

Church acts out Columbine attack, other horrors to make teens think

Tar Heels now can reminisce over legendary No. 23 at '23'

by Christine Tatum
TMS Campus
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by Kim Horner
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CEDAR HILL, Texas — Tim Ferguson says he wants to save teens — from sin, from hell, from another school shooting like the Columbine High School massacre. And to save souls, the Trinity Church youth pastor says he has to scare them first.

His Assembly of God church's alternative haunted house, Hell House 911, shows teens the road to hell with more than a dozen scenes about rape, suicide and other grim topics — including a re-enactment of the Littleton, Colo., high school shooting in April.

"Maybe I can make one person think not to do it," Ferguson said.

Visitors come by the bus load and line up for a haunted house that has no witches or goblins. Some call the Hell House even scarier because it's about true-life horrors.

"It freaked me out, it's so real," said Stacy Holbrook, 19, of Duncanville, Texas. The recreation of the Columbine attack is not unusual for Hell House, which has staged school shooting scenes the past several years. Last year, it was the West Paducah, Ky., shooting.

This year's theme hits "too close to home" for Dave McPherson, who has counseled Columbine students as pastor of West Bowles Community Church in Littleton.

"But even though it's not my style, I see that it can serve a purpose," he said Wednesday, Oct. 20, in a phone interview. "The thing that's interesting about this hell house is there will be kids who will come to that who will never go to

church, and it may be their only exposure to the church."
Cassandra Chance of Littleton, Colo., was best friends with shooting victim Cassie Bernal, who is

yes when the killers asked whether she believed in God before shooting her. (The investigation into the shooting has cast doubt on whether Cassie was the one the killer asked.

Church. His program, which serves about 40 youths, will have an All Saints Day party to remember the life of Christ, rather than a visit to Hell House, he said. The shock value wears off for children who see violence every day on television, he said. But mostly he disagrees with the approach to solving violence.

"Trying to scare people into a decision is very wrong," Tucker said. "If you consider all the money, along with ministry hours ... if they would refocus those areas on missions in urban Dallas, I think they would have a lot bigger return on their money." Sarah Wilke, director of the Wesley-Rankin Center, a United Methodist mission, said the roughly 50 teens at her West Dallas facility already see too much pain and violence.

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. (TMS) — Folks gathering 'round tables to discuss Michael Jordan's glory days at the University of North Carolina may one day think to mention his cornmeal-crusted calamari right alongside the jump shot that handed the Tar Heels the NCAA men's basketball championship in 1982. Then again, maybe not.

barbecued rabbit, stone-ground grits and Atlantic cod cakes. Prices are a bit steep for the average student's budget — entrees range from \$14-\$26 — but the bar offers more affordable snacks.

"I just want to sit inside, and the bar is the only place that'll fit in my budget," said UNC student Brad Vincent. "I'm not even going to be able to afford many drinks. This isn't the type of place that looks like it'll be offering too many blue-cup specials." Indeed, Jordan's new

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-Dave McPherson,
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portrayed in the hell house. "My gut reaction was repulsiveness, I was repulsed. It hit so close to home," said Cassandra, 17.

"But I think if the message is getting out, that's the point of it," Ferguson said church leaders thought carefully before planning another school shooting scene, given the Colorado tragedy. Ultimately, they decided the immediacy of the violence makes the scenes more potent, he said.

After buying \$7 tickets, visitors see two teens in trench coats playing with guns, planning the crime.

"Those jerks will be sorry they ever made fun of us," said the actors, actually teen church volunteers.

Next scene, two teen girls talk in the school library. One is loosely based on Cassie, who reportedly said

Trinity Church officials said they hadn't heard about any controversy.)

More than 12,000 people watched people sin and get saved or sent to hell at last year's Hell House, Ferguson said. Now in its seventh year, Hell House is open Friday, Oct. 22, through Halloween night. Proceeds pay for the \$25,000 production costs; the rest goes to church missions, he said.

The violent scene, Ferguson said, puts you there. "Our goal is to ... make them think about the decisions they make," he said. Some who work with youths worry that Hell House's in-your-face approach goes too far.

"I detest those things," said the Rev. J.E. Tucker, director of Youth Ministries at Northway Christian

"I don't need to charge them and stick it in their face," she said. "I just think we ought to wrap them up in quilts and hold on to them. They need all the care and comfort we can give them."

