

Late Elections Delay Senior Class Transition

■ Ladell Robbins said senior class marshal applications were available in the Union.

BY NATALIE NEIMAN
STAFF WRITER

The delayed election for senior class president has hindered President-Elect Ladell Robbins and Vice President-Elect Amelia Bruce in selecting a transition team and spreading the word that senior class marshal applications are available, Robbins said.

"Basically, two days after the election we had to put senior class marshal applications out," Robbins said. "We wanted to spread the information to as many groups as possible."

Applications for marshals went out Thursday and are due Monday, April 8, Bruce said. Around 40 to 50 marshals will be selected, she said. Applications are available at the Carolina Union Desk.

"We're definitely going to have to move very quickly to get everything accomplished," Bruce said.

The transition team will select the marshals and will be formed a few days after the marshal application deadline, Robbins said. The team will interview applicants starting Thursday, April 11.

"You want to make sure that people view the transition team as fair," Robbins said. "But if 200 people apply, how do you put together a team big enough to interview them all, yet small enough to be able to talk together about the different applicants? It's a very complicated process."

Bruce said she invited anyone who ran

"The time span has made everything complicated, but we're finding ways to deal with the challenges and make sure everything runs smoothly."

LADELL ROBBINS
Senior Class President-Elect

for a senior class office to apply to be a senior marshal. Robbins said he had already talked to Alex Thrasher, former candidate for senior class president, and some of the campaign workers for former senior class candidates Katie McNerney and Minesh Mistry.

"I would encourage anyone who worked on the campaigns to apply," he said. "Obviously, these people are interested in being involved with the senior class, and I think that is a very important quality for a marshal."

Robbins and Bruce said they planned to talk to current Senior Class President Thad Woody and Vice President Terius Dolby within the next three or four days for advice on marshal selection and marshal committees, Robbins said.

A late start would not prevent Robbins and Bruce from selecting qualified marshals and transition team members, he added. "There was a potential month and a half for these things to occur, and now there's like a week and a half," Robbins said. "The time span has made everything complicated, but we're finding ways to deal with the challenges and make sure



LADELL ROBBINS and AMELIA BRUCE were elected last week.

everything runs smoothly." Senior class marshals work at commencement exercises and plan senior class activities.

Journalists Discuss Elections

■ A panel of journalists try to find balance in covering candidates and elections.

BY CRISTINA SMITH
STAFF WRITER

Did the media do a good job serving the public's interest while covering the 1996 presidential primary campaign?

A panel of three journalists from The Washington Post and CBS News gathered at Duke University on Saturday afternoon to tackle that question along with other issues concerning the relationship between the press and politics.

Geneva Overholser, ombudsman for The Washington Post and former editor-in-chief of the Des Moines Register; Robert Kaiser, managing editor for the Post; and Barbara Cochran, political executive producer of CBS News, made up the panel that addressed an audience of about 75 people at the Terry Sanford Institute of Public Policy.

As newspaper ombudsman, Overholser acts as a liaison between the readers and the newspaper staff, relaying readers' concerns to the editors. She said people were interested in seeing the person behind the candidate. "You cannot do enough profiling," she said. "Really telling people what these candidates are like, because we have access to them, is very important."

But Overholser said the contrast between the American hope for an ideal president and the depressing reality of what is seen on the campaign trail breeds cynicism among reporters. She also said negative advertisements by candidates, although effective in the short run, in the long run contributed greatly to the cynicism that exists among the American people.

"Better news coverage is a very small weapon against the enormous size of public cynicism and ignorance," she said, adding that the quest to provide better coverage must be tackled again and again. She said giving the public the politicians' own words and focusing on issues was one way of covering the campaign better. "It is not easy to do this in a way that is gripping to readers," Overholser said.

Cochran said CBS News attempted to provide comprehensive, issue-oriented coverage of the 1996 presidential primaries. She said CBS tried to minimize horse race coverage and focus more on candidate profiles and issues, but she added that coverage this year was difficult because there were no debates.

Kaiser said public ignorance and a lack of interest toward politics made it difficult to measure the success of political coverage. He said political candidates had a tendency to condense issues into simplified sound bites.

Kaiser said informing Americans about what was going on was the most important contribution journalists could make. "Americans know very little about politics and government, and they don't care about their own interest," he said, adding that a collapse of trust in human nature becomes a lack of trust in government. "Americans have been growing extremely distrustful of everything and everyone, starting with their next-door neighbor."

Kaiser said that since the Carter campaign in the early '70s, mud-slinging and negative advertising had become a popular form of campaigning, which has eroded faith in government. "It is not at all surprising; it's a case of very just desserts."

But in order to foster intelligent debate on issues, a basic knowledge of politics is necessary, Kaiser said. Kaiser cited findings from a recent Post survey that indicated four out of 10 Americans did not know the name of the vice president of the United States. Two-thirds did not know who the Senate majority leader was, and one-half could not identify the speaker of the House of Representatives.

