Follow this and additional works at: http://irl.umsl.edu/current2010s

Recommended Citation
http://irl.umsl.edu/current2010s/217

This Newspaper is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Newspapers at IRL @ UMSL. It has been accepted for inclusion in Current (2010s) by an authorized administrator of IRL @ UMSL. For more information, please contact marvinh@umsl.edu.
### Holiday Guide • Winter 2015

#### Light Shows
- **War of Lights:** Statue of Our Lady of the Snows (November 20 through January 1, Monday through Thursday 5 to 9 p.m.) A free drive-through light display featuring more than 100,000 Christmas lights.
- **Winter Wonderland at Tilles Park:** November 25 through January 2 The park is filled with millions of lights with several holiday themes. This event is $10 for a car to drive through.
- **Carnival at the Missouri Botanical Garden:** November 21 through January 2, Wednesdays through Sundays Walk through the Missouri Botanical Garden at night through hundreds of thousands of lights. There is an admission fee for the event.
- **U.S. Bank Wild Lights at the Saint Louis Zoo:** December 9 through 13 16 through 23 26 through 30 and January 1 Through the 3 Walk through the Saint Louis Zoo and visit your favorite exhibits decorated in festive lights. There is an admission fee for the event.
- **Santa’s Magical Kingdom at Yogurt Bear’s Jellystone Park:** November 13 through January 3 Drive through millions of lights and dozens of light displays in the park and shop in Kentucky’s backyard. There is a $20 per night fee.

#### Holiday Activities
- **Polar Express at Union Station:** All of December 1:30, 6:30, and 8:30 p.m. Board the 11-HR Polar Express to travel to the “North Pole” to see Santa and receive a keepsake present for each child. Passengers are encouraged to wear PJ’s on the ride to relive the famous book and movie’s feel.
- **Magical Dinner and Light Show at Union Station:** All of December 5, 6:30, and 8:30 p.m. Enjoy a festive dinner and a special panoramic light show.
- **Steinberg Skating Rink at Forest Park:** November 1 through February 5 Enjoy the largest outdoor ice skating rink in the Midwest.
- **Shaw Park Ice Rink:** December 2 to TBD Skate with the sights of downtown Clayton and the beautiful Shaw Park ice rink.
- **St. Louis Symphony/Macy’s Holiday Celebration at Powell Hall:** December 1 through 20 Enjoy the music of timeless classics like “White Christmas,” “Winter Wonderland,” “Most Wonderful Time of the Year,” and selections from the beloved film The Polar Express.
- **The Point’s Halo Show at the Peabody Opera House:** December 5 and 17 Enjoy live performances from bands for the holidays. The first night is Wecentric with special guest Wives; the second night is Of Monsters and Men.

#### UMSL Events
- **UMSL Dance Winter Dance Concert at the Blanchette M. Touhill Performing Arts Center:** December 17 through 23 Enjoy the dancing of the St. Louis Ballet in this holiday classic story. The event is sponsored by Emerson.
- **Sugar Plum Fairy Luncheon at the Blanchette M. Touhill Performing Arts Center:** December 17 through 23 This is the popular tradition of having lunch with the Sugar Plum Fairy before the Nutcracker performances and having photo opportunities with popular dancers before the show. Tickets are separate from the Nutcracker tickets.

- **Ambassadors of Harmony at the Blanchette M. Touhill Performing Arts Center:** December 11 through 15 Sounds of the Season concert filled with holiday favorites by the 160 man chorus, directed by Justin Henry and Jonas Moroni.
- **PJs and Pancakes at the Provincial House Dining Hall:** December 13 at 10:30 p.m. Enjoy breakfast and entertainment before finals.
GAME CORNER

The UMSL MATH CLUB Presents:
Problem of the Week

Submit your solution to the problem below by Friday, December 11. Solvers will be eligible for our pi day drawing in March. Submit solutions to R. Dotzel 329 ESH (dotzelr@umsl.edu)

Old Mr. Flanagan
Tried this problem every now and then
But he could not succeed
In his scholarly deed
So Flanagan went back to school again.

Problem: The square of one whole number minus the square of another whole number is 997. What are the two numbers?

Thanks for making Fibonacci Day a success. We wish you all well on your finals.

Difficulty: [your name here]
Robots Take Over What’s Current Wednesday

LORI DRESNER
NEWS EDITOR

Two robots were the highlight of the last What’s Current Wednesday (WCW) discussion of the semester on December 2. A full room of students gathered in Century Room C of the Millennium Student Center to partake in the conversation about sophisticated machines, their impact on humans, and what they mean for the future. Keith Miller, Orthwein endowed professor for lifelong learning in the sciences, who is also a computer scientist, led the discussion.

“When I say sophisticated machines, I include robots, but I also am talking about Webbots. I’m talking about Siri, iPhones…I’m talking about any kind of machine that interacts with us in a way that I [don’t] want to say is equal to or identical to human intelligence, but certainly is starting to get more similar to the kinds of interactions upon graduation in December. He now sells Northwestern Mutual’s products to 10 people in seven weeks and was offered a full-time contract upon graduation in December. He now sells Northwestern Mutual’s products for retirement, disability, long-term care, and life and health insurance.

