

The

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A Weekly Student Publication

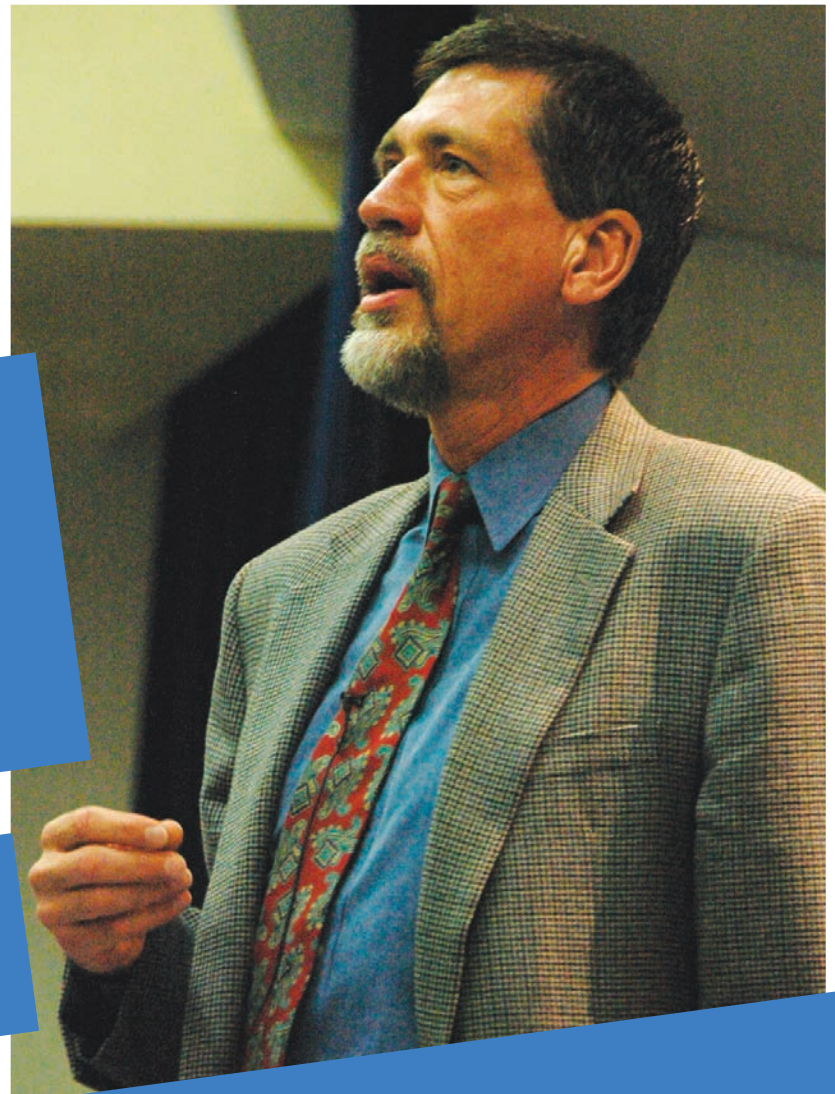
November 12, 2009

Commuter



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The Commuter
Editor-In-Chief: Ryan Henson
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Campus News

News about Linn-Benton Community College, including the Sweet Home, Lebanon, and Benton Centers.

Office Hours: Q&A with Dana Emerson

Max Brown
 The Commuter

Most people get nervous at the thought of public speaking, in Dana Emerson's classes students are not even allowed to say the word "nervous." If you need help conquering your fears of public speaking, Emerson will help you obtain that goal.

Commuter: What do you teach here, and do you like it?

Dana Emerson: I teach different areas of speech communication: public speaking, small group communication, interpersonal communication and introduction to persuasion class, and I absolutely love it.

C: What do you like most about it?

DE: Probably the variety [of situations] that happens in the classroom every single day. I can never predict what's going to happen, so the classroom is like a reality TV show. It's a little bit scripted, but the boundaries are so poor you never know what's going to happen; you just get to have a good time doing it. And I love to see the transition that my students make, from being really

fearful of getting up and expressing themselves in front of a class and introducing themselves to people, to not necessarily loving it but being able to do it and being able to do it with confidence.

C: Which class is your favorite to teach?

DE: I love to teach them all because they all just bring something completely different to the teaching experience. I probably have the most fun in public speaking. I get the most relationships in interpersonal communication class, I see the most emerging leaders in small group class, and I definitely see students go far beyond what they think they're capable of in the introduction to persuasion class.

C: What do you do outside of teaching speech?

DE: [laughs] Yeah, what do I do? I try to explore Oregon as much as I possibly can. I'm really interested in seeing the beauty of the state, so I always ask my students to give me some adventures they think I would like, and that won't kill me, because I would like to come back to work someday. [laughs]

C: What would you be doing if you weren't teaching?

DE: I'd probably be doing what I used to do in California, which was run a couple of businesses. With my consulting firm I worked in the area of politics and I was being groomed to run for public office. I would probably still be somewhere in the political arena.

C: And why'd you leave all that?

DE: [laughs] It's hectic and California got really, really, really expensive to live [in]. It just didn't seem like you could ever get ahead, like you were running this race really fast and they kept moving the finish line.

C: What are your plans for the future?

DE: [laughs] I can feel myself being pulled towards some political work here in Oregon. I'm really interested in expanding the views of diversity here in Oregon and finding ways to incorporate a better understanding



Dana Emerson Photo by Max Brown

of diversity in just every institution that Oregon has. I think there's a lack [of that] here. There's no reason why we can't step up and start having more conversations about diversity and just bring it all up to the surface and not be afraid of it anymore.

Where to find Dana Emerson

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Wonder women

Maya Lazaro
 The Commuter

The annual fall conference for the American Association of Women in Community Colleges of Oregon is quickly approaching. Linn-Benton Community College's own AAWCC chapter is inviting students and faculty of all sexes to register with them and take part in an event designed to "change women's lives through leadership and education," as stated by the organization's mission statement.

The conference, themed "Maintaining Our Vision, Sustaining Our Spirit," will include talks by keynote speakers on leadership and personal growth, a wide variety of breakout sessions and a jewelry-making workshop. The event will be held at the Sheraton Portland Airport Hotel Nov. 19 - 20. Registration costs \$200 and can be completed online at <http://www.aawccoregon.org>.

The Oregon conference is part of a much larger national organization that also offers a convention every year in the spring. The AAWCC is centered on improving educational opportunities for women so that they may better succeed academically and in the workplace, achieve equity and financial independence, and foster healthy communities. LBCC's chapter offers monthly meetings and provides leadership opportunities to its many members, as well as awards at least two student scholarships every year. This year's scholarship recipients include Jessica Calhoun, Sarah McRae and Stephanie Kramer.



For questions and comments about either the upcoming Portland conference or becoming part of LBCC's local chapter, contact Valerie Zeigler at 541-917-4485 or Shelly Dermody at 541-259-5826.



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“Suburban Love Stories”

Max Brown
 The Commuter

The room was packed and full of laughter as Karelia Stetz-Waters told tales of growing up and discovering her sexuality.

The Valley Writers Series event for fall term featured Karelia Stetz-Waters, a writing teacher at Linn-Benton Community College, reading from her works. The event took place Thursday, Nov. 5, in North Santiam Hall, Room 209. At the beginning of the event Amy Earls, LBCC’s poet laureate, read from her poetry.

Stetz-Waters read a chapter from her memoir, “Suburban Love Stories,” and a chapter from her new fiction book, “Throwing from the Lie.” After the reading she answered questions about her work and her quest to get her books in print.

Currently neither of the books are published, but her agent is in the process of selling her memoir. The fiction book was just finished in the last few weeks.

Stetz-Waters said she chose to read the particular chapter from her memoir because “the thing that I like best about my own writing is the blend of pretty bold, campy humor mixed right in with fairly serious ideas and poetic language, and I thought this was the best example of those two in the same chapter.”

