

Vegetarians and Vegans fight for more options on campus

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The common misconception about vegetarianism is that it is a religious obligation, which is true for some people. Nowadays it has also become a dietary, health, personal, and/or moral issue. Vegetarianism is rising among students and faculty at Penn State Harrisburg too.

While there are many reasons for doing it, Kathy Brode, a writing tutor at the Learning Center explained, "It was just a personal choice; even as a small child, I didn't like the taste and texture of meat, so I have always preferred not to eat it."

While most people may not be aware of the difference between vegetarians and vegans, there is a distinct difference. Vegetarians do not eat any meat or fish and often

any animal products. Vegans on the other hand do not eat anything derived from animals including dairy products. There is a general increase of vegetarianism among students and faculty on campus.

Vegetarians face many problems with the limited variety of vegetarian options. For Brode and most vegetarians on campus, ordering lunch is often a problem because there are so few vegetarian options.

In an email between Brode and Capital Times, Brode stated "Yes, often ordering lunch is a problem because there are so few veggie options (although Stacks is doing MUCH better than they used to!). Some days it seems like there is nothing to eat. Often I solve the problem by simply bringing my lunch from home."

Assistant Director of Housing and Food Services, Greg Schiavoni, said that he has certainly noticed

this increasing vegetarian population, and is attempting to address this problem. He said that even though Stacks is the only food provider on campus, he wants to satisfy every group without excluding any, no matter how small they may be. In fact, one of Stack's major agendas is to "satisfy" every customer at PSH, by thinking outside the box.

Last month, they had a "vegan" burger, which, according to Schiavoni, sold a lot more than he had expected, and that was delightfully shocking to him. He said being involved with vegetarians himself he can relate to their problems, and therefore, tries experimenting with more vegetarian options.

Schiavoni also said, "We are planning on doing some vegetarian/vegan option once a week, at least for now, as long as it does not compromise with

other major issues." He also plans on giving off samples of food.

Most students and faculty feel that Stacks should offer daily vegetarian options other than just their salads, which also often contain meat.

"I think that Stacks should offer daily vegetarian options other than just their salads, which also often contain meat. Their 'meat-free' salads are very unimaginative," said Brode.

Ananya Dhuddu, 19, a sophomore at PSH, feels there are not enough options on campus. "Being an international student in addition to being a vegetarian makes it even more difficult with limited funds. Food is one of the most essential things on campus, and when there are not many options to choose from it only makes it harder. Every Stack's counter has only one vegetarian option and they do not even taste that good,

such as the pizza counter has only the plain pizza and the vegetable pizza. Only once a week they offer vegetarian soup, when they can offer one vegetarian soup and one non-vegetarian soup every day. Same goes for the main entrees and the frozen section," she said.

So with Stack's aiming to fulfill the demands of the entire campus, we can hope for more variety, and better options. While thinking outside the box is an excellent idea, one of the other issues to keep in mind is the price of these food items.

Vaishnavi Krishnan, 19, a marketing major, said, "What people want is food that is filling and tasty yet feasible, and it really is not that hard to make decent vegetarian items. With high tuition costs and other expenditures, the last thing we need is to spend so much everyday on food!"

Gun control debate rages on in Pennsylvania and beyond

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In the backdrop of the shooting deaths of three Pittsburgh police officers, the gun control debate rages on in Pennsylvania. Six Pennsylvania cities have passed similar gun laws, requiring the reporting of lost or stolen firearms, while the legality of the municipalities' actions are heard throughout the state's appellate and supreme courts. A governor also works rigorously to pass legislation to curb straw purchasing against a state house fighting to keep gun laws from affecting a diverse population.

The issue of gun control has many different angles and topics for debate. At its essence, the gun debate always relates back to 2nd Amendment of the Constitution, and its interpretations in the form of contemporary legislation. Along with a laundry list of U.S. Supreme court decisions, each facet of every proposed gun law is looked at from two ends of the spectrum.

On the one side of the gun control debate are cities experiencing increases in violent crime. On the other side of the issues are predominately rural and suburban populations holding on to deep traditions threatened by state and federal legislation. In the middle, gun sales sky rocket, while sheriff and city police departments

are flooded with applications for carry and conceal permits.

