

The Current

WWW.THECURRENT-ONLINE.COM

Jan. 17, 2012

VOL. 45;
ISSUE 1364

Last year's tornadoes leave mark one year later

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VOL. 45, ISSUE 1364
WWW.THECURRENT-ONLINE.COM

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AFFILIATIONS



News

Yesteryear's tornadoes still leaving marks in St. Louis; updates on damages and recoveries

Tornadoes of New Year's Eve and Good Friday 2011 still marking communities, birth rebuilding projects

CATE MARQUIS
A&E Editor

For the recent New Year the weather was surprisingly mild, but a year ago it was wild. Tornadoes on New Year's Eve ushered in 2011, a rough weather year in Missouri.

The National Weather Service reported that nine tornadoes touched down in and around St. Louis around mid-day on December 31, 2010. Hardest hit was Sunset Hills, where a tornado rated EF-3 on the National Weather Service's Enhanced Fujita Scale destroyed several homes and killed one person.

On April 22, 2011, Good Friday, an EF-4 tornado ripped through the St. Louis North County area. It tore through Maryland Heights, Bridgeton, Lambert St. Louis International Airport and Ferguson, a community near the University of Missouri-St. Louis campus. Despite widespread property destruction from the Good Friday tornado, no one was killed.

Many communities

are still recovering from 2011. "Everything is not necessarily back to normal but I think we are settling into a new normal," Pam Hylton, assistant to the City Manager of Ferguson, said. "There are some businesses that are still working on recovering, and there are still some homes that are in that repair process."

Royal Avenue, which runs between North Florissant Road and N. Elizabeth Avenue, was one such street heavily damaged in the tornadoes. "There is one street called Royal where the tornado basically went right up the street and ripped most of the trees out of the front-yards. This was an area where the front yards probably had not seen the light of day in fifty years. Suddenly, all that tree canopy they were used to is now gone, so they are struggling with a new normal."

"I live on Royal. The tornado pretty much tore down one side of that street," Mark Perniciaro said. "A lot of houses were

ripped up on that street."

When the tornado hit, Perniciaro was at his job at Bailey's Chocolate Bar in Lafayette Square. "I was at work but my parents were home. They were down in the basement. They said they just barely got down in the basement in time for the tornado to come by," Perniciaro said.

Homeowner's insurance helped. "We are pretty much re-built now... A couple of months after the tornado, everything was fixed up," Perniciaro said.

Not everyone in the neighborhood recovered as easily. "There are at least one or two abandoned houses on the street, and a couple more in the neighborhood," Perniciaro said.

"We had 700 homes that were damaged," Hylton said of Ferguson as a whole. "We still have about 93 homes that are in the repair phase. The city is tracking and trying to encourage the restoration of those homes. However, some of them, the homeowners did walk away, so we do have to

deal with that situation as well."

The First Baptist Ferguson church at Royal and Florissant was hit. "We were blessed that all the damage to the buildings were in the education buildings. Our worship center was virtually untouched by the tornado," associate pastor Ron Beckner said. "Although it came through on Good Friday, right after we had had our Good Friday services here in the church, we were able to have a candlelight service on Easter Sunday morning that was incredible," Beckner said.

Repairs are still underway and that total cost of repairs would come to "around two and three-quarters million dollars."

"A lot of those houses (on Royal) have been restored and are being put back together, with some areas that are a little slower to recover and homes that have been abandoned," said Hylton. "But I think that slowly but surely the whole community is on the way to recovery."

WEATHER

MON.	TUES.	WED.	THURS.	FRI.	SAT.	SUN.
59 30	36 18	34 27	45 30	52 36	54 43	60 38

Mitt Romney and President Barack Obama win Iowa caucus

Traditionally unconventional caucus attendees' voices are heard in end results

DIANNE RIDGEWAY
Staff Writer

Winning the first round of the presidential nominations in Iowa last week, President Barack Obama and Republican frontrunners Mitt Romney and Rick Santorum had an eventful and controversial couple of days. The leading Republicans were separated by only a tenth of a percent (eight votes) out of the over 100,000 votes cast. Romney finished the Iowa caucus with 24.6 percent of the votes to Santorum's 24.5 percent. Republican Senator Ron Paul trailed, with 21.4 percent of votes. Newt Gingrich received roughly 13 percent of votes, followed by Rick Perry with 10.3 percent. Michele Bachmann decided to suspend her campaign after receiving only five

percent of the vote and candidate Jon Huntsman got .6 percent of the vote.

Also joining the Iowa caucus this year was the group Occupy Iowa Caucus. They visited Democratic offices, Barack Obama's campaign office and each Republican candidate's office in Iowa. Occupy Iowa Caucus, originally Occupy Wall Street, is a group committed to nonviolent civil protest calling attention to issues of corporate greed, bank greed and corruption in policymaking around the globe. The movement began on September 17th, 2011 and has taken place in 951 cities in 82 countries around the world with the goal of reducing economic inequality. They

refer to themselves as the "99 percent" based on the statistic that one percent of Americans own the majority of wealth, leaving the remaining 99 percent in need. Events aired on the cable channel C-SPAN and local PBS stations of Occupy Iowa caucus included music, poetry readings and speeches prepared and ad-libbed by those who were "uncommitted" to any of the candidates.

Voting "uncommitted" in the Democratic Party and "undecided" for Republicans is a long-time tradition for Iowa and has even taken the lead some years. The parties have different processes. Democrats initially group together in support of different candidates physi-

cally, allowing time to persuade the neighbors before casting votes. Republicans typically write their votes on blank pieces of paper, then submit them.

The controversy revolved around the Republican Party's decision not to report votes of "undecided" to the media from this year's caucus. They planned to "hide rate," meaning not report, votes for "no preference," believing they should not be made visible to all Iowans. "By hide rating votes of 'no preference' and turning their backs on their own traditions, they are showcasing their own intolerance and exclusionary values for all to see... and deserve nothing more than laughter and ridicule from one side of the State

of Iowa to the other," said American political blog DailyKOS. The party later released a statement changing their position, deciding to count and report the 136 votes.

Some democratic attendees showed up in "uncommitted" groups, dissatisfied with President Obama's past three-year performance. Reports on iowademocrats.org indicate that over 98 percent of the delegates pledged their support to the president. The bulk of support for Republican candidate Romney is primarily from urban precincts, and Santorum received much of the rural vote in the Hawkeye state.

Some argue the real value or benefit of winning

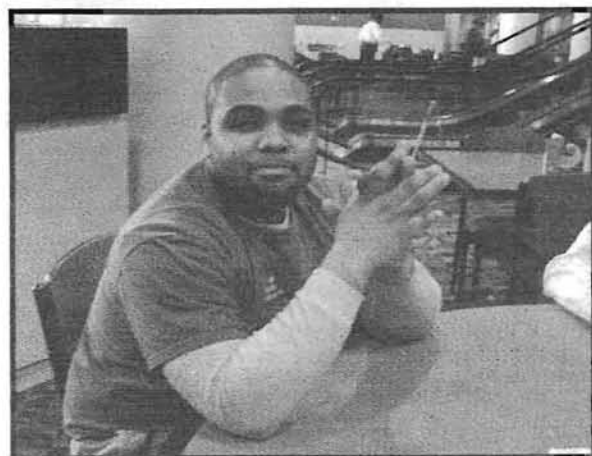
the caucus. "The whole thing that makes Iowa important is the media that it generates for the winner," said David Yepsen, political reporter, Des Moines Register. "It's the cover of Time magazine and what the networks are talking about. That's the prize," Yepsen said.

Winners of the Iowa caucuses in 2000 and 2008 were George W. Bush and President Obama. Candidates who went on to win the general election after winning Iowa included Bill Clinton and Ronald Reagan. Predicting winners and generating media attention may be present-day intentions, but this Iowa caucus produced one solid winner: the voter.

The UNDERCURRENT

by Sarah Lowe

"What did you do over winter break?"



"I worked all break."

Ronald Heaggans
Junior
Biochemistry &
Biotechnology



"I worked a lot and hung with my family and friends. I also went to a Lord of the Rings marathon and hosted a Harry Potter marathon."

Kristin Williams
Junior
Psychology



"I worked, fished, studied and visited family."

Joshua Lembeck
Junior
Business Psychology

Legislation concerning financial aid promises new improvements

MATTHEW B. POPOSKY
Editor-in-Chief

President Barack Obama recently signed into law a string of reforms concerning Federal Financial Aid. These changes are meant to help benefit the students who are completing their college educations in this time of economic strife and the slow job market enveloping not only the United States, but the world.

According to an article on StateNews.com, one of these changes will be the Pay as You Earn proposal, which effectively sets a cap of ten percent on any loan collection through an individual's discretionary income (the money left over after paying for living expenses such as food and housing). In addition, this change would bring about loan forgiveness after only 20 years for most loan holders and a possible earlier point of 15 years for those going into a career in public service or education.

Of course, such a change is going to hold a degree of appeal to students exiting their college careers and entering into the job market. The University of Missouri – St. Louis' own Office of Financial Aid was reached for comment on the upcoming changes, including comments on another proposal to consolidate loans for students whose loans may come from a variety of sources.

"The loan consolidation will be for a very restricted group of folks. It is for

people who have direct loans in addition to loans from a private lender. Those loans could then be consolidated to a lower, single rate" Tony Georges, Director of Financial Aid, UMSL, said.

Naturally, this could be beneficial to students who are concerned with figuring out how to balance paying off several different lenders after graduating. With education prices rising and students having access to more choices for financial aid, it can be daunting to balance repayment after college. Even if this option is only available to a select group of students, its benefits still exist.

"The problem with changes right now, in general, is that whenever there is an article written about changes to the financial aid system, students react very powerfully. Some are scared, and some instantly run out without understanding whether it can truly benefit them or not. Most of the issues right now do not affect students so much as they affect the lenders and the institutions, like UMSL, who hold these loans. They will give us more headaches than they will the students," Georges said.

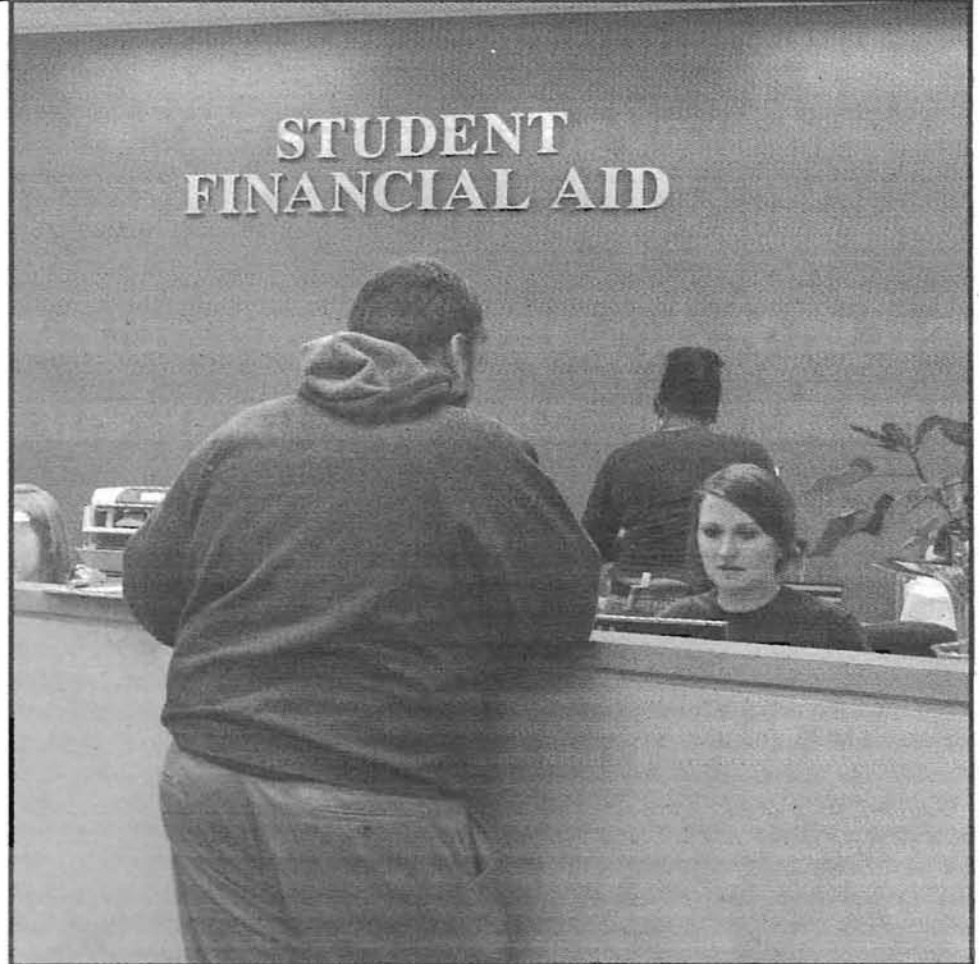
Georges also cited that UMSL's Financial Aid Office plans on releasing a newsletter to the entire community in the upcoming weeks concerning how these changes to financial aid may aid or impact the

students attending UMSL now and in future semesters.

