

## NEWS

## National and world news in brief

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## Cuba's President Castro resigns at age 81

HAVANA, Cuba – 81-year-old Cuban leader Fidel Castro announced he would not be accepting another presidential term, bringing an end to his career, spanning approx. 49 years.

Castro has been in poor health for quite some time. In July 2006, power was handed to Raul, Castro's brother, while the president underwent surgery. Castro has not made a public appearance since.

A meeting is scheduled for Sunday, where Cuba's new parliament will meet to elect a new president.

President Bush urged Cuba to hold free elections and said the US is ready to help the people of Cuba to "realize the blessings of liberty."

The US said its embargo of Cuba, which is now decades old, will remain.



Sources: CNN, BBC News

intact. John Negroponte, a senior US state department official said the embargo, which was enacted in 1962, would not be lifted "any time soon." China referred to Castro as an old friend and they plan to keep cooperating with Cuba. The European Union expressed hope in re-launching ties with Cuba, which were neutralized under Castro.

Castro announced his resignation in a letter published on the website of the Cuban Communist Party's newspaper, Granma. He wrote, "It would betray my conscience to take up a responsibility that requires mobility and total devotion, that I am not in a physical condition to offer." The former leader added that he would not stop "fighting like a soldier of ideas." He plans to write essays entitled Reflections of Comrade Fidel.

## Man gets 50 years for killing and dismembering wife

MOUNT CLEMENS, Mich. – On Thursday, a 50 year sentence was given to Stephen Grant, a man from Michigan, for killing and dismembering his wife. "Stephen Grant is evil personified," said Prosecutor Eric Smith.

Grant first choked his wife to death, and then dismembered her corpse at a machine shop. A jury found Grant guilty of second-degree murder in December. Grant's defense was seeking a term of 15-25 years, but Judge Diane Druzinski saw it fit to issue a sentence of 50 years and an additional sentence of six to 10 years for dismembering the body. Druzinski scolded Grant's actions, calling him "demonic, manipulative and barbaric."

Grant was advised by his lawyer to not speak during the sentencing, and rarely showed emotion. The only time Grant showed signs of distress was when Alicia Standerfer, Grant's sister, explained the struggles of the couples two children in coping with the loss of their mother.

"He's so much of a coward, he doesn't even look me in the eye," said Standerfer.

On Feb. 14, 2007, Grant contacted authorities to report the disappearance of his wife. He claimed he had not heard from her since an argument the couple had on Feb 9. When contacted by the media about his wife's disappearance, Grant tearfully told reporters that he was uninvolved in his wife's disappearance.

Authorities appeared at Grant's house on March 2nd with a search warrant. After allowing them into his home, Grant borrowed a vehicle from a friend and drove away. The authorities quickly found his wife's corpse in a container in the garage. Authorities then tracked Grant's cell phone calls and eventually found him at Wilderness State Park, 200 miles north of Grant's home.

## Behrend dancers prepare for THON

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"I'm not nervous at all, just very excited to be dancing this year," Thomas said. Last Nov., she and all of the other dancers took part in a mini-THON event known as "24 for a Cure." She has been preparing for THON by working out and trying to cut caffeine from her diet and the other dancers have followed suit.

Nguyen, who has been involved with THON for three years, will be dancing for her first time this year. Nguyen is very dedicated to the cause. She is so dedicated to this fundraiser that she has a tattoo of the Four Diamonds Fund logo and their motto, "Hope Finds a Way," on her upper arm.

For a third year, change of assignment student Armyd will also be dancing for the first time this year. Armyd changed his assignment to Behrend

last year from Penn State New Kensington. He is both very excited and nervous about the dance marathon.

"This is going to be the toughest mental and physical battle in my life, but I am very glad to be a part of it," he said. Armyd said his favorite part of THON is the pep rally they have where all the sports teams put on their own show and the audience decides who has the best act.

Kiesel could not be reached for comment.

The dancers said that in between all of the main line dancing and the different activities and contests for them to participate should help to keep them pumped and vitalized for the 46 hours. They will also have a lot of support to keep them awake and pumped. They are all sure that they can do it with no problems and are very glad to be helping out the cause.

