

Apartment fires sweep area

BY SARAH FRIER
ASSISTANT CITY EDITOR

When fire survivor Kelli Gaskill smells smoke or hears sirens, it brings her back to that night in September.

"I wake up at night and it's sort of right there; it's in my head," she said. "I don't know if I'll ever get that picture out of my head, waking up and seeing my dining room on fire."

The Highland Hills at Colonial Village apartment blaze that displaced 20 residents and killed one woman Sept. 30 still haunts the memories of the affected.

Former roommates Susan Thorne, 26, and Kristin Pietrowicz, 25, still are recovering from the severe leg and spine injuries they sustained after jumping from their balcony to escape the fire.

But things are looking up. Next Tuesday, surgeons will remove the structural metal plates and screws that doctors secured in Thorne's foot after the fall.

And a few weeks ago, Thorne returned to her job teaching math part time at Chapel Hill High School. She had left those same students in September; they sent her "get well soon" cards.

"It's only been a short time seeing the kids, but it's been great," Thorne said. "It's going to be hard to leave again and say, 'I'm sorry.'"

Pietrowicz, who returned home to Ohio for recovery, will have her "hardware" removed next year.

Both of the women can now walk with canes. "It's a very slow walk," Thorne said. "It's still painful."

Last fall, Carrboro firefighters were especially busy. A major fire claimed an Ashbrook Apartments building, and six other fires sprung up throughout the town.



DTH FILE/TRACI WHITE

Susan Thorne and Kristin Pietrowicz jumped 25 feet from their balcony during the Highland Hills at Colonial Village apartment fire on Sept. 30.

But the Highland Hills fire was the most severe one.

"In the history of the Carrboro Fire Department, that fire would rank in the top five," Deputy Chief Trey Mayo said. "That's about a hundred-year history."

In response, fire Chief Travis Crabtree asked the Board of Aldermen to strengthen fire code enforcement.

Under Crabtree's plan, the fire department would inspect all commercial buildings yearly and multifamily dwellings every two years.

"Performing fire prevention inspections creates an opportunity to educate citizens and identify fire code violations before the problem occurs," Crabtree said.

He also asked the town to install additional sprinkler heads in newly built multifamily homes.

Such measures could keep devastating fires from happening.

The fire department responded 20 minutes after the Highland Hills fire started, but little was salvaged.

Fire investigators could not determine a cause because the destruction was so extensive, Mayo said. Everything that would have been used as evidence was destroyed.

"You never know. You never know when something like this is going to happen," Gaskill said.

Contact the Features editor at features@unc.edu.

Downtown business goes niche

Franklin Street continues evolution

BY ANASA HICKS
STAFF WRITER

Chapel Hill residents have lost several longtime businesses this year as new ones pop up to replace them.

But the new businesses might be moving in a different direction than residents are used to.

Toots and Magoo, an antiques and paper goods store, opened Tuesday at 142 E. Franklin St. It's scheduled a grand opening May 5.

The Crunkleton, a bar, furniture showroom and art gallery, is slated to open at 320 W. Franklin St. at the beginning of May.

Buns, a hamburger restaurant, will open in the next five weeks.

And Noodles & Co., a "global noodles shop," will open in the middle of July.

"The growth patterns for downtown are going to be centered around arts, education, culture and entertainment," said Liz Parham, executive director Chapel Hill Downtown Partnership.

She said that the downtown is moving toward a niche market and that there isn't as much of a need for an all-purpose downtown anymore.

"If you look at East Franklin from 20 to 30 years ago, it definitely had traditional businesses like hardware and clothing stores," Parham said.

But she said malls and chain

stores have taken away the need for independent stores of that type in a downtown.

The Crunkleton owner Gary Crunkleton said he hopes to attract graduate students, young professionals and neighborhood locals.

"We're hoping it will be the place where Harry met Sally," he said.

But some say chain restaurants such as Cluck U Chicken and Noodles & Co. change the face of Franklin Street.