In addition, Georges talked about how changes to Federal Financial Aid do not always actually benefit the majority of institutions to which they apply. "Rules and regulations are not made specifically for the sectors they originate from. Rather, they are applied to everybody when a problem is found in a very specific sector or institution in the United States. This can actually cause more problems to emerge than those which the changes were meant to solve in the first place," Georges said.

With such a variety of changes already on the way and even more sure to come to light in the coming months, it is evident that students will want to keep an eye on the resources available to them. "Know your lenders. Contact the companies holding your loans to learn more. And read our newsletter when we release it," Georges said.

Those hoping to learn more in the meantime would certainly do well to take Georges' advice. Many lenders have 24/7 customer support lines available and some even have local offices. Knowing the facts concerning financial aid can help avoid trouble down the line for students who have taken out financial aid. Know the facts and utilize the changes that are coming up.



Student loan legislation has changed for the better.

SARAH LOWE / THE CURRENT

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Rep. Bachmann botches Iowa, drops out of Presidential race

HALI FLINTROP
Staff Writer

Representative Michele Bachmann was, for a moment, the star of the 2012 Republican presidential race as the clear winner of the Iowa Straw Poll, but the constitutionalist, social and fiscal conservative and only female in the race had a poor showing in the Iowa caucus due to reported missteps in her campaign, which caused her to stop seeking the Republican nomination.

Representative Bachmann had an impressive showing early in the G.O.P. race. For citizens, she served as a conservative alternative to more moderate candidate and front-runner Mitt Romney. At the beginning, some party officials and news media were skeptical of Representative Bachmann's potential because of her relatively short stint in the United States Congress and her less established voting record. Public support for Bachmann led her to win the Iowa Straw Poll, a poll used for projecting the results of the Iowa Caucus.

After that win, the Washington Post reported that Representative Bachmann made some critical errors in her campaign, that led to her dropping out of the race. She did not raise enough campaign money to run early television ads in Iowa in preparation for the caucus and she actually left Iowa to campaign

in Florida and run a more national campaign. These campaign choices were to Representative Bachmann's detriment and despite the Straw Poll results, she only pulled 6,073 votes in the Iowa caucus. This amount is scant compared with caucus-winner Romney's 30,015 votes. Following the Iowa caucus, Representative Bachmann dropped her candidacy for the GOP presidential nomination.

Representative Bachmann has served as the sixth district United States House Representative for Minnesota since 2006. Representative Bachmann's congress website bachmann.house.gov characterized her as a constitutional conservative who promises to support legislation that simplifies and limits government and relies on literal interpretation of the Constitution.

Representative Bachmann publicizes on her campaign website, michelebachmann.com, that she is in favor of religious liberty, is pro-life and favors the traditional family. Her economic policies include "repatriation" of United States money, presumably by lowering business taxes to entice branches of the United States currently outsourcing overseas back into the country. Her economic policy also suggests lowering the number and salaries of government jobs, cutting

taxes and removing the new regulations on credit.

Representative Bachmann described her stand on foreign policy as one that would not shy from the use of force to protect United States interests. She said that President Obama ended the War on Terror too quickly and that she would be committed to winning it.

Representative Bachmann's healthcare policies clearly stated that repealing the current healthcare reform act was her pet issue. She said that President Obama's healthcare law will harm the United States healthcare system by increasing government involvement, which Representative Bachmann staunchly opposes in most cases. Representative Bachmann wanted to extend Medicare and keep it consistent, though her website does not outline how this can be accomplished. She also wants increased competition in the healthcare market and would presumably support further privatizing it and eliminating healthcare related government regulations.

Her take on the energy issue is similar, as she reported that she advocates reducing government regulations that limit the actions of energy companies, and eliminate the Environmental Protection Agency.

UM System Board of Curators selects a permanent President

JOSEPH GRATE
Staff Writer

On December 13, 2011 Tim Wolfe was announced to be the next president of the University of Missouri (UM) System. He is scheduled to replace the interim president, Steve Owen, on February 15, 2012, at which time he hopes to begin instituting changes for the benefit of all students, faculty, staff, and communities surrounding campuses in the UM System.

The board of curators for the UM System was faced with a dilemma when Gary Farsee, the former president of the UM System, resigned early due to his wife's recovery from cancer. To temporarily take his place, Steve Owens became acting president, allowing the curators to carefully choose his replacement.

After months of careful deliberation, the new president of the UM System was announced as President-Designate Tim Wolfe. Wolfe is currently delaying his position to adjust and prepare for the job.

According to The Missourian, Columbia's newspaper, Owens said that he would stay on to lead the curators into the vote about tuition and fee increases. He also said that the two months would give Wolfe the opportunity to better understand the position and its responsi-

bilities.

During his introduction at Reynolds Alumni Center on the University of Missouri - Columbia (Mizzou) campus, Wolfe mentioned key aspects of his ideas and expectations for the UM System. He then proceeded to visit all the other UM System campuses - first Rolla, then the University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL). "My role right now is to visit all the campuses and understand as much as I can about the challenges they face," Wolfe said in an interview with St. Louis's Channel 5 News, KSDK.

Wolfe holds a great deal of respect for the UM System. "The UM System is the state's greatest asset," Wolfe said during the news conference at Mizzou. He himself was raised in Missouri and is a graduate from Mizzou, having earned a Bachelor's degree in personnel management during his college career. He also finished an 18-month internship with Cramer Products while attending the University of Missouri - Columbia before moving on to a few jobs.

After that, he started a budding career with IBM Corporation in Missouri that lasted for 20 years. This allowed him to experience a variety of leadership positions. He left IBM and went on to become the executive vice

president of Covansys, a global consulting and technology company, for a few years. Following this he joined Novell, a provider of infrastructure software, until it was bought out. A few months later, Wolfe got a call offering him the opportunity to be president of the UM System.

"I concluded that my Missouri roots, my leadership experience, all in addition to my passion for higher education, could likely help the UM System to further its quest in teaching research, service and economic development," Wolfe said.

The big issue that looms over every campus in the UM System at the moment is the constant threat of a tuition hike. For UMSL students, there is talk of increasing tuition to compete with the current market rates. During Wolfe's travels, he said that he would first listen to what all the other constituents from other campuses have to say.

"We have to continue to find ways to creatively deliver high quality education to more people at a lower cost," Wolfe said. His final words at the conference in MU were that the UM system should identify the market needs and, at the end of the day, have more student success. "We need to chart our own course," Wolfe said.

SOMETIMES IT'S OKAY TO LET STRANGERS TALK TO YOU.

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The Current

What's Current

Your weekly calendar of campus events. "What's Current" is a free service for student organizations. Submissions must be turned in by 5 p.m. the Thursday before publication; first-come, first-served. Listings may be edited for length and style. E-mail event listings to thecurrenttips@umsl.edu, with the subject "What's Current." No phone or written submissions.



This week, UMSL's campus was covered in the first big snow of the winter.

SARAH LOWE / THE CURRENT

Wednesday, January 18

Mindfulness meditation

From 12:15 p.m. to 12:45 p.m. Located in the Center for Student Success and open to all. Mindfulness Meditation is a proven—and increasingly popular—method for reducing stress, anxiety, insomnia, and a variety of medical conditions. Incorporating mindfulness into your schedule can enhance your overall well-being and allow you to live your life more fully. These weekly guided Mindfulness activities are free and open to beginning as well as experienced meditators.

For more information, call Jamie Linson at 314-516-5711.

Friday, January 20

Student government association general assembly meeting

From 12:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. Located in the MSC SGA Chambers and open to all. The Student Government Association will be holding its monthly General Assembly Meeting to announce reports, discuss current issues and pass new SGA legislation. All meetings are open. For more information, call Jericah Selby at 314-516-5130.

Thursday, January 19

Spring semester peer academic leaders seminar

From 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Located at the Center for Teaching and Learning and open to all. It is campus policy that all undergraduates who are working as tutors, mentors, or in similar positions attend the Peer Academic Leader Seminar (PALS). This seminar introduces you to mandatory campus policies and procedures such as FERPA, Sexual Harassment, and Anti-Discrimination laws; prevention of academic dishonesty; and student conduct regulations. For more information, call Peggy Cohen at 314-516-7133.

Monday, January 23

Wellness classes sponsored by Campus Recreation

Check online for times. Located at Mark Twain Recreation Center and open to all. Get healthy! Get happy! Join Campus Rec's Winter/Spring Wellness Programs. AEROBICS & SPINNING Spinning, Body Challenge, Core Fusion, Pilates, Stretch & Tone, Yoga, Water Exercise Training, Zumba, and more. For class descriptions, schedules, and fees, visit www.umsl.edu/services/recsport. For more information, call Campus Recreation at 314-516-5326.

Tuesday, January 24

Succeeding in online classes

From 5:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Located in the Center for Student Success and open to students.

Are you thinking about enrolling in an online course? Or are you already enrolled in one and would like to gain tips on how to succeed? This workshop is intended to give you a comprehensive look at online learning. We hope that it not only answers some questions about online courses but that it also provides tools necessary to succeed in this relatively new and exciting method of learning.

For more information, call Antoinette Sterling at 314-516-5300.

A&E

Gary Oldman stars as George Smiley in Focus Feature's release of Tomas Alfredson's *TINKER, TAILOR, SOLDIER, SPY*.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JACK ENGLISH

Alfredson's *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* is no ordinary spy movie

DAVID VON NORDHEIM
Staff Writer

To most film-goers, the phrase "spy movie" tends to bring certain expectations with it: the hero, a roguish playboy with an arsenal of absurd gadgets at his disposal; the villain, a bald European who reveals his ridiculously convoluted scheme while stroking a Persian cat.

"*Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*" is a spy movie, to be certain, but a spy movie cut from a dramatically different mold. Based on Jean Le Carre's novel of the same name, "*Tinker*" explores the lingering tension and political paranoia which

gave rise to modern espionage through the perspective of veteran MI6 agent George Smiley.

Gary Oldman is nothing short of masterful as the disillusioned Smiley, imparting the aggressively clandestine man with a poignant weariness as he tries to unravel the Byzantine communist conspiracy which threatens to engulf the agency and him with it.

The film follows the weathered Smiley as he tries to unravel the cryptic circumstances surrounding a disastrous MI6 operation in which a fellow agent was captured and presumably murdered by KGB agents.

Smiley believes that a Soviet mole in the agency is to blame for the debacle.

