

The Behrend College Beacon

published weekly by the students of Penn State Erie, The Behrend College

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A view from the lighthouse

District Justice not concerned with student voters

Next year, District Justice Peter Nakoski, is up for reelection. He is currently serving his fourth six-year term. Nakoski is infamous at Behrend for being overly hard on students. Students who have to appear before him commonly get fines or sentences close to the maximum allowed by law.

Also, Nakoski is currently under investigation for making racially offensive comments during a justice training session.

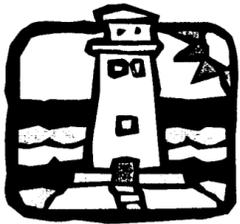
Nakoski can be hard on students because he doesn't have to worry about winning their votes. The people who vote for him aren't the people who have to worry about Nakoski giving them unnecessarily harsh sentences. Students, who have very little political power locally, have to take what the judge gives them.

However, students do have the potential to change this situation. College students are allowed to vote in the district that their college is in, which means that we can vote Nakoski out of office. The only way we can do this is to register to vote in Harborcreek. If the district justice knew that his job security depended in part on the votes of college stu-

dents, she or he couldn't have an anti-student attitude.

As long as Justice Nakoski or any other justice knows that their position doesn't depend on the support of a particular group, such as college students, they will have no obligation or motivation to quell any prejudices they might have.

We encourage students to exercise their voting power and make the situation in Harborcreek more acceptable for college students. If politicians know that students are going to use their right to vote, they will respect the needs and wishes of those students.



Letter to the Editor

Wakeup call to America on hate crimes

Dear Editor:

On October 12th, students of the University of Wyoming and the rest of the world experienced a great tragedy. Matthew Shepard, 21, died of complications resulting from a brutal assault. This would appear to be an everyday crime here in America, but it wasn't. In this crime, hatred was the gun and a person's sexual orientation was the bullet.

Matthew Shepard, a gay student from the University of Wyoming, went out on Wednesday, October 7, to a local campus hangout. There Shepard met two men that led him into believing that they were homosexuals, which was a ploy to lure Shepard into their truck. The two men, Russell A. Henderson, 21, and Aaron J. McKinney, 22, asked Shepard to take a ride with them. Shepard, obviously not suspecting the torture that awaited him, agreed. Officials say that the two men pistol-whipped Shepard while driving to an isolated area outside of town. The two stopped the truck, took Shepard out, and tied him spread-eagle to a fence. They proceeded to rob him of his money, credit cards, shoes, and eventually his life. They pistol-whipped him with the butt of a .357 magnum, then left him there to die. Eighteen hours later, a man found Shepard still tied to the fence, gasping for life. He was taken to Poudre Valley Hospital in Fort Collins, Colorado. For four days, Shepard lay in a coma. Doctors said that his skull was so badly smashed that they couldn't operate.

As a result of this atrocity, President Clinton discussed the possibility of imposing stronger federal hate crime legislation with Congress. The bill would include those targeted based on sexual orientation, gender, or disability. On the upside, Pennsylvania's Republican senator, Arlen Specter, along with several other senators, are co-sponsoring this bipartisan bill. Unfortunately, Con-

gress probably won't pass the bill before the adjournment at this week's end.

The senior analyst of a conservative group called the Family Research Council, Steven Schwalm, had this to say about the murder of Matthew Shepard: "The law should deal with facts and acts and not attitudes. We have great sorrow and regret that the incident occurred. But to try and blame pro-family or religious Americans because they oppose homosexual activity is Orwellian." First of all, no one can sincerely express regret and then suddenly turn around and look for what's to blame in a tragedy like this. Secondly, Mr. Schwalm's stand makes it seem that he is saying homosexuals cannot be part of or are not part of families, as if gay individuals aren't born of mothers and fathers. Also, he seems to be expressing the opinion that homosexuals can't be religious, that "pro-family" and religious groups are and should be pitted against gay individuals, and vice versa. Mr. Schwalm's provincial statement is unfounded and, in many cases, untrue.

It is difficult for me to handle that fact that someone would have to die to get a bill passed. I feel that society has become reactive instead of proactive. I'm saying that instead of preventing crimes before they happen, Americans take action after the fact. When it happens, it's too late. You've lost the battle because a person has died, and no matter what bills are now passed, the parents of Matthew Shepard will never hear their son's beautiful voice again.

What is acceptable in this country and what's not is repulsive to me. The president can engage in sexual relations with a woman other than his wife, but a gay man can't even walk into a bar. Is this acceptable to you? No matter what your answer is, it doesn't give you the right to kill someone. People are dying everyday be-

The Ordinary College Student

Homecoming participation reflects choice of activities

Well it's time once again to begin the celebrations for another Behrend Homecoming. Yeah. With many activities planned for the weekend, the ordinary college student has to wonder if any of them are actually worth going to. Having gone down (in the rain) every year (in the rain) to experience homecoming at Penn State Erie - The Behrend College, or Penn State Behrend, or Penn State Erie, or Penn State Behrend campus, or whatever this school decides it wants to call itself, I've seen one constant thing, aside from the rain, that takes place every year: lack of student participation.

