



# TOWNtalk

NEWSLETTER FOR EMPLOYEES OF THE TOWN OF CHAPEL HILL  
VOLUME 18 ISSUE 5 • FEBRUARY/MARCH 2022

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## On the Front Burner



### Success

Every year members of the Manager's Office, Business Management and CAPA gather together with the Town Council at its annual retreat to begin developing our budget for the next fiscal year. The discussion is a critically important opportunity for the Town to review how we are progressing with our strategic goals, while also deciding how best to invest in the services we offer and our employees who provide those services. It's also a time to reflect on the great success we had during the previous 12 months.

A video was created by CAPA and the Manager's Office ([youtu.be/C3eWZKSU5Qw](https://youtu.be/C3eWZKSU5Qw)) in advance of the retreat to highlight our organization's achievements. We organize the highlights from the year into our Strategic Goal Areas. Due to time constraints, the listing is limited but gives you a sense of the many successful initiatives of our team. Here's quick look at some of those highlights:

### **Environmental Stewardship: To mitigate effects of climate change through management of Town resources, partnerships and natural environment.**

- The Town Council adopted a climate action and response plan and provided nearly a half a million dollars in funding for the fiscal year 22 budget.
- Using federal funding, Chapel Hill Transit took delivery of three electric buses and secured funding for an additional seven more. The Town also increased its electric

*(continued on p. 4)*



## In the Spotlight



Police Officer Ashley Badstein is unstoppable.

Many of you know Ashley from her early days with the Town, as a Downtown Ambassador, then as a Records Technician at Police Headquarters. You might have also seen her Facebook post detailing the recent time she wore a 14-pound vest while running nearly two miles in snow.

"The people around me every day inspired me to become a police officer," Ashley said. "I would hear calls come out over the radio as I sat in records and realized that I wanted to be out and assisting with the calls."

Ashley encourages fellow employees to advance within the Town. "If someone is interested in law enforcement, but may be too timid to pursue it, I recommend getting involved in any capacity: internships, administrative positions, or anything that will help them get an idea of what the job entails," Ashley said.

Ashley likes working for the Town because its size allows her to get to know colleagues outside of the Police Department, as well as the community members she proudly serves.

"I feel as though this allows for a building of trust, understanding and appreciation for one another."



*Thank you to our police officers, firefighters, public works, and parks and recreation maintenance staff who helped keep us safe through winter storms in January. For more compliments, see p. 5.*

## 'Chapel Hill Works' Photography Exhibit

Hundreds of dedicated employees work behind the scenes and on the front lines each day to keep Chapel Hill running smoothly. Many of the community members who benefit from these efforts may never see the workers responsible for them. Michael Schwalbe, a documentary photographer and sociology professor at North Carolina State University, set out to change this through his photography project, "Chapel Hill Works."

During the month of February, fifteen photographs of Town employees at work were on display in the lobby and lower level of Chapel Hill Public Library, along with a slideshow of all 118 portraits, text panels, and a video documentary about the project.

Since the fall of 2015, Schwalbe photographed 118 Town of Chapel Hill employees across every department—from the fire department and public

works, to the library, police, and transit—doing what they do every day to make Chapel Hill a better place to live.

Schwalbe had two goals with this project: to create a visual record of public service workers and their work, and to increase appreciation for the maintenance and service work required for Chapel Hill to function well.

"The Chapel Hill Works Project calls us to recognize that what was true before the pandemic will remain true afterward: the quality of life in Chapel Hill depends, to a great extent, on the dedication, skill, and effort of Town employees," Michael said of the upcoming exhibit. "I hope viewers of the exhibit will appreciate this more fully by getting a look at those employees and the environments in which they work. My hope is that if people appreciate the workers, they'll have a stronger sense of obligation to the people who devote their

lives to providing the services that make Chapel Hill work as well as it does."

"I'm excited that the public will get to see and experience these portraits of Town employees. This project has always been about showing all the different types of work that goes into making Chapel Hill so special," said Sarah Wagner, Library Experiences Specialist at Chapel Hill Public Library and Chapel Hill Works project liaison. "The pandemic has helped many of us see the hard work that goes into working with the public, and this exhibit is another way to highlight the amazing work Town employees do every day."