Fernau graduates in May. He was referred to the company by a fraternity brother in Pi Kappa Alpha. He started his internship in September. Fernau said, “I really enjoy working for this company. They are friendly and really make you feel a part of the team. I am a college financial representative performing the same duties as full time reps, just on a smaller scale with school in the mix. I sit down with people and help them reach their goals while also creating a plan to help them be financially secure. It is great real world sales experience. There is a great feeling when a client tells you how happy they are that they met with you.” Northwestern Mutual pays a higher dividend than the top three competitors combined. Fernau said, “My goals for the future include entering a career in sales and maybe open up my own business one day. Although this profession encompasses selling a product, service, and running your own business, I don’t know if it is for me. I am going to continue with it next semester and who knows, maybe a lot of success may change my mind.”

The idea behind the company is that people should have the ability to secure their family’s financial future. Out of this premise grew the Mutual Life Insurance Company of Wisconsin, which is now known as Northwestern Mutual, originally founded by John Johnston. Over the years this firm has expanded to meet many different financial needs. They help people plan their financial security so they can become more self-sufficient and less dependent on others in times of need, as well as able to build brighter futures for themselves.

Northwestern Mutual has A+ ratings by Moody’s, Fitch, and S&P and is a leader in the life and disability insurance industry. More than 4.3 million people put their trust in them. In 2014 they paid out approximately 3.4 billion in claims. As achieving financial security is becoming an increasingly complex issue, Northwestern Mutual is trying to find ways to make it easier for clients to create a lifetime of financial security.

Final SGA Meeting Focuses on Budget, Food Concerns

SARAH MYERS
STAFF WRITER

The last Student Government Association (SGA) meeting of the semester at the University of Missouri—St. Louis surprised some while aggravating others. It was the shortest meeting of the entire semester.

The SGA President Cameron Roark, senior, criminology, opened up the latest comments on the budget topic. “As you know,” Roark stated, “there is a $18 million problem which needs to be solved.” Roark reiterated that the miscalculation behind the budgeting issue was due to overestimating the total credit hour enrollment for this year. An anonymous student speculated that the enrollment projections did not take into account the current events like Ferguson affecting the future enrollment, which should have been accounted for to ensure an accurate prediction.

Roark made the room of repre-sentatives aware of future meetings scheduled by the university’s Budget and Planning Committee (BPC). The next meeting will be held on December 11 at 2:30 p.m. and is described as an open meeting where students and anyone interested can attend. “A lot will be revealed at this meeting that hasn’t been revealed in several months,” explained Roark. This is the first public meeting concerning the budget being held this semester. The location is to be announced. The Board of Curators will meet December 10 and 11 as well.

The Vice President report by Kris-tin Wynneegar, senior, communications, announced the recent progress the Food Service Advisory Committee made at their last meeting of the semester held December 3. “You should be seeing quinoa more often,” Wynneegar said to the room of student representatives. She also said there will be more to-go op-tions from the Nosh and other dining services on campus. There is a website at umsl.edu/go/YourDiningVoice for further suggestions, concerns, and questions on the matter.

Jessica Long-Pease, Director of Student Activities and the Campus Recreation, announced the Student Activity Budget Committee (SABC) is currently in the process of allocating for Fall 2016 semester bud-gets. Open budget requests will open on February 1, 2016 through 29 instead of January as it has been in the past. “Substantial changes will be happening to the budget process,” Long-Pease said, as she emphasized the mandatory factor for student organizations to attend the budget workshops.

The end of the meeting came as a surprise for the attendees this semester. “It was really short,” said Tavish Misra, junior, international business. “Maybe a newsletter or email would help.”

After the meeting, Roark offered further perspective on the budget issue, saying, “A lot of people really don’t know what’s going on.” An anonymous student speculated that the BPC lacked conservatism. An emphasis is to be placed on treating the university funds similarly to a business to carry out “the bottom line mentality that [UMSL] is,” the student stated. Manashey Ingram, junior, biology, said, “I think it’s good we have a budget in place”.

The next SGA meeting will be held on January 29, 2016.

UMSL Students Interning at Leading Finance Firm

MARY CHICKOS
STAFF WRITER

Northwestern Mutual financial services firm offered internships to two University of Missouri—St. Louis stu-dents: Brandon Giganti, marketing, and Zach Fernau, senior, market-ing. Northwestern Mutual is a leader in the financial services industry and their internship program was recently ranked number one in the financial services industry for a record 20th straight year.

