

Question of the Week

by Heather Peterson, staff writer

"What on-campus programs have you enjoyed this semester?"



"I have enjoyed the Music at Noon Series."
Stephen Foster
 PLET, 01



"Saturday nights there's excellent music in Bruno's."
Allison Gray
 ELISH, 01



"Greek Week."
Bryan Haring
 PLET, 07



"I saw Night of the Living Dead, it was off campus, but for a class."
Chan Duop
 PSHBA, 01



"I thought the one-act plays were really good."
Elizabeth Paxton
 BCBUS, 05

Trigon and SAF host witch burning

Performance piece demonstrates intolerance of homosexuality

by B.J. Shields, staff writer

Less than 24 hours after the state Supreme Court of Massachusetts declared that same-sex couples cannot be denied the right to marry, two lesbians visited Behrend to share their experiences with intolerance in the state courts of Nebraska.

On Wednesday, Kris Gandara and Traci Kujath tied themselves up to a stake in a performance art piece in the Reed Union's Wintergarden Atrium. The two women, who have been together for seven years, used the performance piece to express their anger and depression in dealing with lengthy court battles over the custody of Traci's biological sons. The event was sponsored by Trigon and the Student Activities Fee.

"In 1995, Traci came out of the closet as a lesbian to her husband, Kevin," said Colin McAndrews, ENGL 03. "Kevin told her right then and there that she would never see her kids again."

The performance art expressed the emotions of the couple over losing the custody battle and their experiences with Nebraska's strict laws against homosexual parents. As they stood tied to the stake for several hours, cardboard flames rose up around them out of a pile of wood. They placed signs on their bodies with words like dyke, witch,

mother and lesbian to vocalize the words used against them throughout their court battle. The scene represented a witch burning.

The two later shared their thoughts with guests in Reed 117.

"Kris opened and closed with a poetry reading," said Michael Watterson, GAS 09. "In between they told their story through poetic dialogue with each other, sort of acting it out."

Starting in 1995, Kujath's court battle continued until 2000, when a district court judge in Lancaster County, Neb., ruled that her two boys would remain with their father. Visitation rights were awarded to Kujath but are limited to every other weekend. Kujath also is required to pay child support even though her current family income is less than half the amount of her ex-husband's family.

Kujath and Gandara noted that the boys' father at the time of the hearings was an alcoholic, and had been known to be violent with the boys. However, Nebraska state law is set up so that in a case such as Kujath's, custody is inevitably awarded to the heterosexual parent.

Since the judges ruling in 2000, Kujath and Gandara have continued to fight for custody of the boys.

"The older boy, Josh, has been kicked out of his father's house several times and wants to live with his mother," said

Watterson. "But they still have to go to court to have him testify."

Still, the simple fact that Kujath is a lesbian will likely keep the judge from granting the transfer of custody, as it would go against current Nebraska legislation.

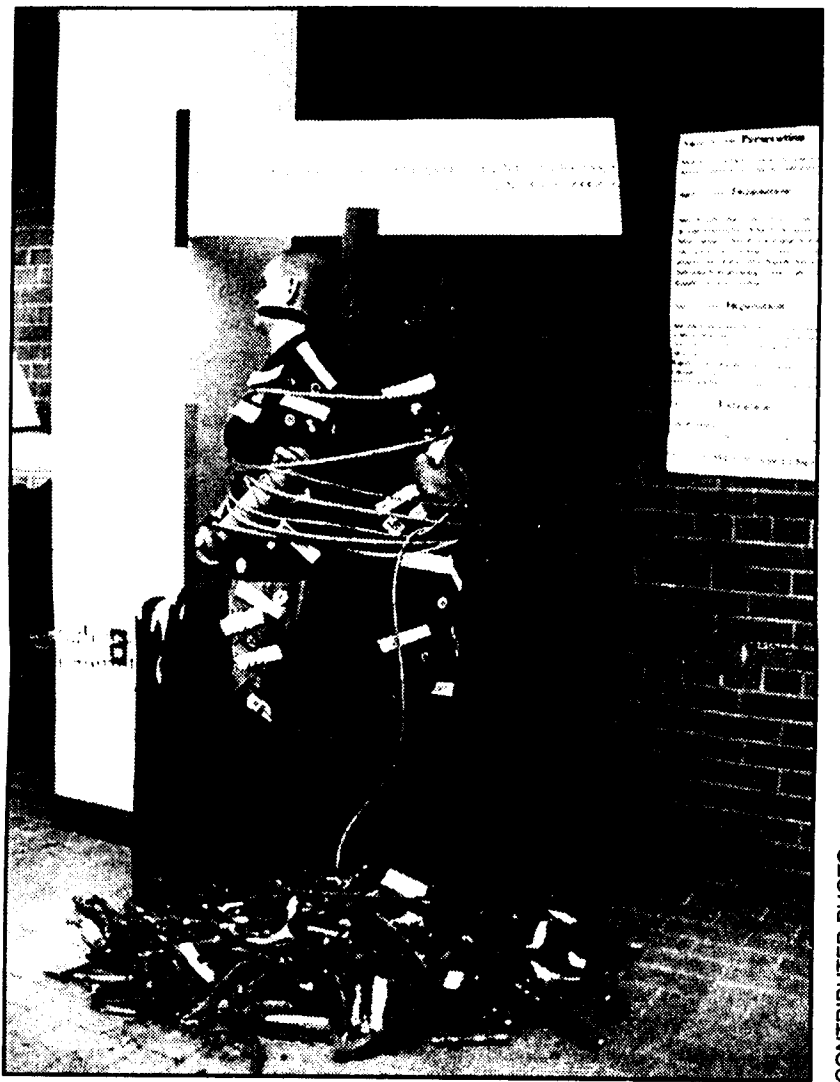
"The boys are stifled at their father's house," said Kujath. "And Kris and I have to take care of any medical problems for the boys."

