



**HAPPY
THANKSGIVING**

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2020
VOLUME 17 ISSUE 2

CHAPEL HILL

Towntalk



On the Front Burner



Town Manager Maurice Jones

While we continue our response to COVID-19, the season is upon us to pause and give thanks for the many wonderful blessings we have.

In many ways we are challenged to be thankful right now. COVID-19 has fundamentally changed our way of life and left many in our country mourning the vast numbers of lost lives we have

witnessed during the last eight months.

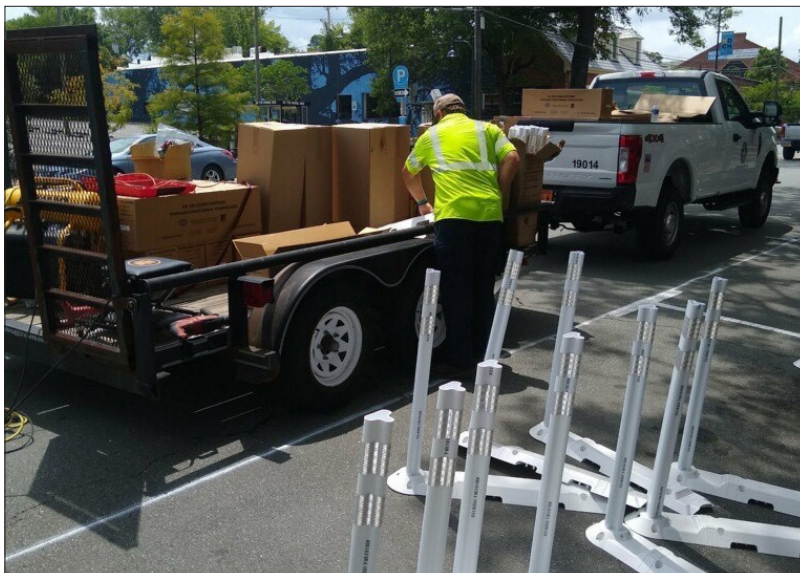
For me, I am thankful for the love and support of my family, for our health, and for an opportunity to lead more than 700 incredibly gifted, hard-working, thoughtful, and caring individuals in our world-renowned community.

I am also very aware that not everyone has the same opportunity to be thankful for their own personal health and the health or even life of their loved ones. That is the reason we have been working so diligently to combat the coronavirus. Each of you have contributed to our effort to keep our services churning and to help people who are struggling during the pandemic.

I am also thankful for hope. Medical solutions to the virus appear to be on the

horizon. With news of multiple vaccines and antiviral medications receiving positive results and nearing approval, there is some light at the end of this dark tunnel. Until a vaccine is approved and fully distributed we must remain committed to the simple steps it takes to protect ourselves, our families and our friends. We have been able to make it this far together. I'm confident we can go the extra mile to get us to the finish line.

I hope you enjoy your time with your loved ones during the Thanksgiving holiday. Please take time for yourself – to unplug and to get the rest you deserve. Thank you for all you do for our community!



Public Works crews installed the Franklin Street walkway back in August and they were all amazing! (left, **Bobby Bratton** (Stormwater); right, **Chris Haug** (Traffic Engineering) and **Philander Logan** (Stormwater). Special shoutout to **Dale May** who has been instrumental in executing Council's vision for the closed lanes to facilitate social distancing and more sidewalk dining.

TOWN EMPLOYEES GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND

Tasha Sanders (Police) works as a Crisis Counselor in the Police Crisis Unit. During this public health crisis, she has relocated to a substation as the only Crisis Counselor serving the area. Tasha has acclimated to her new norm and continued serving this community.

She responded with officers to assess a vulnerable female known to have cognitive impairments and mental health concerns who was approaching



strangers and asking for money. Tasha quickly developed a rapport with the woman and learned the woman has an income, but her roommates were stealing her food. Tasha contacted the woman's guardian, treatment providers, and Adult Protective Services to develop a plan to ensure the woman practiced social distancing and had access to food.

