

THE NITTANY PRIDE

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PSNK Holds Annual Turkey Trot



The Man Behind the Lion

PSNK Soccer Team Kicks its Way into Playoffs

Paleo Diet: Healthy or Not?

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CAMPUS LIFE

The Man Behind the Lion

By Krista Murray

NEW KENSINGTON, Pa. – The student behind the Penn State New Kensington mascot will be retiring from the lion suit at the end of the 2014 spring semester, but recalls his time as the Nittany Lion with a sense of fulfillment and Penn State pride.

Since last January, the newly appointed Nittany Lion made it a priority to be seen at every campus event, and from sports events to orientations, this student mascot has been the symbol of pride for Penn State New Kensington.

With all of these events, one could assume how difficult it might be to juggle time as the Lion as well as time for his education, but the student shrugged it off stating “It’s all about time management.”

“I promised the university and I promised myself that people would see the lion- he would be around,” said the student mascot. “The Lion is about school spirit and my job is to get people excited and make them smile.”

Being the student mascot is, obviously, not an easy task. Certain requirements for the Lion include being as energetic as possible, going to university events, and most importantly, not talking while in the suit. Staying anonymous is key to being the lion, and the student has made that a considerable priority when wearing the suit.

“The first time I put on the suit- yeah- I was nervous,” said the mascot due to all of the requirements, “but after one or two tries I got the hang of it.”

Since his first few events and onward, the Lion has been instilling school spirit in every individual and explained that one of his favorite events to mascot at is basketball due to the spirited crowds. Even though he stated that he has never lacked the energy, trying to get a crowd excited can be a daunting task.

“Last week it was hard to get the crowd cheering,” he said. “But even if you’re tired you just have to bring that extra ‘umph’ to the event.”

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Eric Bennardo, a Communications major at Penn State New Kensington and avid fan of all events for the campus, said that the Lion “adds to the energy of sports events. He does a good job in getting everyone excited.”

Along with sports, the student mascot also enjoys the orientation event of inviting new students to the campus. This is due to his hope that he will inspire incoming students to share the same love and school spirit for the New Kensington campus that he has had for the past four years.

Current Lion ambassador, Craig Synan, has witnessed the student mascot at these orientation events and stated that “The Lion brings the pride better than anyone else can.”

The Lion said that out of all the events he attends, his favorite thing is “Taking pictures with people. I’m what they call a photogenic lion.”

This anonymous student has worked exceedingly hard to put campus pride in the students of Penn State New Kensington and he has absolutely done so. Although he is graduating in the spring of 2014, he is nowhere near finished being the spirited Nittany Lion. He will be participating for the rest of the academic school year in activities such as THON, blood-drives, and of course other sports events.

“He has put the best in me,” said the student referring to the mascot suit. “He makes me feel good about myself and I hope that the next person that wears the suit will respect it as much as I do. That is most important to me because I will always put the Lion before myself.”



The Penn State New Kensington Lion mascot sits atop the Nittany Lion Shrine. (Photo by Krista Murray)

CAMPUS LIFE

PSNK Kinesiology Instructor Shares Her Passion for Fitness

By Sarah Steighner

NEW KENSINGTON, Pa. – Kinesiology Instructor Pepsi Umberger teaches a variety of fitness classes at Penn State New Kensington and at her own studio in Robinson. She is also the race director of the university's upcoming Turkey Trot 5k.

Umberger said she has been involved with fitness since she was about 19-years-old. Around that time, she was hired for a work study job at Kent State in the athletic fitness center. Once hired, she did orientation for new members and showed others how to use the machines. After hearing they were hiring an aerobics instructor, she got trained to be an instructor which then set the ball rolling for her future in fitness.

Umberger is certified in many areas including: group fitness, personal training, kickboxing, spinning, yoga, Pilates, and water aerobics. At Penn State New Kensington, she teaches Introduction to Strength Training, Introduction to Yoga, Fitness and Wellness Theory, Fitness Walking, Physical Conditioning, and Introduction to Kinesiology. In regards to the wide range of fitness that Umberger is involved with, she said that "Fitness is not one size fits all. You have to figure out what motivates you and what you like."

Out of all these classes, Umberger claimed that Fitness and Wellness Theory is her favorite to instruct because she can teach all kinds of fitness in it. Umberger says that her hopes are for her students in that class to find whatever they like to do fitness-wise and continue to do it.

