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The Daily Tar Heel

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Valuable Resource

A campus resource center for lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders is long overdue.

Sadly, even around a campus that seems accepting of alternative lifestyles, there still is a stigma associated with being gay. So when the University gets a chance to improve this situation, there should be no question as to how fast officials should act.

After many students within the LGBT community showed interest in establishing a resource center, the Student Advisory to the Chancellor Committee presented the idea to Chancellor Moeser. So far, the idea seems to be getting positive feedback - as it well deserves. After all, many UNC students and the University community at large would benefit from such a center.

Therefore, if established, the center should make sure to branch out to the rest of the campus community as much as possible. Holding forums and sponsoring speeches on gay issues will help educate the Chapel Hill community on what life is like for this minority.

And the center also is necessary because a student who is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender needs to have an organized network of support. Sometimes, "coming out" to friends and family brings on much pain and rejection that an average college kid won't ever have to deal with. It's often not an easy life and can make a student's everyday life

even more stressful.

An LGBT resource center could alleviate many of the problems those students must face. Such an organization would provide a nurturing environment full of information and support for LGBT students who might not be able to find it elsewhere. As students come to terms with their sexual identities, they shouldn't be punished by feelings of isolation.

And because UNC is one of the only top universities around that doesn't already have such a center, many very talented students could be lost to more progressive schools. When deciding what college to attend, a student thinking about "coming out" might be more likely to choose a school with some sort of LGBT center.

It's important for UNC to provide a welcoming environment for all its students and faculty members. And an LGBT resource center would bring much needed awareness to the campus' gay community. Realizing that there are many people out there leading alternative lifestyles is the best way to start increasing tolerance and acceptance.

By establishing an LGBT resource center, UNC will foster a nurturing environment for more of its students and help to remove the stigma often associated with being gay.

Worth the Cost

Although sprinklers are not required by law in older buildings, landlords should install them anyway.

The apartment blaze that claimed the life of a UNC employee on Halloween illustrated the ease with which a fire can destroy a building. It also demonstrated the need for building owners to ensure that their property and tenants are well protected.

The fire at Brookstone Apartments completely gutted eight units, none of which were equipped with fire sprinklers or other fire suppression systems. Roger Vanden Dorpel, who resided in one of those units, perished in the fire. Although it is impossible to say whether he might have lived had there been such a system in place, it certainly would have improved his chances of surviving.

Chapel Hill and the University unfortunately have experienced a number of serious building fires over the past few years. The most infamous was the 1996 Phi Gamma Delta fire, which killed five UNC students. In the wake of that tragedy, the Chapel Hill Town Council passed an ordinance requiring sprinkler systems in all fraternity and sorority houses and in all new buildings with more than 6,000 square feet of floor space.

The ordinance was an important step in the right direction, but it didn't apply to buildings constructed prior to its passage. Thus, many apartment buildings in Chapel Hill remain unprotected from fires like the

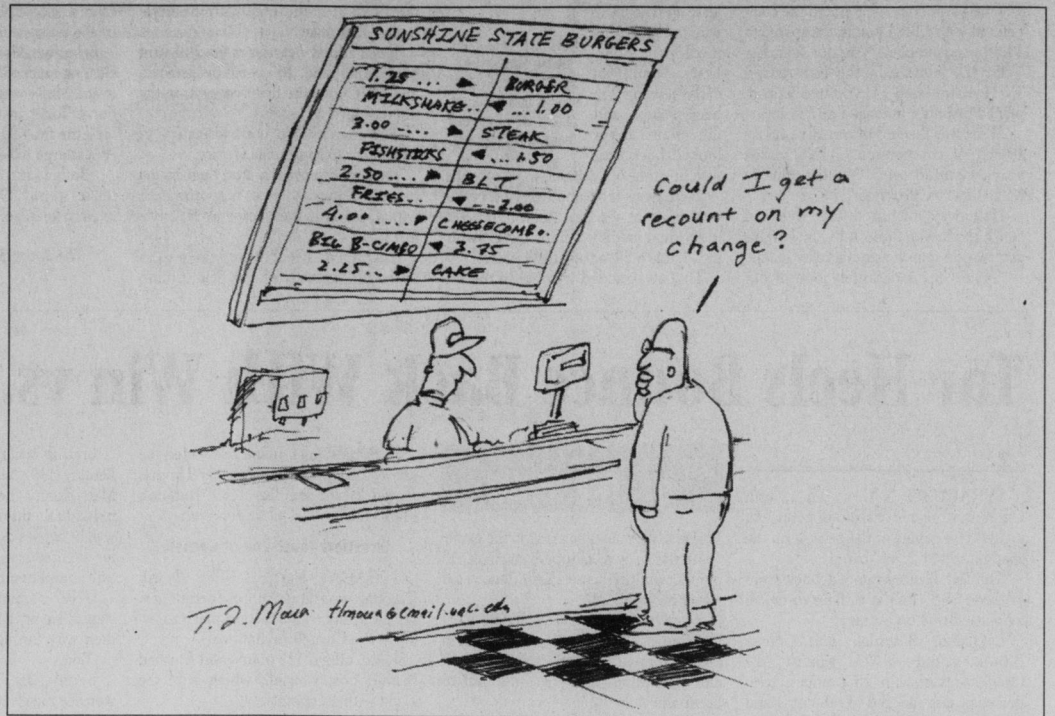
one that broke out at Brookstone. Although these apartment owners are not legally obligated to install sprinkler systems, it would be in their own best interests as well as those of their tenants to do so.