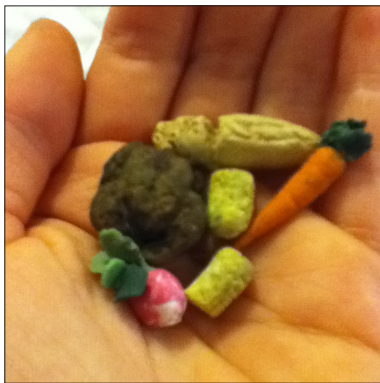
Tasha recognized the extra needs of the Crisis Unit during the pandemic and asked how else she could assist the Crisis Unit and community. She has provided virtual training to new employees of the Orange County Rape Crisis Center (OCRCC), developed a training on trauma-informed response to victims of domestic violence, and identified best practices related to the operational and staff aspects of running a 24/7 encampment site for people experiencing homeless during this pandemic.



Parking Supervisors **Scott Banks** and **Todd McCaffrey** have made the most of the COVID-19 situation. Downtown parking facilities were vastly empty, so Scott and Todd took this opportunity to do long-needed maintenance projects that are difficult to complete when lots are full of cars. They repainted nearly 1,000 parking spaces and numbers. They cleaned and landscaped, patched potholes, cleaned signs, and organized supplies and storage.

Beyond maintenance projects, Scott and Todd are creating maps and assessments of facilities, and growing their own professional development with online classes and learning opportunities.

HOW ARE TOWN EMPLOYEES CELEBRATING THANKSGIVING?



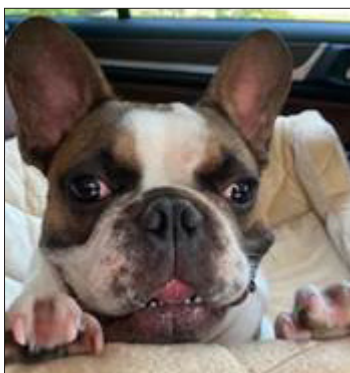
Mary Jane Nirdlinger
(Manager's Office)

"We're keeping it small this Thanksgiving."



Ran Northam (CaPA), wife Randi and daughter Winnie

"We are having a small Thanksgiving at home this year so our little girl can see her grandparents and other family for many years to come."



Celisa Lehew (Police)

"Frankie-Stein is disappointed that he won't get as many crumbs this year from the Thanksgiving table as we will be celebrating apart from our families. We might be apart this Thanksgiving but making the decision to stay home is a step toward bringing about more certain times."



Jeffrey Sullivan (Transit)

"I've spent the past two months converting my backyard from the second photo to the first photo so that I can host my mom socially-distanced and outside for Thanksgiving."



Briefs

Bobby Bratton (Stormwater) is now a Certified Stormwater Inspector. He has completed stormwater permit compliance training for municipal activities from the National Stormwater Center, including required minimum control measures, and inspection of industrial, construction, and commercial activities.

The fire department celebrates promotions of five personnel during COVID-19: **Aris Dixon** to Fire Equipment Operator; **Devon McKenna** to Fire Equipment Operator; **Michael Quigley** to Lieutenant; **Eleni Terzis** to Lieutenant; **Phillip Nasser** to Captain

Oct. 1 marked 51 years since **Flora Parrish** (Police) began her career with the Town of Chapel Hill in 1969. Throughout her career, she has worked in the Records Division at the police department and has served under eight different police chiefs. Flora has provided guidance and support to hundreds of officers and faithfully served countless citizens. She has been witness to many changes in the Town and the Chapel Hill Police Department during her career and can provide a fascinating history of what she has seen. Flora continues to display a heart for service and is an excellent example of dedication. Congratulations to Flora on her 51 years of service!

—Submitted by Capt. Danny Lloyd (Police)



A new mural at 111 N. Merritt Mill Road featuring local blues legend Elizabeth Cotten is a collaboration between Chapel Hill, Carrboro, and the Downtown Partnership. It is part of the North Carolina Musician Murals Project that honors local music history.

Chapel Hill Public Library staff share her story in a new episode of the Re/Collecting Chapel Hill Podcast.

Learn more at bit.ly/35EYVH4

Listen to the podcast: bit.ly/2UDWb6q

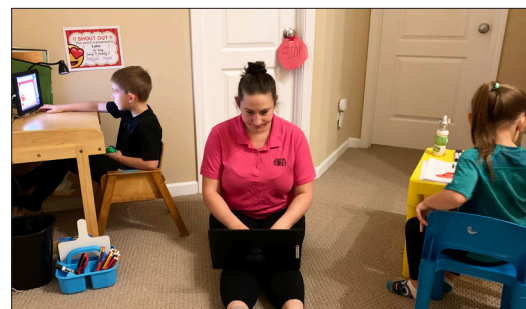
BALANCING FAMILY AND WORK

Lauren Ryan (Transit) shares how her family manages work, school, and family time, all in their home.

