

VIEWPOINTS



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Shuttle

Safety is primary concern for students who travel between campus, Five Points

Many evenings, USC students who frequent Five Points have probably found themselves trapped at an inconvenient hour in a restaurant or bar without a ride home. Granted, home might be a campus dormitory a few blocks away, but at 2 a.m., walking alone in the dark is an unsafe and dismal prospect.

Ideally, people wouldn't be out late at night if safety and security were foremost in their minds. However, gravitating to Five Points as a social center on the weekends is an integral part of life for many students. And what could be more sensible as a safety bridge between USC and Five Points than a shuttle service that runs from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. Thursday through Sunday?

The recent crimes against USC students indicate that walking is no longer a safe alternative for students who are without transportation. They need a safe, inexpensive way of going to and from Five Points. The controversy lies in whether student activity fees should be used to fund this service.

There are many hypothetical reasons why such a service shouldn't exist. Shawna Wilson's comment in the Oct. 29 issue that "Five Points is not a part of the USC campus" is one of them. This is like saying that Gamecock football isn't a part of living in Columbia.

Five Points isn't an official part of USC, but this isn't the point. There are plenty of students who find Five Points an attractive center that adds special times and memories to their USC experience, whether their patronage be for retail or entertainment.

Safety is the key. If we want to counteract the image of unsafeness on the roads between campus and Five Points and take a pro-active step toward a truly safer community, a shuttle service is the answer.

Since some students might object to a shuttle service that draws from their activity fees, perhaps the service could charge a small fare for each student who rides. Recent budget cuts at USC demand that a shuttle service be self-supporting.

USC, with the encouragement from student organizations, should approve a trial run of the service. How will we ever know the good that could emerge from the experiment if we don't take the risk to find out? If students discover that the shuttle service isn't necessary, we can at least say we tried to improve safety conditions in our community.

EDITOR'S NOTE

TV is scapegoat for violent society

What happened to the good old days when people took responsibility for their actions?

The recent controversies about television violence have stirred enough debate to prompt Attorney General Janet Reno to plead with Congress to intervene if the networks don't take the responsibility of cutting back on murder and mayhem.

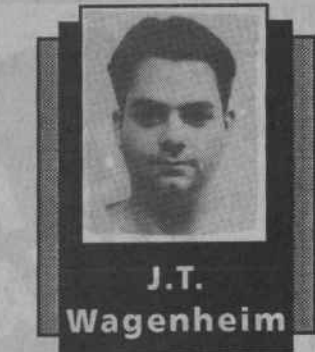
Reno, who once again is meddling in affairs in which she has no place, decided to go before Congress when a two-year-old girl was killed after her five-year-old brother set fire to the family's mobile home. The children's mother immediately blamed MTV's disgustingly funny duo, Beavis and Butt-head.

The mother didn't think to blame herself for leaving the children home alone with matches. Children like to explore and find things out.

When I was 5, there was no Beavis and Butt-head, but I still figured out what matches are. I didn't set my house on fire, but if I had, I guarantee you my parents wouldn't have tried to blame a stupid TV show.

In the Northeast, a few incidences of rough-and-tough football players lying in the middle of the road to psych themselves up prompted Disney's Touchstone division to yank a similar scene from the movie "The Program." Some of the students were hit by cars. Imagine: They were lying in the middle of the road to toughen up and had to learn the hard way that cars are bigger than people. Shocker.

The students were teen-agers. Their parents chose to openly blame a movie for their children's actions instead of saying,



J.T. Wagenheim

"That was a really dumb thing my kid did. How could he be so stupid." One mother said her son couldn't have come up with this one on his own, but he's not stupid.

With respect to the deceased's mother, he was a moron!

People need to take responsibility for their actions and not look for scapegoats to excuse their stupidity. I haven't heard of anyone blaming dam-jumpings on Harrison Ford after seeing "The Fugitive." Did anyone try to kill President Clinton after Clint Eastwood's "In the Line of Fire?" No. And correct me if I'm wrong, but I really don't think anybody blamed "Lethal Weapon" for the bombing of the World Trade Center.

People need to get off this copycat-crime kick and start blaming themselves for their idiocy. And shame on Disney for giving in. When it did, the company practically took responsibility for something it has no control over.