A current student, Krista Murray, in Umberger's Yoga class this semester at Penn State New Kensington said "I was a bit skeptical signing up for a Yoga class, but Pepsi makes the class very welcoming and enjoyable." Meanwhile, Brad Silk, a student who had formerly taken weight training and sports conditioning classes with Umberger stated that "She knows quite a lot of strategies to working out."

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In regards to fitness activities on campus, Umberger noted the upcoming 5k Turkey Trot race. It is to take place on Nov. 9. The race is open to students, family, friends, and pets. Many organizations such as Dunkin' Donuts, Pounds Turkey Farm, and Five Guys Burgers and Fries are supporting sponsors. All proceeds from the race will be donated to the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation of Pittsburgh where 90 cents of every dollar goes to actual research.

Umberger eagerly described some of what she thought to be the best parts of participating in a 5k "A race gives you a goal to train for," she said. "You meet people who are like minded. Everyone comes out and they want to do the best they can. They push each other in a good way. You see people of all shapes, sizes and fitness goals. You see everyone smiling and having a good time with it."

Along with teaching at Penn State New Kensington, Umberger teaches at her studio in Robinson called Balance Fitness. There she teaches Yoga and Pilates every evening and on the weekends. Meanwhile, she also teaches boot camp five times a week, and water aerobics on Tuesdays.

After explaining that her favorite form of fitness activity was circuit training, Umberger outlined how it was important to know and respect one's boundaries and limits. She then stated that perhaps one of the best benefits of being in her career field is "that you are constantly moving and active."

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CAMPUS LIFE

Dr. Adolph Shares Her Academic Journey

By Eric Bennardo

UPPER BURRELL, Pa.—The new Director of Academic Affairs at Penn State New Kensington has started initiating new academic programs on the campus to be started in the next couple of years.

Dr. Andrea Adolph, in her second year at Penn State New Kensington as the Director of Academic Affairs has been trying to “get the ball rolling” as she puts it, to start making service learning a part of the campus curriculum. “It’s something that we will be getting off of the ground slowly but surely,” said Adolph.

Adolph, in her pursuit of these reforms, said she has received the approval of several of her co-workers. “I am very pleased, we get along well and she’s good for the campus,” said Adolph’s co-worker, Professor Rob Bridges. “She seeks out our input and pays attention to everything, pays attention to details.”

Adolph’s co-worker and boss, Chancellor Kevin Snider, also had very nice things to say about her. “She’s a very quick learner, she steps in, and learns like that!” Snider said with a snap of his fingers. Snider also said that he had an added insight about Adolph. “A little known fact, Andrea and I went to the same high school.” This fact only adds to the friendship that these two administrators share with one another.



Dr. Andrea Adolph, Director of Academic Affairs at Penn State New Kensington, works at her desk on campus. (Photo by Eric Bennardo)

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Adolph, who has earned a Ph.D. in English and is now one of the highest administrators at the campus, was not always sure of her path within the realm of academia. “I don’t think I even knew you could major in English,” said Adolph. After taking a couple of years off after her freshman year, she took a creative writing course to get used to the college environment again. “I got a lot of affirmation and support from the professor, and he’s the one who introduced me to the idea that there was an English degree,” Adolph added. “I like to read books and I like to write, and that became my path.”

Adolph had also learned from this professor that she could attain a Master of Fine Arts degree on top of her bachelor’s, which she was also interested in pursuing. The attainment of her MFA finally led to her interest in a Ph.D. “The first goal was to go to graduate school in creative writing and really by the time I started that degree program I knew that I would probably continue on, largely so that I could teach,” said Adolph.

Adolph worked as a substitute teacher for a year after getting her BA with the intent of teaching high school students, but eventually realized that she preferred teaching adults instead. While having only been in the Pittsburgh area for a little over a year, Adolph said she has found it easy for her and her daughter to adjust because of its similarity to Northeast Ohio where they have previously lived.



CAMPUS LIFE

PSNK Visits the Andy Warhol Museum

By Sarah Steighner



Penn State New Kensington students show their artwork at the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh. (Photo by Marisa Bailey)

The Campus Activities Board of Penn State New Kensington held a free day trip for students to the Andy Warhol Museum on Friday Nov. 1. Students left campus around 9 a.m., and headed into Pittsburgh for a day in the city.

Once at the museum, students were given the opportunity to make a few different pieces of art. After being told about the screen printing process made popular by Andy Warhol, students were given the chance to paint and create their own.

