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# THE BEHREND BEACON

Friday, February 25, 2005

A Penn State Erie Student Publication

Vol. LII No. 22

## Seniors need gift ideas

By Annie Sevin  
staff writer

The Senior Class Gift Committee is looking for ideas about the Class of 2005's gift to Behrend. The Senior Class Gift will be donated to Behrend by the senior class later this semester. The committee, comprised of students and staff, meets every Wednesday at 11 a.m. in Reed 113 and they want students to start generating ideas about what the gift should be.

The gift from the Class of 2005 will be Behrend's third. "The first gift [from 2002] was the flagpole that was to commemorate...the Behrend graduate who died in 9-11...and then in 2003-2004 it was the Nittany Lion," said Tina Ianni, COMBA 08 and a member of the graduating class.

Ianni is also part of The Senior Class Gift Committee; she says they are trying to put the word out to seniors that "it's time to think about what you want your class to leave behind."

Few things have been decided at this point in the committee's planning process; currently they are in the "generation of ideas stage."

"Right now we're...just encouraging students to think about...ideas, I think we might have some kind of voting station or some kind of a way to get their ideas to us," said Ianni.

However, by the beginning of April they will have to select a gift for the class to leave behind. The committee will present the gift to seniors at Senior Salute Days in the Winter Garden. It is at that time when seniors can decide if they wish to donate funds for the gift or not.

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## THON 2005

LIBRARY



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Penn State football team raises their hands in support of THON 2005 and the fight against childhood cancer. THON, the largest student-run philanthropy in the world, raised over \$4.1 million. Four dancers represented Behrend this year: Natalie Lytle, Deanna Sieberkrob, Scott Soltis and Ken Middlemiss. The theme of THON 2005 was "Embracing Dreams Sharing Tomorrow."

## Digges commences writer's series

By Sean Mihlo  
staff writer

Each semester the Mary Behrend Cultural Fund and the Clarence and Eugenie Baumann Smith Fund co-sponsor the Creative Writer's Speaker Series. The series gathers together notable and outstanding writers of various literary genres, providing an assortment of literature for everyone's taste.

This semester, the series began with Behrend Reads, a traditional aspect of the series in which faculty and staff members are able to read their own works to students and community members.

On March 3, the series will officially kick-off with a reading by poet and creative non-fiction writer Deborah Digges.

Born and raised on an apple orchard in Jefferson, Missouri, Digges chronicles her unusual childhood in "Fugitive Spring: A Memoir," published in 1992 by Knopf. Before writing her first memoir, though, Digges initially wrote poetry.

Her first book of poetry, "Vesper

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## Santorum outlines social security fix

By Sarah Weber  
copy editor

Outside of the National City Bank on State Street, protestors held signs saying "More Words of Mass Deception" while inside Senator Rick Santorum (R-Pa.) outlined the most recent plan to save social security.

Santorum spent the first 45 minutes of the forum, which started at 9:30 a.m., giving reasons why changes need to be made to social security sooner rather than later. In an in-depth PowerPoint presentation dotted with complicated charts and graphs, the senator laid out what he called 'the perfect storm.'

National birthrates are decreasing leaving the country with fewer workers to pay into social security at a time when retirement rates are increasing and people are living longer.

The first wave of baby boomers will retire in 2008, which, if nothing is done to revamp the current system, will kick off the sharp decline of social security into bankruptcy.

While both Santorum and President George W. Bush have promised that nothing will change for those over 55, Santorum emphasized that the changes

are being made for young workers. Retirees of today are making a small profit on social security, while the current system guarantees future generations will lose money. According to Santorum's road to bankruptcy chart, a person born after 1974 will collect only 70 cents of every dollar they've paid into social security over their lifetimes.

"Keep in mind social security today means that we are taking money out of the pockets of young workers that they won't get back," said Santorum to a crowd of around 100 people, less than 10 of which were under the age of 30.

So, how are we going to save the system? Santorum made it clear that raising taxes and cutting benefits was not a solution.

"Increasing taxes and cutting benefits takes away from the security we provide for retirees," said Santorum.

Instead, Santorum proposes a partial privatization system. Currently, 6.2 cents of every earned dollar is paid into the social security, which employers match for a total of 12.6 cents of every dollar. In the partial privatization system, workers would have the option to voluntarily enter 4 percent or 4 cents of every dollar into a private account to be invested in either gov-

ernment stocks and bonds or a Thrift Savings type of account. Thrift Savings is an investment based retirement plan offered to federal employees. Investment is not in individual stocks, but instead a broad based fund such as the Dow Jones Index.

This system would require the government to hire a manager which would garnish .06 percent of stock earnings, a rate that Santorum calls a "very low cost of running the account."

This proposal raises questions about the general populations ability to handle their retirement investments.

While Santorum reassured the audience that investing was safe and lucrative, low-risk and high-risk investments are risky just the same. Santorum didn't mention any plans the government might have in case the stock market tanks.

Another risk with personal accounts is bad management of retirement funds. Early in the presentation Santorum said America's are some of the worst in the world at saving for their retirement.

"We have a society that's not preparing for their retirement," said Santorum.

