

OCCUPY

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Teach-ins that brought the global issues home included “Duke Energy’s Rate Hikes”, which addressed Duke Energy’s local rate hike and what that money would be used for, as well as discussed corporate utilities and alternative energy development. Two UNC professors who respectively identify as Lumbee and Osage brought us “(Un) Occupy Wall Street”, which simultaneously looked at local Lumbee history while addressing the perennial issue of imperialism and colonization. “Jobs with Justice” presented some of the main issues related to labor unions relevant to North Carolina.

We also have made efforts to be active in the community. We packed a public hearing in Durham for Duke Energy’s rate hikes, and a number of us spoke out against them. OCH/C members have also protested twice in Raleigh, against the prison industrial complex and against hydrofracking. We also participated with Occupy Raleigh in mic checking John Stumpf’s (CEO of Wells Fargo) speech at NCSU. We’ve held two Bank Transfer Day marches and attended the Town Council meeting initially addressing excessive show of force by the CHPD. Members have attended the CVS developers’ meeting, the Chapel Hill Town Council Police Advisory Committee meeting, and the Chapel Hill Town Council Justice and Action Committee, the latter two in order to keep an eye

on the city’s investigation of the CHPD’s actions apprehending individuals at the Yates Building.

Our solidarity marches have connected us visibly and actively with other Occupies in our nation and all over the world. It’s a way to tell each other we’re here and a way to show our communities that history is being made right before their eyes, even if they’re trying not to see. In the case of our March Against Police Brutality, we not only expressed solidarity with Occupies experiencing crack downs all over the nation, but also denounced inappropriate police response in our own town. We’ve marched in solidarity with other Occupies everywhere and in solidarity with those in our own community who struggle under corporate and racist oppression. In just two days, we generated a 130 person parade in solidarity with the largely Latino and Karen community of Abbey Court to protest corporate owners forcing the Human Rights Center out of the apartment complex.

We’ve participated in the national network of Occupy, benefiting from visitors in solidarity from Oakland, OWS, Raleigh, Durham, Greensboro, Asheville, and Boston, among others; our members have visited Triangle Occupies, OWS, DC, Atlanta, and Nashville, among others. Dr. Auerbach, prominent in OWS visited and gave teachings on healthcare and why doctors support Occupy and the 99 percent. We even received a visit from Sgt. Shamar Thomas, the marine now famous for shouting down 30 police to protect U.S. citizens in NYC.

And we’ve had some fun, too! We launched an Occupy George campaign, printing graphics on dollar bills that show the percentages of wealth and ownership inequity in America. We organized a Justice Jam open mic event that brought us everything from poetry slamming to the Raging Grannies and some great music. BeatReport (with OCH/Cer Jil Christensen) DJ’d at the Nightlight, with an immanently danceable mix that revolved around Occupy chants and media bytes. We launched our first guerilla installment in Chapel Hill & Carrboro Art Walk, complete with BeatReport accompaniment, art, and cookies. The day of the Holiday Parade, OCH/Cers handed out pieces of pie from OccuPies, tasty treats converted into pie charts illustrating inequity in the U.S.’s wealth distribution. Our latest holiday event was a Zombie Shoppers Walk at Southpoint to poke fun at consumers and point out our culture’s obsession with purchasing, things, and ownership.

Heather Epes works as a tutor in writing, EFL, literature, ADD/ADHD Coach, dissertation coach, and is an Herbcraftier for Herbal Alchemy. She is an ardent and dedicated supporter of the Occupy Movement and Occupy Chapel Hill/Carrboro.

Editor’s Note: Since this article was submitted in early January, Occupy Chapel Hill has taken down its tents in front of the Post Office on Franklin Street and has taken its show on the road, holding demonstrations all over the area. At this writing, they are camped in downtown Carrboro. Expect to see them around Chatham County. They had planned a fundraiser at the General Store Café this month.

Let’s recommit to civil discourse, due process

By Randy Voller

On January 8, I celebrated my 43rd birthday. I share this birthday with the “King” Elvis Presley and world-renowned theoretical physicist and cosmologist Dr. Stephen Hawking.

But on January 8, 2011 a tragic shooting occurred in Tucson, Arizona. U.S. Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords was shot in the head at point blank range, a federal judge, local constituents and Giffords’ staff member Gabe Zimmerman were murdered in cold blood. Now, January 8 has a somber connotation.

The violence and tragedy of this event is seared into my consciousness due to its date, but also tattooed on my soul because I, too, am an elected official, like Congresswoman Giffords.

With that kind of double barrel blast, is it any wonder why I was so keen last year for the Town of Pittsboro to pass an official resolution condemning the Tucson attack and supporting civil discourse?

In fact, Pittsboro’s official resolution “R-01-11”— the first of 2011 for the Town of Pittsboro — encouraged public officials “...to meet constituents in open forums that are safe for civil debate and open dialogue...”; supported “...the safety and well

being of public officials who serve for the common good...” and “condemned the violence that was expressed in this attack ...as such actions have no place in a civil society.”

It is now 2012 and all over the country, state, and even in Chatham County there are a small number of people who conveniently forget the “due process of law” and use modern methods such as blogs and the internet to intimidate opponents, disseminate untruths, and create a parallel society dominated by fear and recrimination.

Regardless of personal beliefs, political party or affiliation, race, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual preference, marital status, income level, educational achievement, wealth, place of origin, citizenship, or any other group that we may claim as our own, it is imperative that as a community we respect the due process of law and that we operate under a system that at its core guarantees that we enhance our community, ensure opportunity, operate fairly, pursue the truth and ensure equality for all. Anything less is a dereliction of duty and an invitation for the ghosts of the past to haunt our future. We are better than that and we owe Congresswoman Giffords and the six who were murdered our fealty to a due process, open dialogue and commitment to civil discourse.

Randy Voller is Mayor of Pittsboro

GENERAL STORE

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national economy. The people expected to fill the expanded capacity never materialized.

“We never got the bump,” said Joyce. “People love the place but it is a large space.”

Banks did not finance the expansion, so they got some latitude. “We were funded by private individuals, 25 people invested in the General Store,” said Joyce. “You are looking at a \$1 million business.”

“My biggest disappointment is to the customers and to the people who work here, said Vance, “because we are like family. It is the center of many people’s lives.”

Still, hope remained. “A white knight might still come forward,” said Vance. “The phoenix will rise anew,” said Voller. “Something new will come here that will benefit the community at large.”

“You have a \$1 million business with very little debt if you pick it up,” said Vance. “We incurred all the debt.”

Julian Sereno is editor and publisher of Chatham County Line.

OPINION

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