

Hillel holds Hanukkah gathering

BY DEBORAH NEFFA
STAFF WRITER

The holiday spirit is making its way around campus, and it struck N.C. Hillel, UNC's Jewish student center, Saturday evening.

The Hillel held its annual Hanukkah party and hosted more than 100 people from the Jewish and non-Jewish communities.

Sharon Lintz, social chairwoman for the N.C. Hillel, said the student center has been hosting Hanukkah parties ever since its inception in 1936 and encourages students of different religious backgrounds to attend the celebration.

"It is a time when anyone can come to the Hillel and feel comfortable," she said.

"Hanukkah is not a religious holiday but a historical holiday and a fun occasion to celebrate," Lintz said.

Josh Glasser, senior and political science major, said the celebration's multicultural aspect is of great importance.

"It allows for UNC students to come together and enjoy the diver-

sity of the holiday season on campus," he said.

Andrew Wasserman, a UNC football player who is Jewish, said holding such events is important to give the campus's Jewish community an opportunity to gather.

While the downstairs dance floor included a disc jockey and flashing lights, candles and a live jazz band helped create a more relaxing atmosphere upstairs.

Most of the socializing occurred in a room filled with games such as pool and foosball and at candle-lit tables by the long buffet table.

Bill Lane, a freshman Chinese major, said that the event was a success and that it will show the UNC community that there is a lot more to Jewish life on campus than simply religious events.

Students such as Lexie Kuhn, sophomore chemistry major, said they come every year because of the music, the big crowds of people and the low-stress environment.

Other students said they attended because of the childhood memo-

ries the party brings back.

"These parties remind me of the bar mitzvah parties in middle school with the cheesy decorations," Wasserman said.

Raffles took place every half hour, and prizes included gift certificates.

Tzedek Chairwoman Lisa Estrin said the money raised will help meet the Hillel's goal of \$15,000, which will be donated in April to children refugees in Darfur.

Program Director Malki Karkowsky said that even though this is her first year working at the Hillel, she greatly enjoyed coordinating the event.

"Throwing any big party is great, especially when you have students excited about it," she said.

"It's a time to create a community with everyone on campus."

On Dec. 8, the Hillel will continue its Hanukkah celebration by holding Chabad's annual menorah lighting ceremony on Polk Place.

Contact the University Editor at udesk@unc.edu.

ATTENDANCE

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at Connecticut. "It was growing — that was what kind of pushed it over the top — and the fact that the success continued after that, that just grew and sustained itself."

The school, though, does not have to compete with other high-caliber programs in the same region or a long tradition of men's basketball success — two factors that some say affect UNC's attempt to increase support of women's basketball.

"If you could take all the fans from N.C. State and Duke and all of our fans and we just had one program, you'd have a lot higher attendance," says UNC assistant sports marketing director Marie Baker. "Because the three of these schools all have very good success, it does become a struggle. We try to overcome it. But the reality of it is I don't know if that's possible."

But even among Triangle teams, UNC is losing the battle for fans.

Last season, five ACC teams out-drew the conference-champion Tar Heels, and two of those squads were Duke (averaging 4,966 fans) and N.C. State (2,474). UNC managed an average of just 2,218 fans — the 52nd highest total in the nation.

In an attempt to alleviate the problem, UNC Director of Athletics Dick Baddour said the athletic department significantly increased the marketing budget for women's basketball this year. That has allowed the marketing department to increase its advertising efforts, including mailings to the Rams Club and other alumni groups.

So far this season, the team has seen those efforts pay off slightly, with an average of 1,379 fans for its first five games compared to 895 in

2004-05.

Still, big-name non-conference opponents could boost those numbers drastically.

Thus far, UNC's home schedule has featured Davidson, Liberty, UNC-Asheville, Charleston Southern and South Florida, but that will change next year when perennial powers Tennessee and Connecticut are scheduled to visit.

"Sybil's trying to help us with the scheduling with who we're playing with the non-conference games," Baddour says. "We really need to have some competitive games in there."

