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OUR OPINION

Professors as parents will look to university to provide childcare

With new classrooms and construction seemingly the hallmark of the last four years at Penn State, it seems curious that the university is tearing down one of its most valuable buildings.

Recently, the administration opted to demolish the Child Development Laboratory (CDL), which appears to leave professors and other employees without a viable source of daycare for their children.

Yet, as new business, chemistry, life sciences and IST buildings pop up around campus almost by the dozens, the College of Health and Human Development is working to renovate South Henderson building, in which the CDL is currently located, to make room for new classrooms of its own.

And that decision will, most likely, leave no reliable source of daycare for professors and employees, some of whom already have children on the 600-person-long waiting list.

Currently, Penn State is anticipating the results of a survey about the decision to demolish the building, which was distributed to parents Jan. 10 to 22 and is to be released on March 24. While it is admirable that the administration is attempting to gauge the usefulness of a childcare facility before haphazardly constructing it, the need is clearly evident.

As the waiting list grows to 600 children and Penn State continues to espouse its desire for students to gain real-world experience, there seems to be a perfect marriage of two interests. Let the thousands of undergraduates hoping to work in family services, childcare and elementary education assist the professional staff at the daycare.

And in trying to attract qualified young professors, childcare would also be a key drawing card because it would alleviate one key concern of those beginning a family. That would further accomplish Penn State's goal of providing a classroom environment comparable with that of the nation's private schools because it would couple the state-of-the-art classrooms with the nation's best faculty.

But it hardly makes sense, it seems, to invest \$60 million in a law school whose future, currently, is shaky at best and leave the current faculty without childcare options.

And though we do agree with and applaud the university for trying to establish something that is more than just a storage unit for children, Penn State should at least commit to building a facility to alleviate the concerns of its employees.

There appears to be ample initiative for construction here, of which the last four years and many brand-new buildings are examples. Just don't leave the parents out in the cold.

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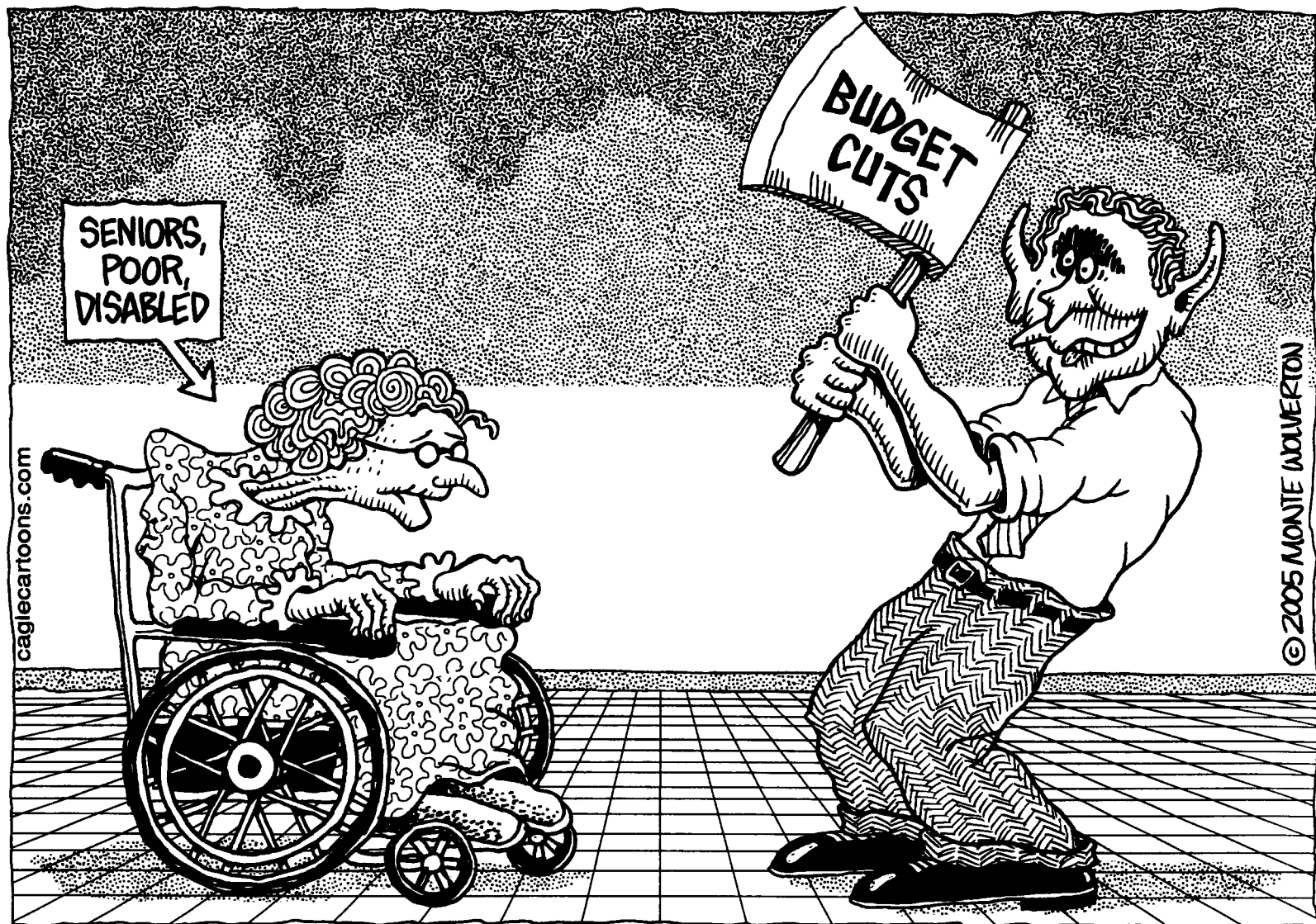
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The Daily Collegian
James Building
123 S. Burrows St.
University Park, PA 16801-3882

