

Schools help tsunami effort County to reform high schools

BY CATHERINE SHAROKY
STAFF WRITER

Local schools are continuing to find creative ways to aid in the international tsunami relief effort.

Students of all ages in the county have been gathering money, soliciting donations from businesses and bringing supplies to school to send to victims of the Dec. 26 tsunami, which according to Reuters has killed more than 297,000 people in Southeast Asia and Africa.

"When something bad happens somewhere in the world, kids are very empathetic," said Anne D'Annunzio, spokeswoman for Orange County Schools. "They feel like they have some control to make it better."

Students at Pathways Elementary School in Hillsborough will participate today in a walk for tsunami relief. Each grade level will walk for one hour, and students can raise money by gathering pledges from family and friends.

"We tried to come up with something that would get the kids

actively involved," said Principal Connie Brimmer.

All students can participate in the walk, even if they don't secure pledges today.

"I had to reinforce to them that this is a serious type of walk," said teacher Gina Rhoades. "It is more of a tribute for those who are in need."

The school is sending pledges and donations through the Orange County chapter of the American Red Cross to the International Response Fund until Feb. 11.

Also scheduled this week is a tsunami relief concert hosted by McDougale Middle School at 6 p.m. Sunday. A \$5 minimum donation is requested, and proceeds will be sent through the relief organization Mercy Corps to the town of Pottuvil, Sri Lanka, which was destroyed in the disaster.

Rajan Patel, a fifth grader at Glenwood Elementary School, suggested to the student council that the school raise funds for tsunami victims and donate it to the Red Cross.

"I've watched a lot right after supper on the news," Patel said of the tsunami. "I just felt really bad for the people who got hit by the tsunami."

Students at Glenwood already have raised almost \$150, and donations will be accepted until Feb. 10.

Other student efforts already have paid off. On Monday, seventh graders at Culbreth Middle School gave \$6,550 in donations to the county Red Cross chapter.

Students at Stanford Middle School collected 2,641 bottles of water to send as aid to the victims.

Students at Smith Middle School raised more than \$400 by selling ribbons with the colors of the Indonesian and Sri Lankan flags.

"Every dollar counts and will help to provide a supply of water or something that will help someone," said Rosetta Wash, executive director of the county Red Cross chapter.

Contact the City Editor at citydesk@unc.edu.

BY LIZ STANLEY
STAFF WRITER

The Orange County Board of Education hopes its approval of a high-school reform timeline will help schools move one step closer to making the grade in the future.

Taking part in a statewide effort to improve high schools, the school board unanimously passed a timeline Monday night that will first establish a task force to make reform recommendations in June.

"There has been a lot done with elementary and middle schools, but high schools have remained the same for a long, long time," said Kathy Osborne, associate superintendent for curriculum and instruction.

"The current high school system is a good model for some students, but it doesn't work for all," she said.

Smaller, more intimate learning environments and scheduling changes are some possible reforms that the task force will consider.

"We need to figure out what needs to happen so that when our students graduate, they can do whatever they

want to do," said Superintendent Shirley Carraway.

Osborne showed the school board a video that summarized the state's initiative, "A North Carolina Action Plan for High School Innovation."

A student discussion forum shown in the movie sparked school board members' interests.

They wanted to see a similar forum carried out to discover local students' thoughts of county schools.

"If given the opportunity, students will tell us where we are being successful and where we are not," Carraway said.

Not only did members want to hear the opinions of current high school students, but also of other groups — middle school students, college freshmen and dropouts.

"Today, children think differently from the way that we did because they are exposed to so much more," said school board member Delores Simpson. "It would be good to sit down and see really what they are thinking."

The statewide high-school

reform goal is to build high schools that succeed and educate students to their full potential.

The state is focusing on three key areas: the rigor of the courses, the relevance of class material and the building of relationships between teachers and students.

The task force also will examine these issues.

Members of the task force will be chosen based on nominations from county high school officials.

