

Automatic doors bring cold inside



An Opinion by Rob Trishman
Capital Times Staff Reporter

This just in: It's cold outside. Yes, that's right, "Gee, thanks Mr. Obvious." Penn State has one of the top meteorology programs and weather services in the country. But we don't exactly need that expertise to notice the tundra-like conditions in the area.

The best thing about this cold weather is being able to escape it by entering one of the buildings on campus, particularly the Olmsted building where most students have class. It's great to walk in and feel that warmth which brings our ears and extremities back to normal.

Our tuition dollars are definitely at work here. It costs about \$145,000 per school year to heat the Olmsted building, according to Bill Moody, Director of Utilities at the Penn State Physical Plant. He said that Olmsted uses about 48 percent of the heat on campus.

As we were sitting in the lobby in Olmsted selling T-shirts over finals last semester and during the second week of this semester, I noticed many people walking through the automatic doors. I would estimate around 30 out of approximately 50 people at any given time took this route. But only about four people actually needed to. The repeated use of the doors caused a lot of cold air to rush into the heated lobby.

Does this cold air have an effect on those heating bills? "Yes, definitely," said Moody.

This is my plea, that those of us who do not need to use the automatic doors in Olmsted stop using them. I know, it's human nature to take the path of least resistance. I am sure that no one goes through those doors with an evil agenda, thinking, "HAHA! I will cause this lobby and everyone in it to be cold while driving the energy bills of this campus sky high!"

I am also not accusing anyone of being inconsiderate or lazy. This is some-

thing we do without thinking, but it is something we need to think about. For instance, there is a universal symbol on the door. This symbol is not some mysterious "mark of the chosen one." This is a handicapped symbol, the same one found in parking spaces at virtually every store, mall, school, church, and alongside streets in appropriate locations.

The Americans with Disabilities Act requires this symbol and the accommodations associated with it. Those of us not allowed to park in a space because that symbol is there should treat these doors with that symbol the same way; save it for those who need it.

Also, one of the reasons that buildings and homes use insulation is to prevent cold air from coming in, thus saving on energy bills. Because the manual doors require you to open one before the other, the outside one has enough time to close before the inside one is open, and vice versa. But when the automatic doors open, it is both doors at the same

time, and thus a big draft of cold air comes through them while almost no cold air comes through the other doors.

The automatic doors also require electricity to open and close. Unnecessary use of electricity, such as leaving lights on when nobody is in a room, is also an unwise decision that we usually make unconsciously.

A less logical reason would be just doing a good deed for someone by holding the door for them, particularly someone carrying a lot of books. Gentlemen, chivalry is not dead. Also, a show of gratitude from those of us who are fortunate to have full use of all four limbs could involve actually using those limbs instead of letting them hang as we saunter through a modern convenience not intended for us.

This may seem like a small gripe, but I believe that it can in some way contribute to keeping the University's energy bills (and maybe even tuition?) at bay. Let's do our part to use our resources wisely.

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