

Elon students fall for kids at YMCA fall festival

Martha-Page Ransdell

Reporter

Members of Alpha Omicron Pi sorority volunteered at the annual Burlington YMCA Fall Festival on Oct. 21 as a way to get more involved in the Burlington community.

"We've always enjoyed doing this," said junior Sarah Dollard. "Sometimes we feel like we don't really connect with the Burlington community, so we wanted to do something that allows us to reach out to other people in the area."

Dollard estimates 80 percent of the AOII chapter participated in the festival. While the members of AOII did not have to help in the planning stages of the festival, they volunteered from 5 to 9 p.m. by helping out with games, food and other activities.

"We can get our four mandatory volunteer hours tonight from this one event, so it works out great, but it's really a lot of fun," junior Meagan Root said. "These kids look up to us, so it's important for us to be here."

For some members of AOII, volunteering at the Fall Festival is a way to not only earn service hours, but also to help promote a more positive image of Greek Life at Elon.

"By volunteering at the festival, we are getting our name out there in the community, and hopefully breaking some of those sorority stereotypes," junior Ashley Krueger said.

Many parents, accompanying their children to the festival, seemed pleased with the activities and games set up for the kids.

"I think it's great to have the sorority girls out here helping tonight," said Keri Key, who was at the festival with her two-year-old daughter, Dylann. "This is our first time at the festival, but we're having a good time."

One highlight of the event was the pumpkin painting station. Safety concerns kept the children from carving the more than 40 pumpkins donated to the YMCA.

In addition to various carnival games set up across the gym, the Burlington Police Department was also on hand, talking to children and passing out goody bags to promote Halloween safety.

Andy Sharpe, director of family and youth services at the Burlington YMCA, estimated about 400 people would attend the festival, but was surprised by how many people actually showed up.

The festival, which has been held for the past six years, is a free community family event sponsored by the YMCA.

"This festival is a way to get families who are not already YMCA members associated with the Y, and to tell them what we're about," said Sharpe.

Contact Martha-Page Ransdell at pendulum@elon.edu or 278-7247.



Susan O'Brien shows several kids how to dance (left) while Katie Gordon gives a child a candy from a plastic pumpkin (bottom right). A girl dressed like a princess for Halloween decorates one of the 40 donated pumpkins for the festival.

Anna Tolner
Photographer



Former ambassador to Rwanda shares experiences

Krista Naposki

News Editor

For Joyce Leader, the movie *Hotel Rwanda* is more than just a powerful flick.

Leader was a former ambassador to Rwanda during the 1994 genocide, in which 800,000 people died in three months.

She will speak to Elon students at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday in Whitley Auditorium. Originally, Elon invited Leader to speak last year for the 10-year mark of the Rwandan genocide, but plans fell through.

Leader will provide background not only about the genocide, but also about relations within and outside of Rwanda.

Before the 1994 genocide, she spent three years working on political efforts for peace. She was supposed to visit at the 10-year anniversary of the genocide in 2004, however planning fell through.

Brian Digre, history professor and coordinator of African and African-American studies at Elon, met Leader through his work in the Peace Corps in 1978. She was the associate Peace Corp director in education for Africa when he volunteered in the Democratic Republic of Congo.



Joyce Leader

Photo courtesy of Syracuse University

Digre served as an English and history teacher at a small town in the Congo. Leader visited his class and held workshops for the teachers in the Peace Corp.

"She was concerned about the volunteers," Digre said. "She was careful that volunteers were placed at schools appropriate for them and the community. She has a serious interest in their education."

Rwanda's genocide occurred because of

“There is stability ... The process of reconciliation and search for justice is occurring (in Rwanda).”

—Brian Digre, history professor

When – 7:30 p.m. Wednesday

Where – Whitley Auditorium

conflict between the Tutsis and Hutus.

Before the genocide, Hutus had control over the government. But historically, the two groups had switched power control.

When the Hutu president was assassinated, the Tutsis were accused of killing the president and the Hutus began killing Tutsis or Hutus that might not have been pro-government. Soon, all Tutsis were hunted and a mass genocide developed.

Leader was forced to leave Rwanda as the violence erupted for her safety. She will talk about the tough decisions the ambassadors had to make when the fighting began.

Leader has since gone back to Rwanda to speak to friends, both Hutu and Tutsis, about the genocide and its effects.

Rwanda is relatively peaceful now. The country is still working on efforts to play down the separate cultural identities. "There is stability," Digre said. "The process of reconciliation...and search for justice is occurring."

Digre said that Leader would appeal to a significant cross section of Elon. Global Experience classes, human rights activists and students concerned with social responsibility and concerns about genocide in Africa will find Leader interesting.

While genocide in Darfur and Rwanda differs because Rwanda had mass killing for three months while Darfur has experienced a slow process of starvation and bad conditions, lessons can still be learned from Rwanda for Darfur, said Digre.

Contact Krista Naposki at pendulum@elon.edu or 278-7247.