



TOWNtalk

NEWSLETTER FOR EMPLOYEES OF THE TOWN OF CHAPEL HILL
VOLUME 18 ISSUE 2 • NOVEMBER 2021

IN THIS ISSUE: New K-9 (2) • Big Awards for Town Employees (2, 4) • Housing Program Update (4) • After Hours Medical Care (6)



On the Front Burner

As the weather cools, the leaves change and fall, and we inch closer to the holiday season, I'm always reminded of how fortunate we are—despite all our world has gone through during the last 20 months.

It is all too easy to get caught up in the negative portions of our lives. It's part of human nature that we focus on the negative. However, I want to take a moment to do just the opposite—to focus on the positive. To celebrate our successes and praise everyone who has worked tirelessly to continue to provide quality services here in Chapel Hill.

At this moment—right now, I want to celebrate you. You have withstood so much during the pandemic, from stressors

at home and work, including being forced to be flexible in ways you probably didn't anticipate prior to 2020. Thank you for rising to the occasion.

You have helped us accomplish so much in providing vital services to our community: from providing meals to people who don't have the resources, to keeping our buses running and getting people to the places they need to go, to providing community safety services in the interest of keeping people mentally and physically safe and well, to simply helping someone get a bill paid, and many, many things in between. Our services have remained operational—even if they needed an adjustment or two. That could not have been accomplished without you.

Take time to celebrate the many accomplishments, compliments, kudos, and praises the Communications and Public Affairs staff has curated from Town departments in this special issue of TOWNtalk. As always, take care of yourself, and take care of one another.



Good news! We now have four parking spaces dedicated for electric vehicle charging at Town Hall. Two spaces are for public charging and two are for employees. If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to John Richardson and/or Brennan Bouma



In the Spotlight

Bobbiette Palmer

holds a unique position in the Town: she is one of only two female employees in Transit's maintenance department. She started as

Administrative Assistant, providing support to two staff members, as a temp in October 2017 and became permanent in April 2018.

"We function as one big family, and I very much enjoy making sure our guys have what they need and coming up with new solutions to challenges we have faced," she says.

And, this English/Philosophy and Art major is no stranger to working on a team. Bobbiette spends a lot of time fishing with her all-female deep sea fishing team, the Ebony Anglers, and creates programs for her team's non-profit youth foundation.

"We are five black women who have embraced deep sea sports fishing while balancing motherhood, businesses, jobs, and everyday life," she says.

Her experiences with this team no doubt contribute to her ability to problem solve in her current role. Just when she thinks she has been challenged to her limit, she is encouraged to "reach deeper and go the extra mile for [her] team, family, job, and [the youth] foundation."

When Bobbiette isn't providing
Continued on p4





K9 Rocky Joins the Team

K9s Mando, Perrin, and Raiden have a new friend at the Chapel Hill Police Department—Rocky! The newest Guardian of the Hill joins Officer **Jacob Clark**. Rocky, a 15-month-old Belgian Malinois, is originally from Poland.

At K9 school, Rocky is learning how to help officers search for missing people or fleeing crime suspects, as well as to search for and find dangerous drugs. He is also learning how to search buildings and protect his new partner, Officer Clark.

When Rocky is not busy at K9 school or playing fetch with his favorite ball, he is soaking up all the love and attention he can find, according to Jacob, who is excited for Rocky to become a beloved part of the Chapel Hill community.

Pollution Prevention Spotlight

On a not-so-crisp autumn day in October, **Tommy Gregory** (Fire) responded to a call behind Eastgate Crossing Shopping Center after a contractor hit a gas line. The project is replacing one leg of an existing clay sewer main. While on site to address the gas line, Tommy noticed that the sanitary sewer lateral from the shopping center was flowing into a trench while workers were in the bottom working on the sewer main replacement.

Tommy immediately reported the issue to Public Works, and Stormwater engineer **Mary Beth Meumann** was quick to arrive on the scene. Mary Beth has been working with the contractor to protect Booker Creek

Colleen Lanigan Receives Distinguished Service Award

Our very own Colleen Lanigan (Parks and Recreation) was recently awarded the Charles F. Blanchard Distinguished Service Award for her contributions and support of The Arc of the Triangle and its participants and their families. Colleen serves as the Special Olympics Coordinator for Orange County.

