

The Behrend Beacon

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

Interim Editor-in-Chief
Kevin Fallon

Managing Editors
Rebecca Weindorf
Robert Wynne

News Editor
Erin McCarty

Sports Editors
Scott Soltis
Zoe Rose

Editorial Page Editor
Paige Miles

Features Editor
Karl Benacci

Staff Photographers
Jeff Hankey
Heather Myers



Beacon

"A newspaper by the students for the students"

Professional Publication Mgr.
Dave Richards

Advisor
Cathy Roan

Advertising Managers
Morgan Work
Liz Kasperick

Calendar Page Editor
Liz Kasperick

Humor Page Editor
Liz Kasperick

Associate Editor
Liz Kasperick

Distribution Manager
Liz Kasperick

Technical Support
Liz Kasperick

The Beacon is published weekly by the students of Penn State Erie, the Behrend College; First Floor, The J. Elmer Reed Union Building, Station Road, Erie, PA 16563. The Beacon can be reached by calling (814) 898-6488 or (814) 898-6019 (FAX). ISSN 1071-9288.

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.

In the diversity corner

by Abbey L. Atkinson
contributing editorialist

Let's get a few things out in the open before we begin. This is a new column devoted to the diversity standpoint. Some of the misogynistic, heterosexist, and predominantly white, middle class views being published can be rather annoying, and I'm being very kind with my wording here.

Some of us "other" people got together and decided to ask for a column in our defense. So, here it is. Every time it appears, a new author will offer their views and values for you to contemplate. We hope you will find what we'll write about to be enlightening, enriching, and maybe even cause to review your own personal inventory.

It may not be the most humorous material and we can't promise that you'll agree or even like what we, the diverse among the Behrend student population, want to write about, but we can promise you this: it won't be just plain ignorant.

Diversity. What is diversity? Who represents diversity? What is diversity comprised of? And finally, why must any of us care about it? It's actually pretty simple. Diversity is what makes each and every one of us different. Celebrating diversity helps us find commonality among those differences to create unity.

It's not just about African Americans, Africans, Asians, Hispanics, Womyn, Queers, or International students; it's about respecting who we are, who are neighbors are, and who our family might grow up to be. It's about building strong communities who can stand strong, tall, and united.

It is because we form this kind of com-

munity that we can take the socially responsible route of caring for our fellow human beings and doing unto others as we'd have them do unto ourselves. No one is 100% politically correct, nor just too sensitive or whiney, but each individual has the power to strive for better conditions, be they physical, emotional, or otherwise, for every individual they feel compelled to fight for. Some people simply feel compelled to strive for total equality rather than selective empowerment. Those individuals are the ones propelling diversity and unity forward for the betterment of humankind.

On our campus, the "people downstairs" or "ethnic minorities in the MCC" (as we're often called) band together because we are willing and able to accept and support each other. It is a fact that the average archetype of power in America, the white, middle class, heterosexual, Christian man is present in many of the "diversity focused" organizations. Diversity has no color, ethnic background, class, orientation, religion, creed, physical or mental ability, or gender. If diversity was only to represent the oppressed, down trodden it could no longer be a mission of diversity but of uniformity among the bottom feeders of humanity.

I challenge you to find that kind of uniformity among the students who are working for social justice through methods of diversity. We celebrate diversity because we hope for unity, not uniformity, to encompass our environments and our futures. I hope that has cleared a few things up about the subject.

Now, what is it exactly that each of you can do with your newfound understanding of diversity? Help encourage unity among

your friends and family. Step outside your comfort zone and get to know someone new in your classes or neighborhood. Write your research paper on a subject you don't know everything about or can't identify with; learn something from it that you can incorporate into your knowledge base and use in later relations.

Stop the person that you're walking to lunch with from writing racial or heterosexist slurs on a poster for a campus event; don't let that person believe that you accept jokes and stories that use hate speech or are aimed at hurting another population. Even if you've never been hurt, physically or emotionally, by another's ignorant actions towards whatever it is that separates you from the rest of the crowd, (and I doubt too many people have had a perfect co-existence with peers thus far) take these actions because others really need that kind of support. Besides, those people who need your assistance in combating ignorance would do it for you and those who would do it for you are the people you want to be friends with anyway.

Finally, I want to make sure every reader out there understands that I'm talking to each and every one of you. I have heard a few times, much to my dismay, that white students don't believe they have a culture so they can't get involved in this movement. That's simply not true. Each one of us has a rich culture to look into if we pay any attention to it. Culture isn't about color. As soon as we acknowledge that our common experience as humans can begin to form a whole unity and richness in diversity that makes us all important.

