

gURL.com Creators To Hit UNC Tonight

By **ASHLEY ATKINSON**
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The girls behind popular teen-oriented Web site gURL.com didn't intend for their class project to become a girl-powered nationwide phenomenon.

"It was just something that we wanted to do, that we were totally passionate about," gURL.com Senior Producer Heather McDonald said. "We had not thought about the future, we just wanted to put it up and see if anyone would notice."

Now the site, intended to provide an alternative to traditional girl-directed media, receives 20 to 40 million hits per week, making it the most popular interactive Web site for teen girls.

Tonight at 8 p.m. in 111 Carroll Hall, gURL.com creators McDonald, Esther Drill and Rebecca Odes will be discussing the genesis and evolution of the site and its new spinoff book, "Deal With It! A Whole New Approach to Your Body, Brain, and Life as a gURL."

The event is sponsored by Internationalist Books. After the presentation, Internationalist will hold an informal reception in the store at 405 W. Franklin St. Attendees will have the opportunity to meet the authors.

While McDonald said the majority of the audience for such presentations was female, "Guys love the Web site because they think it gives them insight."

The site's audience reaches beyond teenagers as well. Women of all ages relate to it because, "You're never through developing with any of these issues," McDonald said. "It's not new to

you to read about somebody complaining about having small boobs like it would be in high school, but you still worry about that kind of thing."

"People still relate to what they were in high school as an adult."

Since its creation in 1996, the site has been featured in Elle, New Yorker, Seventeen and YM magazines and on ABCnews.com. It also won a Webby Award in 1998 and a New York magazine award in 1997.

Drill, McDonald and Odes, now in their late 20s, met at New York University, where they created the site as a graduate school project. McDonald said that she saw them as "an example of doing something you really want to do and having it work out."

The new book, McDonald said, served as a resource for teenage girls. Using topics discussed in chat rooms on the site and direct quotes from girls themselves, McDonald, Odes and Drill put together a frank, funny, creatively designed guide to growing up.

"It's got a fun design, it's fun to read," Drill said. "The way it's put together is a big part of what's so special about it."

Internationalist Books invited the three to speak after their book sold especially well in the store, said manager Andrew Pearson. "The creators of gURL.com have really shown that you can create a resource and a place for girls to grow and evolve without falling into the trap that a lot of mainstream publications do."

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DTH Picks Up 3 State Awards

Staff Report

The Daily Tar Heel won three awards from the North Carolina Press Association on Thursday night, the only college paper in the state to be honored.

Senior Brady Dennis took home a third-place award in the serious column category; sophomore Ashley Atkinson won a first-place award for criticism, and senior Tom Ausman was honored, along with former managing editor and '99 graduate Leslie Wilkinson, with a third-place award for news page/section design.

The annual contest honors the work of commercial newspapers across North

Carolina in both editorial and photography categories.

"For the paper to win these awards when they are competing against professional publications from all over the state says a lot about the quality of the DTH," said General Manager Janet Gallagher-Cassel, who attended the event along with the four award winners and DTH Editor Rob Nelson.

"It means a lot for everyone on staff when we win awards like this," Nelson said. "As student journalists, we have to constantly fight for credibility, but to win against professional papers validates just how seriously we take what we do."

The DTH competes against medium-

sized daily newspapers that have a circulation between 15,000 and 35,000.

Gov. Jim Hunt also attended the ceremony and thanked a packed auditorium of journalists for their coverage of Hurricane Floyd in September.

He challenged the room to maintain the same vigor in covering the upcoming elections season.

Typical heavyweights, The Charlotte Observer and The News & Observer garnered the most awards at the ceremony, winning 50 prizes combined.

Ausman, an economics major, said he was thrilled by his win and planned to celebrate Thursday night.

"It's time for a beer."

Texas Woman, 62, Put to Death

Associated Press

HUNTSVILLE, Texas — A 62-year-old woman was executed by injection Thursday after Gov. George W. Bush rejected her claim that she killed her fifth husband in self-defense and deserved a reprieve.

Betty Lou Beets became the fourth woman to be executed in the United States since 1976 when the Supreme Court allowed the death penalty to resume. She was the second woman executed in Texas since the Civil War.

She gave no final statement as she lay strapped to the death chamber gurney.

She made no eye contact with the victim's family, who attended the execution, but smiled at relatives watching through a window at her side. She continued smiling as she slipped into unconsciousness.