He certainly has his work cut out for him. Although 007's nemeses often throw an eye patch or a Russian accent in for good measure, these bad guys are not so easily identified. Seemingly everyone in the agency, including Smiley himself, operates with a hidden agenda, adding layer upon suffocating layer of complexity.

In "*Tinker*," director Tomas Alfredson's vision of Cold War-era Europe, there is no white or black, just the hazy gray which permeates every scene. It is truly a credit to the

film's intricacy then that this very impenetrability is also its one major hindrance. Alfredson is clearly a director who refuses to backpedal for the sake of exposition, and consequently, the many shady characters and intricate subplots the film throws at the audience quickly become difficult to manage.

"*Tinker's*" previous incarnation, a 1979 television miniseries which starred Alec Guinness as Smiley, used its length to advantage, allowing it to more easily navigate Le Carre's famously labyrinthine story structures. In Alfredson's film,

however, it seems that some of Le Carre's fiendishly intricate design was lost in translation, as several of the novels tangents, including subplots involving a homosexual tryst between two MI6 agents and an operative who goes AWOL to rescue the battered wife of the Soviet agent he is tailing, simply vanish before reaching a satisfying conclusion.

Despite the occasional plot hole, Alfredson succeeds in paring the Smiley chronicle to its essentials. While "*Tinker's*" political origins may be well-traveled, its direction is decidedly contemporary. Director Tomas Alfredson,

best known for the spellbinding supernatural drama "*Let the Right One In*," crafts an utterly chilling Cold War-era Europe, a bleak landscape populated by vacant cities which have a lot more in common with "*28 Days Later*" than James Bond.

Just as the Alfredson's "*Let the Right One In*" sucked the schlock out of horror, "*Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*" injects a dose of gritty realism into the spy thriller, creating another genre film which implodes its own tradition in favor of something far more fascinating.

Grade: B+

The best albums of 2011

DAVID VON NORDHEIM
Staff Writer

All in all, 2011 was a pretty typical year in music. Adele's "21," an old-fashioned collection of pop tunes if there ever was one, was the first choice for Album of the Year. "Watch the Throne" killed two birds with one stone as the requisite Kanye West and Jay-Z release, that garners far more attention than it deserves. Lady Gaga's pop culture domination continued as she made guest appearances on everything from Paul Simon albums to the Simpsons.

Since 2011 seemed to do very little to distinguish itself in the annals of pop music, the sheer diversity of 2011's many highlights came as some thing of a shock. The year was peppered with groundbreaking releases in rock, hip-hop, R&B, electronic and pretty much every other genre imaginable.

"Smother" by Wild Beasts: Wild Beasts rely on a nostalgia for the sonic excesses of the 1980s. Although they are hardly the only group trying to resurrect the sumptuous sounds of new wave, they are undoubtedly one of the finest. "Smother" culls its inspiration from sources which have largely fallen out of fashion in modern indie rock, such as Adam Ant's hypersexuality, Morrissey's detached wit and Siouxsie and the Banshees' overproduced grandeur. Vocalist Hayden Thorpe's lyrical focus rarely strays far from sex or dying, and often addresses both subjects in the same song with a megalliterate delivery reminiscent of Belle & Sebastian's Stuart Murdoch. Individually, these elements are not particularly original, but they are superbly executed.

"Black Up" by Shabazz Palaces: Just as the seemingly endless

torrent of solo releases from Odd Future's many members seemed poised to monopolize underground hip-hop in 2011, Shabazz Palaces' "Black Up" came out of nowhere to steal their thunder. With its fractured beats and abstract rhymes, "Black Up" is truly a thinking man's rap album boasting a cosmic weirdness not seen since Kool Keith's Dr. Octagon days. Of course, it does not hurt that Ishmael Butler, the mastermind behind Palaces and a major player in alternative rap legend Digable Planets, is a veteran of the sort of high-minded hip-hop heard on "Black Up." Although the surrealism of Shabazz Palaces is a far cry from Digable Planets' earnestness, it is clear that the 15 years since the last DP release has not diminished the talents of the artist formerly known as Butterfly in the slightest.

"Dedication" by Zomby: A requiem for Zomby's departed father, "Dedication" is the dubstep equivalent of a funeral march. Whereas Zomby's previous effort, 2008's "Where Were U in 92?" played like a goofy ode to 1990s rave culture, Zomby's sophomore release forsakes the party vibe of its predecessor for something far more austere and introspective. Despite its dour origins, "Dedication" never wallows in its sorrow and much like that other anonymous dubstep wunderkind Burial, its productions are equal parts danceable and thought-provoking. While Burial favored bleaker, more emotionally sterile territory, Zomby's "Dedication" is disarmingly emotive, demonstrating the grace and poignancy of which dubstep, often perceived as a superficial flavor-of-the-month, is capable.

"Stone Rollin'" by Raphael Saadiq: Although

Raphael Saadiq had long been touted for his supporting role in the R&B community, his own releases typically took a backseat to his contributions as producer and songwriter to artists such as Jill Scott, Kelis and Erykah Badu. Still, it is difficult to imagine Saadiq relegating himself to second fiddle for much longer after listening to the explosive "Stone Rollin'," a defiantly jubilant, utterly infectious blast of thoroughly pedigreed neo-soul. Like all great R&B records, "Stone Rollin'" plays like a virtual history lesson on the genre, particularly emphasizing the rock 'n' roll spectrum as it careens from Sly & the Family Stone to Chuck Berry. But while a straight-faced retreat of R&B's innovators would be a rather lifeless affair, Saadiq injects the proceedings with enough reverence and wit to make it both charmingly familiar and entirely original.

"Smoke Ring for My Halo" by Kurt Vile: A motley bunch of low-fi pop tunes from the brooding Midwesterner known simply as Kurt Vile, "Smoke Ring for My Halo" was one of 2011's biggest revelations. Vile had previously pegged himself as a promising newcomer on the indie singer/songwriter scene, beginning with his tenure as lead guitarist for the like-minded outfit The War on Drugs. Whereas that group's twangy, shuffling indie rock brought Neil Young's Crazy Horse output to mind, Vile's accomplished solo work is more haunting, low-key territory. "Smoke Ring for My Halo's" shambling, bare-bones aesthetic carries the same Neil Young torch with decidedly different results, with Vile emerging as the younger, more naive cousin to the weary drunk on Young's own "Tonight's the Night."

LATEST + GREATEST

MOVIES

OPENING FRIDAY, JANUARY 20:

EXTREMELY LOUD & INCREDIBLY CLOSE (everywhere)

-Tom Hanks and Sandra Bullock star as the parents of a boy struggling to cope with his father's death in the World Trade Towers on September 11.

HAYWIRE (everywhere)

-Steven Soderbergh directs this action thriller about a betrayed black-ops soldier (Gina Carano), backed by a big-name cast that includes the ubiquitous Michael Fassbender, Ewan McGregor, Channing Tatum, Michael Douglas and Antonio Banderas.

A DANGEROUS METHOD (Plaza Frontenac)

-One of several Oscar hopefuls making their way here in the next few weeks, "A Dangerous Method" stars Michael Fassbender as Carl Jung, Vigo Mortensen as Sigmund Freud and Keira Knightley as a brilliant woman patient in a searing, intelligent drama about social attitudes and early psychoanalysis set in pre-World War I Europe.

SHAME (Tivoli)

-Another Oscar contender, this taut drama also stars Michael Fassbender as a New York man with a sexual addiction who is forced to confront his life when his troubled sister, played by Carey Mulligan, moves in with him.

PARIAH (Tivoli)

-Oscar bait again, a powerful indie drama exploring the forbidden territory of lesbian teens in the black community.

MUSIC

TUESDAY, JANUARY 17:

ATTACK! ATTACK! "THIS MEANS WAR!"

-Releasing their first full-length album in almost a year, Attack Attack is going to be making waves with their latest album. Strangely featuring all track names that start with "The" (not joking here, all 10 tracks start with the word the), "This Means War!" is going to be a hit without a doubt.

ENTER SHIKARI "A FLASH FLOOD OF COLOUR"

-When the first single from this album "Ssnakepit," it was hard to figure out what the album was to become. But now it is obvious that Brit post-hardcore band Enter Shikari has found the perfect combination between everything that could possibly be good about dubstep and combine it with their already unique and singular sound. Buy this album. It will blow your mind.

ANTHONY GREEN "BEAUTIFUL THINGS"

-Ex-vocalist of Circa Survive, Saosin, and The Sound of Animal's Fighting has a new solo project that is sure to deliver. The amazing vocal abilities of Anthony Green are going to be back in the ear buds of listeners soon enough and the music will be so sweet listeners cannot help but hit repeat.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 24:

FOXY SHAZAM "THE CHURCH OF ROCK AND ROLL"

-Who knows what is going to come from this album. Foxy Shazam is back in the studio recording what may be one of their most outstanding records to date. Pushing the limits with their untouchable and indefinable style. It is nothing like they have ever done before but they have developed a more defined sound than ever before.

Best films of 2011 including the unexpected and unusual

CATE MARQUIS
A&E Editor

It is traditional to greet the new year with a look back at the past one. So here is a look back with this critic's picks for 2011's best films. Almost everyone loves lists, but your list and this list may not agree. Hopefully you will agree with some of these choices, or feel like checking on some of the films you have not seen yet. Films are listed alphabetically.

The Artist: This black and white, nearly-silent film is a clever, technical marvel of a love letter to early films, but it is also so entertaining and affecting that it made the leap from film festivals to multiple screens everywhere in the same way "Slumdog Millionaire" did. It is a mix of drama, comedy and romance packed with movie references for the fan of old Hollywood.

Beginners: With amazing acting and a clever, original narrative style, this emotionally appealing drama-comedy about a young artist (Ewan McGregor) trying to find his way to new love with a French actress (Melanie Laurent) while still mourning his late father (Christopher Plummer), who came out as gay late in life. It sounds far-fetched but the story was based on the writer/director Mike Mills' own experiences and it is a surprisingly universal warm tale of family and love.

City of Life and Death: This moving Chinese historical epic uses beautiful black and white photography, an unusual first-person narrative style and fabulous acting to recount the infamous "Rape of Nanking" during World War II. Like Clint Eastwood's pair of films on Iwo Jima, it tells its

story through the eyes of individuals on both sides, the Japanese soldiers and the Chinese and international residents of the occupied city. This is an astonishing film that can be viewed in Mandarin, Japanese or English.

The Descendants: George Clooney gives the best performance of his career in this film from "Sideways" director Alexander Payne. The story is set in Hawaii and deals with family, legacy and the struggles of a man with two daughters who learns his comatose wife was cheating on him. This movie is a touching, realistic mix of drama and comedy, just as life often really is.

Drive: This movie is nothing like what you expect. A stylish, visually-striking, twisting and emotionally rich film from director Nicolas Winding Refn, "Drive" breaks the rules of drama, crime thrillers and romance. Ryan Gosling delivers another stunning performance as a laconic movie stunt driver who moonlights as a get-away driver. Carey Mulligan as a young mother heads a great cast of actors playing against type.

Hanna: This is another rule-breaking thriller, from "Atonement" director Joe Wright. It is an unlikely departure that re-imagines the spy thriller as a dark Grimm's fairy tale starring young Saoirse Ronan as a girl raised to be an assassin with marvelous supporting performances by Cate Blanchett and Eric Bana.

Melancholia: This visually lush film demands to be seen on a big screen. Director Lars Von Trier gives us a surreal, symbolic film of amazing beauty with scene after scene constructed like paintings from the Pre-Raphaelites or even the Surrealists. The

film is built around a loose tale of two sisters played by Kirsten Dunst and Charlotte Gainsbourg, a wedding, clinical depression, self-delusion and the end of the world. This film is worth your time for the images alone, many of which could be framed and hung in a gallery.