The exhibit documentary can be viewed on the Chapel Hill Public Library YouTube channel (<https://youtu.be/vVIXn-xlwuk>). Further information about the project can be found at [townofchapelhill.org/chapelhillworks](http://townofchapelhill.org/chapelhillworks).



Keith Bowden (Public Works)



Yadira Conyers (Library)



Allison Weakley (Stormwater)



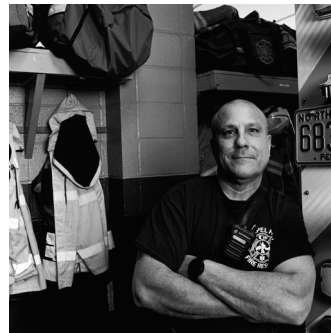
Sheleathea Wright-Quick (Police)



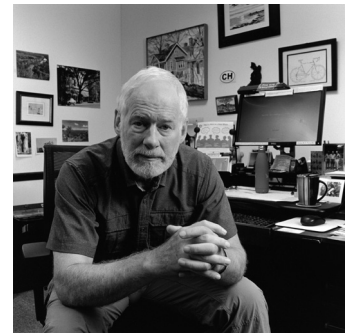
Jeremy Vaughn (Public Works)



Derrick Parrish (Housing)



Richard Bucci (Fire)



Jim Huegerich (Ombuds)



# Briefs



**Aris Dixon** (Fire) welcomed a new daughter, Ava Jordan Dixon. Ava weighed 7 lbs. 6 ozs, Mom, Danielle, and baby Ava are doing great!

Public Housing's new Maintenance Program Supervisor, **Julian Gerner**, joined the team in January. His goal is to provide efficient maintenance services for tenants and continue to maintain strong and sustainable properties. He is enjoying learning about the different neighborhoods.

In his free time, Julian enjoys fishing, drag racing, and home remodel projects.



**Michelle Daschner** joined the Fire Department in January as the Deputy Emergency Management Coordinator.



Welcome to our new Human Resources Technician **Kenneth Hughes**. Originally from New Jersey, Kenneth is a graduate of Elon University. He is happy to be returning to the area, having lived, and worked in Carrboro in the past. When not working, he loves reading, watching sports, and traveling.



Several new employees have joined the Police Department. Welcome to **Alexandria Rudd**, CHPD Officer; **April Hoke**, Records Technician; **Lauren Martinez**, Records Technician; and **Jordan Hyler**, Crisis Counselor.



Congratulations to Senior Transit Operator **Sheila Neville** for ten years of service to the Transit Employee Forum and eight years as Chair of the forum. Her steady leadership and collaboration skills have helped influence positive changes to the work environment. Her willingness to serve illustrates her commitment to the organization.

As Chair of the Transit Employee Forum, her ability to listen and consider alternative solutions to issues has had a positive influence on our work environment. Her leadership has resulted in updates to procedures and new procedures being implemented. She has helped us move forward and will always be a respected leader.

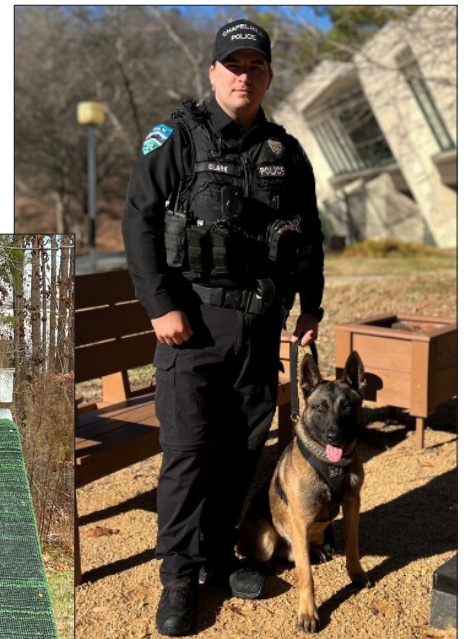
## Save The Date: Let's Celebrate You!

After a long hiatus, the Town's Employee Appreciation Celebration will return on Friday, May 20. Save the date to gather with friends and colleagues.

