

NEWS

Abortion issue controversial at Clinton rally

By Rachel Reeves

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Not all of the 3,000 people who turned out on Tuesday to hear Hillary Clinton speak did so in support of the presidential candidate. Over 50 protestors formed a picket line stretching in front of the Mercyhurst campus before the event began.

The protest was the culmination of a week-long conflict between the Roman Catholic-affiliated college and the Erie catholic community.

Last week, the Bishop of the Erie Diocese, Donald Trautman, spotted a political ad in the Mercyhurst student newspaper, the *Merciad*. In the ad, Senator Obama encouraged students to register to vote. Despite the Bishop's letter of disapproval, there is no policy in place forbidding the *Merciad* from running a paid political ad.

When he discovered that Senator Clinton was coming to speak at Mercyhurst, Bishop Trautman announced his boycott of the Mercyhurst graduation. He did not want people to think that a Roman Catholic college was supporting a pro-choice candidate.

The Bishop was not the only one with this point of view; the Erie-based chapter of the national group, People for Life, protested the event for the same reason.

"We do not want people to misunderstand Mercyhurst's and the Roman Catholic community's affiliation with pro-choice," said Tim Broderick, Director of Erie's People for Life and the one who

organized the protest. When asked why the protests were on account of abortion, when Senator Clinton had come to speak about economics, Broderick said, "It's obscene for anyone to put their own financial considerations a priority above this."

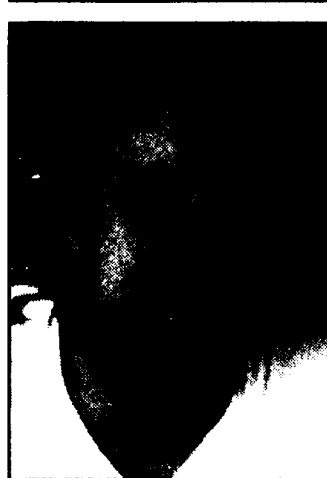
Not many people present seemed too concerned with the conflict or the protests. "Ultimately, it's just a little sidebar," said Erie resident Amanda Scott. "By tomorrow, the focus will be on Hillary and off the Bishop."

Mercyhurst was careful to clarify the school's stance with Senator Clinton before she came on stage to speak. The college was explicit in explaining that Mercyhurst was in no way endorsing or even affiliating itself with Clinton, and that they were hosting the event in order to open a learning outlet to the campus and the entire Erie community. Although the expectations for Mercyhurst's involvement with politics seem unusually strict, they do not vary from Penn State's own policies on the same subject.

An e-mail from the Director of Behrend's Student Activities, Dr. Kris Torok, explained that Behrend does not invite political candidates. It is the campaign's responsibility to scope out possible locations and then propose the event themselves. The only exception, Dr. Torok said, was if a campus-recognized club or organization invites a candidate to speak. Also, Behrend is not allowed to endorse any candidate in any way, from a public announcement to using a school phone number or school stationary to express preference.

Behrend professor releases short story collection

By Thomas Rawls

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Professor Tom Noyes.

While many of the Penn State Behrend faculty's awards and accomplishments may pass by too quietly for the whole of the student body to hear, they are not to be understated in their quality. One of the most recent examples of these accomplishments comes in the release of *Spooky Action at a Distance and other Stories*, a collection of short stories by Behrend's Dr. Tom Noyes, a professor in the B.F.A. program in creative fiction.

For instance, many tend to think of writers as people constantly struggling with where to find new ideas. After all, fresh ideas don't just stop by the writer's house and ask to be written about. Dr. Noyes says, "Yes they do." Some of his ideas, he says, come simply from current events. "But generally," he added, "ideas don't come to me from outside, they grow out of my writing. Writing comes

first, and ideas follow from interesting words or phrases."

But what about writer's block? How can you write first, without ideas? Dr. Noyes explained that "even if you don't have ideas, you can always resort to writing crappy material. Writer's block isn't a block. It should be called a 'writer's process.' The more you write, the more often you get ideas. Once you write what you know about, you start getting interested in the language itself, and ideas can come out of that."

Insecurity, though, says Noyes, can be an obstacle. When asked about whether or not he ever found himself concerned with the opinions of others in regard to his writing, he replied, "Yes. Every word. Always. When people comment on an author's work, it causes concern. Writing is a constant struggle between under-confidence and overconfidence."

Dr. Noyes's experience comes from a long list of influences, two of the more prevalent being the recently deceased Andre Dubus, and Darrell Spencer, a former teacher of his at Ohio University, where Dr. Noyes earned his Ph.D.

