

Opinion**SC mayoral candidates in their words**

Editor's note: Voices invited the two candidates for the office of mayor of State College to discuss their candidacies and qualifications in their own words. Voices does not endorse any candidates. We bring you these views in the interests of educating voters and we thank the candidates for cooperating with our efforts.

Elizabeth Goreham

I am truly surprised to be running for Mayor. Like most people in State College, I was in full support of Mayor Welch to be reelected and continue serving as the face of the State College community.

My husband Jack Matson and I were planning to move into a new phase of our lives since I am term limited off Borough Council and he is retiring from Penn State. Perhaps destiny is intervening and the next phase of my life is to be mayor. Wow!

Why should I be elected the next mayor? I grew up in a small town in Indiana. After moving to State College in 1993, I rediscovered my roots and love for community where friendships are enduring and you personally get to know your postman, your car mechanic, restaurateur, and your neighbors. I graduated from George Washington University majoring in political science, worked for a senator as an undergraduate and continued as a Senate aide after graduation, before heading off into a career in business.

These experiences were helpful in 1997 when I decided to run for Borough Council. I love how democratic government, especially at the local level, gives people the power to change things. My 12 years serving on Borough Council has given me a deep understanding of our community and the important issues and opportunities ahead. I am proud of my record on council with respect to diversity, environment, neighborhoods, town-gown relationships, the Centre Region, Centre County and Pennsylvania. I have been involved in the startup of the Centre Region Bicycle Coalition and the State College Community Land Trust and, in a time of change, served on Borough Council that began making changes such as a commitment to keeping

I am proud of my record on council with respect to diversity, environment, neighborhoods, town-gown relationships...

the Library downtown, investing in affordable housing, establishing a Downtown Improvement District, rebuilding Welch Pool, enacting a Human Relations Commission, adopting a Climate Protection Resolution, and passing a Homestead Exclusion to reduce homeowners' property taxes.

I have been an active member of the Pennsylvania League of Cities and Municipalities. Just this month a subcommittee of members from College towns met in State College to exchange ideas on how to deal with various town-gown issues. Last month I lobbied our representatives in Harrisburg for ways towns like ours could raise revenue. I am always proud to represent State College.

What will I do as mayor? State College Borough has a "weak mayor" form of government, which means the office has neither legislative nor administrative authority. In our Home Rule Charter the office of mayor is named the ceremonial head and official representative of our municipal government. The mayor's substantive duties are to conduct the twice-monthly voting meeting of Borough Council and to potentially exercise veto power in a 4 to 3 vote. I view the office as strong because the mayor is the face and voice of the borough on important matters. The mayor has broad discretion to meet with groups and organizations. I share Mayor Welch's interest in students, international guests, Penn State, and our historic legacy.

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Joe Wakeley

Voices has invited me, as a State College Borough mayoral candidate, to discuss my qualifications in my own words. Voices, I'm told, does not endorse candidates. They bring you my statement, I'm

assured, in the interest of informing and educating you, the voters.

State College Borough voters should cast their votes for the person they believe would best represent them as their ambassador between and among the students and administrators of Penn State, the State College Area School District, other elected municipal officials in and around Central Pennsylvania, our state and federal elected officials in Harrisburg and Washington, and of course you, our residents.

My personal record of State College community involvement and service includes a 44-year borough residency. My wife, Esther, and I raised our five children in the State College Area School District. I served on the State College Borough Council for four years and as Borough Council President for two years. I co-founded the State College Area Family YMCA and served as YMCA Board Chairman for nine years. I established the YMCA Aerobics in Motion (AIM) program, coached hundreds of local children on the YMCA, SCASD high school, and Welch community pool swim teams. I worked as an election poll volunteer for twelve years, and I have served as church treasurer, elder, deacon, and Sunday school teacher.

The essential attributes for a candidate to elected office include strong ethics. I consider a strong ethical sense essential for those elected to office as they provide a foundation for developing empathic work-

I have long supported...our surrounding forests and our abundant wild treasures.

ing associations, a consistent framework for decision making, and a constancy helpful when facing difficult problems. As mayor of State College, my guiding principles will center on the borough's Home Rule Charter, the Pennsylvania Commonwealth Constitution, the Constitution of the United States, and those Biblical precepts we all generally share and abide by.

