

Sports Offer Healing in Wake of Disaster

Travis Johnson

Forget the Cowboys who are back to their winning ways. The New Orleans Saints are America's team now. While it looks like the Saints couldn't win a game against your local high school squad, we want to see them win, bad.

Americans rally around those in despair, much like the people of New Orleans, a city left in ruins after hurricane Katrina ravaged the gulf coast weeks ago. Can you remember rooting for the Giants, Yankees, Rangers, Knicks or any other New York team after the tragedies of September 11? Super Bowl XXXVI, which followed the 9/11 events, had a patriotic theme to it with the Super Bowl logo shaped like the United States. The New England Patriots won that game and I can remember my household cheering for the Patriots. As a matter of fact, it might be fair to say most non-St. Louis fans were hoping the Patriots would win - if not because they were the underdogs with a young quarterback, then because their team name and mascot were symbols that Americans could identify with after the shock we all suffered as a nation.

Back to New Orleans where the death toll is in the hundreds (almost 1,000 for the state of Louisiana) and still climbing, those who did survive have been left with no shelter or food, and the city will need to be completely rebuilt. What is left for these people? Hope. People heal best when they are able to identify with and care for others in a similar situation and hope for the next day to get better. The people of New Orleans all experienced the same disaster; many are without homes. The Superdome, home of the Saints, was also damaged by Katrina, leaving the local football team homeless for this

season. The football team is the symbol many can identify with and while I'm sure the NFL wasn't the first thing on these people's mind these last few weeks after such a disaster, these people need a return to normalcy. The Saints playing ball again in week one was step one on a long journey to recovery.

I can't tell you how many headlines in newspapers, online, and on television read positive for the Saints who traveled to Carolina to take on the Panthers, a possible Super Bowl team, in week one. The Saints won 23-20 with three seconds remaining.

Of course the non-sports fan might say, "How can you think about and look forward to football after what has happened?" That is a difficult question to answer, but it is said best by observing the fact that people need hope to recover from traumatic events such as 9/11 and hurricane Katrina. Sports are all about hope. Hope that your team can prevail when they're the underdogs, when their best players have been injured, or when they have been criticized by the media.

Saints quarterback Aaron Brooks said after the win, "In the back of our minds, we know we have to give them one tiny bit of hope. We have complete faith in what we are doing because every time we go out there, it is our job to give them hope that every day will be a better day."

The Saints probably won't win the Super Bowl, but you could say they are playing for something more important. They are taking the field every Sunday to uplift the souls of the people of New Orleans. I'll root for the Saints next week. I think the majority of America will too.

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Residence from page 1

Alto Hall says Ronjon Ray, "It's nice to have a personal shower. Here at the Hall, people trash our public bathrooms that everyone has to use as if they are their personal showers."

"You don't get as much privacy in a public bathroom," says Brad Mellot

Air conditioners and personal showers are pluses for the Gates. So what do residents at the Hall have going for them? Penn Gaters do admit there are a few trade offs between the different halls.

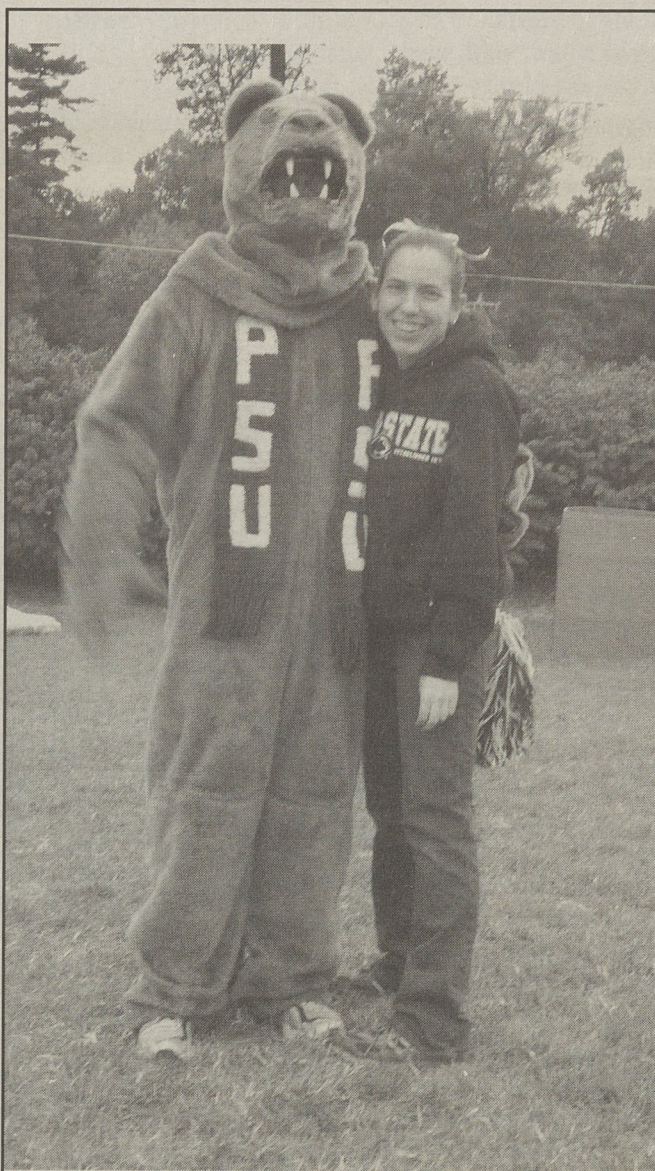
"The rooms are nicer, but the long walk (to classes) is a downfall," admitted Kristin Pugliese about the Penn Gates.

The walk from the Gates to the General Studies building is significantly longer than from the Hall. While one can expect a two and a half minute walk to class from the Hall, a Penn Gater will spend much more time walking - perhaps seven and a half minutes.

For some students, the social atmosphere of the Hall is more desirable than the amenities the Gates offer. Mike Davis started out last year living in Penn Gate II but then moved to Mont Alto Hall during the second semester. "Penn Gate was boring," Davis says, "no one really came out of their rooms. At the Hall everyone knows everyone."

Upperclassmen Ashley Sellers and Lauren Martinchick, who have both lived in the Hall for three years, describe it as a place that is more sociable than the Gates. "Here it's more open, plus it's closer to everything," says Sellers.

The bottom line is, all of these halls offer laundry facilities, televisions, student lounges or study areas, snack machines, and student parking. Basically it comes down to a choice between the more social Mont Alto Hall, or the more private Penn Gates.



RA Jess Smythe poses with Nittany Lion mascot and SGA Treasurer Scott Vinick.