



THE BEHREND BEACON

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Penn State coach taken to court

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The Penn State University women's basketball coach is causing some controversy that dribbles down the court to Behrend. A former Lady Lion has filed suit in federal court on Dec 21 claiming that the coach, Rene Portland, had been harassing her about her sexual preferences and removed her from the team, believing she was a lesbian. Also named in the suit were the athletic director, Tim Curley, and Penn State University. The former PSU Lady Lion, Jennifer Harris, transferred to James Madison University and asked the court to "conduct mandatory non-discrimination training" and also has asked to "create new policies to help student athletes report discrimination without fear of retaliation."

Another former Lady Lion, Courtney Wicks, said that Portland had told her that Penn State was a "straight environment, a lesbian-free environment."

A Lady Lion who played in 1980 has come forward regarding Portland's discriminations towards lesbians.

Portland will not allow these allegations to ruin her career. In her statement to the media on Oct. 14, she said, "Let me make it absolutely clear that the only reason Jennifer Harris is no longer with the Lady Lions is because of her performance and attitude in relation to basketball."

Diversity is highly thought of here at Penn State, but what does diversity mean?

In the stands they were silent but their message was louder than the game itself.

A document called A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 2004-09 states:

"Within the University, the office supports and evaluates the many diversity initiatives and serves as an advocate for a range of populations. These include historically underpre-

sented racial/ ethnic minorities, person's with disabilities, persons from low income families who would be the first generation to college, veterans, lesbians, gay, bisexual and transgender persons and women."

Jeff Barber, a freshman majoring in marketing at Penn State Erie, was unnerved by these allegations. "I think it's unfair. They should be going off talent, not sexual orientation," Barber said. "There is a policy and she [Rene Portland] should be following it." Head Basketball Coach, Roz Fornari of Penn State Erie is troubled by the situation, as she tries to keep her players focused on the positive atmosphere.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Portland coaching the Lions.

Fornari said, "The situation at University Park is unfortunate. I don't feel comfortable commenting on other people's basketball programs. I really only know about how we do things here at Behrend. The Behrend Women's Basketball program is a diverse group of people. We focus on being competitive, getting good grades, and developing as people."

Prior to Harris being forced to leave the team, she averaged 10.7 points per the 22 games she started last season, which ranked her third on the team. Harris had a 3.1 GPA, which had fallen to 2.9 in the spring of 2005. Though her attorney, Karen Doering, suggests this could be from the emotional stress that Portland caused her.

This alleged act of hate is not by any means ignored. Activists have begun to set up protests. The activists were led by Penny Gardner of MSU and dressed in all purple with "Lavender Menace" written on their shirts in the stands of the Penn State vs. Michigan State game. In the stands they were silent, but their message was louder than the game itself.

National holiday recognized

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Penn State University is finally recognizing what many colleges and universities and the entire nation have been recognizing for two decades, the Dr. Martin Luther King holiday. Since being designated as a national holiday in 1986, Penn State University has failed to give students and faculty the day off. On Monday, Jan. 16, the University will honor the memory of the slain civil rights leader by canceling classes.

A national holiday, Dr. King's birthday will be, "Not a Day off...but a week on," said Andy Herrera, the Director of Educational Equity and Diversity Programs. This year on campus, students and members of the Martin Luther King Commemoration Committee will be hosting four different events and working with charities to commemorate the event.

Herrera said it's not only King's life the college is celebrating but also his message. He also said, "There has been a voice of students expressing the fact that they could not participate in many of the events to commemorate the life of Martin Luther King because they were in class."

"It is important, not only to celebrate the life of this American...but it is important because of the message this movement brought," said Herrera.

Jeffrey Stewart, a resident of Lawrence Hall agreed, "It is overdue...everyone else has it off, and he is an important man in history."

The first of the week-long festivities at Behrend will be held on Monday in the Gazebo at Dobbins at 2:30 p.m. Leon Williams, a speaker on racial

issues and diversity, will portray Dr. King for the afternoon and give a speech on what Dr. King might have been saying today if he were still alive. Refreshments will be served at the event. Also on Monday, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Biography will be played repeatedly from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. in Bruno's.

On Tuesday, students will be hosting activities related to the theme of the civil right movement at the Child Care Center. Wednesday, a theatrical performance by the James Chapmyn group entitled One Race, One People, One Peace will be held in the McGarvey Commons of the Reed Union Building. The Chapmyn group, from Ohio, will run this annual event from 5:30 p.m. until 6:30 p.m. and is said to be a performance with humor, drama, and truth.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Martin Luther King Jr. was a pivotal civil rights activist.

