

Local businesses gather for expo

BY ALEXA DIXON
STAFF WRITER

Local business owners gave out samples, pitched their wares and got to know one another Monday at the fourth annual Orange County Business Expo launched at the Sheraton Chapel Hill Hotel.

A collaboration of the Orange County Economic Development Commission and the Chapel Hill-Carrboro and Hillsborough/Orange County chambers of commerce, the expo is meant to showcase local businesses and promote local spending.

"The business expo is designed to give the local community a chance to meet and greet business owners and build relationships with local owners and managers," said Aaron Nelson, the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Chamber of Commerce's executive director.

About 70 businesses were showcased to an estimated 3,000 people at the event. The convention encouraged locals to shop close to home through the Buy Local campaign, which organizers hope will benefit the area's economy.

The campaign will be promoted through window clings, featuring the program's name and its motto — "Spend it here. Keep it here."

"It's more of an educational campaign, seeking to educate people that keeping money in the community benefits everything from schools to infrastructure, emergency services and parks; it is all tax dollars from local spending," said Carla Thames, Economic Development Specialist for Orange County.

The businesses presenting at the expo complemented the push to encourage local spending. "I am a local-based photographer," said Chris Elam, proprietor of Playful Portraits Photography. "... I buy locally, I work with Southeastern Cameras in Carrboro. I'm actually based in Durham but I do most of my shopping between Durham and Chapel Hill."

Allison Nichols, of Maple View Farm, participated in the show to promote the farm's new store in Carrboro across from Carr Mill Mall. She said that local spending

is important for the local economy. "We only sell products from Orange County. We use local products, local strawberries, honey and we feature a craft lady from Hillsborough," she said.

The event has become a staple for local businesses, providing a venue for local businesses to see and be seen.

"This is the fourth year we've hosted this event," said Anthony Carey, the Sheraton's general manager. "We placed food in the back of the room so that people have to go through the vendors to get to it and circle around for coffee and the bar. Hopefully it will draw people in to talk to the vendors."

The Sheraton also sponsored a two-hour networking session called Business After Hours for 350 business leaders.

"The event also gives us an opportunity to showcase what we can offer," Carey said.

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CONSTRUCTION

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Escalating building costs are part of a long-term trend, Runberg said.

Commodity products such as steel, concrete and plywood all have become more expensive during the last year — with a sharp price increase during the past month.

He said plywood has increased in cost by up to 40 percent in just two weeks. The cost of some mechanical work, including projects using steel and other metal products, is up by nearly 50 percent.

UNC's planning officials now are reviewing projects to determine if any should be delayed or canceled.

Sidney Stone, contract administrator for construction management, said some projects in the planning stage could face delays.

He cited the proposed 300-car parking garage planned for the Arts Common, as an example.

But Stone said most construction projects won't face indefinite delays. "They'll just be planned better for the future with realistic up-to-date cost data."

Runberg said the University will try to find bids for remaining construction projects soon to minimize the effects of possible increases.

"We have seen the marketplace become saturated with progressively fewer contractors bidding on each project," he said. "Then you throw in high commodity prices, and those two things are the foremost in what is making it difficult to bring projects within budget."

Officials also worry that contractors who are flocking to rebuild the Gulf Coast region might cause a

shortage and raise labor costs.

But officials from T.A. Loving, UNC's general contractor, said they will remain in North Carolina.

The company will try to lock down prices of materials early on in the construction process to minimize costs, said Michael Richter, senior vice president and building division manager for T.A. Loving.

Campus projects often face price increases because they take more time to complete, he said. "Long-term projects are more risky because they are subject to more potential fluctuations and increases."

Only the next few months will determine whether costs will continue to rise, Runberg said.

"Until the marketplace starts to settle out we won't know."

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SELECTIONS

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said off the bench," Gerhardt said.

"Jones is intemperate in her remarks," he said, adding that Owen is viewed by some to be anti-consumer, which could pose a problem for her if nominated.

Michael Kent Curtis, professor at the Wake Forest University School of Law, said he also has heard speculation about Owen and Janice Rogers Brown, a judge in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit.

The next candidate for the judicial office likely will be asked the same types of questions as Roberts, Curtis said, but specific questions would come from the personal actions and writings of the nominee. "They've left a paper trail," he said.

Both Curtis and Gerhardt said Bush likely will factor conservative beliefs and not public opinion when making his nomination.

"In the lower courts, his primary concern has been judicial ideology," Gerhardt said.

He said Bush will announce his next nominee fairly soon.

"He'll probably announce it shortly after Roberts' confirmation," he said. "Almost everybody expects that."

Curtis said Bush probably will choose a judge who reflects the judicial ideology of justices Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas.

"President Bush seems to go with the wishes of his political base," he said, adding that this type of candidate could split the Republican party between the moderates and the conservatives, Curtis said.

"The court has been conservative, but conservative with some recognition of individual liberty," he said.

Curtis said a more conservative court could have the power to overturn cases that were ruled in favor of personal liberty and privacy.

Curtis said controversial decisions such as *Roe v. Wade* and *Lawrence v. Texas*, which struck down sodomy laws in Texas and other states, might be overturned in a more conservative Supreme Court.

Those types of cases are not consistent with the agenda of the religious right, he said, and could be reversed eventually. "There could be more of an incremental change or one fell swoop."

Curtis said Bush's next candidate for the Supreme Court would be confirmed despite fierce debate because Bush is not known to compromise and Republicans hold the majority in Congress.

Many have said he should choose a minority or a woman for O'Connor's seat, but Curtis said Bush will place ideology first.

"You can find a woman or a minority who is ideologically conservative."

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ONGOING

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Medical assistance aside, help also needs to come in the form of social — not medical — factors, said Renae Stafford, a physician with the UNC Health Care Trauma Program.

