

Northside News

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A print-link for neighborhoods of change

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*New Series on
Youth and Summer
Programs*

GRIOT Entrepreneurship at Blackspace

- By Brentton Harrison and Pierce Freelon -

Do you ever have that feeling that young people with great potential are being depicted in negative ways? And the feeling that far too often society creates barriers that shut youth off from opportunities to cultivate their minds, creativity, and energy? The GRIOT (Galactic

by Inheriting Oral Traditions) social entrepreneurship summer program starting in Chapel Hill and Durham aims to open new doors for young people.

Griots are West-African musicians, poets and teachers of the oral tradition; they are the human library. Both admired and feared within West African tribal societies, griots reserved the history, traditions and values of their respective tribes through oral stories. Griots also nurtured and practiced Black oral traditions in the United States, generations after being stolen from their Motherland. Both the Blues and Hip Hop were birthed out of the Griot's legacy, as cultural responses to widespread oppression.

The GRIOT summer program, youth in Durham and Chapel Hill will produce and perform their own short theater inspired by West African storytelling traditions, while learning a STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and math) curriculum. Youth will be trained in 3D Printing, digital media editing, puppet making, theatre production and Black history. The program seeks to instigate a paradigm shift in the community — by teaching Black History to youth and equipping them with digital and media skills. Like the griots making a living through the oral tradition, we hope to learn from their models of our ancestors creating opportunities for youth that activate their careers and validate their voices and cultural heritage.

The GRIOT program will take place at Blackspace, located across the hall from the Chapel Hill Teen Center at 179 E. 10th Street. Blackspace (formerly the Beat Making Lab) was founded by Pierce Freelon as a community center for digital creativity where youth make beats, edit videos and produce radio pieces in free workshops. Visit <https://www.facebook.com/blackspace179/> to learn more!



The old Beat Making Lab pictured above has been time-warped into a fusion of past and present called Blackspace! Come in to see the space!

Northside and Pine Knolls Welcome New Code Enforcement Officer!

John Jacobs grew up on Craig Street and remembers going to Hargraves after school. After he served in the military and lived in California, he returned to his hometown in 2009. In February, the Town of Chapel Hill responded to neighbors' advice and hired two code enforcement officers, with Jacobs specifically responsible for Northside and Pine Knolls.

Jacobs reflected, "My grandmother used to tell me about Orange County Training School. Being in the military is an eye-opening to learn more about the community's history such as the Navy Band at Hargraves. It made me realize there is still a lot to be discovered." He is committed to strengthening community ties. He said, "My priority is to improve education on what ordinances are and how to effectively communicate with the community to solve issues."

He will address concerns about crowded student rentals, garbage, and parking while also being a resource for tenants' rights and the overall health of the community.

To reach him, call (919) 968-2721 or (919) 485-9264, or email him at jjacobs@townofchapelhill.org. Requested forms are available online at <http://www.townofchapelhill.org/town-hall/departments-services/planning-and-utility/code-enforcement> as well as at Town Hall. If you cannot email or get to Town Hall, call the Jackson Center at (919) 968-2721 and we will bring you the form. Jacobs will also be at the next Community Watch meeting, so come out to get to know him!



One of Jacobs' roles is enforcing parking violations.

Unity Voices: Update on Proposed Development at Breadman's

ch's Community Watch meeting held by EmPowerment (every Tuesday of the month, 6:30 pm @ Hargraves), the developers for input on their design ideas. They own the lot that includes a parking lot, and several houses. They have offered to portion of the lot for a local nonprofit to build and manage housing units. The architects proposed a design that includes over 160 market rate apartments facing Rosemary and 31 units attached in the back to the main building. A nonprofit would fund the affordable housing construction, but the land is divided and the two parts are proposed to be built simultaneously.

Road resident Rashi'i Purefoy expressed concerns about the development. "I am not sure it will happen the way it's supposed to. Affordable housing hasn't worked out at other developments, and I'm not sure a nonprofit would be able to get the money, especially since the budget is so tight ... There used to be a couple shops for things like what that parents could actually afford, and now we don't see that. I know change happens, but there is a way to change, I feel." Farrington of Starlite Drive was more hopeful. He said, "Affordable housing is a great idea. Just about all the land in Chapel Hill and Carrboro is taken up, so this building could make a difference. I think a lot of families would be happy to live there. I think the whole thing is one project, and I think we can find the way to build on the low- to moderate-income side."

Additional concerns voiced at the meeting include that the market rate building would be higher than the Northside Conservation Commission normally allows, that the market rate units might attract too many students, and that there is too little commercial space in the design. You can write us your opinions, come out to meetings, or discuss with your neighbors what you want for your community!

What's Needed on Community Kitchen Amendment at Carrboro Public Hearing

The Board of Aldermen will hold an important Public Hearing on March 22nd at 7:30 pm at Carrboro Town Hall. A Text Amendment has been proposed for the Board to vote on, and, if approved, the amendment would allow for a community kitchen/food center to be built replacing the existing kitchen at the corner of Main and Columbia.

Comments are limited to 3 minutes per person. Many neighbors encourage you to come to us about this meeting. Collectively they say, "Please attend this important meeting for a better quality of life for all our citizens!"

Tigers vs Tigers

On Friday, April 9, Piedmont Health and UNC Walk for Health have to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the historic enrollment of Charles Johnson, the first black scholarship athlete at UNC.

Football students representing the Chapel Hill and Carrboro teams will play students representing the Laurinburg, NC team at 7:30 pm with pre-game entertainment at 6:30. The Durham Divas 'N Dudes, a senior cheerleading team, will perform at halftime. and



Ms. Keith Edwards is a lifetime resident of Northside and a lifelong advocate for the community. Keith is widely known as a fighter for affordable housing. She receives calls from neighbors asking about household and community issues. To submit questions for "Ask Keith," call the Jackson Center at (919) 960-1670 or email us at contact@jacksoncenter.in

Q: This month we have received two questions from areas outside Northside. Many people who have moved to that local officials have been putting all of their attention on the Northside area and have forsaken other areas that desperately need help within the town. **#1:** Some Pine Knolls residents want to know, "How can we get help with repairs and improve police interactions because of safety concerns?" **#2:** "Why isn't anyone offering housing assistance for repairs to people on the outskirts of Chapel Hill, Carrboro, and out in the county?"

A: The Jackson Center and I, along with other agencies that provide assistance, are very concerned and strive to address the issues that affect all residents of Chapel Hill, Carrboro, and the county. Habitat for Humanity has done several repairs with their A Brush with Kindness program, and last weekend in Pine Knolls, and Rebuilding Together is beginning to do interior work in Pine Knolls. We will continue to contact with other agencies to try to get even more help for you or your neighbors need assistance, call or email the Jackson Center, and they will be your advocate. In response to growing safety concerns we have talked with the town chief and other Chapel Hill officers, and the police have had contact with concerned residents too. The Jackson Center will continue to work in addressing Pine Knolls safety concerns. We have also encouraged residents to attend Community Watch meetings (see Community Board website).

In response to the second question, The Jackson Center has contacted many agencies and discovered that the designated for the county are limited, even for people in Chapel Hill and Carrboro addresses. There is no money to go around in county government programs where there are restrictions on how other housing agencies can distribute resources. But, we are continuing to advocate for better programs and hope to create important channels for funding for the Northside community comes from various sources under unique sets of rules because it was the African-American community in Chapel Hill and Carrboro so funds are specifically allocated there to conserve and provide a place for families to raise their children. This is very important because of the influence of many families turning family properties into rentals for students.

Even if many programs aren't currently available