But Stan Denman, youth pastor of The Church at Burleson, says re-enactments work. His church's Living Hell haunted house has staged school shootings in past.

The Baptist church called off this year's school shooting scene after public reaction to a newscast about the plan, Denman said. The board met and decided not to go ahead with it — the afternoon before the Wedgwood Baptist Church shooting in Fort Worth, he said.

"That was too close for us," he said. "We just weren't comfortable with it. We didn't have peace about it."



PHOTO BY JUDITH SCHLIEPER - UNC

The center of the restaurant resembles a basketball hoop with the cables in the foreground making up the netting.

It's too soon to tell. His Airness' new restaurant, "23," opened on Franklin Street — the university's main drag — on Thursday, Oct. 21, to a sell-out crowd, with a long line of students piled outside with hopes of snagging a spot at the bar. Reservations in the restaurant's 140-seat dining room were booked solid weeks in advance.

Jordan was noticeably absent from the grand opening: public relations reps said bad weather kept him from flying in for the event — but rumors that he'll frequent the restaurant any time he's in town have already drummed up a loyal following for the joint.

"Even if the food isn't so good, it'd be worth it to go if there's a chance he'd be there," said UNC student Kris Mattison. The cuisine is billed as "contemporary American," and the menu is filled with Southern twists:

restaurant — developed by Jordan's Jump Higher L.L.C., a management company charged with creating a host of eateries with ties to the basketball legend — was decorated in far more sophisticated tones than the family-style Michael Jordan's Restaurant in Chicago. But the decor does point to Jordan's career: Chicago Bulls-red ceramic tiles are in both restrooms; a private dining area is painted in Carolina Blue, and strategically placed cables descending from the ceiling create the illusion of a basketball net.

"It looks really cool in there, and I'm glad he's home," said UNC student Misha Campbell, cupping her hand against a window to sneak a peek at the crowd of diners inside. "But if it keeps doing business like this, I don't know when I'm ever going to get a chance to go inside."

Professor tackles Christian, Darwin fish symbols

by Edward M. Eved
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KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Call it "The Great American Fish War." It plays out on the backs of cars, pickups and SUVs. One side displays the Christian fish symbol. The other also displays a fish, but one that has sprouted feet, with the word "DARWIN" spelled out inside the symbol to bring home the point.

But what exactly is the message from the Darwin fish contingent? That's what Tom Lessl wanted to find out. He's an associate professor of speech communication at the University of Georgia. Even before the state school board debate over evolution erupted in Kansas, he was walking parking lots in five states looking for Darwin fish, distributing questionnaires.

"I wore out two pairs of shoes," Lessl said. Such emblems can be powerful statements, just like national flags, and people invest their identities in them, he said. More than that, the Darwin fish folks appropriated a religious symbol and

degraded it, Lessl said. That's potentially serious business.

Early Christian believers were said to draw the outline of a fish as a symbol of their beliefs. Letters in the Greek word for fish form an acoustic for "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior." So, he wanted to know, is this an earnest war of some sort? Or just a playful parody? He asked three questions: Why did you put this emblem on your car? What audience did you hope to reach? What does the Darwin fish mean to you? He distributed 140 surveys and got responses from more than a third.

According to the survey responses, a chief aim of the Darwin fish people is, indeed, derision, Lessl said. Their assumption is that people who put Christian fish emblems on their cars are members of the Christian political right, who hold a spectrum of conservative social and political views.

The conflict was not so much about evolution vs. creationism, he said, although some respondents did mention that debate. "This is more religious culture against secular culture," Lessl said. "It's very much a

culture war."

Some Darwin fish people said they were offended by the public display of the Christian symbol and considered the Darwin fish their counterattack. Sixty-six percent of the respondents said their target audience was "Christians." Said one respondent: "I put the Darwin fish on my car for a number of reasons. Mainly I did it to annoy the Christian right wing, since they are so fond of putting the fish/Christ symbols on their cars."

Many did say they displayed the Darwin fish to be funny, and several said their purpose was not to attack any religious group. "I can see how some people might feel hurt by the obvious play on the traditional fish logo," said one. "I can't speak for everyone, but I don't see it as anything but lighthearted."

The Darwin fish has inspired a seemingly endless number of fish mutations. There's a Sinner fish with horns, a spaceship-looking Science fish, even a Gefilte fish. One emblem slaps back at the Darwin fish by depicting a larger fish swallowing it.

