

A Quick Look Outside National and International News

Antigay religious broadcaster Pat Robertson warned residents of a rural Pennsylvania town on Thursday, November 10 that disaster may strike there because they “voted God out of [their] city” by ousting school board members who favored teaching intelligent design. All eight Dover, Pa., school board members up for re-election were defeated Tuesday after trying to introduce “intelligent design”—the belief that the universe is so complex that it must have been created by a higher power—as an alternative to the theory of evolution. “I’d like to say to the good citizens of Dover: If there is a disaster in your area, don’t turn to God. You just rejected him from your city,” Robertson said on the Christian Broadcasting Network’s “700 Club.” Eight families had sued the district, claiming the policy violates the constitutional separation of church and state. The federal trial concluded days before November 8’s election, but no ruling has been issued. Later, Robertson issued a statement saying he was simply trying to point out that “our spiritual actions have consequences.” Robertson made headlines this summer when he called on his daily show for the assassination of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. In October 2003, he suggested that the State Department be blown up with a nuclear device. He has also said that feminism encourages women to “kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism and become lesbians.”

Wins by women candidates in Tuesday, November 8’s election have set a new record for women’s representation in New Jersey. The state legislature will now include 22 women, a record for New Jersey. This brings New Jersey out of its place on the list of ten worst states for women’s representation, according to the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP). New Jersey is now tied with Alaska in 32nd place, with women making up 18.3 percent of the state legislators. In other election news, one of the Virginia legislature’s most anti-abortion delegates, Richard H. Black (R), was defeated by Democrat David Poisson, who supports reproductive rights and legal benefits for lesbian and gay couples. Black received bipartisan criticism in 2003 when he sent Virginia’s 40 senators a pink plastic fetus along with a letter urging support for several anti-abortion measures being considered by the legislature.

The House International Relations Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere has unanimously approved a resolution authored by Congresswoman Hilda Solis (D-CA) that addresses the violent murders of women in border cities of Ciudad Juarez and Chihuahua, Mexico. The resolution denounces the murders and asks that the United States government engage the Mexican government in order to solve the open cases and work to prevent any more deaths. Most of the murders have gone unsolved, and human rights groups have faulted the local government for mishandling the investigations. While 370 murders have been acknowledged by the Mexican government, the actual number of deaths is thought to be higher. As the resolution notes, of the 370 women murdered, 137 were also sexually assaulted. Congresswoman Solis noted that “these acts are more than just crimes – they are horrific violations of women’s rights and human rights.”

Hauwa Ibrahim, Nigerian lawyer and human rights activist, is one of three recipients of the European Parliament’s distinguished 2005 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought. Ibrahim has been courageously defending people (mainly women) “condemned under *sharia* law to horrifying punishments (lashing, stoning, and amputation),” according to the European Parliament. For her lifesaving work, she has been harassed, threatened, insulted, and charged with libeling the judiciary. But she has with determination brilliantly waged a public awareness campaign that has reached worldwide and saved the lives of women condemned to death by stoning. Best known for her defense of Amina Lawal, who faced stoning to death as a sentence for adultery, Ibrahim has defended many condemned people. Ibrahim was also the first woman national publicity secretary of the Nigerian Bar Association, and wrote the first draft (2002) of the constitution for the Pan African Lawyers Union. The other 2005 recipients of the Sakharov Prize are Damas de Blanco, a Cuban protest group, and Reporters Without Borders, and all three will receive the prize during the December plenary session in Strasbourg. Winners are chosen by all the presidents of political parties of the European Parliament for their significant contributions to human rights. Previous winners include Nelson Mandela and Kofi Annan.

compiled by gilda rodriguez from www.feminist.org and www.advocate.com



Charity and BMCDS: Where Do Your Meals Go?

by gilda rodriguez

Among the many efforts on campus to help those affected by Hurricane Katrina was Dining Services’ donation program in which students, depending on their meal plan, could donate meals or guest passes. BMCDS then converted that donation into a dollar amount, matched it, and sent it to the Red Cross. Over 140 students participated, bringing the total amount to \$1456—at \$5 a pop, students contributed more than \$700, which BMCDS then doubled.

