

HATE CRIME

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Bindra — a Sikh from India. All three pled guilty Dec. 7 in Orange County Superior Court to both assault charges — which resulted in jail and probation time for all three — in exchange for the intimidation charge being dropped.

Cousins said Friday that because there was little description provided on the suspects in that morning's hate crime, the investigation has produced no leads.

There were still no leads Sunday.

The police encourage anyone with information relating to the incident to call the department at

968-2760. "I'm still honestly in a certain state of disbelief," Ruskey said about the incident. "This is not something that I would ever have foreseen happening in Chapel Hill."

Contact the City Editor at citydesk@unc.edu.

HABITAT

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of the Cross church, stood in a dirt-streaked street nearby, astonished by the sight.

"This is amazing. It's amazing," DeSaix said. "Wow!"

Such was the mood at the culmination of Blitz Build, a yearlong project headed by UNC Habitat to build a home for a University employee in just three days.

The event, which took place from Friday to Sunday in the Rusch Hollow neighborhood in Chapel Hill, brought together about 140 volunteers with supervisors from Orange County Habitat for Humanity and AmeriCorps.

The event, which has not been done on campus since 1998, has been in the works for a year.

Habitat and other organizations have raised about \$56,000 of the \$60,000 needed to build the home for University employee Linda Parson and her children Isiah, 5, and Imani, 4.

University students and faculty, with members of Habitat's partnership with Chapel of the Cross and various campus institutions, as well as Parson herself, spent their weekend working morning and afternoon shifts constructing the home.

Volunteers, many of whom had never worked on a construction site, found themselves hammering down flooring, raising walls, gluing

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ARCHIE ERVIN, ASSISTANT TO THE CHANCELLOR AND DIRECTOR OF MINORITY AFFAIRS

windows and scaling rooftops during the weekend.

"I think it's amazing," said volunteer coordinator Stephanie Bright.

"It's a little scary, too, but that's why we have all this skilled labor here to make sure everything goes just right."

Friday began as volunteers and supervisors nailed flooring onto the house's foundation and built the walls that would be raised the following day.

Over the next few days, what began as a simple concrete foundation slowly molded into the outline of a house, as volunteers and workers pieced together the wooden skeleton and put up walls.

By Sunday afternoon, students were setting the windows in place and walking across the black-tarped rooftop.

"It was scary at first, but after a while, you begin to feel more comfortable," said senior Rohit Bhandari.

"It was a lot like being on a sailboat for the first time."

Despite the apprehension Bhandari and others initially felt, the volunteers were eager to build,

said construction supervisor Tyler Momen-Hudson from Orange County Habitat.

"That's what people want," Momen-Hudson said. "They want to come out here to have something to do."

The event has potential to forge stronger town-gown relations in Chapel Hill, said Archie Ervin, assistant to the chancellor and director of minority affairs.

"I just think that this is a very important University-community relationship," Ervin said after a brief dedication ceremony at noon Saturday. "And I'd like to see this being extended in some meaningful ways."

Others such as sophomore Kelly Walker, who was there with 10 of her fellow members from Zeta Tau Alpha sorority, say the Blitz Build has another important long-term goal.

"I think it's (important) for a family to have not just a house, but a home," Walker said. "Your whole life feels more in order if you have a home."

Contact the Features Editor at features@unc.edu.

LIVING

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lives in Chapel Hill, got infected. She grew up in a "tight-knit, middle-class family" but had always had a wild streak.

"When I drank, I was the show of the party," said Tara, who requested that her last name not be used. "In high school, I would rather do drugs than learn. I was so daredevil and always had lots of friends."

One of those friends gave her the virus.

"I didn't know how to develop a friendship with men without sleeping with them," she said.

Following her diagnosis, she spent three years of "complete denial" mired in a self-destructive drug habit before accepting the virus as a part of her life.

For the past six years, the only drugs she has taken are the medications that keep her viral load "undetectable."

Tara is now a peer educator at a hospital, where she helps others cope with the virus. She also speaks at colleges to promote awareness.

Her four-year relationship with her fiancé is a testimony to her faith in education.