The event will take place outdoors at Southern Community Park and lunch will be provided. Be on the lookout for more details coming soon.



**Officer Jacob Clark** and **K9 Rocky** (both Police) have successfully completed their Basic K9 School and certification with the International Police Working Dog Association. They spent more than 420 hours training together ... talk about hard work and dedication!



## Ask the Ombuds

Most of us don't ask enough questions. Curiosity is an innate trait of human beings—just look at how curious children are! Yet, many of us were taught that asking too many questions is rude and invasive. Now is the time to retrain our brains and recognize the value of asking non-defensive questions to improve our communication.

### What is a non-defensive question?

Non-defensive questions are:

**Curious** – Asking purely for discovery. There is no hidden agenda.

**Open** – Making ourselves open to an honest response, even though it might not be what we want to hear.

**Neutral** – Removing our feelings to deliver the question in a neutral tone.

**Inviting** – Using a gentle tone to create safety and encourage an honest response.

### Why are non-defensive questions so helpful?

They **clarify assumptions**. Next time you assume you know what someone means, stop yourself. And instead ask a clarifying question. For example, "When

you say X, what do you mean?"

They help us **gather better information about what is actually going on**. It is no secret that many of us don't actually say what we mean. This can create serious misunderstandings. Asking a non-defensive question allows the other person to answer freely and honestly.

Non-defensive questions **keep us from getting caught up in our own defensiveness**. For example, if someone renders an opinion as a statement such as, "You wouldn't listen anyway," you could ask, "Can you help me understand why you think that?" A sincere question often has the effect of equalizing a conversation, even in cases where there is a power differential.

They help us ask **direct questions** in a non-threatening way, allowing the other person to take more responsibility for their own behavior without getting defensive. "What do you mean by...?" or "Why do you assume...?"

Before you ask that next question, remember that disguising your **own** opinions, feelings, and statements behind an

inauthentic question often shuts down a dialogue.

The value of non-defensive questions is their ability to help you understand accurately what the **other person** means, believes, or feels.

While this may seem simple, asking non-defensive questions takes practice. Be patient with yourself and keep at it. The more you pay attention to the questions you ask and how you ask them, the faster you will start formulating non-defensive questions in the moment.

Want help? The Ombuds can help you practice for that next important conversation with a co-worker, manager, direct report, or member of the public. Contact Anita Badrock at 919-260-3153. All calls are confidential.

—Anita Badrock, Ombuds Office

### Credits:

*"Taking the War Out of Our Words: The Art of Powerful Non-Defensive Communication"* by Sharon Strand Ellison

*"What's in a Question?"* Talk by Elizabeth Hill, Associate Director, University of Colorado Boulder Ombuds Office, March 2021

## On the Front Burner

(continued from p. 1)

charging facilities by adding charging stations at Town Hall and the Eubanks park and ride lot.

**Economic and Financial Stewardship: To steward public assets and support a vibrant economy where there is opportunity for jobs and entrepreneurship that position Chapel Hill for the future.**

- The ReVive plan was drafted by a task force of community leaders to provide a comprehensive economic recovery strategy for Chapel Hill with a focus on critical, short term action steps. In June, the Town Council voted to appropriate \$200,000 to award grants of between \$1,000 and \$5,000 to support new entrepreneurs, existing start-ups, and local small businesses.

**Affordable Housing: To increase access to housing for individuals across a range of incomes, and to constantly strive for more equitable outcomes and opportunities for historically underserved populations.**

- The Town of Chapel Hill is recognized for having a high achieving Affordable Housing program. In this year alone, the Town:
  - Provided 535 households with Emergency Rental and Utility Assistance
  - Allocated \$6.3 million for affordable housing strategies and Council approved 198 affordable housing units
  - And the Council approved an affordable housing development on Town-owned land at 2200 Homestead Road. The project will include about 120 affordable homes that serve a range of household incomes including those earning less than \$18,000

**Connected Community: To create a highly connected community where bicycling, walking, and transit are convenient, everyday choices for our neighborhoods, businesses, and public spaces.**

- Despite driver shortages, Chapel Hill Transit has brought back all routes that were stopped during the pandemic. Services have been adjusted on a week-to-week basis to manage critical transportation needs with the drivers that are available.
- Chapel Hill Transit completed 10 shelter replacements and installed 25 new solar powered real time signs with a focus on serving customers with limited English proficiency and those without access to the internet

**Vibrant & Inclusive Community: To enrich the lives of those who live, work, and visit Chapel Hill by building community**



# Compliments

**Dwight Bethea** (Transit) was thanked by Mike Dixon for helping him recover groceries that he left on an EZ Rider bus. Dwight kept them safe and returned them to Mike later.

