

UNC Housekeeper Mothers Students

Housekeeper Betty Russell occasionally gives meals and potpourri to residents of Old East Residence Hall.

By ASHLEY GAINER
Staff Writer

For UNC junior Jeremy Hendley's 21st birthday, his most memorable gift came in the form of a home-cooked meal.

This gift consumed time and energy from a person who had little of those to give. The giver isn't a relative of Hendley, but she is thought of as a second mom around campus.

Her name is Betty Russell, a housekeeper in Old East Residence Hall, where Hendley lives.

"She used her own food, and she did it in her spare time," Hendley said. "It made me feel really good."

While some say interactions such as these are uncommon, friendly relationships between students and housekeepers can be found on campus.

Nate Jaime, Old East resident assistant and public policy major, said the students consider Russell a second mother — as the birthday meal proved. "She knew he hadn't had a home-cooked meal in a long time, so she took time out of her schedule to cook him baked chicken and cornbread for lunch," he said.

Russell — or Miss Betty to her residents — often uses homemade treats and potpourri sprays to create a unique atmosphere for her students. "She really takes care of everybody," said Ana-Laura Diaz, a junior music major who lives in Old East. "It's more like a family here."

Although Russell makes an extra effort to be attentive to Old East residents, the typical duties of a University housekeeper keep her busy.

She cleans the public areas of the residence hall every day. Between

sweeping the steps, mopping the hardwood floors and dusting the library, Russell takes time to get to know the residents.

"She'll take time to talk to the students and give us advice," Jaime said of Russell. "If someone's having a bad day she'll tell them that things will get better, and if they don't feel like studying she'll tell them to get in line."

Russell said she loves working on campus because of her relationship with students. "They make me feel comfortable," she said. "There is never a time when they pass my door and do not speak to me."

Russell's co-worker, Bernice Cradle, works in Alderman Residence Hall, and said she has also fostered friendships with students in her 20 years as a housekeeper.

"I have a great relationship with the students," Cradle said. "They're always coming up and asking how my day is. Even older ones who have graduated still keep in touch."

Some housekeepers say experiences such as Russell's and Cradle's are uncommon on a campus where many students and housekeepers remain strangers to each other.

"(The students) don't do a whole lot of talking," said Chirlene Mason, a housekeeper for Cobb Residence Hall. "I don't even know half of their names."

Regardless of whether housekeepers find friendships with students, Russell said she believes they have one of the most important jobs on campus.

Bill Burston, director of University housekeeping, said the low wages and difficulties of the job keep the department frequently understaffed.

Burston said he scrambles to keep positions filled, but often shifts are left open. He must then rely on his current staff to compensate for the lack.

Russell is no exception, and her residents said they are aware of her strain. "Sometimes she has to clean Old West too, which extends her beyond

"(Betty Russell) really takes care of everybody. It's more like a family here."

ANA-LAURA DIAZ
Junior Music Major



DTH/KATIE RIGGAN

Betty Russell, known by Old East Residence Hall residents as Miss Betty, is more than a housekeeper — she is a second mother to many.

her means," Jaime said. Russell said she enjoys her job but does not believe she will remain in housekeeping. "I'd like to get into an office job. I don't mind being here, but I'd like to move a little higher."

Valuing Russell not only as a housekeeper but as a friend, Hendley said he will miss her. "It would be like trying

to tell a good friend goodbye," he said. For now, Russell said she will continue her efforts to build relationships with her residents. "I think I've got them spoiled," she said. "I don't mind, as long as they keep being good."

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Hundreds Participate In Freedom 5K Benefit

By JENNY MCLENDON
Staff Writer

More than 350 runners and walkers pulled on T-shirts and shorts, strapped on sneakers and pinned on the name of a victim of the Sept. 11 attack as part of a 5K benefit run on Sunday.

The Freedom 5K Tribute to NYC Heroes raised more than \$3,000 for the Families of Freedom Scholarship Fund, a national campaign to aid the educational needs of children of the attack victims.

Organizers said holding the race on Veterans Day, which also was the two-month anniversary of the attacks, emphasized the event's patriotic aspects. As a physical reminder of the race's purpose, each runner wore a paper badge that had the name of a New York rescue worker who died as a result of the attacks.

"We didn't want this to be a really competitive race, but more of a memorial," said Elyse Kopecky, who organized the event with Kelly Ingraham. "That's why we wanted to use the badges."

The Emerging Leaders Program, a division of Carolina Leadership Development, sponsored the event.

ELP requires participants to fulfill a service requirement, and Kopecky said she thought of filling this by organizing a 5K.

"Right after Sept. 11, I was talking with friends about what happened, and we really felt like there was nothing we could do to help," she said. "I used to run a lot of 5Ks, and I knew organizing one could get a lot of people involved." Kopecky's idea drew 320 pre-registered runners as well as additional runners on race day. Every runner paid a \$10 fee.

Freshman Jenni Norman said running in the race made her feel like she could do something to help the New York City victims. "I read about all the children without mothers and fathers, and I wanted to show my support," she said.

Men's basketball coach Matt Doherty and his wife also decided to show their support for the victims of the attacks. The couple pushed strollers carrying their two children during the race.

"I'm glad to get involved in the UNC community outside of basketball and do something positive with my family," Doherty said.

In the end, Ben Hovis, a cross-country coach from Charlotte, walked away with the men's first prize, a gift certificate to Top of the Hill. But the top women's finishers, a group of UNC cross-country runners who held hands as they crossed the finish line, gave their gift certificate to Kate Thomson, who finished second.

Volunteer Irene Birbeck, a sophomore from Cary, said the event seemed to touch participants personally. "When we pinned the name (of a victim) on one girl, she actually cried," Birbeck said. "She didn't realize how personal it was and what a difference we were actually making."

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

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