

CITY BRIEFS

County to host final forum on high school reform today

The last in the series of forums on high school reform in Orange County Schools will be held at 7 p.m. today at Orange High School in Hillsborough.

The series of four forums were designed to provide feedback to a high school reform committee, composed of educators, parents, students and community members.

The task force will present its findings to the board of education in June.

Local rose shop to celebrate its reopening this weekend

A Durham rose and garden shop will hold its grand reopening celebration this weekend, beginning at 9 a.m. today.

Witherspoon Rose Culture, located in Patterson Place in Durham, will be revealing its "extreme makeover" to both its garden and gift shops.

Additional information on the celebration can be obtained by calling 489-4446 or visiting the shop's Web site at <http://www.witherspoonrose.com>.

Downtown board progresses in executive director search

The Downtown Economic Development Corporation is just weeks away from selecting its permanent executive director.

The corporation received an update Wednesday from Smither & Associates, the Chapel Hill personnel firm assisting in the search for the executive director.

Smither representatives said about 60 applications were received by the March 1 deadline.

They will meet with the search committee March 16 to narrow the list to eight or nine applicants, and three to five will be selected afterward for interviews.

Corporation members expect the director to begin work in June.

Local wine store to sponsor charity basketball contests

The Chapel Hill Wine Company, at 1229 Airport Road, will celebrate March Madness on Saturday during the ACC Tournament for men's basketball.

From 1 to 5 p.m., the company will hold basketball shooting and dunk contests and offer free wine, all to benefit the N.C. Children's Hospital.

The company is also still selling its "cork bricks."

For more information, call 968-1884.

ARTS BRIEFS

Applications now available for CUAB committee posts

The Carolina Union Activities Board is accepting applications for the 2005-06 school year.

CUAB receives about \$270,000 in student fees annually to provide diverse cultural, intellectual and social programs for students. Applications are due to the Union Information Desk no later than 5 p.m. March 30.

Contact Jonathon Benson, 2005-06 CUAB president-select, at jbenson@email.unc.edu for more details.

STATE & NATION

Thieves in Ohio make off with heavy, empty safe

FOSTORIA, Ohio — Thieves broke into an agency that serves the poor and made off with a safe. The only catch — the safe was empty.

"It is really quite comical," said Susan Simpkins, director of the Fostoria Bureau of Concern. "It was very heavy, and they did us a favor by taking it."

She said the agency had wanted to throw out the safe but it was too big to move.

The thieves entered the agency through a back door after it closed for the day on Feb. 28 and took the safe, which was in the office.

They did manage to grab a small amount of money from the office's petty cash supply, police said.

CALENDAR

Today — The Sonja Haynes Stone Center for Black Culture and History will present a screening of "Moolaade," a film directed by Ousmane Sembene, at 7 p.m. in the Student Union Auditorium.

The film, which will be followed by a discussion, addresses the issue of female circumcision and has garnered accolades including a win at the 2004 Cannes Film Festival.

The event is free and open to the public.

For more information, call 962-9001.

— From staff and wire reports.

Carrboro loans bring in high-tech ventures

BY TED STRONG
ASSISTANT CITY EDITOR

"Banks won't give a new business like this a loan," the entrepreneur said.

His application for start-up money for a new, high-tech firm in Carrboro was just too risky for a bank.

But that risk level was just right for the town's government and its revolving-loan program.

Six months ago, Carrboro gave Gary Duncan, the entrepreneur, the cash he needed to launch Science Learning Resources Inc., which sells computer programs designed for classroom use.

"(The town's help) was essential to be able to ... buy equipment and get the business started," said Duncan, a psychiatry professor at the University.

Chapel Hill lacks anything akin to Carrboro's loan program, which uses community grant money to infuse new businesses with cash. Entrepreneurs who have struck out with banks can use the loans to jump-start their ventures and to create jobs.

The Chapel Hill Downtown Economic Development Corporation is slated to consider a proposal to create a similar program later this

month.

For Carrboro, the loan program has been a boon to business and has built links between the town and the University.

Faculty members are able to work simultaneously on their academic and private projects, as their business offices are only a short distance from campus, said James Harris, Carrboro's community and economic development director.

