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SPECIAL COVERAGE FROM MISSISSIPPI



DTH/GALEN CLARKE

Sharon Kelly (left) talks on the phone as her husband Collin listens Dec. 30, about four months after Hurricane Katrina hammered Bay St. Louis, Miss. and surrounding areas. Their house became part of a small island, as it was one of the few homes in the area left untouched by the storm.

Port in the storm

Miraculous survival prompts Mississippi couple to open home to all

BY ERIC JOHNSON, SENIOR WRITER
BAY ST. LOUIS, MISS.

Collin and Sharon Kelly moved into their home in July, relocating from Maryland after months of house hunting along the Gulf Coast.

"When we came over here and started looking, and we met the people, it just captured us," Collin said. "The people in this town are just incredible."

Less than two months later, Hurricane Katrina effectively washed that community away, erasing whole neighborhoods, damaging or destroying every building downtown and flooding almost every home. Fields of debris and shattered buildings still scar the landscape.

In the midst of such comprehensive destruction, a relatively small residential part of town — about three blocks wide and six blocks long — escaped the floodwaters. Spared by an accident of geography, these homes were built on land just high enough to avoid the tremendous storm surge and were left as some of the only structures still livable after the hurricane.

The Kellys' new home was among them. "This whole area was an island in the Gulf of Mexico during Hurricane Katrina," Collin said, standing in his backyard and motioning to the neighborhood around him.

That bit of phenomenally good fortune left the couple in a slightly awkward position — the newcomers left almost unscathed in a community where thousands had lost everything.

The Kellys responded by throwing open their doors to new friends and vowing to

stick with the town they'd only begun to know. Four months after the storm, their story and those of the people around them provide a snapshot of a recovery that has just barely gotten underway.

Finding a haven

As a real estate agent in a small town, Ann-Marie Kea stays close with many of her clients. In the months following Katrina, none would be closer than the Kellys.

"God sent me these people," she said. "They swooped in and took care of me."

PHOTO STORY

The Kellys' home has played host to a rotating cast of characters since Katrina, page 5

With her own home completely flooded, Ann-Marie moved into the spare bedroom of the house she'd sold to Collin and Sharon just a few months earlier. "They totally took me in. This was home."

Finding someone to occupy the spare bedroom had been on Sharon's mind from the moment they came back after the storm.

"I just wanted somebody to use it," she said, adding that life with a houseguest was no challenge at all. "We raised three boys; there was always someone at our house."

Ann-Marie tried to repay the couple by cooking, but it wasn't long before another chef would help turn the Kelly home into a center of post-Katrina social life.

Rickey Peters, a close friend of Ann-Marie's and the owner of Rickey's Bar & Grill, came in search of a kitchen. His popular restaurant used to stand less than a block

from the beach in neighboring Waveland, Miss.

"He showed up with beer and food, and he said, 'I gotta cook,'" Collin recounted. "Whenever he showed up, all the sudden people would come up and say, 'We heard Rickey's cooking!'"

Finding a working kitchen was his way of keeping sane, Rickey said.

It was plain that the loss of the restaurant has hit him hard.

"The last few months, I've been busy getting nothing done, it seems like."

"It's been four months since the hurricane, and look at it," he said, standing on the slab foundation that is the only trace of his restaurant. "It's going to be another 20 or 30 years before it becomes the same again."

Though he plans to reopen in a smaller space in Bay St. Louis, Rickey said he hasn't decided about long-term plans for rebuilding on the original site. The entire downtown of Waveland — except for the vault of the bank — was leveled by the storm surge, and few business owners have decided whether to return.

"We ought to call Mississippi the 'I don't know' state," Rickey said. "Put it on the license plate or something."

Four months after the storm, neither Rickey nor Ann-Marie had settled with their insurance companies. Like so many Gulf Coast residents, they've been mired in discussions about how much damage was done by wind and how much by water.

Whether a home or business was blown away or washed away can make a huge differ-

SEE REFUGE, PAGE 6

Building support for master plan

BY BRIAN HUDSON
UNIVERSITY EDITOR

As the campus continues through one of the most grueling periods of construction in its history, University administrators are promising that the light at the end of the tunnel is near.

This year has been characterized as the peak of a massive capital improvement plan that ultimately will add the equivalent of the Wake Forest University campus to UNC.

The buildup has carried with it a squeeze felt across campus,

as the number of available parking spaces, classrooms and dorm rooms took a dip last semester.

Even in the midst of this crunch, the University community is on the cusp of seeing the completion of projects that will ease the squeeze, almost six years after construction kicked off.

After years of criticism about the invasive construction, these tangible outgrowths have the potential to sway support for the improvement plan, said

SEE VISION, PAGE 6

Short-term inconveniences to provide long-term gains

PARKING

Crunch: At the beginning of the fall semester, campus parking was reduced to about 2,700 student parking spaces — 18 percent of the once-available spots.