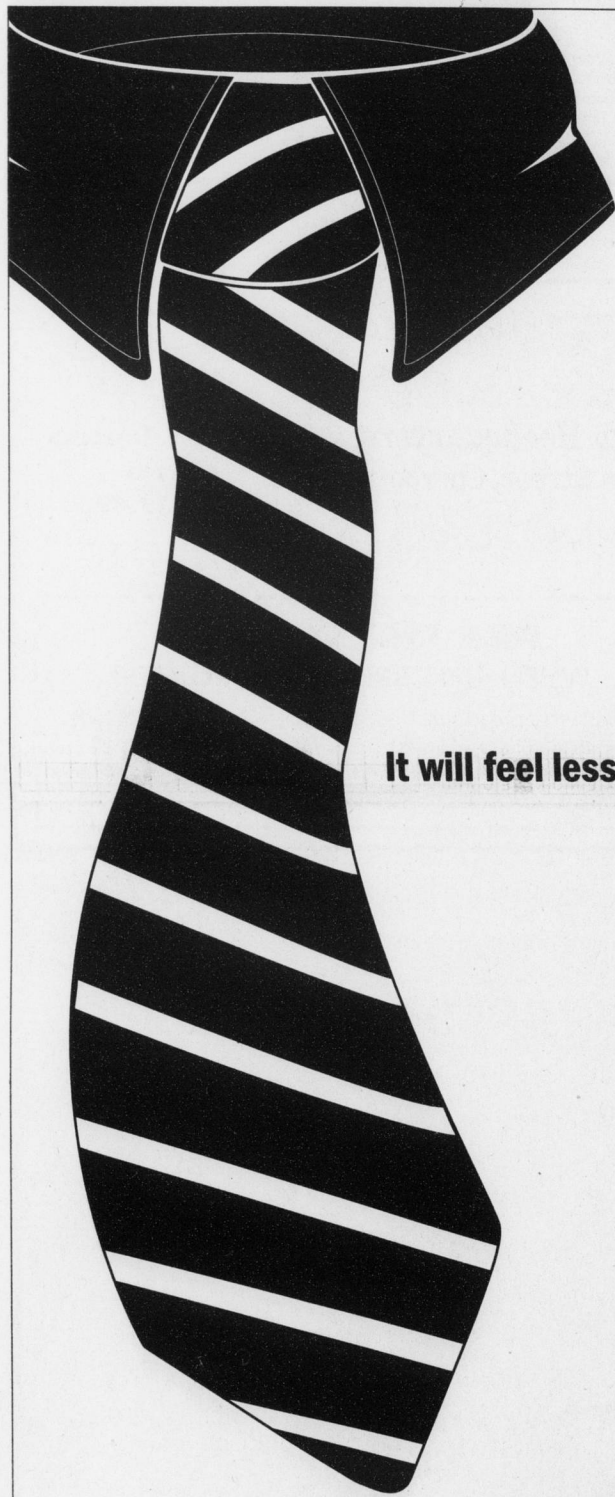
The first task force session will be Feb. 15. At this meeting, the committee will develop its goals and look at current programs in schools.

The recommendations are expected to be implemented by July.

"We need to figure out what we need to do to get students ready for the 21st century market," Osborne said.

Public engagement sessions on high school reform also are scheduled for March.

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Town Council to consider housing plan

BY DAN SCHWIND
SENIOR WRITER

A concept plan that would create 32 new affordable housing units at the Dobbins Hill apartment complex now will face consideration from town officials.

The Chapel Hill Town Council agreed Monday to review the proposal, which includes two buildings with 32 housing units and 54 parking spaces. It would be built in conjunction with the Wilson Assemblage development off Dobbins Drive near Erwin Road.

Crosland Inc. presented the Dobbins plan in response to criticism received Nov. 15 from the council that Wilson Assemblage did not include enough affordable housing.

"We worked creatively to create 32 additional housing units to the previous plan," said Jack Smyre, principal of The Design Response Inc., the firm Crosland hired to obtain special-use permits for both projects.

Chapel Hill defines affordable housing as units accessible to families earning 60 percent or less of the area's median income for a family of four.

Smyre said Dobbins Hill would be affordable to families earning less than 50 percent of the median income.

If the concept plan is approved, Wilson Assemblage would have a total of 87 permanent affordable housing units upon completion.

Council member Jim Ward said he thinks the concept plan did a good job of addressing the council's concerns of affordability but added that he thinks there needs to be pedestrian access from Wilson Assemblage to Dobbins Hill.

"That's something I would like us to enrich," Ward said. "It's something that needs to be addressed, particularly for those who want to traverse east-west through the area."

Mayor Kevin Foy also asked about better access to Dobbins Hill, pointing out that vehicles going between the developments have to take a roundabout route to do so.

Smyre said developers had problems creating direct access for both cars and pedestrians because of a slope that runs through the middle of the development. "There will be linkage between the areas," he said. "But there are definite grading issues."

There was also some concern among council members about the amount of parking proposed in the concept plan, particularly if there was too much visitor parking.

But Smyre emphasized that parking would not be a concern.

"It's just about right," he said. "We know visitors come along, but we don't think there will be overcrowding."

Council members were not the only ones with concerns about the development.

Harvey Krasny, who lives near the Dobbins Hill complex, said he is concerned that both developments could cause already congested local traffic to worsen.

"Crosland's approach is a creative approach and a viable one, but they forgot to subtract the 32 from (Wilson)," he said. "That would really help reduce the number of vehicles there."

Krasny said he believed that such traffic congestion and crowding in the area could drive away residents in surrounding neighborhoods.

"We, the taxpayers, will suffer because we have to pay to widen Erwin Road," he said. "We, the neighbors, will be forced to sell our houses and move."

The council will consider both concept plans and take public comment at a hearing Feb. 14.

Contact the City Editor at citydesk@unc.edu.