



DECEMBER 2020
VOLUME 17 ISSUE 3

CHAPEL HILL

TownTalk



On the Front Burner

Town Manager Maurice Jones

So, if you're ready for a fresh start in the new year as 2020 comes to a close, please raise your hands. Yeah, me too. As difficult as 2020 has been there have been many accomplishments in the Town of Chapel Hill that we should all be proud, especially considering the trying circumstances of this year. I may not be able to touch on all of our many accomplishments, but I want you to know I appreciate each and every one of you and the good work you've done.

Many Town staff members had to come together and quickly pivot budget

planning to conservatively plan for our future. In June, we passed a balanced budget focused on maintaining our level of service with no tax increase. The good news is that revenue is not as low as we initially thought it may be. Our adjustments are working as they were intended, and we are able to maintain the current level of service without making drastic cuts.

Unfortunately, not everyone in our community has been as fortunate as businesses have been forced to close and community members have lost their jobs. Our departments and staff who provide human services have stepped up to provide assistance. More than 46,000 individuals have been served at the Food Bank since March; nearly 24,000 masks have been distributed to vulnerable populations; and more than 400 Chapel Hill households received Emergency Housing Assistance.

Town staff worked with the NC DOT, Town Council, the Downtown Partnership, and downtown businesses to temporarily

adjust Franklin Street to allow more sidewalk space for outdoor dining and the ability to spread out from one another while getting around downtown. They were also able to maintain parking, loading zones, ADA accessibility, and visibility and safety.

The Council set a goal of planting 200 trees in honor of the Town's 200th birthday last year. Town staff assisted in far exceeding that goal, planting 434 trees in a year. In that same vein, our draft Climate Action Plan has been shared with the Council as we look to the future with the goal of preserving the things that sustain us—the air, the water, and those things that are green.

Of course our focus has been on the health and safety of staff and community members. A vaccine gives us hope that some semblance of normal is on the horizon. Until then, we will continue to make every effort to keep everyone as safe as possible.

Our nation is now once again reckoning with its history of racism

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Town employees help with the weekly food distribution at the Eubanks Road Park and Ride lot. If you're able to volunteer a few hours (up to 4), sign up at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904044FA8A922A1FA7-chapel1>.

FALL GIFT BAG INITIATIVE

Lauren Ryan (Transit) coordinated a distribution of gift bags at the Food Bank on Wednesday, Nov. 25. Lauren started the initiative as a way to give back to the community. She worked with Housing and Community to make arrangements to distribute the gift bags to everyone who went to the Food Bank that day.

The bags included items donated by Town departments, five individual Town employees, OWASA, and Flyleaf Books.

The items included face masks, pens, stickers, notebooks, shower timers, bookmarks, small toys, tattoos, magnets, cups, thumb drives, first aid kits, sunglasses, flashlights, pins, hats, gloves, t-shirts, key chains, cameras, lanyards, and much more.

Departments that donated items for the gift bags are: Chapel Hill Public Library, Communications and Public Affairs, Go Chapel Hill/Len Cone, Housing and Community, Manager's



Office, Planning, Police, Public Works/ Stormwater, Technology Solutions, and Transit.

'TWAS THE NIGHT BEFORE COVID

Twas the night before COVID, when all across the Hill,
Not a virus was spreading, but how could you tell;

Stockings were not yet repurposed as masks,
And little did everyone know that wouldn't last;

Children in school had become such a habit,
That mom and dad didn't know how good they had it;

So mom laid out real clothes for the next day,
She didn't know Zoom would become the new way;

When midnight bells tolled on March 13, a Friday,
Our world would be ever changed in an unexpected way;

Away to the stores they flew like a flash,
The toilet paper emptied from shelves in a dash;

No masks to be seen at Home Depot or Lowes,
'Wrap a scarf over your mouth,' they said, 'and cover your nose';

It started in China, then Europe, then the US,
'Don't worry, it won't come here,' they said...what a mess;

With shortness of breath, get a test, you have COVID,
Oh wait, add a sore throat--new symptoms won't stay hid;

A new loss of smell? What the hell are COVID toes?
Don't worry, it can't spread through kids, or maybe it can--who knows;

Now, don't wear a mask, it won't keep you safe,
Okay, so you should definitely wear a mask, it will keep others safe;

Grocery store aisles are only one-way,
Listen up, Mandy says stay 6 feet away;

Stay in your home, don't go out, people are dying,
Mom's sewing masks all day long 'til she's crying;

It's time to move your office to your home, no more driving,
How strong is your marriage? Could extra time upgrade it to 'thriving'?

Now into Phase 1, the worst is over, breathe easy,
But not without a mask, unless you're outside where it's breezy;

Phase 2 is getting better, restaurants open, kids in daycare,
Let's open this place up, breathe in the fresh summer air;

Phase 3? What's that? Did anything change?
Oh yay, the start of flu season! Why are you acting deranged?

