

THE BEHREND BEACON

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

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"Professionalism
with a Personality"

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Letter Policy

The *Beacon* encourages letters to the editor. Letters should include the address, phone number, semester standing, and major of the writer. Writers can mail letters to behrcoll2@aol.com. Letters must be received no later than 5 p.m. Monday for inclusion in that week's issue.



3,700 students can't be wrong.

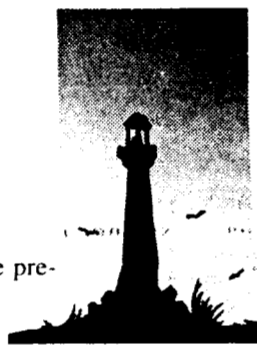
They can't be right either, because none of them can sit down for five minutes and write a letter to the *Beacon*.

Send letters, both positive and negative, to the editor!

behrcoll2@aol.com

The View From the Lighthouse

Office Space



Yeah, it was a great movie back in the pre-anorexic Jennifer Aniston days, but unfortunately that's not what we're going to discuss. Soon there will be an SGA meeting in which the effective use of office space will be discussed. Who should get what rooms? For what purpose? As the size of some student organizations increases, unfortunately the space in which they have to work does not. The *Beacon* is one of the organizations that over the years has grown out of its crib.

Our office is located on the first floor of the Reed Union Building. Okay, so far so good. We're in Suite B, which houses the Lion Entertainment Board and the Commuter Council, our dear friends. Still, not too bad. However, we only have a thin wall that separates our office from the Back Room. Who doesn't like listening to the rowdiness of ping-pong and pool players all night while they listen to MTV and watch loud movies? We've all grown used to the headaches by now. Quiet working environment - what's that? With Bruno's as sort of our upstairs neighbor, the sounds of chairs scratching on the floor all day is pleasant music to our ears. We're actually considering selling our CD player.

All sarcasm set aside, we are honestly hoping that the office space issue is taken quite seriously by SGA, as well as the administration - not only for our sake, but for some other organizations too. For example, look at Trigon and the Returning Adult Student Organization; no offense to either group, but they really have nothing in common to be sharing a cubby-hole of an office space in the MCC suite. Also, the Commuter Council could probably recruit more members if they had a commuter lounge instead of a small closet in the "mysterious Suite B hallway." Mercyhurst College has a commuter lounge that offers free pop and snacks to commuters, plus it is in a high traffic location. In essence, it's a good fishing spot that will easily attract people with minimal bait. How many commuters know where the Commuter Council is at Behrend?

We also realize that there are clubs that don't even have an office. This simply should not be. With new buildings like the Junker Center being built and buildings being gutted like Erie Hall, one would think there's a few feet of space left somewhere. Some organizations just need a place to plug in a phone and set up a computer.

This leads to the next point, which is accessibility to organizations. Through the grapevine we've heard that the reason the MCC and SGA have offices in one of the main hallways in Reed is because the administration wants these organizations readily available to the student body and visitors. Also, there's activity usually going on in those offices. We're imagining the student body would prefer seeing the drama of a newsroom and a newspaper being put together every week rather than watching SGA meetings. Compare it to TV - would you rather watch C-Span or Bob Vila? While both shows may not be your first choice, Bob Vila would probably take precedent, because there is actually something taking place, something being produced.

Hmm, now that we think of it, maybe that's what the campus needs, a Bob Vila! Perhaps he could help refurbish and relocate offices - maybe install a few windows in some of them. The college may find its level of student apathy diminishing if it can expose more organizations to the student body. Well, Good luck, SGA! It's going to be a difficult task, but we're sure you'll pull it off.

P.S. If you have a gripe (or you adore) your office space, a letter to the editor might not be a bad idea...hint, hint.

Livin' outside the tennis courts

Since the technique I used in my last editorial was successful in getting my message across, I will continue to write about specific people with whom I have a gripe without divulging their true identity and thus opening myself up to lawsuits. For those who have a problem, chill - I have one more column after this and then I'm outta here! For those who enjoy, read on.

The focus for this week is a particular group, familiar to college students nationwide. Now, the members of this group will soon accuse me of stereotyping and feeding into false assumptions. But, since both the members of the group and 99 percent of the campus community should immediately recognize who I am talking about, I think there must be a bit of truth to my assumptions.

Let me set up a scenario for you. Back in about seventh grade, the "cool" kids decided to organize themselves into the formally named In Group. Very original. Members of this little clique had to be invited to join and only members were allowed to associate themselves with other members - no outsiders, please. During recess a section of the tennis courts was unofficially sectioned off for the exclusive use of the In Group. Anyone daring to enter without invitation was subject to a serious butt-whupin'. The Ins even went so far as to have their moms make uniforms for them - white Hanes T-shirts with black iron-on letters. Very trendy little group, they were.