Northwestern Mutual has one of the best financial services training programs in the country for college graduates. Giganti started his internship about three months ago at this firm. He was licensed in life insurance by this time. Giganti said, “Originally I went to Northwestern Mutual to start an account for myself and asked about opportunities with this company. I was referred to the hiring manager who saw some potential and they offered me a ten week internship.” He talked to people that he knew about their financial plans. He sold Northwestern Mutual’s products to 10 people in seven weeks and was offered a full-time contract upon graduation in December. He now sells Northwestern Mutual’s products

School of Fine & Performing Arts Director Named

LORI DRESNER
NEWS EDITOR

Provost Glen Cope has named James Richards the Founding Director of the new School of Fine and Performing Arts within the new College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) at the University of Missouri—St. Louis. He will also take on the responsibilities as an Associate Dean in CAS for arts and the human- ities. Richards is the current Interim Dean of the College of Fine Arts and Communication. The students, faculty, and staff of the new CAS were noti-fied of his appointment via email on December 4.
Math Club Celebrates Fibonacci Day

ZYRA DE LOS REYES
STAFF WRITER

The University of Missouri—St. Louis’ Math Club celebrated Fibonacci Day on December 3, by organizing an event in the Nosh of the Millennium Student Center from 12 p.m. to 2 p.m. At the event, students were able to learn about the Fibonacci sequence.

Associate Professor Dr. Ronald Dotzel, advisor of the Math Club, stated that Fibonacci Day is an annual holiday that honors one of the most influential mathematicians of the Middle Ages, Leonardo Bonacci, who introduced the Fibonacci sequence. The sequence came from a single puzzle about rabbit population. In his book, “Liber Abaci,” he posed this puzzle: “How many pairs of rabbits will be produced in a year beginning with a single pair, if in every month, each pair bears a new pair which becomes productive from the second month on?”

“If we start with one pair then at the end of the first month we still have just the one pair. At the end of the second month still we have just one pair. At the end of the third month there will be two pair, since the original pair has become fertile. At the end of the fourth month there will be three pair since the original pair produces yet another pair, and so on. Fibonacci sequence: a series of numbers where a number is found by adding up the two numbers before it. Beginning with 0 and 1, the order is from 0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34 and it goes on to infinity. There is even a scholarly journal which is dedicated to the many mathematical properties of the Fibonacci numbers, called the ‘Fibonacci Quarterly.’ Even Wall Street has caught on. Fibonacci trading is an options trading strategy which utilizes properties of the Fibonacci sequence and the golden ratio. Anyway, his work and reputation works very nicely to foster math awareness and careful thought. And of course, any excuse for a party,” Dotzel said.

Math Club president Ian Edwards, junior, computer science, Susan Novak, graduate, mathematics, and secretary Matt Battles, graduate, mathematics, organized this event with the help of Dotzel. The Math Club sponsored mathematical entertainment including Sudoku, cipher puzzles, art contests, poetry and the popular “guess the number of M&M’s in a jar” challenge. Some of the announced winners were Ryan Bao, graduate, business administration; Hilmo Malkic, freshman, biology; Billy Gardner, junior, mathematics; Novak; Alex Braun, sophomore, information systems. The prizes were Amazon gift certificates, T-shirts and the M&M’s jar for the person who guessed the closest number.

“Fibonacci numbers are something you come across basically every day. The sequence and its ratios appear in nature and in many forms of life. Examples of this pattern can be found in the seeds of a sunflower, systems of the human body and even galaxies in space. Finally being able to see the product of all the hard work and planning that we did for Fibonacci Day and knowing that it came together was truly an enlightening experience,” said Edwards.

Membership in the UMSL Math Club is open to all students on campus. For more information about their upcoming events or to join the Math Club, visit their TritonSync page or join their Facebook group.
‘Not Guns and Bullets, but Education’: Guest Lecturer Talks Hellenism, Education, and Democracy

NATHAN WATSON
OPINIONS EDITOR

For the third straight year, the Department of Greek Studies at the University of Missouri—St. Louis hosted a lecture on December 2 to honor Dr. Diane Touliais, a distinguished professor emerita of music and one of the founders of the Greek Professorship at UMSL. Touliais has been instrumental in a number of high-profile efforts to bring cultural and academic opportunities to the Greek community in St. Louis.

"[Dr. Touliais] has given her life to this university and to Greek Studies," said Dr. Michael Cosmopoulos, Endowed Chair of Greek Studies, in his introduction to the lecture.

The lecture, which began at 7:30 p.m. in Century Room A of the Millenium Student Center, was titled "The Catalyst for Democracy: Hellenism and Hellenic Paideia" and featured Dr. Christos Tsokos, distinguished professor of mathematics and statistics at the University of Southern Florida.

Tsokos, who sees democracy as key to human flourishing, believes that a proper democracy can only exist in an educated society. "This is something I strongly believe because of my heritage as an educator," said Tsokos. "We should try to promote Hellenism, and Hellenic paideia, around the world and . . . not to force democracy in a country with our guns and bullets, but through education. This is very possible through the concept of the educational process," he said.

For Tsokos, this process is not founded on a set of lofty ideals but rigorous mathematical analysis of the correlation between education, democracy, and corruption. "If you tell me how democratic a country is, I can tell you, with at least 95% accuracy, how corrupt it is," said Tsokos before displaying the complex mathematical formulae by which he derives his certainty. Such statistical precision especially matters in today’s world, Tsokos argued: "We do live in a probabilistic society. Everything we do on a daily basis is related to probabilistic thinking."

