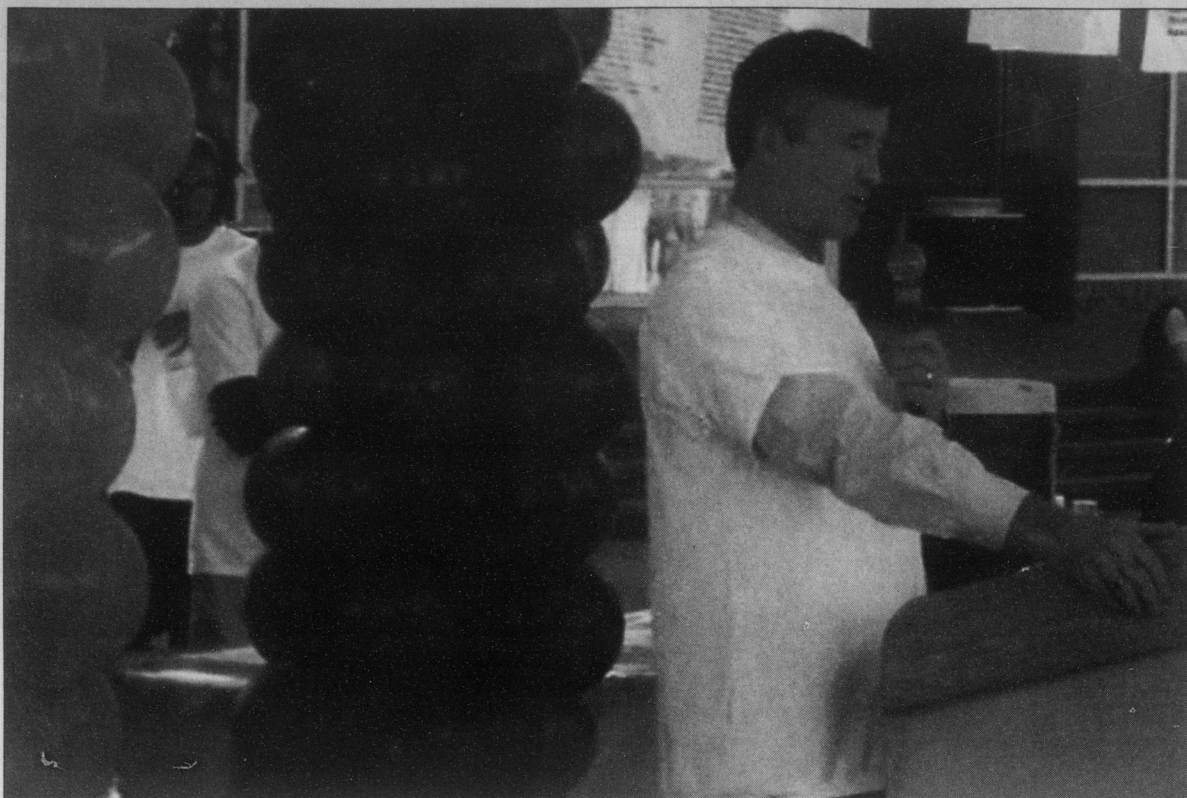


Safe Zone Kicks Off, Offers Chance to Be LGBT Ally



Provost Robert Shelton speaks Thursday afternoon at the kickoff for Safe Zone, a network of allies created for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community at UNC. Shelton encouraged students, faculty and staff to sign the Safe Zone pledge that hung in the Pit.

By RUTHIE WARSHENBROT
Staff Writer

In celebration of National Coming Out Day, the kickoff event for UNC Safe Zone – a network of allies for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students, faculty and staff – took place in the Pit on Thursday.

A rainbow-colored arch of balloons and two cakes with rainbow icing complemented the festive atmosphere in the Pit as students gathered at noon.

Although this program has existed for four years, it is being revamped this year, said Marcie Fisher, diversity advocacy and research training coordinator for Student Health Service.

Fisher said the event, sponsored by the dean of students and the Center for Healthy Student Behaviors, has been in the works since last summer. Safe Zone offers training sessions for any students, faculty or staff members who wish to be allies for LGBT students.

Traci Wike, a second-year graduate student in the School of Social Work and intern at the Center for Healthy Student Behaviors, said anyone can be an ally. She said those who choose to be allies and complete the necessary training sessions must place a Safe Zone sign at their work or home as a visible representation that they support the LGBT community.

"They will be somebody that's a safe person for a student, faculty or staff member to talk to if they have any LGBT issues," Wike said. "(Safe Zone) offers a safe space for that person to be themselves."

The event was hosted by junior Fred

Hashagen, LGBT administrative assistant. Provost Robert Shelton started the event by encouraging students to sign the Safe Zone pledge that hung in the Pit. Student Body President Justin Young also recited the pledge verbally in front of the gathered audience.

The Safe Zone pledge stated, "I pledge to work toward making the UNC community a safe and welcoming place for persons of all sexual orientations."

Senior Marcus Harvey spoke, evoking audience applause. "I speak today as one black gay college student," he said. "I speak because not all blacks are straight and not all gays are white. ... No group or class of people should be oppressed."