"I told him immediately," she said. "I don't think he really knew what it was at first, so I had to educate him. His family knows now, and they've shown nothing but love."

She stressed that her life doesn't revolve around the virus. "It's not like I wake up every morning going, 'Oh my God, I have HIV,'" she said. "I'm in school trying to graduate, have a nice home, some money in the bank and a career."

But HIV did change everything — most of all Tara herself. "My ambition is triple what it's

ever been," she said. "There's no telling what life I might have been living right now. I would never have quit doing drugs."

Tara implores people to learn about the disease and their partners. "If the guy doesn't want to use a condom, or the woman's not asking you, you got to ask yourself, 'What's going on here?'" she said.

Tara said most people have probably been in that situation.

"HIV is out there on college campuses," said Dr. Charles van der Horst, professor of medicine at the University. "What's clever on its part is that it feeds into people's perceptions that they're not at risk."

Van der Horst has been treating HIV/AIDS in North Carolina for more than 20 years. During that period, researchers have made mixed progress against the virus.

"We can now tell people that they'll live a normal lifespan if they take their drugs," he said. "But we've not made any impact in decreasing the number of new cases."

Of 4.9 million people newly infected last year, UNAIDS estimates that 44,000 were in North America. Sub-Saharan Africa alone accounts for 3.1 million of those cases.

Thirteen years after her diagnosis, Elizabeth Gordon fights the epidemic at the United Nations in South Africa. With 5.3 million estimated cases, it is the hardest-hit country in the world.

"Empowerment" is a word she uses constantly when telling her story; the power to resist the stigma, to ask for a condom, to live a normal life.

Her strength stems from her faith in God and her belief that, as a monogamous, married woman, her infection was no fault of hers.

At first she kept silent about her

condition in respect of her husband's wishes. Then in 1994, Bernice was born. The woman who took her own diagnosis stoically was thrown into anguish by her child's.

"I wasn't empowered enough," she said. "I should have looked for more information (on the virus)."

The couple separated in 1996, and Gordon hasn't stopped talking since. Everywhere she goes, she tries to leave a message about HIV. Many people have thanked her for informing them about it, she said.

"HIV and poverty go hand in hand," said Gordon, talking of young girls turning to prostitution to survive. "People aren't scared anymore. They say, 'I don't care as long as my stomach is full, and AIDS takes time to kill me anyway.'"

Her own low point came last year, not because of illness, but due to financial strains. Bernice had an infection and needed medicine she could not afford.

"I stood by the pharmacy, and my tears were dropping," Gordon said. "I thought, 'Oh, my child, you need this antibiotic.' At night I lay in bed thinking, 'To hell with this life. Maybe we should just kill ourselves.'"

Bernice already has joined her

MARCH

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treatment and prevention will be heard.

"As a democracy, we have the ability to influence policy," said Rachel Fischhoff, president of UNC's chapter of the Student Global AIDS Campaign, the national sponsor of the march. "And as U.S. citizens, we have not only the ability but the responsibility to change things."

During the rally, students said the federal government hasn't reached its potential to alleviate the crisis.

They marched from the White House to Capitol Hill, rallying for debt cancellation, production of cheaper medication through fair trade, comprehensive sex education, more money for the global AIDS fund and continuation of the Ryan White CARE Act, which meets the health care needs of AIDS patients.

UNC students hope their participation will motivate those on campus. "It's incredible to me it's not more in the spotlight at UNC," said junior Kelley Haven, who attended the march. "People just don't seem to know anything about it."

Haven's interest in the epidemic was piqued in a public policy course. Now she works at a Carboro AIDS home, is directly involved in HIV vaccine trials at UNC Hospitals and helps fund AIDS treatment in communities in Uganda and Malawi.

"AIDS is an issue that once you become involved, it just drags you in," Haven said. "Once you know the basic facts, there's no way you can turn away from it."

A fall 2003 semester of study abroad in South Africa, where many students interned with groups that combat AIDS, inspired three students to bring the movement to UNC. Fischhoff and seniors Annie Bachrach and Michi Nair

co-founded a local chapter of the global campaign the next semester, said Bachrach, who organized UNC students' travel to the rally.