Paideia refers to the concept and philosophy, science, and other disciplines that have shaped the Western intellectual tradition. Although a few universities still establish programs on these works, American academia has for the most part pursued the more financially lucrative path of preparing students for careers and neglecting their education as human beings.

Included among the audience members were UMSL students, some of whom recognized in their own education the shortcomings of which Tsokos spoke. James Bragado, senior, history, realized that much of the greatest works of the Western intellectual tradition—Plato, Aristotle, and Homer—to name a few—have been all but absent in his college education. "I thought it was really fascinating, even as I myself question how my education compares. It makes me wonder," said Bragado.

Many were even more discomforted by the widespread ignorance that permeates contemporary American culture. "It’s intriguing that ignorance of our government is so prevalent," said George Plakos, an attendee of the lecture. "The more people are educated the better our nation will be."

Whatever the possible shortcomings of today’s universities are, Tsokos wanted to make one thing clear: there are many in the University of Missouri system who have helped keep alive some of the most valuable academic resources. "It takes a good administrator to understand the importance of Greek studies at any university," said Tsokos, speaking specifically of Chancellor Thomas George, who was in attendance for the lecture. "Mr. Chancellor, we really appreciate you.”

OPEN DOORS WITH A DEGREE IN ANTHROPOLOGY

For information on UMSL’s BA in Anthropology, Minor in Anthropology, Archaeology Certificate, or Certificate in Greek Studies, please call 314-516-6020.

I am Patrili Hernandez. I graduated with a BA in Anthropology in 2012. Today I am using my degree to develop policies, promote food justice, and advocate for a hunger-free community while improving the nutrition, health, economic security, and well-being of low-income families in our nation’s capital. Upon graduating from UMSL with my BA in Anthropology, I completed a year of service as an AmeriCorps VISTA at Bay Area Food Bank in Alabama, where I embraced the opportunity to see feeding programs at work and became even more passionate about eradicating hunger in underserved communities. Then I became the Child Nutrition Program Associate at DC Hunger Solutions. Currently, I am pursuing a Masters in Science in Nutrition Education at American University and anticipates the completion of my degree in 2016. My background in anthropology gives me a unique understanding of food not only as nutrition, but also as a key part of culture and human connection.

My name is Jason N. Vasser and I earned a degree in anthropology in the spring of 2012. My field is cultural anthropology and my area of interest is African Diaspora Studies. I have an immense sense of pride and am an alumna. I have given time, resources, and energy to current students and the members of the Association of Student Anthropologists, of which I served as president. College days swiftly pass imbued with memories fond, and since graduating I have earned a Master of Fine Arts degree in creative writing. My work has appeared in Blast Furnace, The Sphinx, and Prairie Gold: An anthology of America’s Heartland, UMSL’s Bellerive and others. Currently, I teach English at Harris-Stowe State University, write poetry, and am committed to service within the community.
A retrospective exhibit showcasing the artwork and legacy of late University of Missouri-St. Louis alumna Leatrice Shank opened at Gallery Visio in the Millennium Student Center on December 2. The diverse and colorful collection is titled “The Mysterious Muses of Leatrice Shank” and displays paintings from primarily her later years. Shank took studio art classes at UMSL toward the end of her life; she passed away in 2013.

Shank’s daughter Stephanie and niece Leslie Bitman attended the exhibit’s reception on December 3. The two of them shared stories and reminisced about Shank’s life and artwork. Shank was particularly inspired by Max Beckmann and Philip Guston, according to Stephanie. She attended Washington University, where she pursued a fine arts degree with an emphasis in painting. She graduated in 1948.

“Being that this is my mother’s work from her later years, she was definitely a dedicated student when she went to Washington University, where Max Beckmann was artist-in-residence,” said Stephanie.

Shank took a long break from painting while raising her four children. In the last 15 years of her life, she began devoting a great deal of time to her hobby again.

“And being that she took a big break from work when realizing it’s the 1950s and women just didn’t get an opportunity like men did to get out there and express themselves and become professional … I’m not sure really what her goal would have been if she had the choice. I don’t feel like she really had the choice. But now the work you’re looking at today is her choice to get back to her work and express that passion I think she’s always had,” said Stephanie.

The colorful collection of Shank’s paintings in the exhibit entails a wide array of themes and symbols. She created nearly all of her works with oil on canvas. Family is a noticeable theme across her paintings. Many of them show significant life events of her family members, and weddings are a recurring theme in several of them. “Whimsical Wedding” and “Jumping the Broom” are two paintings that depict her youngest son and oldest son’s weddings. Despite the same themes, there is a stark contrast between them in style. “Whimsical Wedding” entails pastel colors and takes on a surreal and fantasy-like style with the bride and groom gliding through the air. On the other hand, “Jumping the Broom” encompasses more realistic scenery and natural colors, with the bride and groom partaking in the custom of jumping the broom during their wedding. It is possible that Shank preferred to paint events instead of taking photographs of them.

Some of Shank’s paintings are less straightforward and more abstract, containing thought-provoking elements and symbols. One piece, titled “Fleshly Abstract,” is possibly symbolic of Shank’s experience with cancer. Other pieces, such as her self-portrait with an accompanying monkey face, may symbolize her experience with getting older. Although some pieces are serious, the viewer will find some humor entwined into Shank’s works upon closer inspection.