The rise in gun sales and Pennsylvanians exercising their right to carry a concealed weapon is no surprise to John Hohenwarter, National Rifle Association Pennsylvania State Liaison. "On a national level people see the change in administrations and they are concerned about a change in gun laws," Hohenwarter said.

In Pennsylvania alone, sale and transfer of firearms have increased dramatically in recent years, according to Pennsylvania State Police Annual Firearms reports. The sale and transfer of firearms rose more than twenty percent from 2007 to 2008. While total firearm reports from 2008 and the early portion of 2009 are still not published, preliminary information released by Corporal Linette Quinn, Pennsylvania State Police Public Information Officer, shows a more than a 28 percent increase in gun sales from the first quarter of 2008 to the first quarter of 2009; tracked by the numbers of background checks conducted by the state police's Pennsylvania Instant Check System.

The PICS is an instant background check conducted each time a legal gun transaction takes place in the state. The PICS uses comprehensive statistics gathered from multiple criminal, juvenile and mental health databases, along with federal files containing over 51 million criminal history re-

ports, according state police firearms reports.

During the same time period in the first quarters of 2008 as compared to 2009 PICS background checks for applications to carry and conceal a fire also shot up by almost one third. These numbers reflect a steady increase trend that began in 2007. In the eight years prior to 2007 the amount of permits to carry and conceal a firearm issued by local sheriff and police department averaged less than 105,000 per years. In 2007 and 2008 applications increased from this average rose upward of sixty percent according to state police firearms reports.

Some advocacy groups from throughout the state assert the NRA at its more than quarter million state members have made a recent effort to apply for permits to carry and conceal as a show of power within the state. Hohenwarter disagrees with those accusations.

"Take a look throughout history and you will see that this type of increase in firearm activity is nothing new," Hohenwarter said. "We've seen this type of activity before when there is such a significant change in government."

Hohenwarter said that the NRA at no time has encouraged its members to apply for carry and conceal permits as a political statement. "We promote the right to carry and conceal throughout the country and one of the goal

of the NRA is to preserve that right."

Joe Grace, executive director of CeaseFirePA, said he understands the political concerns of many Pennsylvanians, but maintains all the excitement is for nothing. CeaseFirePA is one of the state largest political action organizations working to reduce gun violence, injury and death.

"We would encourage people to exhale a little bit," Grace said. "If you look at the actual public statements of President Obama and his team in the administration it is clear that they are simply not taking up the gun issue anytime soon. We wish they would, but it is pretty clear that they are not going to do that."

Despite signs from the Obama administration that federal gun legislation is not on the horizon, Bryan Cutler, Pennsylvania State Representative, 100th Legislative District, said many are concerned within his legislative area because of Governor Ed. Rendell's recent calls to renew the 1994 federal assault weapon's ban along with the introduction of a group of legislation that was hotly debated during last year's legislative session.

Cutler, a leading house republican for pro-gun rights, said the house has had to work hard to prevent Rendell's agenda of "anti-gun laws."

"The governor himself actually went to a judiciary meeting and essentially/demanded that these

anti gun bills be brought up and successfully passed out of the committee," Cutler said. "That is fairly unprecedented to have a sitting governor show up at a committee meeting to push in the manner he did."

Because of the governor's bold political moves, a standoff was created between he and state house of representatives.

Last year after intense debate and concessions on both sides Rendell, passed a crime bill that included tougher penalties for any person convicted of shooting a police officer, and raised the statue of limitations from two to 13 years for prosecutions of straw purchases, when somebody legally buys a gun on behalf of a convicted felon.

Included in Rendell's crime bill were tougher penalties for false reports of stolen guns, but groups like CeaseFirePA felt the bill fell short.

Multiple sections of the proposed omnibus state crime bill also failed. This included limiting handgun purchases to one per person per month and allowing cities to make their own gun laws independently of the state.

"There was a very significant debate on lost or stolen handgun reporting in the house," Grace said. The bill, which began as House Bill 29, was tabled during the last

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