Death penalty opponents and domestic violence organizations had urged Bush to grant Beets a 30-day delay, arguing it would be consistent with his description of himself as a "compassionate conservative" in his presidential campaign.

The delay was Bush's only option, since the state parole board did not recommend that her sentence be commuted to life in prison.

During his five years as governor, 120 convicted killers have been executed in Texas. He has spared one condemned inmate.

"After careful review of the evidence of the case, I concur with the jury that Betty Lou Beets is guilty of this murder," Bush said in a written statement after returning to Texas from California, where he was campaigning for the Republican nomination.

"I'm confident that the courts, both state and federal, have thoroughly reviewed all the issues raised by the defendant."

Beets and her lawyers insisted the former bartender-waitress, convicted of fatally shooting fifth husband Jimmy Don Beets nearly 17 years ago and burying his body under a flower garden, was the victim of years of domestic abuse and should be allowed to live.

On Thursday the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans rejected an appeal that accused the state of not following its own rules in reviewing Beets' case.

The arguments were dismissed Wednesday by a federal judge in Austin as a delay tactic.

Beets' lawyers also took the matter to the U.S. Supreme Court, which rejected it without comment.

IFC

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Chapel Hill Town Council member Flicka Bateman said the town could not be expected to pull the IFC out of its financial woes because the town had already given a great deal of support.

"We give them the entire shelter — just the facility is free," she said. "Although we'd like to, I don't think we could absorb the \$50,000 shortfall."

Carrboro Alderman Jacquelyn Gist also said the town could not afford to donate more than it now gave to the IFC. "I don't think Carrboro is the place to turn for money right now," she said.

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STARHEEL

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"My boss (at NCOSH) once said 'People don't come here because they want to come here — most would rather stay at home. They come here because they have to,'" Smith said.

"It's very hard for (the immigrants), and they're doing the best they can."

Smith said this was why he wanted to help the immigrants. He suggested that people change their purchasing habits to show support for workers' rights.

"We can all change the brand of pickles that we buy," he said, referring to a recent workers' rights march from Mt. Olive Pickle Company to Raleigh.

And even the smallest things we do can make a difference, he said. "People should look first to see how they impact people," Smith said. "Then they can look for opportunities to make a difference."

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HOUSING

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aims more toward the higher end than at lower income. We have lots of employees at UNC and UNC Hospitals who can't afford to live here."

Northside Association member Estelle Mabry said Chapel Hill's high-income average distorted statistics when it came to low-income housing.

"HUD sets a standard of what the figure for low-income is by looking at the income level of the area," Mabry said. "The average income in Chapel Hill is very high. What you have in Chapel Hill is a skewed income. Part of that is because of the retired people here."

But recently low-income housing has received increased scrutiny by the local government.

Waldorf said the Chapel Hill Town Council had passed several proposals to develop low-income housing, such as the Scarlett Drive proposal passed last summer and the Meadowmont proposal that was passed a few weeks ago.

The Scarlett Drive plan will provide 14 townhomes on Scarlett Drive while the Meadowmont plan would provide 32 housing units.

Another proposal, the Housing Trust Fund, is waiting to be passed by the Orange County Board of Commissioners. This proposal would increase property tax by one penny, which would raise \$680,000 and go toward developing other properties.

Margaret Brown, a member of the Orange County Commission, said the county also had taken steps to help alleviate the low-income housing problem in the area.

"We have spent about \$20 million in the past 10 years to help with affordable housing," Brown said.

Other Chapel Hill Town Council members said the issue of affordable housing shortages needed immediate attention.

In September, Bill Strom proposed a Neighborhood Preservation Fund to develop affordable housing.

Strom said he feared real estate agents would drive up their prices to make a profit, thereby leaving low-income families to find somewhere else to live.

Strom, who is now a Town Council member, said he was trying to incorporate the proposal into the town's comprehensive plan, which states the town's goals, objectives and strategic direction.

"As a council member, you can't fight Town Hall," Strom said. "You have to go where they have focused their energy."

He said part of the comprehensive plan was the First Option Fund, which would focus on a nonprofit or neighborhood group.

Strom said he was focused specifically on the Northside neighborhood and finding money to go to the neighborhood to buy houses.

But some pointed out that the issue was not one that affected only one or two specific neighborhoods.

Brown said, "Affordable housing is a problem worldwide, and it's certainly a problem in Orange County."

Theresa Chen contributed to this article. The City Editor can be reached at citydesk@unc.edu.



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