Fires can be started by any number of things, and once started they can be enormously destructive. All apartment buildings are currently required to have smoke detectors, but that doesn't go far enough. Smoke detectors often fail to function properly, usually because of dead batteries. Even when they do work, they do nothing to prevent property damage.

Sprinkler systems are an expensive solution - if they were cheap, everyone would have them. But in the long run, they save lives and they save property. The cost of installing such a system would be minuscule compared to reconstructing entire buildings or overcoming the negative publicity of a fire death.

Most building owners and landlords are responsible people who want their tenants to be safe. But they also must contend with financial realities that force them to prioritize their goals.

If these people truly understand the costs and benefits involved in preventing fires, they will make the right decision.



Learn How to Spot the Fake People

It's getting harder and harder to keep it real in Chapel Hill. This is what I'm going to do for y'all: Take this column and distribute it to all the fake people you know. Cut out my mug and attach yours.

I bet there is somebody reading over your shoulder right now, nodding his or her fake head, talking about how much they "feel me."

Whatever. That's the essence of being fake. Fake people become so transparent and deceptive that they fool themselves.

Don't believe the hype. It's not difficult to spot a fake, because these people are always obsessed with power.

Let's begin, shall we? ***

Girl, don't think that I'm not going to call you out.

Why are you so fake? Fake hair, fake eyes, fake nails and a fake attitude.

The worst part of the scenario is that you act as if you think you got it going on.

I really would like to know who is sweating you. What loser is pumping your head up? Don't think that you're tight because a few guys are trying to get in between those sheets.

Although you show arrogance on the outside, I know that you are a weak person on the inside. If you had the slightest bit of confidence, you wouldn't do what you do.

I still can't believe the stunt you tried to pull last month. Yeah, the time you lied on your "homegirl."

I know you remember lying about that sweet girl to her boyfriend, saying she was an undercover freak.

Your mission to steal somebody's man failed. You deserved to walk around campus sporting those shades for a week.

If you had any credibility, you would have tarnished that commendable female's reputation, and that would have been a shame.

Jealousy is a b---. You prove daily that you're envious of any girl who garners respect and positive attention.

You have no right to call anybody out, anyway. Just mind your business.



KOFI BOFAH PHILOSOPHY .22

Thanks. Don't you have a man back home in Greensboro, a man off-campus in Durham and a man at UNC who lives in Lewis?

That's gold-digger status right there. All of your boyfriends are geek-types with large bank accounts. You're oblivious to a man's looks, intelligence and personality, as long as he spends some dough.

Tisk, tisk. Why do you continue to front by playing the innocent role? Sweetie, that good girl act just ain't cuttin' it.

We've heard about your many liaisons. We know about the incidents in E-Haus, Ashley Forest, Granville and Davis Library.

Two weeks into your freshman year, you were labeled as a gold digger/ groupie/freak. Folks called you Chesapeake in '98 - wide open and full of crabs.

You'll never get a decent man. Even if you decide to stop prostituting yourself, the stigma surrounding your name will never go away.

You say that you're tired of being disrespected. But how can you expect respect if you don't respect yourself?