On Thursday, a video presentation and discussion involving debaters Steve Albrecht and Dale Kelly Bankhead will take place in Reed 117 from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. The topic of the event is the issue of protection from terrorism and its effect on American civil rights. Throughout the week, students will be collecting school supplies to be donated to the Diehl and Irving Elementary schools and the college's Child Care Center. Also on Saturday, some student organizations will take part in Habitat for Humanity to help out in the City of Erie.

All events for the week of Dr. King's birthday were sponsored by the Office of Educational Equity and Diversity Programs and the Office of Students Affairs.

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The Laramie Project brought to campus

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The Theater Department at Penn State Erie is holding auditions this January for the upcoming controversial play entitled The Laramie Project, which is slated for late March and early April performance dates. Auditions are being held Wednesday, Jan. 18 from 7-10 p.m. in the Studio Theatre. Callbacks will be Thursday, Jan. 19 from 7-9 p.m. also at the Studio Theatre.

The story of the play revolves around the town of Laramie, Wyoming and its reaction to the brutal murder of a Wyoming college student Matthew Shepard. The play is told through the stories of the people who lived through the ordeal. It came about as a result of a small group of people who spoke to over 200 people from the town to find out, from their point of view, what



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Matthew Shepard's story resonates.

would cause something like this. They attempted to sort out what people said and what they really felt. It will be directed by Dr. Christine Mangone, head of Behrend's theatre department.

Dr. Mangone spoke about some of the purposes for the Play. She said that, "It's a very powerful piece, which is what has made it so popular." The popularity of play has grown enough that HBO picked it up and did a film version of it. Dr. Mangone later went on to say that the play is about "not only what people say, but what is going on beneath the lines." She hopes that as a result of the play, it will "spark more dialogue about homosexuality and the difference between tolerance and acceptance."

The play will be open to all students and to the entire community, which may result in mixed reactions.

When asked how accepting college students are now of homosexual persons, Ben Gilson, an Electrical Engineering major, said, "We have been more exposed to gay people in the past few years,

such as in the media like with Ellen, or Rosie O'Donnell and there is so much more to a persons personality than their sexual orientation that more and more people will be accepting."

This show is certain to command a very powerful performance from eight actors that will represent the 60 characters in the play. It deals with the aftermath from the 1998 murder of Matthew Shepard. It was written using testimonials from the people in the town of Laramie.

This stands as a testament to how much our society has changed in the past eight years. With movies such as *Brokeback Mountain* which have grossed over \$15 million at the box office, trends are starting to appear that show the decline in homosexual tolerance; acknowledging the fact that someone is homosexual, and the rise in acceptance or the embracing of the fact that being gay does not have to be discriminated against. More information is available on flyers posted around campus, or Dr. Christine Mangone the head of the theatre department is available via email at cbm11@psu.edu.

New Director of Student Activities selected

By Adam Othman
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New Director of Student Activities (DSA) Kris Motta Torok greets every student that enters her office in the Student Activities Office with a smile. This, in combination with her enthusiasm and work ethic, is what gave her an edge in the choosing of a new DSA.

Motta Torok earned both a B.A. in Communications and a Masters Degree from Gannon University. Torok's career with Behrend began on Feb. 1, 1996 when she was appointed Assistant Director of Student Activities. Student Activities is the body that provides support for all of

Behrend's clubs and organizations, from the Greek system to the Speaker Series.

Motta Torok has nearly ten years of experience with the office. After nine years as Assistant Director, Motta Torok was promoted to Associate Director in 2005.

She attributes many of her work ethics and personality traits to the former Director of Student Activities, Chris Rizzo, whom she considers to be a strong mentor.

When the position of Director of Student Activities became vacant, Motta Torok applied along with a pool of other highly qualified applicants. The selection process was rigorous, but Motta Torok prevailed.

Motta Torok has some new goals

as the new DSA. She would like to work closely with admissions. She is confident that Behrend Admissions and Student Activities could have a great partnership in working to recruit more students and retain those already enrolled. Motta Torok also sees a great opportunity in working with the Athletic Department to organize new and exciting events.

More students getting involved in student activities is also something Motta Torok would like to see. Motta



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Kris Motta Torok named DSA.

Torok also hopes to get otherwise apathetic students and any student not interested in getting involved in extracurricular activities to begin to participate. "I think such students are missing out by not being more involved in what goes on around campus."

Motta Torok said, "Being involved with clubs and organizations on campus provides great networking opportunities, a transitional landscape between college life and the real world, and an edge in graduate school admissions. Being involved is just part