In this chapter Stetz-Water describes her experiences with high school sex education class, her very sexually active friend and her first kiss with a boy. The kiss was so perfect she decided that she had gotten it right, and thus never needed to repeat it.

“I loved how she uses comedy and makes you laugh when she reads her own writing,” said Sarah Riley, a psychology student at LBCC.

“It gave us aspiring mess-pool of unregistered authors a chance to talk to someone of a bigger name than us,” said Benjamin Brumbaugh, an LBCC student who hopes to become an author someday.

He found the event interesting because Stetz-Waters shared a lot of useful information about getting published and how that works.

Although he found the event useful, he added, “I’m not a fan of gays and lesbians, to be frank ... I’ll probably never read or touch one of her books.”

Stetz-Waters said she would be disappointed that someone would not read her work because of that, but she could think of 20 things she would not be interested in reading, and gave the example of motocross. Not because she thinks it is bad, but because she is just not interested.

She has experienced some prejudice in her life because of her sexual orientation, but she says it’s been significantly less than people would expect and not as much as others have experienced.

Her memoir fills a need that she said has not been met. While most gay or lesbian memoirs focus on the prejudices and discrimination that people have experienced, hers does not because she feels that she was accepted and protected by her family, friends, church and others in the community.

“We gravitate to stories of horrible things done by horrible people, and we forget how many really good people are just going through every day being kind, being decent, being open-minded. We don’t give them enough play. So the memoir really is a tribute to those people,” Stetz-Waters said.

On top of the readings she also talked



Karelia Stetz-Waters

Photo by Max Brown

about how much she writes and her plans for the future. She said that during the summer she writes about eight hours a day, and during the school year she tries to do at least eight hours each week.

She said she plans to start writing another fiction novel right away. Currently her idea for this one would be a paranormal setting where students at a college attempt to summon a great dark force as their thesis project. Then the book would follow a band of unlikely heroes as they attempt to save the day from this summoned evil.

“I love the capability of literature to transcend demographic boxes and to tell stories that are appealing because of who we are as human beings, not just straight or gay, white or black, male or female,” Stetz-Waters said.

See some of Stetz-Waters’ work online at www.kareliastetzwaters.com



A pizza benefit is being held all day on Nov. 12, at the downtown American Dream Pizza, 214 SW 2nd St. The benefit is being held for Damian Ellenburg who has been in the ICU for over a month with an unknown illness. 50 percent of the profits will go towards his medical bills.

Two actors, John Pribyl and Eddie Lopez, from the

Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland will be at the Russell Tripp Performance Center on Friday, Nov. 13. They will perform Shakespeare’s “Fools and Clowns” at 10 a.m. and from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. they will offer an actors’ workshop. For more information, contact Peter Jensen at 541-917-4283.

A blood drive will be held on Wednesday, Nov. 18, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the Alsea/Calapooia rooms. Donors will be eligible to enter a drawing to win two tickets to the Civil War game in Eugene on Dec. 3.

The Thanksgiving food drive is under way, with food and money being

collected through Nov. 19. Boxes have been placed throughout campus for non-perishable food donations. Monetary donations may be sent to Jeanine Howell in room T-213, with checks made payable to AAWCC.

In celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month, LBCC will exhibit the artwork of Humberto Gonzalez and Yolanda Valdés in the LBCC North Santiam Hall Gallery through Nov. 23.

The 39th Annual Children’s Winter Festival will be held on the second floor of the Calapooia Center on Dec. 5, from 1 to 4 p.m. This year’s event will feature magicians, a Kwanzaa celebration, Hanukkah

activities, cookie decorating, crafts and pictures with Santa. The event is free and open to the public.

The LBCC Foundation Annual Fund Drive is now accepting pledges and donations. For more information, call 541-917-4209.

LBCC’s ROV club currently has their remotely operated vehicle on display in the library. The display will be up until mid-November.

If you have a Campus Short, please e-mail them to commuter@linnbenton.edu.

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Opinion

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A word from your local ASG

Student fees are attached to every credit hour that is offered at LBCC. The \$74 charge accrued by students per credit hour is comprised of \$68.72 for tuition, a \$2.28 Student Activity Fee, \$1.00 Transportation and Safety Fee, and a \$2.00 Technology Fee. The portion that interests me most is the \$2.28 Student Activity Fee. Every term, an average student may pay \$20-\$30 for this fee and in some cases as high as \$35-\$40. Are you getting your money's worth?



Nic Bowman

The Student Activity Fee is used to fund a plethora of budgetary line items ranging from breakfast at the start-of-term "Welcome Back" tables, to the very recent 80's Halloween Dance. This fee also helps to cover funding for athletic programs, guest lecturers, club activities, and a variety of other extracurricular happenings. Yet another fee-funded event is fast approaching; Study Jam is set to occur Saturday, Dec. 5, and Sunday, Dec. 6 on the main campus in Albany.

Study Jam, an event brought to LBCC by last year's ASG, is an opportunity for students to enjoy a weekend (or just a few hours) of quality study-time just before finals week each term. In its pilot year, Study Jam offered a wide range of services to its participants including extended library and learning center hours, math and writing help desks, meals and snacks, and even a masseuse. This year's ASG is currently working on the final details for fall term's event. In an effort to improve Study Jam, the ASG is trying to include a time frame for a childcare service during this term's event and a possible expansion of the event to include the Benton Center. And although childcare will be limited and restricted upon initial trial terms, and other satellite campuses lack the same inclusion as the Benton Center, this is a hopeful step towards a more successful student outcome. If both additions become reality, more students than ever will have their much-needed opportunities to prepare for the pressures that come with the last week of term.

The ASG is always soliciting input and feedback from the community they serve. If you have any suggestions as to how Study Jam or any other events could be improved, or if you have any other questions, comments, or concerns please do not hesitate to contact your representatives in the Student Life & Leadership office.

Hoping to see you there,
Nic Bowman
ASG President

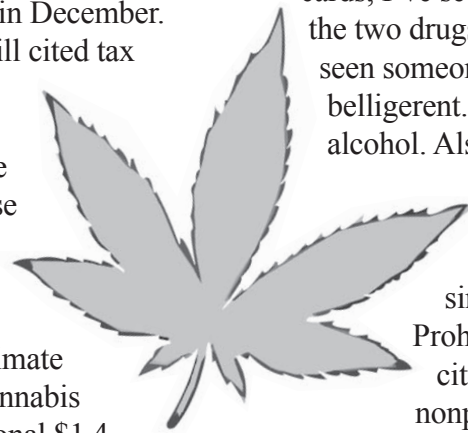
Smoke 'em if you got 'em

Adam LaMascus
The Commuter

So it seems that California may be legalizing marijuana next year, and if they do, Massachusetts may follow suit. An article by the New York Times says that the legalization effort has made some huge gains in the past few years, and that on Wednesday, Oct. 28 California had a hearing to discuss a legalization bill. According to the San Francisco Chronicle, they argued a lot but didn't really reach any major conclusions, and they will most likely continue to argue about it once the Legislature reconvenes in December. People in favor of the bill cited tax revenue increases and other benefits, while opponents claimed there would be a huge increase in violence, drug cartel power and traffic accidents.

Tax officials estimate legalizing and taxing cannabis could bring in an additional \$1.4 billion in revenues to the financially cramping state. I say go for it, and I don't even smoke.

Dr. Burke, president of the American Historical Reference Society (AHRs) and a consultant for the Smithsonian Institute, has said that many of the founding fathers and other presidents smoked it. George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, Andrew Jackson, Zachary Taylor, Benjamin Franklin and Franklin Pierce, just to name a few. Not only that, but the AHRs said that there is evidence of marijuana use since the dawn of human history.



