Briefs

Chamber elects new board officers, members

The Chapel Hill-Carrboro Chamber of Commerce has elected new officers and six new members to its 35-member volunteer board of directors.

New members are Bruce Ballentine, Ballentine Associates president; Linda Cohne, vice president of publishing at AICPA; Margot Lester, owner of The Word Factory; Gerald Ramoin, executive vice president and general manager of Performance Automall; Shannon Reaves, senior vice president at Harrington Bank; and Shawn Slome, owner of Twig.

New board officers are Barry Leffler, chair, CEO and managing partner at 1360 WCHL; Paige Zinn, vice chair, chief operating officer at Jennings; Chris Barnes, treasurer, vice president at First Citizens Bank; Bob Saunders, general counsel, partner at Brooks Pierce; Aaron Nelson, secretary, president and CEO of the chamber; and Marc Pons, immediate past chair, president at Chapel Hill Tire.

The board also reelected Fred Black, Black Star Strategies; Millie Chalk, Duke Energy; Chris Derby, the UPS Stores of Meadowmont and Fordham Boulevard; Mariana Fiorentino, Terra Nova Global Properties; Joel Levy, Joel I. Levy CPA, PA; Torin Martinez, UNC Hospitals; Roger Perry, East West Partners; and Reagan Pruitt, Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina.

He's Not Here sold

He's Not Here, the iconic Franklin Street bar known for its 32-ounce Blue Cups, was put up for sale by owner David Kitzmiller in January for \$165,000 and has since been reportedly sold to a former UNC football player and a partner.

The bar earns an estimated total annual revenue of \$400,000, according to a listing on bizquest.com.

Kitzmiller has owned the bar for almost 40 years, but has said he wanted to sell the bar so he could retire.

Green Plus scholarships

The Chapel Hill-Carrboro Chamber of Commerce has announced it will provide Green Plus scholarships to chamber members running small businesses.

Green Plus is a national small business sustainability education, networking and certification program that was created in 2006 by the chamber in partnership with UNC and other local business and university leaders.

For more information on the program visit gogreenplus.org and click on the scholarship button to apply. The deadline to apply is March 31.

Communication Matters reinvents itself

The Hillsborough-based marketing firm Communication Matters has not only reinvented its name, but also its services.

Now called Comma, the company has a new website detailing its services, which include providing marketing strategies for sustainable business growth.

To find out more visit cmatters.org

UPS Store celebrates love month

The UPS Store at Carrboro Plaza is celebrating the month of February with two specials.

To help spread the love to military personnel serving overseas for the eighth year in a row, the store is offering free first-class postage for valentines sent to deployed military personnel as a part of Operation Sealed With A Kiss. Valentines and letters must weigh 1 ounce or less and be addressed to a specific U.S. service-

The store will also be celebrating "For the Love of Carrboro" month by offering couples a two-for-one special on passport pho-

Hillsborough Brand Ambassadors training

On Feb. 28 the Alliance of Historic Hillsborough will hold its biannual Brand Ambassadors training program.

The program is targeted toward anyone in the area who works

with visitors to the town, like business owners and their employees. Participants will receive a notebook filled with information about the town, including a list of businesses, historic site information and recreational site locations.

The training sessions will be held at the Orange County Historical Museum in Hillsborough from 12-1 p.m. Reservations are required and the deadline to register is Feb. 14. For more information and reservations contact Sarah DeGennaro at 732-7741 or sarah@historichillsborough.org

Seventeen years of serving local suds

BY ROSE LAUDICINA

Staff Writer

Robert Poitras took a gamble on starting a craft-beer brewery in the Triangle at a time when craft beer was an idea that few had heard of.

When he started the Carolina Brewery with his business partner, Chris Rice, in 1995, consumers were starting to show interest in craft beer, yet it was still a risky business venture.

Now in 2012, interest in craft beer is stronger then ever and has helped propel the Carolina Brewery toward its 17th anniversary.

"The 21- to 30 year-old crowd is now choosing quality over quantity," Poitras said. "They want to drink local and they want to relate to their beer, and it is certainly good for our industry."

Just in time for the brewery's anniversary, being celebrated this week, the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Chamber of Commerce named the Carolina Brewery as its Large Business of the Year.

"When you receive awards like this it helps validate you to people," Poitras said.

When Poitras, a third-generation Tar Heel, graduated from UNC and was struggling with the question of what to do with his life, he decided to chase a dream and Poitras had studied abroad in

Switzerland, where he first discovered a wide variety of beer. Then while taking summer-school classes in California he was introduced to the local brewing scene, where



Robert Poitras, co-founder of Carolina Brewery, is celebrating his business' 17th anniversary this week. PHOTO BY DUNCAN HOGE

the trend was toward craft beer, an idea not yet seen in the South.

So upon graduation Poitras and Rice set off on a beer-drinkers dream trip, visiting more than 100 breweries around the country, talking to owners and brewmasters to gather best-practices information.

"We didn't want to just be focused on students or tourism," Poitras said, "we wanted to create a Cheers-like environment. A local brewery focused on local people."

When Carolina Brewery opened on the west end of Franklin Street in 1995, the businesses solidified its place in beer history as the first craft brewery in Chapel Hill and the first brewery to distribute growlers in North Caro-

"We had to build up the education about craft beer and the terminology and styles," Poitras said.