Executive Director Jennifer Pfaltzgraff says, "Every year The Arc of the Triangle likes to recognize individuals and organizations that support children and adults with disabilities right here in the Triangle. The Charles F. Blanchard Distinguished Service Award is for the individual who shines as an example of what that community support looks like. There is no one more deserving!"

Arnold Kaluzny, Emeritus Professor in Health and Policy Management at the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health wrote this nominating letter recognizing Colleen for her efforts.

"One cannot overstate the many contributions of Ms. Colleen Lanigan to our community in support of families who care and love those with intellectual and developmental disabilities. For more than 20 years Colleen has assembled a team of coaches and volunteers and developed and maintained an infrastructure to support an array of activities to enhance

learning in a safe and secure environment. An environment of love and respect providing each individual a chance to become useful and productive citizens who are accepted and respected in their communities."

Mr. Kaluzny went on to say, "Over the past year—the reality of COVID-19 has provided the ultimate test whether any program can meet their objectives. Colleen, through her vision, leadership and commitment, has provided creative and rewarding programs for which many have been beneficiaries. In the end we are a better community because of her efforts. We are better prepared to meet the challenges and needs of I/DD disabled and their families in the post COVID era."

Colleen is very special to us, having worked with Chapel Hill Parks and Recreation since 1990, and we're so very proud of her receiving the highest award that The Arc of the Triangle has awarded. Congratulations Colleen!



from the sewage flow. Thanks to Tommy, Stormwater staff found out about the issue quickly and were able to act.

If you see water pollution in town, report it to the Stormwater office at 919-969-RAIN (7246). Not sure what water pollution looks like? Check out the brand new Stormwater 101 Training. All staff must watch the training video by Dec. 20, 2021. View the video at knowandgrow.csod.com or on YouTube. If you view the video on YouTube, email Tom Clark at tclark2@townofchapelhill.org with the date you completed the training.

Briefs

The newest member of the CHPD family, Paxton Ryien Hedgepeth Bell, arrived on Nov. 7 at 3:04 p.m. He weighed 7lbs 12oz and was 21 inches long. **Ashely and Paul Bell** (Police) are doing well.... and so is the new bundle of joy. Congratulations to the new parents and welcome to their son!



Brennan Bouma (Sustainability) recently joined the Town as the new Sustainability Program Analyst. Brennan will help implement the Town's Climate Action and Response Plan.



Brennan has more than 18 years of experience in Sustainability and a master's degree in City and Regional Planning from UNC-Chapel Hill. He lives in Carrboro with his wife and two young boys. They are one year and 150 miles into hiking the entire Mountains to Sea Trail as a family!

Anya Grahn (Planning) has been promoted to Principal Planner. Anya has over nine years of experience in the field. She holds a master's degree in Historic Preservation and other credentials. Anya is taking primary responsibility of a major area of work within the Planning Department as our historic preservation subject matter expert.

Anya has proven herself an adept planner. She recently managed a major initiative for the Town in the new Short Term Rental ordinance, managed complex development agreement modifications such as Glen Lennox, and delivered an updated version of the Historic District Design Standards and Principles, which will shape our valued historic neighborhoods for years to come.

Corey Liles (Planning) has been promoted to Interim Planning Manager. Corey has over 15 years of experience, holds a master's degree, and is an accredited professional with the American Institute of Certified Planners. Corey has been informally fulfilling the role and responsibilities of Planning Manager for some time. He is responsible for developing long range and project-level planning; managing input from the public, Council, advisory boards, departments, and local governments; and participating and leading development review processes for concept plans, text amendments, rezoning applications, and major economic development priorities. Corey is a consistent resource and mentor for staff.

Becky McDonnell (Planning) has been promoted to Senior Planner. Becky has five years of experience in the field, holds a master's degree, and is on track to become a certified planning professional through the American Institute of Certified Planners. Becky has consistently proven her proficiency in development review, as she takes on increasingly complex projects such as Weavers Grove and several E. Rosemary projects that will significantly reshape downtown.

Congratulations to **Joe McMILLER** (Transit) on completing the Local Government Federal Credit Union (LGFCU) Fellows Leading for Results program through the UNC School of Government. The program is designed to help further develop local government leaders for organizational leadership. Thanks to Joe for positively representing the Town and Chapel Hill Transit in this challenging program and continuing to develop your leadership skills!

