

Local Businesses Profit From Homecoming Crowds

BY TODD DARLING
STAFF WRITER

This year during the weekend that begins Oct. 20, thousands of people will migrate to Chapel Hill to see the Homecoming football game against the Wake Forest Demon Deacons.

Alumni, students and parents alike will come to see the game, to see the sights and to roam around on Franklin Street. As a result, downtown businesses are preparing for what they believe will be a profitable weekend.

"We expect a 10 percent increase in

sales over the weekend," said John Hudson, manager of Chapel Hill Sportswear. Many business owners said they expected an increase in sales and crowds browsing at their stores. Hudson also said other factors, such as if the team won or lost and the visiting team, were important to the increase in weekend business.

Some businesses, such as The Shrunken Head Boutique, will run special promotions during Homecoming weekend.

"This year we're giving away something to the men and women who come in the store, though we can't say what," said Shelton Henderson, the store's owner.

Business owners said they enjoyed the patronage of alumni returning to Chapel Hill. "We build up a relationship with the customers. They know they can get consistent, good food. Some alumni don't even get menus anymore," said Reed Raynor of The Rathskeller restaurant, which is preparing for its 48th Homecoming.

Raynor said the secret to managing large crowds over Homecoming was having employees that knew how to handle it. He said The Rathskeller would probably station people outside to handle the lines and assure the people that, "you can get in the door in 20 minutes and eat in 20 minutes."

Raynor said.

A problem that arose last year due to the large crowds in the stores was shoplifting. Stores are planning extra precautions for the weekend to alleviate the rush due to the increased patronage.

"There will be a lot of extra traffic. All the managers will be on duty," said Alicia Hardin, general manager of Johnny T-Shirt. She said she had started to train staff for shoplifting awareness.

At many businesses, employees will be stationed throughout the store to watch for shoplifters and assist shoppers to speed up the flow of people through the store. "We

don't shoot to wound, we shoot to kill," Hudson said of his store's attitude toward shoplifters. He planned to place employees at the front door as well as schedule full shifts of employees.

Homecoming is a time for people to return to Chapel Hill to remember the past. "Homecoming is very reminiscent. We have to show appreciation for all the years of support," Raynor said.

As students old and new flock to Franklin Street prior to the Wake Forest game, the businesses will be ready to accommodate them. Henderson said, "When they win, we win."

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