

The Daily Tar Heel

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By Mollie Ray. Published Wednesday, Nov. 13, 2024

This past Friday, local open mic night Chime In graced Lanza's Cafe in Carrboro, with members of the community performing original poetry and songs. This open mic meets on the second and fourth Friday of each month.

Founders Joe O'Keefe and Erin Miller created Chime In after noticing that many poets are often underrepresented in traditional open mic nights. They started hosting these nights last December and both are regular performers.

O'Keefe said that Chime In is important because it allows people to socialize in a warm environment where they are encouraged to have vulnerable and engaging conversations. In the wake of the isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and increased social media use, O'Keefe believes Chime In provides a necessary space for connection. Community members can come together, share their stories, and support each other.

"There seems to be a real hunger for meaningful, human, face-to-face connection," O'Keefe said.

Chime In stands out from other open mic-nights in the area because they encourage audience members to engage with one another. Specifically, audience members are encouraged to write compliments and feedback on the Chime In notecards scattered across the cafe and hand them to other participants.

O'Keefe still has all of the notes he's been given since the start of Chime In last December. He said that many other performers have done the same.

Following a brief introduction from O'Keefe, who played ukulele and reminded participants and audience members to tip their baristas, the open mic began.

Over 20 poets, songwriters and storytellers alike took the stage, showcasing topics such as mental health, politics and personal stories. Each performer was met with thunderous applause and specific compliments from O’Keefe and Miller.

Artists of all ages are encouraged to perform at Chime In. Performers include community members young and old, the youngest poet being a thirteen-year-old boy named Tyler, a regular at Chime In.

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Delancey May Hartman, a UNC junior studying psychology and philosophy, has attended five of Chime In’s poetry nights.

“Usually I just share with my close friends and family,” Hartman said. “But it means a lot getting specific feedback from people when they point out lines that they liked.”

Hartman performed what she described as both a Halloween poem and a poem about dropping her sorority. After her performance, many audience members gave her notes responding to the poem.

After a ten-minute intermission allowing participants to stretch their legs and chat with their neighbors, the last bunch of performers stepped up to the microphone to share.

Sevilay Coşkun, a sophomore majoring in political science, was one of these performers. This was Coşkun’s second time participating at Chime In and sharing her poetry. This week, she read an enthusiastic and rhythmic poem about jazz.

Coşkun’s favorite part of these open mic nights is how diverse the poets are in age and perspective. She enjoys the non-judgemental atmosphere and the confidence she has gained from performing.

“The main thing for me is that poetry, and art in general, deserves to be shared because it’s filled with so much love,” Coşkun said. “And love deserves to be shared.”

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