However, some have questioned BMCDS’ charitable intentions. Simple math—dividing the cost of your meal plan by the amount of meals you get a semester—will tell you that a Bryn Mawr meal costs around \$10, twice as much as BMCDS donated in exchange for it. When the campaign was going on, many students wondered where the “extra” money was going or, worse, if Dining Services was making a profit off our donations.

Turns out, BMCDS was actually giving more than the cost of your food. In their operating budget, almost 50% of the money is allocated to employee wages and benefits and 20-25% to other expenses such as equipment maintenance and replacement—the replacement of dishes, cups and flatware—electricity, insurance and other supplies. Only about 20-25% of the money goes into buying food, including special event meals.

“Whether a student eats or not, we still have to pay the employees to be there,” says Bernie Chung-Templeton, director of Dining

Services. “If you don’t eat, I can’t send an employee home.” Thus, more than 70% of the costs of running the dining halls are fixed and, when BMCDS runs a donation campaign, they can’t use any of the money allocated to paying the employees or any of the other expenses, as they “don’t go away when a student doesn’t eat that meal.”

If only \$2 out of every “\$10 meal” can be spared by Dining Services, how did they donate \$5? BMCDS, as we all well know, spends a considerable amount of money on special events, such as holiday dinners, which are included in their food budget. In this case, Penny Candy Day, an event that was supposed to occur around the time of the campaign, was cancelled; the candy will be used instead as an exam snack during finals, offsetting the cost of making our Katrina donations worth \$5.

This campaign is not BMCDS’ first effort to raise money for those in need. This past spring semester, Dining Services organized a similar donation drive for the victims of the tsunami in Asia. Chung-Templeton says she primarily wanted to provide an easy, convenient way for students to help donate to charity. The opportunity to do so depends a lot on timing and the availability of funds. Wanting to help students in ways more than just providing food, she hopes that should a future tragedy occur, Dining Services can continue to provide this sort of opportunity and still offer a quality dining program.

Mainstage’s *King Lear*

continued from page 1

only by his Fool. While roaming the wilderness during a storm, they meet up with the disguised Kent and the Duke of Gloucester, who has also been deposed by wicked offspring (his bastard son Edmund,). They are joined by Edgar, Gloucester’s legitimate son and heir, who was earlier framed by Edmund and fell out with their father. Meanwhile, Cordelia returns from France with an army to restore Lear’s power. The result is a battle for the crown between Lear and Edmund, the latter seeking to elevate himself through a union with either Goneril or Regan. Although retribution inevitably falls on the unjust and the two fathers are reunited with the faithful children that they had mistakenly disowned, the genre of tragedy suggests that most characters will not survive, be they good or evil.

Both the play’s style and subject matter are dark in nature. The dim setting and swinging lights seem to reflect an action movie filled with spies and intrigue, and certain surprises involving loud noises and falling things may startle some audience members. Nonetheless, the atmosphere of darkness is set off by the antics of the Fool, who walks

around in the storm with a spray can and a toy umbrella. More contradictions ensue between Edgar’s disturbing “madness” and Edmund’s intense rationality, and between Lear and Gloucester’s genuine identification with each other and Goneril and Regan’s feigned alliance. In the end, it is death that seems to bring everything together: the curtain falls on a stage of dead bodies vaguely illuminated by faint lights that flash back and forth, like in some dark conference room in a spy movie in which a seemingly peaceful gathering takes a fatal turn for the worse.

Despite these innovative special effects, keeping track of the storyline may be difficult for those who haven’t read the play. A lot of sections are skimmed over—important parts are drawn out and highlighted—and it is for this reason that the summary of events in the program is extremely helpful, particularly for first-time viewers. There will be three more performances in Goodhart Auditorium on Nov. 17th, 18th and 19th at 7:30 p.m. each evening. This will either give you time to read *King Lear*, look up the plot on Sparknotes.com, or go into the show cold turkey, according to your inclination...though in all three cases, it is well worth seeing.