

# Home-cooked entrepreneurship

## Rosemary Street's Mama Dip earns business honor for restaurant

By Danielle Herman  
Senior Writer

*The Chapel Hill-Carrboro Chamber of Commerce will honor 12 local business leaders at its inaugural Hall of Fame Wednesday.*

*The Daily Tar Heel will feature each of its inductees. Mildred Council will be inducted.*

Mildred Council, better known as Mama Dip, started cooking when she was just 9 years old living on her family's farm in Chatham County.

Years later, in 1976, she opened Mama Dip's restaurant on Rosemary Street with \$64 and some breakfast staples, hoping she would have enough money to buy food for lunch.

"I was getting into something I didn't know how, but I did know how to cook," she said.

Mama Dip left work that day with \$135.

Since opening her restaurant, Mama Dip's love of cooking and people has taken her far.

In 2002, she met former President George W. Bush in Washington, D.C., where she was named the fourth-best

small businessperson of the year by the Small Business Administration.

She has been featured on Good Morning America, in The New York Times and has written two cookbooks.

"You learn everything after you leave," Mama Dip said.

### A homecoming

Mama Dip never left her home for long, and her traditional country cooking keeps people coming back to her restaurant even after they've moved away.

Sherry Holbrook-Atkinson said she and her husband, Delton Atkinson, come to Mama Dip's from Maryland every year the day after Homecoming.

"My husband sort of grew up with Mama Dip's," she said.

Atkinson attended UNC in the 1970s for his undergraduate and graduate degrees.

"We've made this a tradition after Homecoming — to meet up at Mama Dip's," Holbrook-Atkinson said.

Things have changed at Mama Dip's since it first opened.

Spring Council, Mama Dip's youngest daughter, said the

work is harder now and the restaurant and staff are larger.

"Life was much simpler then," she said.

### Giving them love

Despite the changes, the family's love of cooking stays constant, as does Mama Dip's compassion and love.

Mama Dip said she hires many young people who have dropped out of school or are losing direction in their lives.

"I give them that love that shows you can make it."

She said she teaches students how to deep-fry foods and slice tomatoes and apples.

Mama Dip has also actively worked within the community, starting the "Share the Love Fund" in 2009 to benefit children facing financial difficulties.

Spring Council said her mother always had someone over at the table, even strangers on Christmas and Thanksgiving.

"Her mother died, and the community helped her dad out, so she's always instilled in us to go out and help other folks," she said.

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Mildred Council, better known as Mama Dip, peels potatoes in the kitchen for her restaurant.

# Chapel Hill Museum site awaits appraisal

By Rachel Herzog  
Staff Writer

523 E. Franklin St. is a building with a rich history — but an uncertain future.

The Chapel Hill Town Council is currently awaiting an appraisal on all such town-owned properties, and the future of the building could be decided soon after.

Constructed and dedicated by the Town of Chapel Hill in 1968, the mid-century modern structure served as the Chapel Hill Public Library

until 1993.

It has had several different uses since then, including the location of the Chapel Hill Historical Society and then the Chapel Hill Museum starting in 1997.

In June 2010, the museum closed due to a lack of funds.

Today, 523 E. Franklin St. has returned to one of its former functions — housing the Chapel Hill Historical Society, a public education and outreach organization. The society's office is on the building's first floor. The upper level is

no longer in use.

During its meeting Monday night, the Town Council tabled a discussion that would have allowed Town Manager Roger Stancil to start marketing the building as for sale.

The Town Council postponed any further consideration of the property until it receives an updated appraisal.

Town Council member Sally Greene said because the council tabled the discussion, it has not received a formal update on the property.

A committee of local real estate professionals was brought together last year to suggest the best uses for the property, Chapel Hill's asset needs and the goals of Chapel Hill 2020.

The report suggested office space would be the best option for 523 E. Franklin St., as long as the office use was in harmony with the building's location in the Franklin-Rosemary historic district.

It also noted the building could be a good location for a

visitors' center or even a combined Orange County Visitors Bureau office and a University Welcome Center Office.

The report recommended ordering an appraisal of the building to determine its potential market value.

An easement — a document created to protect historical buildings — is held by Preservation North Carolina and could prevent the building from being torn down or from being changed.

Because of its historical significance, Cheri

Szcodronski, executive director of Preservation Chapel Hill, said the surrounding neighborhood is concerned about it being torn down.

Szcodronski also said she thinks the town intends to sell the building in the next few years.

"I think that history is really important in addition to the architecture, so we would just really like to see it stay and have a new life with a new owner," she said.

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# Board of Aldermen weighs parking options

By Caleb Waters  
Staff Writer

Parking in Carrboro sometimes feels scarce — and the Board of Aldermen hopes to improve that.

In a meeting that featured a piece of World War I poetry to honor U.S. veterans read by Carrboro Mayor Mark Chilton, as well as a resolution to honor the town employees who provided relief to victims of the June 30 flash floods, the major issue debated was the potential for a new parking study in Carrboro.

Jeff Brubaker, the town's transportation planner, brought forward a two-part resolution that updated the current work on new parking plans.

"A parking plan is a formal process for addressing the issues in a comprehensive way," Brubaker said.

The estimated cost of the plan at this point is between \$75,000 and \$100,000 — a number Brubaker said was average for these types of studies. He said he'd heard of plans costing as little as \$40,000 and as much as \$300,000.

While the aldermen agreed a plan was needed, they disagreed about the end goal of the plan.

Alderman Sammy Slade said the end goal of a parking plan should be to reduce parking in the town.

Alderman Jacquelyn Gist argued no clear goal for the project has been decided yet, and the board cannot make assertive statements at this point.

Instead, Gist said the aldermen should go into this planning process with an open mind about what the town's planners will find through their research.

The need for a town parking plan surfaced earlier this year after seven cars were towed from the Carr Mill Mall parking lot in a two and a half hour span during the Carrboro Music Festival.

While the aldermen agreed

### IN OTHER NEWS

The board tackled other issues at its meeting Tuesday:

- Representatives from the The Splinter Group said they are close to finalizing a brand for the town.

- The aldermen considered hiring a town historian.

- The aldermen also considered building additional sidewalks in the South Greensboro Street area.

that the property owner had the right to tow the unauthorized vehicles from his private lot, the town later decided to launch the parking study to ensure that it could support increased parking for the growing downtown area.

Although the plans are still in the beginning stages, Brubaker said a great deal of research is going into the project.

"One of the tough things about beginning a parking plan is where you are going to study," he said.

Gist asked how the project

could feature unbiased input. "Everybody does have a parking ideology to some extent," Brubaker said.

Brubaker said he was optimistic that groups with experience in parking plans could be contacted for guidance.

Slade said the board does support the project.

"We are all on board," Slade said. "I don't think any of us disagree."

The aldermen now must decide what end goal the plan should seek to satisfy.

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