



Battle lines drawn for  
NFL Conference  
Championships  
**PAGE 10**



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Women capture  
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**PAGE 11**



# BEHREND

# BEACON

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Student Publication

## Mehalso family gives Behrend \$250,000

by Jason Snyder  
editor-in-chief

Behrend alumnus Dr. Robert Mehalso and his wife, Elizabeth, have made a \$250,000 gift to Behrend to fund a new observatory, an advanced telescope and a family scholarship endowment.

"Science is one of our greatest interests in life, so building a new observatory is a perfect fit. We wanted to advance the college's mission through this facility and by providing financial aid for students," said Dr. Mehalso.

Dr. Mehalso is a very successful engineer and entrepreneur known around the world. A 1964 graduate of Penn State, Mehalso was named a Penn State Behrend Alumni Fellow in 1989. The title is given by the university as a lifelong distinction for one's outstanding leadership in his or her field. He is currently a member of the college's Council of Fellows and the president of MicroTec Associates in Fairport, N.Y.

A portion of the gift — \$107,500 — will fund the new observatory and the high-tech telescope, with the remaining balance establishing a scholarship endowment for Behrend students.

The new observatory will be located behind the Otto Behrend Science Building, near where the current reflecting telescope and dome were constructed in 1978. Because of the gift, Behrend will have a higher quality telescope with a computer telescope control, along with a 16-foot dome as opposed to the current 10-foot dome.

The larger dome will accommodate small classes or public presentations involving 15 people at one time. There will be two doors for more comfortable entrances and departures, along with handicap accessibility leading to the dome. This accessibility will include an area outside for wheelchairs and portable computers so that those unable to maneuver will be able to access the stars.

The new facility is expected to open next fall and will be used to help enhance undergraduate teaching and research. Local residents who attend Behrend's Open House Nights in Astronomy will also benefit.

Dr. Roger Knacke, director of the School of Science, said, "the new observatory will be a resource for science and engineering students, and for the public, for many years to come. It will introduce thousands of people to the wonders and mysteries of the sky."

The new telescope will ultimately, through a charged-coupled detector (CCD) and a computer, obtain images of spiral arms of galaxies millions of light years away.

Provost and Dean John Lilley commented on the scholarship endowment, saying, "this generous gift by Bob and Liz Mehalso will enhance the college's ability to recruit and assist academically talented, hard-working, and committed students. We deeply appreciate their gift."

# Promised Land?

Behrend looks for answers during Martin Luther King Jr. celebration

by Liz Hayes  
wire service editor

This past week saw numerous celebrations at Penn State Behrend in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday, which officially was on Monday, January 17, 2000. Numerous campus organizations came forward in sponsoring honorary events that focused on the life, death, accomplishments, and, especially, the dreams of Rev. King.

On Sunday, Jan. 16, the college sponsored a Candlelight Vigil, which kicked off the week's celebrations. The Vigil was held in the Reed Commons and began at approximately 6 p.m. (the service was slightly delayed, as it was scheduled to begin at 5:30 p.m.).

After a brief introduction by student Chris Buchanan, the gospel choir Ultimate Praise took the stage with their rendition of "Lift Every Voice and Sing," during which the audience was invited to join in. Ultimate Praise also performed another musical number later in the performance, just after student Sean Mascoll delivered the evening's invocation.

Baena Cabiri, also a student at Behrend, then introduced the evening's highlighted speaker, Ms. Dorothy Smith.

Smith is the president of the Erie chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and is also a dedicated community leader for the state of Pennsylvania, as well as for Erie.

During her speech, Smith gave much attention to the theme of this year's MLK celebration: "1968-2000: 32 Years After Dr. King — Have we Reached the Promised Land?" As was the opinion expressed by the majority



PHOTO BY JEFF MILLER



PHOTO BY KEVIN BRUNER

of speakers featured over the course of the last few days, Smith believes that, although society has progressed since the days of and before Dr. King, it has not reach the elusive "Promised Land." "We are not yet at the Promised Land, but we are at the crossing point with the Promised Land in view," Smith affirmed.

In her speech, Smith also stressed the importance of the role students now, and especially historically, have played in the development of civil and human rights. "It is still the college students who continue to make the difference."

Following Smith's speech, the college's Inspirational Mime Group, consisting of students Jennifer Foulks and Asia Horton, performed to an *cappella* solo sung by Danielle Marshall.

Finally, Father John Santor of the Catholic Campus Ministry delivered an

inspirational address to the assembly, though in a unique and unexpected way: he rapped it.

On Monday, Jan. 17, the day's events began early with a symbolic breakfast in Bruno's. Dr. King traditionally began celebrating his day of birth with a breakfast held with friends and family. Behrend emulated this tradition with its own breakfast, held from 7:15 to 8 a.m., hoping to generate a communal spirit.

