

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. — As you travel around Orange County and into downtown Chapel Hill, take time to say hello to Rainbow Ram.

Rainbow Ram, located at the Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Center, 501 W. Franklin Street, is a colorful, 4 foot tall expression of the love that Tar Heel fans have for their beloved mascot, Rameses. In keeping with the spirit of Tar Heel sports, Rainbow Ram has his horns painted Carolina blue.

Rameses has been the official mascot of the North Carolina Tar Heels since 1924, when head cheerleader Vic Huggins noticed a lack of school spirit for the Tar Heels. So instead of making the school's mascot a giant foot with black muck on the heel, he suggested that the team make its mascot a ram. The idea was based on UNC's star football player, Jack Merritt, who was nicknamed, the "Battering Ram."

The idea of a photogenic Ram statue came from visitor's bureau staff who receive many requests from visitors who want a "selfie" in front of an iconic image of Chapel Hill and UNC.

After visitor's bureau staff located a paintable fiberglass ram from Icon- Poly, a family-owned company based in central Nebraska, they turned to local artist Steven Ray Miller, who had already painted a cow, a goat and pig to benefit local causes. Miller is known for covering these animals completely in rainbow colored hearts. Miller's HeARTy Hog, created for Hog Day, can be seen at the Hillsborough Visitors Center, located at 150 E. King Street.

The Visitors Bureau paid Miller an \$800 honorarium for the design, painting and display cart's supplies.

Rainbow Ram will greet the 12,000 annual visitors who stop by the welcome center in search of information on the greater Chapel Hill area. Additionally the Rainbow Ram will be available to area school children and group meetings thanks to its installation on a moveable cart.

The statue is located indoors at the County's Chapel Hill Visitors Center, visible from the outside and always ready for photo opportunities. Please contact the Visitors Bureau at 919-245-4320 for information. Tag your photos with #RainbowRam or #ChapelHillRainbowRam.

About the Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau:

As the official accredited destination marketing organization of Chapel Hill and Orange County, the mission of the Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau is to develop and coordinate visitor services in Orange County and to implement marketing programs that will enhance the economic activity and quality of life in the community. The Visitors Bureau is a department of Orange County, NC Government. For information: www.VisitChapelHill.org

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