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Police keep downtown revelers in check

Street preachers create hostile reaction from some partiers

By Kathryn Kennedy
The Daily Reflector

Downtown Greenville's 2007 Halloween celebration started out with a mellow attitude and good spirits among revelers and law enforcement.

The Greenville Police Department did not release preliminary crowd figures Wednesday night. The early evening crowds were described as thin, but by 11 p.m. short lines were starting to form outside the four checkpoints party-goers had to pass through to reach downtown.

"Everything is going as planned. We have had zero problems," Greenville police Lt. Earl Phipps said at about 11 p.m. At that time, one person had been ejected from the area because of disorderly conduct and a juvenile had been taken into custody at a checkpoint when officers using a metal detector discovered a knife, Phipps said.

About 200 Greenville police officers and law enforcement from surrounding communities and counties set up a circle extending from Fourth Street south to Cotanche and Reade streets and from Evans Street east to Fifth Street.

Officers were keeping an eye on a group of about five street preachers who were drawing a hostile reaction from some of the crowd.

When one speaker started railing against rap music, drugs and sex, some in the crowd starting throwing cigarette butts and pens at him.

"This is so wrong ... he's a false prophet and needs to get out of the street," said Tristin Pickens, an Elizabeth City State University student who traveled nearly three hours with friends to enjoy the festivities. "He can't say we are going to hell then cuss and call us whores and tell us we are going to die."

A downtown business owner who declined to give his name was upset that police didn't remove the group.

"Right now they are exercising their freedom of speech," Phipps said. "We're not going to let anything escalate ... that's what our guys are here for."

While diligent, many officers appeared to enjoy the festive atmosphere. A group at Cotanche and Fifth started a count of how many people asked them what they were dressed as. Officers manning the checkpoints joked with people passing through.

Phipps said increasing the number of checkpoints and officers manning the locations kept the lines moving smoothly, making everyone happy.

The crowd was split nearly evenly between costumed revelers and those clad in street clothes.

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from full pirate regalia and nun habits to as little as their underwear and high heels. Several guys joined in the sexy sideshow, wearing tight exercise pants, capes and helmets like the Sparta warriors in the movie "300."

Shiree Hernandez and two co-workers, all dressed as angels, were among the early evening crowd.

"We won't be out too late because we have to be at work tomorrow," Hernandez said.

Junior Johnson, manager of 519 nightclub on Cotanche Street, marveled at the interaction between the crowds and police officers.

"I've seen Halloween grow from the '80s when people were out of control to controlled chaos," he said. "You use to see more party-goers than police."

Johnson said he didn't expect a bump in business, saying it was just another Wednesday night, except for the costumes.

Even with the quiet start to the night, Will Harrwood expected the action to pick up later in the evening.

A bouncer working at Fifth Street Distillery, Harrwood has seen three Greenville Hallo
ewens, each growing a little wilder.

"Every year people get more ridiculous," he said. "You expect a rowdier crowd tonight than they would normally be and they will be more drunk than they would normally be."

Rowdy or not, safety concerns were on the minds of many, given a recent spate of armed robberies, including last week's shooting of an East Carolina University student at an off-campus house and the robbery of about 10 of his friends at the same time.

"As a bouncer, I've heard a lot of stories and you get a lot of threats, but normally the cops keep a real close eye on the bars," Harrwood said. "College kids usually don't want cops around, but tonight they are our best friends."

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Study: Eastern N.C. women find own breast tumors

ECU News Services

Breast cancer patients in eastern North Carolina frequently find their tumors themselves, and those tumors, often found later than they would be through mammograms, are larger and more difficult to treat, according to studies at East Carolina University.

A team led by Dr. Andrea Rosenberg, a resident physician at the Brody School of Medicine at ECU, analyzed the medical records of more than 1,500 women diagnosed with breast cancer at ECU between 1999 and 2004 and found that 12 percent of them had tumors at least 5 centimeters in diameter. One-fifth of black women had tumors that size, compared to less than 9 percent of white women. Those lacking health insurance or on Medicaid were also more likely to have larger tumors.

