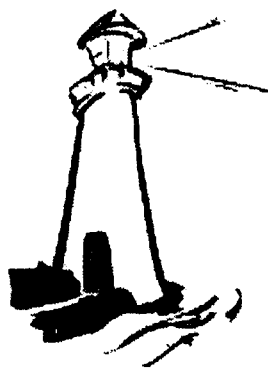




SENIOR SPOTLIGHT

What do Boyz II Men and David Hairston have in common? See page 12.



The Behrend Beacon

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THE L WORD

Showtime's edgy new series airs Sundays. See page 8.

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Harborcreek Wal-Mart opens



PHOTO BY DANIEL J. STASIEWSKI / BEHREND BEACON

Associate Chris Falk sings the national anthem at the grand opening of the 24-hour Wal-Mart Supercenter in Harborcreek Township. Local officials hope it's only the beginning of an expanded Buffalo Road retail district.

by Daniel J. Stasiewski managing editor

Thrifty shoppers and poor college students in the East Erie area rejoiced Wednesday when the new Harborcreek Wal-Mart Supercenter opened its doors.

The 183,000 square foot shopping center at 5741 Buffalo Road is the largest Wal-Mart in Erie County and features the usual Wal-Mart products plus a full-service automotive center, a pharmacy,

a snack bar, a vision center, a large grocery section with bakery and deli, and a photo center.

Store Manager, Kevin Hotovy is optimistic toward the success of the supercenter and doesn't ignore the college population that's just minutes away.

"I was a college student myself and I know how [frugal] I was when going to school," said Hotovy. But not all college students are as enthusiastic about the grand opening of the new Wal-Mart.

Nicole Swartzentruber, COMBA 06, who grew

up in Harborcreek and still works at the township's Shur-fine convenience store, has mixed feelings about the opening.

"I'm happy and sad," said Swartzentruber. "Shur-fine will lose business but I won't have to go to Peach Street to go to Wal-Mart."

Katie Beers, MISBD 07, an off-campus student from Meadville, doesn't see the opening as development at all.

"I do believe is going to ruin all the businesses and that's going to end up being the only business around," said Beers.

Beers' fears aren't unfounded, as the Wal-Mart Corporation is expecting to open a fifth Wal-Mart in the area at 26th and Broad Street in the city, but citizens from the surrounding area are more enthusiastic.

"We need the Lowe's and the Home Depot," said Kimberly Henry, who traveled from Ripley, N.Y., to make it to the Harborcreek superstore's grand opening.

"What's the first restaurant?" asks Pam Sharp of North East, who believes Wal-Mart is just the first step toward development of a Buffalo Road retail district. To her, development is inevitable.

The only people more optimistic than the citizens are local government officials.

"The potential that is created from this opening is tremendous," state Rep. Tom Scrimenti, who was on hand at the grand opening to present the

store with a citation from the state House of Representatives for contributing to "the well-being of the community and ultimately to all the people of the Commonwealth."

"The excitement that's gone on here at this grand opening just a sign of things to come," said Scrimenti.

Scrimenti not only anticipates interest from local shoppers, but international attention as well.

"The proximity to New York state and Canada bodes well for the growth of this area," said Scrimenti. "We have buses that travel to our malls, and now this is even closer for them to travel."

Harborcreek Supervisor Kenneth Springirth said he, too, saw the Wal-Mart as a positive development for the expanding Buffalo Road retail district. Springirth emphasized that the new Wal-Mart is the largest shopping center that sells sales tax-free apparel between Pennsylvania and the Canadian border.

Despite international appeal, Springirth and his fellow supervisors Donna Mindek and Dave Bossert tried to ensure that the Harborcreek store had a look that would fit the community.

"The board of supervisors worked with the developer, H F Lenz Co., in the store design, so this is a unique Wal-Mart," said Springirth. "We think it's going to be a showcase for our retail district."

Both Springirth and Scrimenti had no information regarding further developments surrounding the Wal-Mart, but Springirth said he expects Northwest Savings Bank to begin construction this year on a free-standing banking facility at Buffalo Road and Cook Avenue.

Recently the Eastway Plaza has seen the addition of new businesses including the Eastway Plaza Cinemas, Endless Entertainment, and Aaron's Rental. With the Wal-Mart ready to serve the Harborcreek area 24-hours a day, 364 days a year, Springirth believes more stores will soon set-up shop on Buffalo Road.

"Opportunities really abound in Harborcreek Township," said Springirth. "This is the key to Eastern Erie County."

Lion Cash system coming to an end

by Ben Raymond staff writer

According to Behrend officials, this is the last semester for the Lion Cash system here at Behrend. The change in student ID numbers for the Fall 2004 semester has given the University the option to try something new.

