, by corporations which are claiming that they'll fix the problem," said **Aaron Rothemich**, senior and International Socialist Organization co-founder at UNCA.

Ashleigh Hillen, UNCA student, said there remains a concern over whether the switch to renewable energy will cut jobs, but even labor activists marched to show that they are ready to make the switch.

Like Hillen, **Williams Parker**, a senior and ISO member, said he came away from the march more concerned about the con-



An estimated 400,000 people gathered during the March in New York City.

nection between climate change and economic injustice. Others, like **Caroline Bluhm**, a freshman, went with that in mind. "I wouldn't say that en-

vironmental issues were some of the ones I felt the most strongly about, but seeing how it affects people, it is now," Parker said. "These people are stuck

with landfills and environmental waste because they don't have money to get rid of it. It's something that people know and they don't always focus on it."

Parker and Bluhm were among the seven members of UNCA's chapter of the ISO attending the NYC Climate Convergence on Sept. 20.

The series of workshops and conferences centered around the idea of system change not climate change. The discussions framed environmental degradation as a social justice issue. Speakers included eco-celebrities like Vandana Shiva and Naomi Klein.

"We feel that capitalism is going to fail to address the issues of climate change -- the ideas of profit and resource conservation are diametrically opposed to each other," Rothemich said. "Without radical change, we are not going to be able to stop our dependency on fossil fuels."

Bluhm said grassroots political activism was an aspect of NYC Climate Convergence that held enormous emotional appeal.

"It shows citizens getting involved where they live," she said.

Rothemich, who identifies as an ecosocialist, said he felt pleased that 10,000 people comprised ISO's contingent at the march. He met ISO members from other cities for the first time.

"It was really enlightening to talk to people who have been veteran activists for 10-20 years," he said.

The ISO brought a lot of energy to the march, chanting through megaphones from 8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m., according to the group's leader.

It disappointed Rothemich the march's organizers did not have formal demands in place.

"You saw demands all over the group and of course it was kind of unstructured, the way that Occupy Wall Street was," he said.

Several students noted they have yet to see how far the affects of the march reach.

Hillen said encouraged by the scale of support the march showed, but doubts the activists' work is over.

"Were we speaking to the people who needed to hear it most?" Hillen asked.

SGA fights voter discrimination legislation

SHANEE SIMHONI
ssimhoni@unca.edu -
Political Corespondent

UNC Asheville's student government recently joined the It's On Us initiative, a pledge to end sexual violence. "UNC Asheville is one of 200 universities across the country to sign on with the White House's It's On Us initiative to combat sexual assault," said **James Whalen**, student body president. During Voter Registration Week,

SGA members registered students. "My goal is still 1,500 (students) for the semester, which ends on Oct. 10," Whalen said.

Keith Knox, executive of multicultural affairs, continues his work on spreading awareness of the lack of diversity at UNCA.

"I want people to see UNCA in a better light," Knox said. "UNCA is seen as not one of the most diverse places and has a very nasty reputation."

Knox also continues his

work on MOSAIC and the unity wall, coming up this month.

Juliana Grassia, vice president of SGA, said SGA is working with Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, to kick off OLLI's new program with the Career Center to help students learn how to network.

Whelan said bringing in student volunteers would strengthen the bond between community volunteers and UNCA students.

Prior to the actual march to the nearest polling location, **Sen. Jae**

Slaughter said she plans to do a march to the polls on the quad on Nov. 4, during which speakers will talk about why they vote.

"The point of march to the polls is, there was a recent legislative bill that went out," Slaughter said.

Slaughter also said one of the facets of march to the polls is "bussing out the vote," where volunteers will ride buses to inform and help lower-class residents and members of minority groups register to vote.

Due to an editing error, the wrong credit ran with the Peace Day photograph.

Blake Willis took the photo.

The Blue Banner apologizes for this error.