

Meet the 2001 Homecoming

Higginbotham to Help Victims of Attack

By RUTHIE WARSHENBROT
Staff Writer

Not only is Shayla Higginbotham a senior marshal and the on-campus coordinator for minority recruitment, but she is now running for Homecoming queen.

A senior health policy and administration major with a minor in business administration, Higginbotham said the skills she has developed through leadership in all her campus activities will help her if she is elected queen.

Higginbotham, from Rand, W.Va., said she wants many organizations on campus to be involved in her service project, which will also include support from the Chapel Hill-Carrboro area. "I'd like to serve as the liaison for any organizations involved in (this project)."

Her service project, "Heeling Hearts," is a two-part initiative for children in New York who were affected by the attack on America.

Higginbotham said by making this a campuswide service project, she thinks it will act as a unifying force for the University community. But she wants to include the surrounding communities in the project as well.

"Many people still show support, but some are trying to erase (the memory of the attack)," Higginbotham said.

"But this is not an event that will be erased, especially for the kids and especially during the holiday season."

For this reason, Higginbotham's service project is scheduled to kick off Nov. 30 and Dec. 1. On these days, a bus donated by a local bus company will be parked at specific locations.

Students and community members are asked to fill the bus with toys and cards for the children of New York as part one of the project.

Higginbotham said she has already contacted local radio stations about the goal and she that

plans to write letters to teachers and churches in the area to get the word out. Part two of the project is a letter- and card-writing campaign, to which Higginbotham hopes the teachers and churches will contribute.

She has already notified art teachers at local schools.

Each organization on campus will also receive a letter about the project, which she said she hopes will be completed by Christmas.

Higginbotham wants area children to decorate "Thinking of You" cards for the children in New York. "Lots of monetary donations have already been made, but the kids don't get it," she said.

Higginbotham said she wants the children to receive tangible items, like a toy or card from far away.

Many of Higginbotham's campus activities are service-oriented, including volunteering for her sorority, Delta Sigma Theta sorority, Inc., of which she is president. "Service is a daily thing for me," she said.

Higginbotham said she believes that her experience at UNC, her background with other cultures and other individuals and her passion for the University make her a good representative of the student body.

"I feel that I have a passion for Carolina. I love being here; I love doing the things that I do because I love service."

Higginbotham said she has a good background in interacting with people of all ages and all ethnic backgrounds.

Being involved in so many organizations on campus, Higginbotham feels she represents UNC as a whole, which she explains in her motto: "Vote Shayla because she represents you."



By RUTHIE WARSHENBROT
Staff Writer

Representing the standards of the University is a priority and a commitment for Jessica McLean, who plans to uphold these standards if elected Homecoming queen.

McLean is a senior psychology major from Lincolnton.

"I feel that Homecoming queen should be a person who is representative of the standards of the University, such as morality, giving back to the community and scholarship," she said.

Her service project involves herself and student volunteers visiting the homeless shelter in Chapel Hill two times a week.

While there, students will pair up with people at the shelter to help them fill out job applications and to work on reading and mathematics.

She said she hopes her project, "Heels Helping the Homeless," will motivate people at the homeless shelter to take the first step away from homelessness.

Being there for the members of the shelter and giving them support will also be a task of the student volunteers, McLean said.

She said the volunteers should be there to give them support so they know they are not alone in this situation.

"This (project) is especially important to me personally because homelessness really bothers me," McLean said.

She said she hopes a diverse group of people with a need to help the community will participate in the project.

McLean said the project will show the people of Chapel Hill that the students of UNC can give back to the community.

She said she thinks this project will be beneficial to UNC and to the homeless on Franklin Street.

McLean said she will use her connections throughout campus to spread the word about this project.

She said that her many activities, including many service-oriented ones, give her contacts to many groups.

She volunteers at the Hargrave Center and at Primary Colors Day Care.

McLean also is involved in the Black Student Movement, and she is co-artistic director for cONcEpt (of Colors).

She is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority, Inc.

All of her activities have allowed her to meet a lot of new people and have exposed her to a meet a lot of new people, said McLean.

She said her activities also have allowed her to interact with a diverse group of individuals, different from herself.

She said she feels she has access to more people's perspective than her own.

Through these activities, McLean said she has not only become exposed to diverse groups of people but she has also become more active in both the campus community and the Chapel Hill-Carrboro community. "They've opened doors for me to help others," she said.

"Anything I commit myself to, I carry out. I'm very dedicated," McLean said.

She said she plans to carry out "Heels Helping the Homeless" whether or not she is elected Homecoming Queen.

She said the position is a great instrument to show the community that students at UNC want to give back.

"I consider it more so a position than a title," she said.

McLean said she is open-minded, friendly and willing to take suggestions and advice from others.

After graduation, she plans to take a year off and try to get an internship in a psychology department.

She does plan to attend graduate school after the year off and intends to remain the Chapel Hill area.

By JESSICA SLEEP
Staff Writer

Aidil Polanco is a senior from Raleigh majoring in journalism with a concentration in public relations.

Polanco has worked in the Office of Minority Affairs since her sophomore year, and she created the first successful proposal to start Hispanic recruitment programs at UNC. She is also the liaison to the Carolina Hispanic Association.

Polanco has also coordinated Tar Heel Target, an ambassador program that sends UNC students back to their hometowns to share their college experiences with current high school students.

In addition, Polanco has been very active in CHisPA. She is the secretary.

Through CHisPA, Polanco has conducted various cultural presentations to groups on and off campus, and she represents the organization at race relation events, cultural forums and discussions.

During her sophomore and junior years, Polanco worked as a residence assistant at Granville Towers, where she coordinated programs dealing with issues such as sexual awareness and diversity.

Hunger Awareness and Relief is Polanco's service project.

Working with Stop Hunger Now, a nonprofit organization, Polanco plans to hold forums and discussions during the week of Valentine's Day. She said her program would inform people about how widespread hunger is and how it affects the world. "Hunger is such a big problem that I think people just don't know how to attack it," she said.

Polanco said during her week-long program, there will be activities like dropping a penny in a jar and donating a day's worth of lunch money. Polanco stressed that students can make a difference and have a positive influence on relieving hunger. "I honestly believe that people as privileged as us should take the time to help out any way we can," she said. "Even something as simple as donating lunch money for

a day could feed a hungry family."

Polanco said she has seen the effects of poverty first-hand during visits to countries such as Jamaica, Mexico and the Dominican Republic. "It's heartbreaking to see

young children begging in the streets for bread," she said. "The reality is that you can be a

hardworking person but just not make enough money to feed your family."

Polanco said her experiences at UNC have taught her many valuable lessons. "I've definitely learned the power of learning and how to work with other people."

Polanco said she has tried to become as active as possible on campus, and her participation in a variety of campus organizations has given her a diverse group of friends.

Polanco said she thinks Homecoming queen is an important position because she represents the students. "Homecoming queen gives people who don't know the student body, personally, a reference point as to what people at UNC are like," she said. After graduation, Polanco wants to work for a nonprofit organization.

Polanco said she believes she represents UNC well because she has started many projects with the same type of pioneering spirit with which UNC was founded. Polanco said she decided to run for Homecoming queen because of her school spirit and her pride of being a UNC student. "UNC has been like a home," she said. "I feel like (the University) belongs to me and I work for it, and in return it's made me grow as a person."

Polanco said the most important part of her campaign is her service project, and she wants students to vote for her project, not just for her. "Hunger is such an important issue," she said. "I think the service project will save people's lives."



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