

BEHREND BEACON YEAR IN REVIEW

A look back at the stories that define the 2009-2010 academic year at Penn State Behrend

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DOBBINS FIRE

Midnight fire destroys Gazebo at Dobbins

ALLY ORLANDO
news editor
March 2, 2010

For Penn State Behrend students, the events of Monday night's fire at Dobbins Hall will stay in their minds forever.

In a scant four hours, between 11:30 p.m. and 3:30 p.m., the Gazebo at Dobbins erupted in flames and was completely destroyed.

No injuries or fatalities occurred, as the building was uninhabited when the fire began.

The "Gazebo" section of the building was completely engulfed in flames as early as 11:45 p.m.

The east side of the building, which includes the kitchen and main dining area, suffered some significant damage, but was not entirely lost.

Ken Miller, Director of Student Affairs, said that the dynamics of how the fire was focused became one of the most helpful factors.

"When the windows blew out in the Gazebo, it acted as a sort of chimney," he said. "All of the heat funneled up the central part of the Gazebo, and prevented a lot of heat damage in the rest of the building."

It was enough damage, though, to force officials to close Dobbins Dining Hall indefinitely.

For many students, the fire came as a complete shock, and made for an interesting night.

"I was working on my homework in the lobby of Lawrence and my friend came in and told us Dobbins was on fire," said Lindsey Masterson, a freshman resident of Lawrence Hall.

"We all ran out and saw smoke. They told us to move out of the way, so we went to the apartments and saw



Daniel Smith / The Behrend Beacon

The fire left only the base structure of the Gazebo standing. The disaster was the largest fire in Penn State history, across any campus.

the flames and heard the glass cracking."

Some student bystanders, who stood in large crowds watching the flames, even helped emergency crews that were on the scene.

"One fireman was trying to drag a hose up a hill," said Lindsay Wagner, a junior majoring in communications. "So some students came and helped him; we were all cheering."

The fire dissipated around 12:45 a.m. and was officially extinguished at around 1:30 a.m.

"The fire was put under control at approximately 1:20 a.m. after fighting it for over an hour and 20 minutes," said Assistant Fire Chief of Brookside Fire Department Mike Carpin. The Brookside Fire Department arrived on the scene first.

At the time of the fire, stu-

dents in Lawrence and Porcupine Halls were evacuated and moved to different locations.

Associate Director of Student Affairs, Kelly Shroul, said that 275 students were evacuated from the buildings primarily because of smoke.

At the time of the evacuation students in Lawrence Hall were instructed to go to Niagara Hall.

Dobbins was undergoing renovations before the fire and is going to need more extensive renovations after the fire.

"The west end of the building [the Gazebo area] is a total loss," Carpin said. "The interior kitchen area is a total loss due to smoke from the fire and water from extinguishing the fire."

Further information on the conditions of Dobbins will not be known until later this week.

"The building has been determined to be too unstable to enter," Carpin said. "Further investigation of the building will be held when the fire marshal is here [Tuesday]."

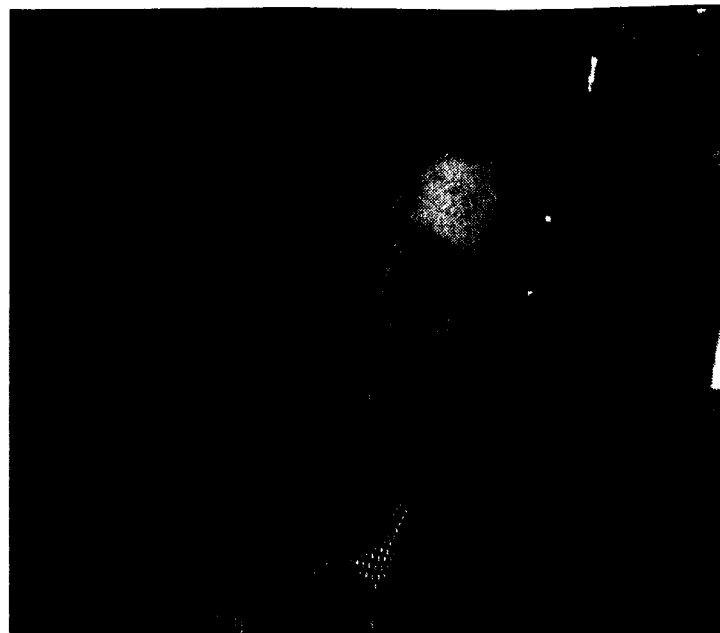
"It is unusable, and it remains to be seen if the building can be accessed by the students that work in our dining hall," Gonda said. "That will be up to the fire inspectors."