Melissa Derechailo, a doctoral

student in music at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, was not part of Lessl's study, but she was spotted recently with a Darwin fish on her blue Saturn. The Christian fish symbol annoyed her, she said, because it seemed arrogant. She felt that people who displayed it were pointing to themselves as being above the rest in a religious sense. It reminded her of the Dr. Seuss story about the haughty, star-bellied "Sneetches," creatures who thought they were better than regular Sneetches who lacked belly stars.

For Derechailo, who considers herself a spiritual and religious person, the Darwin fish was a way to counter that message. Plus, she said, she thought it was a humorous way to take a jab at the "conservative right wing."

"I didn't feel like I was defiling someone else's symbol they hold very dear," she said. "It was more like a tweaking." All of this has made Derechailo, like many others, a fish-emblem watcher. One of the funniest she has seen depicts a figure erupting out of a fish in an Edvard Munch-like pose, hands against the head. It could be we all need a good Scream.

Homecoming '99: 'Yell' more like a whisper at U. of North Dakota

by Sherri Richards
Campus Correspondent
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GRAND FORKS, N.D. (TMS) — Maybe making attendance at some school events mandatory isn't such a bad idea after all. And manners? Well, it certainly appears quite a few students at the University of North Dakota could stand some refresher courses in those. At least that's what organizers of this year's homecoming festivities are thinking.

For more than 10 years, students have packed a traditional celebration held two days before the university's big homecoming game. The night typically includes performances by the cheerleading and dance team, door prizes, the school's annual "Yell Like Hell" competition and the crowning of UND's homecoming king and queen. All those things and more were staged this year — but fewer than 200 of the campus' 10,000 students showed up to see them. Hardly a stellar crowd for the Oct. 14 celebration, given that the event normally attracts close to 1,000 students cheering the Fighting Sioux to victory. Why was this year's attendance so low?

Many suspect it had something to do with this year's Greek Week — a battle in which fraternities and sororities compete to show which chapter has the most school spirit.

In the past, attending the night's "Yell Like Hell" competition — which pits different campus groups against one another in a war of spirit with yells, cheers and chants as artillery — was required of chapter members because Greeks

participating could help their houses earn points that helped them win the title. This year, participation wasn't required, so few groups showed — which was particularly unfortunate, organizers said, because the traditionally Greek-dominated night had attracted much attention this year from students outside the fraternity and sorority scene.

Of the seven groups that did sign

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-Kim Johnson,
UND student

University of Illinois students reap benefits working as mentors

by Anne Cook
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CHAMPAIGN, Ill. — University of Illinois finance professor Elisabeth Oltheten is preparing her UI students for life in the business world. The students recently helped a class at Centennial High School simulate the trading floor of the New York Stock Exchange.

Having her students do that helped them on two different levels, Oltheten said. "One is the academic part, setting up mock trading sessions

and understanding more deeply about processes on the (trading) floor," she said. "The second one's more subtle. Students feel separate from the community, and they want to be part of it."

"Going into the high schools makes them feel more at home here. They're not transients. They live here four years, and this helps develop a relationship with the community."

Oltheten said UI students learn students' names and occasionally field questions that give them a chance to spread the word about higher education. "We have kids

asking about going to university — 'How you choose one?,' 'Do you have to know your major?' — and other questions as well," she said. Lev Gurman said the youngsters he worked with caught on quickly.

"They're pretty bright, and some of them understood almost immediately," said Gurman, a UI senior who's looking for a job in management consulting. "They were pretty mature."

He said the experience also looks good on the resume.

Companies like to see you involved in the community, giving back."

Gurman said. "It's always a positive thing to mention to recruiters. They like to see you doing something on your own." Andrea Scheffler, a junior who is president of the UI Finance Club, said it's fun to go off campus to work with high school students. "We never see kids on campus," she said. "I think it went well, and the kids were enthusiastic. When I'm interviewing for jobs, this will probably come up in the interview."

up to perform at the "Yell Like Hell" competition, six dropped out at the last minute — and not one called festival organizers ahead of time. "I'm really disappointed in the lack of school spirit," said UND student Kim Johnson, pep rally chairwoman of the university association that plans the university's homecoming celebration. "It's nothing I did. People just don't care." Jacob Johnson, president of McVey residence hall, which participated in the competition and showed off school spirit anyway, said he wished there had been more people at the event. "I'm just glad it was my team that showed up," he said.