Mental health workers for those dealing with anxiety and post-traumatic stress are needed, she said.

"You need to be resilient," Stafford said. "And realize that it's going to affect you in ways that you don't understand."

From the admissions perspective, a national framework now is being established to look at how the high school students from the Gulf will apply to college, since most school records, including transcripts, were lost, said Allison Legge, associate

director of admissions.

John Blanchard, senior associate director of athletics, mentioned pairing displaced children in the area with mentors to attend future UNC sporting events through the Carolina Dreams program.

Other ideas — such as spring break trips to clean up the Gulf — surfaced from the forum's small-group discussions. A focus on at-home help was encouraged strongly.

"Pick a family, and make that family your project here," Stafford said. "That's as personal — or even more personal — than going down there on a bus."

University fundraising efforts from the last four weeks total \$60,000, said Erica Curry, vice president of the UNC Red Cross club. Of that, at least \$19,415

comes from collections at the UNC vs. Wisconsin football game.

"We want to get people to think more strategically about what's going on," said Elaine Tola, program officer for the Carolina Center for Public Service. "Saying you want to do a relief trip is great, but then you need to think of the logistics."

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OPEN HOUSE

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ing administrators adopt a team administration plan.

Under the plan, administrators each would be given specialized tasks that they would perform following the guidelines of the team cleaning plan.

"We would not expect our lowest-paid employees to work under conditions which our administration themselves would not work under," Hachey said.

Moerer said he saw both posi-

tives and negatives in the plan aside from efficiency and costs.

Student-housekeeper relationships — which he says can be as strong as family for some students — would be hurt, but housekeepers would have the benefit of working at night with others rather alone.

James Alty, director of the Facilities Service Division, said the program will be on trial in one building on campus for 120 days beginning in October.

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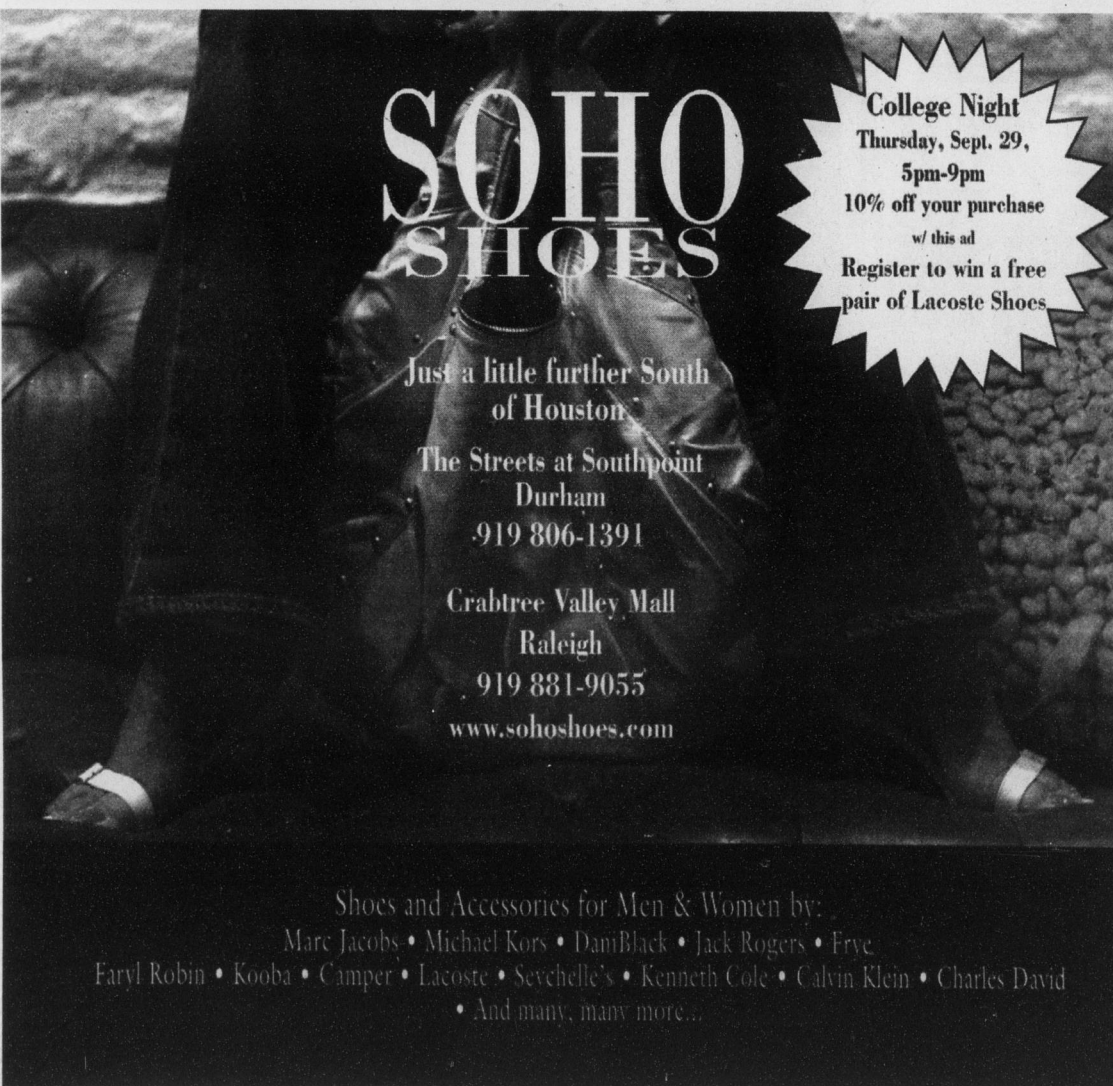
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