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OPINION



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Vegetative state not same as being dead

In her letter, Natalie Bonsell, a woman born with Spina Bifida, proclaims that she would rather die than live in Terri Schiavo's condition ("Living as 'vegetable' not truly state of life," March 14).

In speaking about Terri, Natalie makes her own arbitrary decision as to what makes a life worth living by claiming that "those who are in a vegetative state aren't the same [as her]," and that, rather than grieve over Ms. Schiavo (news flash: Terri's not dead yet!), we should "fight for those who still have a chance to live."

First of all, it has been well documented that Terri is able to respond purposefully with her environment, including reacting to the voices of her family members; don't believe the myth that Terri is a "vegetable."

Second, Natalie, of all people, should sympathize with someone who suffers with a disability; however, her letter demonstrates, rather cruelly, her belief that Terri Schiavo should be starved to death because Terri's standard of living is different from her own.

Natalie, what if your parents had decided when you were young to save you the trouble of living with Spina Bifida by speeding up your "death process"?

Ryan Stingle
senior-philosophy

U-WIRE COLUMN

U2 rocker Bono should lead World Bank

By Jeff Danna

DO YOU KNOW who James Wolfensohn is?

I didn't think so. How about Bono? That's what I thought. Paul "Bono" Hewson, the 44-year-old singer for Irish rockers U2, is one of the most recognizable celebrities of the past 20 years.

Wolfensohn, on the other hand, is the 71-year-old president of the World Bank, the U.N. agency dedicated to improving living conditions in developing countries — definitely not international celebrity material. In June, Wolfensohn's term is up, which will leave the position of World Bank president open.

Thankfully, the Los Angeles Times has recommended a replacement — Bono. In a Feb. 25 editorial, the Times cited the singer's recent Nobel Peace Prize nomination and history of addressing poverty, trade and AIDS in Africa as his qualifications to hold the prestigious position. The Times' editorial might seem like an absurd suggestion given the trend of celebrities running for public office in recent years, but perhaps the editorial staff has a valid point about the blandness of today's political landscape. Take a look at Wolfensohn's credentials: He's an international investment banker with a background in social and environ-

mental issues who has visited more than 120 countries. Bono is the voice behind hits like "I Will Follow," "With or Without You" and "Even Better Than the Real Thing," who has toured impoverished regions of Africa and co-founded the organization Debt, AIDS and Trade in Africa.

What Bono lacks in economic and political education, he makes up for with charisma and zeal, qualities sorely lacking in today's most powerful leaders.

We all followed the November election, and we all saw that neither candidate possessed a very well-defined sense of contemporary culture. On the other hand, Bill Clinton had the right idea: Stay positive, play the saxophone and, last but not least, possess the knowledge of social and economic issues necessary to ... well ... be the president. How many world leaders can say they've been on MTV and exercised such sound economic policies that they helped a country eliminate its deficit?

People don't want a stuffy politician or businessman making policy decisions when they can have a compelling personality with a firm belief system. After all, presidents and other leaders are the faces of government. They might have the final say in putting plans in place, but there's a line of educated, intelligent officials behind them. In Bono's case, the World

Bank's principal decision-making body would be a board of governors composed of one governor per member country.

Look at California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger. His policies might not be the most respectable or original, but to many, he's a good politician. He plays to his image as "The Governor" without shying away from hot topics like pension plans and education, no matter how much media or public scrutiny he receives. That's not to say all entertainers should try their hands at public policy, though.

But an educated entertainer could be an effective leader. Arguably, no celebrity is more conversant and knowledgeable about the plight of the people of developing nations than Bono, and it's hard to find a compelling reason to say he shouldn't be a candidate to head the World Bank.

