#UNCstaff take over Twitter for scavenger hunt

The Employee Forum sponsored a fun event on campus for staff. On Aug. 15, the Employee Forum held a scavenger hunt that involved staff from all corners of campus, and even as far as Morehead City. Using our Twitter handle (@EmployeeForum) and #UNCstaff, we posted clues about the locations of 50 prize vouchers. Employee Forum delegates volunteered to hide vouchers and tweet clues. Staff members who found vouchers took pictures of themselves and their colleagues and posted them to Twitter. The winners sent their vouchers to the Forum office and redeemed them for donated prizes. All winners were entered in a grand prize drawing for a free Kindle.

As students prepare to return to classes, staff are especially busy. We are tidying up the campus, arranging meetings for the school year, helping students with their schedules and directing nervous parents as they navigate the campus with carloads of dorm supplies. To ease the transition to the new academic year and add to the excitement, the Employee Forum sponsored a fun event on campus for staff.

By Tammy Cox
Employee Forum treasurer
@gettammy

For those of us who are novice tweeters, the Employee Forum organized a staff Twitter Basics class. The idea sprung from the scavenger hunt held earlier in the season which used Twitter as a platform to give clues to the hidden treasures. In addition to giving away great gifts, including a grand prize Kindle, it gave many of us an interest in learning how to tweet.

Andy Bechtel, associate professor of journalism and mass communication, agreed to teach us the basics. Registration was filled to capacity and a wait list was created for those who did not get a chance to register early. The class, held on Oct. 16 at Davis Library, included a tour of Twitter, as well as a hands-on opportunity to establish accounts for those without one and to enhance skills for others.

We learned how to follow, unfollow, mute and block fellow tweeters. Since Twitter only allows 140 characters, we discussed how to write concise, brief content that conveys information of interest to our desired audience. We discussed how to create mindful posts since we are in a professional setting.

Many of us now follow Professor Bechtel, as well as university accounts such as @EmployeeForum and @unc_hr. Since the class is in high demand, a second has been scheduled for Nov. 11.

To register for the upcoming session, visit http://tinyurl.com/...
Same-sex spouses of employees eligible for benefits

By Katie Turner
Employee Forum PR and Communications Committee chair

On Oct. 14, Chancellor Carol Folt announced the extension of benefits to same-sex spouses of qualified UNC-Chapel Hill employees.

Her announcement came as a result of the Oct. 10 ruling that struck down North Carolina’s ban on same-sex marriage.

In a message to the campus community, Chancellor Folt said she was pleased that the State Health Plan and NC Flex had begun immediate enrollment for same-sex marriages performed prior to Oct. 13.

“Same-sex marriages performed after this date would be treated as qualifying events, just as with opposite-sex marriages,” she elaborated.

According to the State Employee Health Plan website, the recent ruling “is considered a qualifying life event and eligible spouses will have 30 days to add their spouse. … Beyond this initial 30 days, marriage is a qualifying life event and members will have 30 days to add a spouse to their health plan coverage.”

The effective date of coverage for this enrollment cycle is Nov. 1, 2014.

The LGBTQ Center released a statement in response to the decision, which emphasizes the importance of benefits equity to staff recruitment and retention.

“The LGBTQ Center applauds the announcement by Chancellor Folt and Vice Chancellor Washington that UNC employees with same sex partners will now be able to have equality in health insurance benefits,” the statement said. “This is an important step toward living up to the non-discrimination statement and will make UNC more competitive in recruiting and retaining the highest quality employees.”

At a recent meeting of the Employee Forum with the vice chancellors, Associate Vice Chancellor Matt Brody said staff in the Office Human of Resources were “excited about this new development” and they “welcome developments surrounding spousal equivalence.”

For more information on enrollment, visit http://go.unc.edu/x6N7F

Revised sexual assault, harassment policy affects staff as well as students

By Kelli Raker
Employee Forum delegate

The Policy on Prohibited Discrimination, Harassment, and Related Misconduct, including Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment, Sexual Violence, Interpersonal Violence and Stalking became effective on August 28, 2014. The policy applies to all employees and students. It clearly defines the types of conduct prohibited by the University and clarifies key terms such as “consent.”

The University also adopted new procedures for reports involving a student as the responding party.

This change means that if a member of the faculty or staff report experiencing discrimination, harassment or related misconduct that is prohibited by the policy from a student, the new procedures apply. These procedures provide an easily navigable adjudication process.

A 22-member task force comprising students, faculty, staff and a community member drafted recommendations for the revision of the policy.

The task force reviewed and improved University processes for reports of sexual misconduct and discrimination. Last summer, Employee Forum members participated in task force meetings and contributed to recommendations for defining terms such as “sexual harassment.”

The University plans to begin reviewing procedures involving faculty and staff as the responding party in the near future. Stay tuned for information about new training from the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office about the policy and how to support students or your fellow staff members if they experience discrimination, harassment or related misconduct.

All employees are encouraged to review the new definitions in the policy and resources on campus. You can learn more information at http://sexualassaultanddiscriminationpolicy.unc.edu or on the main portal for information and resources about such conduct at http://safe.unc.edu.

Want to learn more right now? Sign up for a HAVEN training at http://safe.unc.edu/haven

Kelli Raker served on the task force.
Upcoming selections

November
- Mumbai Undercity by Katherine Boo (February 19)
- Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity by Katherine Boo (March 26)
- The Goldfinch by Donna Tartt (April 30)
- The Ocean at the End of the Lane by Neil Gaiman (June 18)
- Middlesex by Jeffrey Eugenides (August 13)

December-January (no meeting in December)
- Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity by Katherine Boo (February 19)
- Tales of the City by Armistead Maupin (March 12)

February
- Ocean at the End of the Lane by Neil Gaiman (March 26)

March
- Tales of the City by Armistead Maupin (March 12)

April
- Middlesex by Jeffrey Eugenides (April 30)
Staff profile: Newton Lawrence, Moving Services

By Katie Turner
Public Relations and Communications chair

Newton Lawrence is the man responsible for keeping the University moving. He holds the title of Vehicle Equipment Operator, but his job entails so much more.

