

# THE OAKLAND POST

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY'S INDEPENDENT STUDENT NEWSPAPER

March 2, 2011

[www.oaklandpostonline.com](http://www.oaklandpostonline.com)

Volume 37 // Issue 24

## Up in the Air

English department and dean clash over the practicality of a proposed creative writing major

Page five

## SUMMIT LEAGUE TOURNAMENT

MARCH 5-8

Look for The Oakland Post's comprehensive coverage of the men's and women's basketball championships  
Follow Senior Editor @DanFenner and @theoaklandpost on Twitter and visit us online at [www.oaklandpostonline.com](http://www.oaklandpostonline.com)



# this week

March 2 — March 8, 2011



## Champions again // Thursday, Feb. 17

BOB KNOSKA/The Oakland Post

The men's basketball team celebrated a second consecutive regular season title by taking turns cutting down the nets at the O'rena. Oakland's three seniors, Keith Benson, Will Hudson and Larry Wright, were honored following their final home game. After the game, players walked through the stands to greet fans and sign autographs.



**10** **SPORTS //** Summit League Tournament Preview: The men's basketball team will be the heavy favorite to earn a return trip to March Madness.



**12** **SPORTS //** The women's basketball team enters the conference tournament looking to redeem itself after a poor showing last year.



**15** **FEATURES //** Our "Day in the Life" series features Dr. Julie Ricks-Donneen, who spends her days working with children under the age of five.



**18** **THE SCENE //** Gore Verbinski, director of "Pirates of the Caribbean" and the new film, "Rango," discusses his experiences with animation.



Look for comprehensive coverage of the Summit League Tournament throughout the week on our website and @theoaklandpost on Twitter.

## THE OAKLAND POST

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY'S INDEPENDENT STUDENT NEWSPAPER

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Cover design by JASON WILLIS/The Oakland Post



## STAFF EDITORIAL

# Giving incentive to Mich.

Gov. Rick Snyder ran on a business-based platform and was transparent about how he would handle the budget. He promised to attempt to present a balanced budget and has taken a step toward that.

There has been much uproar about the proposed abolishment of the Michigan Film Incentive, which currently gives companies a 40 percent refund of all qualified production expenditures in Michigan.

Where is the outrage for a planned 15 percent cut to state university funding that should at least match what is being said about the ending of the film incentive?

The incentive has undoubtedly brought jobs, economic benefit and a renewed sense of identity to the state — the metro Detroit region in particular — but it is a temporary solution to an ongoing problem.

We understand the support behind the incentive. There is proof positive in the amount of production companies that have chosen Michigan as a shooting location and the numerous schools who now teach film-related skills like acting and production.

There's also the financial benefit that comes with more people supporting local businesses, but the fact of the matter is the film industry is a fleeting notion for the

state and its economy. The state would have to continue competing with other locations' more lucrative offers or landscapes.

It's a shame that so much has been invested into the local movie industry, but it's beneficial to stop pouring resources into something without much permanency.

We built something up that will be gone almost instantly — big-budget films like *The Avengers* have already made plans to pull out of the state because of the announcement — and it would have been gone in the same fleeting manner even if the plug were pulled on the incentive later.

That's not to say we don't support the film industry. We just believe there are other proposed cuts that would hurt more.

Proposed cuts to higher education funding impact the region in a much more tangible way than a brush with fame or an economic stimulus idea that has a limited lifespan.

It affects the education of students studying to enter a diversified range of job markets that do not solely depend on the viability of the Michigan film industry.

Despite having the largest incentive for filming since 2008, Michigan has not seen the huge increase that distinction

should bring. The Michigan Film Office reports 128 projects have been completed in Michigan.

In comparison, New Mexico and its 25 percent tax rebate — where the aforementioned *Avengers* project is filming — has seen about 80 projects in the same time frame. Even though it gives the biggest incentive, Michigan still isn't attracting every film.

While the film incentive does bring creativity into play, there are more permanent ways to nurture a creative class.

In his recent state of the campus address, President Gary Russi noted that a strong core of liberal and fine arts programs will give an edge to graduates. Universities are aware of the rising creative class.

It's time to start thinking of long-term solutions that have an impact on business and economy — to diversify the industries and opportunities available.

There is not just a singular creative industry that will create Michigan's future. Creating an inviting atmosphere for thinkers from all industries with innovative ideas for the state's economic growth will begin with the continued support of higher education.