From the realistic to the surreal, Shank’s paintings are a testament to the belief that it is never too late to pursue a passion. The “Mysterious Muses of Leatrice Shank” runs through January 20.
Nearly everyone likes year-end lists detailing the year’s best movies, music, and so forth. In keeping with the tradition, The Current brings its readers a list of the top five movies of 2015.

First, some caveats. Top five lists are always subjective. This is my top five—you might be different, since tastes vary. These are only five worthy films, so plenty of good movies did not make this brief list. Second, studios are still releasing some of the year’s biggest films, and many have not been screened for critics yet, including “Star Wars: The Force Awakens” (opening December 18). Third, to make the list more focused, it only includes narrative films in English that have already opened in St. Louis. Major films that will not make it here for review until later this month are: “The Big Short,” opening December 23, and “Youth,” opening December 18. Other outstanding 2015 films, such as documentaries and international films, are listed after the top five.

1. “Spotlight” (opened 11/6, domestic gross $13,365,804)
   This newsroom/investigative journalism drama, based on the Boston Globe’s Pulitzer-Prize winning investigation that uncovered the pedophile priest scandal, rivals the great film “All the President’s Men.” Starring Michael Keaton, Mark Ruffalo, Liev Schreiber, and Rachel McAdams, the film handles the subject of abuse with sensitivity. It shows how journalism is really done, along with the power of investigative journalism, in a gripping thriller of a drama.

2. “The Martian” (opened 10/2, domestic gross $219,047,062)
   This big special-effects science fiction movie finally gets the science mostly correct, the outlier being the force of Martian winds. Ridley Scott’s film is a highly-entertaining, edge-of-the-seat thriller filled with believable characters that know their science and like to joke around in the face of danger. A sci-fi movie destined to be in the genre’s top 10 for years, it stars Matt Damon, Jessica Chastain, and Jeff Daniels.

3. “Brooklyn” (opened 11/4, domestic gross $8,449,246)
   A young Irish woman’s move from her small village to Brooklyn in the 1950s is both an immigrant’s tale and a coming-of-age story for anyone and for any move away from home. Masterfully acted by Saoirse Ronan, beautifully photographed, and skillfully directed, the film works on several levels as it explores discovery of one’s own identity and how “home” is changed by the act of leaving.

4. “Straight Outta Compton” (opened 8/14, domestic gross $161,058,685)
   The origins of N.W.A. becomes a tale of hip-hop’s transformation of pop culture, the American Dream, and the power of unstoppable creative drive, told in a way that ties in that history with present-day events and the Black Lives Matter movement. The strong cast includes O’Shea Jackson Jr. as his father Ice Cube, E. Gary Gray as Greg Mack, and Jason Mitchell as Eazy-E.

5. “Ex-Machina” (opened 9/3, domestic gross $25,442,958)
   A different, chilling, intriguing tale of artificial intelligence that raises questions more from the likes of Mary Shelley’s “Frankenstein” than most AI films. The story starts when a reclusive millionaire tech genius (Oscar Isaac) invites a young programmer (Domhnall Gleeson) to test his new AI creation (Alicia Vikander). Writer/director Alex Garland (“28 Days Later”) touches on questions of power, exploitation, the nature of humanity, and how different species regard each other. It is also one scary thriller, with unforgettable performances by all three primary players.

Tritons Let Victory Slip Away, Fall to Miners 81-85

ALEX NEUPERT
SPORTS EDITOR

After winning the first three home games of the 2015 season, the University of Missouri—St. Louis men’s basketball team has dropped two in a row after their matchup against conference opponent Missouri Science & Technology (S&T) on December 5. The Great Valley Lakes Conference (GLVC) loss was the Tritons’ second; they lost to Drury University 51-60 on December 3.

The Tritons tried to come back from a 13-point deficit in the second half, and nearly succeeded with two back-to-back three-point conversions from Tre Ogles, senior, management and communications, and Brandon Marquardt, senior, business administration. The men proceeded to force a couple turnovers from the Miners before ultimately falling short at 81-85.

UMSL should not have needed to claw back at all, since they possessed a 17-point lead early in the game. The Tritons used their strong start to power themselves to a 26-9 advantage with 10 minutes on the clock before the Miners surged back. Guards Marquardt and Ogles did everything they could to carry the team to another home victory, with a career high 26 points for Marquardt. Ogles also added 18 points in only 14 minutes off the bench. The two also collectively made nine three-pointers, including a career-best six for Marquardt.

The strong showing was not enough however, as Missouri S&T worked their way back into the game. Missouri S&T had a .429 FG percent, shooting .588 percent from beyond the arc. UMSL was only able to muster .406 percent and .389 percent. Additionally, the Miners maintained great presence in the paint, out-rebounding the Tritons 43-35.