J.T. Wagenheim is editor in chief of The Gamecock. His column appears every other Monday.

USC VOICES

Should USC fund a shuttle service to Five Points?



"Yes, if it's for a safety thing. And it would be good also for people who can't drive home."

Chad Prater
Media arts senior



"Yes, but I feel it should be one of the top concerns for students getting to and from Five Points."

Bryan Mack
Music junior



"I think it would be helpful because a lot of students don't have safe ways to get from Five Points to campus."

Vernica Downey
International studies freshman



"Yes, it would be a great idea. Since people go there to party, it would be safer."

Rebecca Hoffmann
Engineering freshman

SGA seeks more communication with student organizations

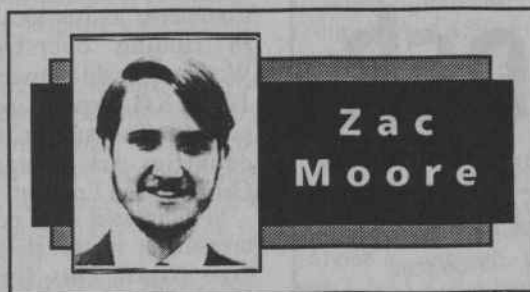
SGA has taken a new tack to serve students, especially those active in student organizations.

There are three radical points of departure in the way we now approach student organizations. First, we're aggressively communicating with organizations at meetings. Second, we're helping student leaders succeed with projects that use campus resources. We want student organizations to work together for the benefit of the USC community. Finally, we're recording the issues and solutions that we encounter for next year's administration.

The possibilities of Internet as a communication device between student organizations and SGA is under investigation by Organizational Affairs. Already, the S.C. Student Association, a statewide student lobby for higher education, is planning its meetings with Internet in mind.

More and more, student organizations are teaming up to achieve common goals. For example, service and environmental organizations are working together under the aegis of "Common Ground" to promote Earth Day.

Organizational Affairs is also coordinating a workshop series where experienced students teach newly elected organization leaders hands-



Zac Moore

on skills. This provides a template for good group transition from year to year while pursuing rewarding and fun projects. We also collaborate with student leaders, staff and faculty to compose a terse guide to running an organization.

In an effort to get students involved in SGA, we're working with three student volunteers who may learn more about SGA by assisting the President's Project Cabinet, attending cabinet meetings and accompanying cabinet members to organizational meetings. These students are planning a computer filing system to improve record keeping, eventually leading to an annual SGA Executive Report.

Finally, SGA hopes to develop a training program that will teach student volunteers public speaking skills. With this in place, students can assist Organizational Affairs with the herculean task of keeping in touch with nearly 260 campus organizations.

As a member of this organization, I've learned that a diversity of opinions can't be replaced and that we must continue to build places where we can hear students' diverse opinions. With hope, the success of the Nov. 9 Vice President's Panel will lead to a permanent student council where students and organizational representatives may present their ideas for discussion and implementation by their respective senators.

In upcoming years, the emergence of a new society of organizations and a new partnership between SGA and student leaders will benefit the USC community. Ultimately, building organizations that learn from year to year will mean that USC's strongest asset, its students, will continue to grow and learn.

Zac Moore is SGA director of Organizational Affairs.

LETTERS

Fabrications shade battle flag's honor

To the editor:

One hundred twenty-eight years ago, my great, great, great grandfather returned home from his term as captain in the Confederate army. Like most soldiers, he didn't fight for slavery. He fought for his home, his family, his way of life and for an economy which was dying under the domination of the industrialized North.

Unfortunately, under the guidance of the NAACP, the ACLU, an occasional obnoxious "redneck" or the misuse of the Confederate battle flag by the KKK, the old South has been made to look like a dark and terrible place that was full of hatred. Furthermore, the NAACP has deemed the battle flag and all vestiges of the old South to be "symbols of universal evil." This, however, is a jaded and narrow-minded view.

My family is not racist. My father marched with Martin Luther King Jr. in the civil rights movement. However, we still stand by many of the lofty ideals of our ancestors who fought in the

Confederate army.

The Confederate battle flag under which they fought is representative of the noble beliefs and ideals of those brave men who lived in a chivalrous age which, contrary to popular belief, wasn't dominated by slavery, hatred or "universal evil." The Confederate flag is a symbol of my very proud heritage.