As their artwork dried, the group was given a guided tour throughout multiple floors of the museum. Showcases of Warhol family pictures as well as the “Silver Clouds” art installation were shown. Students were able to view various artistic and experimental styles of Warhol’s art, as well as some iconic pieces such as the infamous Campbell’s soup can.

After passing a closed room with boxes from the floor to the ceiling, the tour guide then explained how the museum archives, organizes, and preserves many time capsule boxes Warhol filled frequently at different times with various items including whatever was on his desk at the time.

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While passing through one of the floors, the group stopped to listen to Andy Warhol's brother and nephew who had come to visit them museum and speak to the small crowd. Warhol's nephew even recalled one of his most beloved memories of his uncle which was of seeing him without his wig one time as they were visiting.

Students were then able to view the Special Exhibition of art display, Theatre of the Self, by Japanese artist Yasumasa Morimura who has been described as Warhol's "conceptual son." This display consisted of Morimura's recreation of famous popular culture images and Hollywood icons where he inserted himself as astoundingly similar visual replicas. Such recreated images were that of Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor, iconic European paintings, and other recreations of famous related cultural and political photographs.

After spending a few hours at the museum, students were taken to Primanti Brothers Restaurant in the Southside of Pittsburgh for lunch. Afterwards, they continued on to the Duquesne incline. There students were given a historic tour that included information about Pittsburgh and the mechanics of the incline.

Before heading back to the school, students ended the day appreciating the breathtaking view of Pittsburgh from atop Mount Washington on the observation deck.



Penn State New Kensington Students learn about the Duquesne Incline while visiting Pittsburgh. (Photo by Marisa Bailey)

CAMPUS LIFE

Students Learn the Basics of Multimedia Production

By Casey Domski

NEW KENSINGTON, Pa. – Penn State New Kensington students are learning the basics of multimedia design in one of the campuses newest classes, multimedia production.

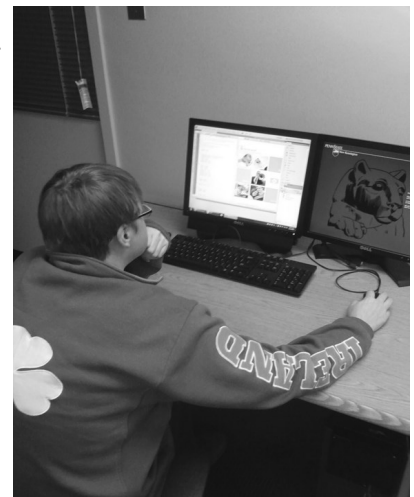
The COMM 270 class, which is open to all students of the New Kensington campus, teaches students how to use a variety of multimedia programs such as Adobe Photoshop, Microsoft Office Publisher, and even advanced programs such as Adobe Dreamweaver.

Throughout the semester, students are asked to complete a variety of projects that relate to the basic principles of design and effective media writing. The final project focuses on building a fully interactive website with the skills that students have acquired throughout the semester. Multimedia is an increasingly large part of society, so it's important that students learn these skills before entering the workforce.

Associate Professor of Communications Dr. Allen Larson said that effective communication skills are one of the key things that employers look for when hiring, and that multimedia platforms are one of the most widely used form of communication in today's society, so it's important that students learn to use these platforms while in college.

“The thing that employers say over and over again is that communications skills are one of the most essential things they're looking for in hiring graduates,” said Larson. “Multimedia platforms are a continuously increasing portion of how organizations and people communicate, so it's obviously quite important that students know how to use these platforms, and how to use them well in order to accomplish specific communication goals.”

Larson said that he hopes students learn not so much the software programs themselves, but rather the basic design principles that go behind making choices when using the programs.



Regina Cherish works on her final project. Photo by Casey Domski

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“I hope students leave with a heightened attentiveness to basic design principles and an enhanced level of thoughtfulness about why they are making the choices they make,” said Larson. “The software will change from year to year and job to job, so the key is mostly about learning how to learn, getting comfortable with that process and using that skill to resolve the specific challenges that you are presented with,” he added.

Larson said the his biggest struggle in teaching the course has been attending to the different levels of skill and the comfort levels of each individual in the class when it comes to multimedia experience.

“Teaching multimedia technology is always difficult for various reasons, but I'd say the most difficult part is negotiating the vastly different range of aptitudes and comfort levels that various students bring with them at the start,” said Larson.

Penn State New Kensington student Regina Cherish is enrolled in the multimedia production class and said that the experience has been nothing short of exciting.