Adam Nicholson (Planning) has been promoted to Principal Planner. Adam has over 15 years of experience in the field. He is taking primary responsibility for a major area of work within the Planning



Department, most notably landscape and urban design, as he is on track to become a licensed Landscape Architect. Adam has identified opportunities for elevating our landscape standards and design practices and anticipates working cross-departmentally to update the Town's Landscape Guidelines.

Michelle Richardson has joined the Public Housing team as Administrative Assistant. She has more than five years

of experience working in administration and two years of experience in property management. Michelle has a long history of helping people and going above and beyond normal protocol to help make their day better! She is affectionately known as the "Excel Queen."

When not working, she loves to spend time with her husband and granddaughter, Savannah. Michelle has shared that Savannah is a feisty 2-year-old and the boss of their home!

Sarah Viñas has been chosen as the new Director of Affordable Housing and Community Connections. She has nearly 20 years of experience focused on

addressing root causes of poverty and housing insecurity. She joined the Town more than a decade ago. In 2014, she joined the Town's newly-formed Office for Housing and Community, where she developed many new programs and policy solutions.

Sarah has a bachelor's degree in Sociology and Religion with a minor in Community Building and Social Change from Emory University and a master's degree in Public Administration from UNC-Chapel Hill. She is supported by her husband, Gabriel, and their two children, as well as her extended family who live in Chapel Hill.



Town Employee Housing Program Update!

Changes to the Town's Employee Housing Incentive Program are designed to better address employee's housing needs and allow more employees to access the program's benefits. The program allows permanent Town staff to receive financial coaching and monetary support to rent or purchase a new place to live closer to work, reducing commute times and stress, and making it easier to be involved in the community.

The key updates recently approved by Town Council are:

Employees may now be able to receive the rental or homeownership incentive when moving within five miles of Town limits! Previously, only housing within Chapel Hill limits was eligible.

Employees purchasing a home in Chapel Hill may be eligible for up to \$12,500 in down payment and closing cost assistance. Those purchasing homes

within five miles of town could be eligible for up to \$7,500.

Employees renting housing in the eligible area could receive up to \$4,200 in assistance for deposits, fees, and future rent. Future rent is a new eligible expense, allowing employees to receive up to the higher maximum assistance amount to make monthly payments more affordable.

These updates were developed from the feedback of Town employees. Thank you to all who participated!

Watch for the launch of these exciting changes, plus learning opportunities on housing strategies, in early 2022!

Visit the [website](#) for more information, including income limits for all members of the household.

Questions? Contact [Megan Culp](#) (Affordable Housing and Community Connections).



Transit Employees Honored with Chief's Cup

Chapel Hill Police Chief Chris Blue recognized two Chapel Hill Transit employees for their exemplary work to help a stranded community member. They just received the Chief's Cup – a commendation – for their good deed.

Officers were recently called to help a man whose electric wheelchair battery failed along Merritt Mill Road, leaving him without a way to get home. Officers asked Chapel Hill Transit for help. Without hesitation, our Transit teammates – Demand Response Supervisor **Javious Newman** and Bus Operator **Thomas Dodson** – stepped up to the challenge and brought a bus to assist.

One of the responding officers said, "I know it was late and they were probably getting ready to call it a day to go home. I want to share my gratitude and commend them for their dedication to service and to teamwork in assisting another department."

Chief Blue added, "I join the responding officers in their appreciation for your efforts. Our community is best served when our Town teammates work together and across departmental lines. We consistently see our Transit colleagues go beyond the call of duty, and it is my honor to thank you both for your professionalism, teamwork, and compassionate service."

Nate Chambers Receives Award for Volunteer Work

We are so proud of **Nate Chambers** (Police), who just received the President's Lifetime Achievement Award for more than 4,000 hours of volunteer work.

The prestigious award from the White House recognizes Nate's passionate and dedicated service in the Chapel Hill community. The award honors people whose volunteer work positively impacts communities across the country and inspires those around them to act.

Nate has been with the Chapel Hill Police Department since 2005. He is a critical part of the "Shop with a Cop" program each holiday season. Nate also supports our "Coffee with a Cop" initiative. A few years ago he even partnered with a UNC-Chapel Hill basketball player to set up a free basketball camp for children. He also touched countless lives during his time as a School Resource Officer.



Pictured: Nate Chambers (l), and Bruce Carter (r)

Nate has consistently taken initiative to give back to our community. He is a shining example of what it means to be a Guardian of the Hill.

