

# STUDENT LIFE

## “The Laramie Project” enlightens students



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

**By Matthew Burneisen**  
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Opening on campus last Friday, “The Laramie Project.” “A docudrama that examines the 1998 murder of a young gay college student,” was performed by Penn State Behrend’s Studio Theatre. This play was written by Moisés Kaufman and members of the Tectonic Theater Project and may already be familiar to some students because of the 2002 HBO film based on it. The play talks about the murder of a 21-year-old University of Wyoming student, Matthew Shepard, who was pistol whipped and severely beaten after meeting and leaving the Fireside Lounge with Aaron McKinney and Russell Henderson on Oct. 7, 1998. Shepard’s unrecognizable body was found the next day tied to a fence in the prairie outside Laramie, Wyoming (population 26,687). He was discovered 18 hours later in a coma, and died five days later in a hospital in Fort Collins, Colorado. The events occurred in a small town in the West that is much like any small town in our country, which is represented in the play. The play makes it a point to the audience that what it portrays could occur anywhere, no matter how “live and let live” the community may seem.

The goal of the project was to collect the townspeople’s thoughts and memories, which often conflicted and painted a portrait of Anywhere, USA. To achieve this goal, the writers interviewed over

200 residents from Laramie, Wyoming about the incident. From there, eight actors portray different characters from the town and recite from the notes and journals taken by the theater group in the process of interviewing the residents and creating what would become the Laramie Project.

The play itself, as presented by the Penn State students and directed by Dr. Mangone of the Studio Theatre, is set up within a very intimate setting which fit in with the interview style of the play. A slide show filled with pictures of Laramie, the Wyoming sky, and images from the trial and scene of the crime aid the mood that was created during the performance. Characters both close to Matthew, such as friends and landlords, were portrayed as well as people that were more distant from him in life, but brought into the story by chance. These characters, such as the police officer who was first on the scene, and the college student who discovered him, stood out and really added to the story and made it more than just Matthew’s story. It depicted the media storm that surrounded the events, and showed views of people from Catholic Priests and sign carrying anti-gay protesters to openly gay professors and bartenders.

Overall, the performance was powerful and kept away from preaching one point of view. The priest from Laramie made sure the people interviewing him from the Tectonic Theater Project understood that they should show the truth in what happened and although some controversy around the actual crime remains, the play presented the facts and allowed the audience to make their own opinion.

## Vocalist Lenora Zenzalai Helm performs in McGarvey Commons



Jennifer Haight/THE BEHREND BEACON

Jazz vocalist Lenora Zenzalai Helm performed a versatile style of jazz music at Thursday night’s Logan Music Series concert. Her latest album, *Voice Paintings*, was released in 2003 by MidLantic.

## ATTENTION SENIORS:



### SENIOR SALUTE DAYS

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**Stop by the Registrar’s Table**  
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**When: Monday, April 10th - 10 a.m. - 6:15 p.m.**  
**Tuesday, April 11th - 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.**

**Where: Reed Wintergarden**

**(For More Info - Stop by the Bookstore)**

## Student Life Snippets

### Lamda Pi Eta accepting applications

**By Colleen Applebaugh**  
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Lambda Pi Eta is the official communication studies honor society of the National Communication Association (NCA). Lambda Pi Eta, Omicron chapter, is currently accepting applications for new members of the chapter here at Behrend.

It is open to all majors and minors provided that a student have the following qualifications: completed a total of 60 credits with an overall GPA of 3.0 and completed a minimum of 12 credits in communications courses with an average in those courses of at least 3.25.

The society provides an outlet for activities both social and academic, and promotes community service. Although the honors society has many goals, Lambda Pi Eta prides itself primarily on a few distinct ones. First, Lambda Pi Eta intends to recognize, foster and reward outstanding scholastic achievement in communication studies. After all, this is an academic honors organization, setting its very foundation on academic excellence. The next goal is to stimulate interest in the field of communication.

If you are interested in becoming a member or are in need of further information, please contact Mrs. Mester, society advisor, at csm1@psu.edu or Colleen Applebaugh, Chapter President at cma196@psu.edu as soon as possible.

### Behrend students fast for charitable organization

**By Kristen Comstock**  
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This weekend Penn State Behrend students took part in a 30-hour famine, “Fast for Food.” The event was organized by World Vision, whose mission is to alleviate world hunger for children.

The 18 Behrend students and staff members joined students from around the country in this weekend event. They began their fast Friday at 9 a.m. and continued until 3 p.m. Saturday. In total, Behrend students raised over \$1000 to combat child hunger. Penn State Behrend has participated in this annual event for about 10 years.

To take their minds off hunger, the students left on a retreat held at the Sisters of Saint Joseph’s Villa Rose vacation house in McKean. During the overnight community building experience, they participated in teambuilding exercises, a spiritual service, a clay reflection activity, and games - one of which was Bible Pictionary. The students also discussed India’s hunger and human trafficking problems, and reflected on starvation and the abuse of children that can occur as a result.

Sister Mary Drexler, coordinator for Catholic campus ministries, said, “It is a wonderful experience for those who participate. I always come away with the fact that our students really do have a sense of compassion and care for the most needy among us.”

After the 30 hours, the students broke their fast and were guests at Old Country Buffet.

## ABC set to host 18th Annual Gala

**By Hayolom Tadesse**  
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The Association of Black Collegians (ABC) will host a renowned yearly celebration known as the Gala. The tradition of the Gala started in 1988 and has been well received every year. It is a formal dinner/dance, which began as an off-campus event. However, in the recent years it has been held on-campus in McGarvey Commons. The Gala is a highly anticipated night when all non-traditional students are recognized for their academic achievement (3.0 and above), extra-curricular participation and social involvement. The Gala also serves as a celebration of the completion of another academic year and is open to all Behrend students and faculty.

This event has a variety of benefits for the individuals who attend. It recognizes students’ academic and social activities and rewards them, which gives them reason to stay focused and involved. An elegant evening program, it offers a relaxing social atmosphere where the participants dress up, eat and dance while being soothed by a live band, a totally different social atmosphere than their monotonous daily routine. The color theme chosen for this year is red and white. The food will be provided by Market Place Grill. The program will be announced to all students through mass email; therefore, those who wish to attend must sign up at the RUB Desk. They will use personal invitations and emails to inform the students who will be receiving awards that they should attend this special night. Faculty and staff are also highly encouraged to attend the celebration as well. The program will take place on Saturday, April 8 at 7:00 p.m. in the McGarvey Commons.

This program is held annually and has shown great success since its creation. Not only does ABD attract students and faculty but they manage to gain the attention of the Erie community and surrounding colleges.

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