During my experience as both a Borough Council member and Borough Council President, I observed how local government and state government can work together effectively for the good of the community. To remain effective, state and local governments must clearly understand their respective roles and responsibilities. The purpose of State College government is to oversee and adjudicate day-to-day issues and ordinances that directly affect our citizens. The Pennsylvania legislature is responsible for the overall well-being of all state citizens. The state government can hardly manage the specific and discrete needs of our community—these must be left to our local government. To maintain this balance, open dialogue and collaboration must continue, and our Mayor serves as a custodian of this association and of the ongoing communication between various local and state government representatives. While an elected State College Borough official, I worked with our staff to convert a water run-off trench and retention basin waste area into community softball and soccer fields and an open-air amphitheater as part of what is now Orchard Park. In fact, I proudly consider my work in founding and supporting

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Letters to the editor

Setting the record straight on wind power

It's important to set the record straight: Wind farms today can be sited properly and developed responsibly and with minimum impact, especially when compared to other energy sources. They don't taint water supplies or emit harmful pollutants. Attempts to portray Gamesa's proposed Sandy Ridge wind farm as an instrument of wildlife and resource destruction are way off base ("Opponents try to blow away wind farm," October 2009).

First, it's important to emphasize the very rigorous standards that go into permitting a wind farm in Pennsylvania. Opponents claim the process is completely unregulated. The Sandy Ridge project proves otherwise. It is complex, time-consuming, rigorous and science-based. It takes a tremendous investment of time and resources to secure the information needed to meet local requirements and satisfy state and federal regulators. But this strict enforcement of environmental standards ensures that the Sandy Ridge wind farm is done right.

Second, it's true that Gamesa is among the many companies partnering with the Pennsylvania Game Commission to research the critical habitats of birds and other animals. The industry takes potential wildlife impacts seriously and invests heavily to ensure wind farms are sited appropriately and developed responsibly. But, while the research project is voluntary, it hardly represents the only guidelines wind companies must follow to operate. In fact, regulatory oversight is rigorous.

Development of a wind farm requires a National Pollution Discharge Elimination System permit to protect water quality. The work is reviewed, inspected and overseen by the local conservation district and the state Department of Environmental

Protection. Four state and federal agencies are involved in protecting the state's natural resources. Wildlife surveys are coordinated with and reviewed by PGC, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources reviews plant surveys.

That's not all: The Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission oversees cultural resource surveys; local land use regulations need to be followed; and the Federal Aviation Administration must issue a "determination of no hazard" to show that turbines will not interfere with air space. The voluntary partnership with the game commission adds another layer of consultation and review to ensure the best designed projects.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, wind farms do not pollute surface or subsurface water quantity or quality. As proof, part of Gamesa's Allegheny Ridge wind farm in Cambria County was developed in an "exceptional value" watershed, which requires the most stringent environmental standards. State regulators will not grant permits for projects that negatively impact these pristine waters. With 40 turbines now active, the Allegheny Ridge wind farm has not affected any streams there.

At the proposed Shaffer Mountain wind farm in Somerset and Bedford counties, an independent geotechnical and civil engineer testified that Gamesa's best management practices and superior approach to installation will bring a net benefit to water quality and groundwater availability after construction because the work there also would fix existing access roads that allow erosion to run off into area streams. Part of this project also includes development in an

Thanks for Hot Mamas article

Thank you so much to Michael and all of the Voices community for the thoughtful, informative, accurate, and well-written article on the Hot Mamas reunion/benefit concert. The Fairweather Lodge is an opportunity that not enough of the community knows exists.

Michael put a lot of work into the

article and spoke to a lot of people involved in the event. Thank you Michael for attending as well as for writing the article!

Voices continues to be a great resource for our community.

Fran McDermid
State College

"exceptional value" watershed.

Although a common theme among opponents is that wind farms threaten waterways, they have yet to show evidence of a single local stream or river damaged by wind.

Gamesa understands the effects of development and takes care to work in the most environmentally sound, ecologically sustainable manner. Only the most appropriate sites are chosen, and that's after exhaustive

People don't understand their own cultures

I have been teaching a course titled "Jewish Civilization" at Penn State University for several years. Unfortunately, the assumptions implicit in "Required Culture Courses Losing Purpose" (October 2009) by Art Goldschmidt and Rayshaan Miller illustrate the value of and enduring need for this course.