Kaiser said U.S. culture allows people to live without being politically aware. After living in the former Soviet Union for three years, where politics is central to the culture, Kaiser said it was a shock to return to Durham. "Maybe the campaign isn't the thing we should be covering better," he said. "Maybe the thing we should cover better is what is happening to American society and why it is happening."

Panel Focuses On Literacy, Social Justice

■ A panel of literacy experts highlighted this weekend's national SCALE conference.

BY DEBRA HEIGHT
STAFF WRITER

A panel discussion led by literacy experts highlighted a national conference on literacy and social justice issues held at the University this weekend.

The panel was hosted by the Student Coalition for Action in Literacy Education, an organization that unites community programs to increase literacy in the workplace, community and school.

Patsy Medina, former Director of Training for Bronx Education Services, said literacy provided a new way to learn.

"Literacy is the opening up of a window that's allowing you to fly," she said. "It is learning to see a different way. Before I was existing, now I am participating."

Tony Sarmiento, assistant director of AFL-CLO's education department, said literacy is used as a form of personal empowerment in the professional community. "Literacy can be used as a weapon," he said. "There's an unequal relationship between workers and employers."

Sarmiento said the program he worked with involved a federation of unions that set up educational training programs. The unions and their companies provide workers with additional education, such as GED programs, to put workers on an equal basis with employers.

Ilene Jones, director of Leadership, Education and Athletics in Partnership, said individuals must empower themselves by becoming literate instead of allowing literacy to be used against them. She said LEAP provided enrichment activities and encouragement to children between the ages of 7 and 14 who come from low-income families. "Saying and helping isn't enough," she said. "It's not enough to set high expectations if you don't have anything for them. Our job is to feed them with experiences and hope that they'd empower themselves."

Doris Williams, director of the Youth Leadership Academy, said, "Literacy is about access and basic human rights. At some point, we'll recognize it's not about color; it's about class and economics."

Phillip Lyde, an undergraduate at Fayetteville State University, said he enjoyed the panel discussion. "It was organized and developed well," he said. "In terms of tutoring kids, I learned how to look at each situation differently. I have more insight about handling situations."

New Schools Prompt Request for Increased Budget

■ Taxes in the Chapel Hill-Carrboro district would aid funds for a budget increase.

BY LESLIE KENDRICK
STAFF WRITER

Growth and decreased federal funding in the Chapel Hill-Carrboro schools have caused school system officials to ask Orange County Commissioners for a 20 percent increase in the district's budget.

Superintendent Neil Pedersen said the proposed \$3.6 million increase was prompted in part by the opening of two new district schools this fall. The school district will need almost \$2 million to open East Chapel Hill High School and McDougle Elementary School.

The increase also reflects increased staff salaries, Pedersen said.

"We're anticipating there will be about a 5 percent increase in state workers' salaries, which would apply to local workers and would cost this district about \$600,000," Pedersen said.

The district will also be serving about 267 more students, causing an increase of around \$250,000 in operating costs. Federal budget cuts to reading and substance abuse programs will saddle the district with an additional \$100,000 in personnel costs, Pedersen said.

Funds for the budget increase of \$3.6 million could come from both county property taxes and a city school district tax.

"We're basically asking that the per-pupil appropriation for the city district be increased to \$120 per pupil," he said. "This would be accomplished by a 3.3 cent in-

crease on county property tax rates."

Pedersen said the increased property taxes would mean equal increases in per-pupil appropriations for the Orange County school district.

In addition, the new budget proposal would increase a tax on the Chapel Hill-Carrboro School district residents by 6.3 cents to 21.7 cents, Pedersen said.

Orange County commissioners will discuss the school system's proposal and explore different ways to fund it, making its final decisions on its budget by June 26, Commissioner Alice Gordon said.

"I think the commissioners have been very supportive of education and that they are ready to continue that, but I don't know to what extent that will translate into action in this particular case," she said. "Right now we're just at the beginning of the budget process so we're just starting to

look at the district's needs."

Pedersen said a rejection of the budget increase would affect resources at the district's new and existing schools.

"If we don't receive the requested funding, we may have to open the new schools without the resources that the other schools have, or we may have to take resources away from the existing schools in order to staff the new ones," he said. Pedersen said the proposed tax hikes reflected the reality of a school district made up increasingly of residential property.

"We have to fund ourselves this way because the Chapel Hill-Carrboro school district is becoming more and more residential," he said. "And without a strong commercial tax base, we can expect tax increases to continue to support the growing number of students and schools in our district."

Residents Can Seek Help Through Various County Services

■ Orange County services provide help for women, the elderly and victims of abuse.

BY SUZANNE WOOD
ASSISTANT CITY EDITOR

Most residents of Chapel Hill and Carrboro have probably heard of the Orange County Women's Center, Meals on Wheels, the Orange County Rape Crisis Center and the Freedom House. However, most residents probably do not know what these organizations actually do.

