

# Campus News



## ConKerr Cancer: A Case For Smiles

By Sarah Neville - Lion's Eye Staff Writer - sen136@psu.edu

In addition to the wildly successful THON at Penn State's main campus, the university's Brandywine branch has been making continual efforts to support children with cancer. A few years ago, Dr. Laura Guertin, Associate Professor of Earth Science at Penn State Brandywine, saw an eye-catching display at her local fabric store. The display was advertising for ConKerr Cancer, a local organization that makes pillowcases for children with cancer. Dr. Guertin was inspired to learn more about the cause, and how she could engage students at Penn State Brandywine to help.

ConKerr Cancer began as a small initiative to bring a little piece of joy to the dark and dreary hospital rooms of children with cancer. When Cindy Kerr's son, Ryan, was diagnosed with cancer in 2002, she began to make him pillowcases with goofy prints, bright colors, and sports

*"There's not a lot of universities that are doing sewing projects...I think it's nice that we can do this."*

logos on them. Kerr saw the profound effect these pillowcases had on Ryan, and was inspired to make them for other children in the oncology unit at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. Kerr wanted to make a difference in more children's lives, so she began to ask for help by founding ConKerr Cancer, an organization whose aim is to give every seriously ill child in North America a cheery pillowcase by 2015.

According to ConKerr Cancer's website, the organization has:

- Delivered over 400,000 cheerful pillowcases to sick children in hospitals around the country
- Established 125 chapters (so far!) serving children in 225 hospitals and pediatric hospices in the United States, Canada, South Africa, and Israel
- Recruited thousands of volunteers - young and old - to sew and donate pillowcases
- Recognized nationally by Martha Stewart, TEVA Pharmaceuticals, The Philadelphia Eagles, Omni Media, Talbots, Bank of America, Pfaff, and L'Oreal (About Us, <http://conkerrcancer.org>, 2009)

Dr. Guertin, taken by the profound impact something as simple as a pillowcase had on a child with cancer, decided to bring the pillowcase project to Brandywine. She reached out to Cindy Kerr, and got to meet Ryan before his cancer took his life. With the help of Knittany Lion Needleworks, Penn State Brandywine began to donate pillowcases to Kerr's cause.

"We've been working with her pretty much since her early days," Dr. Guertin said of Kerr, "There's not a lot of universities that are doing sewing projects. I think it's nice that we can do this."

On Friday, September 30th, Dr. G. spearheaded a pillowcase-making session in the Commons Building's conference room. Equipped with piles of bright fabrics and five sewing machines that had been donated to the Knittany Lion Needleworks over the years, volunteers were in and out of the room from 11:30-1:20, and created pillowcases for ConKerr Cancer, making the campus's total donation 79 pillowcases.

To learn more about how you can help out, stay tuned for the next pillowcase-making session on campus, or check out <http://conkerrcancer.org/help.html>.

(Photos attached courtesy of Knittany Lion Needleworks @ flickr.)

## Mold: The Invasion of the Book Snatchers

By Robert Ripson - Lion's Eye Staff Writer - rlr283@psu.edu

Dateline: 20 September, 2011. Susan Ware, one of the librarians, is looking through reference books for a student's edification. Something does not appear right. MaryFran McLaughlin also has occasion to use the same set of reference books. The invasion has begun.

Quickly, consultation is the order of the hour. There is a discoloration on the binder of the reference books. A call is made to Campus maintenance, University Libraries Preservation Department and to the Department of Environmental Health and Safety explaining what was detected and what course of action should be taken. Because of the nature of mold and some people's reactions to fungus, it was decided on at the local level by head librarian, Sara Whildin, that those students that were using the library be moved to the lower level of the Vairo Library building. Tuesday is now complete.