Halloween, an Election, and another 13th on a Friday,
What could go wrong? Oh, they gathered? No way;

The numbers are rising, but not to worry,
It's not like there's a holiday coming that makes the rules blurry;

Just get together over Zoom, eat your turkey alone,
Oh, they gathered again? You're kidding, not just by phone?

So we're barreling toward a new order from Roy,
But the vaccine is being produced by the masses, what joy;

One more week 'til it's Christmas, what might Santa bring?
A swab up your nose instead of a ring?

You've made it this far, 2020 hasn't taken you yet,
Just wait, wear, and wash, and don't you fret;

The time will come when we'll gather again,
And you can kiss, and you can hug, and you can shake hands
with friends;

We've learned new ways to get through the day,
Backgrounds on Teams hide the clutter away;

Remember the goals you set for this year?
That's okay, no need to look in the rear;

A new day will dawn with a chance to start fresh,
Will it be without masks? Just in case, save some mesh;

Just one more wish for you before we say good night,
Happy 2021 to all, and to all, hold on tight!

With Love,
The Town of Chapel Hill Emergency Operations Center



Briefs

Nickie Adkins (Transit) has been promoted to Administrative Assistant. She will provide office support and assistance to Transit Team Members and the Transit Partners Committee.



Nickie has a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration, with a minor in Accounting, from South University. She lives with her husband in Mebane. She enjoys working on cars, arts & crafts, baking and cooking.

Megan Culp

(Housing and Community) is the new Community Development Programs Manager. A Chapel Hill native, Megan brings to the Town an extensive background in affordable housing and community development. Most recently, she worked with Habitat for Humanity of Wake County developing a homeownership counseling program. Megan enjoys spending family time outdoors with her husband and three young children, as well as traveling, reading and baking.



Clayton Hainline

(BMD) is our new Financial Systems Manager. This position is integral to our operations as it manages the Town's financial reporting software system (Munis).



Clayton completed an undergraduate degree from UNC and an MPA from Appalachian State. In his free time Clayton enjoys playing tennis and spending time with his dog, Baxter.

Congratulations to **Transit's Demand Response Team** on achieving 418 consecutive days (and counting) without a preventable accident, crushing the previous record of 400 days. Over the last three years, they had more than 1,090 days without a preventable accident.



Congratulations to Transit Team Members who recently completed the Fill-In Supervisory program (Supervisor Trainees): **Doranda Cole, Javious Newman, Jermaine Ray, Justin Graves, Keica Hargraves, LaTosha Mooring, and Lillian Graves.**

Team Members who have already achieved the Fill-In Supervisor designation and continue to play a critical role on our leadership team are: **Anita Hackett, Ed Bunker, Jason Tremmel, TY Edwards, Jon Powell, and Quentin Craven.**

TRANSIT SAFETY AWARDS

Congratulations on this significant accomplishment and commitment to our values of Safety, Professionalism, Responsibility and Ethics. These achievements are even more significant, considering they were achieved in the midst of a challenging pandemic.

Team Members of the Year:

William Barnett and **George Coutinho** (Demand Response Team)
Kim Monroe and **Matthew Rahimzadeh** (Fixed Route Team)
TY Edwards and **Henry Jaramillo** (Maintenance Team)

Distinguished Operators – Fixed Route Team: **Kim Monroe, Carol Brown-Lopez, Matthew Rahimzadeh**

Distinguished Operators – Demand Response Team: **William Barnett, George Coutinho, Gerhard Konig**

Safety Awards – 111 Team Members received safety awards for having no preventable accidents over 12 months.

The following Team Members were recognized for 20+ years of safe driving (no preventable accidents or safety

violations for at least 20 years) – these are the best of the very best:

Amy Edwards (leading the way with 31 years) – Fixed Route Team
Scott Blacknell – Fixed Route Team
Keica Hargraves – Fixed Route Team
Deborah Yancey – Fixed Route Team
Darren Purdee – Fixed Route Team
Katina Capers – Fixed Route Team
Sam Jackson – Demand Response Team
Tony Combs – Demand Response Team

View a video: youtu.be/rrphS1w3Nt0

INCLUSION TIPS

How we think and talk about identity, gender and sexuality is always evolving, and it can be hard to keep up. The LGBTQ+ Resource Group wants to help! We'll be giving advice in TOWNTalk to help you make your coworkers and community feel safe, respected and included. Got a burning question you want us to address? Email sslayer@townofchapehill.org.

This month, let's talk about conversation. Sometimes people are so afraid of being offensive or causing discomfort, they avoid talking to LGBTQ+ folks about our partners and families, or just avoid all LGBTQ+ topics entirely. It's good to be careful with people's feelings, but avoiding us like this makes it feel like who we are is something to be ashamed of, or that we can't be our authentic selves.

