

# OPINION

THE DAILY  
Collegian

Elizabeth Murphy  
Editor in Chief

Kelsey Thompson  
Business Manager

About the Collegian: The Daily Collegian and The Weekly Collegian are published by Collegian Inc., an independent, nonprofit corporation with a board of directors composed of students, faculty and professionals. Pennsylvania State University students write and edit both papers and solicit advertising for them. During the fall and spring semesters as well as the second six-week summer session, The Daily Collegian publishes Monday through Friday. Issues are distributed by mail to other Penn State campuses and subscribers. **Complaints:** News and editorial complaints should be presented to the editor. Business and advertising complaints should be presented to the business manager.

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## Letters

We want to hear your comments on our coverage, editorial decisions and the Penn State community.

■ E-mail  
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■ Online  
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■ Postal mail/in person  
123 S. Burrows St.  
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Letters should be about 200 words. Student letters should include class year, major and campus. Letters from alumni should include year of graduation. All writers should provide their address and phone number for verification. Letters should be signed by no more than two people. Members of organizations must include their titles if the topic they write about is connected with the aim of their groups. The Collegian reserves the right to edit letters. The Collegian cannot guarantee publication of all letters it receives. Letters chosen also run on The Daily Collegian Online and may be selected for publication in The Weekly Collegian. All letters become property of Collegian Inc.

## EDITORIAL: IRAQ WAR

# Think twice when leaving Iraq

United States military commanders do not foresee any need to resume combat operations in Iraq. Unless there is a complete breakdown of Iraqi security forces, 50,000 troops are expected to leave by the end of next year.

But military leaders warn there is a rocky road ahead and if the Iraqis ask that U.S. troops remain in the country past 2011, that the request will be considered by the president.

President Barack Obama needs to proceed with caution in his address to the country on Aug. 29 about these details. Pulling out of combat is a good start, but this war is still far from over.

Giving Iraqis a choice for U.S. military occupation after 2011 is a good decision and reflects well on America's reputation.

But if something happens to necessitate our return, we could be right back where we started.

Despite the waning military involvement, there is still a lot of work to that needs to be done for Iraqi civilians.

Charities should not see this as an end to the need for help, for there are still plenty of citizens of this war-torn nation who live without basic resources.

Whatever the initial opinion on the war, its end is a momentous occasion, and we offer gratitude to all those veterans who served in its seven-year duration.



## EDITOR'S COLUMN

# Guest columns on Fridays give the pen to you

By Elizabeth Murphy

It's your turn now. The Daily Collegian's Friday opinion page is renting real estate out to you. There are plenty of things to sound off on in our community, so we thought we'd turn the pen over to you one day a week on our opinions page.



MY OPINION

Today, Interfraternity Council President Max Wendkos kicks off our new Friday feature.

Check out what he's got to say about competition within THON in his own words below.

Who knows, maybe next week it will be you.

If you've just got to get something off your chest, shoot us an e-mail at [guestfriday@psu.collegian.com](mailto:guestfriday@psu.collegian.com) with your name, title (if applicable) and description of your column idea.

This page is as much yours as it is ours. Whether you're the student body president or a freshman still figuring out what "DUS" stands for, we want to hear from you.

We don't really care if you've got a big fancy title — we want columns with a clear voice and opinion.

We aren't drawing the line at just students, though. Penn State staff and members, State College residents, community leaders: Take this as your call to action.

Maybe the latest borough council ordinance really ticks you off. Maybe you have the solution to the Penn State quarterback question.

And maybe, just maybe, your words can get the state legislature to pass a budget on time.

As the Penn State student newspaper, it's our belief that the pen is mightier. The words on this page — your words — have power.

Embrace it and show us what you've got.

Elizabeth Murphy is a senior majoring in journalism and women's studies and the Collegian's Editor in Chief. Her email is [editorinchief@psu.collegian.com](mailto:editorinchief@psu.collegian.com)

## Mosque will never bridge gap between religious differences

First and foremost, no one is disputing the legal right of the people behind the Park51 (Cordoba House) project at Ground Zero to build their building. It is simply an issue of ethics and common sense. The idea that this project will lead to better relations or "bridge-building" between Muslims and non-Muslims, as has been stated, is somewhat laughable considering how much unrest it has caused before ground has even been broken for it.