The five-year breast cancer survival rate ranges from 98 percent for stage 1 cancer to approximately 18 percent for stage 4 cancers, according to Rosenberg. Therefore, a patient is more likely to be cured or have prolonged survival if she presents with a smaller tumor. A tumor 5 centimeters or more in diameter would be at least a stage 2 cancer, Rosenberg said. Cancer is classified in four stages, and stage 2 cancer is advanced and may affect lymph nodes but has not yet spread to other parts of the body. Rosenberg added that catching a cancer before stage 3 can make a significant difference in treatment and quality of life for patients.

She also said her research points to a need for a better understanding of the cultural explanations for why larger tumors are more often found among black women than white women.

In a separate study, Rosenberg found that three-quarters of breast cancers were discovered by women examining themselves. That figure included women who had regular mammography.

Breast cancer survival is improved by early diagnosis. Some experts have questioned the usefulness of self-exam, saying it leads to unnecessary diagnostic procedures without improving survival. Rosenberg said community-based education needs to be provided to all women on how to perform a breast self-exam to help them identify tumors sooner and improve survival rates.

"These findings suggest that self-examination remains an important method of breast cancer identification," Rosenberg said.

She surveyed patients who had been diagnosed with breast cancer and were receiving care at the Leo W. Jenkins Cancer Center. Rosenberg found that breast cancers were first identified by the patients themselves in 75 percent of cases. Cancer was first identified by mammogram in 16 percent of cases, by provider in 9 percent and by the spouse in 2 percent.

The women surveyed crossed all demographic, educational and income levels.

While women discovered most cancers themselves, those discovered by mammogram were identified earlier and thus were more likely to be successfully treated.
Son's memory haunts family

After his death in a fire, parents fight for safe housing

BY THOMAS MCDONALD
STAFF WRITER

The beach house inferno at Ocean Isle Beach that killed seven South Carolina college students Sunday morning brought back painful memories for Ivey and Pam Pilkington of Grifton.

Two years ago, the Pilkingtons' son, Cody, a 19-year-old sophomore at N.C. State University, and senior Mark Brandon Davis, 22, of High Point were killed as they tried to escape the second floor of an apartment that was on fire off Oberlin Road.

"I know how those parents are feeling," Ivey Pilkington said Tuesday. "No words can explain what or how it happened."

The Pilkingtons have not put the tragedy behind them. They have established a scholarship fund in Cody's name and are planning to lobby the General Assembly to require landlords to make regular checks of fire alarms and smoke detectors.

They also are trying to ensure that Cody's landlord is held accountable for the fire that killed their son.

"Smoke detectors and alarms are life-protection issues," Ivey Pilkington said. "No one dies when the plumbing gets backed up."

Authorities have not determined the cause of the Ocean Isle fire but said the house did have smoke alarms.

Cody Pilkington and Davis were living in a duplex at 128 Groveland Ave. that was used as a fraternity house by

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eight members of Sigma Alpha Mu. Raleigh fire officials said a cigarette left smoldering in a sofa caused the fire.

Every occupant in the adjoining apartment at 126 Groveland Ave. made it out safely. Investigators later found that 126 had more than enough smoke detectors in hallways and the bedrooms. But on the side of the duplex where the fire broke out, investigators found only one detector in a second-floor bedroom and another on a table in a basement bedroom, authorities reported.

Ivey Pilkington said Cody didn't smoke or drink but that "alcohol and cigarettes killed him," he said, referring to evidence that there had been a party at the house the night before.

The landlord of the Groveland Avenue duplex, Marshall Stewart, is scheduled to appear in Wake County District Court next week to face a charge that he violated a residential rental agreement.

The Pilkingtons settled a civil lawsuit out of court in May with Stewart and Laura Hales of Apex, the property owner. They used documents from the civil case to help convince the Wake County District Attorney's Office that someone should be held legally responsible for not ensuring the smoke detectors were working.

