



FRIDAY
Partly Cloudy
68/56

SATURDAY
Partly Cloudy
81/58

SUNDAY
Chance Rain
70/47

C THE CARRBORO CITIZEN



PHOTO BY KEN MOORE

This winged sumac tree west of town will be brilliant this week.

FLORA BY KEN MOORE

Go west to see a sumac tree

One of my favorite drives is west out of Carrboro on N.C. 54. Along the way are forest edges, fields and vistas across hilly terrain, beautiful miniatures of the grand mountain views that are four or more hours drive away.

With each drive, I usually discover something of interest not observed before. I've been waiting since about this time last year to share my discovery of an impressive sumac tree I noticed exactly 3.5 miles from the edge of town.

I glimpsed on a fence line on the left-hand roadside the brilliant fall color of what I thought was a sassafras tree. On my return drive, I remained alert to take a closer look and was surprised to realize that my sassafras was really a winged sumac.

Now, winged sumac, *Rhus copallina*, is by nature a medium-height, rhizomatous shrub. A single seedling plant can produce a vigorous clump simply by extending its shallow horizontal roots (rhizomes) in all directions. When you see an extensive display of it, you may be looking at a single plant. I very seldom see it above five or six feet in height, a condition certainly maintained by roadside mowing schedules that are a constant threat to nature's efforts at self expression.

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Towns' schools' leadership in the balance

BY KIRK ROSS
Staff Writer

Voters in the Chapel Hill-Carrboro school district and residents of Chapel Hill, Carrboro and Hillsborough will have their say Tuesday, with the outcome of only the uncontested Hillsborough mayor's race certain going into Election Day.

Early voting ends this weekend with the close of balloting on Saturday. Results so far show 1,228 casting their ballots as of Wednesday afternoon at early-voting sites in Hillsborough, Carrboro and Chapel Hill.

Only 69 residents have voted early at the board of elections office in Hillsborough, 486 at Carrboro Town Hall and 673 at Morehead Planetarium. The three sites will be open Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Hours in Hillsborough are from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thursday and Friday and 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday. The two sites in southern Orange will be open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Thursday

and Friday and from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday.

The vote totals represent an increase in early voting from the 2007 municipal and school board elections. That year, 558 voters cast their ballots at Morehead Planetarium, 568 at Carrboro Town Hall and 130 in Hillsborough. Although the totals for this year show an increase, it's hard to predict whether there will be an actual increase in turnout since more voters have taken advantage of early-voting opportunities in each cycle since it was introduced in the state in 2000. In last year's presidential race, overall turnout was roughly 71 percent, with more than 55,000 voters casting ballots through early voting.

The overall turnout in the 2007 cycle was 15.57 percent. In 2005, the overall turnout was 14.84 percent, with Hillsborough reporting a 28 percent turnout; Chapel Hill, 14.17 percent; and Carrboro, 15.56 percent.

On the ballot

In Chapel Hill, the on-again-off-again departure of Kevin Wolff has added some confusion to a four-way race for Chapel Hill mayor.

Wolff, who has run twice before for the office without success, told radio listeners at a forum sponsored last week by WCHL that he was withdrawing from the race. He remains on the ballot though, and has not endorsed any other candidate, taken down signs or withdrawn fliers distributed at early-voting sites. In a letter of support sent to *The Citizen*, his wife Mary called on voters unhappy with decisions by the town council to lodge a protest vote for her husband.

Wolff could play the role of spoiler in the four-way mayor's race, which includes town transportation board chair Augustus Cho and council members Matt Czajkowski and Mark Kleinschmidt.

The Chapel Hill Town Council

election also features a large field of candidates, with incumbents Laurin Easthom, Ed Harrison and Jim Merritt and challengers John DeHart, Gene Pease, Matt Pohlman, Will Raymond and Penny Rich.

In Carrboro, the mayor's race is similar to two years ago, with two-term incumbent Mark Chilton facing two challengers — Brian Voyce, who also ran two years ago, and newcomer Amanda Ashley.

There are three seats up for grabs in the Carrboro Board of Aldermen election. The race will determine who replaces Alderman John Herrera, who resigned his seat recently and moved to Holly Springs. In addition to the open seat, the race features incumbents Randee Haven-O'Donnell and Jacquie Gist and challengers Sharon Cook, Tim Peck and Sammy Slade.