“It's exciting to see a project come together,” said Cherish. “Actually seeing the final product and knowing that you created the whole thing is a really great feeling,” she added.

Cherish, like many others in class, has learned a great deal about HTML and web design this semester.

“Before this semester I had no idea how to write an HTML code, or create a webpage,” she said. “Now I'm designing a website for one of my photographer friends all my own,” she added.

Eric Bennardo is another student who is currently enrolled in the multimedia production class who says the class has helped him tremendously in learning visual design basics.

“Coming into this class I had no previous design experience,” said Bennardo. “I have learned a lot in this class and it has definitely helped me develop my visual design skills,” he added.

Any student looking to further expand their knowledge of multimedia production is encouraged to schedule the multimedia production class this spring. The course can be found under the communication offering on the Penn State New Kensington schedule of courses. For more information about scheduling please contact your academic advisor.

CAMPUS LIFE

Adjuncts Seek Better Pay

By Ryan McLaughlin

UPPER BURRELL, Pa. – A Penn State New Kensington instructor is advocating for better pay for adjunct professors after a Duquesne University adjunct professor died in poverty. Rebecca Mertz is an adjunct professor of English at both Duquesne University and Penn State New Kensington. She did not know Margaret Vojtko, the adjunct who died in poverty after working for 25 years, but she said she understands the hardships that adjuncts can go through just to make ends meet.

“The MLA, which is the Modern Language Association, did a study of what adjuncts should be paid,” Mertz said. “They recommend that adjuncts make \$7,000 per class per semester. Penn State New Kensington pays between \$2,000 and \$2,400 per class per semester.”

Mertz said she got into teaching because she likes teaching. However, she wanted to be a college professor, as opposed to a high school teacher, for the material. “I wanted to teach more grown up kind of stuff and have more control over what I taught,” she said.

According to Mertz, an adjunct professor is an added on professor. They teach fewer classes than full time professors, and are used to supplement the full time professors. They may be professors that are fulfilling their doctorate degrees or perhaps want to teach fewer classes. Because adjuncts don’t receive benefits and are paid less, universities are taking on more adjuncts. “Right now, however, 60 percent of average university faculty is adjunct,” Mertz added. “So it’s much more than a supplement. It’s the majority effect.”



Adjunct Instructor in English Rebecca Mertz

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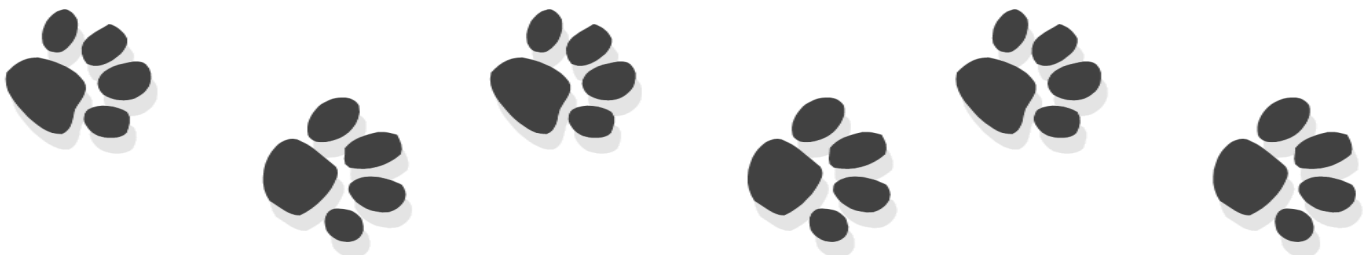
After Vojtko's death in poverty, adjunct professors have received much more attention. "The main thing is better pay and benefits and to convert part time positions in full time positions," Mertz said. Duquesne University has received a lot of attention because of Vojtko's death, but Mertz said she wants to stress that this is a nationwide issue, and must be handled as such.

At Penn State New Kensington, Mertz teaches English 15, Creative Writing, and is also the advisor to the Creative Writing Club. James Stull, a sophomore history major, had Mertz for both classes. "I felt she was a very good teacher," he said. "She taught us to write, of course, but she also helped us develop our style and come out of the box a bit."

Stull is the vice president of the Creative Writing Club and says that Mertz is an extremely helpful advisor. "She almost runs the meeting, sometimes," he said. "Outside of planning, she'll introduce creative writing prompts for us, and exercises."

Caitlyn Cody, a sophomore and president of the Creative Writing Club, also said that Mertz is a good instructor. "I think Mertz is an amazing professor and advisor," Cody said. "She genuinely cares about her students as something more than a grade, and she really helped me further myself in writing. She pushed me to be the president of creative writing (club), I think because she knew that I could do it and because it would be a good learning experience for me. And it has been."

