

Blacks residents speak about life here

by Art Goldschmidt

Black residents living in Centre County today find conditions at the university and in the community better than they used to be, but in interviews, said they could be better still. As William Asbury, 66, Penn State's vice president for student affairs from 1987 to 2003, put it: "We won't know if the programs for diversity are enough till we no longer need to have a vice provost for educational equity. We'll always need to ensure that there's a systematic approach to the problem throughout the university."

African Americans have lived in Centre County since the era of slavery, when the so-called Underground Railroad brought some escaped black slaves to settle in and around Bellefonte. But Penn State has been the main driver for increasing the black presence locally since Calvin H. Waller became the first black student to enroll at Penn State in 1899. The first full-time black faculty member, Mary Godfrey, was appointed in 1956. In the late 1960s, when organized student protests began at Penn State and black students formed the Frederick A. Douglass Association, African

American enrollment at all Penn State campuses hovered around 1,000; in 2010 it exceeds 4,700.

Veteran black residents in Centre County recall both positive and negative aspects of their first exposure to Penn State or the community. Deborah Atwater, retired associate professor of communication arts and sciences and former head of the African and African American Studies Department, recalled that, when she arrived as a freshman in 1967, her assigned roommate, who was white, burst into tears upon seeing her for the first time. Fortunately, 10 other girls on her floor offered to room with her, and the resident assistant was able to soothe ruffled feelings. Joining Delta Sigma Theta, a black sorority, helped Atwater to feel a part of the Penn State community, she said. She also earned high grades in her courses, overcoming the patronizing attitude of a few white instructors.

Andrew Jackson Sr., 59, former adviser in the College of Education, had little trouble gaining acceptance from classmates when he arrived in 1970 and became the first African American admitted to the Blue Band, then directed by James Dunlop, who



Photo by Kevin Black

Thelma Price, a long-time area resident, said racist behaviors aren't typical in the area.

was still opposed to letting women march with his band. He said he felt strongly supported by Thelma Price, then head of the

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DARE teams up with Penn State to update program

by Mairys Joaquin

The Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program has decided to revamp a long-time program called "Keepin' It Real" by refreshing its curriculum.

DARE teamed up with Penn State and Connect with Kids, a multimedia education company, to change the content and delivery of the program in order to make it more effective for young students, said Penn State professor of Arts and Sciences Michael Hecht.

Hecht developed the Keepin' It Real program with fellow Penn State professor Dr. Michelle Miller-Day in the 1990s and initially implemented it in Phoenix, Ariz. This new program was based more on real stories from students and centered around the situations that would most likely occur

based on their community setting—from urban to suburban and rural environments.

"This system is more about the kids and who they are," said Hecht. "Each classroom faces different challenges because of the cultural and geographic differences and this new program addresses many of these issues."

The DARE program, founded in 1983, a police officer-led classroom education program, seeks to prevent use of illegal drugs, membership in gangs and violent behavior among youth from kindergarten through 12th grade.

In past years, DARE came under a great deal of scrutiny because of criticism toward its approaches as well as its effectiveness in preparing students to combat the pressures of substance use and abuse, said Penn State's Margaret Colby, who served as coor-

dinator of the project.

"DARE had such a bad reputation in the past but they have made great strides in any perceived missteps they may have had, especially with this program," said Colby. "It's a program that really works."

The program adapted many of the approaches of the Penn State project into its current curriculum. The new program, which officially began this past fall, consists of 10 lessons that include videos and personal narratives followed by a critical analysis of the material shown, said Colby.

The adaptation of the current Keepin' It Real program requires officers to be trained for 80 hours on connecting students to the material and getting them to think critically about the various scenarios presented. In the past, said Colby, this was not essentially the focus of the program.

"I always thought of DARE as officers talking at the students," said Colby. "Now the focus is bringing out the student's stories...and getting [officers] to act as intermediaries, not just talking ideas at kids."