Skin I Live In: Spanish director Pedro Almodovar practically re-invents the classic horror film, and proves once again that he really knows how to make a movie. The scariest film of the year, it stars Antonio Banderas as a brilliant plastic surgeon with issues. It has a twisty, edge-of-your-seat script but it works through suspense, imagination and skillful storytelling rather than plain gore.

Tree of Life: Another visual movie that demands a big screen, this one has drawn comparisons to Kubrick's "2001." Director Terrence Malick starts with the creation of the universe and crafts a dreamscape film that is a contemplative, almost non-narrative, time-shifting meditation on life, death, family, dinosaurs, volcanoes and faith, plus a remarkable child's-eye view of growing up in 1950s small-town America. A visual delight filled with astounding effects and stirring music, featuring a remarkable performance by Brad Pitt, supported by Sean Penn as his grown son.

Ides of March: In this political drama, Ryan Gosling offers one of three remarkable performances this year, the others being in "Crazy, Stupid, Love" and "Drive." Gosling plays an idealistic campaign worker for a presidential hopeful (George Clooney) in this intelligent, sometimes heart-breaking political thriller about modern campaigns, directed by Clooney.

Everyone gets old; not everyone grows up, and 'Young Adult' means it

ALADEEN KOLONOWSKI
Staff Writer

If we compare the film "Young Adult" to leftovers in the refrigerator, it might be the spicy foreign food that you only brought home because there are starving kids somewhere. So you set it next to the plain, boring leftovers you eat every day, romantic comedies like "No Strings Attached" and "The Ugly Truth." What do you think you will reach for? The foreign food might leave a weird taste in your mouth, but it clears your sinuses, or in this case, your dependence on the normal movie mold that has gotten a little bit... well, moldy.

"Young Adult" is not a likable movie but it is a thought-provoking one. It is hard to sit through because it is unexpected. The previews and the fact that it was written by the same person who wrote "Juno" suggested it would be funny. Unfortunately, most of the humorous bits were cut together into the preview, viewers are left with an onslaught of suggested mental illness and unrelenting narcissism.

One of the most interesting things about the movie is that it does not

spoon-feed the audience. It presents the life of Mavis Gary (Charlize Theron), a 27-year-old ghostwriter nearing the end of a long line of high school novels. That subtle fact helps explain who she is fundamentally. Spending years writing from the point of view of a high school student would make it hard to grow up, as the film's tagline suggests: "Everyone gets old. Not everyone grows up." First and foremost, a writer's characters have to be believable or it is impossible to care about them.

Mavis Gary is a static character. She does not change, and that is not what people go to movies to see. There is plenty of that in our daily lives. In the end there is no pretty bow for the top of the box of crazy that is the "protagonist" of the movie. In fact, Mavis is the antagonist of her own movie, which is not something that happens. Ever. Hollywood has a formula and every patron has it down pat. Good luck watching "Young Adult" without at least having felt a little queasy at some point.

Charlize Theron is completely believable as

Mavis and Patton Oswalt is a charming sidekick. Oswalt's Matt Freehauf is possibly the only character worth giving a damn about. He is definitely the only one that eases the tension. There is a lot of subtle character development for Mavis but Oswalt's Matt is a pretty-straight forward guy.

As a prescript for a movie, "Young Adult" is bad. Nobody gets what they want. There is no happy ending. Mavis is not tamed like the shrew and she is not hit by a bus like the witch in "Mean Girls." Walking out of the theater, it was hard to figure out just what had happened. What was the ideal outcome? Mavis breaks up some poor, unsuspecting guy's marriage on a whim thinking it will save her life, and then it does? Thank goodness that was not the answer.

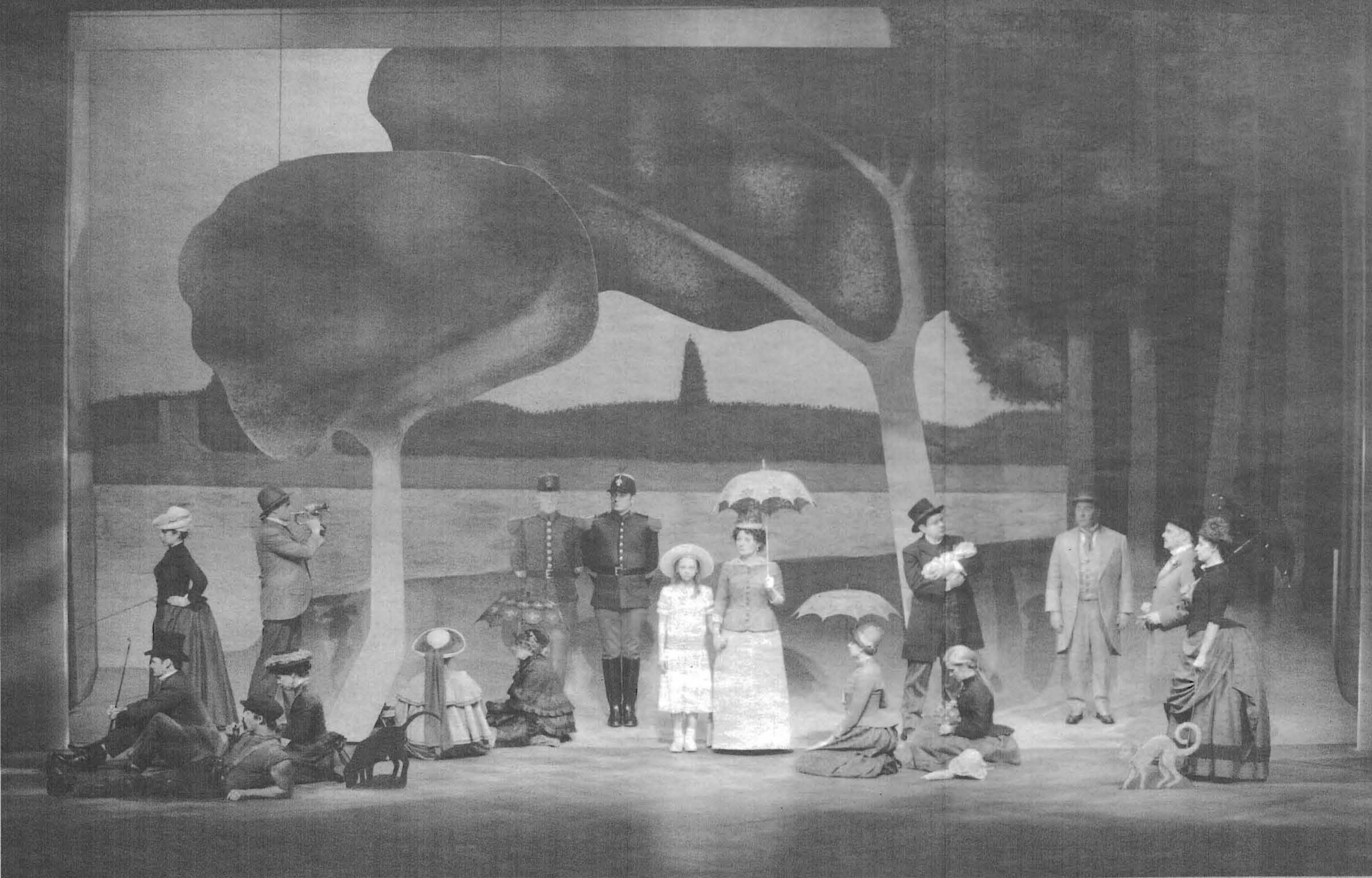
Mavis has a chance at redemption near the end but she does not take it, because that is not what people do. It is hard to change who you are and sometimes people fail. "Young Adult" deserves respect for representing that.

Grade: C+

Herp & Derp want to hear your
Best of Lists for 2011

www.thecurrent-online.com

Sondheim's "Sunday in the Park With George" continues Rep's wonderful art-filled season



CATE MARQUIS
A&E Editor

The Repertory Theater of St. Louis is having great success this season with plays about artists this season. The Rep opened its season last fall with "Red," a fabulous drama about modern artist Mark Rothko. The Rep continues that trend with "Sunday in the Park With George," Stephen Sondheim's musical drama about French pointillist painter Georges Seurat working on his masterpiece "A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte."

"Sunday in the Park with George" is one of Sondheim's best, with clever lyrics, memorable music and an emotionally-involving story. The Rep's excellent production is a must-see.

Rob Ruggiero directs the two-act play. The longer first act focuses on Seurat (Ron Bohmer) and his long-time mistress, model and muse Dot (Erin Drake) as the artist works obsessively on his masterpiece. Dot is devoted to the artist but becomes increasingly frustrated as she is ignored by George, who is creating a new kind of painting inspired by scientific discoveries about perception.

Seurat covers his canvases in tiny dots of paint in primary colors, such as red and blue, knowing that the viewers' minds will blend them to create violet. While the painting appears flat and stiffly formal, there is a riot of activity in the crowded scene. Characters are rich with details and clever social commentary about a rising middle-class and the new concept of leisure. The painting shows a suburban Paris park on the river Seine, with people of various classes crowded together as they try to escape the city, ironically in order to enjoy nature.

Apart from the artist, all the characters in the play are also people in the painting, who turn into a living

tableau as the painting is completed.

George and Dot's faltering love affair forms the emotional heart of this play. Bohmer is wonderful as the emotionally distant, obsessed artist. He loves Dot but cannot see how she is suffering in the heat of a Sunday afternoon in the park as she sings her discomfort and longing in "Sunday in the Park With George."

The luminous Drake is touching as Dot, who adores both the artist and his work, yet she is wasting away from lack of any kindness from her lover. Their duet, "Color and Light," as George paints and Dot powders her face, preparing for a rare night out, speaks clearly to their dilemma and mutual love of his work.

Bringing the painting to life is one of the joys of this production. It starts with George facing a white stage, a blank canvas, which is suddenly transformed into the background of the painting by clever staging. As George paints his subjects in the park on Sundays, flats depicting elements in the painting, stylized animals, pop up, parasols descend from above and painted trees slide across the stage. When the artist decides he does not like where a tree is located, the tree trundles across the stage to a more pleasing spot.

It is not just the sets that recreate the painting, but Alejo Vietti's costumes as well. Like the painting, the colors are created by tiny dots of primary colors that the eyes fuse into a blend. The flower on Dot's hat, for instance is not really purple, it just appears that way.

When the artist is working in his studio, placing the precise little dots of color that will create the illusion, the large transparent version of the painting allows us to see both its outlines and the artist at work.

There are playful songs as George pays homage to the elements in his painting.

Many characters are in pairs, often middle-class people who aspire to upper-class respectability and provide much of the play's comic element as well as a shifting soap opera.

George's friend and more successful fellow artist Jules (Chris Hietikko) and his wife Yvonne (Deanne Lorette) serve as the voice of the prevailing art world's opinion. Their servants, a married German couple Frieda (Rebecca Watson) and Franz (Jamie LaVerdiere), relishing their day off in the park, discuss their own upwardly mobile ambitions. The Old Lady (Zoe Vonder Haar), George's aristocratic mother, pines for the past while taxing the patience of her nurse (Kari Ely).

The first act ends with a wonderful living tableau of the famous painting as the cast sings "Sunday."

The second act, rather than resuming the story of George and Dot, fast-forwards a hundred years. The artist's great grandson, another artist named George (Ron Bohmer again), is preparing to unveil his latest modern art creation in the museum where Seurat's masterpiece is displayed. With him is his 90-year-old grandmother Marie (Erin Drake), Dot's daughter.

The same actors take new roles now. George is surrounded by critics, patrons, museum directors and fellow artists. While he really knows how to work the room, he is losing his artistic vision. The modern story resolves some of the issues of the first act and ends with a living recreation of the painting again.

This excellent production runs through January 29 and is well worth a trip to the Webster Groves campus. Student discounts or bargain "rush" tickets make it possible for everyone to enjoy this wonderful, moving production.