His interest didn't start in college, though. From early childhood onward, Noyes remembers, reading and writing consistently took the front page in the giant newspaper that is life. He's written journalistically, for sports, and others, but his college experiences, he says, and Deryl Spencer, assisted him in making the decision to move to fiction writing—an assistance he now pays forward to the students of the Behrend campus.

Vote on new student fee could come soon

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"The unique thing about this decision," Miller said, "is that students don't just have a say, they have control." One main point of the SGA discussion was that possibilities were unlimited. Students get to decide how the money is spent.

However, students at Behrend are having trouble finding a voice in the issue. In Wednesday's SGA meeting, no students attended the open session. The debate over the facility proposal, while getting somewhat heated at times, lasted 10 minutes before it was tabled for the next week's meeting.

The disconnect between SGA members and the student base at Behrend was painfully apparent as people reported polls conducted with small groups of friends or clubs. Tripi, the only senator who seemed to have done random sampling, was one of the only voices who seemed against the proposal.

"SGA's charge is to reflect the purposes of students," says Miller, who serves as the SGA's advisor. "Each representative has constituent bases they should be talking to. The problem is, most students just don't have an interest in student government."

The SGA is considering holding an open-forum discussion to try to garner the attention and opinions of Behrend students. If such a thing were to happen, Gilson says, the SGA would send an e-mail to every single student at Behrend. Until then, he insists, the best way to voice your opinion is to simply show up at the SGA meetings. Every Wednesday at 5 p.m., the SGA will open up each session with an open-discussion period in Reed 114 for any students who wish to have their voice heard.

"If you want to have your opinion heard," says Gilson, "The best way is to come and tell us yourself."

Democratic party gains more members

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in the conventions due to their prestigious positions. The state has become a keystone in possibly deciding which of the two remaining Democratic candidates will be the one to lead the Democratic charge in the 2008 national presidential election against now near-assured Republican nominee John McCain, a senator from Arizona.

The last time that Pennsylvania was relevant in the Democratic nomination race was in 1984 when former vice-president Walter Mondale beat Colorado Senator Gary Hart.

In order to be able to participate in the closed Democratic Pennsylvania primary, voters had to

register as Democrats before March 23. To get more Behrend students registered for the primaries and general election, both SGA and the College Democrats held voter registration drives. The College Democrats were able to get roughly between 110 and 130 students to register with a desk outside of Bruno's and some dorm activities.

Erie, along with the other major Pennsylvania population centers such as Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, is generally a Democratic city, with 55 percent of those registered belonging to the party. The city voted to elect Senator John Kerry President in 2004. Kerry got 54 percent of the Erie vote.

Check-out time: Spring semester

By Connor Sattely

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Mikhail Cooperberg feels like he has finally arrived at Behrend this year. Though he has been going to his classes the entire year, he spent the fall semester living off-campus in a new type of living arrangement through Scott Enterprises.

Cooperberg was one of roughly 18 students who found that the local Days Inn, roughly a 10-15 minute drive from campus, would be their "dorm room" for the semester. The option for students to live there was presented by Scott Enterprises' Tony Bruno, the Director of Catering, to Penn State Behrend at the beginning of the school year following the housing crisis. Fall of 2007 proved to be a tumultuous span of time for Behrend's Housing and Food Services, as the school's largest freshman class entered the campus.

After some students were forced onto the waiting list, Cooperberg found himself living in the local Days Inn, for a reduced "long-term" rate.

By the start of Spring semester, the Behrend junior and his "hotel mates" either found off-campus housing or a place to stay on campus. Cooperberg, who now lives on the first floor of Ohio, says he's one of the few who lives in a Residence Hall. "Most of my friends from the hotel now live in the apartments," he said. "But some found their way to local

houses or residence halls."

As far as his reflections on his stay at the Days Inn, Cooperberg had mixed feelings. "Of course I loved the housekeeping," he laughed, "and the breakfasts were nice too."

Those were two of the things that Scott Enterprises, the owner of the local Days Inn, wanted to advertise to students next year. Pamela Wolfe, Scott Enterprises' Director of Sales, mentioned those as an actual advantage of living in the hotel.

Cooperberg mentioned the inconvenience of the transportation – a van paid for by the hotel, leaving at 7 a.m. and returning at 8 p.m. – and the cost of the rooms as the things he didn't like. "The room was great, but it's just a completely different experience from living on-campus," he said.

As far as whether the deal will continue next year, Scott Enterprises and Behrend's Office of Student Affairs are currently discussing whether the option will be available to students next year. If it is, it will be presented as another off-campus location, rather than an extension of the campus. Students still will sign a living contract, the only difference being they can opt out of it at any time.

