Volunteers to make a difference

By Kim Grizzard
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Hundreds of volunteers throughout Pitt County will be working to make a difference this weekend.

Saturday is Make a Difference Day, the nation’s largest day of volunteering. It also is Operation Inasmuch, a movement of churches nationwide to serve their neighbors in need.

More than 325 volunteers will participate in 40 Operation Inasmuch projects Saturday, from calling bingo games for senior adults at area nursing homes to completing yard work for nonprofit agencies. Members of nine churches will spend a few hours installing carpet at The Little Willie Center or sorting donations at Give2theTroops, My Sister’s Closet, the Food Bank of Central and Eastern Carolina, Hope of Glory and God’s Love ministries. Projects range from local (distributing food at First Born Community Development Center) to global, (bagging rice for Stop Hunger Now).

“It’s a great tool to mobilize volunteers in the community to meet the needs of their neighbors and show them the love of Christ,” said Jimmie Hughes, director of missions at Oakmont Baptist Church, which has participated in Operation Inasmuch 14 times in the last 12 years.
“The goal is to raise people’s awareness of needs in the community,” Hughes said. “It has definitely opened these churches’ eyes.”

Launched at a church in Fayetteville in 1997, Operation Inasmuch has grown to more than 1,500 churches in 21 states. While churches in North Carolina have come together for statewide Operation Inasmuch events, participating congregations are free to schedule service projects any time of year and may host multiple annual events if they choose.

Held the fourth Saturday in October, Make A Difference Day was created by USA WEEKEND Magazine. The 22-year-old, single-day event boasts millions of volunteers nationwide.

Students at Greenville’s John Paul II Catholic High School are among them. The school, which opened last year, is hosting students from the local Boys & Girls Clubs for an environmental education event that will include a sundial demonstration, a nature hike and a presentation by “Love a Sea Turtle” founder Casey Sokolovic. Students also will teach children from the Boys & Girls Clubs about the contributions of Pope John Paul II.

“We selected it (Oct. 22) because it is a feast day for Pope John Paul,” said Annette Jones, who chairs the school’s public relations committee. “All of his life he was giving back to the community and working with youth. We picked making a difference on his feast day to be following in his footsteps.”

East Carolina University sophomore Roman Rys joined Make a Difference Day for the first time last year when he helped collect luggage and duffle bags for foster children throughout the state.

“A lot of foster youth have only trash bags or something to put all their possessions in,” said Rys, who spent some time in foster care in his teen years. “That’s what happened with me.”

Shante Carson, a social worker for the Pitt County Department of Social Services, said Rys and other volunteers will collect the bags as part of Make a Difference Day again this year.

“When they decided that they were going to do the suitcase drive, it just really hit home,” she said. “It’s bad enough that they’re having to move from foster home to foster home. We don’t want to make it worse by telling them...
to put all their stuff in the trash. ... You just think about what kind of image that puts in their mind of what they’re worth.”

This year, Rys and fellow members of SaySo (Strong Able Youth Speaking Out), a statewide association of youth who have been in foster care, will not only collect bags for Make a Difference Day, they will lend a hand with Operation Inasmuch as well. The teens are volunteering to help host a fall festival for children in foster care.

“I’ve been a product of some volunteering,” said Rys, who is majoring in social work, “so I think it’s pretty important.

“I do think we are making a difference,” he said. “Just to know that somebody cares enough to donate their time and effort, I think that can make a whole lot of difference.”

Contact Kim Grizzard at kgrizzard@reflector.com or 252-329-9578.
Plaintiff can get papers in UNC lawsuit

BY KATELYN FERRAL - kferral@newsobserver.com

CHAPEL HILL UNC-Chapel Hill must release documents in its investigation of a housekeeper's sexual-harassment allegations, a judge ruled Wednesday.

Amanda Hulon, 30, of Carrboro, filed a complaint against the university with the state Office of Administrative Hearings in August. The former housekeeper says she was sexually harassed by her former supervisor, Wade Farrington, and his manager, Bill Burston. Neither works for the university now, according to court testimony.

In her complaint, Hulon says Farrington touched her inappropriately and said he would make her job easier if she would have sex with him. Farrington told Hulon regularly to "keep her mouth shut" about the comments and touching, or he would get her fired, according to her complaint.

At the hearing, Administrative Judge Joe L. Webster ordered the university to release the documents in its investigation to Hulon and her attorney, Al McSurely, within seven days. He also said he anticipates ordering both parties to undergo mediation and participate in a settlement conference.