Many of Mertz's students have heard about the adjuncts' situation and hope to see it swiftly resolved. "I really think that Mertz is one of the more valuable professors here, and that she deserves more than the school gives her," Cody said. "I don't pretend to understand the whole adjunct situation, but I know that they are vastly underpaid and over-worked. It isn't fair, and I really do think that several of our adjunct professors deserve better."



ENTERTAINMENT

Movie Review- THOR: The Dark World

By Krista Murray



Photo courtesy of Marvel Studios

Let's face it, people don't go and see a Marvel film to think much about it afterwards. They are these "MARVELous" films (sorry) placed on this good Earth to entertain, sell popcorn, and then send the audience on their merry way when finished. There is nothing wrong with this. As hard working citizens of the world, we need to have films that require no thinking, hammer wielding, or cape wearing. Thor gives us just that. Thor: The Dark World is an epic, insane, humor ride of emotion, and I loved every minute of it.

Directed by Alan Taylor, this sequel is every bit as entertaining as its predecessor, and dare I say, more so. Chris Hemsworth returns as the invincible title character with the heavy burden of saving the world... again. At least the threat of world domination was in London this time. I mean New York City needs a break from movie destruction. I'm looking at you Man of Steel, but I digress.

Thor may be the ultimate hero in this tale, but the true scene thief is his troubled villain half-brother Loki (played by the humorous Tom Hiddleston) who returns to Asgard after his destruction of New York in The Avengers (Again, poor New York). And by "scene thief" I mean Loki could be in the foreground of the shot with his back to the camera and you would still be more focused on what he was doing. All I'm going to say is, Loki needs his own film. Let's make it happen, Marvel.

Now, get a ticket, some candy, and an absurdly priced drink. You deserve a fun day at the movies, and the creators of Thor: The Dark World know it.

ENTERTAINMENT

Movie Review: Delivery Man

By Krista Murray

Plenty of us have been in a situation that we didn't want to be in. Either you were in the wrong place at the wrong time, or even the right place at the wrong time, but this situation scarred your emotionally awkward instability for life. For me, it was in the summer of 2009, but that is a story for a different time. On the bright side, it turns out movie characters seem to have more of an awkward existence than our own, and that is something to be thankful for when Thanksgiving comes around. I don't know about you, but finding out that you have fathered 533 children through an anonymous fertility clinic is one of those awkward situations. Ah, the movies.

David Wozniak (Vince Vaughn) is a life slacker who has never reached his full potential of being a decent man, until the day 142 of the 533 children he anonymously fathered for money 20 years ago, file a lawsuit against him in order to reveal his identity. David then decides to visit each one of the 142 children without presenting himself as their father, but rather as a guardian angel. This outrageous plot is simply a backdrop



Photo courtesy of DreamWorks Studios.

to a film that just couldn't decide whether to be funny or serious.

Vaughn gives the expected regular comedic performance and with a supporting cast including Chris Pratt, Britt Robertson and Colbie Smulders. Delivery Man does present hilarious situations and heartwarming moments, but the two do not coincide, leaving an uneven final product that never quite finds its footing.

Save Delivery Man for the DVD, but sit back and enjoy the film as it parades the fact that your life probably couldn't get as awkward as Wozniak's. Probably.

SPORTS

PSNK Soccer Team Kicks its Way into Playoffs

By Darren Myers

On the Penn State New Kensington campus, not many sports teams show their dominance much like the men's soccer team. Captained by sophomores Casey Cavanaugh and Michael Killian, the men's team finished with a record of 6-6, just enough to squeeze into that all important final playoff spot.

Throughout the season, Cavanaugh and Killian paved the way for the team's success. Killian led the team in goals with 16, and Cavanaugh led the team in assists with 9. New Kensington finished with a conference record of 5-6, and a non-conference record of 1-0. The team only played one of their non-conference games due to schedule difficulties of students, but made the most out of it by winning.

The New Kensington Nittany Lions faced off against Penn State Brandywine's Nittany Lions in a winner-moves-on matchup. The matchup on paper was not in favor of New Kensington. Brandywine was the first seed in playoffs and New Kensington was the sixth and lowest seed, so the matchup already looked one-sided.