Be open to honest conversation; it's better to make a mistake and apologize than to avoid us altogether.



THE EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM CAN HELP

We all encounter experiences – times, situations and people – that are stressful and frustrating. The Town provides a couple of resources – Ombuds and Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for helping us navigate these experiences so we can be our best.

EAP is a free, confidential resource to support employees when they are feeling stressed, frustrated or having problems that they would like to talk over with somebody. You can call the number on the back of your Town ID at any time day or night and get help. Here are some employee stories about using our EAP services.

"My father passed away from Alzheimer's. Though we had years to prepare for his death, it still hit me really hard. I took the three days of funeral leave and an additional week off to process. However, when I returned to work my grief didn't just go away. Every day was a struggle and I finally had to admit to myself that I needed help. That's when I reached out to EAP. The process was simple. I made the call and after a few short questions I had an appointment for an intake session. After answering some questions, I was given a therapist and had my first appointment within a week. I continued to see the therapist after my five free visits until I felt that I was in a

ART WORKSHOP FOR STUDENTS

The Community Arts & Culture team worked with Parks & Recreation to host a workshop for local students as part of the Scholastic Learning Centers event on Nov. 18. **Steve Wright** took kids on a public art 'tour' around the Chapel Hill Community Center, seeing the different art pieces that reside in the park. **Erin Jobe** and **Rachel Bass** helped lead a 'roll-a-dice' mural activity where kids spray-painted designs based on what was rolled.



Try this art activity with your family during the holiday!

Chance Operations: Create different art prompts for each face of a dice. Roll the dice and let the magic happen! (art prompt examples include draw a star, paint a tree using the color green, draw something that makes you happy, etc.)

healthier and more stable place. I would encourage anyone who feels they may need help to utilize our EAP services."

"I was being disrespected at work and was upset about it. I talked to my friends and family but it wasn't getting better. Someone suggested that I should call the Employee Assistance Program. I didn't want to, but finally decided I would see if it could help me. I knew I could hang up the phone if I changed my mind.

I called and talked to someone who assured me that this was confidential and no obligation. She asked me a few questions that were a little personal, and I told her so. She said these would help her find the right therapist for me, but that I did not have to answer any questions I did not want to. The therapist called and I made an appointment. I had to fill out an intake form before the appointment and send it back to her.

We talked a lot about what might help me the most with my work issue and we focused just on that. I was relieved, because I really did not want to talk about stuff I did not think was relevant to my problem.

After five sessions, I felt like I had gotten what I needed. I was able to talk to my boss about my concerns and it helped. I would call EAP again."

Compliments

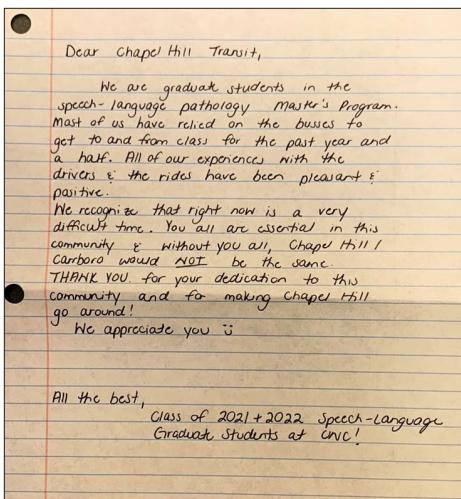
Carolean Craig thanked the **Police Department** for responding many times, along with EMS, to help her during an illness. She said everyone who has responded has been great.

Renuka Soll commended the team who planned and coordinated the Arbor Day Celebration — **Kevin Robinson, Adam Smith, Wes Tilghman, and Tanner Thompson** (all Parks and Recreation). "The Arbor Day celebration was excellent and extremely enjoyable to watch. Great job!"

James Huggins and Wayne Moore (both Engineering) were commended by Tim Czupka (Technology Solutions) for being outstanding in their desire to help whenever called upon. "I have worked with them multiple times now, and the latest work is no exception."

Nancy Cheng thanked the Aquatics Team, including **Tanner Deisch** and **Chris Graham** (both Parks and Recreation), for being helpful, professional, accomodating, and cheerful. "I was impressed with the effort the aquatic team made to accommodate person like me trying to swim."

Graduate students from UNC's Department of Allied Health Services Speech-Language Pathology Master's program delivered gift bags to **Transit's**



Margaret Vanderford thanked the **Community Center Team**, including **Keith Dodson** and **Community Clay Studio staff**: "Y'all have turned our 2020 around with the small, safe youth programs. My kids have loved having activities to look forward to each week especially after a long, miserable, cooped-up spring and summer."