If someone from another country came here and asked me what the flag stood for, I would explain its historical significance and the significance of what it means to me and thousands of people.

Don't be misled. Think for yourselves. The Confederate battle flag is not a racist symbol despite the misconceptions of a small minority. If the flag is taken down and viewed as insignificant, then a mockery will be made of the men who fought so bravely and paid so dearly with their lives for the true ideals and beliefs of the South.

We can't erase history. We can, however, try to understand it better rather than shading it with our own views and misleading others with adulterated, darkened fabrications of it.

Check the polls. A great majority

of the people of South Carolina want the flag to stay atop the State House. In a Democratic society, the majority rules. Try telling that to their heritage is insignificant. Put it to a vote. Let the people decide that this is truly an issue of heritage, not hate.

Don't, however, ever again refer to the flag as racist, insignificant or a symbol of "universal evil." It's not.

Matt McCord
History junior

Gamecock lacks conservative views

To the editor:

For three years, I have read The Gamecock between classes every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. I have seen the good journalism along with the bad. Many of the writers have given us their opinions wholeheartedly on many different issues, whether it be homosexuality, race relations, abortion, equal rights and, yes, even the Confederate flag.

One thing I have noticed is that they always seem to tack on their liberal views and make light of moral and conservative views that

others may have.

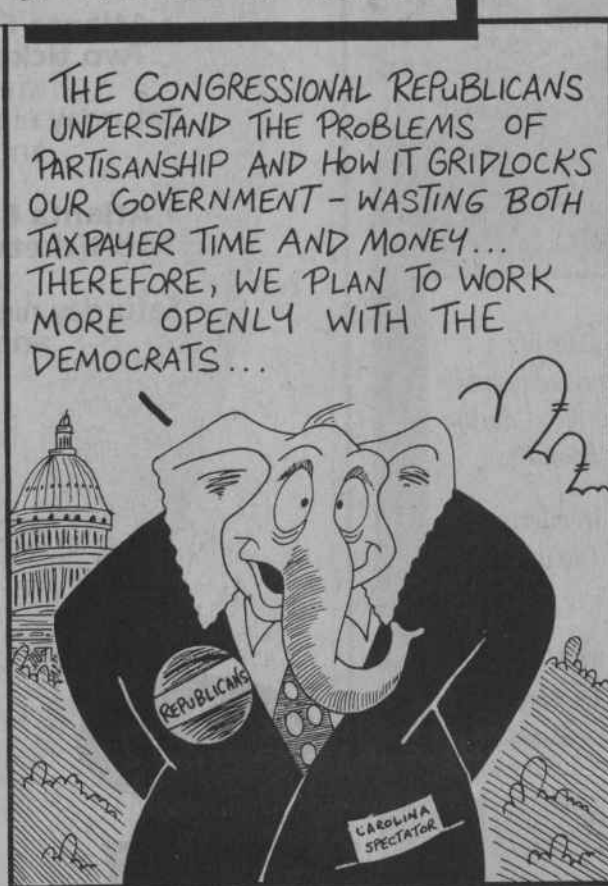
I know that young, aspiring writers want to be the next to write for The State or U.S. News, and I'm sure that they will fit right in. The liberalism that they hand us week in and week out will go along great with the rest of the media we hear today.

All of this brings me to my point: Contrary to popular belief, not all of us who attend USC are tree hugging, politically correct people who stand on the steps of Gambrell Hall and voice our opinions. Not all of us see eye to eye with Bill Clinton and Al Gore. Some of us go to church with our parents Sunday morning, like country music and still believe it's OK to wait until you're married to have children.

If you happen to see differently on subjects like pro-life, homosexuality or any of the above, fine. But maybe, just maybe, the next time a journalism major sits down to write his next article in The Gamecock, he could consider the other side of the story as well.

Ben Merritt
Music education junior

ON A NATIONAL NOTE...



BOY, PASSING THAT HEALTH CARE PLAN OUGHTTA BE A CINCH.

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THE GAMECOCK'S LETTERS POLICY

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The Gamecock reserves the right to edit all letters for style, possible libel or space limitations. Names will not be withheld under any circumstances.