"Our first priority right now is that students need to be fed. There is no doubt that our Housing and Food Services team will accommodate them."

According to Ken Miller, the Director of Student Affairs, the Dobbins food service will be run out of McGarvey Commons until further notice, and classes will run as scheduled all week until Spring Break.

CHANCELLOR SEARCH

Burke to Birx



University of Houston Communications Department
Donald Birx will be Behrend's next chancellor in the fall semester.

CONNOR SATTELY
editor-in-chief
March 19, 2010

Donald Birx, one of two final candidates for the chancellor position, has been chosen as Penn State Behrend's next chancellor. He will replace Dr. John "Jack" Burke, who will retire at the end of this semester.

The chancellor position, which includes the overall operation of Behrend, including fundraising, strategic vision of the college, alumni and investor relations, faculty and personnel matters, and athletics, amongst a variety of other duties.

"Don Birx's experience in both academia and industry will help open the traditional boundaries between both worlds, enhancing students' educational experiences at Penn State Behrend," said John Romano, Vice President for Commonwealth Campuses, according to a Behrend press release sent this morning. "In addition, his varied background, with degrees in arts and sciences, engineering and business, has enabled him to see the strong collaborative possibilities that exist in these very different fields. We're looking forward to his building such

programs at Penn State Behrend."

Birx comes from the University of Houston, where he has been vice president of research since 2006. Before 2006, he held a position as interim vice provost/president for research and professor of physics at New Mexico State University, while simultaneously serving as president and founder of PSI, a corporate entity at the institution for technology development and incubation. Birx also spent 19 years at Systems Research Laboratories Inc., in Dayton, Ohio before his position at New Mexico State University.

Birx holds a Ph.D in electrical engineering from the University of Dayton, as well as a master's in bio-physics and an MBA in finance, both from Miami University of Ohio. He completed his undergraduate studies in engineering physics, from the University of California - Berkeley.

"I am thrilled to be a part of the team that will shape Penn State Behrend's next decade as it continues to develop as a leader in high-quality, innovative programs for education, research and economic development," Birx said, according to the release.

CAMPUS SAFETY

Student rescued from Wintergreen Gorge

MIKE O. WEHRER
news editor
September 18, 2009

A week after being rescued from a cliff in Wintergreen Gorge, Behrend Junior Kyle Reilly is still feeling the effects of his harrowing experience.

Last Sunday, Reilly, a psychology major, got stuck climbing a steep section of the Wintergreen Gorge cliff called the Devil's Backbone. Emergency crews were called to the scene and Reilly spent over an hour and a half on the cliff side before he was rescued.

Reilly was hiking through the gorge with two friends and his girlfriend, Julia Kanaitis, when he decided to climb one of the steeper parts of the hill known as Devil's Backbone.

"I've climbed a ton of the hills and cliffs back there before," Reilly said. "I've gotten to the top all the time. This section of the cliff looked doable, but I got to a point where there was a ninety-degree cliff. It would have been literally impossible to continue, without ropes."

Looking back, a steep grade and sharp rocks prohibited him from backtracking. After

roughly 20 minutes of trying to find a safe way out, he decided the safest option was to call 9-1-1.

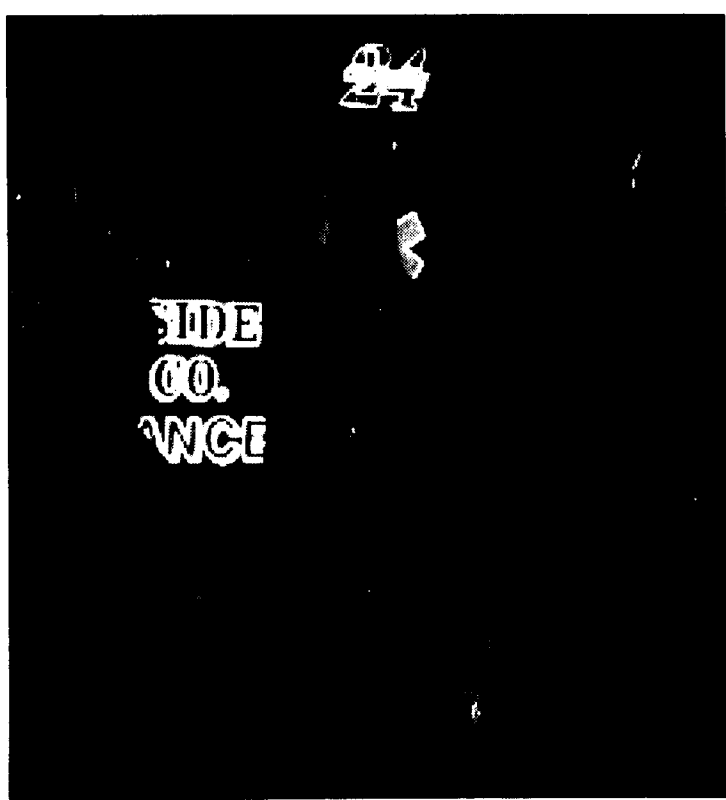
He did so, and was instructed to stay calm and stay put. The crews got to him after about a half hour, and shortly, a rescuer rappelled down to him and fitted him with a harness. At that point, Reilly had been on the cliff for over an hour.