Harry J. Anslinger, one of the leaders behind the push to criminalize cannabis, was also the Assistant Commissioner of the Bureau of Prohibition and therefore obviously a big supporter of Prohibition, before he was made Commissioner of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics. The late Anslinger said that cannabis causes people to act violently, irrationally and "overly sexual." If I may say so, alcohol is so much worse than cannabis in that regard! As someone who lives in a college town and has some friends in California with medical marijuana cards, I've seen first hand the effects of the two drugs on people, and I've never seen someone smoke a joint and get belligerent. I cannot say the same for alcohol. Also, it seems to me that the opponents of legalization seem to be using some scare-monger tactics similar to the ones used during Prohibition. The people in favor cite numbers and numerous nonpartisan experts, while the opposition gets police officers to say "there will be more violence and Mexican drug dealers will have power in California!" No offense to the police officers.

The government spends millions of dollars annually tracking down, prosecuting and incarcerating people who grow marijuana. Druglibrary.com sited research by numerous sources, their estimates ranging from \$60 million to \$100 million annually. Why spend that time and money when you can just tax them and make money off of it? Handle it like we handle alcohol and regular tobacco: regulate it, tax it and only track people down when they are being reckless and endangering others.

Associated Student Government meeting schedule
3:30 to 4:30 p.m.
November 18 – Benton Center, Room BC-104; Public welcome.
December 2 – Board Room, Room CC-103; Public welcome.
December 9 – Siletz Room, Room CC-213; Public welcome.

The views of the ASG do not necessarily reflect those of The Commuter. Any questions or comments can be directed to the Student Life & Leadership office.

Perspectives:

Do you give blood? Why or why not?

 Tim Clauson E.M.T. "You know what? I haven't. I can't say there's a particular reason."	 Marian Tolmen English "I used to all the time because I like the feeling of helping someone out."	 Erik Fisher Diesel Tech. "I haven't... there's no particular reason why I haven't."	 Emily Rist Undecided "I don't, but I would if I had the opportunity."	 James Barnes Diesel Tech. "I have... to help out people."
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Compiled by Alx George. The views expressed in Perspectives do not necessarily represent the views of The Commuter staff.

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Opinion

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Back in the day

Adam Lamascus
 The Commuter

This week in history...

Nov. 11, 1918: The war to end all wars ends...

At the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, World War I officially ends with Germany signing an armistice. The treaty is signed in a railroad car outside of Compiègne, France. On an amusing side note, during World War II, the Germans used the same railroad car to hold the meeting where France surrendered to Germany.

Nov. 12, 1970: Whale of a tale...

The Oregon Highway Division blows up a beached sperm whale carcass with dynamite at Florence, Oregon. The nearby news reporters are surprised when chunks of blubber begin raining on them, splattering buildings, houses, parking lots, and damaging a parked car. As if all that weren't bad enough, it didn't even work, and OHD workers had to manually remove the remains of the whale.

Nov. 13, 1002: Should've thought that one through...

King Ethelred "the Unready" of England orders the massacre of every Danish person living in England. He believes the almost constant raids by Vikings are being aided by the Danes in England. Thousands of Danes are murdered, including the sister of King Sweyn Forkbeard of Denmark. In an act of revenge, Forkbeard invaded England and was aided by the surviving Danish residents. Ethelred the Unready was forced to flee, and died in exile.

Nov. 14, 1969: That's one second step for man...

NASA launches the Apollo 12, the second manned mission to the moon. Pete Conrad and Alan L. Bean have the privilege of walking on the surface, while pilot Richard F. Gordon remains in lunar orbit.

Nov. 15, 1864: Not making any friends...

Union General William Tecumseh Sherman burns down the pro-Confederate city of Atlanta, Ga., in preparation for his infamous March to the Sea. If you are from the South, you already knew this and hated Sherman. If you didn't know this, I wouldn't recommend talking about the guy south of the Mason-Dixon Line.

Nov. 16, 1632: Great man most of you haven't heard of...

During the battle of Lutzen, King Gustavus Adolphus the Great of Sweden is killed. King Gustavus is known for having almost single-handedly created the Golden Age of Sweden. Likewise, he was an excellent general, and is known in military circles as "the father of modern warfare."

Nov. 17, 1969: A step in the right direction...

Ambassadors from the United States and the Soviet Union meet in Helsinki, Finland, to begin discussions on the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks, also known as SALT I. This is an attempt to reduce the number of nuclear weapons the U.S. and U.S.S.R. possessed. At the time of SALT I, the U.S. had approximately 4,500 nuclear warheads, a combined load of over 5,100 megatons.

Thought for the week:

"History doesn't always repeat itself. Sometimes it just screams, 'Why don't you listen to me?' and lets fly with a big stick."

-John W. Campbell Jr.

Advice from Weiss

Mark Weiss
 for The Commuter

Q. Besides trying to do well on my tests and papers, what else can I do to be a success at college?

A. Ahh, the question every faculty member wishes to be asked, yearns to be asked, and I get to answer it. I knew this career would pay off, some day.

A quote that's most commonly attributed to filmmaker Woody Allen (but who knows) is "80 percent of success is showing up." Now I don't know if the exact number is 80 percent, but I'm sure it's a big number. I think students pass classes, employees get promotions, lovers win the hearts of their beloved and politicians get elected president of the United States by showing up more than anyone else. Students who show up consistently know things that other students do not know and I don't just mean about the subject of the class. Students who show up learn the teacher's style and preferences. They understand the emphasis of the class, from this teacher's unique perception and knowledge base. These students also know about any small change that's made in class, like a shift in an assignment, or the due date of an assignment, for instance.

There's one more very important advantage students who show up for class have over students who don't: The teacher knows them and has reason to believe in them. Teachers, like anyone, are far more likely to be responsive to the people they know and trust than they are going to be to those they don't know well enough to trust. So, if you need some special help, or consideration, you are far more likely to get that help from a teacher that knows you from your participation in class, as opposed to a teacher that doesn't know you from Adam ... For instance, one of the most common reasons for missing class (and, therefore, need to take a test or turn in an assignment at an alternative time) is that a grandparent has died. Teachers hear this from students a lot, and mostly, it's true. But when any human being hears the same reason a lot, they do begin to question the validity of it, particularly if the person asking for special consideration hasn't been to class very often to begin with. I mean, who are YOU going to believe, when it's your turn to be the teacher, or the business owner, or the president - someone who's been there seven out of 14 times, or someone who's been there every time?

In my experience, there is a tie for "second biggest key to success in college." The tie is between "homework" and "sleep." We talk about this as being "the Communication Age," and we see the truth of this in classrooms every day. Teachers don't just expect students to show up, they expect them to speak up. They



Counselor Mark Weiss

expect students to communicate and participate. You can't participate if you don't have some information. Well, you can, you just can't do so with any credibility or success. And this expectation of knowledgeable participation doesn't stop with school. It's in the world of work, the world of government, the world of community involvement and pretty much every other aspect of life. We never get away from "doing our homework" anymore. Needing to

have information as we come through the door is a part of everyone's life. It's just the age we live in.

Getting some sleep, unfortunately, is just as important as doing your homework. I say "unfortunately," because these two factors are often competing for our time. We have all experienced those late night sessions of writing a paper or reading three chapters, of pulling an "all-nighter" in order to be ready for class in the morning. And maybe we do well with that paper, or those three chapters. But typically, we then fall apart, or just let go where our other classes and responsibilities are concerned, on that day at least.

Somehow, some way, you have to plan for sleep as well as homework. One of the most helpful statements I've heard on the topic was made by one of our Study Skills teachers. She said, "Don't take your homework home!" Her point is that a college that has a learning center, a library, and a disabilities learning lab, has plenty of help for you to get your work done in a timely way, and not risk the kinds of personal conflicts, family conflicts, social conflicts, and sleep loss that can come from trying to do homework at home. If we arrive home, with homework already taken care of, it may be a little later than we would otherwise get there, but we can then give our "other life" our full attention, we can actually pay attention to our own energy level and do a better job of getting the rest every body needs.