"I think this case cries out for that," he said.

UNC-CH has filed a motion to dismiss the case because Hulon did not complete the university's grievance process before filing a suit, said Katherine Murphy, assistant state attorney general. Therefore, the Office of Administrative Hearings lacks jurisdiction, she said.

According to state law, once a complaint is filed with the university, it has 60 days to respond, Murphy said. The university did respond to Hulon's complaint and found no evidence of sexual harassment, she said. Hulon then had 30 days to dispute the university's finding, but she didn't, Murphy said. She waited five months, then took her complaint to the state.

"The harassment claim is untimely," Murphy said.

Hulon brought her complaint to the university ombudsman office in 2008. She was then transferred to another section of the housekeeping department, but when the harassment didn't stop, the university did not adequately respond to her concerns, McSurely said. The university's unwillingness to
release documents reflects a systemic problem and history of discrimination in the housekeeping department, he said.

"We believe this case will begin to expose how the university treats its poorest-paid, predominantly female workforce," he said.

Hulon said that she didn't know how the university's grievance process worked exactly and that as she tried to file complaints and they were investigated, she didn't hear back after repeated calls and emails.

"No one would talk to me; no one would address any of the concerns I was having," she said.

At the hearing, Murphy said the university is not trying to obstruct her right to have her complaints investigated and heard in court.

"I resent the allegation that the university is trying to run and hide and doesn't care about these things," Murphy said. "It's just not true."

Murphy cited the release of a report this month detailing housekeeper concerns and problems with past management.

The university hired PRM Consulting Group, which made 45 recommendations on how to improve management and staff relationships in the housekeeping department, including how to resolve issues of harassment, retaliation, confidentiality and fairness.

Ferral: 919-932-8746
KANNAPOLIS — Kannapolis City school system teacher, Georgann Athanaelos Sapp, has been named the top elementary art teacher in North Carolina.

The award is given by the North Carolina Art Education Association (NCAEA). The Elementary Art Educator of the Year award recognizes exemplary art educators as “Art Stars” in their fields.

Sapp has been an elementary art teacher at Jackson Park Elementary since 1991. In 2007, she was selected as Jackson Park’s Teacher of the Year, and she was runner-up for the Kannapolis City Schools’ Teacher of the Year award.

She also has illustrated a children’s book written by local author, Marilyn Overcash, and she has been honored by the Bob and Sheri Morning Show as a Link Leading Lady for her commitment to volunteering and dedication to her community, school, and students.

Sapp serves on the Board of Directors of the Cabarrus Arts Council, and she is a member of the Kannapolis Association of Educators (vice president), the National Education Association, and the National Art Education Association. She was appointed by the Kannapolis City Council to serve on the Kannapolis Beautification Commission, and she serves on the Kannapolis Kares Committee.

She is currently president of the Kannapolis Woman’s Club and district president of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs-District 3.

Sapp has a bachelor of fine arts and master of arts in education from East Carolina University and her certification in academically intellectually gifted education from the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill.
Diversity, 1963: Vivian Malone, a civil rights pioneer, was one of the first blacks at the University of Alabama.

College Diversity Nears Its Last Stand

By ADAM LIPTAK

Adam Liptak is the Supreme Court correspondent for The New York Times.

Washington

ABIGAIL FISHER, a white student, says she was denied admission to the University of Texas because of her race. She sued in Federal District Court in Austin, causing Judge Sam Sparks to spend time trying to make sense of a 2003 Supreme Court decision allowing racial preferences in higher education. “I’ve read it till I’m blue in the face,” Judge Sparks said in an early hearing in Ms. Fisher’s lawsuit. But the meaning of the central concept in the decision — “this esoteric critical mass of diversity of students,” he called it — kept eluding him.

The 2003 Supreme Court decision he was trying to understand, Grutter v. Bollinger, had elevated the concept of “diversity” from human-resource department jargon to constitutional stature. The pursuit of diversity, a five-
justice majority said, allows admissions personnel at public universities to do what the Constitution ordinarily forbids government officials to do — to sort people by race.

Judge Sparks in the end ruled that the Grutter decision meant that Texas was allowed to take account of Ms. Fisher’s race. Now her case is hurtling toward the Supreme Court. That could provide a fresh opportunity to consider what we mean when we talk about diversity. It could also mean the end of affirmative action at public universities.