The question with those high-profile games, however, is where to play them. The past two seasons, UNC has played Duke at the Smith Center, an arena logistically more prepared to handle large crowds in terms of parking, restrooms and concession stands.

Yet a packed crowd in Carmichael creates a significant home-court advantage, whereas the same amount of fans would not fill the Smith Center halfway. And that is the primary reason the seniors elected to play this year's season finale against Duke in Carmichael.

"My freshman year, we played (Duke) here — I can remember that game like we played it yesterday," says senior La'Tangela Atkinson. "It was just so competitive, the fans were into it, people were standing up, and just to see the fans standing and clapping and everyone packed around the court — it motivated me."

The game against Duke likely will draw a packed house — in the 2003 contest, the Tar Heels set their single-game attendance record with a crowd of 10,180. The question remains whether other

ACC matchups, such as a Feb. 9 game against No. 9 Maryland, can garner strong fan support.

And that question extends to both fans and students alike. Students at UNC can attend all home games for free, though seldom do more than a couple hundred show up.

"When you're asking students to come to one or two men's games a week, and trying to come to another one or two women's games, that's a lot," Baker says.

With few exceptions, schools across the country — including Connecticut — have more student support for their men's team. In turn, the women's basketball fan base usually consists of individuals priced out or unable to secure tickets to the men's competition.

Grant Clayton of Creedmoor epitomizes this trend.

He attends nearly every UNC women's home game with his wife and 7-year-old son and has done so for the past couple of years. He cites ticket availability and enjoyment of basketball as reasons why his family routinely makes the 30-mile trip to campus.

Does he know why others like him have yet to support the Tar Heels in high numbers?

"I don't think people know about them as much as the men," Clayton says. "They're not really advertised as much."

The increase in the advertising budget hopes to curtail that concern, but it remains to be seen whether families across the region will take notice of the added publicity.

And until then, games like tonight will serve as a tantalizing reminder of what the Tar Heels are missing.

Contact the Sports Editor at sports@unc.edu.

MALL SANTAS

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Claus, where Kiddy got his master's degree in Santa Clausology.

There, Kiddy was instructed on how to hold children and work with difficult kids.

And Kiddy has seen his share of trouble makers.

"When this little girl's mom set her on my knee, the kid didn't see me," Kiddy says. "When she turned and saw me she got scared, jumped off my lap and took part of my beard with her."

Santas themselves sometimes complain about the increased commercialization of the holiday.

"To be honest I don't really like Christmas," says Gary Owen, a Santa from Huntersville. Instead of malls, Owen works private parties.

"I just don't like the whole hoopla surrounding it," he says. "You are just blasted with 'buy, buy, buy.'"

Randy Gibson, who has played Santa for three years at the University Mall, said he likes the fact that they don't charge for photos.

"Christmas is a whole lot more than dollars and cents," he says.

Claus echoes this sentiment. "The malls think of you as nothing but a Christmas decoration," he says. "But it's supposed to be an experience for the children."

Those children, he adds, do the darndest things.

"This one kid wrote me a letter asking for handcuffs and a chain saw and then drew pictures of flowers in neat rows all over the letter," he says.

Santa also has to be able to answer difficult questions quickly.

"Some serious kids ask for their parents to get back together or for world peace," Claus says.

"One kid asked me for his puppy back," Claus says. "But I thought he said puppy."

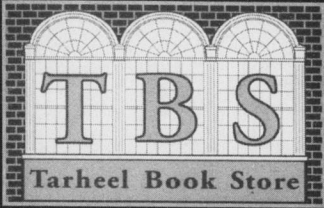
"I said 'I don't resurrect animals!' Him and his grandma were a little upset."

And children aren't the only ones who come to visit with Santa.

When adults visit, Santa can find himself in some sticky situations.

"When 'Toy Story' came out ... we had a big line of women and their kids," Claus says. "A kid said 'I want a big Buzz and a big Woody,' and three women said 'Me, too!'"

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