Rope crews at the top of the hill pulled Reilly and his rescuer to the top. Since he had no major injuries, Reilly was cleared to leave after a few checks of his vitals and some paperwork.

Perhaps a larger challenge than the cliff, though, has been dealing with fellow students. Since the incident, which was covered on several major news outlets in Erie, some classmates and friends have been less than kind following the event.

"Some people have been pretty immature, rude, laughing at me and making fun," he said.

Already, though, it has calmed down some, and he is returning to regular life at school. He says that prayer was a major force in keeping him



Daniel Smith / The Behrend Beacon

Firefighters in the Ohio parking lot following the rescue of Behrend student Kyle Reilly

calm on the cliff side, and that his faith will play a big part in moving onward.

"In retrospect, I overestimated my abilities," he said.

"People have climbed that cliff before, but not on that section. If I could do it again, I just would have chosen a different route."

SWINE FLU

Four students test positive for H1N1

CONNOR SATTELY
editor-in-chief
September 25, 2009

Two more Penn State Behrend students have tested positively for Swine Flu, bringing the college's total to four.

According to a Penn State Behrend press release on Thursday, the two students were both tested at the college's Health and Wellness Center.

Seven students in total tested positive for the Type A influenza; three were tested off-campus while four were tested in the Health and Wellness Center. All students have gone

home to recover.

Further testing for the H1N1 virus returned positive for the four tested at Behrend; the school does not know the results of the other three students' tests.

No additional students have returned tests positive for Type A influenza; as of press time, the total remains at seven. Many students, though, have inundated the Health and Wellness Center with complaints of flu-like symptoms.

Students who have influenza-like illness (ILI) symptoms are being advised to follow self-isolation guidelines, as well as

fight the illness through "bed rest, fluid intake, and the use of over-the-counter medications to reduce pain, fever, coughs and other symptoms."

When students complain of ILI symptoms, they are tested for Type A influenza, which can either be seasonal flu or the H1N1 virus, otherwise known as "Swine Flu."

If students test positive for Type A influenza at this point in the year, Erie County Department of Health estimates they have about a 90 percent chance of having the H1N1 strain, because usually the seasonal influenza will not

reach its peak until January or February.

Swine Flu is thought to be spread the same way as seasonal influenza, according to the CDC: coughing, sneezing, or transmittance of viruses to nose or mouth.

Behrend continues to promote prevention as the best method of avoiding influenza. CDC lists the highest priority as taking everyday steps to protect one's health, including good hygiene, avoiding contact with sick people, and not touching one's eyes, nose, or mouth.

SGA ELECTIONS

Burger and White take the reins



Stephen Burger and Hannah White will be next year's SGA president and vice president.

CONNOR SATTELY
editor-in-chief
April 16, 2010

A race which saw 14 students running for only ten spots as upperclassmen senators has drawn over 600 votes, nearly a 30 percent increase from last year's total.

Stephen Burger and Hannah White, both juniors, won the uncontested race for President and Vice President, respectively. They ran on the same ticket. Burger is a finance major, and White is a biology major.

Briana Newstrom, a junior psychology major, was elected to the position of Secretary.

Harshal Patel, a sixth semester supply chain and information systems major, was elected

to the position of University Faculty Senate Representative.

Elected to the contested position of Senator were Ryan Frankowski (freshman - Industrial Engineering), Alli Heitzenrater (sophomore - Creative Writing), Cassie Kosmal (sophomore - Business), Aaron Morelli (freshman - Business), Devin Pierre (sophomore - Undecided), Jake Randolph (junior - Marketing), Aharon Robinson (freshman - Business), Jennifer Slane (freshman - Psychology), Andrew Sywyj (freshman - Business), and Ryan Voris (freshman - Computer Science).

"Steve and Hannah are going to do a great job next year," says current SGA President Brad Kovalcik.