Ms. Fisher’s lawyers filed a petition seeking a Supreme Court review last month, and legal experts say the justices will probably agree to hear it, setting the stage for a decision by June. Such a decision, given changes in the membership of the court since 2003, is likely to cut back on if not eliminate the use of race in admissions decisions at public colleges and universities.

Diversity is the last man standing, the sole remaining legal justification for racial preferences in deciding who can study at public universities. Should the Supreme Court disavow it, the student body at the University of Texas and many other public colleges and universities would almost instantly become whiter and more Asian, and less black and Hispanic.

A judicial retreat from diversity would be deeply symbolic, too. The term — a gauzy, unobjectionable way to talk about the combustible topic of race — has had a remarkable run. If the diversity rationale falls apart in university admissions, it could start to test the societal commitment to it in other arenas, notably private hiring and promotion.

There is little question that diversity as a legal justification for preferences is at risk. Grutter was decided by a 5-to-4 vote. The author of the majority decision, Justice Sandra Day O’Connor, announced her retirement in 2005. Her replacement, Justice Samuel A. Alito Jr., has consistently voted with the court’s more conservative justices in major decisions hostile to the use of racial classifications by the government.

“There thus seem five votes — Roberts, Scalia, Kennedy, Thomas and Alito — to overrule Grutter and hold that affirmative action programs are unconstitutional,” Erwin Chemerinsky, dean of the law school at the University of California, Irvine, wrote in “The Conservative Assault on the Constitution,” published last year.

Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. has certainly been intensely skeptical of government programs that classify people by race. “Racial balancing is not
transformed from ‘patently unconstitutional’ to a compelling state interest simply by relabeling it ‘racial diversity,’ ” he wrote in a 2007 decision limiting the use of race to achieve public-school integration.

Justices Alito, Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas agreed. Justice Anthony M. Kennedy, the court’s swing justice, was less categorical, and he has sometimes served as a brake on the ambitions of his more conservative colleagues in cases concerning race. But he has never, Professor Chemerinsky noted in an interview, voted to uphold an affirmative action program.

John A. Payton, president of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, said studies supported the value of a diverse student body. “There is no longer any doubt as to the educational benefits of racially diverse students learning together and from each other,” he said.

But Peter Wood, an anthropologist, the author of “Diversity: The Invention of a Concept” and a critic of the Grutter decision, argues that the educational value of racial diversity is problematic. “The part of diversity that matters to me and a lot of academics is the intellectual diversity of the classroom,” he said. “The pursuit of a genuine variety of opinions that are well thought through and well grounded is essential. But that has an off-and-on, hit-or-miss connection with ethnic and racial diversity.”

Grutter authorized admissions officials to admit a “critical mass” of minority students. But a brief filed in Ms. Fisher’s case by the Asian American Legal Foundation said that Texas had gone far beyond that threshold and sought “the odious and unlawful objective” of trying “to make the racial composition of its student body mirror the racial composition of the state of Texas.” The upshot, the brief said, was discrimination against Asian students.

A second brief, from the Asian Pacific American Legal Center and other Asian groups, took the opposite view, saying Asian students benefited from exposure to a diverse student body.

The admissions systems endorsed by Grutter are, perhaps incidentally and perhaps by design, opaque, meaning it is hard to identify specific students who would have been admitted but for their race. Texas officials, for instance, say Ms. Fisher cannot know that she would have gotten in had she not been white.
BUT the very murkiness of the diversity rationale, dissenting appellate judges in Ms. Fisher’s case wrote, exists uneasily in a legal system that aspires to analytical rigor policed by judicial scrutiny.

The Texas system challenged by Ms. Fisher is idiosyncratic. Students in the top 10 percent of Texas high schools are automatically admitted to the public university system. Ms. Fisher just missed that cutoff at her high school in Sugar Land. She sued in 2008, challenging the way the state allocated the remaining spots using a complicated system in which race played a role.

Ms. Fisher is now a senior at Louisiana State University. Through her lawyers, she declined to be interviewed.

Grutter allowed but did not require states to take account of race in admissions. Several states, including California, have declined the invitation. As a result, there are fewer blacks and Hispanics on campus in the state.

“I would say that we have lost systemwide — undergraduate, graduate and professional — about one third of the black students we would have enrolled if affirmative action hadn’t ended,” said Vikram Amar, a law professor at the University of California, Davis. The proportion of blacks has dropped, he said, to about 3 to 4 percent from the 5 to 7 percent it would have been.

