

MY VOICE

A detour in life

I have unexpectedly run out of time at Behrend. It is a surreal feeling.

Over the winter break, my mind ran a marathon thinking about whether or not I could return as a full-time student. This was the hardest decision that I've ever had to make due to how much I love Behrend, the Beacon, and because of the fact that it would have been my last semester in Erie.

In the end, my decision came down to one thing: my health. I know that I've made the right decision because I must get my body back to 100 percent.

I was told that I had mono the week before Thanksgiving break. Afterwards, my initial symptoms were gone and I thought I'd be fine going back to my nonstop daily schedule.

However, in December I wasn't sleeping nearly the amount I should have been, considering how fatigued and exhausted mono makes a person. I kept going with classes, producing a newspaper and attending meetings. I'm not sure how I was able to keep going. At times, it was honestly God who gave me the strength. All of this eventually led to me leaving a day early during finals week because I was too sick.

For this current semester, I

am commuting to Penn State Greater Allegheny (McKeesport) as a part-time student. I will head to University Park in the fall of 2010 to pursue a degree in journalism and a minor in business.

The Beacon has been such a significant and large part of my life for the past year and a half and it will always be a part of me. I'm not quite sure how to live without it yet. I've learned an unbelievable amount through my experiences. I could fill this entire newspaper with the knowledge I've gained because of this club.

Last spring, the editor-in-chief interview taught me so much. I was nervous when I walked into the meeting and saw six interviewers ready to fire questions at me. However, I learned that being extremely prepared and stepping into a room with confidence will com-

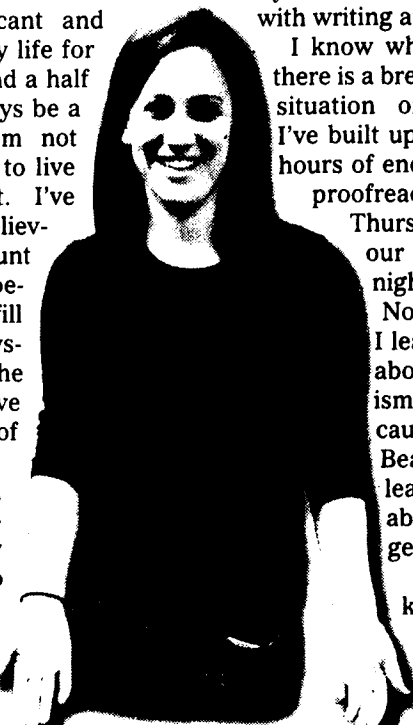
pletely surpass nervousness.

I've learned how to produce a newspaper every week and how to manage and run a staff. I've learned how to prepare for an interview, know the types of questions to ask, and dramatically increased my speed with writing an article.

I know what to do if there is a breaking news situation on campus. I've built up hours and hours of endurance for proofreading on a Thursday night, our layout night.

Not only have I learned more about journalism, but because of the Beacon I also learned more about life in general.

I know what it is like to work with a group of people so closely that specific music, YouTube videos, and food all mesh together on a Thursday night. I know how to manage my time effectively.



CHRISTINE NEWBY
managing editor

OUR VOICE

A day of service

Already, the idea of a day off seems like a welcome break to many of us on the Beacon staff. The "newness" of the semester wearing off, a day to catch up on already-neglected projects, play some video games, and sleep on Monday will surely be a welcome change from the grind of this semester.

Martin Luther King Jr. Day, however, is much more than a day off. In 1994, when Congress mandated that a day would be set aside for all public schools and nearly all government employees to "stay home" from work, they intended the day to be a "day of service" to honor the life and teachings of a great man.

Indeed, Coretta Scott King reminds us that "the greatest birthday gift my husband could receive is if people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds celebrated the holiday by performing individual acts of kindness through service to others."

So what is this coming week really about?

At the Beacon staff, we've become familiar with the hard work put into this coming week and the passion given to offering our community a variety of ways to celebrate Dr. King.

Andy Herrera, Director of Educational Equity Programs at Penn State Behrend, was kind enough to work with the Beacon in preparing this issue for the upcoming holiday. He provided us with images and information, as well as some inspiration for approaching this event.

He, and those whom he worked with - both students and faculty - deserve recognition for making this week-long commemoration a major yearly event at this school.

We believe that through involvement at these events, Behrend students from all walks of life can gain an appreciation for the works of Dr. King.

It is perhaps fitting that the last event of the week is one which seeks to "reignite" Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Poor People's Campaign" in aiding the homeless and those in extreme poverty. At Behrend, there is a myriad of ways to serve those in our community - from participating in Habitat for Humanity trips through various student organizations, to joining other organizations dedicated entirely to community service, to spending a week in spring helping hurricane victims.

Dr. King's birthday comes at a time in which the largest issue in the world is one of the biggest humanitarian issues to ever hit the Americas. We encourage participation in the events of next week, but we also recognize that this holiday is about service. We hope that the students of Behrend will give the events of next week a chance and encourage our students to use this opportunity of a free day for service.