We want to thank Bruce Carter and Blessed are the Peacemakers for nominating Nate for the award. #GuardiansOfTheHill

graphic design and creating websites and brand identities for individuals and small businesses.

To learn more about Bobbiette's deep sea fishing team and youth programs, visit [ebonyanglers.com](#). Her team is hoping

to impact the world of sport fishing while teaching children in the community how to fish and boat. They also aim to provide access to hands-on learning about sports fishing and marine biology.

In the Spotlight: Bobbiette Palmer

Continued from p1

clerical or technical support to her team with Transit, she is designing logos or websites and spending time with her daughter and (new!) fiancé. She loves

Compliments

Jason Grafford, Anthony Wilborn, and Kevin Chestnutt (all Fire) were thanked by Mack Howell (Public Works) for providing a fire hose to fill the pool at the Community Center after a recent maintenance project. "The old hose was leaking into the pump room and could have potentially damaged some equipment. I called the Battalion Chief who was on duty to inquire about a new hose, and he dispatched the truck from Fire Station #3 to deliver the hose personally. Their teamwork and willingness to assist another department was wonderful. It's nice when someone makes your life just a little bit easier."

Angie Arrington (Public Works) was thanked by Lauren Johnson for assisting with a bulk trash pickup. "Thanks again—I'm so impressed with your customer service and efficiency."

While several staff and members of senior leadership from Public Works, Inspections, Planning, BMD, Transit and CaPA were involved in the project, John Richardson wanted to give a big shout-out to **Meeghan Rosen** (Library), **Bryan Serrano** (Public Works), **Joe Stiff** (Public Works), **Mack Howell** (Public Works), **Tom DiBenedetto** (Inspections), **Robert Key** (Inspections), **Scott Saterlund** (Inspections), **Charnika Harrell** (Planning), **Sally Warther** (BMD), **Talisha Ross** (BMD), **James Wilkinson** (Transit), **Brian Litchfield** (Transit), **Brenton Hodge** (CaPA), **Ran Northam** (CaPA), and **Ross Tompkins** (Manager's Office) for their essential support with the installation and testing of new electric vehicle charging stations at Town Hall.

Dennis Puckett (Fire) was commended by Sara Harrington for the way he informed the residents of St. Andrews Lane of a gas leak and kept them informed as the situation changed. "He was very communicative and made a bad situation better. We really appreciate his kind manner." Sara also thanked Chapel Hill Transit for sending a bus for the residents to sit in to keep out of the cold while they waited.

Tanner Thompson (Parks and Recreation) was commended by Phil Fleischmann for professionally and appropriately handling a sensitive situation involving a resident who was upset about a tree pruning project in the right-of-way near their house.

MaryLee Tyndall (Parks and Recreation) was commended by Phil Fleischmann for quick thinking and responsiveness to a medical emergency that occurred at the Plant Road Parks & Recreation offices.

Great job to **Sarah Poulton** (Manager's Office) as she works with the ADA Team in meeting with community members with safety concerns. One community member praised Sarah in a regional meeting for her attentiveness and immediate action related to safety concerns for community members! Way to go Sarah!

Ran Northam and **Matt DeBellis** (CaPA) were complimented by Betsy Harris for the Chapel Hill eNew video roundup. "I don't always take time to read my Town emails. But this week, clicking on it, I was impressed to see my first video roundup of Town news. In fact, had this been some other city's video, I would have been envious, and would have wished it had been TCH's. Outstanding format option, and excellent professionalism!"

Susan Brown (Library) praised the Community Arts & Culture team for pulling together and pulling off a totally new Festifall concept, especially while the Special Events Coordinator position was vacant. She says, "Whatever needed doing—wrangling contracts, popping tents, hanging posters, meeting the porta-john delivery service—this team did it.

Melissa Bartoletta, Steve Wright, Rachel Bass, Meeghan Rosen, and Isabella Gamez truly exemplify our RESPECT values, especially TEAMWORK, defined as supporting each other in service to the community and encouraging innovation and creativity." Susan also gives thanks to other Town team members who assisted with the Festifall events, including **Sarah Poulton, Mike Carew, Bryan Serrano, Charlie Pardo**, and many others!