Margaret Vanderford thanked **Keith Dodson** (Parks and Recreation) for leading an archery program. "We appreciated you taking the time to teach us parents archery and let us have such an amazing family experience."

Parks and Recreation and Public Works crews were thanked by Andy Sachs for relocating a stone marker at Emily Braswell Perry Park. "The area looks so much more inviting. Thank you so very much."

Adam Smith and Torri Maddox (both Parks and Recreation) were commended by Bill and Anne Brashear for safely and carefully removing dead trees, leaving areas for native plants to thrive.

Melanie Miller (CaPA) was thanked by John Richardson for helping update the Climate Action Plan, including revising several complicated graphics and charts. "Very impressive."

Operations and Maintenance teams with notes and a very nice thank-you letter.

#KindnessMatters



Lance Norris and the Public Works Stormwater, Traffic, and Construction teams were thanked by Kevin Robinson (Parks and Recreation) for making a stormwater project at the police station happen quickly. "We can now proceed with finishing the Bolin Creek Trail project. The contractor started pouring concrete last week on the trail and we hope to finish this year."

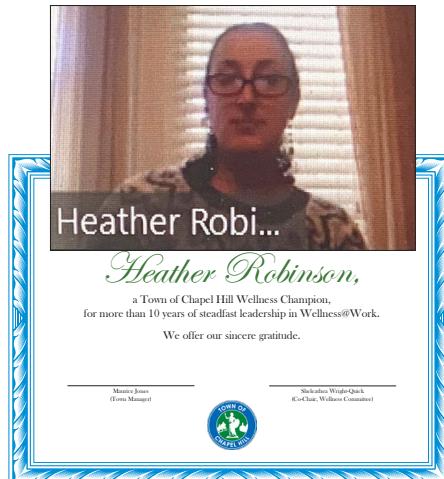
Corey Kuhns, Kyle Brumbaum, and Drew Cabe (all Police) were commended by Julia Masterson for assisting her family when her teenage son was going through a period of emotional and psychological distress. "And in each instance, your officers demonstrated professionalism, respect, and compassion."





**CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2020
WELLNESS CHAMPIONS!**

Heather Robinson (Fire) was chosen as a wellness champion for more than 10 years of steadfast leadership in Wellness@Work. **Erin Jobe** (Library) was chosen as a Wellness Champion for her critical contribution to the success of the Drive-Thru Flu Shot Clinics.



WELLNESS SUCCESS STORY

Wesley Keeler (Transit) learned about the Wellness@Work Tobacco Treatment Program during his annual Health Risk Assessment, but wasn't "ready to make a change." In July, he contacted Tobacco Treatment Counselor Barbara Silver.

Wesley started smoking at 16. He tried to quit a few times, but was not able to remain tobacco-free for long. COVID-19 played a significant role in his decision to try again. He knew both the virus and smoking affected one's respiratory system and ability to breathe. He wanted quit "for good" to improve his lung function and live a longer, healthier life.

He and Barbara decided that Varenicline (Chantix) would be a good option for him. Wesley employed several strategies to "unhook" from his triggers,

like getting rid of his car ashtray. Wesley has been tobacco-free since Aug. 1! He reports improvements in his ability to breathe, smell and taste.

Wesley encourages any Town employee considering quitting tobacco to contact the Wellness@Work Program. He felt encouraged and supported in a "gentle, non-judgmental way."

If you'd like to quit smoking, vaping, chewing or dipping, please call or text Barbara Silver at 919-904-4848, or email barbara.silver@med.unc.edu. The program and medications are free, and if you quit for six months you receive a \$100 gift card!



FEELING STRESSED?

The Manage Stress Challenge begins on Monday, Jan. 11. Learn how to practice strategies to reduce and manage stress.

In this four week challenge, you will earn points for trying strategies related to weekly themes: Move More, Laugh a Little, Money Management, and Make Yourself a Priority. All participants who submit logs will be eligible for prizes!

Sign up by Friday, Jan. 8. Contact Liska Lackey at 919-968-2796 or [w](#) to get a log and details on how to record points earned.

ON THE FRONT BURNER

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and oppression that has led to an examination of how many African-Americans have been and continue to be treated. Through the work of the Reimagining Community Safety Task Force, we are aiming to build on the success of our police department's efforts to build a strong relationship with our vulnerable populations by developing innovative and effective ways to serve and protect our community.

We are also putting the building blocks in place to boost economic development in our Downtown through the East Rosemary Street projects, which include a new parking garage and a 200,000 square feet office building. These projects promise to send a positive economic ripple throughout our Downtown, and help the businesses that have been hardest hit by the pandemic.

A new year will mean new adventures, hopefully less challenging and dangerous. What we know for certain is that, like we did in 2020, all of us will rise up and take on those challenges yet again – together. Thank you for all you do for this great town. Happy Holidays and Happy New Year!