In today's classrooms, students often overestimate peer drug-use and in many cases, use it as a form of identity, said

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Educational Opportunity Program office. He recalled how, when he went to study in England under the Education Abroad Program and ran short of funds, the entire EOP office staff contributed money to support him. Even Penn State President John W. Oswald helped.

Thelma Price, 84, came to University Park from the New Kensington campus, where she was assistant dean of student affairs from 1964 to 1972.

"I didn't have time to deal with racist behaviors, which in any case aren't typical in this area," Price said. She noted that, although the Educational Opportunity Program did increase African American student enrollment at Penn State, it was not solely meant for blacks. There were also Latinos, Asians, Native Americans, and other underrepresented groups. "All EOP students were gift-wrapped," she declared. "God has wrapped the whole world with

Penn State has a 68 percent graduation rate for African American students, compared with a national collegiate rate of 45 percent.

color. You don't refuse to open a gift you find under the Christmas tree because of the color of its wrapping." For her, every child, every student, is a piece within the jigsaw puzzle of the world. "If a piece is missing, the world is not complete!" she exclaimed.

Based on their results, Penn State's programs for minority students have achieved at least some measure of success. W. Terrell Jones, 60, vice provost for educational equity since 1999, pointed to Penn State's 68 percent graduation rate for African American students, compared with a national rate of 45 percent.

Jones remembered the days when he knew every black person in the area and the Martin Luther King Day dinner drew 40 to 50 people. This year it drew more than 600

and sold out almost immediately.

Jackson noted that past instances of discrimination, often subtle, have at times led to court cases, and one valuable result has been a series of five-year plans to foster diversity. The latest publication, *A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State 2010-15*, describes the variety of Penn State programs and provisions for accountability and assessment. It projects a 9 percent drop in the total number of public high school graduates in Pennsylvania between 2007-08 and 2014-15, but the percentage of nonwhite students is projected to grow from 19 percent in 2004-05 to about 25 percent in 2014-15. It discussed how to meet this rising demand.

Not all black newcomers to Centre County are affiliated with the university. Marian Dornell, 70, came with her husband in 1991 to retire here. She said she was impressed by the warm welcome she got from members of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Centre County.

"I landed at a very happy time," Dornell said. "My race was acknowledged but no one was running away from it." The only bad experience she could recall was to find out that "someone whom I viewed as a friend turned out to view me as a racial object."

Jackson, who raised two daughters and a son here, expressed concern about the number of black people working within the State College Area School District. Eleven staff and six faculty employees are black,



Photo provided
W. Terrell Jones measures progress by the relatively high graduation rates of black students.

according to the superintendent's office.

Families of black newcomers have had mixed experiences. One noted that his son, who played varsity sports in high school, made friends easily but had problems with athletes from other schools. One said that his daughters found it hard to get invited to social events, but his sons could easily get dates. Dornell said that her grandchildren, who are enrolled at the Friends School, have found a very warm and accepting environment. Living in the State College area is especially challenging for single black women, several people noted.

Good teaching and advising are crucial for young blacks in Centre County. "You are unique and special, and the world won't be the same without you," Price concluded. "We teach the child how to love when we treat him as someone special. Then he will do unto others as we have treated him."

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Hecht. It was important to give officers in the classroom the ability to draw out real student stories in order to better equip them with the critical thinking skills and strategies which would allow them to combat these pressures.

"All kids are different, but the overarching reason why they chose to use drugs is because they think they are fun and are only shown positive consequences," said Hecht. "We teach them how to think their decisions through critically and help them see that

"Now the focus is bringing out the student's stories...and getting [officers] to act as intermediaries, not just talking ideas at kids." --Program Coordinator Margaret Colby

there indeed are very negative consequences that follow drug use."

The new curriculum is anchored in a more evidence-based approach and was tested through randomized trials consisting of surveys as well as through the creation of a scientific advisory board to evaluate it.