Despite letting the victory slip away, UMSL still has some bright marks in the early going of the season. For starters, winning the first three matches at home is a good indicator, and many of their players are getting involved with the scoring. The Tritons next game continues their long home stand as they host Robert Morris-Springfield in a reprieve from GLVC play. The game will be on December 8 at 7 p.m. at the Mark Twain Athletic & Fitness Center.
GET HYPED
NERDS

Boba Fett made of soda cases at the Triton Store

COURTESY OF MIKE PLUMB
In last week’s issue, we ran an opinions piece titled, “What Saying ‘I Will Pray For You’ Really Means.” The writer, Jessie Eikmann, senior, English, argued that saying, “I will pray for you” is really just a condescending remark disrespectful to those who do not believe in praying. However, I cannot help but feel that this is the complete opposite of what people mean.

For people who are religious, prayer is a powerful thing. It gives them hope and comfort. When people say they will pray for you, it is coming from a place of love. The person is ultimately saying, “While there may not be anything I can do to help you personally, I sincerely hope that you find comfort.” Saying that you will pray for someone is akin to saying you wish someone luck on an exam. Next time someone wishes me luck, should I be offended and say that I do not believe in the abstract, social construct that is luck because I believe in God? I think we can all come to a consensus about how dramatic of a response that would be.

Last week’s article also likened prayers for someone who does not want them to someone grating cheese over a dish without asking if the person wants the cheese. However, I think this is a faulty comparison. Perhaps a more accurate analogy would be the idea of putting cheese on the table despite someone saying that they do not want any on their plate. This indicates a sense of respectfulness more so than rude presumption.

The writer of last week’s article specifically addressed the people who stand outside of Planned Parenthood centers saying that they will pray for the people who use the center’s services, or even work or volunteer there. This is a more frustrating situation, and it is valid for anyone hearing that to be disgruntled and even offended. However, it is dangerous to overgeneralize and assume that everyone who prays is an overzealous anti-abortion fanatic.

It does not matter what someone’s views on God or religion or spirituality is; if someone says that they will pray for you, understand that it is because they care enough about you to wish for your happiness. Instead of praying for your happiness, I suggest understanding that it is because you are taking the time and energy to pray for you. Be gracious that you have someone in your life that is willing to do that for you.

SAGE ROHRER
STAFF WRITER

Have you ever wanted a pet sugar glider? Or maybe you prefer tropical fish for your aquarium? Perhaps you have even considered how cute a baby tiger would look in your living room? If so, then you are considering becoming part of the exotic pet trade. Exotic pets are immensely popular in the United States, with millions in captivity throughout the country. Unfortunately, the practice of obtaining and keeping exotic species may cause severe environmental problems and is potentially harmful to both the captive animals and to humans.

Exotic pets are animals that are generally considered wild species and are not typically kept as pets. Lacking the generations of domestication that animals like cats and dogs have undergone, these wild animals are difficult to tame. Common or exotic exotics include big cats, wolves, fish, primates, reptiles, and others. Some are bred in captivity, but many are also taken from the wild to be sold to foreign customers. Exotic pets have become so common that in certain animals, such as tigers, the total captive population has surpassed wild populations.

A huge environmental issue catalyzed by the exotic pet trade is the removal of animals from their natural habitats which may damage the ecosystem of a given area. All wild species fill a specific niche and removing too many of one species leaves a vacancy that can be harmful to the animals left in the ecosystem. While in many places it is illegal to remove and sell exotic animals from the wild, the practice is still extremely common.

Environmental problems may also arise when pet owners release exotic animals into areas previously uninhabited by that species. Consider the lionfish: its vibrant colors and patterns make it a popular aquarium fish, but it is challenging to care for. As a result, lionfish are often released into the ocean by owners who decide they can no longer provide the necessary care. Unfortunately, this fish is very aggressive, venomous, and has a high reproductive rate. Thus it is highly invasive when introduced to areas outside its normal range. Lionfish released from private aquaria have been rapidly reproducing in the Atlantic Ocean, destroying reef biodiversity at an alarming rate. Similar situations have happened with many other species as well.

In addition to the environmental issues, exotic pets are often mistreated and may harm humans. Many exotic species are fragile and unsuited to life in captivity. Pet owners also romanticize the idea of exotics, often purchasing large animals when they are still babies. However, once their pets become adults, owners may become disenchanted with the idea of keeping potentially dangerous animals that require extra care.

Since these animals are not domesticated, they cannot be easily tamed by pet owners. As a result, these pets may pose a danger to any humans who come in contact with them. Any pet that shows signs of aggression may also be killed. With so many potential problems from captivity in mind, it is far more kind to leave these animals in the wild where they belong.

In short, keeping exotic pets is a bad idea. Even legally purchasing pets that have been born in captivity contributes to the illegal trade because it increases the demand for those pets. By spending money on an exotic pet, people are supporting an illegal industry which harms the environment and causes injuries and fatalities among both animals and humans. If you happen to be in the market for a pet, the best solution is to adopt a domesticated dog or cat from a shelter instead, for they are always in need of good homes.