So, showing up is important, but if you haven't had some sleep, you probably won't have the energy needed to pay attention and learn, much less participate. And, successful participation in class is dependent on having some information, on having done some homework on the subject at hand.

There are many other factors in being a success at college, so I will do a "Part Two" column next week. For years now I have been collecting comments and suggestions, from faculty and students, on how to succeed in school. I'll share several more next week.

Mark Weiss has been a counselor and adviser at LBCC for 20 years. The purpose of this column is to answer students' questions about the college, academic advising, and how to be successful at LBCC. Please send your questions to mark.weiss@linnbenton.edu or stop by the Career and Counseling Center in Takena Hall.

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Feature

Something a little different.

Presidential showdown

Justin Bolger
 The Commuter

Who is to be crowned the successor to Rita Cavin as the next president of Linn-Benton Community College?

In a public forum last Friday, the two candidates, Gregory Hamann and Darlene Miller, shared with the audience their philosophies on leadership and education. Each survived over an hour answering questions from an audience nearing 100 people.

According to Hamann, president of Clatsop Community College, a leader needs to create a story and passion around their organization.

"[A leader] needs to be the banner carrier for the work that we do," says Hamann.

Miller, former president of Manchester Community College in New Hampshire, believes that you should surround yourself with people who know more about their jobs than you do.

"Hire good people and get out of their way," says Miller.



Darlene Miller

Both candidates expressed a strong desire for open communication with the staff as well as the students. Both believe decisions should be discussed in groups. Hamann likes to have weekly casual meetings over coffee to get to know the staff, and enjoys outside activities with the students. Miller makes it a point to walk around campus

in order to talk with people to learn about their concerns and happenings.

Each candidate came across as a very strong choice. According to Marlene Propst, director of college advancement, the Board of Education will use the audience's comment cards to help make a decision by mid-November. The board meeting will be on Nov. 19.

Here are some paraphrased highlights of the questions asked during the forum:

Question: Talk about a time you've faced a controversial proposal.

Hamann: Smoking on campus. It was controversial. We had lots of external pressure. The dean suggested we have an internal dialogue to see what would work for us. We set aside a smoking area, and we unanimously supported that internally. I think we did the right thing for our institution.

Miller: We had an employee once who shared that we had a hostile work environment. We ended up needing an outside investigation because there was so much conflict.

Q: What is the role of a community college president in creating a welcoming atmosphere for people who come from diverse backgrounds; people of color, people who are first-generation college students? How do you welcome, retain, and help them advance?

H: At Clatsop we have five core values, and one of them is diversity. We are not perfect, but we are working on it. The president's role is first to make sure you have a statement and purpose that affirms the core value. Diversity is about all of us feeling valued for who we are and what we can contribute. We must model this value and we all have to work to personify it.

M: The goal is to create a welcoming and safe environment. The role is to model the behavior and the responsibility is to deal with the situation if it's brought to your attention that it's not a welcoming place. It is important to recognize and affirm your own culture and what makes you unique, and to create an atmosphere of open and honest communication.

Q: You're forced to reduce the budget by 10 percent. Where do you begin?

H: The state just asked us to do that. You have to bring people together to look at your core purpose when you come to that question. That's what we did. We got the leaders of the faculty, part-time, management, classified, and had regular meetings, weekly, to answer that question.

M: We went through a significant cut a year ago, and the budget capital planning team came up with recommendations.

Q: Some colleges are following the trend of hiring more part-time instructors. Your thoughts?

H: From an instructional perspective, as opposed to economic, there is a clear advantage to having full-time instructors. But at Clatsop, part-timers do create a curriculum breadth I can't always have with full time.

M: I don't like the trend, but I don't know that it will reverse, given that funding is going in the wrong direction.

Q: If you were a fruit, what kind of fruit would you be?

H: It seems to me that the obvious answer is an orange ... but maybe an apple. An apple is really good, it's basic, it's not fluffy like a kiwi, it doesn't spoil rapidly like a banana.


M: I would be a fruitcake. I do like to have fun. I do like to laugh. I take my work very seriously, but I don't take myself very seriously.



Gregory Hamann

Photos by Eve Bruntlett

The candidates: Face to face

	Darlene G. Miller	Name	Gregory J. Hamann	
	Doctorate of Education, University of Massachusetts Master's Degree (Biomedical Engineering), Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute Bachelor's Degree (Biological Sciences), Oakland University, Rochester, Mich.	Education	Doctorate in Educational Leadership, Gonzaga University Master's Degree (Counseling Psychology), Trinity Evangelical Divinity School Bachelor's Degree (Psychology and Social Studies Education), University of Minnesota	
	President, Manchester Community College, Manchester, N.H. (2006-09) Vice President, Shoreline Community College, Shoreline, Wash. (2002-06) Dean of Instruction, Green River Community College, Auburn, Wash. (1997-2002)	Job Experience	President, Clatsop Community College (2003-Present) Dean of Administration, Northwest College, Powell, Wyo. (1996-2003) Director of Administrative Services, Whitworth College, Spokane, Wash. (1990-95)	
	She enjoys kayaking.	Fun Fact	He loves to surf.	

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Feature

Something a little different.

Treats for troops

Alethea Skinner
 For The Commuter

“Supporting the troops is more than slapping a sticker on the back of your car!”

Spoken by Director Sharon Crary, these words are demonstrated in her leadership of the Oregon/Washington branch of Give 2 the Troops (G2TT), a non-profit organization that sends care packages to deployed troops.

On Oct. 15, they hosted one of two October “packing parties” at their Albany location.

While only four attended this party - Crary, Nancy Sacks, Larry Schmale and Marilyn Girdler - they created the energy of a dozen as they packed boxes for a troop from Dallas, Oregon.

Like Crary, Sacks and Schmale are also parents of active-duty service personnel, and their commitment indicates that they also understand the true meaning of troop support.

After setup was completed, Schmale and Sacks formed an assembly team and bagged candy, toothbrushes, toothpaste, floss, mouthwash, hand sanitizer, lip balm, cards, stationary and a handwritten note.

For Sacks, step-mom to a newly-deployed Navy SEAL, packing parties are the way to learn what to do when while her stepson is deployed. She says she finds it helpful to be with others who have already had the experience.

Girdler has no family members deployed but she participated in this packing party because she “just wanted to do something.” While others bustled around her filling bags and boxes, she sat carefully composing thank-you notes as if writing a cherished family member or friend.

The driving force behind the Oregon/Washington branch, however, is Crary who said she always believed in supporting the

troops, but the most she actually ever did to support them was “send something” to a friend’s son.

She needed to do something else.

That something else appeared in the form of a request from her son, Preston, when his unit deployed to Iraq.

Suffering from the sweltering desert heat and longing for something cold, he thought a frozen drink machine would be a solution; his chaplain agreed.

“My mom can get you one!” her son assured him, and the request was made.

By the end of the month Crary had contacted the Washington branch of G2TT. As a result, four ICEE machines were shipped to different locations - one a donation from the ICEE Company.

Operation ICEE Treat was born; Crary had found “something else to do.” For two years she managed that operation since the follow-up request was for more drink mix.

When the director of the Washington branch retired after five years of service, Crary, by then a seasoned member of the team, was asked to take over. In doing so, they packed and moved the operation to Oregon.

According to Crary, she accepted the director position because she felt the operation needed to remain on the west coast and brought it to Oregon because so many troops deploy from this state. Crary also says she wanted G2TT here as a way for local parents to get support they need.

“When your child is deployed, you feel so alone, isolated and helpless.” Working with G2TT, parents get that support.

“It really is a good organization; they do things well and they don’t send shoddy things,” Crary said. In fact, Crary sends nothing that she would not send to her son.

“Packing Parties” are driven by unit request.

“We ship whatever they request,” Crary said, “which has even included wrestling mats, baseballs and gloves, and golf equipment.”

The smallest unit they supported consisted of six sailors who requested items for a local orphanage where they volunteered.