## Theft in Dobbins increasing

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the students that. "[he] hopes to thwart them from stealing." He also admitted that there will be cameras placed inside of the newly renovated Dobbins Hall when the project goes underway. Geering felt also that it wasn't important to "prosecute the students" but to remind them to be careful and make better decisions. Randy also wanted to remind the students to leave their back packs at the door because this will prevent most of them from the temptation of taking the food that is not rightfully theirs.

In the REDC café, students have also been taking orders that are not rightfully theirs on accident. The employees at the small café have now started checking receipts to prevent this from continuing to happen. Geering made it clear to that "some students aren't trying to steal" they just grab what's there and run to class. The receipts are a new

important factor that will be more widely enforced throughout the campus. This presents the validity of each student's purchases, eliminating confusion and wrong orders.

Dobbins Dining Hall may be an easy in for students because many think of it as "free food." Nicole Unrue, a senior, admitted that she "has always thought of Dobbins as an open free for all because logically, [she] paid for it." However, Geering did strongly suggest that students remember not to think so loosely about taking things from Dobbins because "its not take whatever you need" and be on your way. He also stated that if "every-one student took food from Dobbins when they wanted to, there would be a serious problem" and a shortage on food for the rest of the campus. The important aspect to remember about the dining halls on campus is they are here for the students benefit, not at their disposal.

## Campus security under review

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emergency, whether it is a bomb threat or power outage, then immediately, we would inform students to leave school by reaching them with text messaging. Ream says, in case of an emergency we will post information on the news media as newspaper, and post alerts on the school webpage.

Ream said students could sign up for text messaging so they could be reached by us in case of an emergency. Also for more information regarding classes cancellation or any type of delays, students can reach our department by dialing (814) 898-6000.

We haven't had any problems with text messaging, no problem with delays," Ream said, but the last text message was for University Park and some Behrend students were confused about it." When

signing up online for text messaging, students can choose any Penn State campuses that they need to be informed of its emergency alerts.

After the shootings incident that occurred in Virginia Tech and Northern Illinois University, "we have armed police officers around campus to keep it secure and we would immediately contact the Pennsylvania State Police to quickly response, which is head quarters three miles away," Ream said.

It is important that students sign up for text messaging, so they would receive alerts in case of emergencies whether it is classes' cancellation or any other types of emergency. In case of any emergency, students should contact our campus police office at (814) 898-6000.

## Will the asteroid Apophis hit the Earth?

By Kameron Greene  
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According to Dr. Darren Williams, Associate Professor of Physics and Astronomy, a 270-meter-wide asteroid named Apophis, will come within 20,000 miles of the Earth's orbit on two separate occasions; April 13, 2029, and again in April of 2036. Both dates fall on a Friday.

"There is a three percent chance of impact, and that's the highest percentage of any asteroid on collision recorded," Williams said. Although three-percent is deemed high in this situation, Williams adds that the probability of impact on either date may in fact be insignificant, but because there is some uncertainty in the measurement of asteroid orbits, "we cannot entirely rule out the chance that Apophis could not collide with the Earth."

"Today, there are about 1,000 potentially hazardous asteroids that orbit the Sun within the area of the Earth," Williams admitted. "And the most dangerous of this group is the asteroid Apophis." The asteroid Apophis is capable of accumulating more energy than 1,000 atomic bombs that are going off at once.

Apophis, named after a sci-fi villain in the T.V. show, Stargate SG-1, was discovered around June of 2004. By late December, scientists noticed the motions of an asteroid that had nearly made its way into the Earth's orbit, causing a future problem for Earth's manmade satellites.

"The Geo-Synchronous Satellites are extremely close to the Earth. "If an asteroid were to pass through, there would be a small chance that it would disrupt the orbital of the satellites because it's too close," says Dr. Williams.

On Thursday, Feb. 21, Williams held a lecture discussing Apophis, and what might be done to deflect it or another before it strikes the Earth. "Apophis would collide with such a huge velocity, and the

impact speed would be equivalent to 40,000 mph. For a space shuttle to make only one orbit around the Earth, it would require a speed up to a mere 18,000 mph, compared to the intense velocity of the asteroid."

Williams added that if it were to hit the middle of the Pacific Ocean, the impact would cause massive tsunamis, submerging the coasts of all neighboring continents. He also gave a detailed example of what would happen if the asteroid were to hit Behrend.