The events continued on Monday with a writers session with guest Sonia Sanchez. Sanchez is a frequently lauded poet, activist, and lecturer, and is well-known in international circles.

The session was held from 2 to 3:15 p.m. in Reed 114. A group of about 15 participants listened as Sanchez referred to episodes from her youth in New York City, of her vast experiences in a college setting, both as a student



TMS ILLUSTRATION

## 1968-2000: 32 Years After Dr. King — Have we Reached the Promised Land?

ABOVE: Sonia Sanchez addresses the audience in the Reed Commons at the All-College Celebration on Monday, January 17. LEFT: The panelists debate their views on affirmative action at the MLK Forum.

and as a teacher, and of her family life. Sanchez also entertained questions from those present about her writing experiences and views.

Sanchez ended the session by reading an excerpt from one of her more recent books, *Does Your House Have Lions?*, which dealt with her brother's battle with and death from the AIDS virus. Sanchez also mentioned to the group that she has taken leave from her teaching position at Temple University in order to concentrate on her writing.

Shortly after Sanchez spoke at the Writer's Session, she appeared as the featured speaker at the All-College Celebration in the Reed Commons at 4 p.m. Sanchez entertained the audience for almost the entire allotted

MLK cont. on page 2

## Former student pleads no contest in child porn case

by Jason Snyder  
editor-in-chief

Former Penn State Behrend student Brian Scott Jackman pleaded no contest to charges made against him involving the use of university computers to collect and trade child pornography through the Internet. Jackman's plea to Erie County Judge Stephanie Domitrovich involved two felony counts of sexual abuse of children and one felony count of the unlawful use of computers.

According to court records, the charges made against Jackman stemmed from the report of a Nevada resident, who claimed to see an advertisement for child pornography in 1997. The ads were then traced to a computer at Behrend.

On July 17, 1997, detectives found disks that contained over 2,000 photographs, most of which contained child pornography. The images were found to have been downloaded from a computer in Behrend's biology lab and a computer in Jackman's former residence.

After a successful seven month attempt by a Provo, Utah, company to break the passwords to the computer files, the files were sent to the Erie County District Attorney's Office, which led to the arrest of Jackman in October 1998.

Nine charges were dropped by the district attorney's office as part of the plea agreement. Four of the dropped charges were misdemeanors, while the rest were taken into account with the other charges. The prosecution did not object to the plea because the two counts carry the same sentence.

Jackman will be sentenced by Domitrovich on March 3, with a maximum possible sentence of 24 years.

## Students weigh their options when purchasing books

by Mike Frawley  
managing editor

As students are returning to school, many are faced with a choice: where and how to buy their textbooks for the upcoming semester. In the past few years, this has become a much harder choice than it may seem. Now, besides the usual set-up of buying everything from your local campus bookstore, a plethora of other options has been presented to students. Now students can use sources such as online book dealers and special used book sales to save money and time.

Up until recently all students could do to buy texts was go to their campus bookstore to wait in long lines to purchase books that had been greatly marked up in price. On larger campuses, where more than one bookstore was located, students were able to get

somewhat better prices. Students on smaller campuses, such as Behrend, only had one option available to them. This made options for students in purchasing their books almost nonexistent.

But new competitors have appeared on the scene to draw students' money away from the campus bookstores. One way that has recently appeared on our campus is a used book sale. This sale, which was recently sponsored by the Student Government Association (SGA), allows students to sell their books to one another without having to deal with the very reduced prices that the bookstore gives during the book buyback program. "Response from the students is incredible, considering we received almost five times the amount of books as last year," said SGA president Andrea DiPlacido. Students came out

in record numbers for a chance to get their books at a lower price.

The major new competitor for students' money has appeared on the Internet as of late. Many new companies have started up that allow students to be able to buy their books online at lower prices than those charged by our bookstore. These sites are currently growing in popularity, with a major explosion in advertising and special offers. Cable networks, such as MTV and Comedy Central, which draw major amounts of college-age viewers, have been showing a large amount of advertising for these sites. Some sites feature celebrities which appeal to college students, such as Tom Green, who appears in commercials for *bigwords.com*.

There are a variety of sites from

Textbooks cont. on page 2



PHOTO BY MATT WIERTEL

The Behrend Bookstore is not the only option when buying books. The Internet is gaining in popularity due to cheaper prices and easier accessibility.



Weekend weather outlook on page 2.

THE BEHREND BEACON INDEX

NEWS.....	PAGE 1
POLICE AND SAFETY.....	PAGE 2
WORLD NEWS.....	PAGE 3
CAMPUS NEWS.....	PAGE 4

CALENDAR.....	PAGE 5
EDITORIAL.....	PAGE 6
FEATURES.....	PAGE 7
SPORTS.....	PAGE 8