After Harvey spoke, musical groups Tar Heel Voices, the Achordants and the Walk-Ons sang. Jenny Walker, a junior member of the Walk-Ons, said she was grateful to have her group participate. "All of us really support Safe Zone," Walker said. "To us, it's really important that Carolina is open to all groups on campus."

Student Body Vice President Rudy Kleysteuber quoted George Bernard Shaw, saying indifference is a worse sin than hate. "If you're straight, the way to not be indifferent is to sign the Safe Zone pledge," Kleysteuber said.

Hashagen said he hopes someday Safe Zone will have a representative in each academic department to respond to any problems LGBT students might have. "We hope to change Carolina's atmosphere where everyone will either be a Safe Zone ally or it won't be necessary."

The University Editor can be reached at udesk@unc.edu.

N.C. House Again Delays Passage of Redistricting Plan

Staff & Wire Reports

RALEIGH – Democratic leaders sent N.C. House representatives home for a week Thursday without a redistricting plan in place after it became clear the party's plan didn't have enough votes.

While Democrats have a slim 62-58 majority, five black Democrats unhappy with minority representation in the pro-

positional derailed efforts by Speaker Jim Black to get it approved this week.

Rep. Toby Fitch, D-Wilson, one of the five Democrats, said the plan debated Tuesday and Wednesday might lower black influence within the chamber, in violation of federal law. "I want the Voting Rights Act complied with," Fitch said. "Presently, I don't think it is."

Black said he believes the Democratic

plan will receive federal approval. He said black North Carolinians would benefit in the plan by electing them and making their voting bloc substantial in other races.

The bill was taken off the floor Thursday morning and Black said the next full session would be Wednesday. "I thought it was time for folks to cool down and talk about the issues people seem to have problems with," Black said.

The impasse reflects the challenges facing the Legislature as it performs the once-a-decade remap of House and Senate district boundaries. The map lays

the groundwork for political control of the N.C. General Assembly and policies it approves for the next 10 years.

Rep. Joe Hackney, D-Orange, said that black legislators were consulted about the changes made in their districts and that 11 were satisfied. "The five members who objected are trying to help the 11 who don't want their help," said Hackney, who serves as House speaker pro tem.

He said he was not sure what changes the five dissident Democrats wanted. "I don't think their changes have been clearly expressed."

Campus Calendar

Today

8 a.m. – Students with a minimum grade point average of 3.0 may register for spring 2002 honors courses on a space available basis in 225 Graham Memorial. Honors course descriptions are available at <http://www.unc.edu/depts/honors>.

Saturday

5:30 p.m. – The Asian Students Association will hold Journey Into Asia

in the Great Hall. Dinner is at 5:30 p.m. The show is at 7 p.m. with Kamikazi, martial arts, Lion Dance and special guest Christy Medrano, a comedian who has appeared in "Friends," "Seinfeld," and more. Price is \$8 for students, \$10 for nonstudents and \$5 excluding dinner for either.

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New Center Opens For Neuroscience

By PHILLISSA CRAMER
Staff Writer

The dedication of the new Neuroscience Research Building on Thursday was more than a photo opportunity – University officials called it a major step in medical research at UNC.

"This is the beginning of what might be a number of happy occasions," said Jeffrey Houpt, dean of the School of Medicine.

The 35,000 square-foot building will house both clinicians and scientists. Research there will focus on brain development and neurological disease.

The dedication ceremony emphasized the benefits the new center will provide for patients at UNC Hospitals. Researchers will work to identify genes and proteins that cause neurological disorders, allowing them to isolate therapeutic targets and develop new treatment options.

"The collective goal is to help improve the lives of people," said Chancellor James Moeser. "(That is) really what this university is about."

William Snider, director of the UNC Neuroscience Center, which occupies three of the eight floors in the new building, said the center will house researchers studying genetics, genomics and the neurological processes that control human behavior and thought.

Neurological science is progressing so rapidly, Snider said, that "any agenda I or anyone else might present here today would be obsolete in five years."

Despite the competitive nature of the field, Snider expressed confidence in the University's ability to keep up.

"If our neuroscience studies continue to receive support, exemplified by this beautiful new building, UNC will be in the forefront."

Half of the funds for the building came from UNC Hospitals, which received the former site of the Biological Sciences Research Center building in return. In addition, a grant from the National Institutes of Health paid for the construction of one floor of the building, and other grants were given to individual research programs to equip their facilities.

Growth for the School of Medicine doesn't stop with Thursday's dedication.

Further construction will finish in 15 months on a new structure for the Cell and Molecular Physiology departments, paid for by the \$3.1 billion bond referendum passed by N.C. voters last year. The sounds of construction were audible even during the ceremony.

Officials said these new facilities will allow UNC to be more competitive when attracting faculty and students.

Dick Richardson, former UNC provost, said the Neuroscience Research Center will have positive effects on the overall academic climate of the University. "(The building will be) an enormous recruiting service for faculty, not only for the School of Medicine."

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