Unfortunately, the game against Brandywine turned out to be just as one-sided as it was on paper. The final score was 8-0; New Kensington failed to get on the board. It was a difficult loss after a season that showed such promise, but according to Cavanaugh "Brandywine was the worst team in our conference last year, and now they're the best."

With branch campuses, kids move from school to school so one may never know who will end up where and what school will have a pool of talented freshman coming in.

When asked how he felt about his team this year, Cavanaugh said "We had, obviously, goals to do a little bit better than just the sixth seed in playoffs but every year, with this conference, you walk into it and you don't know what teams (are going to win)."

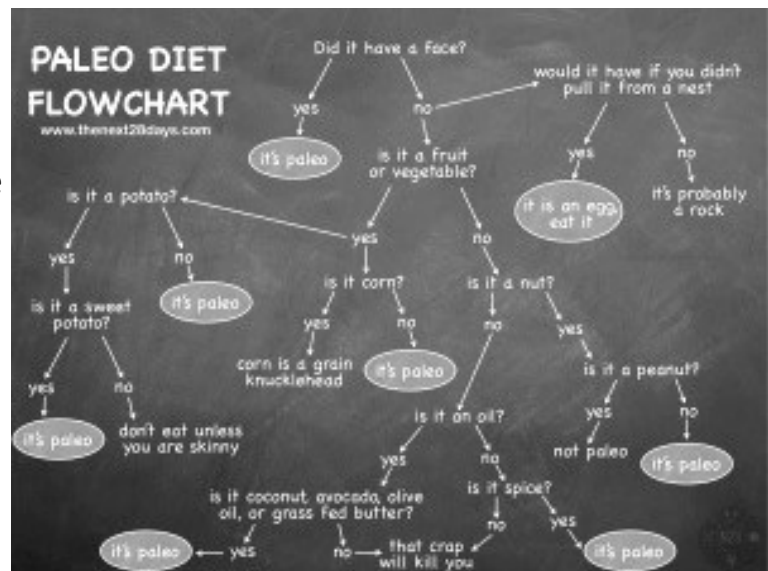
When asked about the playoffs specifically, Cavanaugh said that "Since the program started in New Ken, we've made the playoffs every year, so, five years running." New Kensington had a reputation to uphold, and they did just that. Hopefully the Penn State New Kensington Nittany Lions keep the tradition of making the playoffs for years to come.

HEALTH

Paleo Diet: Healthy or Not?

By Alexandra Smith

Recently, a new diet trend has been talked about by the news media, healthy living bloggers, and even medical doctors: the Paleo diet. The premise of the diet is that cavemen of Paleolithic times were healthier than many people are today because they only ate foods like unprocessed meats, fruits, and vegetables. According to a May 9 article on usatoday.com, “the Paleo diet encourages participants to eat pasture-raised animals, fruits and vegetables, while eliminating dairy, grains, legumes and processed oils such as vegetable and canola oil.” The article quoted Liz Wolfe, a nutritional therapy practitioner, stating that though cutting out food groups may seem extreme, the “other food groups aren’t necessary for a healthy diet.”



Flowchart depicts rules of Paleo Diet. (Photo courtesy thenext28days.com)

A Sept. 28 article on miamiherald.com quoted Loren Cordain, a professor in the Department of Health and Exercise Science at Colorado State University, stating that the chronic diseases that impact 50 to 65 percent of the Westernized adult population “were rare or nonexistent in hunter-gatherer societies,” and that “when hunter/gatherer societies transitioned to an agricultural grain-based diet, their general health deteriorated.”

Lately, my Facebook and Instagram feeds have been filled with people posting pictures of their Paleo meals, and talking about the diet. A Jan. 2010 article on nytimes.com titled “New Age Cavemen and the City” noted that one man who adopted a Paleo diet said that “Much of his nourishment comes from grass-fed beef, which he eats raw. “Apparently, some people are taking the trend a bit too far.

HEALTH

I don't think the Paleo diet is as healthy as some claim, and I don't think people should be jumping on the Paleo bandwagon without doing some research. First of all, our cave-men ancestors didn't have very long life spans, so I'm not sure why people are so interested in copying their diet. Aside from that, I don't know if you've been to the grocery store recently and seen the cost of free range, grass-fed meat, but it's pretty high.