I had the (mis)fortune of being part of this group for about a week. Not bad, considering the group fell apart once winter hit and recess was moved indoors. But, another friend of mine was not allowed in the group, and her attempts at entry were loudly ridiculed. So, in an early show of the morals I'm known for (guffaw), I decided to exit the group in a gesture of defiance. Actually, I may be making that up. I think my mom refused to make me an iron-on shirt and I wasn't allowed to use the iron in seventh grade. Either way, the Ins and I parted ways and I was delegated back to the realm of the average.

I proceeded through high school as just an average kid. The Ins, though no longer formally recognized, were still out there. They'd traded in the

iron-on shirts for clothes from the Gap. They had their own little section of the cafeteria. But the group was much more subtle and relatively pleasant to most outsiders in high school. I thought it was a sign of maturity and possibly the intrusion of reality that caused them to be more sociable with people who didn't necessarily fit in.

So imagine my surprise when I came to college and found the group had reorganized! And they'd gone national! Not only is this reincarnation formally organized, but they have the shirts back, too. And they even pay for membership now! They have monopolized sections of Bruno's and they sneer at outsiders.

Most of this they would deny. All members would immediately tick off the names of 10 people they know not in the organization. Sure, those are probably the people they talk about in the restrooms and don't invite to their parties, but they are really good friends right before the test. But follow those people around all day and see how many members and nonmembers they associate with. The ratio should be pretty slanted in favor of members.

Another stereotype these members would fiercely deny revolves around partying and drinking. Because, you know, their parties aren't very well known at Behrend. Now the Fantasy Gamers Club, they throw some wicked benders. And look out for that Roundtable Society - they should be called the Beer Pong Table Society. But this trendy, letter-wearing group - nope, nary a soiree.

I hope you were picking up on my sarcasm, because I've been laying it on pretty thick. I think it's time for this group to admit what they really are - the alcohol providers for college campuses everywhere. Sure, they go out once a year and pick up the trash along the road or hold a controversy-riddled event to raise money for a charity. That's nice. But the other 364 days a year they are out there throwing keggers and raising a generation of alcoholics or worse that will someday need the assistance of the charities the organizations benefit.

And if you want to avoid the alcohol stereotype, here's a hint - avoid wearing shirts that have your organization's name worked into alcohol advertisements. We know

you've heard of Absolut and Rolling Rock - there are probably bottles of it in your garbage can right now. So don't

A tale told by an idiot
Liz Hayes



be surprised when we put two and two together.

And that crap about getting a better job after college because you are members of these organizations? Bull. Employers know what those organizations meant when they were in college, and popular media is now blaming the same organizations for much of the binge drinking problems in colleges. If anything, I would think an employer, unless also a member of your organization, would be less likely to hire you than someone in a career- or academic-related organization with the same skills.

And I see these signs around campus that members of your organization have graduated with this GPA or a certain percentage of certain professionals belonged to your organization. Let's keep in mind that there is a difference between the words "social" and "honor." The people with those great grades were, I suspect, members of honors organizations and were closely tied with academic or leadership avenues. Professionals were members of honor societies that required high grades to become members. I think these social organizations are trying to compare themselves with their smarter and more goal-oriented counterparts in a weak attempt to boost their own reputations.

Members of these organizations like to say no one can really understand what it's like to be a member until you are one. Okay, I'll give you that - to a degree. I don't think that means you've found the mysterious meaning to life. I have really close friends, too. I hang out with them on weekends. I occasionally lift a glass or ping pong ball in their honor. I have made really great friends in college who I plan to keep in touch with after I graduate. All I'm missing is the unoriginal shirt and

my college experience is almost like yours.

As Mike Frawley, former managing editor of the *Beacon*, once said, there is another type of group always saying no one else understands them - religious and anti-government cults. No one understood David Koresh or Timothy McVeigh or Osama bin Laden. Does that mean they were above criticism? Should we overlook their transgressions and their antisocial behavior because we aren't members of their groups? I think anyone can see the lack of logic there.

As far as I can tell, there are two types of people who join these organizations. First, there are the people who were in the In Group in grade school. They've never operated by themselves and have no idea how to function without members of the group holding their hand. And then there are the people who were never allowed inside the tennis courts and had to stand alone by the woods, watching everyone else have fun. They are so desperate to belong to any group, they will pay any price to wear the same shirt as everyone else.

It's rather sad, I think. Here we are, generation X or Y or whatever it is they're calling us now. We are supposed to be the extreme rebels, going our own way, walking outside of the lines. You aren't very different, though, if you wear the same shirt as everyone else, act the same as everyone else, and only associate with everyone else - aka, everyone else like you.

My advice? Take a peek outside the tennis courts and see what you're missing. There are other events on campus. There are other parties. There are other people. Leave the letters in the drawer for a week and see if your life is really better with the group. You might be surprised. And then, when you put the letters back on, see if you're treated the same. Once you've been exposed to the world beyond the tennis courts, you won't be the same sheep you were a week before. Your so-called friends, brothers, and sisters may turn out to be less than supportive of your originality.

Hayes' column appears every three weeks.