

Student activist uncoils energy to further campus causes

By Vicki Hyman
Staff Writer

"Lindsay, Lindsay, Lindsay," Erik Ose says to a redhead seated at the next table. "Have you bought your Chilton for town council T-shirt yet?"

Lindsay shakes her head and rolls her eyes. She's heard this before. "Erik, I don't have the money."

"Lindsay, Lindsay, Lindsay.... You don't understand. You need this T-shirt. Don't you support Mark? What's \$20 in exchange for your candidate on town council? Lindsay, Lindsay, Come on." Ose gives her the hard sell, his eyes pleading with her conscience and her wallet.

"Erik, not today," she begs. "Please. I'll get one tomorrow."

"Promise?"

Lindsay nods and breathes a sigh of relief. Ose lets her off easy today.

If he isn't hawking T-shirts, Ose is registering voters. ("Are you registered to vote? What do you mean you're registered in your hometown? This is where your vote counts.") And if it isn't voter registration, it's something else. With Erik Ose, it's always something.

A junior history and public policy major from Bristol, R.I., Ose is a man

with a cause. Any cause, as long as it makes a difference in his world. This includes registering more than 1,000 people to vote this electoral season; working on campaigns, both local (such as Mark Chilton's) and statewide (he campaigned tirelessly last year for U.S. Senate candidate Harvey Gantt); organizing Musicians Organized for Voter Education; and being a member of the Student Environmental Action Coalition.

But lots of people want to make a difference in their community. The difference with Ose is that he'll pester you unceasingly until you go along with him.

If Ose were type, he'd be in bold. He's everywhere, in your face, all the time.

Just mention the name to a person, and there's instant recognition — be it a smile or a grimace. Everybody knows Ose, and everyone has something to say about him.

Newly elected town council member Mark Chilton, a senior geography ma-



Profile

ior at the University, is very frank. "He's a madman," he puts simply, "and a workaholic, but I love the old coot." Ose contributed countless hours of work to Chilton's campaign, the council member says, coordinating the mass voter calling and the distribution of fliers and posters.

But Ose's enthusiasm, often taken as pushiness, turns many people off. Lindsay Lowry, Ose's unsuspecting T-shirt customer in the cafeteria, also worked for Chilton's campaign. She said Ose called her as many as five times a day and sometimes as late as 2 a.m., asking her to distribute fliers or to tack up posters.

"He worked really hard on the campaign, and we won," said Lowry, a junior English major, "but I never want to see him again."

Ruby Sinreich, a junior environmental protection major, has known Ose since they met through SEAC their freshman year. Like almost everyone else, she pauses for a minute while she searches for the best way to describe him.

"He has more energy than anybody I know," she says carefully. "He is really committed to the things he does, and he doesn't do anything halfway. He blows



Enthusiastic student activist Erik Ose swears in new voters in the Pit

all over the studio. He's at the microphone doing a public service announcement, then he bounces up to look for a certain album, then he's back setting the next record up for play, every so often tossing his head back to get his long, curly, brown bangs out from behind his glasses.

"Sometimes I figure that people probably get annoyed at me when I try to get them to do things, or I come across as too strident," he says, resting — for once — back in his chair. "But I tend to harass people for good causes, and in that case, I really don't care what people think. People are so busy; they need a little encouragement."

The campaigns, the voter registration — these are all ways to make a big difference at the local level, Ose said. "Since high school, I've been interested in working for change — trying to make the world a better place."

He puts in so much time to his causes. "I neglect my schoolwork a lot," he said. But he always seems to enjoy himself. When Ose organized MOVE last summer, he had to travel across the state — from Asheville to Greensboro to Wilmington — to register voters at concerts. "It was a lot of fun," he shrugs. He has no complaints.

It seems everything is "fun" to Ose. Would he ever do anything that's not fun? "If it meant getting something accomplished," he says thoughtfully. "But if something has to be done, then make it as enjoyable as you can."

"Life is too short, too crazy and too painful, so that a lot of people don't really devote any energy into trying to make things better," he said. "The only way to do it is by staying sane and staying positive."

you away with his enthusiasm."

Caroline Philson, a junior anthropology major who worked with Ose for Chilton's campaign, agrees. "Erik is a wonderful person whose personality is turned up three notches too high. He's intense, and he's annoying, and he wants what he wants and he wants you to see his point of view."

Dana Lumsden, a senior political science and Russian literature major, said the Girl Scouts would love a guy

such as Ose to sell cookies "because he would sell millions and millions of boxes."

He's a hustler, and like any good hustler he's hard to keep track of. Trying to get him alone is not easy, and getting him when he's not busy is impossible.

It's 7 a.m., and Ose is doing his weekly two-hour shift at WXYC, the University's student-run radio station. His tall, wiry frame is a spring uncoiling

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Campus Calendar

WEDNESDAY
5 p.m. CAA ticket distributors will meet in 218 Union for a scheduling meeting.
5:30 p.m. Newman Catholic Center will hold a student night with dinner and a social.
8 p.m. Sliced Bread, a campus satirical magazine, will meet in 226 Union.

ITEMS OF INTEREST
Carolina Fever will meet at 7 p.m. Thursday in 109 Fetzer to distribute tickets for the Clemson game.
Il reste des places a la Maison Francaise si vous aimez parler la langue, boire du bon vin, et rencontrer des bons amis, donnez un coup de fil: 933-0945.

Campus Y will hold elections for co-presidents, co-treasurers and secretary on Feb. 4. Applications are available at the Y and are due at 5 p.m. Jan. 23. Candidates must attend a mandatory meeting at 4:30 p.m. Jan. 16.

Freshmen and sophomores: applications for the Honors Program are available outside 300 Steele Building and are due by Feb. 7.

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