Crary said, “We sent boxes of baby items to that unit,

and a primarily female unit received magazines and books for women, chick flicks, and other ‘girlie’ things.”

While the nationwide branches of G2TT receive support from across the country and around the world, the Oregon/Washington branch boasts of having received donations from as far away as Chicago - “Starbucks sent coffee.” Still, Crary makes the G2TT Oregon/Washington branch a part of this community.

As long as troops are deployed, donations and assistance will be needed and Crary says there are several ways everyone can help. Donations can be made at the US Army Recruiting Center and Mid-Willamette YMCA.

Oregon State University students will join the students of Washington State University and University of Washington, who have already held donation drives, by hosting their own drive during the week of Veterans’ Day.

“Do what you can do,” Crary says. “Whatever your hot button is, do that. Write notes, pack boxes, host a fundraiser or donation drive. Or help financially - every box that is shipped must be paid for.”

Crary also said no one should



Above: Director Sharon Crary (left) and Nancy Sacks combine personalized cards with packages.

Left: Marilyn Girdler writes personal notes to go with each bag.

Photos by Alethea Skinner



feel badly for “only signing a piece of paper.” One such piece of paper “paid the \$200 cost of shipping boxes to 125 troops.”

Recent shipments from Arizona and Petaluma, California, combined with local contributions (11 boxes of much-needed books from Friends of the Library and 1500 theater-sized boxes of candy) necessitated the rental of additional storage space.

The Oregon/Washington branch is currently searching for a new facility, hoping that someone with a vacant building needs to make a charitable contribution this year, Crary says.

The G2TT Oregon/Washington branch demonstrate for this community the national G2TT slogan: “Our troops need to know that we support and appreciate the sacrifices they make for us, our families, and our future. This is about giving back to those who give all.”



Will you be our friend?

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Tell us what you’re thinking and keep up-to-date on the latest news. Plus, check our website for more stories, pictures, videos, and blogs at commuter.linnbenton.edu.

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SPORTS

News about local and national sports and activities.

Roadrunners bring it home

Erik Bender
 The Commuter

Over this past weekend the Linn-Benton Community College Roadrunners won two consecutive home matches on Friday and Saturday against Southwestern Oregon Community College and Umpqua Community College.

Friday night's game was against SOCC, who seemed like a tough opponent as the Roadrunners were down by seven before scoring their first point, and they lost the first game 16-25. But that was not the end as the Roadrunners made quick work of the second game, winning 25-17 and eventually winning the next two games with scores of 25-21 and 26-24, winning the match 3-1.

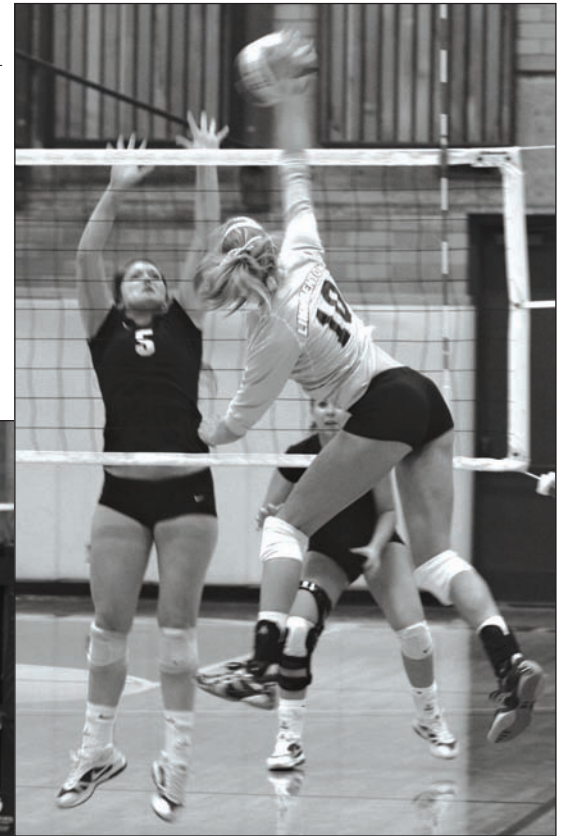
Sophomore Stephanie Mugleston led the team's kills with 17 for the night, while freshman teammate Mackenzie Gundlach led the team's assists with 36.

Saturday's game against Umpqua looked to be fairly easy for the Roadrunners as they handled their opponents 25-16. But in the second game the visiting team showed a comeback, and although the Roadrunners kept it close, they lost the second game, 22-25. The third game was a flip-flop of the second as the Roadrunners won 25-22, then 25-17 for the overall match win of 3-1.

Top players for the match included Sophomore Luci DeLong with 15 kills, Mugleston with 14 kills, Gundlach with 50 assists and freshman Emily Buchheit with six aces.

"From day one we have dealt with injuries, from back injuries to illnesses like H1N1 for every single match," said Head Coach Jayme Frazier. "For this weekend I asked the team and individuals to step up, and they did and proved that they can do it."

LBCC is currently in fourth for NWAACC's southern region league and has one more away game against Clackamas before the NWAACC Championships.



Above: Sophomore Stephanie Mugleston tallies another kill for the Roadrunners.

Left: The volleyball team celebrates its win.


Photos by Erik Bender

Join the AAWCC!

AAWCC Motto
"To inspire, champion and celebrate the talents within each of us."

Membership
Please Join Us Today!
 If you have questions call Jeanine Howell at 541-917-4236 or email her at howellje@linnbenton.edu

Current Events
Thanksgiving Food Drive
Oct. 26th- Nov. 19th
 AAWCC, the Independent, Classified Association, and Student Life & Leadership will collect non-perishable food items and money donations again this year for students and families of LBCC who need a little support for the holiday. Watch your e-mail for details and donation sites.



Academic Success Seminars

Boost Your COLLEGE KNOWLEDGE!

Sign up on SIS under Study Skills – or just drop in!

Always 50 minutes!

ALWAYS FREE!

Am I Depressed, or Just Stressed?

Monday	Nov. 16	Lebanon	LC-205	4:00 – 4:50
Wednesday	Nov. 18	Sweet Home	SHC-102	4:30 – 5:20

Always helpful!

Academic Success Seminars are organized by the Learning Center. For more information and to sign up, visit SIS under Study Skills or call 917-4684.

LBCC is an equal opportunity institution. For disability accommodations, call 917-4789. Submit requests 4 to 6 weeks before the event where possible. To call by TDD, call the Oregon Telecommunications Relay Service at 1 (800) 735-2900 & provide them with the number you wish to reach.

Linn-Benton
 COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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The Commuter is the weekly student-run newspaper for LBCC, financed by student fees and advertising. Opinions expressed in The Commuter do not necessarily reflect those of the LBCC administration, faculty and Associated Students of LBCC. Editorials, columns, letters and cartoons reflect the opinions of the authors.

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Letters

Letters to the editor. These do not reflect the views of the Commuter staff.

Thoughts on our scantron policy

I recently had the pleasure of participating in a school policy which I had no intentions of agreeing with, in principle. It concerns our policy on Scantron sheets. While some instructors choose to provide Scantron sheets for their students, others do not. I feel as though this is a necessary topic to explore simply for the fact that up until this point in my relatively moderate time in higher education, I have never had to be responsible for purchasing one single Scantron sheet. It was an agreed upon fact by that particular institution, which I attended, that Scantron sheets were provided by the school, instructor, or any other member of the faculty that issued the testing material.

Some of you who may be reading this might be a little disturbed by the fact that I am arguing about something so menial ... so minute ... so ridiculously inexpensive (20 cents) that you could find the money to purchase one just by looking on the ground on the way to the bookstore. That may be the case, but then where will it end? Are we going to have to pay extra for the use of a desk in the future? What about the lighting in the classroom? Is there going to be a surcharge for that also? Should we pay extra for the cleaning of the carpet in the class? Or how about charging the students for pothole repair in the parking lots? Better yet, let's include a fee for fertilizing the foliage around our school so it's more aesthetically appealing to the passerby. It's this never-ending conundrum of extra fees and associating educative expenses that make my head spin.