**Fred Rogers** (Public Works) was thanked by Priscilla Hudson for going the extra mile and offering to help.

**Angie Arrington** and **Howard Baldwin** (both Public Works) were thanked by Stuart West for being pleasant, helpful, and quick to respond when he requested a new trash cart.

**Dale May** (Public Works) was commended by Susana Dancy for replacing a bulb in a streetlight that was too bright.

**Charmyka Marrow** (Public Works) was thanked by Jennifer Miller for excellent customer service. "I sure appreciate her willingness to go the extra mile."

**Mack Howell** (Public Works) and the Facilities Maintenance team were thanked by Sharon Fisher for keeping the server room cool while repairs were being done. "His group is an example of teamwork."



A generous community member donated these Girl Scout Cookies to the Police Department's Crisis Unit. We will give them to people who are experiencing homelessness. The act of kindness didn't stop there. The community member made sure to buy the cookies from an officer's daughter! We are always grateful for the support of our community.

Many people thanked Town staff for keeping the community safe during several winter storms in January.

Council Member Camille Berry: "Very much appreciate all the preparation and continued efforts to keep us all safe. Our best to Town staff and others, whose duties call them to be out in this weather."

Council Member Michael Parker: "Thanks for the updates. And please thank all of the folks who had to work keeping our residents safe."

Amanda Coronado Frisard: "Thank You!! To the Town of Chapel Hill and all its employees for keeping us informed, updated, and safe."

Tess Sharpe: "Thank you for all you do with cleaning up sidewalks from the snow storm."

Bill and Sharon Kirk thanked the Town for moving and donating to EMPOWERment Inc. a house that was located at 108 North Street. The house was moved to Gomains Street in the Northside District and is being prepared to be used for affordable housing.

"We are elated! Because the house has a rich history of labor and civil rights movement advocates meeting there, it seems fitting that the house stands in 2022 on Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Once sitting at the kitchen table at that little house was internationally famous Odetta, often referred to as "The Voice of the Civil Rights Movement." If you haven't listened to her sonorous, majestic music lately, today might be a good day."

## and creating a place for everyone.

- The Chapel Hill Public Library and Parks and Recreation adapted to COVID-19 conditions and were able to bring back many of our residents' favorite recreation, events, and festival activities.
- A new mural at 111 S. Merritt Mill Road honors Black civic leaders from Chapel Hill and Carrboro. Painted by artist Kiara Sanders, the African American Trailblazers mural celebrates twelve African American pioneers who were vital to Chapel Hill and Carrboro's history.

**Community connections and partnerships with historically disengaged and marginalized populations has only become more important during the pandemic environment.**

- The Town's COVID Response relied heavily on the Town Council's Language Access plan and was recognized and used as a best practice in a recent report from the Migration Policy Institute.

## Safe Community: To preserve and protect life and property through the fair and effective delivery of Town services

- The Final Report of the Re-imagining Community Safety Task Force was presented to Council on June 14, 2021. Implementation included adding an additional position to the Town's Crisis Unit; increasing training on implicit bias; increasing affordable housing in Town and enhancing our diversion program.
- On the building and permitting side of community safety, the Town of Chapel Hill Building and Development Services staff received one of three Home Builders Association Presidential Service Awards.

## Collaborative and Innovative Organization

- The Town completed and implemented a Compensation and Classification Study to ensure we remain competitive in retaining and attracting excellent employees.
- The Town continues its efforts to diversify its workforce and increase inclusivity and equity in the workplace and throughout our community. Chapel Hill received a perfect score of 100 in the 2021 Municipal Equality Index Report from the Human Rights Campaign. Cities are given points for inclusive programs and policies, such as non-discrimination laws and inclusive health benefits for employees.

