

Mayor, author promotes book in State College

By Ricky Morales
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Not every small-town mayor gets a chance to pose with Justin Timberlake, but then again, David Bentkowski isn't every small-town mayor.

The youngest mayor in Ohio — elected for office in Seven Hills at the age of 31 — Bentkowski has shaken hands with the likes of Gwen Stefani, Kevin Costner and Wesley Snipes, all for the purpose of publicizing his hometown.

Now he's touring around the country to promote his book, "The Power of the Proclamation," which chronicles his meetings with more than 100 celebrities whom he has given "proclamations," or documents acknowledging their contributions to society.

Mayoral proclamations are typically filled with "a bunch of nice words" and compliments, Bentkowski said.

"You'd think I was giving them gold, they're so excited, but it's really just a piece of paper," he said.

Bentkowski's stop in State College on Tuesday was one of several before his scheduled appearances in Philadelphia and New York City, where he will talk about his book, released Nov. 4. He met with local media while he was on town for the book promotion.

Among his more interesting encounters was one with Flea, the bassist for the Red Hot Chili Peppers. Before meeting him, Bentkowski was instructed to wait for Flea in a hallway. He waited while the bassist, dressed in only a towel, paced in his dressing room.

"It's like we weren't even there," he said. "He just kept walking back and forth naked." Another was with Norwegian metal band Dimmu Borgir, who accepted his proclamation on behalf of Ozzy Osbourne. Despite the band members' dark appearance — they typically wear black clothes and have body piercings and tattoos — he said they turned out to be nice people.

Several years later, the Osbournes sold many of their belongings to raise money for charity. Bentkowski's proclamation was among the items sold. The piece of paper sold for \$375.

But the benefits go beyond the dollar signs. He uses the photos to get kids excited about government when he gives lectures, and he uses the proclamations to gain publicity for his city.

"Usually a city is only in the paper if it's negative," he said. But because of his proclamations, some of the smaller celebrities have offered to play at local events. Bentkowski acknowledged the absurdity of his celebrity

meetings, calling them a gimmick. "There wouldn't be a paper in the country who would want to speak with me or profile Seven Hills if I hadn't done this," he said.

But, as a younger man, he said this is just part of his new approach to politics.

Chris Matthews, executive mayoral assistant and senior citizen coordinator for Seven Hills, said the publicity has done the city good. Bentkowski is a young person at heart, he said, mentioning that the mayor still plays softball with the guys and visits "hot spots" around town.

"He thinks like he's 21, as far as his outlook on life goes," Matthews said.

State College's mayor-elect Elizabeth Goreham thinks Bentkowski's proclamations are a great idea, although she hasn't thought to use them as he has.

"We do that in State College, but generally it's for local activities and celebrating the achievements of our local citizens," she said.

She doesn't know what Bentkowski is trying to promote in Seven Hills — each town and celebrity is different. But she doesn't rule out using proclamations in State College.

"If it's successful, then maybe we'll try it," she said.



Courtesy of David Bentkowski

David Bentkowski, a mayor from Ohio, poses with Justin Timberlake; one of the many he has given a proclamation to. A proclamation is a document acknowledging a person's contributions to society. Bentkowski was in State College to promote his book "Power of the Proclamation."

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By Jacqueline Bigar

HAPPY BIRTHDAY for Wednesday, Nov. 18, 2009

This year, a unique resourcefulness bubbles up. Learning to tap into it could be more important than you realize. Learn to let go of the tried-and-true more easily. Apparently you are evolving into such a commanding figure that others feel the need to express their independence. Be flattered. If you are single, you draw some unusual types to you... states who might be very exciting but not necessarily stable. The end result could be some heartache, until you find the right person, who you will see many ups and downs with.

The Stars Show the Kind of Day You'll Have: 5-Dynamic, 4-Positive, 3-Average, 2-Soso, 1-Difficult

ARIES (March 21-April 19) ***** You might need to adjust to a perception, or else you could be shocked. If you take the high road, you'll discover a new basis of understanding and growth. Opportunities revolve around a meeting with a key friend. Tonight: Where there is music.

Taurus (April 20-May 20) ***** Deal with others directly. You could be uncomfortable with what is coming down your path. You might want to rewrite an interaction with a realistic friend or an unexpected development. Continue to relate closely to a friend. Tonight: Work as a team.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20) ***** Defer, defer and defer one more time. You could be startled by someone you look up to, as this person waves a new path or heads in a new direction. News from a distance invigorates your imagination. Do you know

***** Deal directly with one person. You know what is happening, and you probably have a strong set of expectations as well. Plans could change because of news. Your flexibility is tested to the max. Relate directly to a key friend. Tonight: Go to the gym!

LEO (July 23-Aug 22) ***** Your fire and get-up-and-go can inspire many to rethink a situation. However, a partner will surprise you for better or for worse... with his or her reaction. Express your imagination with drama, and someone will respond accordingly. You have a way of inspiring a partner emotionally. Tonight: Talk about dreams, desires and secrets!

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept 22) ***** Have you been toying with the idea of a home office or perhaps another type of business that would permit you to work from home more often?

LIBRA (Sept 23-Oct 22) ***** Your words leave an impression on someone. You could be surprised by what comes up out of the blue if you remain open. New technology could be filtering into the most old-fashioned offices. Share your imaginative ideas more often. Your confidence grows as you get strong feedback. Tonight: Swap news with friends.

SCORPIO (Oct 23-Nov 21) ***** Be more aware of your finances, especially right now. An aura of deceptions could easily filter into that side of your life. You will land on your feet, but at what cost? Emotional risks also need weighing. You often are taciturn and

***** Take advantage of all the good vibes right now. You'll head in a new direction if you can jump over an anticipated hurdle. Keep communication moving by returning your calls and scheduling meetings. Your imagination will take over if you aren't careful. Try to stay reality based. Tonight: Out and about.

CAPRICORN (Dec 22-Jan 19) ***** Know when to cut back and decide that enough is enough. You could be in a strange mood dealing with a friend, sibling or neighbor. Ask yourself what you need to do to make this relationship easier. You want to open up to new possibilities with finances. What looks good might not be. Tonight: Get some much needed R and R.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb 18) ***** Zero in on what you want. Are you questioning a decision you made recently? Until you see how the situation plays out, you might not know what will happen. A meeting could prove to be instrumental in your choices. Weigh various ideas. Tonight: Whatever knocks your socks off.

PISCES (Feb 19-March 20) ***** Sometimes others can question you to the point that you want to go in another direction. Your instincts are right-on. Recognize your multiple options and think in terms of new beginnings. Your inner thoughts don't seem to correlate with your actions. Stop if this is the case. Tonight: A must appearance.

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