Many of us think that we know and understand Jewish culture because it seems so familiar. We read about the Jews in the Bible, the Koran, and in the daily news. Yet much of what we think we know about Jewish culture is little more than the mischaracterizations placed upon the Jews, Judaism, and Jewish culture by non-Jews. The Jews have been portrayed as a divinely chosen people, Christ killers, stubborn unbelievers, wealthy bankers, communists, and more. Such stereotypes reveal more about non-Jewish than Jewish cultures. While for centuries the Jews have resided in and been shaped by the cultures of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, Jewish culture is unique and more than the projections placed upon it.

The 21st century American Jews enrolled at Penn State University are, like most other students, primarily familiar with the communities within which they grew up. Most have not studied Jews across time and space. Most have not been exposed to critical scholarship about the Jewish people. Moreover, like other minority groups, many Jews have imbibed the perceptions placed upon them by dominant cultures. Like the non-Jewish students, the Jewish students who enroll in Jewish Civilization benefit from an improved understanding of a minority culture.

wildlife studies and wilderness surveys. Wind energy remains the cleanest means we have for powering our economy and improving the environment. But just as our siting decisions at Sandy Ridge are based on sound science, any discussions about the merits of the project should be based on fact, not fiction or opinion.

Joshua Framel, Senior Project Developer
Gamesa Energy
Philadelphia, PA

In the article, an academic advisor is reported making the point that Jewish students would be better served by taking a course about another, less familiar people. Goldschmidt and Miller leave this assertion unchallenged. Like the academic advisor,

Goldschmidt and Miller's reporting reflects the widespread misperception that we all "know" Jewish culture and that it is well-understood by most Jews, as well as by non-Jews.

Goldschmidt and Miller's reporting reflects the widespread misperception that we all "know" Jewish culture and that it is well-understood by most Jews, as well as by non-Jews. In their failure to acknowledge that Jewish culture may not be well-understood (even by Jewish students), the authors implicitly reproduce the widespread, but mistaken and misleading sense that Jewish culture is merely the invented representations of it that are found in popular imagination.

However, "Jewish Civilization," a course available to any Penn State student, introduces students to little-known information and patterns in Jewish culture. In doing so, the course fosters an improved understanding of cultural diversity among its students, whether Jewish or not

Alan F. Benjamin
State College, PA

Don't drill in additional state forest lands

In April 2008 Pennsylvania's Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) opened 75,000 acres of our State Forests to leasing by the gas companies drilling the Marcellus shale. Some politicians now are proposing to force DCNR to lease an additional 390,000 acres of State Forest land to the gas industry.

Marcellus gas wells have ten times the impact of any gas wells you have ever seen: Each well requires the clearing of dozens of acres of forest and every well requires more than a million gallons of water to fracture the 5,000-foot-deep wells.

The DCNR has objected strongly to this proposal, stating that "Rampant, unplanned leasing of forest lands would severely jeopardize DCNR's ability to retain its third-party certification (of timber) and to maintain ecologically sound forest management."

It is important to note that those politicians want to lease additional vast parts of our State Forest in lieu of having the gas drillers pull their own weight via paying a

fee on the gas they extract from State Forests. We still suffer from the damage from coal extraction—and taxpayers continue to pay for the cleanup of what was done 100 years ago. Some people haven't learned from the mistakes of the past—now they want to help the gas industry to ravage our public lands without setting money aside for fixing their damage. The Marcellus gas field will be an economic boon for the industry but Pennsylvania taxpayers will be stuck (again) for the cleanup of the damage.

Juniata Valley Audubon, a local conservation organization with 450 members in the Juniata Valley, is strongly opposed to opening additional State Forest lands to Marcellus shale gas drilling. Forest conservation—not energy extraction—should be the overarching purpose of our State Forests.

Stan Kotala,
Conservation Chair
Juniata Valley Audubon

I have been called a radical environmentalist. If this means advocating a sustainable borough, clean air and water, uncontaminated land, and reductions in carbon dioxide emissions then I'm in good company.

ances put on by Penn State students, playing tennis, hosting international visitors through Global Connections, eating out, and getting around town and the University events. Following in Bill's footsteps I will be highly visible and available. The Mayor represents the entire community, students and non-students alike, and far beyond the borough limits.

I ask you vote for me as Mayor on Nov. 3 and look forward to serving in this exciting time with so many interesting challenges ahead.

Elizabeth Goreham is the President of the State College Borough Council.

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the YMCA a major contribution in that I've encouraged hundreds of our youngsters to become physically active and fit enough both to promote their health and to use, appreciate, and, one day, preserve our outdoor environment here in the Borough and beyond.