On Sept. 19, nearly two years after the fire, Raleigh police issued the summons to Stewart, 56. He is accused of failing to ensure smoke detectors in the duplex were operating when the students moved in Aug. 1, 2005, court records show.

Missing or disabled smoke alarms are among the most common causes of student housing fires, along with lack of automatic fire sprinklers, careless disposal of smoking materials and alcohol consumption, according to the Center for Campus Fire Safety, a nonprofit group in Massachusetts.

Once the case is resolved, the Pilkingtons will begin trying to get the attention of state lawmakers. "I'm taking it one step at a time," Ivey Pilkington said. "I figure if I make enough noise, somebody will listen."

The Pilkingtons have established a Web site, www.codyblue.org, and the Cody Blue Pilkington Scholarship Fund to honor their son's memory and to promote the academic interests of their son.
Are you ready for cornhole?
No sweat

Harry Bray of Blanch, left, and Brian Fleming of Greenville, facing right, play a game of cornhole while tailgating in the parking lot outside Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium in Greenville before the Oct. 20 N.C. State-East Carolina football game.

It's a truly lazy competitive sport

BY JOSH SHAFFER
STAFF WRITER

RALEIGH – Patrick Foote Jr. lobbed his beanbag with the graceful arc of an Olympic discus thrower, taking care not to spill his can of Natural Light or let the cigarette fall from his lip. His bag plunked neatly through a hole 30 feet away, and a shirtless mob threw its arms in the air, howling like snake-bit coyotes, celebrating the arrival of the world's laziest sport.

At least two dozen cornhole games raged outside Carter Finley Stadium for Saturday's homecoming game, with the simple beanbag toss drawing bigger crowds than the pig cookers.

In Hillsborough, Chuck Friend watched the cornhole mania build and started constructing his own sets out of plywood this summer, selling them for as much as $120. He has sold more than 30 since June, roughly the date The Wall Street Journal featured cornhole on its front page.

Cornhole.
Easier than horseshoes. More portable than pingpong. Mindless fun that satisfies like a loud belch.

Born in Ohio, the barroom pastime has slowly trickled into the Triangle and found wild popularity at N.C. State University tailgate parties.

The game combines Americans' twin passions for leisure and blood sport — intense enough to play with teeth bared, ridiculous enough to play with a half-full beer can in your pocket.

"It doesn't take a lot of out you," said Mike Vysocka, an N.C. State student in his "super-senior" year. "It's a lazy competitive sport. That's American!"
FIND OUT MORE

Want to know more about the game? Visit the website of the American Cornhole Association, www.play-cornhole.org.

Any cornholer will explain that the real appeal lies in cornhole's ease, goofing off risen to the level of art.

Pingpong tables are heavy and hard to move around, and the game takes a speck of athletic ability, said Joseph MacMillan, senior. All cornhole requires is a reasonable attention span and a working arm.

The American Cornhole Association boasts 16,000 members nationwide, mostly displaced Ohians, with Charlotte claiming what appears to be North Carolina's only official league.

The ACA hopes to bring cornhole corporate sponsorship, get airtime on ESPN and develop a traveling pro tour.

"For veteran cornholers, being ranked relative to other cornholers across the country is great fun and adds a whole new dimension to the game," writes Michael D. Whitton, the ACA's president. "Help us make cornhole America's game!"

All it takes is two wooden platforms built on a slant and pair of bags filled with corn kernels.

Rules can vary more than a kid's game of tag.

For the most part, a cornholer stands 30 feet from the platform and aims his bag at a circular hole.

Send one through the "cornhole" and collect three points. A near-miss on the platform scores one.

But some give points for bags that slide down the hole when knocked in on someone else's throw — much like shuffleboard.

As cornhole players see it, the time is near for tournaments that will rival darts and pool. Cornhole forgives poor aim, nervous fingers and blurry vision.

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