Put down the gun, Heston

How many innocent people have to die? That's the question that we need to be asking ourselves everyday when we don't do something about guns in this country. And as college students this should be even more important with the recent events in Arizona.

For those of you who live under a rock I'll enlighten you about what took place. A student who was receiving a failing grade entered a college classroom and gunned down the professors who gave him the failing grade. And guns aren't a major problem in this country? We have professors gunned down in class and snipers walking the streets, but the NRA says we have enough gun control in this country.

Maybe its time to put Moses in an old folks home, after all.

And please don't trot out those tired arguments about the right to bear arms being in the Constitution and the people need guns to protect themselves, or that even if we have stricter gun control the criminals will still get guns. None of these arguments hold any more water than a cup with a bullet hole. But for those of you with the letters NRA tattooed on your brain I'll take the time to destroy these arguments

one by one.

First, the right to bear arms was originally meant to cover the formations of militias by the individual states, not so people could carry assault rifles into their local Denny's. The framers of the Constitution could not have foreseen a society like we have today, but they did not need to. The Constitution is a living and breathing document that has been honed and adapted over the years to fit the times in which it is functioning. Unless we all are going to join a local militia to defend the country from a sneak attack by those pesky Canadians, why don't we just let this argument

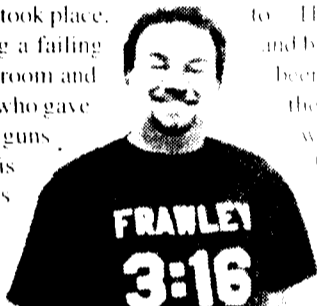
die. Now, for those of you who feel you need guns to protect yourselves, how much does that Glock really protect you? If you follow all of the gun safety programs that you are supposed to, you have the gun to begin with on your place and the bullet or lead shot from the gun and placed some where else. That is going to be a big help at the moment when you might need it. And at least once a year we have a report of some small child sitting at his parents home that was kept in the

house for "security" and killing themselves or some other child. Or a disgruntled teen takes his parents' gun to school and blows away numerous other students. Now explain to me who these guns are protecting again. I think I missed it.

And as for the fact the criminals will still be able to get guns, of course they will. That's why they are criminals. And it's not the illegal guns that criminals have that I'm worried about anyway. It's the nut who buys their gun legally then listen to the voices telling him to kill a whole bunch of innocent people. If private citizens could not get guns easily things like this would not happen.

So what is the solution? Do we ban guns all together? Do we pass stricter laws and hope that they are enforced effectively? Or do we throw up our hands, unlock the gates, and let the barbarians in? Well, maybe it's not quite that bad yet, but it's getting there. But until we all say that something needs to be done, things will plug along like they always have and we can be sure that some nut with a gun will kill innocent people for us to watch on the 5 o'clock news. And I, for one, do not want to be sitting in class, hoping the guy next to me did well on the last exam.

Frawley's column appears every three weeks.



Mike Frawley



Becky Weindorf

Ways to make money

I have found that, curiously, America can take anything at any given time and turn it into a profit. In some charities, about 90% of everything they make go to "administration costs," paying the people who are supposedly volunteering their services to feed hungry children in Third World countries. People "claiming" to collect money for victims of Sept. 11 were caught because they were gathering these funds for themselves. They were trying to make a profit from more than 3,000 victims of a terrorist attack.

Think these are sad stories? It would depress me if I knew that 75 of my 80 cents were going to some Enron-like chief who was coordinating this "effort" to help feed the hungry. More depressing is that Americans have turned tradition into revenue and necessity into an economic opportunity. Being the thrifty English major that I am, I have listed some of the necessity-gone-revenue that I have noticed recently:

Weddings: Yeah, you never thought that meeting the love of your life was a way for others to make money. But if you want to marry him/her, you better believe that you'll be forking over (on average) about \$18,000 for a single day which is almost twice my current annual earnings. Being a sort of participant in this specific economy, as I am planning my wedding in eight months, I'm beginning to realize just how much money is poured into this formerly religious tradition that has turned into prenuptial agreements, Vera Wang gowns, and has given a whole new meaning to "feeding the thousands."

Clothing: What was once developed to shelter our fragile bodies from the cold is now a race to see who can clothe

the most people in the 17-34 age range AND earn the most money doing it. Now, I know that there are still people out there that realize that clothing is just clothing and not a statement or popularity gauge, but please, clothing labels, while advertising Ralph Lauren, Nike, American Eagle, Victoria's Secret, and so forth, could be a gauge for clothing quality, but it shouldn't be a status symbol.