I categorize any environmental achievement three ways: (1) conservation of our fields, forests, waters and wildlife; (2) preservation of municipal open spaces; and (3) conservation of our human resources. As an avid hunter, I have long supported—financially and rhetorically—our surrounding forests and our abundant wild treasures. I applaud the Pennsylvania Game Commission's role as protector of our wild areas and all our wildlife. As an elected State College official, I would advocate for our parks, for our enlightened shade tree program, for natural recycling (composting, for example), and for those who work toward these implicit goals.

"Green design and development," a new expression in our lexicon, leads me to support alternative power sources for our heating and power use. For example, I find the use of trellised exterior wall plantings for summer cooling an intriguing innovation,

The development I support should conform aesthetically to its surroundings without blatant greed as its motive.

and as I look about State College and the Penn State campus, I can see acres of flat-roofing ideal for solar panels. Penn State might one day reduce its coal use and replace it with benign solar heat. I also think we have great savings waiting for us here in our limestone-laced region when we fully exploit our geothermal heating potential.

I support the protection of public lands and farmlands from over development. The space available for green expansion within the Borough itself is slight, but gardens and tree plantings and incremental green expansion all need advocacy, and I would gladly support these initiatives. The development I support should conform aesthetically to its surroundings without blatant greed as its motive.

Joe Wakeley is a retired electrical engineer.

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I am also keenly interested in environmental issues. Sustainability, global warming, recycling, alternative transportation, native plants, and living simply are very important to the future of State College and me personally. How can we not be alarmed to learn that Pennsylvania is responsible for 1% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions! I have been called a radical environmentalist. If this means advocating a sustainable borough, clean air and water, uncontaminated land, and reductions in carbon dioxide emissions then I'm in good company.

My vision is of a community consisting of students, renters, homeowners, and businesses not just coexisting but making the town a place where all members respect and benefit from the synergisms of our incredible diversity. I will with great pleasure continue the policy of Mayor Bill Welch to preside over marriage ceremonies irrespective of gender preference with the only criteria being the parties truly love each other.

I am a person open to new, fresh ideas and enjoy conversations on most any subject. Jack and I thrive on theatre perform-



Cooperatives can best develop the West End

by Joshua Guy Lenses and
Carrie A. Peters

The State College Borough Council lists several key goals as part of the 2009 West End Revitalization Plan including the diversification of housing opportunities, broadening the Borough's tax base, and maintaining the unique and historic character of the West End. Pursuant to these goals, we believe that housing cooperatives not only satisfy the key elements of the West End Revitalization Plan, but foster a strong sense of community in a region characterized by transience. We, therefore, propose that the Borough Council use its influence and its capital to support the development of housing cooperatives in the West End in order to more fully actualize these goals, using Central Pennsylvania Community Housing as a model.

Central PA Community Housing (CPCH) is a housing cooperative that has been a member of the West End community for over five years providing community-based, environmentally conscious, socially responsible housing to students, working professionals, artists, and young adults seeking alternatives to typical campus life. Members of CPCH are creative, community-focused, conscientious students who depart from typical campus revelry and its culture of entitlement. CPCH embraces an atmosphere that values the experiences, interests, and diverse perspectives of all its members, inclusive of race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and personal disposition.

Housing cooperatives are not uncommon; in fact you can find them in many college towns, major cities, and rural areas alike.

How to avoid budget impass

by David M. Silverman

I was talking the other day to Whitey Blue, long-time Centre region resident and hard-nose.

"Whitey, do you have any suggestions on how to avoid state budget impasses like we have had this year?"

"Yes, I have some thoughts and suggestions about that. There are too many inputs, each favoring the pet projects of some



Housing cooperatives such as CPCH provide the Borough Planning Commission with a unique opportunity to satisfy its goals while addressing many residents' concerns regarding responsible community development.

Although they take many forms, housing cooperatives are member-owned and operated organizations that share the tasks of daily living, often with common goals and interests. This unique feature separates housing cooperatives from individuals that simply cohabitate and exist as mere economic partners. Their diverse membership includes students, families, and members of the working middle-class. Because members share the cost of living, housing cooperatives provide an affordable housing alternative in an otherwise inaccessible rental market.

Just as CPCH members represent a responsible body of young adults, our organization extends an ethic of responsibility to the State College community, its

group or community in the state."

"How would you reduce that?"

