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The Behrend Beacon

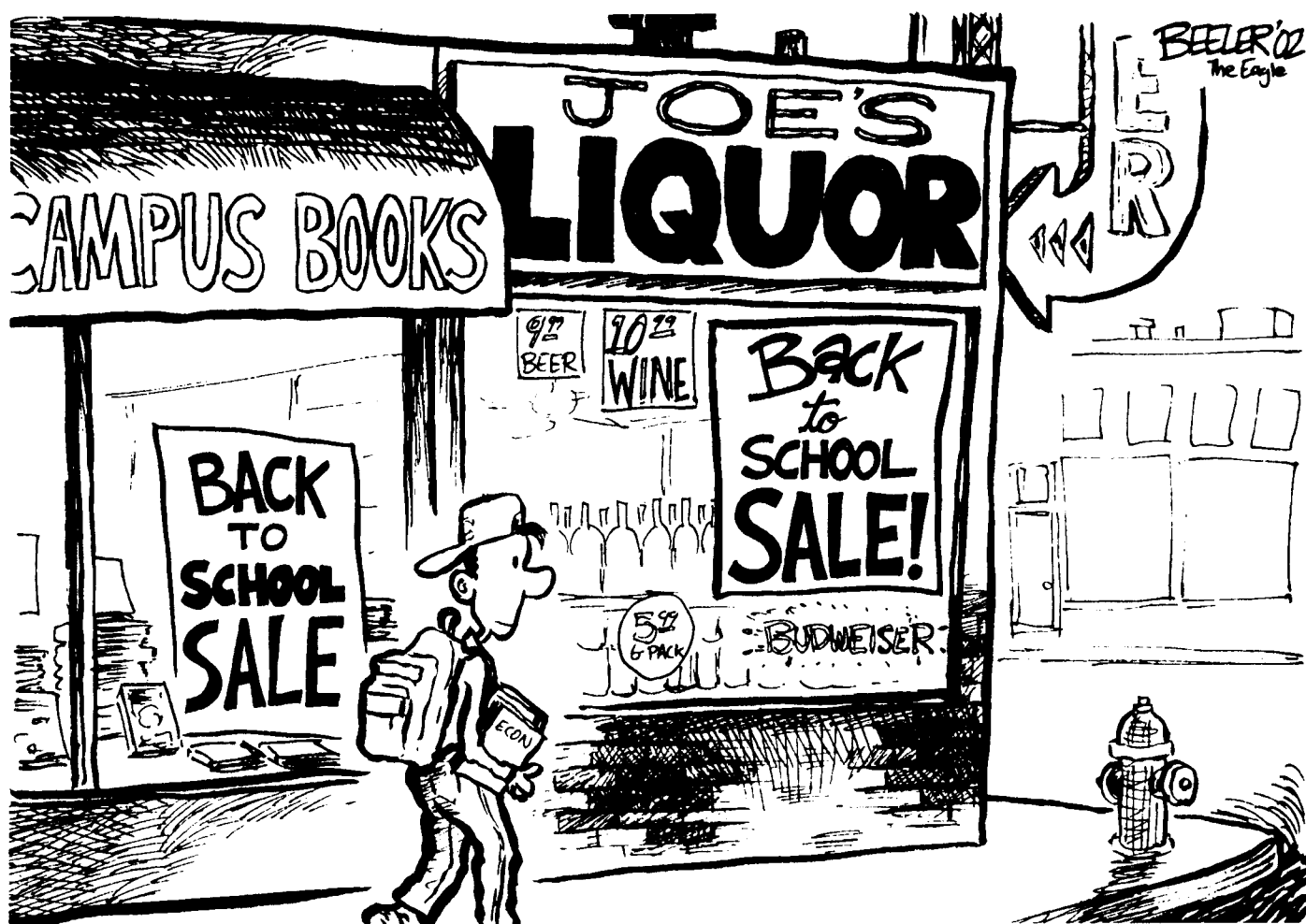
## The Behrend Beacon

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

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Want to be heard?  
Be an editorial columnist for the Beacon!  
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## Campus journalism: take a look at our audience

Recently I walked into the Beacon office, cleaned of last semester's collection of pizza boxes, wax stains, ink smudges and wholesome oaths that we would sometimes let float past our lips (the damn G4 crashed again?!).