Informing the public has been a problem for the Women's Center located at 210 Henderson St., said Jen Barr, office and program manager. "We're so busy, we don't have time to do outreach," she said. "That is something we will be working on. We could always use more volunteers."

The Women's Center offers legal, educational and professional, personal and financial counseling, Barr said. The center also offers continuing education classes and workshops at night.

The Women's Center has been in Chapel Hill since 1979 and has 1,800 members and volunteers. The center focuses on helping women help themselves, Barr said.

Like the Women's Center, the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Meals on Wheels program would like more community involvement, said Jeanie Arnel, the part-time director and bookkeeper for the program. "We're always looking for more recipients and volunteers," she said.

The Meals on Wheels program delivers \$3 meals to residents throughout Chapel Hill and Carrboro who are in need of assistance or daily check-ups, Arnel said. The program delivers meals to 70-75 recipients, Monday through Friday.

The Meals on Wheels volunteers are

instrumental in looking after the welfare of the recipients, Arnel said. "We serve more than meals," she said. "We are sort of like a watchdog group. We can refer people to other agencies or contact the family members about problems."

The Orange County Rape Crisis Center offers a 24-hour-a-day rape crisis telephone line. Volunteers who have gone through a 58-hour training session assist callers in issues ranging from nightmares to preparation for upcoming court proceedings, said the center's executive director, Margaret Henderson.

The crisis center tries to inform children in the Chapel Hill-Carrboro area of sex abuse through programs like puppet shows presented to elementary school students, Henderson said.

"Sexual violence is a preventable injury, and we should be working to prevent it," Henderson said. "It happens because we don't go to enough pains to stop it."

In order to prevent and detect instances of sexual abuse, the Crisis Center could use more community volunteers. "We're needing a more diverse group of volunteers to more effectively reflect the county," Henderson said. "We would like more African-American and men volunteers."

The Freedom House, a 25-year-old alcohol and other drug detoxification facility located at 477 Airport Road, runs a halfway house for women, said Trish Huffey, the executive director. The Freedom House just received funding for a recovery center for men to be opened in the near future, she said.

The medical attention and support groups offered by the Freedom House are crucial services for people with alcohol or drug addictions, Huffey said. "The Freedom House is a recovery program that helps residents regain the life skills necessary to lead a productive and sober life," she said.

County Ranks 15th in N.C. Seat Belt Violations

BY MARGO HASSELMAN
STAFF WRITER

A major statewide effort to enforce seat belt laws Wednesday showed that Orange County had more violations than most counties with comparable populations.

In the Click-It-or-Ticket campaign, Chapel Hill police found 21 passenger restraint violations at the two Orange County checkpoints, according to information released by the Governor's Highway Safety Program.

Two of the 21 violations were child safety seat regulations.

Orange County had the 15th highest total violations out of 99 counties statewide.

"The whole point of the programs is not to ticket people, it's to save lives."

BARBARA THOMPSON

Director of Public Information for the Governor's Highway Safety Program

Click-It-or-Ticket is the name of the campaign the safety program started in 1993 for education and enforcement of passenger restraint laws.

The program cracks down on people who don't wear seat belts and on parents who don't properly restrain their children. "The whole point of the program is not to ticket people, it's to save lives," said Barbara Thompson, director of public information for the GHSP.

This year's campaign focuses on child safety, she said.

Neighboring Durham County had the highest number of restraint violations in

the state, with 164 violations at one checkpoint.

Five were child safety seat violations.

The statewide average was about 10 occupant restraint violations per county, but some counties had no violations while a few had well over 100, a press release stated.

Violation of an occupant restraint law carries a fine of \$25, according to information released by the Chapel Hill Police Department.

About twice a year the GHSP embarks on a two-week blitz of seat belt law enforcement, Thompson said. Every county in the state operates at least one checkpoint during a blitz.

Highway Patrol officers and local police check seat belt use, child restraint and traffic violations at each checkpoint, she said.

Click-It-or-Ticket is an effective tool to encourage seat belt use, Thompson said. Seat belt use across the state has risen from about 65 percent in Click-It-or-Ticket's first year to about 81 percent this year, she said.

CAROLINE

FROM PAGE 3

that the Voice FX computer system was having problems maintaining sessions with the UNC computer system, which caused the calls to be disconnected.

He said Sunday afternoon that he believed the problem had been resolved.

However, some students ended up calling Caroline to register for classes instead of using the 800 number.

"I heard that they had a new 800 number out, so I thought I would get in more quickly this year," said sophomore Vanessa Ysunza.

"But I've spent more time calling Caroline this year than I ever did in the past two years."

Ysunza said she called both the 800 number and Caroline.

She said she got into the 800 number first, but after she entered her PIN number, the system hung up on her.

Ysunza said she decided to call Caroline instead of continuing to try to use the 800 number.

She said she then had to call Caroline for about an hour and 15 minutes before she was able to register for her fall semester classes.

Former Student Body President George Battle pushed for the 800 number two years ago when he learned it would be too expensive to expand the existing Caroline system.

The University has a one-year contract with Voice FX.

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