Exotic pets are animals that are generally considered wild species and are not typically kept as pets. Lacking the generations of domestication that animals like cats and dogs have undergone, these wild animals are difficult to tame. Common or exotic exotics include big cats, wolves, fish, primates, reptiles, and others. Some are bred in captivity, but many are also taken from the wild to be sold to foreign customers. Exotic pets have become so common that in certain animals, such as tigers, the total captive population has surpassed wild populations.

A huge environmental issue catalyzed by the exotic pet trade is the removal of animals from their natural habitats which may damage the ecosystem of a given area. All wild species fill a specific niche and removing too many of one species leaves a vacancy that can be harmful to the animals left in the ecosystem. While in many places it is illegal to remove and sell exotic animals from the wild, the practice is still extremely common.

Environmental problems may also arise when pet owners release exotic animals into areas previously uninhabited by that species. Consider the lionfish: its vibrant colors and patterns make it a popular aquarium fish, but it is challenging to care for. As a result, lionfish are often released into the ocean by owners who decide they can no longer provide the necessary care. Unfortunately, this fish is very aggressive, venomous, and has a high reproductive rate. Thus it is highly invasive when introduced to areas outside its normal range. Lionfish released from private aquaria have been rapidly reproducing in the Atlantic Ocean, destroying reef biodiversity at an alarming rate. Similar situations have happened with many other species as well.

In addition to the environmental issues, exotic pets are often mistreated and may harm humans. Many exotic species are fragile and unsuited to life in captivity. Pet owners also romanticize the idea of exotics, often purchasing large animals when they are still babies. However, once their pets become adults, owners may become disenchanted with the idea of keeping potentially dangerous animals that require extra care.

Since these animals are not domesticated, they cannot be easily tamed by pet owners. As a result, these pets may pose a danger to any humans who come in contact with them. Any pet that shows signs of aggression may also be killed. With so many potential problems from captivity in mind, it is far more kind to leave these animals in the wild where they belong.

In short, keeping exotic pets is a bad idea. Even legally purchasing pets that have been born in captivity contributes to the illegal trade because it increases the demand for those pets. By spending money on an exotic pet, people are supporting an illegal industry which harms the environment and causes injuries and fatalities among both animals and humans. If you happen to be in the market for a pet, the best solution is to adopt a domesticated dog or cat from a shelter instead, for they are always in need of good homes.

It’s Not You, It’s My Anxiety

LORI DRESNER
NEWS EDITOR

Among the flurry of memes that exist on the internet, I find one particularly relatable—the one titled ‘Socially Awkward Penguin,’ which pokes fun at relatable scenarios in which people often feel socially awkward. As someone who can relate to every last one of these memes, I know the struggles of social anxiety firsthand. But as funny as these memes may seem, I have found that the challenges of social anxiety greatly outweigh any humorous aspects. From the extreme nervousness when wanting to speak up, to the stumbling over words or the excessive fear of looking stupid in front of people, social anxiety has been plaguing me since I ever had a name for it.

I want to make it clear that I am not writing this article to try and make people feel sorry for me. My intention is to help people realize that social anxiety is real, and to do so from the perspective of someone who has experienced it my whole life, on a day-to-day basis. The Anxiety and Depression Association of America estimates that 15 million American adults suffer from an anxiety disorder. People plagued by social anxiety could be your classmates, professors, and maybe even your friends or family. I encourage people to realize that many of us who suffer from social anxiety are fighting our own inner battles in social situations and that assumptions about us only make those battles more difficult.

After all, I have never been medically diagnosed with social anxiety, what I have experienced throughout my life lines up completely with its known symptoms. According to the Social Anxiety Institute, people who have social anxiety experience severe emotional reactions when being introduced to other people, being teased or criticized, being the center of attention, or when in most social encounters. Most people who suffer from social anxiety know that their fear is irrational—that people are not scrutinizing their every move or criticizing every word they say—but they cannot rationalize their fears.

Since I was very young, I always had an extremely hard time starting and maintaining friendships and holding conversations with other people. In line with the symptoms of social anxiety, I am often overcome by excessive fear of social situations. I used to avoid starting conversations in social situations and that assumption about my personality and character. Throughout my life, people have assumed that, because I am not immediately friendly or talkative, I am standoffish or that I simply dislike them. It often leads people to believe I am mean or in some cases, that I have a personal vendetta against them. Although my social skills have gotten better since I have been in college, I still have much work to do. I am still fairly quiet and am by myself more often than I am around others. Even being in college, I have found that some people are still rash in their judgment about my quietness and interpret it as a personal attack on them.

So before writing off a person as ‘standoffish’ or ‘snobby’ because they are quiet, please consider that you may be judging them by their actions. By not feeling that every person is fighting some kind of battle, and for many people, that battle comes socially. Something that might seem effortless to you might be the hardest thing in the world for someone else.
This month, esteemed leaders from the United Nations will be meeting in Paris for the 2015 Climate Change Conference. They are coming together to create a permanent, legally binding plan that will hopefully reverse the damaging effects of climate change on the planet’s environment, and drastically reduce the harmful emissions coming out of countries such as China and the United States, the top two leaders in CO2 production. As usual, there is no sign from any of the PR campaigns and open talks that suggests this conference is not the same crock of bull that every other climate change-based UN event has ended up being since the Kyoto Protocol fiasco in 1997.