But taped to the wall with thick pieces of yellow masking tape was a recent issue of the Beacon with the words "who reads this sh\*t?!" marked in black permanent marker.

There is always the assumption that someone who doesn't know any better decided to do it for laughs. But in the past, as the semesters wore on, we would post nasty notes to each other and generally do it to relieve the insanity that we call layout night. So it could be a former or current member doing it for a joke.

But for the sake of argument, and because no one knows who did it, I am assuming that a few of you are really wondering, who reads the Beacon?

Start with you. Duh. It is important to realize that it is YOU who is sitting

on one of those brand-new couches in front of the RUB desk, kicking back with your bookbag resting at your feet and cruising the Beacon's assortment of news, entertainment and sports. As one of the several students that could care about where your SAF money goes, you're looking at it. (There. Now you know where that \$40 is going - whether or not you think it's worth it is your own opinion that you can express properly in a letter to the editor.)

We'll go to faculty next. Yes, the faculty here read the Beacon, even if it's just for the funnies.

Some faculty even come to us with story ideas. It is a way to keep up with what's happening on campus - just like USA Today is a way to keep up with the United States. Same concept, different size.

I kid you not about this audience: there are Beacons usually strewn around the guy's bathroom by the middle of the semester. I don't care HOW they decide to utilize the campus paper, but I guar-

antee that several are being read. (And no, I do not do my own research on that. I get it from dependable resources.)

As for other audiences that we are reaching, I can tell you that other campus journalists are checking out our paper and wanting what we've got. The Merciad (Mercyhurt's paper) is switching from tabloid size paper to the broadsheet size that you're holding at this moment. "Check out the competition. You'll see why."

As for what we write: it doesn't matter if we don't cover "important" events like the World Summit (which may happen later on this semester), but what matters is that we cover news on campus. Because we are a CAMPUS paper. Which I clarify: not an Erie paper or local paper.

If you decide that what is happening on this campus is sh\*t, then that is your fine opinion. But since most of you are sticking around for a few years, that's why you should start reading. It's the only life you're going to know for the next four (or more) years.

Weindorf's column  
appears every three weeks



Becky Weindorf  
managing editor

## The lesson we forgot

Before it happened, most of us acted as we do now—uncaring, selfish, impersonal, and insincere. However, for a few weeks, and maybe even a few months, many of us acted selfless and kind.

It's hard to believe the tragedy of September 11 occurred nearly a year ago. Time flies, eh?

Don't jump to conclusions—this editorial isn't exclusively about what happened that day, but rather the manner in which Americans treated one another after the catastrophe.

America's hearts were softened after witnessing the heroism of the firefighters and police officers, along with the human suffering that was displayed upon the television set.

What happened next? Quite simply—Americans were nice to one another. Their tolerance for annoyance went out the window and everyone tried to be their best in a time of sadness. A few days after the attack, I re-

member observing a few cars at a four way stop. Instead of the usual routine, people were shouting one another to go, as if to say, "After you."

Everyone was nicer to one another, and people were good—they went to church, showed their patriotism, and donated money and items to various 9/11 funds.

However, little by little, the typical American returned to his/her former self. Why? Human nature!

I admit, I am one of the people who has returned to their prior self. I do find it sad, though. It takes a huge tragedy to make the general population act kind toward one another, and it still eventually wears off.

Unfortunately, I have no antidote for this problem other than telling people to be nicer. However, it would be hypocritical for me to say this, since I'm not exactly "Mr. Sunshine."