I will give credit to the project's planners for scrapping the original plan of opening the facility on Sept. 11, 2011, which was just a terrible idea. However, the project still reeks of deliberately intended controversy and a very poor way to actually improve relations between, well, just about anyone. Disregarding everyone who opposes this as an "Islamophobe" is an inaccurate and despicable, yet sadly, it is an all too common unintellectual kneejerk response that needs to end. Whether or not Park51 ever gets built, its negative "legacy" is secure.

David Carr  
junior-economics  
Young Americans for Freedom Vice Chairman

# Competition in THON adds to total and cause

By Max Wendkos

**D**ISCLAIMER: I love THON. During my time at Penn State, I have served as a THON Chairman for my fraternity, raised thousands of dollars for the cause, spent hours with our Four Diamonds Family and I have danced.

I have also lost both friends and family to cancer and have received meaningful emotional support through THON. As such, I fully support THON's goal of keeping the philanthropy's primary focus on conquering pediatric cancer.

That's how it should be. However, I believe that the Overall Committee's goal of decreasing the amount of competition and the manner in which the decision was made is concerning.

It has become almost taboo on Penn State's campus to question THON. Understandably, very few people are comfortable questioning a philanthropy that has done so much good for such a worthwhile cause. However, we enter dangerous territory when we allow an entity to achieve a status so high that its actions are above reproach, for the ability to critique and question everything has formed the foundation for progress across all spectrums throughout history.

With that said, I do wonder whether the THON Overall Committee made the correct decision when they decided to no longer release the fundraising totals of individual organizations beyond the top five organizations in four different categories. According to THON Overall Chairwoman Kirsten Kelly, the reasoning behind the decision was "to take focus away from competing with each other." The THON Overall

Committee insists that the presence of competition between participating organizations negatively detracts from the focus on the kids.

This is where we start to disagree. I cannot possibly accept that competition negatively detracts from our focus on the kids when that very competition undoubtedly drives so much of the money that we raise for them. Not to say that competition drives all, most or even half of the money that is raised for the kids, but we would be foolish to pretend that its presence doesn't help.

Consider this: without competition, Apple would not have introduced the iPod, Microsoft would not have developed Windows and Google most likely would not exist. In any arena, competition fuels creative thinking, innovation, hard work, and, ultimately, more positive results. This has been proven time and time again in a variety of organizational psychology studies and in real practice. The members of the THON Overall Committee are some of our campus' brightest leaders, so I think it is safe to assume that they are aware of this.

But if they are, why would they knowingly make a decision that potentially jeopardizes the amount of money that we are able to donate to the Four Diamonds Fund? Why would they risk the very money that funds the cancer treatments, the gas bills, the meal tickets and practically every other form of aid offered to the Four Diamonds children and their families? Call me crazy, but it sure seems like THON leaders have chosen to fight for the innocence of THON's image over the money that helps the children and their families to survive the nightmare that they face.

I do not mean to suggest that THON's highest leaders are doing this intentionally — of course they're not. However, considering that even the foremost experts in a field are prone to making mistakes, I would say that a group of students in

their young 20s with only three to four years of experience definitely are as well.

So THON supporters like myself should voice our concerns.

We should let the THON Overall Committee know that we do not support a decision that will jeopardize a chemotherapy session, a blood transfusion or maybe even a life.

Unfortunately, THON's organizational structure currently has no checks and balances. There is no mechanism to hold the Overall Committee accountable for its decisions. In essence, THON's governing structure is an oligarchy with the 15-person Overall Committee holding all of the power. What this means is that none of THON's passionate and hard-working volunteers have any say in the decisions that are made. We may be rolling now, but this power structure is not a safe formula for long-term success.

On a large scale, I believe that THON must shift to a more democratic structure in order to prevent future reckless decisions concerning the philanthropy.

The Overall Committee must find some way to give a voice to the volunteers that they are so thankful for, or at least to its elected leaders. And regarding its most recent decisions, the Overall Committee must reconsider its stance on the role of competition within THON.

It is not easy to publicly acknowledge a mistake, especially this early on, but if THON's leaders truly care about the kids and the interests of the students they represent, they will do what is right and reinstate the honorable and noble competition to see which organizations can do the most FTK.

Max Wendkos is a senior majoring in marketing and psychology and is the Interfraternity Council President. He is a Collegian guest columnist and his email is [maw5053@psu.edu](mailto:maw5053@psu.edu)