I never imagined I would be a stay-at-home mom, let alone a successful one. Since the end of March, our household has had two parents working from home full time, one student in elementary school, and one kid in daycare. The beginning of the pandemic had us facing the same problems, fears,

and uncertainties that most were. We knew that we would need an ingenious plan to survive the next school year.

There are a few key tools we are using to make this happen! ALEXA has been set up with reminders throughout the day to announce transitions and class times. Any additional meetings are added to our phone alarms first thing in the



morning so that we don't miss anything. The other key part to this plan was setting the kids up to be as independent as possible throughout the house. We also have a STOP sign to hang on our doors for important meetings that cannot be interrupted.

The day-to-day grind isn't always pretty, and I often go to bed shortly after the kids do, but overall, we are succeeding in managing this crazy reality we have all been thrown into.

Before the pandemic, we had less than three hours a day together as a family. Now we get to share all our meals and all the moments in between. When tensions get high, I try to remember what a blessing it is to have all this time together as a family and how fortunate we are to both have jobs that enable us to keep our family home and safe.

The Family Plan

- 6 a.m.: Parents alarms go off (earlier if it's a busy day or we need quiet time to focus on work)
- 6:30–7 a.m.: Parents check calendars, set reminder alarms, and get a jump start on critical work
- 7 a.m.–7:15 a.m.: Wake up kids, and they get themselves ready for the day
- 7:15–8 a.m.: Family breakfast and walk outside
- 8 a.m.: First grade, parents' work, and preschool start
(Two kids desk stations in the hallway between my office in the master bedroom and Jef's office in the guest room.)
- 8:30 a.m.–12 p.m.: My sister takes Bailey for Outdoor Learning Adventures. (We are so blessed to have a close family member who can come and help us!!!)
- 12–12:30 p.m.: Family lunch
- 12:30 p.m.: More work and more school. Nap time for Bailey!
- 2:30 p.m.: School day ends, kids get TV and snack time. Parents keep working.
- 6–7 p.m.: Family dinner & family time
- 7–7:30 p.m.: Bedtime routine

DISTANCED, YET UNDIVIDED

Public Housing Staff Plans for 2021 Virtual Annual Retreat

Most can agree 2020 has been an interesting year! For individuals, for our community and for our town departments alike, we are adjusting to a “new normal” and thriving under unfamiliar circumstances. To recover from some trying months filled with uncertainty and the need to be especially adaptive to evolving work demands, the staff of Public Housing is planning a virtual Annual Retreat to jumpstart 2021 with some focus and positivity!

The Annual Retreat is a wonderful opportunity for staff to gather in order to

celebrate successes, plan goals and learn how to best navigate challenges. While continued challenges remain, as our world comes to terms with COVID-19, constant heartbreaking racism, and continued economic uncertainty, there have also been many celebratory-worthy events and the possibility of improvement that we do not wish to go unheralded. For these reasons, Chapel Hill Public Housing staff has decided not to forgo this annual centering event. We need a retreat more this year than we have ever needed one before!

Public Housing has chosen to partner with Project Passport for a day long virtual event on Jan. 22, 2021.

Project Passport is a minority and woman-owned business. It is managed by Sabriya Dobbins and provides hands-on, blitz style sessions focused on mindfulness and empowerment. The sessions will be broken down into several topics, including Fear & Change, Team Building & Conflict Management, Connecting Work & Purpose, Intentional Productivity, Boosting Motivation, Stress Management, and Tapping into Creativity.

While 2020 has definitely taken a toll on our team’s morale and unity, Retreat 2021 will surely be an opportunity for staff to recharge and realign our values with our mission!



The Community Clay Studio, as part of Parks and Recreation's 31 programs of Halloween, hosted a Ceramic Pumpkin Carving workshop on a beautiful crisp fall day, in our outdoor program area at the Chapel Hill Community Center. Participants carved their very own unique clay pumpkin that was hand thrown by clay instructor Dede Richardson. Participants were able to pick up their finished glazed pumpkin just in time for Halloween! Look at all of those spooky and fun pumpkin faces!