"Despite its being denied federal funding to help further test and evaluate the pro-

gram, DARE was still very dedicated to making it work and to having someone show that it works," said Hecht.

Anita Bryan, the deputy director of education who has worked with DARE since 1995, said the partnership with Connect with Kids has been vital to its success because of their reputation in working with youth programming in various TV net-

works.

"Working with Connect With Kids ensured that these were real students being used with real stories to tell," said Bryan. "They were able to go out into these schools and get these stories for the videos."

As for the program's effectiveness, Bryan said it has already begun to receive a great deal of positive feedback from students, officers and teachers.

"It has been a very positive collaboration and I am pleased to have been able to work together to get a product we think will work best in the classroom," said Bryan.

Shaman poses offer path to the subconscious

by Jill Gomez

Our dreams are the keys to learning about our deeper inner selves—or so Dr. Nick Brink of Coburn, Pa., believes. He has incorporated the study of dreams into his work as a clinical psychologist for much of his career, and currently facilitates groups—open to anyone who is interested in joining—in holding ancient shaman poses to strive for possible healing and understanding through an "ecstatic trance state."

Brink is interested in determining just what sort of effect the ancient poses have on one's ability to overcome illness and pain or to understand something hidden within the subconscious, and he's currently writing a book on his findings based on the trance-like, dream experiences of others as well as his own.

For three years Brink has been following methods developed by the late Dr. Felicitas Goodman, who rediscovered these poses in

the late 1990s while traveling in Mexico and who later set up the Cuyamungue Institute in New Mexico to continue her research into altered states of consciousness.

When Brink facilitates a group, he always participates himself. Over two years ago, he was diagnosed with prostate cancer, and felt hopeful that doing the poses regularly was beginning to have an effect on decreasing his PSA levels.

He hosts the shamanic posturing sessions in a light-infused upper story annex in his woodsy Coburn home, just over a tiny single-lane bridge across a mountain stream. On the walls of the room are drawings of eagles and bears; shelves are lined with ancient-looking statues and numerous books. Large pillows are stacked in corners and his students are encouraged to sit upon them while they assume their shaman



Photo by Jill Gomez

Dr. Nick Brink, Sarah Berndt and Maria Hewitt (from left to right) in Jama-Coaque pose.

see Shaman, pg. 14

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Used to be only the GOP tried to destroy Medicare

by Joel Solkoff

"...Dr. [Margaret] Pfanstiehl...said her goal was to engage the sight-deprived to 'live a 20/20 existence without 20/20 vision.'"

--from The Washington Post.

Dr. Pfanstiehl, mourned last month in a Maryland ceremony, was blind and promoted audio description technology to the point where a blind patron can hear audio description of dance.

From where I sit on my \$5,000 power chair, two issues come to mind immediately. First, President Obama, the man I supported to be president, plans to reduce the Medicare budget by nearly half a trillion dollars. These cuts, intended to help pay for health care reform, have come on top of procedures that hurt me and others who are



From Where I Sit

elderly or disabled. The argument is that current and future cuts will reduce "fraud and abuse." Attorney General Eric H. Holder, Jr.'s fraud and abuse prosecutions are notable for their relative insignificance.

The second issue that comes to mind is, when elderly and disabled voters are organized, they constitute an effective voting bloc. As I write this column in Addison Court in State College, I note that Addison Court has about 90 residents who are 55 or older or who have disabilities or impairments. Most of us are registered and vote even in low-turnout elections.

Addison Court now has a tradition of inviting candidates to inform our residents

about the issues. To date, residents (eating Elaine-Meder Wilgus' donated food from Webster's Café) have heard Representative Glenn (GW) Thompson, his challenger Mark C. McCracken (currently a Clearfield County commissioner), Assemblyman Scott Conklin, State College Mayor Elizabeth Goreham, and four State College Borough Council candidates representing both major parties.