"We'd have to cut down the number of diverse interests. We should have one strong leader who would lay down his policies and enforce them!"

"That would be a dictatorship!"

"That's what these super-liberal groups would call any government that just determines the best policies and implements them without endless discussions."

residents, and businesses. Indeed, our organization is an active participant in the local economy, primarily patronizing local businesses and directly supporting Centre County farmers and agriculture. Local participation is a core element of the goals of CPCH, and represents one of the many ways in which housing cooperatives support their local communities and foster growth.

One of the long-term goals of CPCH is to purchase property in an effort to provide truly affordable housing and establish a more permanent platform by which to grow our community. We believe the long-term establishment of our cooperative brings with it the additional benefit of expanding the Borough's tax base and allows us to

invest in a community that we find meaningful. Housing cooperatives symbolize what can be possible when a sense of community has a permanent presence in a neighborhood. Housing cooperatives have significant incentive to care for and maintain the historic integrity of their properties in order to ensure a lasting presence and not solely in order to turn annual profits.

We believe that the overall goal of the West End Revitalization Plan should be to foster true community development. Presently, community is a notably absent element from State College at-large, but the West End provides a unique opportunity to solve this issue. The West End, as it is today, lacks green spaces, community centers, and other public venues for residents and their families. Ideally, a comprehensive plan for the West End would include such provisions so that families and students are brought together in order to form a more impressive whole. For now, CPCH offers space for artists and musicians, in addition to hosting workshops that educate the public on sustainable housing, transportation, and lifestyles. We hope that community members embrace these goals, and that we may work together to see them realized.

Housing cooperatives such as CPCH provide the Borough Planning Commission with a unique opportunity to satisfy its goals while addressing many residents' concerns regarding responsible community development. CPCH represents a cooperative that is as invested in our community as the neighbors we share it with and effuses a sense of permanence absent from the dry-wall developments along the fringes of town.

We envision a safe and established West End that reflects the values of community in its residents, but only if the plan provides for the development of housing cooperatives. It is our sincere hope that the Council shows an earnest interest in this proposal and that it seriously considers housing cooperatives as a prudent and viable option for a revitalized West End.

Carrie Peters is a fifth-year senior in Penn State's Schreyer Honors College. She has been a member of CPCH since August 2008. Joshua Lenses was a member of CPCH from 2006 to 2009.

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Learn about global myths & realities Nov. 18

by Elizabeth Stock

The power of the people is the power to change, reform and transform. We are the people, six billion strong and we have a right to influence issues of global concern. But to do so, we must be aware of the processes at work and how they affect each and every one of us that share this planet.

Pushing the city into the media spotlight on September 24 and 25, Pittsburgh hosted the G-20 summit of leaders that represent 85 percent of the world's economy. The main purpose of the gathering was to discuss key issues in the global economy.

Although these leaders sat down together for two days, not much was accomplished, which is quite disappointing and also not particularly surprising and probably for the best considering so few people cannot possibly represent the world population.

It is scary to see leaders representing 20 world powers getting together and discussing the fate of over six billion of us, with no results. But did we really want there to be much result from these few people deciding the fate of all global citizens? Perhaps if they want to accomplish something, they should invite a few of us in, those who their decisions really affect and let us be members of their exclusive club for the day and actually hear from those who are out on the streets who wanted their



voices to be heard. These people represented all types of groups and all walks of life. Protests began with a Greenpeace banner hanging on Wednesday the 23rd, ended with peaceful protest on

Friday the 25th, and included a lot of action in between.

As expected, security was extremely high in the days leading up to the summit, with about 4,000 police officers for the event, with 1000 designated just for the downtown area in anticipation of protests.

The city was mostly quiet until Thursday the 24th, when larger groups of protestors began gathering to march and protest. The Pittsburgh G-20 Resistance Project and anarchist groups largely organized these actions. Once the various groups began marching towards the convention center where the world leaders were meeting, police ordered them to disperse after declaring that it was an unlawful assembly. The police met the protesters in riot gear, and used pepper spray, tear gas and a sound cannon for the first time. All in all, there were 190 arrests, including 16 who face felony charges.

We are the people, six billion strong and we have a right to influence issues of global concern. But to do so, we must be aware of the processes at work and how they affect each and every one of us that share this planet.

According to most reports, the protests remained relatively peaceful and the police used unnecessary force. Most of the protestors were college students or college-aged and were merely expressing their discontent with the government and the way current situations are handled.