These are just a few of the many success stories from the last year, thanks to all of you! I look forward to many more achievements in 2022!



wellness@work

UNC HEALTH | FAMILY MEDICINE  
TOWN OF CHAPEL HILL

## Spring Lunch and Learns

Wellness@Work is offering a three-part series this spring: "The Pharmacist Will See You Now." Partnering with the UNC Family Medicine Pharmacy Program, we will have three Lunch & Learns led by pharmacists. Bring your questions and join us virtually!

March 23: Sorting out Supplements –

- Are they a miracle?
- What do they really do?
- What is worth the money?

April 20: A Lifetime of Vaccines –

- Are you vaccine-skeptic, hesitant, or a believer?
- We're hearing lots about the Covid vaccine, but what about all the others?



May 5: Over the Counter Medications –

- What should be in my medicine cabinet?
- How can I get the best price?

Watch your email for more details or visit [chapelhillwellnessatwork.org](http://chapelhillwellnessatwork.org) for updates.

## Want to quit tobacco? Patricia Catanio is here to help!

*Patricia Catanio, our new Tobacco Cessation Specialist, has more than 20 years of experience working with addictions, trauma, and relationship counseling. She is excited to be working with the program, and shares her thoughts how she can help you become tobacco-free:*

Tobacco addiction is incredibly hard to stop alone. If you have been trying to stop smoking or dipping tobacco without success, Wellness@Work is here to support you. I'm available to help you reach your health goals, be that to reduce or quit.

This free program is available to employees, dependents, and pre-65 retirees. We offer many options, depending on your needs, including medications to help reduce cravings: prescription medications, nicotine patches, gums, and lozenges are all covered 100% with your insurance. Combining medications with coaching offers the most comprehensive plan for you to become tobacco-free.

I'm available for phone or video sessions, which can be scheduled during your work hours. The call can be whatever fits your needs; anywhere from 15 to 30 minutes.

I'm here to celebrate and encourage you along the way, including \$100 gift cards when you quit tobacco for six months and another \$100 gift card when you reach your one-year anniversary.

While we can't control a lot of what life brings in the pandemic, you can control if you start to take steps to become tobacco-free. Becoming tobacco-free is not a one step process. Often, it means taking two steps forward and one step back. But each time you have a setback you will learn something and try again with support until you succeed. Give me a call and we can schedule a time to talk and get you started on reaching your goal: 984-974-8455.



## HRA Starts in April

The 2022 Health Risk Assessment (HRA) starts on April 4. Get ready now by signing up for My UNC Chart!

Through My UNC Chart, the Wellness Clinic will send you a message with the HRA questionnaire attached. Make sure you get the message—sign up for My UNC Chart now!

Already have My UNC Chart?

Log in at [myuncchart.org/](http://myuncchart.org/)

[MyChart/Authentication/](http://MyChart/Authentication/)

[Login?postloginurl=inside%2Easp%3F](http://Login?postloginurl=inside%2Easp%3F)

New to My UNC Chart?

Find out more at [unchealthcare.org/patients-families-visitors/my-unc-chart](http://unchealthcare.org/patients-families-visitors/my-unc-chart), including how to sign up.

Note: If you do not want to complete the questionnaire through My UNC Chart, you will be able to complete a paper copy and it will be entered on your behalf.

## Meet at the Creek

Chapel Hill is teaming up with Carrboro, Hillsborough, OWASA, UNC, and Orange County to celebrate our local waterways. The first annual **Orange County Creek Week** will be March 12–19. We are offering a suite of virtual and in-person events for the community. This year, our unifying event will be a county-wide litter cleanup challenge.

OC Creek Week is also joining ranks with several other municipalities for the Clean Water Education Partnership (CWEP)'s second annual Regional Creek Week.

Want to get in in this? Your department can participate in three ways:

- Host an event that connects to water.
- Share a resource that relates to water.
- Amplify Creek Week messages to the public.

Not sure how your work fits into celebrating our creeks? Have an event or resource you would like to share? Reach out to **Sammy Bauer** (Stormwater) at [sbauer@townofchapelhill.org](mailto:sbauer@townofchapelhill.org)

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