When George Bush was president, he attacked Medicare, creating barriers that made it more difficult for eligible citizens to obtain medical oxygen for homecare, wheelchairs, power chairs and scooters. For example, in March 2008 a power chair was prescribed for me after (in-patient hospitalization at Health South) I received a thorough evaluation from physical and occupational therapy. My physician, Dr. Colin McCaul, a specialist in rehabilitation, prescribed the chair because he said it would be useful for me to have more support for my right arm, helping to avoid surgery. It would also be useful teaching my left arm how to perform functions previously done by my right. The chair's controls are on my left causing much trouble before I finally learned how to drive left-handed.

Medicare required that I go through an

hour-and-a-half test with a rehabilitation specialist. After passing the test, I saw Dr. McCaul in the hallway and said the specialist emphasized the importance of the doctor scheduling a one-on-one appointment devoted strictly to why I need a power chair and to be followed by a prescription with the magic words on top "after a one-on-one appointment"....

Since I had seen Dr. McCaul immediately before the test, he said it wasn't necessary to meet again. He would take care of it. Medicare, which has been consistently negligent in explaining the rules to physicians, rejected the prescription and would not pay because it was not written in keeping with Medicare regulations. [How I obtained payment from an agency other than Medicare is a story for another time.]

When Obama became president I thought he would reverse those policies. He has made things worse. Especially distressing is that while Obama has been busy with health care reform in which Medicare was a significant factor, he had not named a director of Medicare, the largest health insurance company in the United States. Assistive technology (which gets me from bed to the bathroom reliably) generally helps the disabled avoid assistive living (which costs Medicare more than \$40,000 extra per person per year than independent living while allowing a greater sense of independence and helping to improve morale).

I said in my last column that I would dis-

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I wish...

- for all kids to have gifts*
- for every human to have a home*
- for a baby*
- I had some waffles, so I could share them with the world*
- for my son to speak*
- that no child ever goes hungry again*
- for Mom to get a job*
- for a bit of fun in everybody's life*
- for no neck pain*
- for good work*
- for world peace*
- for my dad to stay home for 5 days*
- more people would share hope with those who have none*
- for returned health*
- for understanding*

Centre County's Wishes for 2010

At the 2009 Festival of Trees in December, Global Connections invited visitors to decorate its tree with wishes for 2010. The responses were so poignant that Voices wanted to share them with you as we begin our new year. We hope you will join us in wishing the best for our community in 2010.

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from Shaman, pg. 12

poses—unless, of course, the pose in question is a standing one, like that of the ancient Tlazolteotl, the Aztec goddess of love and of purification from disease.

One Sunday afternoon in December, participants took the pose of Tlazolteotl. They were first handed a picture of the goddess in ancient sculpture form, and then Brink provided a bit of background information. The Aztecs believed that if they confessed sins on their deathbeds, Tlazolteotl would come and eat this “filth,” allowing them to die while spiritually pure and clean. Brink’s group simulated the goddess by standing comfortably with feet hip-distance apart, elbows bent, hands cupped and facing upward and mouth open. The group uses 50 to 60 poses adapted from various cultures.

For many ancient peoples around the globe, a shaman acted as a medium between the visible and spirit worlds, practicing healing and divination. Brink’s mentor, Goodman, discovered that shamans often held a yoga-like pose while in a hypnotic trance. As a linguist and anthropologist, she studied the dance rituals of present-day peoples and noted that rhythmic drumming, singing and clapping also seemed to transport participants into trance-like states.

“Ritual without a switch into the altered

state of consciousness is simply not possible,” Goodman said in an interview available on YouTube. “People all around the world are aware of rhythmic stimulation. It is a momentous event on the neurophysiological basis when we change our state of consciousness, and is usually brought about by rhythmic stimulation.”

Following her lead, Brink combines a background drumbeat with the shamanic poses. Before turning on a tape, he encouraged everyone to look at the picture again, and then visualize the statue standing in the middle of the circle. He advised the group to take notice of the statue if they encountered it during their dream-like “journey.”