Many Penn State students made the trip to Pittsburgh to express their own opinions and discontents and to examine and experience this important event. Globalization is happening all around us and it is important to be in tune with current world happenings and events. Knowledge is everything and knowing about these issues, which directly affect all of us and will continue to affect us in the future, helps us to form informed opinions about globalization.

Today information travels at the speed of

light. We live in a world where large factories replace natural habitats and pollute the rest, where the shoes on our feet may have visited more countries than we knew existed and the shirts on our backs are most likely made by someone whose language we will never speak; where money constantly changes hands and global trade is controlled by only a few. These forces control all of our lives, but most of us remain uninformed about them.

If you would like to learn more about the myths and realities of globalization, come to our event, "A Tragedy of Errors," which features guest speakers, student films and animations, artwork, and dramatic presentations. This event is a product of the class Anthropology 455, "Global Processes and Local Systems," at Penn State and sponsored by Student Labor Action Project, Anthropology Club, and University Students Against Sweatshops. Come to educate yourself about the effects of globalization on local, national, and global levels. This event will take place on Nov. 18 at 6:30 p.m. in 105 Forum Building.

The event is free and open to the public. For more information please contact Andy Mazur at aam5056@psu.edu or Nuno Ribiero at nfr106@psu.edu.

Elizabeth Stock is a psychology and international studies major at Penn State.

New Limbaugh pig flu transmitted by right-wing ideologue

by Marylouise Markle

In response to recommendations by our Secretary of Health and Human Services that Americans get vaccinated against H1N1, Rush Limbaugh recently replied, "Screw you, Kathleen Sebelius."

Eighty-seven children have died.

Mr. Limbaugh says he's not getting vaccinated. Good.

In yet another one of his tiresome, purple-faced, near-ischemic diatribes, Mr. Limbaugh has unintentionally uncovered a rampant new virus, however. He called it "The Pig Flu." The "Pig Flu," according to the acerbic Limbaugh is, evidently, an invention of the Obama Administration. A socialist plot, he suggests. Vaccinations are



the insidious mechanism by which the children of the damned are transformed from over-indulged, bullying, young right-wing Cherubs for The Protection of the Constitushun [sic] into socialist automatons committed to a left-wing Stalinist, neo-fascist (no contradiction there) totalitarian agenda. Note nuance of stereotype.

The "New Limbaugh Pig Flu" (NLPF) is characterized in part by loud snorting, often coupled with metaphorically dirty extremi-

Potential sources of "pig flu" are insidious and varied, but include prolonged exposure to right-wing congresspersons, nut allergies, premature emasculation, and, of course, Fox News. Unfair, unbalanced and unsafe at any speed.

ties and fever pitched pounding of hooves among the politically manipulative and the mendaciously mean alike. "More cowbell" (SNL), unfortunately, is not the prescription. Neither is the vaccine.

Not intended to impugn any farm animals living or dead, the NLPF is apparently a self-referential virus.

Potential sources of "pig flu" are insidious and varied, but include prolonged exposure to right-wing congresspersons, nut

allergies, premature emasculation, and, of course, Fox News. Unfair, unbalanced and unsafe at any speed.

Manifestations of the new disease include but are not limited to abusive language, chest beating, thumping, humping and monkey manners, rude signage, high-pitched anger and screaming, intense desire

see Pig flu pg. 31

ASK Cosmo



Dear Cosmo,

I'm sick of all the buzz about Facebook, Twitter, Delicious, Flickr etc. All these people walk around oblivious to the physical world around them with their noses buried in a little electronic screen. And everybody acts like if I'm not avidly participating in all this stuff, I'm a total cave dweller. In terms of my preferred social networking site, is there an "I don't give a damn" box that I could check?

Signed, Profoundly Anti-Social Media!

Dear Antisocial Meteorite,

You need to add more buffer memory to your "Ignore" program. If constant public booger-eating became all the rage, I suppose you'd look down your nose at that, too. These new communications applications seem to be all the rage, but I suspect they'll level off as the novelty dies down.

The 1950's earth didn't lurch off its axis with all those hula hoops gyrating, and our linguistic skills didn't permanently plummet during the 1970's public zeal for jabbering on the CB radio.

We didn't suffocate in a flannel cocoon with 90's Grunge or bankrupt dental plans chasing after the latest hip-hop grilles. So I don't think we'll become completely oblivious to the world around us as we enter the twenty-teens.