"In the foreseeable future, we can see this offer continuing for as long as it needs to," says Wolfe. "We loved the students, and had a great experience. We're glad to help."

Track facility: a new possibility for athletics

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team manages to find success in their meets: last year, Behrend saw 17 ECAC qualifiers, one ECAC champion and an NCAA qualifier. So, how and why is Behrend seemingly ignoring such a successful athletic team?

Chancellor Jack Burke claims that building a new soccer field and track is something that he would love to do. "Last year, the issue students had was the tennis courts," he says, "and this year, I'm getting a lot of feedback about the track, so it's on the schedule."

A preliminary proposal, Burke claims, will be made to the University to see if the college could build a track. The money would have to come from Behrend – no state money can be used to build an athletic building or fixture (the Junker Center was built as a "multi-purpose facility," claims Burke). So, the financing would come directly from Behrend, and any fund-raising or donations that Behrend could get.

"I would love to see an indoor track," Burke says. "The problem is, NCAA rules prohibit soccer teams from having indoor fields, so if it will circle a soccer field, it will be outside. Then comes the problem of turf or sod for the field. A sod field could take up to three years to grow."

Coach Cooper would love to see an indoor track too. "Obviously, an indoor track would be much better. I mean, we live in northwestern Pennsylvania," he says with a chuckle. "An outdoor track would be unusable for most of the time

between December and March."

It doesn't seem like any of the track and field athletes would mind an outdoor track over an indoor practice area, though. Both seem like a dream-come-true scenario to a group of athletes used to setting up hurdles and dodging incoming cars in a parking lot.

Kevin Gorney, a sophomore in his second year with the track team, recalls slipping and falling on the ice in the lot. He also recalls using a high school practice space to practice for Behrend. "Last year, when the weather was nice, we actually went over to Harbor Creek High School to practice. We just drove ourselves over there and waited for the high school athletes to get off the track, then we could practice for real. I mean, it's just kind of silly, college athletes waiting to use a high school's track."

Interestingly enough, Penn State Altoona has one of the nicest tracks in the area, according to Gorney. Athletics sources at the college confirmed that a track existed, but that there was no track team to use it. Employees of Altoona explained that the track was mainly for recreational use, student use, and for practice areas for other teams.

Gorney, who holds several records for Behrend, including the 3000 meter "steeplechase" event, explains that a track like Altoona's is something that Behrend athletes have been promised for years. "There were guys who graduated last year who said they'd been promised a track since they were freshmen," he says. "I just hope that I get to practice on a track by the time I leave Behrend."

Clinton appeals to voters in the region

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the cheers were explosive. Standing in front of a massive American flag and under giant letters spelling out "H-I-L-L-A-R-Y," she opened with a story about the last time she had been through Erie. Her bus pulled in late after 2 a.m. to thousands of waiting supporters, making it a "campaign highlight."

"The price of everything is going up, and the means are not," she said as she began her talk about economics in Pennsylvania. Her outlined plan included cutting tax benefits to companies that outsource jobs, making pro-American trade agreements, and cutting special interest corporate giveaways. A major part of her speech centered on the potential for renewable energy, both to "end the addiction on foreign oil," and to provide five million American jobs. Clinton also talked about the importance of universal healthcare, creating more preschool and early childhood programs to better prepare children for school, and getting rid of the No Child Left Behind program for good. As for the war in Iraq, Senator Clinton proposed pulling troops out

after 60 days. Just as important as bringing them home safely and responsibly, she said, is to "provide care for our troops once they are home."

To close her 45-minute speech, Clinton discussed rising college costs. When she asked the audience how many people were currently paying off college debt, almost every hand sprang into the air. Clinton said that she believed the government should support America in its pursuit of higher education. A modern-day GI Bill was on her list of proposals, along with direct aid grants with minimal interest rates and cutting debt for professionals in the teaching and law enforcement fields.

With "God bless Erie, and God bless America," Clinton ended her speech and stimulated a parting, roaring cheer. Most seemed to think that the evening, long wait included, was a valuable experience. Both Sara Lebine and Lisa Meyer, juniors at Gannon University, felt that the speech resonated with them on a personal level, especially when Clinton talked about healthcare and cutting college costs. "We waited outside for two and a half hours, but it was definitely worth it," said Lebine.

Quotes on Civility

"It is reasonable that everyone who asks justice should do justice."

— Thomas Jefferson,
American Founding Father and
third U.S. president (1743-1826),
letter to George Hammond, 1792

Janet Neff Sample Center
for Manners & Civility

