

Project to provide Christmas trees for needy families

By JULIE CAMPBELL
Staff Writer

In an effort to purchase Christmas trees for needy families in Orange County, the Beta Theta Pi fraternity is seeking contributions from area businesses.

Beta Theta Pi project chairman Randy Gill said he got the idea from the movie "Scrooged." In the movie, actor Bill Murray said, "What you put into the lives of others comes back into your own."

"Hundreds of kids do not have a Christmas tree because of financial difficulties, and that's a shame," Gill said. "If there are no symbols of the holiday in the house, Christmas is just like any other day of the year."

Gill is asking for contributions of \$40 from area businesses to pay for the trees.

"I believe that \$40 or \$50 that would be spent for a month's worth of Pepsis can go toward helping someone buy a Christmas tree," Gill said.

All businesses that participate will have a poster placed in their windows depicting a family gathered around a Christmas tree, he said.

After fraternity members collect the money and buy the trees, they will take the trees to various needy families throughout Orange County, Gill said.

Linda's Bar and Grill on Frank-

lin Street is among the businesses that have made contributions to the Christmas tree fund.

Pat McGuire, one of the managers of Linda's, said buying Christmas trees for families that cannot afford them is a worthwhile cause. "We did it in the spirit of Christmas," he said.

Molly Maguire's also will donate money to help buy Christmas trees for needy families. Jim Cashwell, a manager at the restaurant, said the owner of Molly Maguire's donates a lot of money to children's homes and other organizations.

"Many people need financial help, and if they do not have enough money to buy a Christmas tree, then sure we will make a contribution," Cashwell said.

Henderson Street Bar, He's Not Here and Ham's Restaurant will also donate money for the Christmas trees.

The Orange County Department of Social Services will give Beta Theta Pi the names of needy families in the community.

Beachy Sanders, administrative secretary of the department, said families have signed up for the trees.

Any area businesses that would like to participate in the Beta Theta Pi Christmas tree fund should call Randy Gill at 942-5763.

Tour some historic houses this holiday

By JESSICA LANNING
Staff Writer

The Chapel Hill Preservation Society will hold its annual tour of homes Saturday, presenting five historic houses decorated for the Christmas holidays.

The houses are in the Historic District, and the tour will include the Friday House on Hooper Lane; the Horace Williams House, the Spence House and the Chandler House on East Rosemary Street; and the UNC President's House and the Hooper-Kyser House on East Franklin Street.

Mary Arthur Stoudemire, past president and present trustee of the Chapel Hill Preservation Society, said the society has held the tour for the past 10 years.

"We (the society) consider it our Christmas present to Chapel Hill," she said.

Stoudemire said the tour was also a fund-raiser for the activities of the

society.

The tour used to be called the Candlelight Tour, and it lasted two days, she said. This year the tour will last for one day with longer hours.

The Horace Williams House, one of the houses being presented in the tour, belongs to the University and is rented and used by the society as its headquarters.

The Williams house was willed to the University by a famous professor, Stoudemire said. The society is responsible for preserving and maintaining the house.

People taking the tour are welcome to start anywhere along the tour and take their time touring inside and outside the houses, she said.

A bus will take passengers from house to house, but the tour can also be taken on foot.

All the houses are decorated in the Christmas theme, Stoudemire said.

"The houses are exceptionally beautiful," she said.

The houses will be adorned with many native decorations such as pine, cedar, fir, berries and candles. The candles will be lighted once the sun sets and the houses will be even prettier, she said.

Both instrumental and vocal music will be played in the streets and in the houses, she said.

Ida Friday, owner of the Friday House, said she liked the idea that the tour was becoming a tradition.

"I think it's one of the most fun and exciting things that happens in Chapel Hill," she said. "I like the way so many people work together to put it on."

Friday said she believed her house stood where the old Gimghoul Society Lodge used to stand before the society moved into the castle.

The Friday House was built

around 1926 by University professor Lasley, she said. The Fridays did some remodeling in 1980 but left the house essentially the same.

Friday said this was the second year her house has been on the tour. "The talented crew at Lavinder's on West Franklin Street is helping me decorate it this year," she said.

Highlights of the tour include an exhibit featuring work by Chapel Hill artists and refreshments at the Williams house.

The tour will last from 10:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Tickets are \$10 and available at the Horace Williams House and The Country Store in University Mall. Children under 10 are admitted free; if accompanied by an adult.

Parking will be available at the Morehead Planetarium lot and the parking lot at Boundary Street and Park Place.

Planning begins for new county airport

By LYNN GOSWICK
Staff Writer

Plans for a new Orange County airport are taking off, county officials announced recently.

The county received \$50,000 from the N.C. Department of Transportation in November, said Pamela Jones, purchasing manager for Orange County.

After the county received the money, planning consultants Wilbur Smith and Associates of South Carolina began studying the feasibility of putting another airport in the county, Jones said.

Moses Carey, chairman of the

Orange County Board of Commissioners, said concerns over the safety of Horace Williams Airport, located near Airport Road, have been a primary reason in planning for the new airport.

Horace Williams Airport is now surrounded by a residential area that just grew up around it, Carey said. No accidents have occurred at the airport, but the commissioners want to prevent any from happening, he said.

The planning consultants are studying the economic and environmental feasibility of the airport. They began their work two weeks ago,

Jones said.

As the consultants search for possible locations for the airport, the county committee in charge of the airport will be meeting each month to allow the public to voice their opinions about the new facility, she said.

Carey said the consultants will report on their findings early next year, probably in the spring, but all the selection decisions will be made

Inn

year for the last five years, Rehkopf said.

And while occupancy rates are dropping, maintenance and operation costs are rising, he said. The oldest part of the inn was built in 1924, and emergency repairs on the building are becoming more frequent. "I would dare say that every older hotel in town is facing the same situation," he said.

The inn, at the corner of Cameron and Columbia streets, still has a prime location, but the area's newer hotels are often equally appealing to travelers, Jones said.

"Now a person can stay elsewhere for the same price, where before we had the advantage of both price and location," he said.

The pressure to keep prices competitive is another drain on the inn's revenues, Rehkopf said, since rising operation costs can't be buffered by higher room rates. "It starts to put a squeeze on your profits," he said. "What we're presented with is a challenge. The ground rules have changed in the last five years and we can't continue to do things the way we have."

The inn has started making changes to increase its profits, Rehkopf said. Increased marketing efforts, better service and food, and

by the commissioners.

If all goes well, the feasibility planning and site selection will take anywhere from one and a half to two years to complete, he said. After that, the county will apply to the federal government for building funds.

The county is now planning a tentative calendar of meetings about the airport to present to the commissioners at their next meeting on December 20, Jones said.

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some selective price increases have already shown results, he said.

Renovations are another part of the inn's master plan, Rehkopf said, but funding needs put those improvements on hold and not even a rough timetable exists as yet. "I'd like to have had it last year," he said.

The 24 rooms in the old part of the building are targeted for renovations, he said. The plan is to make the rooms larger and more modern, "but not destroy the ambiance of the Carolina Inn," Rehkopf said.

But if the rooms most in need of repair are closed for renovations, occupancy will drop even more. One possible solution is to connect the alumni building to the inn after the new Alumni Center on Stadium Drive is completed. The new area would provide additional rooms while the older ones are renovated.

Each move to renovate brings about related complications like this one, Rehkopf said.

"Of all the positions that I've faced in my career in the hotel business, this is one of the most complex I've had to face," Rehkopf said. "I've never confronted a problem that's so multidimensional and has so many things that impinge on something else."

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