

Jordanian students visit UNC

BY KATY DOLL
STAFF WRITER

The word "America" has different meanings for different people, but for a group of visiting Jordanian students, it means opportunity.

Thirteen students from the Middle Eastern country of Jordan visited campus Tuesday as part of a three-week tour of the United States.

"The purpose of their trip is to teach them more about democracy and civic engagement," said UNC senior Stephen Lassiter, who helped coordinate the event.

The students' trip is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State. The group already has visited California, Washington, D.C., and Texas.

The tour continues through North Carolina and ends March 3

in New York City.

The students had been in the United States for 18 days before their visit to UNC.

"It's a chance to know how the political man is thinking and how you can make diplomacy," said Samer Elmasry, a Jordanian fourth-year student.

Elmasry said he hopes to someday be prime minister of Jordan and plans to use the skills he learned in America to help his country.

"I will go to any country if there's a chance to improve my skills," he said.

The group toured the Smith Center in the morning, had lunch with several members of the Campus Y, attended the class "Defining America" taught by Professor Larry Griffin, held a negotiation exercise about resolv-

ing conflict and had dinner with a group of Muslim and Jewish students.

"Throughout this interaction, we hope to create the opportunity for dialogue and to form substantive relationships with people who it would be more unlikely for them to form relationships with," Lassiter said.

In the negotiation exercise, Jordanian students were paired up with UNC students and asked to talk about their experience with past conflicts and how they resolved these.

"It's always good to interact with other people from different countries and cultures," UNC junior Sam Dolbee said.

"It gives different perspectives and helps you to think about different things."

Some Jordanian students said

they saw this trip not only as an opportunity to increase their skills, but also to explore a new land.

"When I hear America, I hear my dream come true," said Eman Arabyat, a Jordanian college freshman.

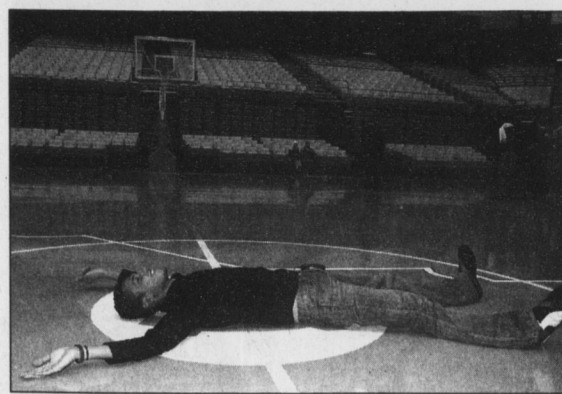
Arabyat said she knew America through television and movies that she had seen.

"I always saw Oprah and always saw it through Oprah," she said, "I love Oprah."

Arabyat said she was surprised at how nice and safe everything has been, especially after America's portrayal in many movies.

"It's so secure here. I can leave my bag and come back, and it's still there," she said. "That's a very rare thing."

Contact University Editor at udesk@unc.edu.



Samer Elmasry lays down on the N.C. map on the Smith Center floor. He and his fellow tour participants were amazed by the size of the building.

Greenbridge gets the go-ahead from council

BY TOM HARTWELL
STAFF WRITER

The environmentally-friendly Greenbridge development approved Monday by the Chapel Hill Town Council will be something new for North Carolina and a benchmark for Chapel Hill.

But the "progressive" development might be a sign of things to come in more ways than one.

The two condominium buildings' sustainable design will make them the first in the state to achieve Gold Certification under the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design.

And at 10 stories, one of the buildings will be the tallest in downtown Chapel Hill.

The vote granting a special use permit to Greenbridge Developments LLC, was unanimous.

But council member Bill Thorpe cast an opposing vote on an earlier measure considered during the meeting to rezone the proposed site between Merritt Mill Road and South Graham Street.

Thorpe said he thinks allowing the building to rise up to 10 stories sets a bad precedent for future projects.

"The project is a good project," Thorpe said. "It's a good use of the land. It's just too high for that area."

Thorpe likened making an exception for Greenbridge to changing ACC rules midway through a basketball game.

"When they came in with the

request at the beginning, they knew it wasn't supposed to be that high."

But like it or not, taller buildings are in Chapel Hill's future, council member Cam Hill said.

"Chapel Hill is going to grow," he said. "And we can't grow out, so we have to grow up."

The town's ongoing plans for the Lot 5 development on Franklin Street involve nine-story buildings.

And in October, Chapel Hill representatives pushed University leaders to consider making taller buildings a feature of UNC's proposed satellite campus, Carolina North, to better accommodate employees who will work there.

"If it reduces the footprint by increasing the height, then it's worth considering," Hill said.

Greenbridge partner Tim Toben, who heads up the project, said in an interview earlier this month that height and density also are part of the philosophy behind Greenbridge.

"What we don't want to see is suburban sprawl," he said.

Resident reactions to the news have been mixed.

In his Singular Wireless store across the street from the site, Red Elagi said the project could benefit the neighborhood.

"It will be good for the area," he said. "It will bring jobs and business, and there will be more protection."

Contact the City Editor at citydesk@unc.edu.

Group discusses adding street vendors

BY SAM WINEKA
STAFF WRITER

Members of the Chapel Hill Downtown Partnership opted against the traditional meeting Tuesday — instead, they invited residents to join them for their morning cups of coffee.

The partnership met at Franklin Street's 3 Cups to hear feedback from residents on the prospect of allowing street vendors in downtown Chapel Hill.

"The Town Council asked our organization to look at something that may be beneficial for downtown," said Liz Parham, executive director of the partnership.

"We're looking to gain more feedback from business centers."

Street vending in Chapel Hill was banned in 1971 because some vendors were selling drug paraphernalia.

Parham said the organization is looking at allowing a market around Parking Lot 5, across Franklin Street from University Square, when the current development project is completed. Another option includes allowing vendors anywhere on Franklin Street.

Parham said the partnership also is considering recommending to the council that Franklin Street businesses be allowed to sell mer-

chandise on the sidewalks outside their stores.

"I'm in favor of having an open marketplace," said Betty Maulsby, who formerly owned the Chapel Hill Leather Shop on Franklin Street that was open from 1964 to 1983.

"I have responded to this issue every time it has come up."

Maulsby, who was once a street vendor in New York City, said she believes that having street vendors in Chapel Hill will help local businesses, even if businesses are afraid it will hurt them by taking away customers.

"It is an issue that recycles and always gets shot down," Maulsby said.

Some residents did share misgivings about the project.

"I have a hard time seeing how street vending would help," said Mark Sperry, owner of TCBY in Eastgate Shopping Center.

"I'm not against it. I'm just looking at it from both sides."

Despite his concerns, Sperry said that if street vendors were allowed, he would take part.

"I'd be the first one to sign up," he said.

Residents at the meeting all agreed that more should be done to promote local business.



Betty Maulsby (right) gives her input on street vendors at an open meeting Tuesday with the Chapel Hill Downtown Partnership at 3 Cups.

"I think our concern should be keeping people in this town from going to Southpoint," said Chris Jones, manager of the BB&T branch at 143 E. Rosemary St.

"I'd pay good money to be able to walk outside of my building and get a paper and a cup of coffee," he said.

There will be another meeting discussing this topic at 5:30

p.m. March 5 at the Ackland Art Museum.

Parham said no recommendation will be made to the Town Council until after that meeting to allow people who are unavailable in the mornings to come speak out.

Contact the City Editor at citydesk@unc.edu.



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