The Paleo diet doesn't address the issue of saturated fat, and the linkage between red meat and cancer. An Oct. 24 article on pbs.org noted that researchers have found a gene present in one in three people that can raise the risk of colorectal cancer from eating red meat. The Paleo diet may seem like a healthy diet because it advises against eating sugar and salt, but it also eliminates dairy and grains—two food groups that provide essential nutrients like calcium, magnesium, Vitamin D, phosphorus, and B vitamins. I don't see what's so unhealthy about legumes, either, as they provide protein, fiber, and essential nutrients. There's no real research behind the Paleo diet, but there is research behind the health benefits of dairy, grains, and legumes.

What really bothers me about the Paleo diet is that it's extremely restrictive. I would never want to follow a diet that doesn't allow me to eat foods like potatoes, beans, peanuts, and milk. Unless one is allergic to, or intolerant of certain foods, I don't believe they need to completely remove them from their diet. I also believe that people will be less likely to adhere to the Paleo diet because it is so restrictive. What if a Paleo dieter's friends want to go out for pizza, but the dieter can't enjoy pizza with his friends because the dough and cheese aren't a part of his diet? I'm a firm believer that one's diet shouldn't seriously impact one's social life.

It makes sense that people are losing weight on this diet because they are eliminating processed foods, as well as whole food groups. At what cost does this diet come, though? Paleo dieters may also be eliminating nutrients and nourishment from foods that have been considered healthy by society for centuries. It's totally possible to lose weight and eat healthfully without eliminating whole food groups and following the eating patterns—which were most likely due to food scarcity—of cavemen.

HEALTH

Health Professionals Provide Tips for Stressed Students

By Alexandra Smith

UPPER BURRELL, Pa.—As final exams and the holiday season approach, many students may feel stressed out due to a larger homework load, lack of sleep, and other personal problems related to family life and school.

According to Leslie Bonci, Pittsburgh-based registered dietician, students may neglect healthy eating habits due to their busy schedules as the semester ends and the holiday season begins.

Bonci said that students often overeat at holiday gatherings. “What tends to stimulate more eating is alcohol,” Bonci said. “If you go to a party and start drinking, you’re going to eat more. Have something before you go to a party to absorb alcohol.”

According to Bonci, it’s important for students to eat high-protein snacks while shuffling between activities like shopping, hanging out with friends, and studying for exams.

“Protein is really important and it can be challenging,” Bonci said. “Have some almonds, nuts, string cheese, and grab and go packets of peanut butter on hand. Jerky and granola bars with fruit and nuts in them are also healthy and portable.”

Bonci also noted that hydration can affect academic performance. “The brain is an organ just like the rest of the body,” she said. “If someone’s isn’t hydrated, they can get headaches, fatigue, and have concentration issues.”

“People don’t think about water as much when it’s cold out,” Bonci added. “It’s still important and forced heat in classrooms can make you dried out. Coffee, hot cocoa, apple cider, and tea don’t dehydrate the body. They’re tasty fuel, and they hydrate you.”

Elaine Zarichnak, Penn State New Kensington nurse, said that it’s especially important for students to take care of themselves as the semester ends and flu season begins in December.

HEALTH

“The biggest thing is washing your hands,” Zarichnak said. “Before you eat, and after you go to the bathroom. Don’t share drinks with somebody else, and get a good night’s rest. Your body’s resistance is down if you don’t get a good night’s rest.”

According to Zarichnak, it’s also important for students to hydrate properly and stay home from school if they are sick. “Drink enough fluids,” Zarichnak said. “Limit alcohol because it dries you out. There are germs everywhere, and when you start to feel ill, you should stay home. Don’t go to school if you’re sick.”

Julie McCune, Penn State New Kensington counselor, said that proper studying techniques and taking short breaks while studying can help students prepare for final exams. “I think making sure that you’re not spinning your wheels while studying is important, and that you don’t over study,” McCune said. “At some point, the brain starts to turn off, so you want to make sure you’re studying effectively.”

“Managing your time and leaving enough time for breaks is important,” McCune added. “Don’t sit down and do a five hour study marathon. The brain doesn’t work very well that way. It helps to build in little breaks for distraction because mental breaks help you refocus and learn a little better when you come back to studying.”

McCune said that students often feel depressed or struggle with family issues during the holiday season. “There’s this kind of exaggerated sense of holiday on television,” McCune said. “Life isn’t a Hallmark special, and when you keep that in mind, you won’t have unrealistic expectations about the holidays.”

“Sometimes families fight,” McCune added. “If you don’t want to have a really big blow out, then don’t. If a fight starts to happen, step outside. Just walk away or leave.”

According to McCune, it’s important for students to maintain perspective as they prepare for final exams. “Just remember that all of this will pass,” McCune said. “A final is just one test in the scope of your life and all the tests. Everything is not all or nothing, and it’s not the end of the world.”

