

THE NORTHWEST CURRENT

Wilson group lobbies to get healthier food

By **VICTORIA SOLOMON**
Current Staff Writer

Wilson High School students are gathering signatures and drawing up a formal request of D.C. Public Schools administrators to provide healthier food options at lunch, including some vegetarian fare.

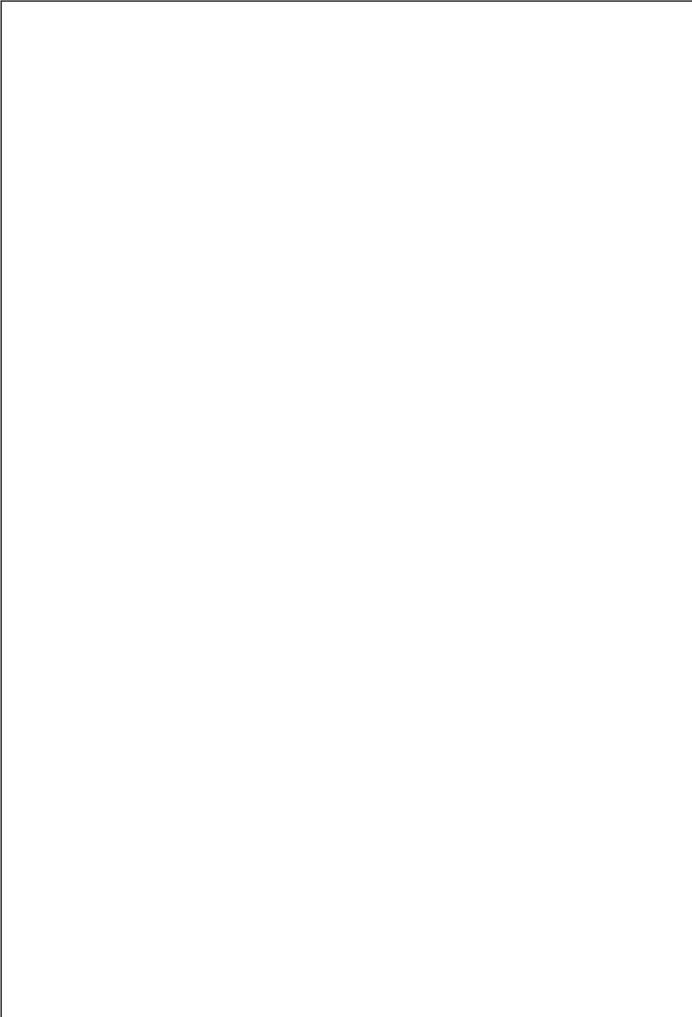
Students in the school's Caring for Animal Rights and the Environment Club began collecting signatures about two weeks ago and have collected about 375 from teachers and students at the Tenleytown school, said senior and club president Virginia Boyles.

The students plan to hold a meeting, set tentatively for May 22, to talk about healthier food in the cafeteria, and hope to present D.C. Public Schools Chancellor Michelle Rhee with a sample two-week meal plan.

"We want a healthier and less cruel alternative in lunch," said Boyles, who is a vegetarian.

As it turns out, the chancellor is in the process of hiring a new food-service provider for the public school system to offer exactly what the students are requesting: healthier options. And Rhee welcomes the students' meal-plan ideas, her office See **Food**/Page 45

FLOWER MART



Bill Petros/The Current

The Lesole's Dance Project performed high-energy African dance numbers at the 69th annual Flower Mart at the Washington National Cathedral. The springtime festival honored the Cathedral Centennial and the Republic of South Africa.

Council loosens rules on wine but not beer

■ **ABC:** Legislation extends Ward 4 limit on single sales

By **ELIZABETH WIENER**
Current Staff Writer

The D.C. Council yesterday in quick succession tightened laws on beer sales and loosened laws on wine. The separate actions expand a ban on the sale of single containers of beer, but allow restaurant patrons to take home partially consumed wine bottles in sealed containers.

Members quickly dubbed the second measure the "doggie-bottle bill."

On beer, the council, as expected,

voted tentatively to make permanent a ban on sales of single containers of beer and malt beverages in Ward 4. It also extended the ban to wards 7 and 8 at the request of council members from those wards. A final vote is expected next month.

The ban on selling single containers of beer is an attempt to control the public drinking, urination and disorder that plague some neighborhoods. Ward 4 member Muriel Bowser said the temporary ban in her ward cut such "quality-of-life" crimes by an average of 60 percent since it went into effect last August.