Noodles & Co. regional marketing manager Patrick Noone said the Raleigh-Durham area is a "no-brainer" market for his company.

"We opened our first East Coast market six or seven years ago in D.C., so it was only a matter of time," he said.

He said Noodles & Co., which has locations in 16 states, is an active member of each community.

But Carrboro resident and former Chapel Hill business owner Musa Firat said chain businesses are bad for Chapel Hill and the country in general.

"Big companies are putting small businesses out of business," he said. "It will monopolize power in the hands of a few people."

Firat, who sold Aladdin's Bar

"Big companies are putting small businesses out of business. It will monopolize power."

MUSA FIRAT, FORMER ALADDIN'S OWNER

last year, said it is hard for small businesses to survive because of the high rent and the unhelpful business environment of Chapel Hill.

He said one big problem is the lack of parking on Franklin Street.

But Parham said businesses that closed in downtown Chapel Hill all closed for different reasons.

"Schoolkids (Records) closed because the industry has shifted and changed," she said. "People rarely buy CDs anymore."

She said The Rathskeller, although it was comparable to Top of the Hill in its heyday, suffered from competition with the 85 restaurants now downtown.

"Downtown's not stagnant either," she said.

"A downtown is an ever-evolving environment that always wants to have new businesses opening up."

Contact the City Editor at citydesk@unc.edu.

Crafts on the Green
at Southern Village

Craft Show and Adopt-a-Thon
to benefit 2PawsUp!

Sunday, May 4th
1-5 pm

Handmade Art by 30 Crafters
Proceeds benefit local animal rescue

www.2pawsupcraftshow.blogspot.com

Hot Deals
...from Domino's®

Call Us!

UNC CAMPUS & CARRBORO
919-929-0246
412 E. Main St., Carrboro
Delivery charges may apply.

"Extra Big
Fantastic Deal"

Get an
EXTRA LARGE
1-Topping Pizza
for only \$10!

Why not have
a party and get
2 or 3?!

BE COOL... THINK COOL...
LIVE COOL...

When the time comes to ditch the dorm or move in with friends, check out the really cool houses at:

www.COOLBLUERENTALS.COM

300 Davie Rd
4 bedrms, 2 baths
\$1840/mo. Fantastic floor plan. Terrific house with all appliances in great neighborhood!
AVAILABLE JUNE 1ST

320 Davie Rd.
4 bedrms, 2 baths
\$1840/mo. Fantastic floor plan. Terrific house with all appliances in great neighborhood!
AVAILABLE AUG 1ST

Now signing leases for 2008-2009!

We make finding your new place easy... Visit our website where you can see photos of our houses, floor plans, map locations and much more!

Complete information on our houses is on-line. We only rent clean, well maintained homes. Call us soon to get a chance at yours.

www.CoolBlueRentals.com

THE DAILY TAR HEEL'S
DIVERSIONS PRESENTS...
SHNMTF
SEKON
THE GRAVES OF FAIRMOUNT
DJ DAN BRYK
+FREE FOOD!

LOCAL 506
506 W. FRANKLIN STREET
APRIL 26 10 PM
FREE!

After 37 years we are closing our doors.

GOING OUT OF BUSINESS SALE!

Save up to 75% on our entire inventory!!
Hurry, because items will go fast!

Sale starts 4/25.

133 West Franklin Street
the back side of University Square
(Facing Granville Towers)

Trail Shop 929-7626
Chapel Hill Since 1971
10-7 M-Sat, 12-6 Sun

Caucasian Non-Menthol Smokers
Needed for Research Study
Compensation up to \$200

DUKE CNSCR
Duke Center for Nicotine and Smoking Cessation Research
Charlotte · Durham · Raleigh · Winston-Salem

CALL TODAY!
888-525-DUKE
(#1011)

visit:
www.dukesmoking.com
e-mail:
smoking@duke.edu