"The geographical region of Erie would be altered drastically," Williams states that the asteroid would

cause a crater that would stretch from the Behrend campus, all the way to Girard. "The asteroid would create a crater the size of the entire city of Erie if it were to hit. The impact would cause evaporation of the lake on contact, and it's assumed that there would be a series of earthquakes over 7.0 on the rector scale."

If the asteroid were to in fact decimate Erie, not only will the state of Pennsylvania be affected, but neighboring states as well. "Matter excavated would be launched into other states, and states as far as Florida would see material launched."

Will the asteroid in fact collide with the Earth? Williams believes the probability is questionable. "In the year 2029, there really isn't a probability of Apophis hitting the Earth it'll just be passing by. The year 2036 on the other hand, is a different story."

Williams explained that scientist cannot give a concrete answer if Apophis will hit, because of the uncertainty of the parameter of its orbit.

After the lecture, some students shared their own opinions about the idea of an asteroid colliding with Earth. "I think it's interesting to see that this could actually happen, and that scientists can almost predict what can possibly be ground breaking" sophomore Moriah Johngrass said. Senior Jeff Doud had a more laid back approach to the phenomenon. "I'm not too worried about it. Whatever happens... happens."

**"The asteroid would create a crater the size of the entire city of Erie if it were to hit"**  
— Dr. Darren Williams  
Associate Professor of Physics and Astronomy

## The Medical Minute: Alcohol and your health

By Emmanuel Yacoub, Author: Michael Pitzer, Levi Benson and Bill Randazzo, Editors  
Lux et Veritas, Penn State College of Medicine

**Q: I was an angel my first three years of college, but now I'm a Senior, and you can probably see where this is going already! Lately, I find myself drinking more and more. I always drink with friends, but now it seems like it's 3 or 4 nights a week, and on a lot of those nights I drink more than I should. The alcohol isn't affecting my school-work, but I'm worried about the health consequences. When will my liver start to go bad? What other problems can result from drinking so much? When am I an alcoholic?**

A: The problem you describe is a common one among college students. The health consequences of drinking ethyl alcohol (ethanol) are numerous. Things that have effects on the way your body functions, otherwise known as a drugs, get chemically changed at least once in order for your body to get rid of them. The liver is the organ of choice where most drugs get metabolized, and consequently, liver problems are commonly associated with drinking. Although there is no correlation between a certain number of drinks and liver failure, the liver eventually goes through three major transformations with enough prolonged ethanol consumption. First, fat cells infiltrate the liver, and you get what's called a fatty liver. This change has been reported to occur after as little as one drink.

After prolonged bouts of imbibing, the liver becomes chronically inflamed, and this is called

alcoholic hepatitis. By this stage, liver function has decreased, but all the liver damage done so far is reversible.

The third stage is cirrhosis of the liver. This is irreversible damage done to the actual plumbing of the liver and the rest of the story is quite obvious: gallstones, jaundice (yellow skin), bleeding esophageal varices (bleeding from inside of your esophagus), ascites (enlarged abdomen), coma and death.

Drinking to toxic levels and drinking with Tylenol and prescription drugs are ways to expedite your journey to liver disease. Females are also known to metabolize ethanol slower than males, and this can cause cirrhosis more quickly.

Other problems one may encounter from prolonged drinking include pancreatitis (inflammation of the pancreas), high blood pressure, heart disease, stomach ulcers, and cancer. Long-term alcoholics can also experience a condition called Wernicke-Korsakoff syndrome, which is characterized by a decrease in IQ (memory and learning problems), lack of coordination, and mental confusion.

The best choice is to drink moderately and appropriately because most health hazards that result from alcohol are the direct result of reduced inhibition. An alcoholic is someone that is dependant on drinking. Alcoholic behavior includes, but is not limited to, drinking alone, in the morning, against your will, during work or school, feeling guilty about drinking, or exhibiting abnormal behavior in order to drink (such as making excuses just to drink). In general, if alcohol becomes or causes problems, then one ought to seek help.

## Quotes on Civility

"If the world seems cold to you,  
kindle fires to warm it."

— Lucy Larcom,  
American poet (1826-1893)

Janet Neff Sample Center  
for Manners & Civility