The Lion Cash system came in to effect at Behrend in 1997. It was projected to be a valuable asset to students and make residence life much easier. Six months ago Housing and Food Services took over the Lion Cash system, because the company that brought this service went out of business. This means that when something goes wrong with the machines that Penn State is respon-

sible for fixing it.

Since the installment of Lion Cash there has been a growing list of problems and complaints from students. In order to add money to an account, students must have their ID card present. Even when a student has the available cash and their card, there is no guarantee that one of the very few Lion Cash machines will be operational. There is always the possibility of losing one's card and that means that whatever money was on the card is now gone. Students living farther up on the hill, such as those in the apartments, Ohio or Almy halls are really inconvenienced by these things.

"Sometimes the cash machine isn't worth walking across campus in 10 degree weather," said Almy Hall resident Carinne Knight, COMBA 02, about the hassle

of getting something as simple as laundry done.

Starting in the Fall Semester of 2004, Behrend students will be receiving new student IDs with a new student number. Students will no longer be using their social security numbers. Behrend has approved the idea for a new system to replace Lion Cash that should eliminate these problems and hopefully make residence life much easier.

The new system would operate similarly to the Diner's Club meal plan. Students would be able to add money to their account from their rooms by either using a credit card or ATM card or by going to the ID office.

Transactions would be instantaneous, which would mean that students wouldn't have to go all over campus before they could do their laundry or make pho-

copies. For this to happen there are several things that the University needs to do.

The system would be run through a separate Internet server so all of the card readers on the washing and vending machines, as well as the copiers, would have to be replaced. In their place would be a card swiper that would be similar to the ones at Dobbins Hall or Bruno's Café. The residence halls would also have to be fitted with ports to connect to the system. With renovations already planned for Niagara and Perry halls and with Senat Hall scheduled for completion in the fall, the addition of these things would be fairly inexpensive and no problems are foreseen as of yet. The system is tentatively scheduled to be operational August 1, 2004.

Applebee's waiter serves more than food

by Brad Stewart staff writer

When you think of Applebee's you probably think: decent food, decent service, and reasonable price. What you do not think of is magic. Prepare to be amazed! Applebee's, 7790 Peach Street, has its very own food serving magician. His name is Marty—Marty the magician.

Marty is not the circus act or child's birthday party-type magician. He is a veteran server who performs tricks that are small but just as amusing as any grandiose presentation by a costume-wearing entertainer.

One ball becomes two and then appears from behind your ear; a handkerchief slides into his hand and vanishes.

His relationship with magic developed completely by chance. He was once an employee of a steak and lobster joint called the Sir Walter Raleigh Inn located in Bethesda, Md., his home town.

After the Inn installed a larger-than-life sized salad bar, Marty found that there was a common theme of costumers

being unable to finish their entrees. He began carrying doggy-bags in his back pocket, and upon the request of a bag he would quickly slide one out of his pocket and faster than you could say, "Don't mess with Texas," Marty had the meal safely secured and ready for the ride home.

Customers were amazed at his speed, astounded by the skill of his doggy-bag wielding. Diners began demanding an encore—they wanted more magic.

Marty is self-taught. He has never read any magic books or studied under any magic masters. "I went to a magic store and asked, 'What are the easiest tricks you've got that I can do over and over again?'"

He does not plan to cease performing his magical feats any time soon. When asked if his tricks ever become monotonous and he should some day like to quit he replied, "I like it too much. When you see the looks on little kids' faces it's completely worth it." Also, Marty says that thanks to his tricks, added to his sparkling personality, his tips have been better than average. So

for anyone looking to become a server, working on your own magical act might not be a bad idea.

He has been serving and making kids laugh for almost 30 years—seven of them spent working for Applebee's. When asked to describe Marty, a fellow employee said, "He is very personable. Kids love him. They love to see magic Marty."

And he knows how to deal with kids. The oldest of 12 brothers and sisters, and the proud father of three daughters (sorry ladies, he is married), he is no stranger to young people, making Applebee's a great place to take the family for dinner.

For those hungry people worrying that Marty's acts will cut into eating time, let your fears be quelled. His tricks are quick and fun and like any good server he knows when to step back and let the chow be chewed.

If you are looking for a restaurant with decent food, and excellent service at a reasonable price, check out Applebee's on Peach Street and do not be afraid to ask for Marty the Magician.



PHOTO BY BRAD STEWART/BEHREND BEACON

Peach Street Applebee's waiter Marty the Magician serves up more than just food. He has been providing his customers with friendly service and magical tricks for years.

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