Poitras and Rice saw their business take off, thanks to local businesses like the Carolina Inn, Linda's Bar and Grill and Weaver Street Market taking a chance on the brewery by stocking its beer and the public embracing their

Now they have been able to expand the brewery, adding more brewing tanks, another restaurant in Pittsboro and offering beer in

"I feel like we have succeeded in becoming an institution in Chapel Hill," Poitras said.

"For me growing up, the institution was the Rathskeller. When I was in school, it was Spanky's. And now I feel like we have become a Chapel Hill institution."

Although Poitras could easily

sit back and enjoy his success, he is continuing to push the brewery into new ventures.

Last week the brewery finalized a deal to launch the distribution of two beers, Sky Blue and their Flagship IPA, in Hilton Head and Charleston, S.C. - the brewery's first out-of-state distribution.

"We are committed to growing, Poitras said. "We want to become more of a regional brewery."

While initially the brewery he and Rice started to spread the love for craft beers and good food might have been risky, he has faith in the younger generation to help keep it alive and allow it to continue to grow.

"I think this younger demographic can and will be craft connoisseurs for the rest of their lives," he said.

Hispanic-owned eateries overcome obstacles

BY JEREMY GERLACH

Courtesy of the Carrboro Commons

According to the 2010 census, there are no Hispanic-owned restaurants in Carrboro. There are chain Latin-themed establishments, yes, but none are owned by anyone in a Latino community that comprises more than 13 percent of Carrboro's population.

Yet on any given morning, you can walk past tienda after tienda – and by night, taco truck after taco truck. Why are the numbers - or lack thereof - hiding the Latino food industry from the Carrboro consumer?

José Torres is a community specialist at the Carrboro branch of El Centro Hispano, a Durhambased grassroots organization dedicated to strengthening the Triangle's Latino community. He says that Hispanic businesses, especially in the food industry, often fly under the radar.

'The Latino community in Carrboro is full of businesses that may be smaller or less advertised," says Torres. "Some are so small that the census doesn't even count them."

"El Centro Hispano tries to help [businesses] network through our community outreach, but they also have had some innovative efforts of their own," Torres says. Carrboro's taco trucks, for example, have taken to Facebook, Twitter and other social-network-

Despite these efforts, he still does not know how many Hispanic-owned businesses actually exist in Carrboro.

Annette Stone, director of the Carrboro Chamber of Commerce's Office of Economic and Community Development, was also unsure.

"We help businesses of all demographics find loans," she said. 'We haven't worked specifically with the Latino community."

Alfonso Guzman, owner of Captain Poncho's Tacos, has been in the food industry for three years, since moving to Carrboro from Mexico. He ventured an educated guess.

"I would say there are about four to five taco trucks competing in Carrboro today," he says. "It changes, because sometimes you are making money – or sometimes you have to pack up for a while."

While his taco truck is undergoing renovations, Guzman has opened up a permanent sister store, Tienda don Poncho. "It's nice to have a grocery store

too - but it's harder to advertise," he says. "With the taco trucks, you can just go right to the customers." According to Guzman, the

four Carrboro-based, Hispanicowned taco trucks are Comida Mexicana, Costa Sur, Taquería de Jalisco and Captain Poncho's Tacos. Permanent grocery stores and restaurants include Tienda don Poncho, Don José Tienda Mexicana, Toledo's Taquería and Taquería Tres Amigos.

Isabel Lin Guzman, a local immigration attorney and Alfonso Guzman's wife, said that the biggest difference between Hispanicowned businesses and the larger chains is the authenticity of the venue.

"We take the time to make [Tienda don Poncho] a real Mexican grocery store, just like it would

be in Mexico," she says. "It's smaller and it might not show up in the ads, but we want people to know that businesses like ours are the real thing."

Torres says that in addition to the lack of exposure, entrepreneurs like the Guzmans face issues like loan availability.

"Most of these businesses only need very small loans to start up, and we try to educate them and refer those individuals to the right sources," says Torres. "But even micro-loans are still difficult to

That said, he foresees a growth of Hispanic-owned businesses in

"The community here is well connected, and the businesses are networking now too," he says. "Carrboro's Latino community is making some real innovations."

Jeremy Gerlach is a UNC student writing for the Carrboro Commons, a bi-weekly online lab newspaper for Jock Lauterer's Community Journalism class at the School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

RISING K TO RISING 9TH GRADERS 1-WEEK SESSIONS

JUN 13 - AUG 12 942-4716 newhopeccc.org LUNCH & SNACKS

NEW HOPE CAMP & CONFERENCE CENTER, INC.

Arts/Crafts • Sports • Nature • Archery • Free Swim/Lessons Canoeing • Christian Exploration • Middle School Leadership Camps



OLYMPIC SUMMER CAMPS!

(JUNE 11-AUGUST 24; 6:45 AM-5:45 PM; AGES 5-12 YEARS)

SPORTS CHALLENGES, FIELD TRIPS, DRAMATIZATIONS, SCIENCE, SPANISH, EDUCATIONAL GAMES, COMMUNITY PROJECTS, ORGÁNIC GARDENING MUSIC, ART, WATER PLAY

INCLUDES NATURAL/ORGANIC MEALS & SNACKS

CONTACT 919-929-7060 WWW.LACHAPELHIL.COM