"It means I work more because I still have my full-time job at UNC," Duncan said of his fledgling busi-

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SELF-TAUGHT



DTH/PERRY MYRICK

Andrea Williams, a professor in the history department, talks about her new book, "Self-Taught: African-American Education in Slavery and Freedom" in the Bull's Head Bookshop on Wednesday. For the full story, visit www.dthonline.com.



DTH/DAN BLUM

"Felicia Monet" performs during the "Body Language" drag show — presented by the UNC Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender-Straight Alliance — Wednesday night in the Great Hall of the Student Union. The event was the finale to the organization's Celebration Week.

BODIES SPEAK VOLUMES

'LANGUAGE' DRAG SHOW CLOSES OUT CELEBRATION WEEK

BY STEPHANIE NEWTON
STAFF WRITER

Attraction arises. The person in the spotlight becomes appealing. But confusion, awe and puzzlement take center stage.

"It messes with people's minds and makes them think about the social constructs," said Win Chesson, co-chairman of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender-Straight Alliance.

The GLBTSA capped its Celebration Week on Wednesday night with "Body Language," a drag show that took place in a packed Great Hall. Event participants stressed the week's overarching theme — breaking gender definitions and bringing the heterosexual community into the mix — all the while watching the cash, music and synthetic hair flow.

"(People) shouldn't have to conform to these stupid gender stereotypes," said Alex Ferrando, GLBTSA co-chairman. "Drag is not just entertainment. It's a political statement."

Amateur drag competition judge Kyle Yamakawa said gender is a mental construct. "I feel like gender performance is something that everybody does," he said.

Though the event was two months in the making, student reaction to an assault on an openly gay UNC junior about two weeks ago affected the evening's activities.

"We did not try to cater a response to what happened," Ferrando said.

But a message of frustration wove in and out of the acts, as the audience passed petitions lobbying for changes in the state's treatment of such attacks. The tension culminated in a graphic portrayal of a streetside, hate-induced beating, performed by the Cuntry Kings, a 15-member Triangle troupe.

The group, which has performed throughout the United States and Western Europe, drew upon the personal experience of one of its members during a segment of the show that expressed distaste with the Iraq War and military crackdowns on gay soldiers.

The performers took on topics including militarism, sexism, racism, classism and homophobia in a variety of formats.

"This is an outlet for me, given that I have that sort of an alternate identity," said Neeve Ehmi, a female member of the Cuntry Kings who was mistaken for a boy as a child. "I am

a drag king because I think it's an interesting way of commenting on the significant forces at work in our culture."

Despite the social commentary, much of the show was about sheer entertainment.

"I'm nervous," said John Jackson, an amateur performer. "This is my first drag experience in front of people."

While affixing a set of pink nails and prepping with eyeliner, Jackson said he wanted to bring back a level of artistry that he thinks is missing from amateur performances.

"Look at my face," he said. "I bear a pretty natural, striking resemblance to a one Miss Kelly Osbourne."

But the amateur crown was jointly taken by Veronica Steele and Jamocha Shake, two performers who shared the spotlight by hooking the audience at two ends of the spectrum: pure strip tease and Madonna-style expression.

"I've been to drag shows before, but I've never seen drag queens as beautiful as these," said Chapel Hill resident Aviana Alam.

Contact the University Editor at udesk@unc.edu.

Rules for apparel makers may shift

Labor policies might get stricter

BY DANIEL WILKES
STAFF WRITER

Companies that manufacture apparel bearing the UNC trademark would face additional scrutiny if a campus committee approves a new policy to enforce the University's labor code.

After meeting last semester to discuss the status of Gildan Activewear as a supplier of blank T-shirts to UNC licensees, members of the Licensing Labor Code Advisory Committee said labor issues with the company have been resolved.

The group discussed Wednesday guidelines for the protection of workers' rights at factories that produce items with UNC labels.

Melanie Stratton, Student Action with Workers member, proposed that the University take extra steps to forbid explicitly activities it has not previously addressed.

The policy, outlined in letters that would be sent to licensees, would prohibit licensees from terminating relationships with factories accused of worker rights abuses or those at which investigations into alleged abuses are under way.

But her hard-line approach to stop companies from "cutting and running" to avoid trouble with the University's Code of Conduct drew criticism from other committee members.

Don Hornstein, professor in the UNC School of Law, said he is concerned that if a company legitimately planned to close a factory, workers could cry abuse and force the factory to remain open.