Why is it that more on-campus residents from our campus participate in University Park homecoming activities than in the ones that take place for our special little weekend? Is it because it rains every year? Maybe. Is it perhaps due to the fact that an Open House weekend is always scheduled the same weekend of Homecoming, and that there will be no parking, and too much of a circus to bother going down to see events that take place? Could be. Or is it that a majority of the events that go on are

not really geared for current students, or interesting enough to get student participation.

I mean come on, unless someone is really excited about AMCC cross

parents of prospective high-school seniors. The unfortunate result is that parents and hopeful students see the low student turnout at many homecoming events and are left to wonder

why on their drive back home. Another rather disheartening fact is that our own Penn State President doesn't come to our

him the rest of your college career, so you better get a good look when you have the chance.

I know that students are contacted and their opinions are taken into consideration when homecoming events are planned, but maybe it's time for a campus wide survey to be conducted. Looking back on what has taken place in the past, one tends to think that new and more exciting ideas would be implemented to draw current students to events and encourage them to participate. Perhaps new programs like this year's Battle of the Sexes and live music from the Gathering Field will result in higher student participation. Unfortunately it looks for the most part that we will be seeing the same events taking place this coming weekend. This will result in poor participation once again, and if the ordinary college student wishes to partake in the festivities, they will have to combat the annual rain showers which continue to haunt Behrend homecomings. I guess it's a good thing SPC is showing *Scream* and *Scream 2* in Reed this weekend, because I don't own a raincoat, and don't plan on getting wet.

Greenbank is associate editor of *The Beacon*. His column appears every 3 weeks

Yes, the BBQ and live music on Friday night will draw many students down to the ski slope. Traditionally though, participation and student turnout at the chariot race, carnival, and float parade is low. The question is why do we keep on doing it?

country competition, who will be attending the award ceremony for top athlete in that division? What ordinary college student really gives a damn about some alumni soccer game. Unless you're a hardcore soccer fanatic, or have a relative or friend playing in that game, why would anybody realistically go see that game? Yes, the BBQ and live music on Friday night will draw many students down to the ski slope. Traditionally though, participation and student turnout at the chariot race, carnival, and float parade is low. The question is why do we keep on doing it?

If the school wants to have special events, that's fine. Don't have them though just for visiting alumni and

homecoming, or really anything for that matter. When he does come over, like he did last week for the Council of Fellows Ceremony, it's for a short time period and then he is gone like a ninja in the night. I understand that he is extremely busy and cannot make it to every event or homecoming for every campus, but shouldn't he at least try to make an occasional appearance. When he is here, it's like Zeus coming down from Mt. Olympus to mingle amongst the mortals. His advance staff acts like the entire campus is supposed to become weak in the knees at the mere mention of his name, and then crowd around when he appears. Yeah, you might as well crowd around, because you'll never get to see

Live From Guyana

Living with a roommate requires respect

Think back to your high school graduation day; you just received your diploma and you're thinking of the ways you are going to spend your last summer at home before you go away to college. You may get a summer job, or just party and have fun before you have to buckle down for the upcoming semester. So the time has come for you to get ready and depart to a new world, and all of your friends and family have a piece of advice to give you. "Remember your college years, they will be full of memories of all the good times you've had" or "don't drink to much" or "don't mix your whites and your reds," but nobody warned you about roommates.

Living in a dorm, a suite or even the apartments, students are forced to live with people they've never

known or probably would never care to meet. Even if you do know your roommates, living together may cause a rift among already existing friends. The sharing of basic facilities in small space provides the perfect environment for conflict. Before you know it, it's two in the morning and you are arguing over closet space and how much space your food takes up in the refrigerator. Is there anyway we could avoid this disturbance of peace? I gave this problem a lot of thought and I've finally came up with a solution: RESPECT.

Respect is earned only if it given, this basic principle of life was taught in kindergarten; never take without asking, respect other people's property. Yet by the time we reach college I guess most of us have forgot-

ten this simple fact. Instead, we allow strangers to sleep in our roommate's bed, we gobble their food and even have parties on Monday nights while they are studying for an exam. Once these injustices have been committed against us we resort to guerrilla tactics, such as defacing their property, labeling our food and totally ignoring their presence. Is it the dishes that have been sitting for a week or is it the garbage which hasn't been emptied in four days that really pushes your button? Fed up, you begin to tell your roommates how you exactly feel whether they wish to hear it or not. Hopefully it does not result in any physical violence.

I wish that these uncomfortable moments of life could be avoided, but how? The roommate agreement

that all on-campus students fill out in the beginning of the year is a distant memory by October, and by that time many have had their first major argument with their roommates. By this time we are so far gone, that we could care less about their wants or needs. When you walk into your "home," you wish you were back in your 8 a.m. class listening to your teacher explain the forces of nature; instead you are in the middle of a war zone. Is there anyway to recapture the feeling of the first day, when you first moved into your apartment and all was well with the world? I highly doubt it, but I just heard that Ohio Hall has 64 single rooms, all roommate free.

Jones is managing editor of *The Beacon*. Her column appears every 3 weeks.

Letters to the editor

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