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### Letter Policy:

Writers must provide full name, class rank, phone number and field of study. Please limit letters to 250 words or less. Letters may be edited for content, length and grammar.



# MEET THE POST

Watch The Oakland Post's bi-weekly TV talk show for Student Video Productions.

Airing now on OUTV! Video podcasts can be found at [www.oakland.edu/outv](http://www.oakland.edu/outv)



# Being broke does not mean leaning away from local

Last week, I spent some time in Asheville, N.C. Something that stood out for me about the city was the huge emphasis on supporting local businesses. Throughout the downtown area, "Love Asheville" and "Local is the New Black" stickers proudly announced each unique, local business.

The stores in Asheville are not that different from what we have in Rochester. A majority of the businesses in downtown Rochester are locally owned and completely unique to the area, and yet we have no real push for members of the community — students in particular — to shop locally.

While I enjoy the deals at chain restaurants and big box stores as much as the next broke college kid, the businesses in Rochester go out of their way to make shopping locally not only a convenient choice, but an economically smart one as well.

These businesses are eager to draw in the college population, whether it's through student discounts, happy-hour specials or the increasingly popular social



**Annie Stodola**  
Staff Reporter

media outreach.

Downtown Rochester has its own Facebook page where it features downtown business Facebook pages of the day. While not all of these businesses cater to the traditional college student demographic, many of them do and they're energetically searching for new ways to reach us. Restaurants like Miguel's Cantina, Rockin' Cupcakes and Rochester Mills all actively use sites like Facebook and Twitter to offer special discounts as well as receive customer feedback.

One of the biggest complaints recur-

rently brought up by students at Oakland University is that they don't feel like they get the experience of being in an actual college town.

To their credit, local business owners, the Downtown Development Association and the university have done their part to begin to foster a partnership between the Rochester area and students.

The university and its Alumni Association have worked together to create the Go Card, which offers students discounts at local businesses. The Bear Bus is also helping advance of the partnership as it provides students transportation to the downtown area on the weekends.

There's only so much that the university and business owners can do to make the area college-friendly. At this point, it's up to students to patronize local businesses to make it clear that we want unique Rochester businesses to thrive.

We're lucky enough to have a community that not only houses our school but that

also actively seeks out ways to make local entertainment, dining and shopping affordable and accessible for college students. If we want these businesses to stick around and build a college town atmosphere, it's time we start supporting them.

I understand that for many of us, shopping locally exclusively isn't possible or practical, but even small changes in the way we shop can make a big difference.

Trade in your morning latte from an overpriced coffee shop for a freshly brewed coffee from a locally owned shop downtown. During the spring and summer, grab some fresh produce from the Farmer's Market downtown instead of at a run-of-the-mill grocery store.

If we want a college town experience, we have to show local businesses we're happy to support them.

Shopping locally not only helps business owners see we want them to stick around, but it gives us, as consumers, a uniquely Rochester experience.

## Letters to the Editor

The Oakland Post gladly accepts letter submissions. The views expressed are of their respective writers and do not necessarily reflect those of The Oakland Post.

**Letter Policy:** Writers must provide full name, class rank, contact information and field of study. Please limit letters to 250 words or less. Letters may be edited for clarity, length and grammar.

Today we often hear of selfish, self-centered athletes. However, I was quite impressed with the actions of some Oakland University student athletes at the men's basketball game last night (Thursday, Feb. 17). Yes, Oakland prevailed over NDSU and won the Summit Championship. Yes, the team cut down the nets to celebrate. However, what so impressed me occurred after the game during the net-cutting celebration.

Sitting a few rows behind us with his parents, watching the net-cutting, was a red-headed young man who apparently has severe autism. I have seen him often on campus; I believe he occasionally plays tambourine with the pep band. In the midst of the celebration one of the players, Ledrick Eackles, ran up into the stands and gave a piece of the net to this young man. Both the young man and his parents were quite emotional. I also observed Will Hudson, another player, making sure the young boys who mop the damp spots on the floor received a piece of the net.

I know that this type of concern for others is not unique to these two Oakland University athletes. As a member of the Senate Athletic Committee, I hear of numerous activities where student athletes reach out to the community to help others.

I am proud not just of the athletic prowess of our student athletes, but especially of their character. I commend them and their coaches.