Grade: A

The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis' production of "Sunday in the Park with George" at the Loretto-Hilton Center in St. Louis. ©PHOTO BY JERRY NAUNHEIM JR.

Student recognized at MLK observance for winning essay

ASHLEY ATKINS
Features Editor

How often do you check your student email?

For student Andrew Smith, junior, social work, the answer might be "not enough."

In early November 2011, the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity at the University of Missouri – St. Louis sent out a mass email concerning a Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. essay contest. The theme of the essay was "How can we further Dr. King's legacy of service in today's economic climate?"

The contest was open to all registered undergraduates for the fall and spring semester and promised \$300, \$200 and \$100 cash prizes to the first, second and third-place winners respectively. The office even went as far as extending the deadline of the competition from its original due date of December 2 and all that was required of the winners was to attend the Dr. King Holiday Observance on January 12

at the Touhill Performing Art Center. As first place winner of the contest, Smith is expected to grace the stage where he will deliver his essay word for word.

Deborah J Burris, director, Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity, said that the essay contest had a three-fold purpose.

"First, is to engage the students in serious reflection about the principles that Dr. King espoused by applying those principles to a current issue of our world. Second the contest is intended to provide an opportunity for students to enhance their analytical and writing skills. Third, the contest provides a financial award which assists students their college expenses."

She believes that its three-fold purpose compliments Dr. King's attributes as a scholar.

Smith decided to participate in the contest after realizing that his fellow students would not due to finals. He also saw the cash prize as ideal, but these were not his only

reasons for participating.

"I am a social worker and Martin Luther King Jr. was an advocate for social justice and that is kind of what social work is all about: social justice for the underprivileged people," Smith said. "That really stuck out to me. It helped me want to be in the contest."

Smith admits that while beginning to construct the essay he did not have a specific point, though he did want to construct something that was interesting and creative. The majority of his essay revolved around a saying that was commonly used in public during the election of President Barack Obama. "Rosa sat so MLK could walk. MLK walked so Obama could run." In his essay, Smith added, "Obama ran so that people could fly."

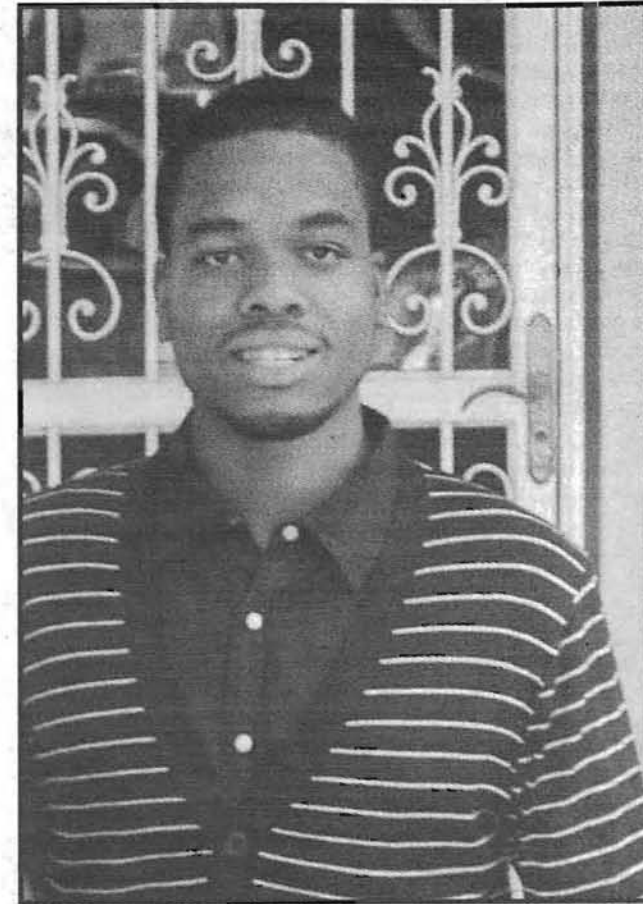
"I intertwined that with serving and how if we all give that message a push or a boost or a lift, we can all fly," Smith said. "The last part of my paper talked about how we can do this by voting and contacting

our politicians to advocate for social injustice just like Martin Luther King Jr. did."

Beyond the essay Smith is working on realizing this meaning through his actions. Last summer, he devoted his time to Camp Wyman in Eureka, Missouri, where he acted in the leadership role among teenagers on a daily basis. He is helping his message come to life by looking toward a career in social work, a position that he has come to respect after depending on the government in his earlier youth.

"It was fine because I got through it and made it to college," Smith said. "I figured that I can use my knowledge and experiences to help other young people finish school and become somebody in life."

Smith wants the community to realize that service is more than a thought. It is an action. He believes that people can deliver his message by offering out a helping hand to at least one other person.



Andrew Smith, junior, social work, won this year's MLK Holiday Observance essay contest.

COURTESY OF ANDREW SMITH

UMSL radio station pulls out the stops for 5th year anniversary

ASHLEY ATKINS
Features Editor

The U-Student radio station at the University of Missouri - St. Louis has decided to ring in the new spring semester in song.

A "Snowball Mashup" will take place in the Pilot House of the Millennium Student Center, January 20, from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. The brainchild of Mark Lodes "DJ Paradise," senior, political science, the event will consist of both rock and hip-hop acts on one stage. The ambitious event was created for the well being of the student body and also allows participating artists to network and promote their original work.

Each individual act was recommended by a U- DJ.

SEMPA member, Shelecia McKinney, junior, media studies, was the one who brought the rock group "The Garrisons" into the equation.

The event will be hosted by recording artist Penelope Jones, who has recently joined the U radio station. Jones is known for her 2006 collaboration with Mya in "No Matter What They Say." She was introduced to the idea of hosting after meeting with student DJ Bryan Eason, junior, media studies.

"It has been hard for us to get artists on our bills or any of our events without paying serious money," Eason said. "We just happen to run into each other. It was an opportunity to work

with somebody who had experience in that area as far as bringing together local talent."

Eason believes the upcoming "Mashup" to be a one-of-a-kind event, praising it for its ability to bring different forms of music together on one stage at UMSL. He does not believe that this has ever been done before and hopes that it can be re-created on other campuses.

"I think that it would be a great cooperative effort on everyone's part to see if we can mix the two and see if something good comes from it," Eason said.

SEMPA president Josh McNew, junior, media studies, sees the event as a great way to support local artists in an appropriate

location.

"This is college. This is when you are supposed to open your mind to things that are not just put in front of you by MTV and big companies," McNew said. "These are independent artists doing their thing. It is a good time to see something different, something out of the ordinary."

When critics try to categorize the event as another "Battle of the Bands," McNew does not hesitate to voice the "Mashup's" non-competitive drive. Instead, he believes it to be an artistic vision where artists have the freedom to play together and not play against each other.

Not only is the

"Mashup" a big event for U-Student Radio, but it acts as the kickoff to a monumental year, according to Station Manager Keith Robinson, senior, information systems.

"The week of April 9 will be our five-year anniversary here in the Millennium Student Center. We started in April 2007 and what we were planning to do was bring back all the DJs that have been a part of the radio station for the last five years."

The entire week will act as a reunion week where old DJs will be mixing with new DJs (on air), building up to a retrospect on Friday April 13 in the Pilot House of the MSC.

"Each year, we keep

growing and growing and five years is really a milestone for something that pretty much started in a closet in 2004-2005," Robinson said.

Robinson believes that the "Snowball Mashup" will present the campus with something that they have never seen before, resulting in the achievement of the station's original goal.

"The students are what brought us here. We are funded by student fees and I think that it is our job to entertain the campus and inform the campus," Robinson said. "We put on things that we believe are going to be entertaining to the campus population."

The "Snowball Mashup" will be free of charge, so come enjoy the music.

A viral world makes it possible for the student to come out on top

DIANNE RIDGEWAY
Staff Writer

Endless options in a fingertip world raise choices, including textbook shopping yet another opportunity for financial analysis. When one North American higher education book publisher, Pearson, reported profits of over seven-hundred-million dollars in 2010, how can we find the lowest price and best choice for our learning and budgetary style?

Our educational horizon is surely expanding with ebooks and audiobooks more easily accessible than ever and the ability to surf the web for the lowest price in seconds. Renting, buying, copying and downloading are all ways to obtain that educational material you may or may not be reading this semester. With tools and applications for nearly every technical device, one can be left feeling a little overwhelmed. Androids, iPhones, Blackberrys and iPads can all be used for reading and using our textbooks. Even the note taking software Evernote can be

used to photograph and save material you may need, allowing you to access that information from all of your devices.

Despite these technical offerings, a 2010 study done by a California Public Interest Research Group, or PIRG, reports that 75 percent of students prefer print rather than digital textbooks. Ebay, ecampus.com, Abebooks and textbook.com are all places to start the textbook hunt. Other sites like campusbook.com, campusbook4less.com and affordabook.com will shop and compare prices for you. Even the University of Missouri-St. Louis bookstore has jumped on board with comparison shopping at compare.umslbookstore.com.

The convenience of picking up your book on campus puts one example at 97 dollars, while the same book was found on cheapesttextbooks.com for 86 dollars and campusbooks4less.com with a copy for 46 dollars. It is important not to forget about the cost and time of shipping ranging from

days to weeks depending upon sites. Amazon is a popular site and offers a trial Amazon Prime membership, which includes free two-day shipping to anyone with an .edu email address. International editions are another way to save money but can take long periods of time for delivery.

Looking to social media and community sites like Craigslist for books is another alternative solution. The best way to ensure you are not wasting your hard earned (or borrowed) money on books is to make sure you actually need them. Waiting until required texts are posted, emailing professors or even holding off to hear directly that books you will be using can save you time, money and the hassle of returning any unneeded books.

The earliest you can start your cheap book search the more fruitful it will become. Checking the school and local libraries can prove to be the most cost-efficient way to prepare for your courses and offers the option to request copies from other



A student searches for books on his list in the UMSL bookstore.

JARRED GASTREICH / THE CURRENT

branches to be sent to yours.

Knowing a classmate to share a book with or copy chapters from is another way to cut or share costs.

Bookstores can be known for high purchase prices and extremely low returns. Looking to online sites for book resale may prove more beneficial as their quotas are most likely considerably higher. The same book found in UMSL's bookstore

for 97 dollars would be bought on textbook.com for over fifty dollars. The last option for college students who plan to sell their books at the end of the semester is renting. Some college campuses are implementing their own rental services while online sites have offered this option for years.

Campusbookrentals.com and Alibris.com offer textbooks for rent for about the

same price as a lower-end used book. Chegg.com is a book rental company that offers free shipping both ways and promises to plant a tree for every book rented. By going completely paperless with an e-textbook, opting for a black and white used textbook or renting a Chegg.com returnable book, we seem to be going a little more green in our efforts to save a little green.

Make this year count; 5 steps towards a successful resolution

SAAD SHAREIFF
Staff Writer

The holidays are past us once more and the dawn of a new year is upon us. Maybe you would like to shed some of that holiday weight or climb out of debt. Either way, there are 365 days ahead to fully accomplish your goals. Before up taking up year-long tasks, some organizational rules are necessary.

"I'm doing a 365 photo project," Erin McKee, graduate student, says. "So many people take the opportunity of a New Year's resolution to extremes! I want to focus on one small thing this year and that's taking a photograph

a day."

Instead of taking on a monstrous task that will wreak havoc on her self-esteem, McKee is instead focusing on one small thing that will inspire her to do — or look at — things differently.

Rule 1: Make an inverted-to-do list. Instead of writing a massive list of chores to do, try writing a small list of important things that were accomplished. This little trick works as positive reinforcement. Also, you can witness how much work gets accomplished in a single day!