It's just a trend, not the apocalypse, although Twitter's stock-in-trade in "followers" does have a whiff of idolatry to it.

Now there is a certain "keep up with the Joneses" mentality surrounding social media. But that lust for timely intelligence was also the case with turn-of-the-century

tycoons whose offices seemed naked without the bell jar with the ticker tape machine tele-spewing the latest stock quotes.

But ticker tapes actually provided tycoons with vital information...at least among tycoons. It's not like they were Morse coding one another, "I'm on the patio."

I think consumers should resist the notion that we'll be totally behind the curve if we fail to snarf up every byte of social noise that's currently irradiating the planet. Now that the 24-hour-a-day news cycle is being deemed too slow and unresponsive by the same channels who are also hawking their Twitter feeds and Facebook fansites there is an enhanced sense of urgency that we're not getting vital information fast enough.

But it's a counterfeit urgency if the content of all those communiqués is not all that earth-shattering.

My concern is that our voters will continue self-selecting media channels solely for entertainment instead of ones that help contribute to the informed public that is essential to a healthy democracy.

I worry about a society whose information diet could shift from high-drivel to all-drivel. Sound the re-tweet.

But they could be life-changing, given the evolutionary possibilities. You might consider kneepads for your keypads.

cowardice, generic ignorance and zealotry, pretend crying on television, right-wing prognostication and compelling trance-like fixation on—dun, dun, dun—Fox News.

Clearly America needs a flu shot.

Or, maybe just a new national campaign for Smart.

Marylouise Markle is an American cultural historian and essayist who lives in State College, Pa.

Campus and Culture from the Canine Perspective

If you aren't careful about your tendencies toward rampant Poindexterity, you humans could develop increasingly flattened out thumbs if you don't relinquish the death grips on some of your techie twaddle touchscreens.

And those wider thumbs might be a little painful as you stand there with your shift-key trigger way up there.

Dear Cosmo,

I'm sick of all the gays on this campus. Why don't they just go back in the closet where they belong?

Better yet, why don't they just choose a normal lifestyle and leave the rest of us alone?

Halloween on campus was totally sickening this year. I couldn't believe some of the costumes or the gross acts they were performing in public.

It was all just so...gay. It's like we're being overrun by a bunch of poodles who get to run loose, and all of us regular coon hounds and pit bulls have to stay on a leash.

Is part of a "liberal education" really about teaching me to accept that crap? I think I'd rather stay uneducated.

Signed, Proud To Be A Big Dog

Dear Smarmaduke,

Yup, acceptance is pretty much a major lesson in a liberal education, and it seems like you're well on your way toward your wish to remain uneducated.

I am intrigued why you and your "real dog" friends feel so constrained while the

flamboyant ones feel free to frolic. Do you feel like you're missing out on something? Are you straining at your leashes? Are your latent tendencies craving a little poodle-tang? Methinks thou dost protest too much.

I'm not sure whether you feel threatened so you're marking your turf, or you're just engaging in a pissing contest. We "real" boy dogs pee sittin' down sometimes when we're young, and when we're real old, and sometimes just because we feel like it.

That doesn't make us any less "manly," just pee-flexible. Fact is, turf has been marked by squatters for eons. But don't give me that "poor downtrodden heterosexual majority is getting hind tit" routine.

By the way, lay off the "breedist" stereotypes with the coon hounds and pit bulls, breeder boy.

There are psycho Golden Retrievers and total creampuff Dobermans. I had a co-dog who was a 10-pound toy chocolate poodle who pinned a 100-pound Rottweiler to the wall.

Little Harley D. just went apeshit buzzsaw, and boy was Dagmar surprised! (And a bit chagrined.) But it was definitely some hot girl-on-girl action, so maybe that would appeal to you.

But your old-fashioned, and dare I say anachronistic, sentiments were actually pretty timely. There's currently a public service campaign underway called, "It's not OK to say 'That's so gay.'" More can be seen at www.thinkb4youspeak.com. It's pretty worthwhile. And just to set your uneducated mind at rest, it's not all that gay.

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to hike the Appalachian Trail, delusions of Biblical grandeur, historical ignorance, impenitence, impotence (not the same thing though often equated by the creatively illiterate), quasi Tourette's outbursts during Presidential addresses to the nation, membership in the C Street House (where boys will boys), bad grammar and spelling, disrespect for women and children, inherent



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