That creates practical problems, Professor Amar went on. For example, the entering law school class at Davis has fewer than 200 students, and the new students are divided into three large sections in their first year. The handful of black students, he said, may all be assigned to the same section to avoid “creating feelings of isolation.” Other sections may have no black students.

Peter H. Schuck, a Yale law professor, said that should not matter. “The idea of racial and ethnic diversity altering the kind of conversation that goes on in the classroom is so overrated,” he said.

Then he offered a footnote, literally, one from his book “Diversity in America.” Reading it aloud, he said: “Any experienced, conscientious teacher, regardless of race, could and would get on the table any of the arguments that ought to be there, including ideas normally associated with racism or other analogous experiences not personally experienced by the teacher.

“One of my best students responded, ‘Yes, but you wouldn’t say it with the same conviction or affect as one who had experienced it personally,’ ” Professor Schuck continued, still reading. “This is a point I had to concede.”
Closing the Gender Gap at Business School

By LOUISE LOFTUS

PARIS — For years, companies seeking to improve women’s representation at the top tiers of business have relied on tactics like increasing child-care options, offering flexible working hours and instituting boardroom quotas. Those in academia have relied on more bottom-up methods, including getting more women into M.B.A. programs, and educating students on the importance of diversity and family-friendly working environments.

But with female business-school enrollment still languishing below the parity already achieved in law and medical schools, business schools are trying to find out just why fewer women enroll, and determine how to change that.

One school, the European Institute of Business Administration, or Insead, in France, has partnered with the Forté Foundation, an American initiative funded by a consortium of corporations and business schools that tries, through mentoring, financial aid and networking assistance, to channel women toward leadership roles.

Other initiatives, like the European Professional Women’s Network and the European Executive M.B.A. Women’s Group, are undertaking similar efforts.

“It’s about reaching critical mass,” said Herminia Ibarra, a professor of organizational behavior at Insead. Ms. Ibarra, who consults on talent, leadership development and women’s careers, has conducted extensive research on the ways women enter senior business leadership positions.

In 2005, 17 percent of students at Insead were women; enrollment this year has grown to 33 percent.

“When women are only 17 percent of the group, they are far less likely to speak up,” she said. “When they are over 30 percent you can be sure they are raising the issues important to them.”

To reach those numbers, Insead, which is outside Paris, has begun efforts like women-only networking events and scholarships. “We wanted to ask
women who were considering doing an M.B.A. what interested them, and what held them back,” Ms. Ibarra said.

The school found that women’s needs were practical as well as psychological; they sought financial assistance in the form of scholarships, as well as a better understanding of how a M.B.A. could be useful and where it could lead.

One major obstacle the school discovered, and one that is difficult to surmount, is timing. The right time for business school for many applicants is after several years of experience in a prospective student’s chosen field — a time when many women are thinking of starting a family, or already trying to manage working while raising of young children.

“That’s going to continue to be an issue,” Ms. Ibarra said.

Still, Ms. Ibarra said, Insead is concentrating on long-term goals. “We get women students from the younger and higher end of the age spectrum, but we’re trying to educate women about the career paths that an M.B.A. can prepare them for,” she said.

Part of that education involves providing role models for women to identify with. The World Economic Forum Corporate Gender Gap Report 2010 surveyed 600 heads of human resources at the world’s largest employers to assess those companies on the representation of women within their establishments. The respondents, in almost all countries surveyed, said they considered a lack of mentors and role models as one of the main barriers to career advancement.

Insead now has a student body that includes over 300 women, out of a total of about 1,000. The school says these women have created a strong networking base of women, who have in turn set up their own efforts to help others.

“They invite women speakers and hold events,” Ms. Ibarra said, which she said didn’t happen when women were less well represented.
IDEO
David Kelley says most of us stop thinking of ourselves as creative somewhere around the fourth grade.

Innovation 101
Anybody can be creative, says David Kelley. You just have to learn how.

By CAROLYN T. GEER
OCTOBER 17, 2011

Innovators aren't exceptional as much as they are confident. So says David Kelley, the founder of the venerable Palo Alto, Calif., design firm IDEO.

Mr. Kelley, whose company is responsible for designing a wide range of products and services, including the modern computer mouse, believes—and research suggests—that virtually everyone has the capacity to innovate. It's just that somewhere around the fourth grade most of us stop thinking of ourselves as creative, he says, so our ability to innovate atrophies.