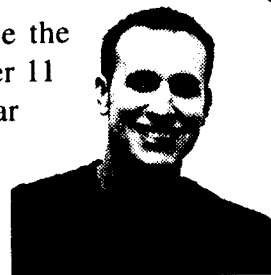
Perhaps the one-year anniversary of September 11 will somehow affect us in a positive way

and remind us that it's better to be nice to one another. If everyone was nice to one another, tragedies like September 11 would occur with less frequency across the world.

If everyone learned from their mistakes (myself included) the world would be a better place. But like I said before, it is human nature that makes us stupid.

In closing, I have some advice to everyone. Try to be a nice person, because you might make someone's day and make him or her SO happy that they will be nice to people, also. So the next time the waitress drops ice cream on you or the Jehovah's Witness knocks on your door at 8 a.m., remember—be the better person, and be happy with what you have and whom you have to share it with.

Benacci's column  
appears every three weeks.



Karl Benacci  
features editor

## Living the campus high life

Originally appeared in  
The Chicago Tribune on  
August 29, 2002

Bluto and the "Animal House" frat boys would have loved to see their alma mater top-ranked in a list of the nation's best party schools. But for parents now packing their teen-agers off to college, the latest poll results are a sobering reminder that not all campus activities involve slide rules and long hours at the library.

The rankings published by a private college-preparation company are a result of an annual survey of university students all over the country who graded their schools on everything from quality of campus life to the political ideology of the student bodies.

The poll made its biggest splash, though, with rankings in the category for the wildest party atmosphere, stirring up a minor controversy among critics who say the assessment ends up glamorizing binge drinking and substance abuse.

The empirical merits of the report card by the Princeton Review which is not related to Princeton University are highly dubious. The results are collected in a non-random sample and are far from scientific, as any first-year statistics student could deduce.

Indiana University didn't even make the list last year. This time it captured the top party spot, rocketing past some more established swingers. Clemson University won the title in the "Reefer Madness" category, but there's no way to tell if Clemson students exaggerated their high times in a misguided bid for glory.

Scientific or not, the survey provoked a broad reaction, from titers to outrage. The American Medical Association, concerned that the survey promotes unhealthy behavior, called on the publisher of the guide to eliminate the party-school category from its annual guide to U.S. colleges and universities.

There is, though, some benefit to such a survey. It draws attention to an extremely serious problem on many college campuses. According

to the Harvard School of Public Health, 44 percent of U.S. college students say they "binge" drink.

A top spot on such an A-list tends to get parents riled up, and that, in turn, is the magic ingredient that gets schools to take serious steps toward reducing substance abuse on campus.

Parental concern and the embarrassment of publicity, for instance, helped push Southern Illinois University into giving students a weeklong October break to cut off the raucous, liquor-soaked reverie the annual Halloween party had become.

Indiana University officials note that five fraternities have been expelled from campus for alcohol-related violations since 2000, and that parents are now notified when their offspring commit a serious alcohol violation.

Many schools now offer substance-free dormitories, or stage university-sponsored parties that are billed as alcohol-free. State lawmakers are getting into the act, too. Starting this school year, underage drinkers caught buying package liquor or drinking at a bar or tavern in Illinois will forfeit that thing they value the most—their driver's license.

Parents shouldn't breathe a sigh of relief just because their young scholars aren't satisfying their thirst for knowledge at one of the Big Keg schools. There are drinking parties at virtually every campus, and plentiful opportunities to inhale and imbibe to excess.

When students are choosing a school, parents should put tough questions to university officials about campus policies on substance abuse. What is the campus crime rate? Will I be notified if my child violates the drinking policy? How vigorously is the policy enforced?

Parents can also do what mothers and fathers do best: lecture their kids. Talk about how responsible adults use, or abstain from, mind-altering substances. It works especially well in a mandatory-listening environment, such as a station wagon packed to the brim with winter clothes and headed toward campus.