"It's had a tremendous positive See **Sales**/Page 29

Council panel reopens Klingle Road decision

■ **Transportation:** Council to revisit plan to reopen road

By **ELIZABETH WIENER**
Current Staff Writer

With prospects now dimming for reopening Klingle Road to traffic, one of the most heavily debated projects in recent city history is about to get yet another hearing.

Ward 1 Council member Jim Graham has scheduled a "roundtable" on the disputed 0.7-mile stretch of road for Thursday at 6:30 p.m. It is a last-ditch attempt to save the project before the council votes Tuesday on next year's budget — which, under the mayor's proposal, would have included \$2 million in local funds to repair the road.

"The decision to remove funding and not open Klingle Road should only be made after maximum opportunity for public comment," Graham said. "People who assumed year after year Klingle would be rebuilt have had no opportunity to comment on this reversal," he said



Bill Petros/The Current

A 3-2 majority on the council panel proposes to spend federal funds on a trail, rather than city funds to reopen the road.

after a committee markup last week axed the funding.

But Mary Cheh, the Ward 3 member who successfully moved to stop the road project, said there is no need for more hearings. "There has been extensive comment," she said. "I don't know of anything debated more than Klingle Road."

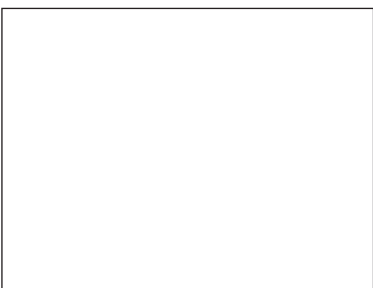
The winding stretch through Rock Creek Park was closed in See **Klingle**/Page 45

Northwest groups scout out dog-park sites

By **KATIE PEARCE**
Current Staff Writer

Now that the city has cleared the way for legal dog parks — fenced areas where dogs can run off-leash — several Northwest community groups are working to pinpoint appropriate sites.

Two dog-park sponsor groups, in Dupont Circle and Cleveland Park, have filed official applications with the D.C. Department of Parks and Recreation, while other groups are preparing applications. The department finalized its regulations for legal dog-exercise areas last fall, after several months of fine-tuning.



Bill Petros/Current File Photo

A pending application would make S Street Park into a dog park.

"It's a goal of mine to get three [dog parks] up and running in the next year," parks department director Clark Ray said in an interview yesterday. Ray said his agency has \$600,000 allotted toward dog parks for fiscal year 2008, and the same amount available for the following year.

Under the regulations, sponsor groups must seek support from their surrounding communities before applying to the parks department. Once a review committee approves the site, the sponsor works with the parks department to maintain it.

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Classified Ads

FOOD

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said.

Boyles said her group is not only seeking non-meat options — the school has a diverse population, with Jewish students who eat only kosher food, Muslims who don't eat pork and others with various dietary restrictions. She and other students hope for alternative meal options as simple as vegetarian burgers or pizza with vegetables instead of meat, as well as fruits and vegetables, Boyles said.

And the issue isn't solely about health; the food is often just plain bad, said Boyles. She said the meal of the day recently was hoagies with ham and cheese. The sandwiches were reheated; some were burnt and others were still frozen in the center.

The impetus for the request came from Erica Meier, executive director of the nonprofit group Compassion Over Killing, who gave a guest lecture at a Wilson "Alternatives to Violence" class about the treatment of animals in factory farming and its impact on health and the environment. Meier also met with the Caring for Animal Rights and the Environment Club.

When she spoke with club members, they discussed the idea of asking the school system to put some vegetarian and healthier food options on the menu. Wilson students may not go off campus at lunch.

"They just ran with it," said Meier. "They're eager to see some meat-free alternatives in the cafeteria."

Similar feedback from students across the city about their daily lunch selections has already won the ear of the administration, and Wilson is in store for better food this coming fall, according to school system officials.

Chancellor Rhee announced in February that she is hiring a new food-service contractor that will provide healthier breakfasts, lunches and snacks to all D.C. public schools. Currently the school system's Office of Food and Nutrition Services provides meals, but the office has been losing money each year because fewer and fewer children buy school lunches.

Less than 40 percent of high school students now

purchase their lunch from their public school; in other urban school districts the percentage of students who buy lunch is closer to 70 percent, according to the chancellor's office.