Mr. Kelley has made it his life's work to help people regain their creative confidence. In his three decades as a designer and as a professor in the design program at Stanford University's engineering school, from which he graduated in 1978, Mr. Kelley has developed a set of techniques for solving all kinds of problems—techniques that he came to believe could be taught as a methodology. His approach is called "design thinking."

Six years ago, with a $35 million gift from German software magnate Hasso Plattner, co-founder of SAP AG and a onetime IDEO client, Mr. Kelley founded the Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford—dubbed the
d.school—a nondegree program that draws students from all seven of Stanford's graduate schools. The program aims to help students unlock their creative potential by teaching them to become, among other things, more open to experimentation, more comfortable with ambiguity and less afraid of failure.

**Teaching the Process**

The best way to unleash creativity, Mr. Kelley says, is to give students an "experience," or in d.school speak, a design challenge. Under his teaching model, however, students aren't just handed a problem to solve—they must define the problem themselves through research and direct observation.

One group of students, for example, was tasked with designing an incubator for the developing world, where infant mortality is high and expensive incubators are scarce. But when the students were dispatched to Nepal to spend time with mothers and doctors, they found that most births take place in rural areas far from hospitals, so flooding hospitals with cheaper incubators would be of no use to most premature and low-birth-weight babies.

Equipped with this knowledge, and, as Mr. Kelley sees it, a newfound empathy for their subjects, the students reframed the problem. "This was about keeping babies warm, not cheaper incubators," explains George Kembel, executive director and co-founder of the d.school.

The second step in the process is "ideation," where students visualize and brainstorm potential solutions with one another. The students decided that what was needed was an inexpensive baby-warming device that could function in rural communities—one that was transportable, simple to use and sanitize, and worked without electricity.

Next comes "prototyping." The students made sketches and three-dimensional models of potential incubators that they could test, modify, and test again, in an iterative process that is at the heart of design thinking. By the end of the class they had a finished prototype—a kind of sleeping bag made of special material that could be wrapped around a premature infant and kept clean and warm with nothing more than boiling water. The students went on to form a nonprofit company in the hopes of bringing their Embrace incubator to market.
Mr. Kembel says the learning experience at the d.school is centered on a few basic beliefs. One is that people learn by doing, so the more projects students tackle the better. The same goes for developing prototypes. Speed and quantity are encouraged in the hope that students will fail early and often. "If you go through lots of little tests, you learn more than if you just do one test," says Mr. Kembel.

Another guiding principle is that people learn best by collaborating with others who have radically different points of view, so classes should be made up of students and teachers from a variety of disciplines—the more the better.

Moreover, "everyone needs to have an equal voice," says Mr. Kembel, "because everyone in a sense is learning, even the faculty." So the old model of teacher at podium lecturing students has been thrown out in favor of classrooms that look more like studios, with tables and chairs scattered about.

Mr. Kembel says a lot of time at the d.school is spent helping students unlearn things they learned in elementary school. Fear of failure is rampant among students who have been drilled in standardized-test taking, he says. "What we want the graduate students to do is work with others and go out and take risks," says Mr. Kembel.

**Making Waves**

The d.school is reporting progress on several fronts.

It now enrolls 700 students per year, up from 30 six years ago. Applications are running at two to three times the number of available slots, Mr. Kembel says, and increasing numbers of students are choosing to attend Stanford because of the d.school. He also says employers are starting to seek out students with d.school credentials.

The d.school has produced several companies, including d.light design, which makes solar-powered lanterns for the developing world; Alphonso Labs, which markets Pulse, a news-reading application for iPhone, iPad and Android devices; and of course, Embrace, which hatched from the incubator project.
Almost weekly, educators from around the world make the pilgrimage to Palo Alto to take tours and get advice on how to set up d.school-like programs of their own. Dozens of colleges have programs in various stages of development.

More recently, the d.school has been teaching K-12 teachers how to employ design-thinking techniques in their classrooms. Last year alone, more than 500 educators attended workshops at the d.school's K-12 lab. Research is under way, but early indications are that K-12 students exposed to design thinking are more engaged and motivated to learn, say Rich Crandall, director, and Adam Royalty, founding member and lead researcher, of the K-12 lab.

To Mr. Kelley, that is the Holy Grail of design thinking. He says it is behavioral change that enables students to gain innovation confidence, something he believes is as important as gaining literacy skills. "For me this is a mindset," he says. "It's a way of thinking that you can use in every part of your life."

Ms. Geer is a writer in Connecticut. She can be reached at reports@wsj.com.