The chapter has spent the past year trying to educate the student body about AIDS but will take steps toward becoming more political, UNC senior Kavitha Kolappa said during a workshop she helped lead for Sunday's Youth Summit to End AIDS. "Our focus has been mostly awareness," Kolappa said.

Students framed AIDS as a social justice issue, not just a health problem. Pre-march speakers such as Kolappa, a member of SGAC's national steering committee, stressed that those most affected by AIDS are those most often denied access to medication and education — minorities, women and the poor. "The privilege I've been afforded in the First World comes at the expense of the Third World," Kolappa told the crowd. "I don't want my daily Starbucks if my counterparts in the Third World can't afford medication and condoms."

Dismissing "band-aid" solutions, ralliers said the problem is rooted in the structure of the world economy. A June meeting of the world's richest nations, the G8 Summit, likely will begin a process of canceling debts

owed by some poor countries.

"The pivotal issue now is the fight for debt cancellation," said senior Marce Abare, coordinator of international partnerships for SGAC's steering committee. "It's either going to come off this year or not."

Abare's planning helped make the march part of a worldwide movement Saturday called Global Day of Youth Action, which included a meeting of nongovernmental organizations in India and a rally of 15,000 students in Cameroon.

Students hoped to show their disapproval of President Bush's proposed plan to cut funding for the global AIDS fund and to give \$15 billion to 14 countries through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. One-third of that money will go toward abstinence-only education, Kolappa said.

The mobilization against AIDS might follow in the tradition of radical youth-led reforms such as the civil rights movement, she said.

"It's a really big deal because the march was completely organized by students," she said. "We're at a pivotal point in history. It could be a watershed moment."

Contact the State & National Editor at stntdesk@unc.edu.

MARATHON

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Hospital — eclipsing last year's total by more than \$14,000.

"It's a combination of the increased devotion of students and our increased presence on campus," said Marketing Chairwoman Allison Boothe, who shouted the total excitedly to a friend on her cell phone.

"The success of the marathon can only be measured in perspiration," she added, wiping her forehead.

But the money raised only represents a portion of the event's success and the efforts of those involved.

Committee leaders estimated that almost 2,000 people — including dancers, moralers, volunteers and spectators — turned out for this year's marathon. Even former coordinators came to show support.

"The energy in the room was out of control," said alumna Haley West, who served as overall coordinator in 2004. "It's not the only worthy organization on campus, but it's certainly an awesome cause."

Other student organizations graced the stage throughout the 24 hours, entertaining enthusiastic but weary dancers. Groups such as the Loreleis, The Capulets and Inversions helped pass the early morning hours.

"The moralers and entertainment are what's going to get me through the next 20 hours," said fund-raising committee member Brooke Bitler late Friday night.

In addition to the grueling 24 hours of dancing that brought the marathon to an end, fund-raising efforts included a UNC ONE Card

push week in October followed by a local concert and date auction in November. "We're uniting the campus," Shalen said. "And we're helping so many people."

The marathon's proceeds are contributed to the For the Kids Fund, which goes to the Children's Hospital.

Dance Marathon committee members announced that 356 families have been helped in the last 2 1/2 months, thanks in part to the 217 Food Lion cards, 1,390 phone cards, \$51,141 for bills and \$23,619 for transportation that has been donated to the For the Kids Fund.

Many families who are being helped by the Dance Marathon funds circulated the gym late Saturday afternoon. They were met with smiles and tears.

"They're thanking us," said Jeff Simpson, whose daughter, Rebecca Simpson, is in remission from acute myeloid leukemia.

"But we're thanking them," Rebecca's family members said they were grateful for the dinners and phone cards provided to them.

"These students are doing something for people they don't know and will probably never meet," Rebecca said. She nodded in agreement when her father referred to the Dance Marathon as a huge labor of love.

"We got to see their faces. The marathon made it personal," said sophomore dancer Brett Gantt. "It was a painful 24 hours. But I have no doubt it was worth it."

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