Let's try to find some consistency.

If you are going to make us buy our own Scantron sheets then I would like my financial aid to reflect the fact that I have to make additional purchases for Scantron sheets throughout the school year. I am already nickled-and-dimed to death by my bank, cell phone, electric and insurance companies. I do not need to incur any more monthly costs than I already have. I never expected, nor thought that I would associate financially persecuting behavior with an institution of higher learning. I thought that this technique was reserved for major corporations who seemingly indulge in the fact that they can gouge the consumer at every available opportunity. Apparently this is not the case.

So why don't we all just bow down and accept the fact that extra-fee-based educational materials are going to be an [omnipresent] and inevitable addition to our everyday scholastic lives? It's just another 20 cents, right? It's this type of attitude that put our country in the economic turmoil that we are currently experiencing. When we keep on adding minutely significant fees to our already strained budget, it tends to shrivel in a much more hurried and unexpected fashion without ever seeing any inkling of future replenishment.

If it comes down to purchasing another Scantron sheet in the future, I think I will: A) Write

another opinionated and harsher version of this perspective, B) Just sulk in misery, C) Collapse in utter disbelief, D) Break down and buy the darn thing, E) Find a busy intersection in Albany and beg people to donate to the Student Scantron Relief Fund of the Greater Northwest.

-Dave Alderson

THE COMMONS FARE

11/12-11/18

Wednesday
LBCC Closed

Thursday
Dishes: Meatloaf, Fish and Chips, and Tempeh Enchiladas
Soup: Dill Potato Chowder and Chicken and Wild Rice

Friday
Chef's Choice

Monday
Dishes: Turkey Cutlet w/ Brown Butter Sauce, Texas Chili Con Carne y Frijoles and Spinach Lasagna
Soups: Roasted Vegetable Chowde and Albondigas

Tuesday
Dishes: Shrimp Etouffée, Swedish Meatballs and Huevos Rancheros
Soup: Egg Flower and French Lentil

Classifieds

Deadline: Ads accepted by 5 p.m. Friday will appear in the following Wednesday issue. Ads will appear only once per submission. If you wish a particular ad to appear in successive issues, you must resubmit it.

Cost: Ads that do not solicit for a private business are free to students, staff and faculty. All others are charged at a rate of 10 cents per word, payable when the ad is accepted.

Personals: Ads placed in the "Personals" category are limited to one ad per advertiser per week; no more than 50 words per ad.

Libel/Taste: The Commuter will not knowingly publish material that treats individuals or groups in an unfair manner. Any advertisement judged libelous or in poor taste by the newspaper editorial staff will be rejected.

Help Wanted

You can sign up at www.linnbenton.edu/go/Student_Employment to look at student & graduate jobs. *For more info about the opportunities listed below, please see Carla in Student Employment in the Career Center (Takena 101).

CWE Environmental Technician

(#7628, Albany) Are you wanting a job that also provides experience related to your major in engineering, wastewater operations, environmental science, chemistry, biology, management, etc.? You must be a current student & completed 2 terms. Part-time during school and part or full-time during the summer. \$10.85/hr

Disney Recruitment (#7609) Do you want to just get away and work in a warm location & have

fun at the same time? Talk to some Disney students & get your questions answered. Date: Wed, Nov. 18th at 3-4 pm in the Fireside Room (CC 211). See you there!!

Volunteer positions

(#7614, Albany) Do you like to work with kids or want to get experience & maybe a reference. Or is your major related to one of these jobs and you need CWE credits: tutor

& read to kids, help in the art room, play board games, PE games, help in the computer room, etc.

Security Officers

(#7632, Corvallis) They are looking for 7 full-time, 3 at 32 hrs/week and one 30 hrs/week security officers. They will offer training and encourage career growth and promotion from within the company.



FREE CLASSIFIED ADS

Non-commercial ads for LB staff and students are free!

HELP YOUR BUSINESS BY SAVING MONEY ON ADVERTISING!

Business and off-campus ads only 10 cents per word!



For more information contact us at: (541) 917-4451 or e-mail us: commuterads@linnbenton.edu

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Surreal Living

Crosswords, cartoons and some fun facts to brighten your day.

Los Angeles Times Daily Crossword Puzzle

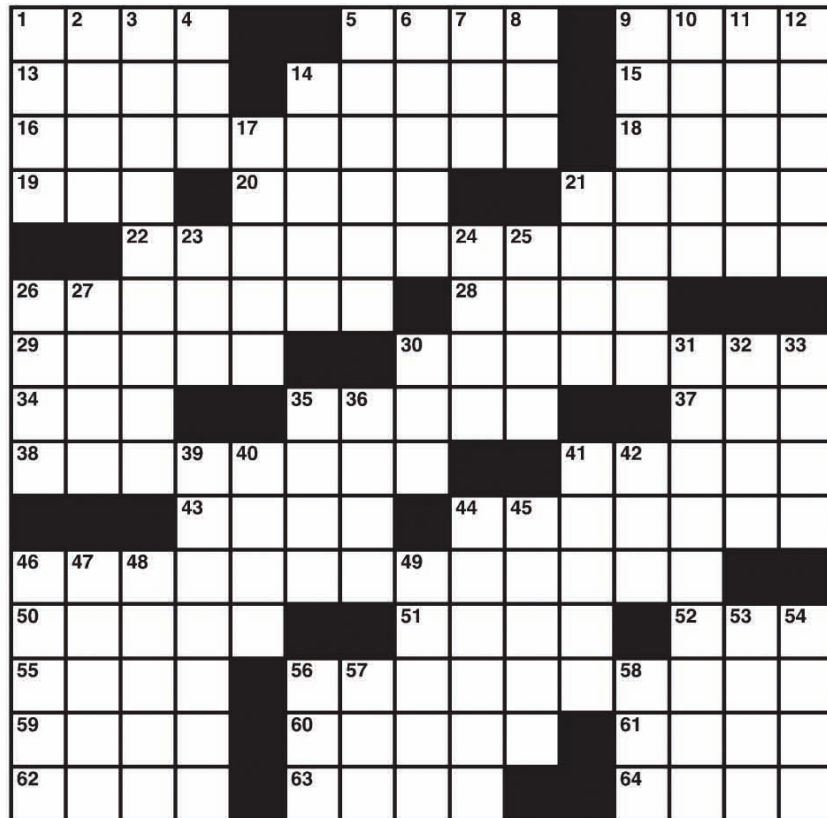
Edited by Rich Norris and Joyce Lewis

ACROSS

- 1 Magic amulet
- 5 With 13-Across, "Lonely Boy" singer
- 9 UPS deliveries requiring payment
- 13 See 5-Across
- 14 Ship to remember
- 15 Related
- 16 Window treatment support
- 18 Christmas trio
- 19 "___ Beso (That Kiss!)": 5- & 13-Across hit
- 20 Prefix with China
- 21 Lukewarm
- 22 Proceed cautiously
- 26 The flu, for one
- 28 Dynamic start?
- 29 God
- 30 Most intelligent
- 34 Looooong time
- 35 Blocker of offensive TV material
- 37 Penn & Teller, e.g.
- 38 "Put your John Hancock on this line"
- 41 Desert rest stops
- 43 Chaplin's fourth wife
- 44 Weepy people
- 46 Sports show staple
- 50 Orderly display
- 51 Has a meal
- 52 Repair
- 55 Reddish horse
- 56 No longer in trouble
- 59 Oklahoma city
- 60 Numerical relationship
- 61 One-named Deco artist
- 62 Personnel dept. IDs
- 63 Greenish-yellow pear
- 64 Treos and iPhones, briefly