ASK THE OMBUDS

Anita Badrock joined the Ombuds Office on Sept. 1, 2020. However, she is not new to the Town. Anita has worked for more than five years in a variety of HR roles throughout the Town. Prior to that Anita has been a long-time resident of Chapel Hill, including being a small business owner, working with a nonprofit, and as a community volunteer in over 20 different capacities in Chapel Hill and Carrboro. She lived and worked for three years in South Africa just after the end of apartheid and was profoundly changed by the experiences she had there. Anita’s immediate family includes people from nine different nations and five continents.

She’s excited to bring all these experiences to her new role as Town Ombuds. She sees this role as a way to help anyone who lives, works, or plays in Chapel Hill to have a positive experience of local government and our community. Her particular interest is in helping all employees and all

community members to have a seat at the table when important decisions are being made that affect them.

Currently Anita is working on

- Learning more about Advisory Boards and how to best support their work;
- Networking with various community influencers and organizations to learn more about their experiences of Chapel Hill, focusing specifically on hard to reach populations;
- Helping to facilitate various community and employee meetings; and
- Working with various town departments to help them communicate more effectively with employees.

Take the opportunity to join with me in welcoming Anita. Her energy, vision, experience, compassion and commitment to you and to this community, make her a wonderful resource and welcoming person.

—Jim Huegerich, Ombuds

Compliments

Sammy Bauer (Stormwater) was thanked by Geoff for a temporary ADA ramp at the Booker Creek Basin Park construction site. "I've ridden on the ramp several times and it's a much improved experience. Thanks so much for getting this done!"

Richard Roberts (Transit) was commended by Lorna Chucran for finding a lunch bag that she left on the bus and bringing it to UNC Hospital. "I was so impressed with going through the 3 buses that he needed to search in order to find my lunch bag. I just want to say that it was so nice to know that your employee really went out of his way and for that I am grateful!"

Dajuan Johnson and **Cris Rosas** (both Public Works) and **Matthew Dunn** (Labor Works) were thanked by Leah Hunt for helping her children take a heavy trash bin down to the street when she was ill. Thanks also to **Christina Strauch** (CaPA), who helped identify the street where Ms. Hunt lives, which allowed us to pinpoint the proper crew to recognize.

The Police Department was commended by Kyle Worsham for responding quickly to make sure all was well when he accidentally dialed 911. "I so appreciate the rapid response and the bravery exhibited on that day...and want you to know how grateful I am for your presence and important contributions to our community."

Thank you to **Sabrina Smith** (Housing) from a Public Housing resident who is now purchasing her own home: "I would like to thank Housing for giving me this opportunity to have a roof over my head that was affordable to me and my daughter. Thank you to all that you do to make sure that we are in good hands. You are a valuable person to housing department. Thank you to the rest of the staff that work tirelessly to keep things running."

Tiffanie Tapp (Transit) and other members of the Transit Demand Response Team went the extra mile to help an EZ Rider customer look for a lost cell phone. Tiffanie went through video footage, let the customer use her personal cell phone, and transported her home.



We tend to use the term community with an assumption that they just exist. In fact their origin reflects a more complex set of social functions: of human need for social interaction and belonging.

The traditional view of a community has been the place you live and the people who occupy that place. However, the availability and access of the internet has changed this perception with communities being far broader and more diverse. So, whilst it has moved beyond this narrow, albeit readily identifiable, view, we should not devalue the traditional perception that is still relevant to many. With that thought in mind, the Chapel Hill Public Housing community began looking at itself and how others perceived us to do a community signage upgrade.

Thanks largely to the efforts of Maintenance Programs Supervisor **Andy Reeder**, we think we did pretty well!

—Faith Brodie, Housing and Community

LEADERS ARE READERS: ANTI-RACISM 101

The work of becoming anti-racist is a marathon, not a sprint. It involves reflection, education, conversation, reckoning, action, and more. Here are a few books that can build solid foundations for this personal and professional journey.

***Stamped From the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* by Ibram X. Kendi**

This book won at LOT of awards when it was released in 2017—and for good reasons. It is fast-paced, engaging writing about how racist ideas were created and how they have become so deeply rooted in American culture and society. If you

have a young person in your life, there's also a version for teens called *Stamped: Racism, Anti-Racism, and You*.

***Me and White Supremacy: Combat Racism, Change the World, and Become a Good Ancestor* by Layla F. Saad**

A practical, actionable approach to understanding systemic racism and white supremacy. With self-reflection exercises and prompts for journaling, Saad encourages readers to reflect on how they have benefitted from racist structures and systems as a way to understand how those same structures and systems have oppressed others.

