

ACCESS

Presentation calls for integration of disability awareness in SLRP

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simple issue of minor renovations and updates to facilities: putting some buttons here and widening a door there and building a ramp there, etc.," said Perkins, who is himself in a wheelchair.

"But the more we uncovered, the more we were able to see complex issues systemic within the Guilford College community," said Perkins. "We began to understand the concerns facing a significant population of the Guilford Community, whom the core values seem to overlook."

The PPS scholars group examined accessibility in numerous ways, from building entrances and multi-floor access to the heights of water fountains and elevator buttons.

The groups' presentation highlighted issues such as the lack of access to water fountains and elevator buttons that are too high to be reached from a wheelchair, heavy doors that lack automated, push-button entry systems, and a complete lack of access to the North Apartments except by road.

Despite the seeming lack of options in housing for students with disabilities, circumstances have improved.

"It used to be we'd keep students in Milner,

in that same room all four years," said Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean of Students Aaron Fetrow. "But once we started having first-year only housing, then it wasn't very fair to have a junior or senior on first floor Milner with all these freshmen. So, then we started trying to figure out ways to have options for those students (with disabilities)."

The PPS scholars group also voiced student complaints about common social places being inaccessible particularly the lounges, kitchens, and the Milner patio.

"We're doing everything we can to make it so those gathering spaces are accessible," said Fetrow. "The Greenleaf, areas outside the Greenleaf, most of those areas are accessible, and that's what we want. But to make everything accessible becomes really cost-prohibitive, to try to make every floor of every building accessible, retro, because those buildings are 50 or 60 years old."

Another concern the group raised was an inequality in classroom resources.

Most classrooms, they explained, have only desks and not tables that students in wheelchairs can sit. Instead, they have to turn a desk around so that the writing surface is facing them, while the back of the chair faces the front of the classroom, effectively coming

between them and the rest of the class.

As part of their efforts, the group posted signs on doors, water fountains and elevators around campus that ask "Is this handicapped accessible?" in order to increase visibility for their project and awareness of the obstacles disabled members of the community face.

"A lot of these are just issues of awareness," said Dungan. "If someone was thinking about a person in a wheelchair trying to maneuver through these spaces they might think that they need to remove the clutter, but as we see in a lot of these cases it's a simple lack of awareness."

While problems like clutter in front of elevators can be easily corrected by the community, larger issues require the attention of such Guilford College initiatives as the Strategic Long Range Plan (SLRP) and the Diversity Plan, both of which the group focused heavily on for their research and recommendations.

"According to the Diversity Plan, the needs of disabled students seem to be placed on the back seat compared to other diversity concerns like race, sex, ethnicity, sexual identity and international origin," said Perkins. "Whenever the plan discusses the goals of achieving diversity within the college, it refers to these five areas of emphasis."

Perkins found similar shortcomings with the SLRP.

"The SLRP is an excellent plan for outlining the goals and benchmarks for the future development of Guilford College," said Perkins. "Unfortunately, disability access issues regarding the renovation of all restructures and the development of new facilities are not mentioned within the plan."

The group explained that, although a recent law passed under the Americans with Disabilities Act stipulates that all community spaces be fully accessible by 2011, a 1979 law serves as a grandfather clause to allow historic buildings to circumvent current ADA regulations.

"Students aren't flocking to Guilford if they have these certain disabilities because Guilford doesn't really have anything in place for them," said Dungan. "Because of that, we have a really low number of blind and deaf students."

With a lack of resources and inadequate planning in place, Fetrow's explanation of the hard-to-access Milner laundry room accurately describes the status of accessibility across campus.

"There is accessibility," said Fetrow, "but it's not very convenient."

Fall Food Fest prompts community bonding and conversations

By Rebecca Gibian
STAFF WRITER

On Nov. 14, the grassy area between Shore Hall and Mary Hobbs was alive with music, sunlight, and good food as the second annual Fall Food Fest, held by the Food Justice Network, entertained the community.

"Fall Food Fest is a community potluck and celebration of local, seasonal food," said sophomore and member of the Food Justice Network Elizabeth Wray. "We will be cooking several dishes ourselves to share, and hope that other clubs and individuals will do the same."

Last year, the event mainly consisted of a Thanksgiving-style dinner held in the Greenleaf. The goal was to teach the community about the connections between local food, hunger, and sustainability.

The first Fest was such a success that the Food Justice Network decided to have the event again.

"Last year we were not officially a club, so we had to ask a lot more people for help with money and food, which isn't so much of an issue this year," Wray said in an e-mail interview. "This year we are planning to be outside and serve food all afternoon rather than inside at night."

Fall Food Fest involved outdoor games, face painting, and a canning session held by the Pines housemates. Students played in the fallen leaves as others lounged in the sun while live music, such as the student band Pimps and Daisies, played in the background.

The goals of the event were simple.

"Eat, play, and be merry," said junior and member of the Food Justice Network Courtney Mandeville.

Other members hoped for longer-lasting goals.

"(Our goals are) to raise awareness about the connections between hunger, local food systems, environmental sustainability, and good food," Wray said. "We hope this will be a community-building and festive event."

According to both club members and event attendees, the event was a success.

"For being the second year, I think it has been a success; we were able to do more stuff this year, such as the music," said junior and club member Daryn Lane. "Hopefully it will become a long-standing tradition. I hope it gives people a chance to pause and consider all the abundance of yummy foods grown locally."

"It was a delicious and a wonderful community-building



opportunity," said sophomore Cate Schurz.

Food Justice Network was started last year when a group of interested students started meeting to talk about local food, farmers, and community.

Now officially a club, the group meets every Thursday in the Greenleaf to continue their discussions about the veggie co-op, environmental events and conferences, and worker's rights.

"We also have carpools to the farmers markets, the Edible Schoolyard, and Food Not Bombs dinner preparation, among other events that pop up in North Carolina," said junior and club member Hannah Swenson in an e-mail interview.

"We also work in different capacities with the community garden, the Pines garden and Meriwether Godsey to edu-



(Left) **Courtney Mandeville**, junior, enjoys a plate of freshly cooked food at the Nov. 14 Fall Food Fest. (Above) Sophomores **Lydia Rain** and **Chelsea Emery** play an acoustic set for an adoring crowd. (Right) **Andrew Slater**, senior, hoists a delicious bowl of kale.

cate, advocate, and work for fresh, local and organic food at Guilford," Swenson said.

The Fall Food Fest ended as the sun began setting. As Food Justice Network members began cleaning up, they discussed the event.

"I feel like it was a good opportunity to bond as a community over good food and environmental awareness," said first-year Isabelle Brace. "Educating the student body is one of the most important goals of our club and the activities and conversations held at the Fest supported that goal."