DOWN

- 1 Riot squad spray
- 2 Weighty obligation



By Fred Jackson III

- 3 Harry Potter's creator
- 4 Bit of granola
- 5 Bamboo-eating critters
- 6 ___ superiority: obvious confidence
- 7 Juan's "one"
- 8 Was in first place
- 9 King Arthur's realm
- 10 Giraffe relative
- 11 "Let's eat!"
- 12 Like a catty remark
- 14 Expensive furs
- 17 Dance company founder Alvin
- 21 La., on old U.S. maps
- 23 Bug in a colony
- 24 "___ Said": Neil Diamond hit
- 25 Minimum-range tide
- 26 March 15th, e.g.
- 27 First of 13 popes
- 30 "___ Believes in Me": Kenny Rogers hit
- 31 His name wound up on a lemon
- 32 Plaintiff
- 33 Partner of turn

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

D	A	F	T	S	A	T	E	S	Z	A	P	S					
O	D	I	E	C	H	E	S	T	O	R	S	O					
L	I	R	E	A	O	R	T	A	N	E	S	S					
C	O	M	P	A	N	Y	R	E	T	R	E	A	T				
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				T	A	I	L	E	R	A	T	O					
				C	O	M	M	U	T	E	R	F	L	I	G	H	T
J	O	K	E	N	A	M	E	R	K	A	R	T					
E	R	R	S	C	L	O	N	E	E	P	E	E					
T	E	A	S	H	O	N	E	D	S	E	E	R					

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- 35 "___, vidi, vici": Caesar's boast
- 36 Mountain goat's perch
- 39 Words after "Look, Ma"
- 40 Sanctified
- 41 Way beyond pleasingly plump
- 42 Prez on a penny
- 44 Kind of electricity
- 45 Big name in garden care
- 46 Rabbit look-alikes
- 47 Smooths, as hair
- 48 Smidgen of sand
- 49 Tests by lifting
- 53 Greek "i"
- 54 Vintage Jaguars
- 56 Planet
- 57 Toy magnate ___ Schwarz
- 58 Like cool cats



"Is your dog friendly?"



"Wanna be my default best friend?"

Did you know?

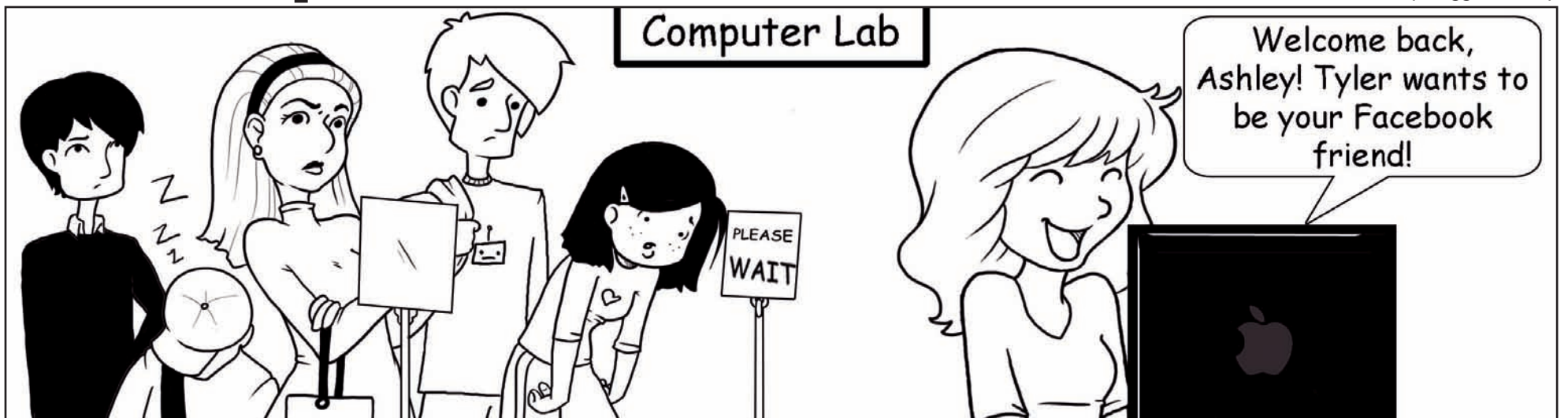
On Nov. 10, Mikhail Kalashnikov, designer of the AK-47 assault rifle, was made an official "Hero of Russia" by President Dmitry Medvedev, for "creating the brand that every Russian is proud of."

Let's go fly a kite! HD 189733-b, a planet 63 light years away, was discovered in 2005. Why is it special? The average temperature is 1,770° F, and the average breeze is 4,500 mph (nearly 6 times the speed of sound). NASA believes the winds there top out at 22,000 mph.

Add/Drop

An LBCC student generated comic.

By Maggie O'Reilly



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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Reviews, upcoming events, and the cure for weekend boredom.

redbox review

X-Men Origins: Wolverine

Bonnie Starr
 The Commuter



I love Wolverine. I love X-Men. I did not love this movie.

Being an avid movie-watcher, I can pride myself on wanting to watch most movies a few times through, but this movie just didn't have what it takes. Shoddy CG graphics mixed with poorly-placed classic lines from the comics left more than a few broken claws on the ground with no hope of being fixed by adamantium infusion; in review terms, of course.

The movie starts off with a very young Jimmy Logan sick in bed in 19th-century Canada. We get to see him meet his half-brother Victor (aka Sabertooth), learn of his mutation, run away from home and then grow up and fight in a lot of American wars through a montage. The montage had a silly-looking shot of Sabertooth making a flying leap for some Nazis.

"X-Men Origins" progresses through the story of how Logan and Victor end up on bad terms, how Logan gains his adamantium claws and skeleton, and how he comes to be known as Wolverine. I have to say, it is not often that I find myself almost bored by a movie, but this one managed it somehow. The storytelling in this one just didn't hold up to the other X-Men movies and we aren't exactly talking about Bruckheimer or Scorsese here; it shouldn't have been that hard.

As I mentioned, the CG was no good. They forsook the prop claws in this film in favor of CG, which might have been alright had they put a little more effort into it. The green-screen backgrounds and scenes were reminiscent of early '90s sitcom blue-screens, and there were some very poorly chosen helicopter follow shots that remind me of car chase scenes from the old "Dukes of Hazard" series.

I can say that the casting was done pretty well. We have our favorite grumpy-man with a cigar, Hugh Jackman, as Wolverine, Liev Schreiber as Sabertooth, and Ryan Reynolds as Wade Wilson. And now we get into another problem with this movie ...

Deadpool. I will fully admit that I don't know so much about this character from the comics, but after being filled in by some very knowledgeable friends I can see why he was so disappointing in the movie. Even as a layman in the Deadpool of knowledge the character was disappointing - and boring.

Also, whoever did the casting for Gambit needs to be put back in casting school, because this one was poorly chosen. I just cannot see our cheeky, back-talking Creole as played by the skinny little Taylor Kitsch. He doesn't look right, he doesn't sound right ... he just isn't right.

All in all, this movie rates on the mildly disappointing side. Go ahead and watch it if you've got nothing better to do or feel like rounding out your X-Men experience. Entertaining? Kind of. Fulfilling? Nah. I want to recommend this movie but really can't.

Clooney psychs up audiences

Joel DeVylidere
 The Commuter

With wit and intuition, George Clooney and Ewan McGregor lead off in "The Men Who Stare at Goats," a comedy that opened last Friday. A crazed and stumbling, fumbling, jumble of loudly mumbled one-liners and stunts that are purposefully bumbled (oh, slapstick!), "Goats" is the kind of film that makes your desire to not laugh crumble.

First, let me assure you, this is not your grandfather's goat-infused war epic. This is a completely new kind of film, the kind that relies on the prestige of the leading actors whilst it humiliates them with embarrassing situations and a ridiculous storyline. It comes off kind of like a Disney flick intended for adults. The storyline, set in the Iraq War, is at once confusingly complex and ridiculously retro, while the characters are loveably quirky and fantastically unbelievable.