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## Books, computers headed to Africa

By Sara Kamber  
co-sports editor

OAS (Organization of African Students), the Psychology Club and the Italian American club are currently helping librarian Patience Simmonds with the project "Books and Computers for Africa." The project is to benefit schools in Ghana, where students are often forced to share one textbook between many students due to lack of funds.

Simmonds needs to raise approximately \$5,000 in order to ship about 320 computers and several hundred books to Ghana. She wants to provide these materials as a means of updated education to children in the schools of the country. Simmonds, along with the Ghana's Minister for Education and Sports, Yaw Osafo-Maafa, will organize the distribution of the resources.

"I saw the abundance of resources here and watched as students threw their books out at the end of the semester," said Simmonds. "It made me think of the other students who are less fortunate that could benefit. These books and computers will also help to add equity to the schools and students."

Simmonds has received donations from both students and faculty, with the bulk of contributions coming from the faculty. She has been collecting for

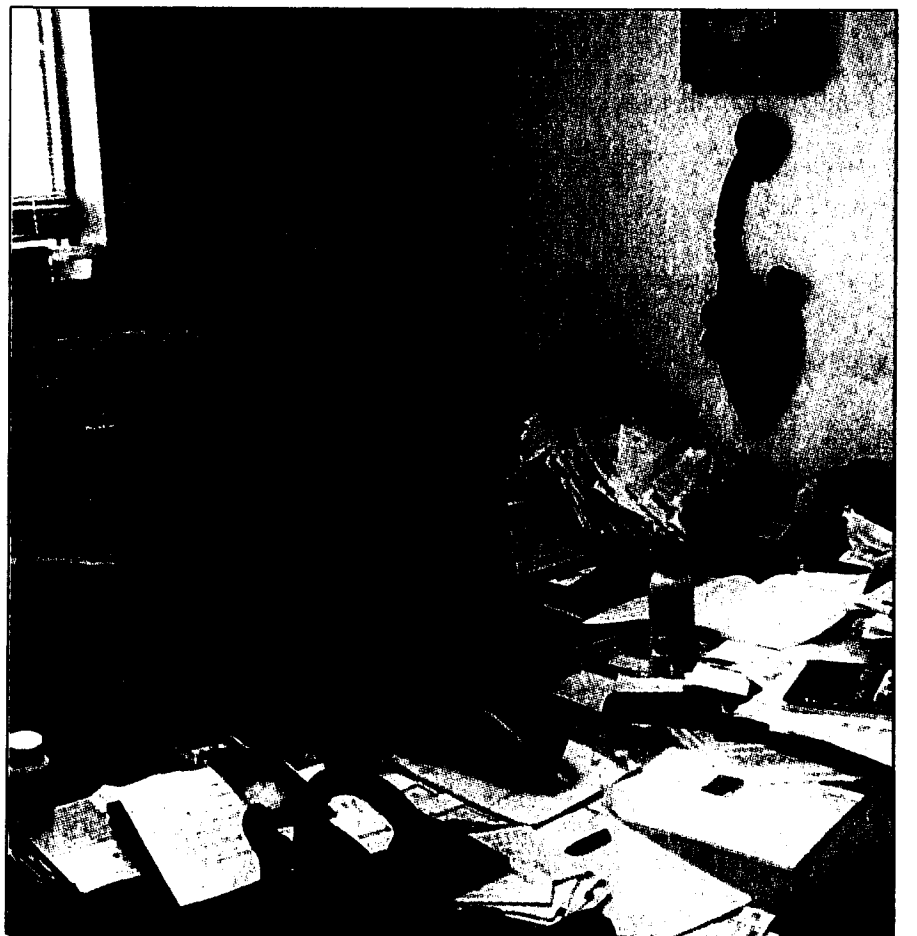
about two years and has spent more than \$3,000 in storage. Finally, she has moved the inventory to her garage until the funds can be raised.

"The problem is, the longer these items are kept in storage, the more outdated they become," said Chrissy Anderson, president of the Psychology Club. "It's important to ship these items as soon as possible."

The clubs are raising money in a few different ways. OAS has held Krispy Kreme fundraisers in previous as well as the current semester. The group is also organizing "African Odyssey," with the help of the other organizations mentioned. "African Odyssey" will be held on April 8 in the McGarvey Commons. The event will be free to all students and catered by Dobbins. Contributions will be encouraged and African jewelry will be sold at the event with all of the proceeds going to the fund.

Members of the Psychology Club are selling shot glasses with 25 percent of the profits going to the project. During an upcoming psychology banquet at the Waterfall restaurant on March 19, the club will hold a Chinese auction to support this cause. A dollar has been added to the price of the banquet tickets in order to raise additional funds.

"This will be a starting point to help other third world countries," said Hayolom Tadesse, President of OAS. "Once we meet this goal and make the



DANIELLE FAULKNER/BEHREND BEACON

Patience Simmonds patiently sits in her library office. Simmonds is the mastermind behind the project "Books and Computers for Africa."

shipment to Ghana, we can start the process over again."

Behrend students and faculty have not been the only people to donate. Members of the Erie community have

also taken interest in Simmonds' project. With everything collected in the last two years, a list of schools and universities with a strong need for the materials are patiently waiting.