Think about it ... ***

What's up, Homie!??? You're laughing like it's all good, giving your boy next to you a pound talking about how much you love this column ...

But slow your roll and wipe that smirk off of your face, because I've got some words for you too.

What is this whole hard core/down for whatever/hard times song and dance for?

You say you rep the Ave, but I know you represent the cul-de-sac.

You keep claiming to be a thug. Do thugs take one punch to the face and just drop? Does a true thug chill at the bar while his boy is getting jumped in the club?

I assume that bobbin' your head to a Mob Deep CD while sippin' on some Hennessy makes you hard core.

I'm sorry to break it to you, but listening to rap, blazin' the skunk and setting up shop in your dorm room doesn't make you a thug.

Being a thug is not an act. Real people do what they do out of circumstance. You don't know the meaning of tough times.

In fact, you're always bragging about how much money you make. You conveniently forget to mention that Mom and Pops send you checks on the regular.

Instead of buying some Iceberg outfit that you know is ugly, you should be using that loot to pay off your maxed-out credit cards.

Your lies have ruined the reputations of too many quality females on this campus. Every word that you speak concerning your relationships is false. You're a master of folklore, with a variety of tall tales at your disposal.

You might be able to impress a few outsiders with stories of bogus conquests, but those of us who are in the loop know about your lonely nights.

C'mon. You're not a player if some high school girl loves you. You're not a player if you spend \$150 every weekend to impress a woman.

You're not a player if a stripper gives you a five-minute lap dance for \$20.

You're not a player if you must take a trip downtown to get your phone calls returned.

Continue your charades and you will eternally be played.

A lot of people on this campus are laughing at your expense right now.

I can't blame them because you did it to your own self.

Philosophy .22 is a tool manufactured to annihilate fakeness. Reach Kofi at bofah26@email.unc.edu.

The Daily Tar Heel

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READERS' FORUM

Government's Policy On Marijuana, Tobacco Hypocritical

TO THE EDITOR:

For 23 years, the third Thursday in November has been designated the Great American Smokeout. Initiated by the American Cancer Society, the Smokeout has evolved from a grassroots effort to encourage smoking cessation for just one day to being the one day a year, including New Year's, that the highest number of smokers decide to quit - and for good reason.

Cigarette smoking is the United States' most preventable cause of death. Tobacco kills more people each year than AIDS, heroin, crack, cocaine, alcohol, car accidents, fire and murder combined.

Moreover, a person's addiction to cigarettes is comparable to that of heroin in its severity and form. Withdrawal symptoms exist for both, and tobacco's relapse rate (75 percent) is right on par with that of crack cocaine.

Cancerous tobacco products are legit to sell over the counter, and

tobacco farmers still receive some of the highest farm subsidies, yet cigarette smoking is America's No. 1 killer!

With facts like these being just the tiniest tip of the iceberg, the hypocrisy of our government's treatment of tobacco is, frankly, infuriating.

All the while, possession of a different kind of "cigarette" can be enough to land you in jail lamenting a permanently marred record. Hypocrisy has always abounded in our government's treatment of marijuana, and, when some other facts and figures are presented, I hope I won't be the only one wondering why - if so many souls a year (according to the ACS, from 1990 to 1994, 430,700 people per year) die of smoking-related diseases, compared to 0 deaths related to marijuana smoking through the centuries - is the "killer" legal while the "calmer" remains classified as a dangerous narcotic?

Many millions of Americans take regularly, yet cannabis smoke, as of December 1997, has never caused a known case of lung cancer.

There are irritants involved with

any kind of smoke. Although cannabis smoke causes mild irritation to the large airways of the lungs, these symptoms abate when smoking is discontinued. Tobacco smoke, on the other hand, causes long-term, permanent damage.

I'm not saying that tobacco should be illegal; on the contrary, I think the freedom of choice is of the greatest importance. These facts and comparisons are merely food for thought.

If they've piqued your interest, and you'd like to learn more about our government's capitalistic, hypocritical and hurtful methods of drug classification (among other things), please come to the next meeting of Carolina NORML on Mondays in 103 Bingham Hall or check out <http://www.norml.org> or <http://www.cancer.org>.

Vivian Kathleen Hancock Senior Journalism and Mass Communication

The length rule was waived. Hancock is a member of the Carolina NORML board of directors.



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