***So You Want to Talk About Race* by**

Ijeoma Oluo

How do you tell your roommate her jokes are racist? How do you explain white privilege to your white, privileged friend? This book gives us language and strategies to have clear and constructive conversation with each other on bias, prejudice, and racism.

***The Fire This Time* edited by Jesmyn Ward**

This collection brings together writers, poets, essayists, and thinkers to reflect on racism in America, past, present, and future. Each entry takes the reader back into our painful history, explores our present day, and imagines a better future.

—Chapel Hill Public Library

ADVICE ON TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

Public health experts warn that things could be worse over the cold months ahead, in part because the COVID-19 virus is more easily spread when we are gathered inside.

This is the time of year when we gather with family and friends for the holidays. How do we do it safely during COVID-19? Should we do it at all?

Keep on doing the things we know make a difference: physical distancing, face coverings, frequent hand washing and disinfecting shared surfaces. Keep gatherings small and do things outside.

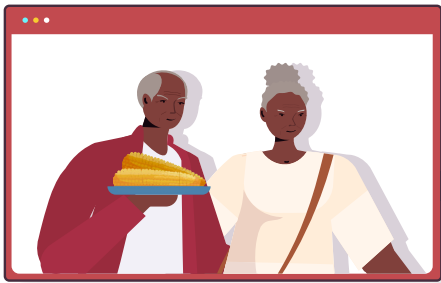
If you are planning to travel for the holidays, do it safely. Consider the conditions where you are traveling. Does your destination have lots of COVID-19 cases or rising numbers? Are there COVID-19-related restrictions where you are traveling? Some areas require travelers to quarantine for up to 14 days – not a good fit if you're only going to be

there for Thanksgiving dinner.

How are you planning to get there? Air, train and bus travel place you in close quarters with others; car travel can lead to stops along the way that put you in close contact with others. Do your research and figure out what is right for you.

Where are you planning to stay? While it might be a tradition for generations of family to bunk together, staying in a hotel lets you have more control over your environment.

When you get home or after guests leave, you will want to monitor for possible COVID-19 symptoms for two weeks.



NOW IS A GREAT TIME TO STOP TOBACCO USE!

COVID-19 falls under the coronavirus family of diseases, which cause respiratory illness. People with any underlying lung condition, including people who smoke or vape, have much higher rates of death if they become infected with COVID-19. Smoking weakens lung function and increases the risk of dying from respiratory infection.

"Overcoming addiction to tobacco and tobacco products is particularly challenging at this time, as smoking is triggered by stress and anxiety," said Adam Goldstein, MD, MPH, Director of UNC Tobacco Intervention Programs.

"This epidemic makes the need for quitting even more immediate and compelling. By becoming tobacco-free, you can decrease your risk of complications from COVID-19.

If you are a Town employee and want to quit smoking, vaping or using smokeless tobacco, contact Barbara Silver at 919-904-4848 (phone or text) or barbara_silver@med.unc.edu. The program is free and includes support and free medication. If you quit using tobacco for six months, you receive \$100 gift card. Quit for another six months or one full year and receive another \$100!



TAKE A BREAK!

Wellness@Work is pleased to announce Recreational activities for Town employees offered by Parks and Recreation! We are happy to help our fellow Town employees have a mental health break during these times.

Fitness Swim Club for employees.

Designed to track swim distance, allow for employees to schedule swim time together, and incentivize participants for swimming more often, the club will be led by Aquatics Supervisor Tanner Deisch. Pool passes are offered free of charge to Town staff on the health insurance plan who have completed the annual HRA. Contact Tanner at tdeisch@townofchapelhill.org.

Virtual Lunch Time Scattergories

can be offered virtually for Town employees on the 3rd Friday of each month – Nov. 20 and Dec. 18 - at 12:30pm or possibly on a different schedule if desired. You will get a list of categories and a letter each word will have to start with. Then, you will have to come up with a word in each category that starts with that particular letter before time is up. Zoom's chat feature is used to complete the games virtually. Registration is required. Contact Marian Kaslovsky at mkaslovsky@townofchapelhill.org

We can lead a **virtual mug decorating workshop and/or ornament making workshop** for employees in November and December. Contact Lizzie Burrill at lburrill@townofchapelhill.org.

