

Homecoming bonfire, fireworks canceled due to drought

By JENNIFER BELLANTONIO
Collegian Staff Writer

The lack of rainfall this year not only affected crops, harvests and trees but the 1995 Homecoming Committee's plans as well. Although University students and area residents will still enjoy the music from Crazy Band and the King and Queen nominations on Wednesday, the bonfire and fireworks will not light the sky.

The bonfire, traditionally held the Wednesday of Homecoming week, was canceled due to drought restrictions placed on the state, said Remi Cohen, overall special events chairwoman. Because of rearrangements, the activities

Wednesday will be moved from the Beaver Stadium fields to the steps of Old Main, Cohen added.

John Hvizdash, coordinator of Centre County Emergency Management Agency, said the order to restrict water use came from Gov. Tom Ridge several weeks ago.

"There's no restriction on building the fire, but the restriction comes with the fire company using water," Hvizdash said.

Secretary of Centre County's EMA Cathy Shafranich said several restrictions have been placed on local fire company's daily routines.

"There is certain things (the state) has asked the fire company to stop doing, such as hold off on live fire training, flushing hoses

and pump testing. It takes a lot of water to put those activities out," Shafranich said.

As a result, Alpha Fire Company Chief Steve Triebold said the Homecoming Committee was notified last Monday that the bonfire could not take place.

"We felt the bonfire or anything that will potentially use unnecessary water should not be permitted," Triebold said. "The problem with fireworks is there is a potential of spot fires to occur in surrounding fields."

Although the change in plans occurred a week before the ceremonies, the cancellation did not come as a surprise to some.

"The Homecoming Committee

was notified well over a month ago of the possibility that if these mandates weren't lifted or relaxed there wasn't going to be a bonfire," Shafranich said.

Rick Funk, coordinator of Greek Life, said the committee was told when they first went to get permits for the bonfire.

"We gave it some thought but maybe not as much as we should have," Funk said. "That was the cards we got dealt, so we're dealing with it."

Although the bonfire and fireworks display may cause some disappointment, the committee is working to build enthusiasm.

"The whole event is to promote PSU spirit, unity and enthusiasm,

and although we won't have the bonfire, we're trying to find other ways to get people excited about homecoming," Cohen said.

Bryan Crowell (senior-environmental resource management) is not worried about losing spirit.

"It doesn't really bother me," Crowell said. "I think the same number of people will show up."

And George Bard (junior-agricultural engineering) said he was looking forward to the event regardless of the bonfire or fireworks display.

"I don't think it will affect the campus at all. There is just so many other different activities going on," Bard said. "The parade seems to be most important."

To deal with the change in plans, Overall Parade Chairwomen Jennifer Wright said the committee centralized the night's activities on the steps of Old Main and is trying to add a pep rally involving the cheerleaders, Blue Band and others.

"It was an unfortunate circumstance, but it turned into a positive event," Wright said. "We're going to do a pep rally, and it's going to end up attracting more people."

Greg Rogalski, special events committee member, agreed with Wright's optimism.

"We're hoping that by moving it to that location more people will attend and the spirit will still be there," he said.

Summit about black male empowerment held on campus in wake of march

By PEI H. SHEN
Collegian Staff Writer

In the wake of the Million Man March, the first African-American Male Student Empowerment Summit was held Saturday at the Paul Robeson Cultural Center to raise consciousness about the current problems facing black men. The event, sponsored by Omega Psi Phi fraternity, specifically focused attention on black male undergraduates at University Park and the Commonwealth Campuses.

"At the University, African-American males have the lowest retention rate," said Leon Caldwell, summit organizer. "This summit addresses this issue and serves to empower African-American males to become more active and participate in the community."

About 55 undergraduates, graduates, faculty and administrators participated in the summit. Although the undergraduate turnout was not as large, Caldwell said the event was a success.

"Out of it, people came up with other ideas to keep this process ongoing," he said. "I left the summit thinking that there is more to be done and other organizations are willing to help."

From these discussions, the groups came up with ideas for community action programs including prison and youth outreach, Caldwell said.

Another goal of the summit was to facilitate communication across generations. Through small group discussions, the summit encouraged and fostered cross-generational talk between black male students and black administrators and faculty at

University Park and the Commonwealth Campuses.

"It is our intention that we break down the superficial barrier of the generation gap by providing an environment for us to not just talk, but to talk and be heard about each others' experiences," Caldwell said.

In addition, the summit gave faculty an opportunity to provide mentoring and support to a younger generation.

"We are trying to establish a mentoring relationship between older African American males and younger African-American males to help them negotiate a system like Penn State," said James Stewart, vice provost for educational equity. "So after they finish their college careers, they have access to a support system that allows them to benefit from some of the experiences that the older males have had."

For students, the exchange allowed them to get to know faculty, administrators and students from other campuses.

"It's a good opportunity for African-American males to network and discuss some of the things affecting our community," said Ivory Toldson (graduate-counselor education).

After icebreakers and lunch, students and faculty formed small groups to discuss issues important to black men's survival and progression.

"During the discussions, we talked in-depth about each empowerment and the things we need to do as black men to help ourselves and our communities," said Jibri Bond (sophomore-marketing). "I gained a better view of the thoughts and perspectives about self-empowerment, political empowerment and spiritual

empowerment from the bright men here on campus."

The summit also fostered a sense of community among those who attended.

"We gained a sense of togetherness by bringing our people together to teach one another what we should be doing," said Baron Lane (sophomore-athletic training).

Finding solutions was another collective effort at this event.

"Getting people focused on collective solutions to problems is a great beginning and that certainly happened at the conference," said Lawrence Young, director of the Paul Robeson Cultural Center.

For members of the faculty, the summit renewed their faith in the next generation.

"To see young men saying that we are part of the solution was very encouraging," Young said.

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