I recently had the pleasure of interviewing Mr. Lawrence about what drew him to Carolina, his secret to longevity in the housekeeping department and some of the strangest places he’s been on campus. I started by asking him about his background before he came to Carolina.

NL: I was born and raised in Kingston, Jamaica. My wife and I were friends from our childhood days, when we were young teenagers. She migrated to the United States and after a couple years passed she came back to visit. We had children, and she would bring them back and forth from the U.S. to Jamaica to visit me. We did that for six years until I finally came to the U.S. in 2000. She was working as a housekeeper for the Holiday Inn and the University. Now she works in an after-school program in the public school system.

KT: What positions and job titles have you had?

NL: I got a temporary job with housing support at the University in August of 2000. I worked as a temp until I got a permanent position in housekeeping in 2003. I worked with that group for about a year until I became group leader in 2004.

KT: What do you like best about working at the university?

NL: I love meeting new people and learning about different cultures. I have to say my favorite thing is the diversity of university.

KT: Can you give an example?

NL: This person I met a couple years ago was from Burma, and he taught me a lot about his culture. It was hard to understand and vague because of his communication skills. I met one lady I work with who is Native American and she would tell me about her background.

KT: What is an average day like in the moving services department?

NL: My average day is busy. Moving furniture is my main priority, but I also help another group that delivers housekeeping supplies across campus. Sometimes when they are backed up or others aren’t around I step up and help. Their crew will help me if we are short-handed with a move.

KT: What is the biggest challenge of working at the university?

NL: The biggest challenge is moving furniture in tight spaces when the stairwells are narrow and there’s no elevator.

KT: What is the hardest move you’ve ever had to do?

NL: Since I’ve been at the university the hardest move was moving Dr. [Christopher] Payne from the first floor of Carr building to the third floor. That day I went home and my muscles were cramping. [Interviewer’s note: Carr building is one of the few buildings on campus without an elevator. Its tight, steep staircases make carrying things up and down especially hazardous.]

KT: Where is the strangest place you’ve ever done a move? Attics? Basements of old buildings?

NL: One time I did a move in Brinkhous-Bullitt and had to use the elevator for the move. That was hard for me because I’ve never seen a dead body before. We used the same elevator that the staff used to transport bodies for autopsies. That’s the strangest and weirdest elevator encounter I’ve ever had. I never really thought of dead person like that. I was thinking about the people mourning for the loss of that person. That was strange to me.

KT: Can you share a little bit about hobbies?

NL: I’m a movie fanatic. I like action movies or watching basketball. My two favorites are Tar Heel basketball and Lakers’ basketball. Sometimes the Heels will play and the Lakers will come on after, and that is a full night for me. (chuckling) I like music, too. Back in Jamaica I was a DJ. I got an iPad Mini at Student Stores. I found out there’s a DJ2 app and I loaded that up on it. I like to plug it in to my surround sound and deejay for the home crowd. I’m a reggae fan. I like some R n B, but my main music is reggae.

KT: If there’s one thing you wish you knew when you started working at Carolina what would it be?

NL: I can’t say there are any changes I would have made. For me to advise a person coming in, I would tell them this is a wonderful organization. Play your role. That’s what I do.

Finally, I wondered how Newton had managed to stay in Moving Services so long when so many others hadn’t. It’s a physically demanding job and the work isn’t always recognized or appreciated. I asked him what his secret was to longevity at Carolina. He said, “Be positive and do everything to the best of your ability. Stay on top of things and be mindful of your surroundings.”

He paused for a moment and added with a knowing smile and laugh, “And follow the rules.”

Volunteering in the Community Garden

By Arlene Medder
Carolina Campus Community Garden Committee chair

Did you know that you can bring a group to the Carolina Campus Community Garden to volunteer? It is a great team building exercise and the garden is always thrilled to have help.

Kelli Raker, an Employee Forum delegate, learned about the garden through the Forum. The Office of Student Wellness has their staff training in August, which includes team-building. They have done a ropes course previously, but this year they volunteered at the CCCG. Those who took part said they enjoyed it and plan to return to the garden to volunteer. An extra benefit: team-building at the garden is free!

The UNC Food Research Program also volunteered in the garden. They understand the importance of access to healthy food. They volunteered in the garden to support the garden’s mission to provide access to fresh fruits and vegetables to UNC employees. Jessica Davis, a research assistant in the program, said they enjoyed spending time in the garden clearing, preparing and planting fall crops. Those crops will eventually nourish some of the housekeeping staff who help to make UNC a great place to work.

Every year, the School of Law sponsors a work day volunteer event at the CCCG. The law school provides a van to shuttle volunteers from the law library and school to the garden.

Nadera Salaam, director of human resources at the School of Law and a former delegate to the Employee Forum, recounted her experiences in the garden. In the summer, she volunteers with her son. She feels the garden is a great way for children and adults to learn about our food. From the Philadelphia suburbs, she is interested in learning what fruits and vegetables look like in their natural state. She is more selective at the store, she frequents farmers’ markets, and she takes part in community supported agriculture programs.

Volunteering in the Garden qualifies as Community Service Leave. Garden workdays are 3-6 p.m. Sundays and 4-6 p.m. Wednesdays. Arrangements can be made for groups at other times.

For more information: http://uncgarden.web.unc.edu or contact Claire Lorch at clorch@email.unc.edu.