Rule 2: Never, ever, rush. Not only does rushing exhaust you, but it

also takes the fun out of life! Take the time to focus on the resolution: do not make the resolution fit your time. Whether it is working out, paying bills or driving to class, try to never rush.

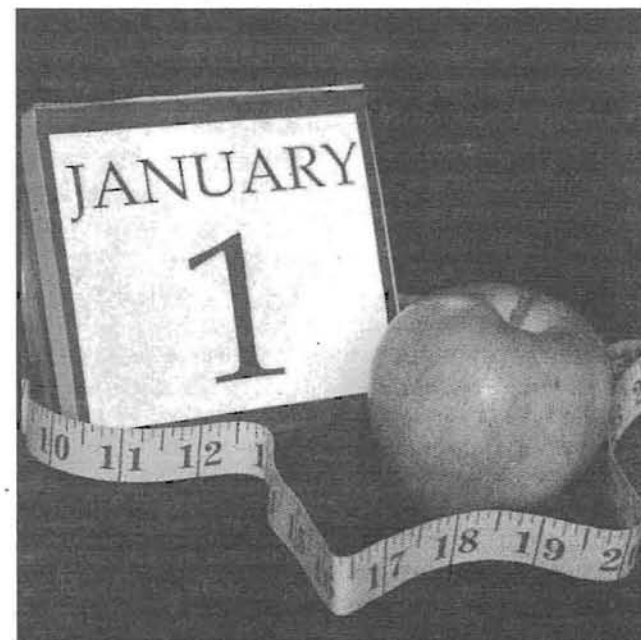
Rule 3: Take a break. If you have only five minutes to spend on a workout for the day, take the day off and work out tomorrow. No one is perfect and everyone needs a break now and then from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. Focusing on a resolution can be another addition to stress, so once in a while just be lazy.

Rule 4: Split it up. There is no reason for anyone to work out every

single day of the year. Split up the workout between the days.

Rule 5: Be proud of your resolutions. Whether it is losing weight or taking a picture a day, be proud of the cause. This little trick will boost your self-esteem and give you something to talk about with new people.

Less than ten percent of Americans successfully complete their New Year's resolutions. Incredibly enough, gyms make the most money during the first three months of the new year. The most surprising fact, actually, is that many people give up their resolution before January ends!



The number one resolution for 2012 is losing weight and getting in better shape.

SARAH LOWE / THE CURRENT

Sports

Tritons basketball is scoring well, winning numerous games

OWEN SHROYER
Sports Editor

St. Louis has always been a college basketball town. Perhaps it is because we do not have an NBA team. Perhaps it is because of all the nearby teams that have perennial success, such as St. Louis University, Mizou and the University of Illinois. This season, though, there is a new team to talk about. Even University of Missouri - St. Louis alum Frank Cusumano, DJ for 590am, the Press Box, gave the team a shout-out on his radio show.

There was a lot to be excited about heading into the season: Second-year Head Coach Steve Tappmeyer had already improved the men's basketball program at UMSL drastically in one year, leading to perhaps its best season ever. It was certainly the best in terms of conference wins. But, apparently Tappmeyer had not even begun to tap into his plan to lead this team to greatness.

The Tritons dropped their first two games, and then dropped their fourth game by 15 points. If you did not know any better, you would have expected another dismal season for the men's basketball team.

But last year was different. If anything, those games were closer to practice, with team members still getting a feel for one another, with an unsure rotation, new faces everywhere and a second-year coach just trying to figure out his way around his new team. He figured it out real quick.

After starting the season 2-3, the team was ready

to buckle down and get to business as their conference schedule began. Would the team be ready by their first two conference road games after starting 2-3? Yes; they easily cruised to two conference road wins by a total of 26 points.

Winning on the road is tough, but doing so can give a team confidence and momentum. The team responded to the three-game road winning streak by coming home to win three more. They beat McKendree, Culver Stockton and Robert Morris Springfield, all by double digits. They were not just beating teams, but trouncing them.

How did the team respond to playing on the road for their first time in a month? The team came out firing against Maryville, jumping out to a quick double-digit lead and working with it for the remainder of the half. Maryville slowly chipped away at the lead, but good teams win close games, and when the Tritons needed to hit their free throws in the final minutes, it was team leader Troy Long, senior, liberal studies, who knocked down four of four free throw, leading to another Triton win.

The Tritons returned to their home court for two games that they did not lose. They remain undefeated at home, having beaten two conference opponents; 79-71 over Wisconsin Parkside where they led for the final 35 minutes and 70-61 over Lewis where they never trailed during the final 35 minutes.

Undefeated in conference, and on a nine-game winning streak, the Tritons went on the road for two conference games, the first of which was at St. Josephs. Again the Tritons led for the final 35 minutes of the game. The story would not be the same in Indianapolis. University of Indianapolis led for the majority of the game, and even by double digits most of the second half. But the Tritons showed grit, worked to tie the game and even got a two-point lead after a 9-0 run in the final two-and-a-half minutes. With four seconds left, the Greyhounds Miles Mitchell hit a three-pointer to give Indianapolis the win and cap the Tritons ten-game win streak.

During the Triton's ten-game win streak, they dominated opponents. Their average margin of victory was 16.5 points. Troy Long has been averaging 20 points per game in conference play. Their hot stretch has led them to first place in the West division of the Great Lakes Valley Conference. They are 6-1 in conference, and 11-4 overall. It has been their high shooting percentage, .454, that has led to their high points per game - 74.2.

The Tritons come home for two conference games next: January 19 against William Jewell and January 21 against Rockhurst. This is truly the best men's basketball team this school has ever had, so come out and support them as they shoot for their first conference championship ever.

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1,000 point milestone highlights stellar career for Caitlyn Moody

ELI DAINS

Staff Writer

The 2011 to 2012 season is already a memorable one for Tritons guard Caitlyn Moody, senior, physical education. In the December 10 game at home against the Missouri Baptist Spartans, Moody scored a game-high 21 points to become only the twelfth woman in school history to eclipse the 1,000 career point threshold. Over the course of her four-year career at the University of Missouri - St. Louis she has certainly worked hard to earn her place in the record books.

On the court, Caitlyn describes herself as an "aggressive, versatile scorer." Moody's abili-

ties on the hardwood are also recognized by her coaches. "Her strength is her shooting - she can shoot the three-pointer as well as post-up and she has a nice pull-up jumper. She has developed into a strong leader for us and has a big impact in our point production," Lisa Curliss-Taylor, head coach, Tritons womens' basketball, said of Moody's skills.

As a high school athlete, Caitlyn played basketball and soccer at Glenwood High School in Chatham, Illinois. As a basketball player, she set the school record for blocked shots, with a career total of 60 and led the league in scor-

ing as a senior. In soccer, Caitlyn was recognized as one of the best goalies in the state, proving that her talent extended to multiple sports.

As a freshman at UMSL, Moody started 22 games and finished third on the team in scoring with 9.7 points per game. In her first season at the collegiate level, she showed flashes of the athlete that she would become, tallying two 20-point outings, while shooting a team best .867 from the free throw line. She was also a Great Lakes Valley Conference Academic All-American selection.

As a sophomore, Caitlyn

stayed consistent on the court, once again finishing third on the team in scoring with 9.5 points per game and matching her freshman total of 3.7 rebounds per game. Her offensive highlights of the season included 29 points against St. Joseph's University and 27 against Missouri Science & Technology. As in her freshman season, she was also named a GLVC Academic All-American.

Last season, as a junior, Caitlyn took a huge step forward on the court. She started all 27 games and improved her scoring output to 13.9 points per game, leading the

team, while keeping her rebounding numbers consistent as ever at 3.7 per game. In the 2010-11 season she scored double digit points in 22 out of 27 games and was named a GLVC Academic All-American for the third consecutive year.

This season has thus far been even more productive than any of the previous for Caitlyn Moody. Over the first 13 games she is averaging 14.4 points and 5.1 rebounds per game, both of which would be career bests. Moving forward Moody expects the team, which currently sits at 6-8 on the season to have a winning record by

the end of the campaign. "We need to keep making improvements everyday," said Moody.

After this season, Caitlyn's playing days as an UMSL Triton will be finished. Looking forward, she plans to expand upon her degree in physical education by going to graduate school to study exercise physiology. If she approaches life with the same dedication and tenacity that she brings to the game of basketball, her future off of the court should be just as successful as her life on it. We here at UMSL wish her all the best and thank her for her powerful legacy.

Lady Tritons basketball season recapped, look ahead

LEON DEVANCE

Staff Writer

Under head coach Lisa Curliss-Taylor, the University of Missouri - St. Louis Tritons women's basketball team has been known strictly as a defensive powerhouse, pressuring opponents to create turnovers and opportunities for easy lay ups.

The Tritons started the 2011-2012 season with an impressive 3-1 record. Now at 6-8, the Tritons begin the Great Lakes Valley Conference season as the last-place team in the Western Division, at 1-5 in the conference. Devonna Smith, junior, sociology, and Kiki Robinson, senior, criminal justice, were the only highlights for the Tritons with their double-double 19 points and 20 rebounds and 10 points

and six rebounds, respectively, as they lost on the road 77-56 to St. Joseph's in conference play.

The five key statistics to focus on are the scoring difference as the Tritons average 64.2 points per game compared to their opponents' average of 69.4. And the Tritons have been outscored in the first half quite often. The opponents up the pressure on the Tritons and outscored them in the second half, as well.

The Tritons average three turnovers more than their opponents. The Tritons have stolen the ball 100 times this season, an average of 7.1 times a game compared to the opponents' 125 steals against them, an average of 8.9 a game. The Tritons are slightly behind

their opposing teams in assists, 187 to 196, an average of 13.4 to 14 assists per game. The Tritons out-rebound at 40.1 per game to 36.8 by opposing teams.

The Tritons shoot .310, and hit 5.1 three-point shots per gam. The Tritons' opponents are less dependant on the outside as they have connected on 72 three-pointers on 223 attempts, an average of 5.1 per game. The Tritons have connected for .400 percent of field goals on 335-838 shots compared to the opponents' 331-790 for 419 field goal percent. The Tritons shoot only .636 from the free throw line for an 11.9 average a game, 166-261, compared to the opponents' .704 percentage for an average 17 free

throws a game, 238-338.

The biggest contributing factor in the Tritons' current 6-8 record is the constant occurrence of injuries, which continues to plague the team, affecting depth on the roster and forcing the Tritons to reach down to the end of the bench.

"We are still nursing nagging and new injuries alike. So we have to go deeper into our bench each game," Curliss-Taylor said.

But despite the injuries, the Tritons offered evidence that they are not done yet as they defeated the Lewis Flyers 67-49 Saturday at home on the Chuck Smith court. The Tritons' dynamic duo of Kiki Robinson, 12 points and 14 rebounds and Caitlyn Moody, senior, physical education, 15

points and six rebounds, led the way against the Flyers. The Tritons controlled the glass as they collected 46 rebounds to the Flyers' 24. The Tritons conducted better offensive execution as they dished out 11 assists and hit 44 percent from the three-point line in the first half, then made 66.7 percent in the second half. The Tritons connected on 87.5 percent of their free-throws.