“Ask it a question,” he said. “What do you have to show me? To tell me? Ask it to take you there.” He then led the group into a trance-like state of meditation. After fifteen minutes or so, the drumbeat slowly died, and each participant was given an index card and a pen to record the experience he or she just had. Brink probed into the shared comments, encouraging people to articulate all they saw and felt. A feeling of safety and trust pervaded the atmosphere.

To the novice or skeptic, the benefits of the shamanic poses might seem a little far-fetched. But those who have been participating in the group for some time say the experiences they’ve had have helped them to better understand their subconscious.

from Solkoff, pg. 13

cuss John Wayne’s comment that after cancer surgery he did not feel sorry for himself, despite the temptation. Wayne proved it by getting back to work, filming a movie only two weeks after his surgery. For those of us who are disabled, not feeling sorry means having the equipment to get a job, equipment like that listed above. For the blind, it’s assistive technology, a very exciting development, which disgracefully is not paid by Medicare. We also need technology for those who cannot hear—only some of which is paid for, including controversial cochlear implants.

The most effective message to the Democratic Party is the creation of a bloc within the party that will vote strictly on disability and aged concerns—a bloc which will flirt with the Republicans if it does any good. [It should go without saying that this bloc would include disabled veterans, but all too often veterans are neglected even



Photo provided by whitehouse.gov
Is Obama ruining Medicare?

when intentions are best.]

—Joel Solkoff, author of “The Politics of Food.” Contact him at jsolkoff@gmail.com

Maria Hewitt of State College has been practicing with Brink for nearly two years, off and on. She said she grew up in an “alternative family” and was used to the idea of meditation, but that she never really learned to sit still for silent meditation. The guided meditation with Brink—incorporating the drumbeat and the shamanic poses—has been much more effective for her.

“It’s like a good tarot reading,” said Hewitt. “I see it as a mechanism for helping me gain clarity in what’s happening in my world. I’m aware that the visions I have are open to many interpretations, but I feel it’s a way to alternatively help me understand what’s going on.” Hewitt said that Brink does not offer his own diagnosis or opinion on what her visions may mean once she’s shared them. Rather, he asks questions to help guide her to her own interpretation.

Brink said he is fascinated that often two or more people in the same setting have very similar dream—ecstatic—experiences. It’s this consistency with connectedness that keeps Brink going with this project, even though, recently, he says he is feeling a little

less certain about the poses’ ability to help heal his cancer. It has returned, and he is currently traveling each day to the hospital for radiation treatment. Still, said Brink, he does believe that delving into his subconscious through the shamanic posturing has helped him to deal with the stressfulness of his situation.

Sarah Berndt of Rebersburg, Pa. has been working with Brink for two years as well, and she said that doing the poses has helped to train her to trust her subconscious to work out things that are bothering her. She will take a problem, “wrap it up like a package, and hand it over to my subconscious.” And within a couple of days, she is able to see a solution.

“Everybody that goes into these trances does it for different reasons, and gets something different out of it,” said Berndt. “It’s very personal. I do feel that after doing this for a while that I am in better touch with my subconscious.”

Readers interested in more information can contact Brink at nbrink@verizon.net.

PSU Black Caucus Black History Month Week

FEB 15: Kickoff! **129D HUB 7 p.m.**

FEB 16: A Taste of Two Cultures **129D Alumni Hall HUB 7 p.m**

with Black Caucus and Club Kreyol

Storytelling, black cultural and historical events and feature presentations and information about Haiti.

FEB 17: Beyond Black History **Alumni Hall 7 p.m.**

with Black Caucus, NAACP and National Panhellenic Council

Highlights the historical aspects of each organization, prominent unsung heroes in Black History and discusses our past, present and future.

FEB 19: Late Night Penn State **HUB**

with SPA and Black Caucus

Trivia with fun facts about Black History Month, prizes, more!

Feb 20: Black Caucus Jazz Fest **Heritage Hall, Doors Open at 6 p.m.**

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