Stratton reminded committee members about their ethical responsibilities.

"Capital is mobile, but people aren't," she said. "We need to ensure that jobs stay in developing countries that need them and not let companies cut and run when the code of conduct gets in their way."

Another provision of the policy

SEE LICENSING, PAGE 9

Council approves \$206 million debt

BY MATT BOWLES
STAFF WRITER

A borrowing package approved Tuesday that would fund new facilities for the UNC system has raised concern among some state officials, but experts say North Carolina's credit rating remains sound.

By a 5-2 vote, the Council of State authorized \$206 million in borrowing to finance a new psychiatric hospital, prisons and various projects at UNC-system medical centers.

Lew Borman, spokesman for Lt. Gov. Beverly Perdue, said projects such as UNC-Chapel Hill's Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center deserve adequate financing.

"All of these projects are extremely important to the state," Borman said, explaining Perdue's vote in favor of the bond. "The UNC cancer center is as important to Lieutenant Governor Perdue as it is to the University."

But Commissioner of Labor Cherie Berry expressed some concern with the borrowing package.

She said more consideration should have been given to the state's fiscal situation. "It inches us closer to that 3 percent cap that everyone

desires. In case something catastrophic happens, then we have no money to borrow to fix it."

The 3 percent cap was proposed by Gov. Mike Easley as the maximum percentage of state revenues that should go toward debt payments.

Berry also said the measure should have been submitted for a statewide referendum. "I believe the voters have a right to say whether or not they should go into debt."

Thad Beyle, professor of political science at UNC-CH, said North Carolina has used bonds effectively when there is not enough tax revenue to cover larger projects.

He said a slow economy or excessive debt, which make it difficult for the state to meet interest payments, can cause bond ratings to drop and investor confidence to decline.

"North Carolina has had a good bond rating for some time," he said. "There has been some worry out there among people that we could be jeopardizing that good rating."

Credit rating firms so far have maintained confidence in North

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State leaders debate death penalty

BY VICTORIA WILSON
STAFF WRITER

A possible pause in executions in North Carolina for two years brings the promise of reform to some and seems unnecessary to others.

N.C. House Majority Leader Joe Hackney, D-Orange, has sponsored a bill that proposes a moratorium on capital punishment for two years. During this time, the legislature would conduct a study of the state's death penalty system.

Sen. Ellie Kinnaird, D-Orange, introduced similar legislation in 2003. It passed the Senate but was not brought to a vote in the House.

Rep. Paul Luebke, D-Durham, is confident that the current moratorium bill, which he co-sponsored, will pass. He said that it is a bipartisan effort to give the legislature time to examine the results of the study and to possibly reform the system, and that it doesn't seek to abolish the death penalty.

"(The bill) recognizes that a majority of North Carolinians want the death penalty but want (it) to be a fair process," Luebke said. "This bill, with a two-year suspension and study, seeks a middle ground."

Luebke said he wants reforms such as more competent defense lawyers who would fight for lesser

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REP. PAUL LUEBKE, D-DURHAM

jail time or life without parole. He also said juries are more likely to give the death penalty to minorities — a practice that should be stopped.

David Neal, co-founder and executive director of the Fair Trial Initiative, said he supports the these reforms. In addition, he wants to make sure innocent people, like Alan Gell, stay off death row.

Gell, sentenced to death in 1998, was acquitted of the 1995 murder of Allen Ray Jenkins last year after it was discovered that the prosecution withheld evidence that proved his innocence.

Neal also said that only the worst crimes should receive the harshest punishment.

But there is opposition to the bill. Sen. Hugh Webster, R-Alamance, said he is not in favor of a moratorium or a study.

"We have never, as far as I know, executed a person who is not guilty," Webster said. "Alan Gell is living proof that the system works."

Peg Dorer, director of the N.C. Conference of District Attorneys, also said there isn't need for a study because the state has made improvements to the system, such as the post-conviction opening of prosecutors' files.

In addition, she said that the reasons behind the survey only serve to misinform the public and that concern about exonerated prisoners has been blown out of proportion.

"I think that district attorneys in general have no opposition to someone's moral opposition, but misinforming the general public is a disservice to all citizens of North Carolina," Dorer said.

But Webster said the death penalty protects the rights of citizens.

"The state's main obligation is to protect civilization from the lawless and to keep civilization from becoming lawless."

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