Jewelry and shoes: I suppose they also belong in the clothing category, but it's a big enough issue to discuss on its own. I'll admit that I am a sore hypocrite in the shoe category, however. I include myself when I say that a closet full of shoes is just plain greedy. I complain when I scuff a sole; others don't make a peep when their toes are sticking out the front end of their 10-year-old sneakers.

And, as for my jewelry, you don't see me wearing a 14-pound medal around my neck, (literally) 10 pairs of earrings or three rings on each of my fingers. That's just plain stupid, walking around like we're Christmas trees. We were born with a body to care for others and work hard, not to show off who's got the best "duds."

All right, this is a very short, biased and clipped example, but you get the idea. Our editorial page editor is having a rough time, so I'll go easy this time. But watch for me again -- by the time you read my next editorial, you'll be on your way to finals. Now isn't that a lovely thought for a hellish semester?

Weindorf's column appears every three weeks.

Random thoughts by Karl

I don't know when it began, but it should have never happened. My family always tells me that when I was a young, I was the happiest child. I loved to laugh and smile and I loved being the center of attention. Heck, I was a cute kid!

I'm not sure when this ended. I would probably say around first or second grade, when I began grade school at Chestnut Elementary in Fairview. I had friends, but it was at this time I began getting picked on by a few bullies who were older than me. Sure, everyone got picked on by bullies when they were little, but being aware of this doesn't soften the blow.

Little by little, all of this negativity and cruelty caused me to become somewhat of an introvert. As the years passed by, I not only became less of the happy child I was, but I even became a bully myself. In middle school I can remember being a jerk to my good friends' little brother, dragging the kid up and down the soccer field by his legs in order to get him muddy. I was unhappy with myself and harped on my failures, taking my unhappiness out on other individuals.

Looking back on it, I find it sad that I went from despising mean kids to becoming one myself. In my Alcoholic Awareness class that I took for an Esact,

I remember a woman speaker telling the class she hated her father, who was an alcoholic, but she inevitably became an alcoholic. This is ironic, but it's weird to see how people often become what they find to be horrendous.

I went to boarding school in 9th grade in St. Catharines, Ont, and despised the place because I was surrounded by a lot of snobby Canadian kids who weren't very nice. The only thing that got me through that year was playing football and basketball, which helped me take my aggression out in a healthy form. Knocking people over and getting pats on the back for doing so.

Later, I transferred to a Catholic school in 10th grade, which was definitely a nice change. The people were great and I learned a lot about myself. I loved writing and wanted to concentrate on it in college.

If you're an avid reader of the Beacon, you'll remember the Letters to the Editor and editorials written about the crazy religious man who let everyone know they were going to hell. I, myself, did not have the honor of coming across this man, but I've met many people like this person. They're religious fanatics, which isn't a necessarily referring to a person who's very religious, but refers to one who is motivated by an extreme, unreasoning enthusiasm, such as telling

people they're going to hell.

Just because a few people who claim they're religious are acting like scum doesn't mean their parish or religion is full of people with that person's frame of mind. A great example is the religion of Islam, which does promote peace. A few evil people performed an evil act on Sept. 11 and claimed they did it for their religion, but this doesn't make their religion bad, it makes them bad.

A few weeks after hearing about the religious guy who told everyone they were going to hell, I was approached by a man handing out pocket-size copies of the New Testament. The man was nice to me and I realized something -- there are nice people in this world and there are bad people. One shouldn't let the bad people tarnish the good people. More importantly, I recognized that letting negative people or any unnecessary negativity into my life is something that I should completely avoid.

We've all heard the famous quote, "you are what you eat." I truly believe this quote is true when it's applied to human interaction. I used to hang out with negative people who talked behind their friends backs and complained about everything. If one subjects themselves to this the person will find it hard to be happy. Hanging out with sad people just isn't worth it. In fact, it's a waste of time. Take it from me.

My mistake was closing others off, namely the good people, because of bad people. Now that I've learned that some

things are a total waste of time, I've come to have a new appreciation for individuals who are kind and happy. Not only are these people more interesting, unique, and fun than mean people, but they also bring me great satisfaction due to the interaction I have with them and it only makes me want to get to know more nice people.

If I were to tell my readers one thing, I would tell all of you to not let others negatively influence your outlook on other people, how happy you are, or what you believe in. Instead, spend some time with people who respect you and treat you well. The sooner an individual institutes these views to his life, the sooner he will become a happier person.

Benacci's column appears every three weeks.

You know you want to tell us. Write a letter to the editor at behrcoll2@aol.com Please include your name, major, and semester standing.