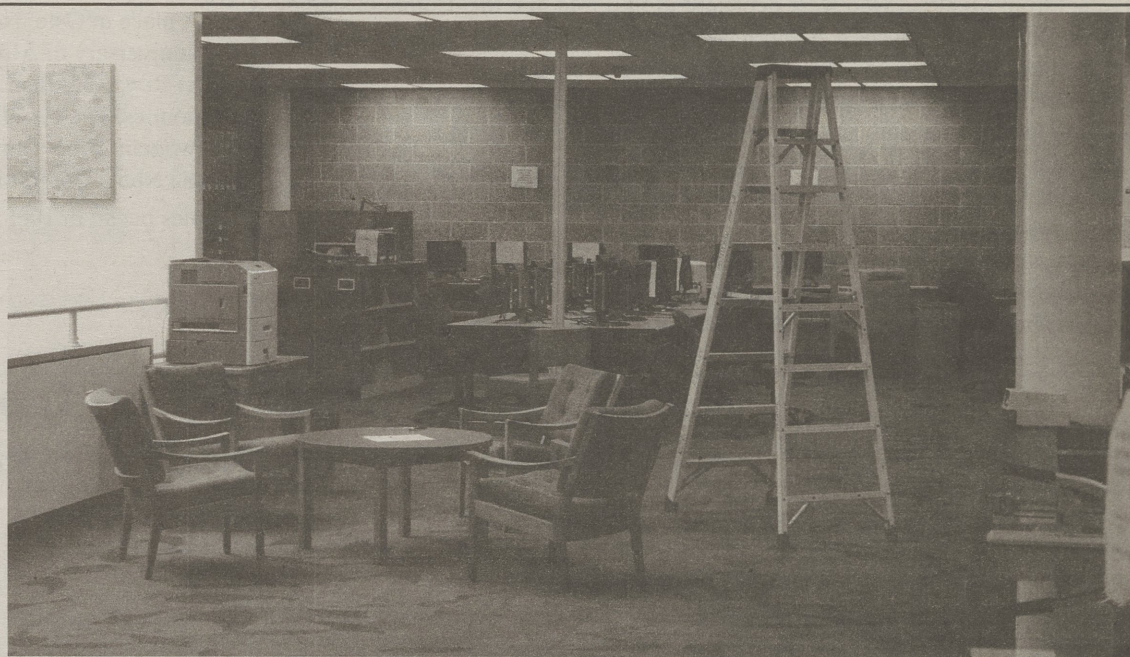
By Wednesday noon, teams from the Physical Plant, the Libraries, and Dept. of Environmental and Safety had arrived and began to assess the overall situation. It was determined that indeed there was an outbreak of mold that has permeated books that had cloth bindings. Not affected were those that had paper or vinyl covering. Tests were conducted to see if the rug or furniture were "infected" with the spreading fungus. It has not.

Because of this situation and the potential health risks, the decision was made to close the library's upper level until the entire infestation could be eradicated.

Mold takes on many forms. Conditions must be exactly right for a bloom to occur. Factors that lead to this are temperature and humidity levels. Once the right mixture is in place, voila, a bloom takes place.

Because the upper and lower levels of the library are run by separate heating and air-conditioning units, and after testing was done for the lower level, access was deemed safe and all operations are being held there. The Writing Center, Stem Lab, Brandywine Learning and other tutoring services are still up and running and apparently quite smoothly. Although, an inconvenience for the moment, students seem to have adapted quite well.

Now that there has been a confirmation of the cause of the bloom, an outside contractor has been brought in to correct the A/C issues which will bring the humidity



The industrial steam cleaners were brought in to shampoo the carpets in the Vairo Library following the mold scare in late September. (photo by Robert Ripson)

levels back down below fifty percent. This is ideal for keeping books in tip top shape and of course to keep these conditions from occurring again. Once that has been accomplished, a team of expert mold eradicators will begin the arduous task of cleaning. This will be done in stages. One part of the library will be sealed off, and cleaned. Then, with care and determination, the next section will follow suit. This will be repeated as sections are decontaminated. Reasoning for cordoning off areas at a time, is so that any "spores" that get airborne stay in the area that is being treated and the need to complete this task can be accomplished just once.

Dateline: 20 October 2011. The Vairo Library is pleased to announce they are now fully open for business on both the upper and lower floors. The STEM Lab, Brandywine Learning, and the Writing Studio resumed normal services on Friday October 21 and everyone involved sends thanks to all campus staffers who did extra work to help keep us operational in emergency mode, and for their cooperation and patience as we worked through our problems the last few weeks.