The only notable thing to come from this conference has been those stray kittens scurrying onto the stage of a press meeting, striking adorable terror in the hearts of all the journalists who were far too eager to take videos of their mewls. Everything else has been so much dross and empty promises. But then, when has that ever not been the norm for climate change politics? Everyone talks big, but rarely does anyone take the big plunge into real, effective action.

Already, the United States is looking like it will once again fold under pressure and do nothing worth mentioning during this conference of dunces. According to a report by the Atlantic, the U.S. would rather have a “commitment to voluntarily commit” to such measures as emission reductions and transparency in the process of enacting climate-based reform. In other words, we are asking other countries to “pretty pretty please with sugar on top” at least consider committing to reducing harmful emissions by a certain year. Would 2050 work? How about 2030? What if we threw in a pony and some nukes? On a global stage where we could be talking softly but carrying a huge stick, we are talking loudly and lobbing softballs—pardon the mixed metaphors.

At this rate, we should plan on sending our grandchildren a pretty fruit basket and photo-book of all the currently endangered species of the world, along with a greeting card that reads, “Sorry both U.S. coasts are currently well below sea level and seasons are no longer a thing. At least we had really great profit margins?”

Secretary of State John Kerry has already declared that the point of this conference is not to create any sort of legal treaty which everyone must follow. And, when asked by Congress about the possibility of another protocol, a State Department attorney said it ”is not intended to constitute an obligation the United States must fulfill under international law.” Lift up the lid of the crock pot, kids, it smells like the same bullshit from last time. If we as a global superpower cannot lead the charge in non-apologetic, fully comprehensive climate reform, what good are we?

It is time for all of us to take a stand and tell our elected officials that we want a better planet. We want clean energy sources and independence from oil. We want technologies that do not rely on mining precious metals, a process that sickens and kills struggling third world workers every day. We want the air to be cleaner, the soil to be healthier for crops and trees, the water to be safer to drink and wash in. We want normal seasons, not bizarrely warm autumns and tornado-dense springs; we want less weather that kills. All of this we can change to our advantage, with Paris and the UN conference being a perfect step forward. Or we could do what we always do: plug our ears, ignore the fact that man-made disaster is coming down the drain, and stare at the cute kittens.
Robots Take Over What’s Current Wednesday

LORI DRESNER
NEWS EDITOR

Continued from Page 3

between two people,” said Miller.

The article that guided the conversation topic was “Don’t Be Afraid of Robots, Says Ayanna Howard.” It discusses how robots can benefit the future of healthcare, sports, and jobs, and how people and robots can coexist in the workplace.

“When I was invited to talk about this paper, this was right up my alley,” said Miller, who does research on computer ethics, “What should our attitude be as these machines become, first of all, smarter, and secondly, ubiquitous?”

One major question in regard to how robots and sophisticated machines will impact the future is in the area of employment. Miller addressed how robots can partially or completely take over jobs humans do. He cited a movie he saw recently that said a skilled bricklayer can lay approximately 400 bricks per day whereas a robot that works with the human can lay over several thousand bricks in that same amount of time.

Referencing the two robots in the room, Miller said, “They’re kinda cute. But if one of them took your job, maybe they wouldn’t be so cute.”

Miller noted that there is a debate between people who want to use robots to replace or improve on human function and those who want to use robots in partnership with humans. When corporations purchase a robot, however, they want efficiency. Miller said ideally corporations would be so efficient that people and robots would be able to work together in the same environment.

Robots are utilized as teaching tools in classrooms as well. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are automated classes that thousands of students take, with little human interaction. Lynn Staley, associate teaching professor in English, noted that they have experimented with a similar type of system in the English Department. The professors would grade students’ papers themselves, but would then scan them through a software system that would then identify problems in students’ writing. Overall, the system was unsuccessful.

“What we found [from assessments] was that the students who wrote very poorly to begin with, and had a lot of really basic grammatical problems appreciated it to a certain extent because it could notice all of their grammar problems and they could go back and work on them. The students who were good writers hated it because it had no appreciation for style,” said Staley.

The latter part of the discussion prompted conversation about the relationship between ethics and sophisticated machines. Ethical questions are often raised in response to machines that enhance human performance beyond normal human ability, such as the exoskeleton suit. Questions have been raised as to if cyborgs—individuals who have artificial parts—are as human as those without artificial parts.

Miller asked the room, “If somebody has an artificial hip replacement, is that human being any less of a person than without the hip replacement?” Most people in the room said no. Miller continued, “How about if you’re fifty percent mechanical parts—are you still a person? How about if you’re ninety-eight percent, by weight, mechanical parts—are you still a person?”

Miller emphasized the fact that these kinds of issues and questions are ones that people need to examine when they discuss sophisticated machines and their future.

“I’m a student in the UMSL [Information Systems] Department, so we usually talk more about the application of the things that we build and how to build them. We’ve never really discussed the ethics and the impact, and how people take it, so this was a really good experience and discussion from that aspect,” said Yumna Ali, senior, information systems.