Solution: The University's Master Plan calls for about 1.9 million square feet of additional parking to be included by the end of the build-out. The construction includes the addition of three parking decks on campus. The recently completed Rams Head Center, which opened last spring, offers 768 parking spaces. A deck near Cobb Residence Hall will add 470 spaces and another, near UNC Hospitals, will create 800 parking spaces. Both are scheduled for completion this summer.

CLASSROOM SPACE

Crunch: Due to numerous academic buildings going offline, the academic day has been extended from 5 p.m. to 6:15 p.m. and is using alternative scheduling, such as allowing 75-minute classes on Monday/Wednesday only to be scheduled after 3:30 p.m.

Solution: The Student Academic Services Building, currently under construction on the corner of Ridge Road and Manning Drive, will be a hub for myriad University administrative offices after its completion in spring 2007. As renovations are completed and new buildings are added, the squeeze is promised to dissipate.

HOUSING

Crunch: Administrators are preparing to begin renovations of the South Campus high-rise dorms, which will reduce the number of beds by several hundred during the next several years. The total number of beds on campus dipped last semester to 7,300 with the Morrison and Cobb residence halls going offline.

Solution: Ram Village apartments, which include five apartment buildings, two behind Hinton James Residence Hall and three near Craige Residence Hall, will house more than 900 students. By fall 2007 there will be an additional 1,800 beds on campus after the Morrison project is completed and the Ram Village apartments open.

DOWN THE ROAD

Administrators say construction on Carolina North, UNC's planned satellite research campus, could begin in 2008. Development would not be completed for five to seven decades, but improvements to area education and research are much-touted.

SOURCE: DTH ARCHIVES

Carrboro race gets crowded

8 said to be applying for vacant seat

BY TED STRONG
SENIOR WRITER

The contest to fill an open seat on the Carrboro Board of Aldermen has heated up, with more candidates applying for the lone seat than ran for the three seats disputed in November's election.

Five candidates in total had submitted applications as of late Tuesday afternoon, and three other individuals confirmed their intentions to submit applications before today's 5 p.m. deadline.

The seat became available

when former alderman Mark Chilton defeated alderman Alex Zaffron to become mayor.

Three from the pool of eight — Katrina Ryan, Catherine DeVine and David Marshall — campaigned unsuccessfully in the fall. Marshall and Ryan had not yet turned in applications Tuesday.

Marshall, a Panamanian-born military veteran, said he sees his application as a natural extension of his campaign, in which he emphasized the analytical approach his background allows

him to offer — he's working on a master's degree in public policy at Duke and a law degree at UNC.

He's also pushed for community preservation through issues such as affordable housing safeguards.

DeVine, a writer and activist in Carrboro, has long said that she would apply for the seat. "I have no particular beef; I want to tweak Carrboro, not change it."

As the fourth-place finisher, Ryan tried to be appointed automatically in December.

A prominent Democratic Party activist, Ryan said she decided to

SEE APPLICANTS, PAGE 6

Bill threatens students' wallets

BY ELIZABETH DEORNELLAS
STAFF WRITER

As tuition costs continue to increase, student budgets could be squeezed even tighter by proposed congressional legislation that would cut billions from student loan programs.

What happened?

On Dec. 21, after Vice President Dick Cheney cast the tie-breaking vote, the Senate passed a budget reconciliation bill that included a \$12.7 billion reduction in student loans.

The cut to student loans is the largest included in the bill created

to decrease government spending by \$39.7 billion in five years.

The cut also is the largest in the history of federal student loan programs.

What happens next?

The budget reconciliation bill must be sent back to the House for final approval. The House will vote on the bill after it reconvenes Jan. 31.

Is the bill likely to pass?

"The vote will be very close," said Luke Swarthout, higher education associate for the State

Public Interest Research Groups' Higher Education Project.

Earlier versions of the bill faced stiff opposition from Democrats and moderate Republicans.

Swarthout said he is optimistic that the bill will be defeated now that members of Congress have had time to fully consider the bill's negative impact on students.

"We have an uphill fight," said Tony Pals, director of public information for the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities.

"It's a fight that we may be

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SHALL MAKE NO LAW UNC-system school free speech policies come under fire

SAFETY FIRST University officials and DPS unite to improve campus lighting

OPENING ITS DOORS UNC is one of six schools to host international journalists

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LEGISLATORS SWAP JABS

Still-rising gas prices and the latest state gas tax debate reaches a fever pitch as state legislators and congressional leaders exchange barbs.



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A SLOPPY WIN

North Carolina survives a turnover-riddled performance and David Noel foul trouble to escape Blacksburg, Va., with its second ACC win.

Today in history

Jan. 11, 1965 ... University leaders sign a proposal that would for the first time provide AM programming to residence halls and FM transmission across a five-mile radius.

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