While the Tritons will never abandon their defensive DNA, injuries were a factor in the Tritons' 10-17 record last season. Injuries comprised against the Tritons yet again in the off-season as Samantha Swarts, freshmen, criminology, was lost with a knee injury and Jennings High

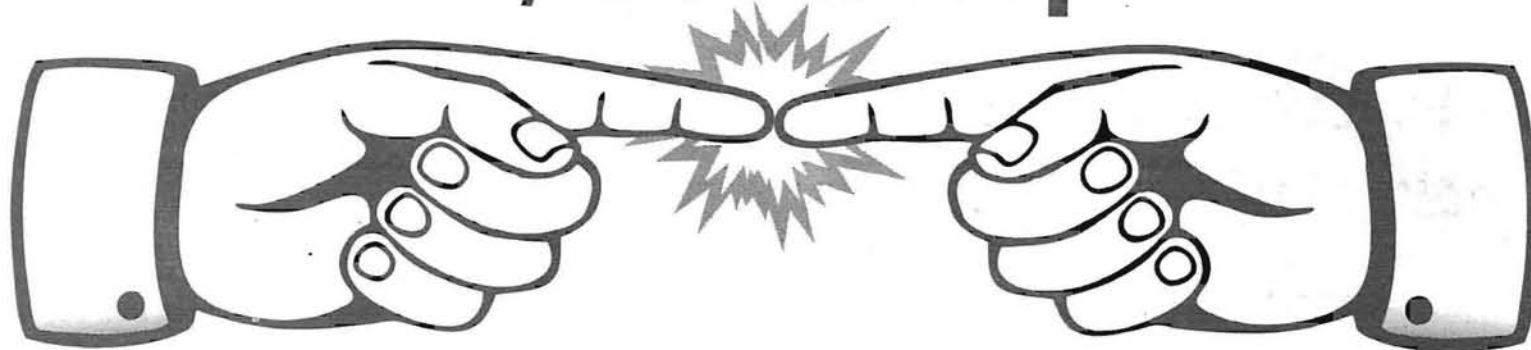
senior Normeka Holder, senior, sociology, to a foot injury before the 2011-2012 season began.

Curliss-Taylor said the Tritons will follow the senior leadership of Robinson, Moody and Kelly Carter, senior, elementary education.

"(Caitlyn) Moody is our most consistent free-throw shooter...she gets our offense in the flow. Moody and Robinson are our team captains as well as Carter," Curliss-Taylor said.

Curliss-Taylor insisted that the Tritons will face tough competition as the Great Lakes Valley Conference continues. "Everyone in this conference is tough. There aren't any easy games in our conference," Curliss-Taylor said.

Point/Counterpoint



Should twelve year-old blogger be allowed celebrity exposure online?

Twelve year-old blogger is overexposed on celebrity site

Intelligent and witty twelve year-old Mikaela Foster, heavily-featured on Zooey Deschanel's women's entertainment website and blog Hellogiggles.com, is a prime walking, talking, tweeting and posting example of overexposure on the internet.

Foster's blog posts covered a myriad of things that would be important to a twelve year-old girl, like dating, the movie "Mean Girls," how annoying her parents are and hair color. Foster has displayed an obvious natural talent for writing and she appears to love it judging by the sheer number and size of posts on her Hellogiggles.com blog. This does not include the probably numerous posts on the Tumblr and Twitter accounts Foster announced she has at the top of her blog, inviting all of the strangers who visit the public website to join.

Foster is far too plugged in for a twelve year-old, a topic that she even jokingly covers on her blog. Though she appears intelligent, Foster is, at twelve, too young by yards to predict the consequences of her actions, an ability that psychologists have said becomes fully honed sometime when people reach their twenties.

Foster illustrated her youthful recklessness in the dozens of pictures she posts of herself and in mentioning the name of a restaurant close to her house, making it too easy for comfort for any unwelcome visitor to find her. In her naiveté, Foster has unintentionally created an unsafe environment for herself.

This is where responsible adults, like Foster's parents, or even Deschanel and those who run her website should step in with the sadly underrepresented mindset that enough can be enough and revealing sometimes highly personal public posts made by child are too, too much. Though remarkably articulate and mature, a child is what Foster is. She even depicted herself next to a stuffed Brobee, the green, fuzzy "Yo Gabba Gabba!" character. Any owner of a Brobee is too immature for public blogging. Intervention is needed to prevent Foster from posting something she will ultimately regret and it is a perverse reflection on our narcissistic, exhibitionist society that what once were personal thoughts and feelings meant for a diary with a lock and key hidden under a pillow are now perfectly commonplace, fair game for a public blog.

Now twelve year-old Foster is a role model. She is a pseudo-public figure at the very least, set up on Deschanel's blog to serve as inspiration to other girls. Instead of looking up to accomplished, adult women like the first lady, lawyers or teachers, Foster's blog readers will look to her, a peer. Foster is a smart kid. She has written successfully about the topics that would interest a twelve year-old girl, but kids need role models of a more mature caliber than Foster.

Overexposing online readers to the topics and limited understanding of a twelve year-old unintentionally distracts them from focusing on material that is mature and could be more beneficial. While Foster, like everyone, should enjoy free speech, it is dangerous for her and silly for everyone else for her to have massive exposure on a celebrity blog site. Foster should be published only on private websites where she can safely share only with friends. Ultimately, public blog spots should be occupied by mature, ethical writers, the likes of which Foster may well grow into. Until then, she needs to be better observed and limited by her parents.

Blogging is not necessarily an age-dependent activity

How many of us remember what it's like to be a 12 year-old? Running around outside, playing games with the neighbors while trying to find our way through what is supposed to be some of the most awkward times of our lives. Middle School.

Well, one little girl is finding her way through the muck and mess of social pressure and self-awareness by blogging, and it just happens to be on a site that is known across the United States and is controlled by the delightfully adorable Zooey Deschanel (try the movie *Elf*, the tv show *New Girl*, and the band *She & Him*). The website, called *Hello Giggles*, is geared towards 'intelligent women' who are looking for an entertainment site that isn't filled with fart jokes and one-night stand stories.

But the debate here is whether we live in a time where it is acceptable for a 12 year-old girl to be posting articles of life, love and happiness on the internet. The answer for this question is yes, we do. We live in an age where this child isn't going to have to go a day without some sort of technological advantage, so why not let her use it?

Mikaela Foster is the youngest contributor to *Hello Giggles*. Having written a grand total of 10 articles for the site, she is putting in simple insights on such things as music, sickness, *I Heart Boobies* bracelets and even the Duggar family.

Mikaela has already broken out by posting on her own Tumblr page (cleverly titled *tweenage-wasteland*) and also openly using Twitter. It's not like blogging is a step in a new direction.

Childlike knowledge of the world is truly insightful. She tells us to appreciate what we have and give to others when she talks about when her dad is in the hospital with cancer. She tells us that we delve too far into the dating scene when discussing if she's old enough to have a boyfriend.

A good portion of the American population can learn from this little twelve year-old girl who is sharing thoughts that really aren't so deep and aren't so profound. Simple lessons that she may just be learning right now in her life, that shouldn't be so far lost in the hustle and bustle of the grown-up world.

The biggest issue that sur-

rounds a twelve year-old writing for a known blog is how could her parents let her do that? Simple. Mikaela's mother is a writer. Publishing poetry, writing hit songs for singer Michael Buble and running her own craft blog.

It's obvious that someone is editing Mikaela's blog. The sentences seem too well-rounded and thought-out at times to truly be from the mind of a 12 year-old. The obvious solution for such a thing would be that Mikaela's mother is editing them. A writer who knows her own daughter's mind and personality. It seems appropriate.

And the opportunities this child has been handed at such a young age are astonishing. She is already being talked about. If she wants to be a writer in the future, she has already found her way. If she wants to do anything else, she has already been given a great chance to prove what she can do. Who wouldn't want to take another chance on this adorable little girl?

While the idea of a 12 year-old blogger may seem a little weird, it's a good thing. She is helping others, her mother approves and she is setting herself up for success in the world.

Opinions

OUR OPINION

Google's driverless car: our ride into a bleak, dangerous future

It is like a bad gag in an old movie: there's a kid in the back seat riding along a busy highway when he notices that there is no one driving the car next to them. The sighting is immediately followed by a double-take, a dropped jaw and pointing at it in hopes that other people see it as well. Well, best warn your kids because Google intends to make the driverless car a reality.

There are differing ideas as to what the cars would be used for initially. An invention of this magnitude must be introduced slowly - most agree on that. One report says guided tours and another indicates the more altruistic: aiding elderly people and those with limited mobility: good options to get the driverless car into the public eye so it can begin to gain the general populace's trust. Considering our exposure to movies like *The Terminator*, *iRobot*, and *The Matrix*, it is easy to understand why we might be gun-shy of a car that can drive itself. As of right now, the actual driverless car has driven about 1,000 miles in cities and on highways with no problems. The car drove itself through the famously winding and sloping roads of San Francisco. Most recently, the state of Nevada began considering it.

There are a lot of things to consider when thinking about an "autonomous"

vehicle, such as how quickly Google or the automobile industry would move on from cars to say, semi-trucks. Charming as Optimus Prime is, we don't actually want him rollin' down our highways and driverless semis would put a lot of people out of work. Other thoughts involve taxi, shuttle and metro bus drivers. Countless jobs would fall before the robot car and what looks innocent enough in a Youtube video becomes a creature with the *Jaws of Life* for teeth to the thousands it puts out of work. A person should not let idealism steal the dinner off another's table.

Now we are not against technology here. Things should move forward, but at a steady pace that allows time to consider possible repercussions and how to resolve them. Why leap off a cliff before you know if there are rocks in the water below? Our general feeling toward the driverless car is that it will only promote laziness and stagnation. Some people might not value driving as a legitimate stimulant to the mind but there are many people who receive great satisfaction from the action and have a great love for the machine they control. It is an extension of them and removing their ability to weave in and out of traffic or change their destination on a whim might leave some with a sort of phantom-limb

syndrome.

Now there are some benefits, real benefits, not just "oh I can use my commute time to read or work," when really that time will probably be spent playing *Words with Friends* or updating Facebook statuses. If cars drive themselves, there is less room for human error. Highways can have smaller lanes and thus more of them to ease congestion. The driverless car can drive itself home after it has dropped off its person, therefore reducing the need for garages. Another interesting result would be that because human error is reduced to next to nothing, in theory we would collectively spend less money.

We would pay less in insurance and since the number of accidents would conceivably drop, we wouldn't have to replace cars as often. Is it a good thing? For lives, yes. For young, accident-prone teenagers, it is - but for the people who make their living making cars in factories, for the dealerships and the automobile-makers, not so much. It is hard to imagine a world in which we are all chauffeured, but it might be just around the corner.

Unsigned editorials reflect the majority viewpoint of The Current's Editorial Board: Matthew Poposky, Minho Jung, Ashley Atkins, Cate Marquis, Jennifer Meahan, Jeremy Zschau and Janaca Scherer.

DEFINING MOMENTS

'Happy New Year!' given scope and definition for January 2012

The ball drops in Times Square. "Happy New Year!" they shout, and then people have to kiss. People have to kiss someone to ring in the New Year. It could be someone they love, like, hate or do not even know. And there is not necessarily anything happy about this kiss. There is something obligatory about it, and the kiss could be with the sweet powder-smelling widowed aunt you happen to be sitting next to on the couch or a sad, single friend desperate for human contact - any human contact. Kissing the wrong person is a terrible way to start anything, let alone a whole year. But tradition is everything, so anything goes.

Resolutions are made, which means unhappy sacrifices are promised for happy results. Cheesecake is unhappily sacrificed for looking happy in a string bikini come summer, sleep is unhappily sacrificed in hopes of the happy day that the big promotion or best grade is yours, and spare cash for concert tickets or Pabst Blue Ribbon is unhappily sacrificed for the happy day the down payment on the shiny new car becomes affordable. Oh how blissfully naïve to make resolutions, for resolutions are the promise of disappointment to come when they lay bleeding in the middle of life's road come March or so. No one is as happy in March as they are at midnight on New Year's Eve, at the moment of the kiss.

Of course, all resolutions do not go to pot. Someone, if not you, will lose twenty pounds, get an "A," be promoted or buy a new car. Those people, the lucky resolution achievers, gambled on New Year's Eve when they made their resolutions, just the same way the rest did. Everyone who made a resolution gambled because they hoped to win. And, really, every year, everyone could best their resolution. Failures of the past year fail to matter as the world turns the inch that makes the difference between 2011 and 2012, and it is a time to set a hopeful goal. The fate of that goal is uncertain, but it is still best to set one anyway.