Abbey Atkinson, an alumni of Trigon, met Kujath and Gandara at a conference in Columbus, Ohio, several years ago. She spoke with them again last year and invited them to Behrend to share their performance piece.

"With so much in the news today about gay marriage and adoption, we (Trigon) hope the performance will make students more aware on a personal level of anti-gay discrimination," said McAndrews.

In addition to the performances by Kujath and Gandara, Trigon hosted the Laramie project last week. Other events the group sponsors include Erie's annual Pride rally and march, the Safer Sex Cabaret and an organizational recruitment party. The organization also promotes safe sex and research on campus, and is planning an event for World AIDS Day in December.

Trigon meets every Thursday at 7:30 p.m. in the Multi-Cultural Center suite on the first floor of Reed.



Kris Gandara and Traci Kujath tied themselves to a stake in a performance art piece in the Wintergarden.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Mini powwow performed in Reed Wintergarden

by Heather Peterson, staff writer

On Thursday, the Rhythms of Life Series continued with its second performance. The Native Nations Dance Theater held a mini powwow in the Reed Wintergarden in order to help celebrate American Indian Heritage month. Their 12:30 p.m. performance was complete with traditional costumes, ceremonial dances and many drums.

According to Andy Herrera from the SAF office, the Native Nations Dance Theater is a group from Philadelphia, which is a subsidiary of Performance Dance Theatre. It was founded in 1991 in order to educate people about different aspects of the performing arts. He also said that Vaughnda Hilton was the founder of both organizations and Delwin Fiddler Jr. is the current Chairman.

The Native Nations Dance Theater formed out of PDT in order to help specifically teach about Native American culture. During the performance, those who attended were able to see a variety of dances, costume, and instruments first hand. At the beginning of the performance, each member of the group was introduced. There were many Native

American Nations involved, including Seminole, Creek, Blackfeet, Navajo, Lakota Sioux and several others. The performers each talked about where they were from and how long they had been involved. The youngest member of the group was just 2 years old and it was explained by her parents that she started at one, as soon as she could walk.

Each member wore a different type of costume depending on his or her tribe. However, they all had elaborate beadwork and featherhead dresses as part of their ensembles. They began by doing a walk-around dance to the beat of a flat, decorated drum and traditional chanting. Following this, a blanket dance was performed by some of the younger members. It was later explained that the younger women of the tribe often do the most athletic dances.

Dancing was not the only part of the performance. Throughout their program, the group also explained the importance of many of their crafts and the different decorations on their costumes. One of the women discussed the importance of the bone and bead breastplate that she wore. Not only did it provide decoration, it also provided bullet

protection in the event of a confrontation or battle. They also explained that traditional women's costumes include decorated shawls to keep warm, fans to help cool off, and a purse to carry valuables and food.

Along with all of the beadwork, costumes, and instruments, other arts and crafts were on display as well. One of the most popular was the dream catcher, which many people are familiar with. As the program progressed, several more chants and elaborate dances were performed as well. Overall, the group shared a great deal of history with the Behrend community as well as an entertaining performance. Those who attended were able to learn about many different Native Nations and why many of their customs were formed.

According to its mission statement, the Rhythms of Life Series "seeks to inspire an appreciation of all people through vibrant presentations of the arts." It will continue to do so throughout the year, and all performances will be free and open to the public, thanks to the SAF and the Office of Educational Equity Programs.

Lambda Sigma helps the unfortunate

by Brian Mitchell, staff writer

Lambda Sigma, an honor society for students of third and fourth semester standing, set up 35 boxes around campus from Nov. 3 to Nov. 14 and delivered them on Wednesday to Second Harvest Food Bank. They also presented a formal presentation at the "Dinner for Six Strangers" on Thursday. This year, Lambda Sigma collected the most cans than any previous year.

"It is kind of unique for a group to donate that much food after two weeks," said Joell Sparie, ACTNG, 03, president of Lambda Sigma. "Previous years, members went door-to-door as well setting up the boxes, but this year they just decided to stick to the boxes, which actually worked out better. However, the bank was surprised they didn't go door-to-door collecting when they saw how much cans were brought in."

"We received good responses for the two weeks we ran it," said Melissa Dale, MGMT, 05. "It was a simple process but a lot of work because of all the weight of the food." Even teachers were getting

interested in the food drive.

"Teachers have been coming up to me asking how much food have we been collecting," said Sparie. The Harvest bank appreciated more because it is getting toward the holidays and they were one of the first groups to donate. Around the holidays, the bank makes holiday baskets for families who are less fortunate. For example, a typical Thanksgiving basket would consist of stuffing, cranberry sauce and mixed vegetables. "I think it is nice to give goods to families who are less fortunate," said Sparie. "Now that it is over, it feels to be quite an accomplishment."

Lambda Sigma is now preparing for another service project with Reality Check.

Next month, Lambda Sigma will be teaming up with Reality Check and putting on the ESO dance. The ESO dance is a monthly dance for people with physical and/or mental disabilities.

"I went last week, and it was a lot of fun," said Sparie.

They are also planning to sell care packages to parents for their kids and deliver them to students during finals week.