George Clooney plays retired soldier Lyn Cassady, who claims to be entering Iraq on a secret mission from his unit of psychic

soldiers. Desperate for a story and eager to prove to his ex-wife that he isn't a coward, reporter Bob Wilton (McGregor) follows Cassady into the war-torn country. The two men travel through a series of hilarious obstacles and entertaining situations, all the while taking turns narrating the crazy back-story. It involves Lyn's army unit, who are allegedly able to do things remotely through psychic powers like running through walls and killing goats.



It seems like the cliché message in war movies is either praising the allied victory in WWII or protesting the United States' involvement in Vietnam, but this movie is different. "Goats" is far too confused and muddled to actually know what it's trying to say, which you might blame on the rampant substance abuse displayed by its two main characters/narrators. Essentially, this movie seems like it's trying to make a point, but it keeps tripping on its own satire.

I really appreciated "The Men Who Stare at Goats" because it was so strange and out of the box. For an eccentric plot, fairly good acting, and especially for not taking itself seriously, "Goats" deserves a hearty four out of five stars.

Love Love Teriyaki

Erik Bender
 The Commuter

Love is a strong word and you shouldn't use it unless you mean it. At Love Love Teriyaki, they use it twice.

So why the self-proclaimed adoration? This little restaurant is serving up some pretty big flavors.

When first walking into Love Love Teriyaki, which is located between Great Clips and Pizza Hut in the same parking lot as Albany's Heritage Mall, you'll want look at the large menu board and choose from 15 different combination plates and bowls. The plates come with chicken (teriyaki or spicy), beef, pork or shrimp. There are also yaki soba and yaki udon noodle dishes.

Once you find a table, it usually takes about five or 10 minutes to receive your food, at which point you have the opportunity to gorge yourself on teriyaki perfection. Come hungry, because the serving sizes are very generous.

There are several daily lunch specials for \$6.25. I had the spicy chicken plate that came with what looked like a pound of charbroiled spicy chicken, a sumo-sized helping of rice, and fresh cabbage with crisp oriental dressing. The food was very satisfying, but I could not finish the whole meal, so I boxed it up for later.

The price range is \$6.25-\$8.95 and you definitely get what you pay for here. I've been to Love Love Teriyaki several times with various friends and everyone, including myself, has become a fan. The only downfall to this teriyaki treat is that they are not open on Sundays.



Mmm, teriyaki Photo by Erik Bender

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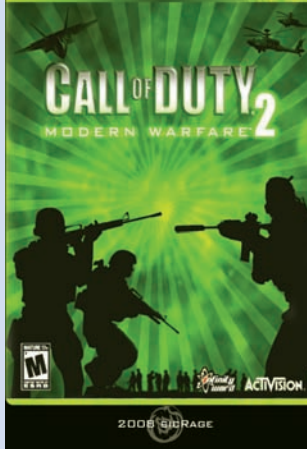
ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Reviews, upcoming events, and the cure for weekend boredom.

Coming attractions

Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2

The much anticipated sequel to the extremely popular Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare, CoD:MW2 picks up right where the last one left off. With improved graphics, multiplayer mode, and additional features, the game had already received rave reviews from IGN (9.5/10), OXM (10/10), GamePro (5/5), GameSpy (5/5), and Metacritic (96%) despite the fact it had only been released for 12 hours at the time this article was written.



Rating: M

Platforms: Xbox 360, Playstation 3, PC

2012

See CGI sequences of planet earth destroying itself! Researcher Jackson Curtis (John Cusack) leads a team of people in an attempt to survive and work against the apocalyptic happenings predicted by the Mayan calendar as they occur in the year 2012. Directed and produced by Roland Emmerich, who directed such epics as "Independence Day," "The Patriot" and "The Day After Tomorrow."



Rating: PG-13

Runtime: 158 minutes

Pirate Radio

A re-titled British flick (originally called "The Boat That Rocked") about an illegal radio station operating in the North Sea near Great Britain in the 1960s. Aboard was a crew of crazy DJs who endeavored to break the law and play rock records on-air for the love of music. With Michael Hadley and Phillip Seymour Hoffman.



Rating: R

Runtime: 135 minutes

Sources: Imdb, Fandango, Yahoo! Movies, Infinity Ward



Dragon Age: Epic win

Justin Bolger
The Commuter

"Dragon Age: Origins," for the PC, PS3 and X-Box 360, may very well be the most beautiful piece of epic fantasy literature I've ever encountered. On the surface it's some good old traditional fun, but it runs so much deeper than that.

Software developer BioWare has brought its proven prowess of enrapturing storytelling back into a realm of knights, mages and dragons. The world they've created is so rich in history and legend that it pulls you in just as well as any novel could.

The people are no different. Every character is very distinct in personality on the surface, but given a couple well-placed dialogue options, you learn that each individual has a past and purpose that is completely unique and highly detailed.

Stunning voice acting is what really brings these characters to the next level of awesome. From the mysterious, alluring Morrigan (Claudia Black) to the witty yet soulful Alistair (Steve Valentine), the lines are incredibly well delivered.

The script is so good too. Who doesn't love hearing lines like, "There's nothing like a brush with death to make you ... not like death very much," after a hard earned victory.

Combat plays like a fusion between "Baldur's Gate" and "Mass Effect." It's

tried and true, I guess. You can control each of the four members of your party with the pause and plan technique of BG, but you also have the option of setting specific tactics for your teammates whom you may not want to fiddle with as much. It's a good time, especially for the strategic-minded.

Fortunately, the graphics and camera resemble the quality seen in "Mass Effect." They're very pretty.

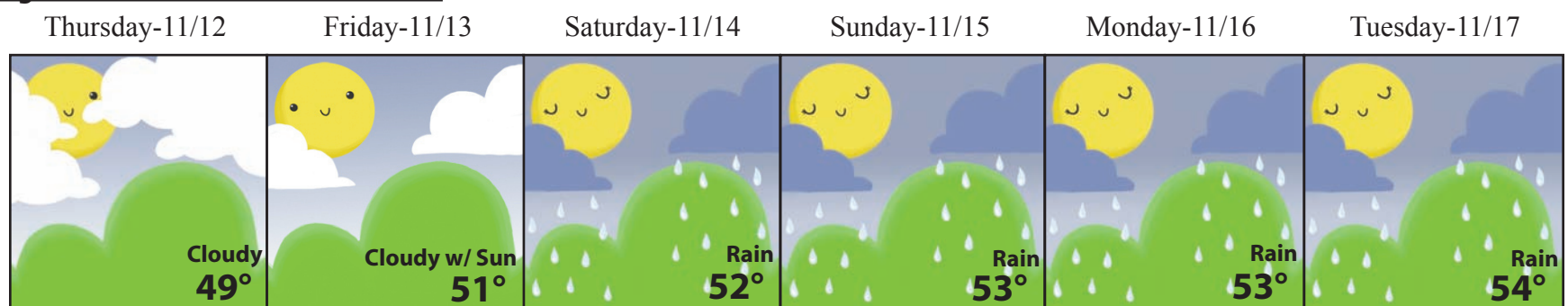
This goes right down to the complexion of your character. Wrinkles, beards and makeup are just a few malleable details. The character customization is unreal in both aesthetics and abilities. Skill trees are quite fruitful. No two heroes need ever be alike.

Options are sort of a theme in "Dragon Age: Origins." Every little choice you make can affect the entire course of the game, and the choices are rather plentiful. It's improved since "Mass Effect's" simple options of a positive, neutral or negative response. The game offers you true moral quarrels. It's one of very few games that I want to play through more than once, if only to see the vastly different outcomes of various choices.

You have to be into exploring a world and having a story told to appreciate this game. If you love shooters, this might not be your cup of tea. However, if "Final Fantasy" is more your flavor, you will never ever want to go back to that rubbish.

Overall: Buy it.

Weekly Weather Predictions



Warning: These are only predictions. For up-to-date forecasts, please look out your window. source: accuweather.com