"Experts," whoever they are, say it is always best to have a goal. They say that people's minds function best when they have an endpoint in mind, and that success builds self-esteem. So why not set a goal? It is not like failing to accomplish a New Year's Resolution will make for an unhappy year or the total decimation of self-esteem. So many people resolve something on New Year's Eve, despite their resolution success rate, that it seems pretty safe to say that self-esteem has a pretty quick rebound rate. No matter how it feels in March when dead resolution carnage is the reason for the world's woe, when the next year rolls around resolve is reincarnated. Hope feels natural and happy, and resolutions are made and



Hali Flintrop

re-made.

In reality, time is a continuum, and there is no rational difference between New Year's Eve and any other time. There could not possibly be legitimate cause to believe that a goal set while ringing in the New Year is more likely to be achieved than a goal set at any other plain old time, right? Except for hope. New Year's Eve is the only time in the whole year that anyone is willing to pucker their lips with reckless abandon to receive a kiss from whoever is the closest. There is a naïve, silly, genuine and absolutely delicious hope that our lips will connect with someone wonderful as the old year kisses the New Year hello. It may be a good kiss, it may not. The optimism is the important part, and just like with resolutions, there will be winners and losers. New Year is "happy" because of goals, kisses and optimism. If none of that works out, there is always 2013, 14, 15, 16... Happy New Year!

Hali Flintrop is the News Editor and a columnist candidate for The Current.

What do you think?
www.thecurrent-online.com.

SCIENCE MATTERS

Media coverage of Keystone pipeline shows science reporting flaws

Last year, Congress created a showdown over attaching approval of a 1,700-mile oil pipeline from Canada to Texas to legislation extending the payroll tax cut.

Judging from comments on the internet, it appears a sizable portion of the American public thinks that the debate over TransCanada's Keystone XL oil pipeline is about jobs or oil prices. That conclusion misses the real topic at the heart of this issue, oil production from tar sands, but much of the blame for that mistaken impression is how the subject has been covered by the news media in this country.

The news media often covers science and environmental stories the same way it covers political or social issues stories. Reports present a summary of the issue, with two equally-presented, opposing viewpoints. However, this seemingly balanced approach actually is often a disservice to readers when covering science, because it fails to give a complete picture of the science underlying the topic. Frequently it gives the illusion there are two equally valid arguments, when that is not always the case.

A case in point is the current debate over the Keystone XL oil pipeline. TransCanada's pipeline is intended to carry Canadian oil from tar sands in Alberta to a Texas port on the gulf of Mexico, for export to other nations. While news media report that there is strong opposition from environmentalists and many scientists, although why they are opposed is never explored. On the other side, the media reports that business interests favor it and claim it would create jobs. Media coverage then typically goes into a

debate over how many jobs it may or may not be created or focus on the issues role in some kind of political stand-off between the Obama administration and Congress or between Obama and environmental groups.

But what is left out of this picture is the most important aspect of the debate, the one that matters most in terms of what the public needs to know to form an informed opinion on it. Namely, the reasons behind the opposition: the real costs of oil production from tar sands.

First, let us look at what the pipeline is. Since this is Canadian oil, building the pipeline will not reduce United States energy dependence on Middle Eastern oil or reduce prices at U.S. pumps. This is a Canadian enterprise, carrying petroleum from Alberta, Canada to the Texas coast, intended solely for export overseas. It will not be refined or sold here. Jobs will be created in building it but few will be needed to maintain it. We can create an equal number of construction jobs with any number of more useful projects.

Then, there is what this project means for a livable planet. This oil comes not from an ordinary oil field but from a source once considered so costly, so unprofitable and so dirty that it was inconceivable to ever consider it as a source: tar sands.

Tar sands are a mix of clay, sand, water, and bitumen. Bitumen is also known as asphalt or tar, a naturally-occurring, thick, smelly, viscous material. This is not liquid pumped from the ground. Tar sands are strip-mined and melted to release its oil or it is extracted by injecting steam at high pressure.



Cate Marquis

Converting it into crude oil requires enormous quantities of water and natural gas and it creates large amounts of carbon dioxide and waste material. Extracting oil from tar sands produces 82 percent more greenhouse gas emissions than conventional oil production and releases more mercury and arsenic. The process also produces an exceptional dirty kind of petroleum.

The difficulty in extracting oil from this natural asphalt had previously made it prohibitively expensive but rising oil prices have made it tempting for oil companies. A pipeline for export will accelerate its production.

As the world uses up easily-obtained oil, it is forced to choose between more costly, less accessible oil sources, like tar sands, or switching to other energy sources. As oil costs rise, alternatives become more economically attractive. Those other energy sources would then become even cheaper due to efficiencies and economies of scale.

Tar sands are a costly source for oil and the complete picture of the costs to all of us should be the real issue the news media focuses on when reporting on the Keystone pipeline.

Cate Marquis is Arts and Entertainment Editor and a columnist for The Current.

MAD WORLD

Postmortem bullying showcases the worst the internet has to offer

It's safe to say that suicide isn't usually considered an amusing topic, unless perhaps in the hands of a talented comedian. Those who have taken to the internet recently to mock the death of 15 year-old Amanda Cummings are neither talented nor funny, but represent a disturbingly unapologetic group whose antics have repeatedly crossed the line.

Two days after Christmas, Cummings stepped in front of a bus with a suicide note in her pocket. She died six days later from her injuries. The online taunting that followed her death began with the forum 4chan.org, whose users have been criticized in the past for taking their mob-like online jeering to a place of real-life harassment. Users of the site gathered on the Facebook memorial page created in Cummings's honor to openly mock both Amanda and those who mourn her, citing the ridiculousness of Facebook memorials as justification for their actions. Those involved pose as enlightened critics of society in order to justify their crass behavior, painting their actions as being more thoughtful than they most likely are. While the merits and sincerity of expressing grief in a manner that's simultaneously social yet disconnected has been debated, at what point is it worth hurting those who are already grieving the loss of a loved one just to make a

point? That's assuming, however, that social commentary is as much of a factor in their actions as some claim.

Without the threat of social retribution, unpopular attitudes can thrive on the internet, where even the most heinous viewpoints can find support and even applause. When criticized by the media, those being challenged claim that their free speech is being infringed upon; they do so with a level of self-righteous indignation and fury that can only exist online, where one can live in a nearly untouchable bubble of unwavering moral superiority. The resulting adoption of the oppressed victim role by those who initially began the cycle in the first place is laughable and showcases the supreme obliviousness of the most narcissistic among us.

Part of the problem is that many today live in a society where the internet affords us an amount of distance from the "real world." Someone can type and send words out into the limitless void of the internet with no real thought as to the actual real-life repercussions of their actions because it has no bearing on their day-to-day personal lives. It's this disconnect from immediate reality that leads to overzealous online shopping, out-of-hand Facebook fights, and shameful behavior such as this.

There's something about the internet that brings out



Sharon Pruitt

the sociopathic nature in those who were previously just mean-spirited and cynical. It can serve as a vacuum, sucking out all of the empathy that many would at least pretend to possess in real-life situations. The power and privilege of anonymity brings out the best and the worst in people, the bravery and the cowardice. With anonymity comes a fearlessness that brings out whatever the one behind the virtual mask isn't brave enough to reveal in the "real" world, where consequences exist and everything isn't a joke, no matter how much they think it should be. Would these people be so quick to openly mock the death of a teenage girl in the physical presence of her loved ones? Judging by the tendency of many of them to go by a pseudonym whenever they're officially quoted in the media, it's a safe bet that many wouldn't. That's the point where the joke stops being funny.

Sharon Pruitt is a columnist and staff writer for The Current.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Let us know at www.thecurrent-online.com

Horoscopes

CURRENT HOROSCOPES by The Inane Collective
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CAPRICORN (DEC. 23 - JAN. 20)

So, too much winter fun led to a terrible case of pneumonia, eh? Remember to take all of your medicine and that, for future reference, swimming in a lake at two in the morning during snow is not smart.

AQUARIUS (JAN. 21 - FEB. 19)

When people talk to you, they tend to use baby voices and tell you just how beautiful you are. Keep in mind that while these compliments may be plentiful now, personality is still key in the long run.

PISCES (FEB. 20 - MARCH 20)

Find pleasure in the simple things this week. Enjoy a night out under the stars. Dance when nobody is watching. Throw a frisbee with your dog. Just remember a coat for the outdoor activities.

ARIES (MARCH 21 - APRIL 20)

How much did you actually accomplish over winter break? How much more could you have accomplished had you not sat around drinking beer and watching reruns? Why are you taking my advice?

TAURUS (APRIL 21 - MAY 21)

Late night visits to Memebase and Cracked may be beneficial to your sanity, but they have been seriously impeding your ability to function when surrounded by other people. Consider lowering your dosage.

GEMINI (MAY 22 - JUNE 21)

Fast cars and trips to bars are hallmarks of the rich and famous. Unfortunately, this is not a future which anybody sees for you, so starting a real savings account this week will be beneficial.

CANCER (JUNE 22 - JULY 22)

That roaring sound you keep hearing in the middle of the night is not a monster, nor is it your overactive metabolism. Your home is actually located right next to a stealthed military base. Investigate.

LEO (JULY 23 - AUG. 21)

The start of a new semester means the start of a new you. Give up old vices, start living a healthier lifestyle and do not take no for an answer. Not even from the rude attendants at Subway. Get those sammiches!

VIRGO (AUG. 22 - SEPT. 23)

Moments like this only come once in a lifetime, so be sure to pursue this opportunity with absolute dedication. Do not let anything sideline your passions and be sure to be home by eleven: mother's orders.

LIBRA (SEPT. 24 - OCT. 23)

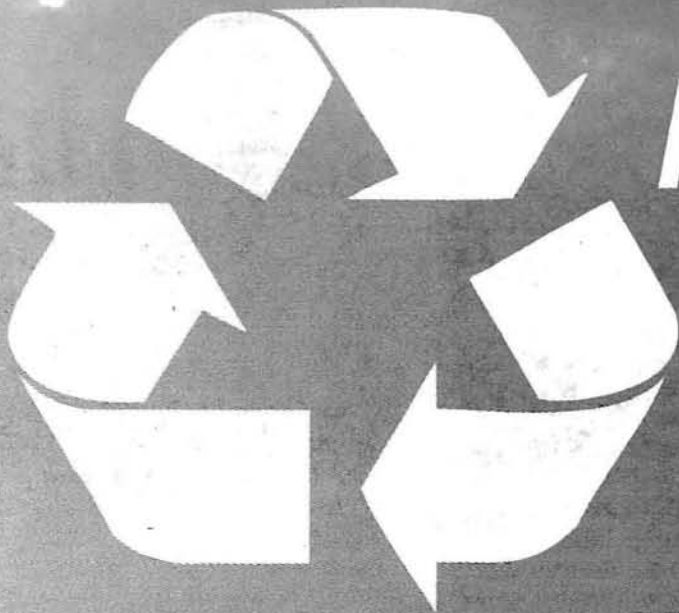
Chaos really is underrated, don't you think? Honestly, all of this balance stuff is pretty ridiculous and it never really pays off in the long run. True anarchy is the only way to... wait...Libra...right...later!

SCORPIO (OCT. 24 - NOV. 22)

This week, somebody will intentionally lock you out of the restroom at the most inconvenient moment imaginable. In order to combat this, be sure to eat and drink sparingly and use the facilities before leaving home.

SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 23 - DEC. 22)

As more and more of the world around you begins to fall into patterns of idiocy and conformity, remember that one day, their works will amount to nothing and yours will pay off. Just saying.



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Simply Beagle by Karlee Sellars



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