Wellness@Work thanks Town staff who have helped us offer GREAT programs! Thank you all for helping Town employees thrive! A special shout out to those who helped with:



Drive-Thru Flu Shot Clinics: **Steve Wright** (Community Arts & Culture), **Tanner Deisch** (Parks and Recreation), **Dennis Farmer** (Technology Solutions), **Brian Litchfield** (Transit), and **Peter Aube** (Transit).



Halloween Pumpkin Fest: **Robena Meek** and **Lizzie Burrill** (both Parks and Recreation)

Library Director Susan Brown is thankful for the **staff and volunteers at Chapel Hill Public Library**—as are so many community members. Here are just a few recent compliments they've received regarding their service during the pandemic:

"I want to extend my gratitude and admiration for how your dedicated staff have helped us during the pandemic. They are consistently friendly, cheerful, and helpful!"

"I am grateful for your help finding appropriate reading materials for my grandchildren. You have been generous with your time and right on target with your selections."

"Coming into this library is like coming into a candy shop!"



wellness @ work

UNC HEALTH | FAMILY MEDICINE

TOWN OF CHAPEL HILL

Healthy Holiday Challenge

Wellness@Work invites you to participate in the 2021 Healthy Holiday Challenge!

Join us from Nov. 22 to Jan. 2 for a healthful, relaxing, balanced, and fun holiday season.

Give yourself the gift of self care with this six-week program that will support you with small, healthy steps you build on each week and can keep going through the New Year. Sign up now: llackey@email.unc.edu or 919-968-2796.



After-Hours Medical Care

Where can you go for care when the Wellness Clinic is closed? Insured employees, retirees, and dependents can receive after-hours care—with NO copay—from 5 to 9 p.m., Monday through Friday, at UNC Urgent Care at the Family Medicine Center.

- **When?** From 5–9 p.m., Monday–Friday
- **Who?** Open to insured employees, pre-65 retirees and dependents with after-hours healthcare needs
- **Where?** UNC Urgent Care at The Family Medicine Center, 590 Manning Drive in Chapel Hill
- **How?** When you check in, refer the front desk staff to the Town of Chapel Hill/Wellness@Work flyer posted on the check-in desk

Lunch and Learn: Medical Microaggressions

Join us on Zoom at noon on Thursday, November 18, to talk about Medical Microaggressions: A Case of Life and Death.

We will discuss social identity-based lived experiences and the state of health disparities in the US, and identify medical microaggressions, strategies for patient self-advocacy, and strategies to dismantle oppressive provider practices.

The session will be led by Venus Standard, MSN, CNM, APRN, FACNM, LCCE, and Shenekia Weeks, MPA.

Please RSVP to Liska Lackey by 5 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 16: llackey@email.unc.edu or 919-968-2796. Liska will send you the Zoom link.



Donations for Food Drive

Stormwater intern **Morgan Flynt** is coordinating a food drive through her work with UNC's Edible Campus. The wish list includes non-perishable foods, such as crackers, peanut butter, canned food, and snacks, as well as hygiene and household items.

Produce donations to Carolina Cupboard, the student food pantry, come to a halt during the transition from summer to winter crops. So, Edible Campus is hosting this initiative to supplement regular donations. Morgan says, "Your donation will make a real impact in students' lives, especially with finals season right around the corner, which is stressful enough without having to worry about your next meal. Thank you so much for your help!"

If you would like to donate, email Sammy at sbauer@townofchapelhill.org. Sammy will collect staff donations around town Friday, Nov. 19. You can also bring donations to the Stormwater Office on the 2nd floor at 208 North Columbia Street.

"Kind Is the New Cool" at Chapel Hill Parks

Parks and Recreation has been selected to receive a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) mini grant from the NC Recreation and Park Association. The grant will allow the department to develop and install permanent signage related to anti-bullying at three park locations. The initiative may expand to other parks in the future. **Lizzie Burrill**, Chapel Hill Community Center Supervisor, led an effort to develop temporary "Kind is the New Cool" signage and submitted the successful grant application.

Published by:

Town of Chapel Hill
405 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Chapel Hill, NC 27514

publicaffairs@townofchapelhill.org or (919) 968-2743

TOWNtalk is produced by the Communications and Public Affairs Department

Editor: Ran Northam

Graphic Designer: Melanie Miller

Staff Writers: Ran Northam, Melanie Miller, Christina Strauch

TOWNtalk, a publication for and about Town of Chapel Hill employees, is issued monthly September through June. It is printed on recycled paper. Please recycle.