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Smaller Halloween celebration doesn't mean less fun

BY BETH MECHUM
Staff Writer

Hilarious costumes, unfortunate costumes, crowds of people, fake blood, "too soon" jokes (we're looking at you, Michael Jacksons) and maybe even some candy. Halloween in Orange County just wouldn't feel right without these things.

It's another Homegrown Halloween for Chapel Hill, where town leaders are hoping to decrease the numbers flocking to Franklin St. by even more than last year.

The number of people spending Halloween on Franklin Street last year went down from about 80,000 to about 35,000. The town's goal is to have about 10,000 to 15,000 people attend annually.

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PHOTO BY AVA BARLOW

Be Prepared — Kyra Nicholson, left, and Simone Suber, both freshmen at UNC, get prepared for Halloween by trying on costumes at the Clothing Warehouse, a vintage clothing store on East Franklin Street, Monday afternoon.

Chatham Habitat celebrates 20 years

BY BETH MECHUM
Staff Writer

There have been countless changes over the years at Chatham Habitat for Humanity, but the purpose and message remain the same. Staff members and volunteers alike are a part of Habitat to help families who can't always help themselves.

Chatham Habitat celebrated its 20-year anniversary during the month of October. What started out as a completely volunteer-driven organization in 1989, building one house that they weren't even sure they had the funds to finish, now has a full-time staff, a board of directors and 89 houses built.

Chatham Habitat is an official affiliate of Habitat for Humanity International, whose stated goal is to "eliminate poverty housing and homelessness from the world, and to make decent shelter a matter of conscience and action."

To do this, volunteers (usually church and college groups) come together to build a house in a matter of weeks, allowing a family to move out

of often dilapidated residences and become homeowners.

David Scott, a retired homebuilder, was involved with Habitat in the early 1990s and now, with all his kids moved out of the house, has gotten involved again. He's seen how the program has evolved over the years and said one of the biggest differences is the number of resources Habitat now has available.

"It's utterly different. We started out in '89 with just a small group of volunteers, no money to speak of, no buildings, no lots of land," Scott said. "Now the organization today, it is very professional, the staff is very dedicated, so different than the early day. It's a terrific group of people. And it's not just houses, it's about family support."

That support is one of the things Habitat staff members say they're most proud of. After families apply for a Habitat house and are involved in part of the building process, they are required to attend homeowners' classes in six-week segments.

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PHOTO COURTESY OF CHATHAM HABITAT FOR HUMANITY
Volunteers dig the footings with shovels for the first Chatham Habitat house in 1989.

Through community support, a need is met

RECENTLY . . .
BY VALARIE SCHWARTZ

As a board member of the OCRCC, Miriam Slifkin's words resonated as I walked into her living room and she said, "Welcome to the place where the Orange County Rape Crisis Center was formed."

Many meetings and 36 years later, Slifkin still supports the center that she founded.

"If I had a priority list of things I'm glad exist, it would be number one on my list, after my family, of course," she said.

Slifkin held a doctorate in botany and was raising four daughters when a series of incidents pointed the way. At the time, she was president of the Chapel Hill chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW), which she also founded. Despite a lot of mail that indicated a need for a rape crisis center, she encountered resistance from fellow "women libbers," until, of all people, Billy

Graham presented a motivating factor.

"Billy Graham was in South Africa when a 12-year-old girl was abducted and gang-raped," Slifkin explained. "He was furious," and in a hasty moment while advocating strict punishment for the brutal crime, made the statement that he thought a person found guilty of rape should be castrated. Graham suffered from the fallout and Slifkin said an item making fun of him appeared in the *Chapel Hill Weekly*, prompting her to write a letter asking why Graham should be laughed at and what suggestion the writer might have as punishment.

After her letter's publication, "all hell broke loose," Slifkin said, remembering the harassing phone calls with masked voices that she received at a time when her husband, Larry, a UNC physics professor, was traveling a lot.

Then came a series of rapes.



PHOTO BY VALARIE SCHWARTZ
Miriam Slifkin, founder of the Orange County Rape Crisis Center, in the room where the idea was launched.

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