In the song "One" from U2's 1991 masterpiece "Achtung Baby," Bono sings, "Love is a temple / Love the higher law / You ask me to enter / But then you make me crawl / And I can't be holding on to what you got / When all you got is hurt." That is the voice of a world leader-idealistic, confident and diplomatic. If only our current leaders could be so eloquent.

Jeff Danna writes for the Columbia Chronicle at Columbia College.

COLUMNIST

If you can't beat sports obsession, get on the lazy train

By Lane Weaver

I LOVE NCAA tournament time, or March madness, if you prefer. Forget Christmas, Spring Break and Arbor Day; to me, it's the real "most wonderful time of the year." Sixty-five teams Duke-ing it out for the right to appear in the final four and ultimately capture the national championship. Along this arduous path, former contenders are strewn, Cinderella's are made and legends are born.



MY OPINION

There's just something about the collegiate atmosphere and pageantry surrounding the event that appeals to me, and even though it was somewhat of a buzz-kill when Penn State wasn't offered an at-large bid this year (who knew that their 208 RPI would come back to haunt them?), the field is still tremendously exciting.

And this is a true national event, no one part of the country has geographical preference over another as in other championships: games are played from New Mexico to Massachusetts and everywhere in between.

Yes, soon the insanity will be here. In a few days, CBS will trans-

form itself into a veritable basketball command center, with wall-to-wall, sunrise-to-sunset, nightly-toothbrush to morning-OJ, George Bush-in-Iraq to George Bush-in-Iran coverage. It's very much like the night before November election day, only for a week straight.

However, unlike the outcome of an election, the outcome of the NCAA tournament is, its safe to say, fairly pointless. It has no bearing on our lives, and the only significance it holds is that which we attach to it.

And this is where my confusion asserts itself: I'm aware of the tournament's unimportance, but I watch it anyway. I'll spend entire days (in between classes) in front of the TV, looking for back-door passes and last-second buzzer-beaters.

Before the tournament even starts, I'll probably spend far too much time analyzing which 12-seed will beat a five-seed, thus ensuring my winning pool entry.

I guess my question is why do we watch sports at all? We as a nation are obsessed with athletic events and the statistics attached to them. I'm not criticizing, because as you can see from above, I'm complicit in this fanaticism. I mean, I can tell you the majority of the 1991 Atlanta Braves roster, including world series-MVP Terry Pendleton and not so noteworthy Otis Nixon — and I don't even like the Braves. I can list the depth chart three-deep for the

Penn State football team the past five years, including one of my favorite all-time players — Ricky Upton. And I can certainly tell you that Kenny Mayne was the greatest Sportscenter anchor ever. But I would classify this fandom as a personal and generalized one, because I don't really follow many teams anymore and the ones that I do I'm not vocal about.

This is in stark contrast to most NFL fans. State College is awash with these people — mostly Eagles and Steelers fans — who find it necessary to incessantly scream chants every night outside my window. In fact, I'm sure that for some reason I'll be hearing them during the tournament. I bet Donovan really appreciates you.

These fans identify with an artificial grouping of athletes (hardly any of the players nowadays actually hail from the city they represent) so strongly that they actually go into depression if their team loses. In fact, I'm thinking of opening up a sports psychology office, not to help players cope with the crushing disappointment of defeat, but to console these fans. Tapping into this unrealized market might even allow me to accrue enough money to be featured on that episode of Family Guy with Bill Gates and Ted Turner.

But depression is the least serious result of sports. Worse yet are the fights that begin over arguments regarding sports. In some parts of the world, rivalries can

even become deadly, as hard-core soccer fans can attest to.

So back to the question, why do we watch sports? It seems to be doing us more harm than good. Even at its best, it just seems to be a waste of knowledge and time. With all the useless sports trivia I have stored in my head I could probably have memorized MacBeth and Gray's Anatomy, and still have enough space left over for a few chapters of the phonebook.

So perhaps it's time for me to stop being wrathful in March. Maybe I could use the time saved from watching the tournament more constructively.

I could read, study, tie some flies for my fly-fishing class, watch some hockey (sike) or maybe even play a little basketball myself. Because no matter how cool it is to see someone my age have a monster jam, its much cooler when I do it (ok, so I can't dunk, but I do have a mean lay up).

The thing is, I can rationalize like this all I want in this brief respite between conference and national tournaments.

But when tip-off happens in a little more than 24 hours, I'll just throw all this rationalization out the window. So maybe I'll try to break free from the tournament's grasp ... next year.

Lane Weaver is a senior majoring in chemistry and biochemistry and molecular biology and is a Collegian columnist. His e-mail is lfw140@psu.edu.