

Speakers address homeless struggles

By Sarah Peters
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

When Eric Sheptock was eight months old, his parents beat him and left him to die in a hotel room.

After spending time in the foster care system, he was taken in by the Sheptock family and grew up as their fourth adopted child of ten children. Growing up, Sheptock lived in a mansion in Chester, N.J., and in two homes in Florida with pools and acreage.

But he became homeless as a young adult when he had a falling out with his boss and walked off the job.

Sheptock is currently living in a homeless shelter in Washington, D.C. He's a blogger and political activist.

Last night, Sheptock, John Harrison, Jr. and Michael Stoops brought the issue of homelessness to the forefront of the minds of attendees at the Memorial Lounge of the Pasquerilla Spiritual Center.

John Harrison, Jr. has been in and out of homelessness since he was laid off from a successful company in Maryland that he worked at shortly after graduating high school. After he lost his job, his house burned down. His neighbors let him live in their shed for a little while before he



Peter Tesoriero/Collegian

John Harrison, Jr. speaks about the challenges of being homeless.

began living in his car. When his car broke down and was towed, he became homeless for the first time.

"When I turned homeless, it seemed like I turned invisible, too," Harrison said.

Stoops, cofounder and community organizer for the National Coalition for the Homeless, said he feels good that he's stuck with the issue for so long but feels that the system has failed, considering homelessness is still an issue in 2010.

Stefan Richter (junior-accounting) said he's planning to participate in an Urban Service Experience over Thanksgiving break. Richter said the message was worthwhile, and he wishes more people came to hear it.

"It's a good message that they had, and it was eye-opening," Richter said.

"Being at Penn State and the hometown I grew up in, I didn't come in contact with homelessness much."

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Redifer ATM set on fire

By Zach Geiger
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

An on-campus ATM was set on fire at about 5:35 a.m. Tuesday in what Penn State Police are calling a case of arson that resulted in more than \$5,000 worth of property damage.

The fire started early Tuesday morning inside of Redifer Commons near Louie's convenience store, located off of McKean Street, Penn State spokeswoman Annemarie Mountz said.

An unknown accelerant was thrown on to the machine and set ablaze, causing damage to the

PNC Bank ATM, she said.

No students were harmed in the fire, Mountz said.

But the ATM damaged in the blaze is lost beyond repair and a replacement machine will cost \$16,000, she said.

An automatic sprinkler in the area extinguished the fire within minutes.

But it left residual water damage in the surrounding area, Mountz said.

Water flowed into common areas in Redifer and Louie's store, but most of the damage occurred in storage rooms located below the lobby, she said.

Louie's was temporarily closed as a result of the cleanup process from the sprinkler system, South Food District Assistant Director Jim Richard said.

All other areas in Redifer opened on time and Louie's was opened later that day, Richard said.

Penn State Police are looking for witnesses who were in Redifer at the time of the fire or recently had an accelerant stolen.

Anyone with information about the arson is asked to call university police.

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Highlands housing discussed

By Nathan Pipenberg
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Vice President for Student Affairs Damon Sims said at Tuesday night's Highlands Civic Association Meeting that he's looking for creative solutions to residents' frustration over student housing and town-gown issues in the Highlands neighborhood.

Sims told association members that since increased sanctions and alcohol education have only had marginal success, he's been looking for better ideas.

"By the third drink students are not reflecting on the consequences," he said.

The Highlands, which stretches between University Drive and Atherton Street east to west, and is bordered north to south by

Beaver Avenue and Easterly Parkway, is a section of town where community members and students often live side by side.

Students make up 70 percent of the population in the Highlands, which includes Fraternity Row.

Tuesday night's meeting was a venue for community members to discuss how they could achieve peace and quiet, especially at night, when most of the criminal behavior occurs.

Residents acknowledged that so far, efforts to do so have been unsuccessful.

Sims was joined at the meeting by mayor Elizabeth Gorman, council president Ron Pappilli and council member Jim Rosenberger, all Highlands residents.

One fix Sims suggested was to convince students and Penn State

faculty to live closer to campus.

Rosenberger agreed, and added that there should be an effort to "tie a stronger string to students living off-campus."

Rosenberger also suggested forcing students who violate tenant agreements in apartments to forgo their leases and return to living on-campus.

But Sims said that increasing on-campus housing is "more complicated than it appears" since it would be a large expense for the university.

Sims, who has spoken out against a proposal to build a student apartment high-rise at 254 Beaver Ave. as a resident, not on behalf of the university, said the problem has "vexed" university officials.

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Athlete speaks to students about homophobia issues

By Matt Scorzafave
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

When Brian Sims came out to the quarterback of his Bloomsburg University football team in 2000, his friend had only one question for him.

"OK. Do you think I'm hot?" Sims - then the captain of the team - said the quarterback asked.

Sims, now a lawyer based in Philadelphia, spoke Tuesday night at the HUB Auditorium on being an openly gay athlete.

Penn State's LGBT Student Resource Center sponsored the event, titled "Homophobia in Sports."

Brian Patchcoski, the center's assistant director, said it is important for students to know that there is help available and resources to turn to.

"As a Division I school, we need to look at the many identities of the student body," he said. "A lot of students may be worried about coaches and teammates knowing that they are gay."

Patchcoski emphasized the

importance of self-identity, no matter what the circumstances.

"We want students to recognize that they don't have to sacrifice one identity for another. There are other LGBT athletes and no one is alone in this," he said.

Sims said that while he struggled with his identity quite a bit, it was a rewarding experience to come out to his team.

"I've received such awesome support," he said. "People don't always realize that 81 percent of college students support gay rights."

Sims stressed that straight allies are a key support system for gays.

Katy Wick (senior communications) and Mike El Saleh (junior marketing) both student representatives in the Student Athlete Advisory Board, said that they agree.

"This was really important for straight people to hear," El Saleh said.

Wick said she was happy to hear that Sims' teammates supported him.

"It's important to see how we

can be supportive of our fellow teammates," she said.

Along with speaking as a gay rights activist, Sims is also the president of the board of directors at EqualityPA.

EqualityPA is an organization that seeks to achieve equality for LGBT individuals in Pennsylvania through educational campaigns and policy reform.

He is a chairman with the board of directors of Gay and Lesbian Lawyers of Philadelphia.

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