Last year, the school system administration conducted a pilot food-service program in two elementary schools, C.W. Harris and Garfield, and two high schools, Woodson and Cardozo, offering students options of fresh salads, specialty sandwiches and vegetable dishes. At Woodson, food sales increased from \$180 per day to \$900 per day after two weeks. Rhee envisions implementing this program across the city.

Rhee spokesperson Mafara Hobson said last week that the school system will choose a vendor in the next few weeks and that the new supplier will provide healthier options.

Once selected, the vendor will be rolled out to all schools, beginning with high schools. At each school the new contractor will re-outfit the kitchen with new cooking equipment to prepare food onsite.

Hobson said Rhee welcomes the Wilson students' suggestions. "They should submit their proposal," she said.

The students plan either to invite Rhee to their meeting or to head down to her office to present the request to her directly.

Some of the same students also plan to kick off another initiative during the May 22 meeting. Twenty-plus students are planning a weeklong fundraiser walk for a nonprofit organization called One Common Unity. The executive director and co-founder of the group, who goes by the name Hawah, is one of the school's three "Alternatives to Violence" teachers.

One Common Unity has conducted peace-building and character-education work at Wilson in the past, hosting after-school events like open-mics and panels to discuss issues such as youth incarceration. But the grant that funded the program ran out at the end of last school year, threatening the organization's viability (the work this year has been voluntary).

Hawah said in an interview last week that about 20 students have signed up to raise money for the program to continue its work at Wilson next year.

KLINGLE

From Page 1

1991 because of severe erosion. The council voted in 2002 and again in 2003 to reopen it, but the project is still mired in the federal approval process, with observers speculating that the Federal Highway Administration is holding up an environmental impact statement because it does not want the road rebuilt.

Graham and Mayor Adrian Fenty this spring proposed using \$2 million in city funds to jumpstart the work. But Cheh, in a dramatic committee session last Wednesday, won a tight 3-2 vote to delete the money. Her budget amendment says Klingle Road "shall remain closed," with no funding — "District, federal or other" — spent to repave it.

Instead, a second successful Cheh amendment says \$2 million shall be spent next fiscal year for repair of erosion and drainage problems along the roadbed and for construction of a hiker-biker trail. It requires that existing pavement be removed and the recreational trail surfaced with permeable materials.

At Graham's suggestion, Cheh accepted another amendment to have the environmental and trail work done with federal money, directing the \$2 million in local funds to alley repair citywide.

"A large share of responsibility

[for the condition of the roadbed] rests with the federal government," Graham said. Federal officials earlier earmarked \$5.7 million for the Klingle Road project, and he speculated that they would probably be happy to spend it creating a trail.

The Committee on Public Works and the Environment debate echoed, in condensed version, the debate about Klingle that has raged for years.

Cheh said the stretch of roadway through the park has been closed for 17 years, and traffic has adjusted. She said transportation studies show that reopening Klingle would have a "negligible impact on traffic" and would be "economically unsound and environmentally harmful."

Graham countered that the right of way was deeded to the city in 1885 "expressly for a public highway, and, if abandoned, might revert to the owners of adjacent land." He said that the federal government had "violated home-rule principles" by obstructing the road project and that the council should not reverse its decision to reopen the road.

Then, facing defeat, Graham offered to delay the decision and deal with Klingle in separate legislation. But his motion to postpone debate failed 2-3.

Others chimed in.

"We don't want to send a message that our laws change from year to year," said Muriel Bowser of Ward 4. "We're a small town; we only have so many roads. So the

effect of pinching, or closing, a road doesn't mean cars evaporate. Neighbors who may benefit on one side [of the park] are impacting residents on the other."

Ward 8's Marion Barry noted that the debate over Klingle first gained steam when he was mayor, and he added that he has consistently favored closing the road. Barry also said he is deferring to Cheh because the closed portion of Klingle is entirely within her ward.

"The closed part is in Ward 3, but communities in wards 1 and 4 are greatly affected," Graham shot back.

On the final committee vote, Graham and Bowser favored reopening the road to traffic, while Yvette Alexander of Ward 7 and at-large member Kwame Brown joined Cheh in axing the funding. Barry is not on the committee and did not vote.

The council's membership has changed since its last vote on Klingle, with only five members remaining from 2003. Three of the holdovers — Graham and at-large members David Catania and Carol Schwartz — were part of the 8-5 majority that year for reopening the roadway; at-large member Phil Mendelson and Ward 2's Jack Evans sought to eliminate funding for the road's reopening.

Cheh said she thinks she will win by a "comfortable margin" when the full council votes on the issue next week.