

# Play threatens funding for the arts

By Kate Peeples  
Reporter

It's a Saturday night in our beloved Greensboro. You and your friends are, again, doing nothing. There's no concerts, no plays, nothing going on. You've already seen all the new movies. And if our county commissioners have anything to say about it, this flatline state of being is how things will stay.

This past spring, the community became divided over the Community Theatre of Greensboro's controversial production of "La Cage Aux Folles." The play is the story of a gay nightclub owner whose son becomes engaged to a morals crusader's daughter.

A crowd of 250 angry citizens stormed a commissioners' meeting May 23, denouncing the play as "exposure to perverted forms of sexuality." As a result, Republican Steve Arnold threatened to eliminate all arts funding from Guilford County's 1997-1998 budget.

As a thinking human being, I already had little regard

for our county commissioners. But eliminate the arts? I just cannot comprehend the reasoning behind the commissioners' proposal. First of all, most of the commissioners and other nay-sayers never even saw the play. It's not right for anyone to denounce something if they've never even experienced or witnessed it. How can you take away money from something you had nothing to do with, and therefore knew nothing about? The commissioners should take a field trip to some of our very fine theatre groups' productions. We are so lucky to have groups such as the CTG and the North Carolina Shakespeare Festival.

Commenting on the widespread opposition to "La Cage Aux Folles," Dale Metz, board chairman of CTG, said, "I was hoping that (Guilford County) would somehow be different."

The other mastermind behind this dastardly plot is Republican commissioner Walter Cockerham. "This is a no-frills budget, and we're going to take out everything that's not absolutely a priority equal to or above school

construction. Arts funding certainly wouldn't be a priority for me," he said. Though I believe that the current conditions of our county's schools is unacceptable, I also believe that no education in a "modern" (meaning without arts programs) school would be complete without opportunities to participate in arts programs. The arts enrich our minds, they make us human. Without the arts in our schools and our community, we'd all be just a bunch of factoid-spitting human calculators. If family values are what our commissioners are worried about, cutting arts funding and extinguishing any outlet for creative expression is NOT the answer.

And whatever happened to that age-old argument, freedom of speech? So you're opposed to homosexuality? Fine, you're entitled to your opinion. We should celebrate our common right--your right to hold that opinion, and my right to become enriched by a beautiful play.

## Guilford County schools are full of hot air

By Lisa Guttentag  
Reporter

When teachers turn to magical charms to ward off the heat, it's obvious something is terribly wrong.

Mrs. Tuttle, who has taught on the third floor of the Main Building for years, drapes her walls with plastic snowflakes in the hope that they will bring cool weather. "It's my voodoo," she says half-jokingly. "I pray for snow from the first hot day 'til the first cool day."

But Grimsley's lack of air conditioning is no laughing matter. In 90+ degree weather, students are packed like sardines into classrooms resembling ovens -- hardly the best environment for fostering academic performance. In many rooms, whirring fans make students strain to hear their teachers, but do little to stir the stifling air. Solving math problems, many students have noticed, becomes extremely difficult when drops of sweat obscure the calculations on the paper. Besides, sitting in the heat for long periods of time is downright unhealthy; I've personally gotten headaches on numerous occasions.

And an overheated school generates among its students (besides a rather unpleasant, musty odor) a feeling of resentment towards the administration forcing them to learn in such an uncomfortable place. How can students feel cared-for by an administration relaxing in spacious, air-conditioned offices while Grimsley suffers?

But contrary to the popular notion that the administrators lounge behind their cool desks thinking, "What's the problem? I'm not hot," Superintendent Weast is painfully aware of our pitiful, perspiration-producing plight. "You don't know how much I wanna air condition Grimsley," he insisted over the phone. Apparently, a visit to

Kiser Middle School's sauna-like gym just before my interview had left him sweating from both the heat and the knowledge that hundreds of students, parents, and faculty were fuming. "I just want everyone to know I do understand," he asserted desperately before we hung up.

"Overcrowding," says Dr. Weast. "We have to get seats for students." Air conditioning Grimsley would cost around \$3 million. According to the school board's ten-year plan, providing space for all students and completely renovating already existing schools (including installing air conditioning) would cost over \$800 million. Most of the system's \$400 million annual budget goes to faculty salaries, and for the meager remains, overcrowding and "safety" concerns take priority over climate control. Last year alone, the system's student population increased by 1,295, and 20 trailers were purchased for a total of \$1.4 million, to be replaced by entirely new (and entirely expensive) schools in the future.

Indeed, underseating problems are even more dire than overheating problems, and safety measures (an interesting one in the 10-year plan is "asbestos abatement") should be the #1 priority. But not all of the school system's money is going towards safety and overcrowding difficulties. Top-rate computers have been appearing at schools for years, even where students rarely use them. At my elementary school, expensive computers sat in sealed cardboard boxes for months because teachers saw no need to replace the existing ones. Even at schools that take advantage of modern technology, students would be better off typing comfortably at an out-of-date computer than sweltering before the lat-

est model. The 10-year plan allots Grimsley \$1,657,000 for "technology." If air conditioning is truly one of the school board's top priorities, why is so much money being poured into computers?

Part of a \$36 million subsidy from the County Commissioners air conditioned four single-story elementary schools this summer. As Grimsley Junior Hannah Fulton points out, "If schools with one floor have air conditioning, we should have air conditioning." Dr. Weast claims the administration selected the four schools because "We wanted to air condition as many schools as possible with the money we had." On the other

hand, another member of the administration says they gave precedence to inner-city schools over those in richer areas. Moreover, Dr. Weast doesn't foresee any more schools receiving air conditioning within the next year. He admits regretfully, "[The subsidy] was a one-time thing."

The administration realizes Grimsley is suffering. "It's a bad situation," laments Dr. Weast. "It's bad for the teachers, and it's bad for the students." But until the school board truly makes air conditioning schools a top priority, even second to overcrowding and safety, they will continue to be full of hot air.

## Whirlies... Speak Out

What's the farthest you have ever gone to impress a guy/girl?



"I went to the Renaissance Festival and bought a girl a metal rose, a leather rose, and a red rose."

- Josh Chambless, Junior



"I danced around a coffee shop in a blue tutu."

- Venee David, Freshman



"I stole my mom's cell phone, rode my bike to the store, and bought roses for a girl. Then I went to her house, put the roses on her porch, hiding in the bushes, called her on the phone and told her to come outside."

- Martin Hundley, Sophomore



"I found out this girl liked me, so I had 39 of my friends call her and tell her she was the most beautiful girl in the world."

- Brian Smouse, Junior

*High Life*

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