Connor Sattely for the Behrend Beacon Editorial staff.



Have something on your mind?
Want to respond to an article?
Send an email to opinion@psu.edu

Submissions must be
less than 350 words in length.

Check every week for our new section:
-Letters to the Editor-

MY VOICE

Remove 'retarded'

BRANDON BOYD
staff writer

When one reads an opinion article of mine, they will almost always hear me joking, whether it's about the outrageous prices of the parking passes, finals, or any other issue concerning students here at Behrend.

I think now is a good time to talk about something more serious. Something, in fact, that I believe passionately in.

I have heard people say, "that's retarded," or, "what a retard," in conversations. They are, of course, referring to mentally retarded people.

Unfortunately, people use the word "retard" to infer that something is stupid, dumb, idiotic, dense, senseless, slow, thick, etc.

What's really senseless is that people choose to use this word over the many others that could avoid hurting the feelings of those who were born with mental handicaps, as well as those who are positively affected by their loving personalities.

The reason why I am so passionate is because of my autistic brother, Jason. I am a triplet, and Jason is one of my triplet brothers. I have grown up with him, and seen him develop as a person. Although he cannot talk, write, or perform the simplest of mathematical problems, he is one of my best friends. His kindness and love are unparalleled, his laughter could cheer up even the most

clinically depressed. While he's not book smart, he is smart in other ways. He knows how to get to places that he has been to, knows his favorite parts of his Thomas the Tank Engine movies and is able to successfully communicate through pictures.

While Jason may seemingly not achieve much in his simple life, he is actually achieving quite a lot. He impacts many people throughout his day, providing a smile to a sad face, providing hope for those facing difficult challenges and providing meaning to life.

If that's what being "retarded" entails, then by all means, call me a retard. I'll be flattered.

I'm not the only person in favor of eliminating the demeaning usage of the words "retard" and "retarded." The Special Olympics has set up a website, www.r-word.org, which calls to, "spread the word to end the word." If anybody knows just how special mentally retarded people are, it's the Special Olympics. They deal with more than 3.1 million participants in 170 countries, all vying for gold, but more importantly, aiming for a fun time.

When it comes down to it, the derogatory usage of the words "retard" and "retarded" should be avoided because of another "r" word: Respect.

Brandon Boyd writes a weekly column for the Behrend Beacon.

THE EDITOR'S BLURB

Keeping your New Year's resolutions

Each year, we resolve to rectify certain mistakes of the previous one. We may want to lose weight, get better grades or ask out that cute girl who sat next to you in calculus. So we run out and buy gym clothes or books or hard liquor and throw our full weight towards this goal, (more weight for some than others).

However, these resolutions are easier said than done. Go into Junker Center the first week of school and you'll see it so crowded that you'll think Penn State put cocaine in the building's air conditioning system. Now, go back in February and it will look as empty as a Hooty and the Blowfish concert.

If you want to be one of the unsatisfied many that fails to fulfill onto their resolutions, follow my steps and you'll be in good shape.

• **Set realistic goals:** It's easy to stand around at a party and tell your friends that you want to get ripped abs. However, try 20 minutes of crunches

after 10 years of McDonalds and you'll feel like a cast member from Alien. This may put a damper on your resolve, so aim low at first. Just try to run a mile. Once you can do that, go for two. Rome wasn't built in a day, and neither was Arnold Schwarzenegger. Set realistic goals and move forward from there.

• **It takes 21 days to make a habit:** After a few days of effort, your resolution may seem impossible to reach. However, keep with it. Your body will adapt to any environment you put it in. If you want to be a runner, then keep running. Soon you'll love to exercise and feel physically sick of you skip a day.

• **Get a buddy:** Having somebody to push you is a big plus, especially on those lazy days where you don't want to

get out of bed. Whether it is in the gym or on the wagon, they can give you the encouragement to push past any rut.

• **Reward yourself:** No matter what you are trying to achieve you need something to look forward to on a smaller basis. Suppose you want to lose 50 pounds. It's going to take a long time to reach that goal. Eventually you are going to feel burned out and want to give up. That being said, if you allow yourself some rewards, then it will be easier to stay motivated. For example, if you stick to a healthy

diet for a week, reward yourself with some sugar free pudding or ice cream. If you work out five days a week give yourself the weekend to relax.

• **One resolution is enough:** We all have a lot of things we'd

like to fix in our lives. That being said, it's not a good idea to overload you plate. If you spread yourself too thin, you may not have the patience or energy to achieve either. Just focus all of your energy on one, and you'll be fine.

• **Stay positive:** The hardest part about changing is keeping your morale up. When it's March and you still don't have the washboard abs you wanted, it's easy to feel an overwhelming need to run over to Junker and bash in some musclehead's face with your bathroom scale. While this may be extremely satisfying, it is also illegal and is typically frowned upon by the potential mate that you are trying to attract by working out. So instead of committing murder, try to keep your spirits up. Anyone can be negative and complain about every tiny detail, but it takes a much stronger person to find the silver lining in bleak situations. Happiness is a decision, so make it.



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