“You don’t have to be perfect, and the final doesn’t have to be perfect,” McCune added. “You might get a grade you don’t like, but you can still be a successful, thriving individual for the rest of your life.”

OPINION

Poor Maternity Benefits in U.S.

By Alexandra Smith

Did you know that the U.S. has some of the worst maternity benefits in the entire world? The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 guarantees new mothers in the U.S. just 12 weeks of unpaid leave from their jobs, and exemptions apply to small companies, part-time workers, and those who have been working at a company for less than a year.

According to a May 2012 article on huffingtonpost.com, 178 countries around the world guarantee paid leave for working moms, and the only countries who don't provide any type of financial support for mothers are "The United States, along with Papua New Guinea, Swaziland, Liberia, and Lesotho." The article noted that mothers in Russia are guaranteed 140 days of maternity leave with 100 percent of their wages paid. New mothers in the United Kingdom are guaranteed 90 percent of their wages for 52 weeks after giving birth, and mothers in Sweden are guaranteed 420 days of maternity leave with 80 percent of their wages paid. The article also noted that Canada's International Labour Organization gave the U.S. "a failing grade in providing women and new mothers support entering motherhood."

An Aug. 2012 article on today.com noted that Google was losing women workers after they had babies. The author, Eve Tahmincioglu, stated that Google's "attrition rate for postpartum women was twice that for other employees," and in response,

"Google lengthened its maternity leave to five months from three and changed it from partial to full pay. Attrition decreased by 50 percent."



Infographic displays how many weeks of maternity leave other nations provide new parents, as compared to the U.S. (Photo courtesy thinkprogress.org)

OPINION

What's really alarming about maternity leave in the U.S. is the fact that it's associated with lower infant mortality rates. Jody Heymann, dean of the Fielding School of Public Health at the University of California was quoted in a Feb. 23 article on nytimes.com stating that infants receive more one-on-one care and "are more likely to be breast-fed, which lowers illness and hospitalization for infants and benefits women's health." Heymann was also quoted stating that "paid maternity leave yields economic gains in terms of reduced health care costs, reduced recruitment and retraining and improved long term earnings for women."

Why is it that the U.S., a highly family-oriented country, is the only developed country to not offer a paid maternity leave program? Many U.S. mothers may think the amount of maternity leave they will receive will depend on their employer, and a number of other factors, but it shouldn't matter where a woman lives or who she works for—she should be guaranteed time to take care of her baby without worrying about financial stress.

What really confuses me about maternity leave in the U.S. is the fact that the Family and Medical Leave Act was signed into law over 20 years ago. The Feb. 23 nytimes.com article noted that some lawmakers have proposed expanding the Family and Medical Leave Act "so that it covers more people either by reducing the required number of hours an employee must work to become eligible or by including smaller companies with 25 or more employees." A blog post on nytimes.com mentioned that a group called MomsRising, created in 2006, was made to "bring important motherhood and family issues to the forefront of the country's awareness," and that it has helped to win paid family leave in New Jersey and Washington.

While, I think it's great that lawmakers and groups like MomsRising are working to expand the Family and Medical Leave Act, I think progress should have already been made. I fully understand that having a baby is one's own choice, but the fact that almost every country in the world offers paid leave for working mothers is just sad. The U.S. needs to get its "act" together.

Chewy Oatmeal Raisin Cookies

By Alexandra Smith

It's officially cookie baking season, and these chewy oatmeal raisin cookies are packed with delicious ingredients such as honey, almonds, cinnamon, and molasses. They bake in less than 15 minutes, and will quickly warm your kitchen and have your home smelling like a bakery.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup quick-cooking rolled oats
- 3/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 cup raisins
- 1/4 cup chopped almonds
- 1/3 cup maple syrup or honey
- 1/2 cup canola oil
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/2 teaspoon molasses



Photo by: Alexandra Smith

Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Combine the oats, flour, cinnamon, baking powder, baking soda, salt, raisins, and almonds in a large bowl. In a separate bowl, combine the syrup, oil, vanilla extract, and molasses.
3. Add the wet ingredients to the dry ingredients, and stir to combine.
4. Roll tablespoon-sized scoops of dough into balls. Place the balls onto the prepared baking sheet and press down slightly on the balls to flatten the tops.
5. Bake for 8 to 12 minutes or until lightly browned. Transfer cookies to a baking rack to cool completely.