

# Teens smash smoking habits Campus activism for workers grows

BY MELODY GUYTON  
STAFF WRITER

With a final blow to a brightly colored piñata, a pungent smell filled the air as hundreds of cigarette butts scattered to the ground.

The butts — collected from local high school campuses — were meant to represent the problem of teenage smoking, an issue that some area students are working to combat.

Wednesday's piñata-smashers were celebrating Kick Butts Day at Chapel Hill High School.

Similar events took place at other schools throughout the county as part of a national campaign against youth smoking, called Tobacco Reality Unfiltered.

"This is great for students, because if they have a passion about the issue, they really get a chance to act on it," said Jim Wise, a student assistant specialist at Chapel Hill High.



DITHJANIE TARMAN

Chapel Hill High School students smash a piñata filled with cigarette butts in celebrations for Kick Butts Day on Wednesday afternoon.

Freshman Amanda Franczak, who is involved in the anti-smoking campaign, said she has a number of reasons for staying smoke-free.

"People don't have long to live, so I'd like to live the longest and healthiest life possible," she said.

Freshman Ian Ager, also involved with the campaign, said stopping

students from smoking early on is the best way of curbing usage.

"Cigarettes are among the largest preventable causes of death in America," he said. "It's important that people are educated."

This week's education has included anti-smoking stickers that student campaign participants placed on tobacco advertisements in magazines at the school's library.

Matt Streng, Orange County Youth Tobacco Prevention manager, said such peer-to-peer education is effective. "Youths will create messages that resonate with their peers," he said. "And as adults, we need to give them the chance to do that."

Streng said a 2001 Chapel Hill Carrboro-City Schools study showed that 20 percent of city high school students smoked cigarettes.

In 2005, that number dropped to 15 percent — a decrease Streng partly attributed to in-school intervention and media anti-smoking campaigns.

About 22 students at city schools are involved with Tobacco Reality Unfiltered, and about 13 are involved with the campaign in Orange County Schools.

The campaign's work is funded by the N.C. Health and Wellness Trust Fund Commission, which provides a grant for such programs to the county's health department.

The next project student campaign members will tackle is raising the cigarette tax by \$0.75 in North Carolina, which currently has the lowest tax in the nation.

Contact the City Editor at [citydesk@unc.edu](mailto:citydesk@unc.edu).

BY MATTHEW BOWLES  
STAFF WRITER

At a time when labor unions nationwide are struggling to retain and attract membership, student activists are working to revitalize collective bargaining among university employees.

College students recently have held demonstrations on campuses across the country to promote the interests of university workers and staff.

Students at Georgetown University staged a high-profile hunger strike last month to express their support for a "living wage" for campus employees, and many UNC students have rallied to the cause of workers in Chapel Hill.

Last week, the arrest of Carolina Dining Services employee Vel Dowdy on March 25 prompted a sizable demonstration in the Pit, where students voiced support for her and other University workers.

Mike Hachey, a UNC student and member of Student Action with Workers, said the purpose of the group is to promote the fair treatment of all campus workers by their employers.

"We try to ensure that workers aren't being intimidated," he said.

SAW is loosely affiliated with the Service Employees International Union, Hachey said, adding that the association is indirect because only

workers can establish a union.

Hachey said the group is now working to have the University require Aramark Corp., the company operating CDS, to sign a card-check neutrality agreement with its employees. The agreement would be an alternative to National Labor Relations Board elections in which a company declares itself neutral to avoid intimidation in the workplace.

Hachey said this would allow workers to decide whether they want to unionize.

But students aren't working exclusively at the university level. Many are attempting to influence labor policies in state government.

Sherry Melton, director of communications for the State Employees Association of North Carolina, said the association welcomes those who support their mission. Students, she said, could join as affiliate members.

"Students have been very supportive of university employees," Melton said.

She noted that SEANC is not a union, but an association composed mostly of public school teachers and state workers.

While student groups seek better treatment for university employees from the state, Melton said the association's objective is similar.

"No less than a 5 percent pay

raise this year is our goal for all state employees, including university employees," she said.

Although North Carolina restricts the collective bargaining of state employees, other states allow for the establishment of unions among their workers.

In 2001, Maryland extended the right to unionize, which existed for other state workers, to employees at the state universities, said Karl Pence, executive director of the Maryland State Higher Education Labor Relations Board.

"The purpose is to administer the collective bargaining rights to employees of state institutions of higher education," he said.

Pence said it includes all university employees, except faculty members.

Because of this policy, demonstrations for collective bargaining have not occurred at state universities in Maryland, he said.

Even if UNC-system workers face obstacles to bargaining, there is hope for employees and their student-activist allies, Melton said, referring to the proposed pay raise.

"We're optimistic that employees will fare better this year than they have in recent years."

Contact the State & National Editor at [stntdesk@unc.edu](mailto:stntdesk@unc.edu).

## POLICE LOG

FROM STAFF REPORTS

■ An area high school student was arrested Tuesday after state investigators found three .80-caliber semi-automatic shotguns at his residence, Chapel Hill police spokeswoman Jane Cousins said.

Police arrested East Chapel Hill High School student Tailong Wu, 17, at 5:45 p.m. at his home on Chesapeake Way and charged him with one misdemeanor count of possession of a handgun by a minor and one misdemeanor count of driving without a license, police reports state.

Police were at the residence to assist state agents in serving a warrant on Wu.

Cousins said she was unsure to what the warrant was related, but Wu's mother gave consent for the search.

Wu arrived after officers had begun the search and was observed

driving up to his residence. Once officers found he did not have a valid license, the second charge was issued.

Wu was issued a written promise to appear May 9 in Orange County District Criminal Court in Hillsborough.

■ Chapel Hill police arrested an N.C. State University student at 3:15 a.m. Wednesday and charged him with one misdemeanor count of driving while impaired and one misdemeanor count of driving with a provisional license, police reports state.

According to reports, Yani Patrick Mengul, 19, was arrested on Airport Road near Piney Mountain Road after police stopped him for speeding.

Mengul registered a .08 percent on the Intoxilyzer 5000 test, reports state.

■ Chapel Hill police arrested a local homeless man at 6 p.m. Tuesday and charged him with one misdemeanor count of possession of drug paraphernalia, police reports state.

Reports state that Arthur Williams, 35, was arrested at 100 E. Franklin St. after police found a silver-colored crack pipe in his left rear pocket.

Williams is scheduled to appear May 9 in Orange County District Criminal Court in Hillsborough.

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