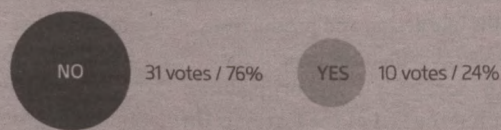
Gadis Dillon  
Professor of Accounting

## Poll of the Week

3.2.11

### Last Week's Poll

Would you consider ever running for student body president?

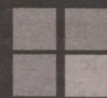


### This Week's Poll

How do you feel about the proposed elimination of the Michigan Film Incentive?

- It's a huge loss
- I'm glad to see it go
- I'm indifferent

Vote at [www.oaklandpostonline.com](http://www.oaklandpostonline.com)



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If you are interested in writing a guest column for the Perspectives section, e-mail [editor@oaklandpostonline.com](mailto:editor@oaklandpostonline.com) or call 248.370.4268.



## Proposed creative writing BA proves 'point of contention'

By MIKE SANDULA

Managing Editor

One of Oakland University's colleges could soon have a new major — with or without the approval of its dean.

In 2007, Ronald Sudol, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, told the English department he supported the "further development of creative writing," according to a Feb. 16 letter addressed to the University Senate.

The English department crafted a proposal for a BA in creative writing, which has since been approved — unanimously — by the Committee on Instruction, the College of Arts and Sciences College Assembly and, on Feb. 17, the University Senate.

In the Feb. 16 letter, however, Sudol wrote that he did not support the current proposal, creating "a point of contention between me and the English department."

Michelle Piskulich, associate provost, said the program still has two more steps to go through: the Board of Trustees and the President's Council, which looks at programs across the state. It's unclear, however, what would happen if the proposal passes those two stages despite not being favored by the dean.

"The process has to be completed before we would even begin to think about what to do next," Piskulich said.

The next Board of Trustees meeting is March 15, but an agenda is yet to be released.

### The dean's objections

In his letter, Sudol wrote a BA in creative writing "is an oddball degree and extremely rare across the country" and the proposed budget is "totally unsupportable" — though Susan Hawkins, chair and associate professor of English, said there are initial costs, but the program is a "money maker for sure."

A BA in English with a creative writing track, Sudol wrote, "would be a much more effective credential."

"I have offered financial assistance to launch and promote such a track. The department has declined the offer. The offer

has been withdrawn," Sudol wrote.

Outside of his letter, Sudol declined to make any additional comments regarding the creative writing proposal.

### A spirited Senate meeting

Many faculty members spoke in support of the proposed creative writing program at the Feb. 17 Senate meeting.

Some said Sudol's letter, dated one day before the Senate meeting, was written too late.

"It is unthinkable, when work has been done, there hasn't been any contest over the principles and the content of the proposal, and yet we get this kind of backlash at the end of the day," Kellie Hay, associate professor of communication, said. "I urge us to support this, and there's good reason why deans have term limits."

Kevin Grimm, associate professor of English, said Sudol — who was not present — showed "contempt for the process" of governance.

"I put it to you that someone who is the chief administrative officer of a legislative body (and) issues a public document that says he cannot support a program approved unanimously by that body, in which he has a vote, is failing to do his job (and) should resign," Grimm said.

After the present voting body voted unanimously in support of the creative writing proposal, Provost Virinder Moudgil said "the process has worked" and that he would take the verdict to the next level.

In an interview with The Oakland Post the following day, President Gary Russi said that when the proposal comes to him, "I will support it and I will take it to the board to pass it."

Liberal arts programs are a focal point of Russi's, as he stated at the university update.

"From a better logical point of view, reading and writing are the most important things as a foundation for anybody who's educated," Russi said. "When I talk to a lot of CEOs and those graduated from college, they really, really value those people who can read and write."

### What the program would be

OU would be the third school in Michigan to offer such a program, Eastern Michigan University and Saginaw Valley State University being the other two. There are 159 undergraduate programs in creative writing across the U.S., up from 10 in 1994.

The proposed major would require 44 credits and a creative thesis, such as a collection of poetry. Possible jobs for creative writing majors include freelance writer, publications manager and technical editor.

The English department had 444 students at the start of the Fall 2010 semester, up 7 percent from 2009. But all programs within the English major are down, with the exception of Cinema Studies, which started in 2009 and currently has 61 majors. Still, there's been a demand for creative writing.

"We're responding to what's become the most popular request in our English student surveys ... which is more courses in creative writing," English professor Ed Howarth Hoepfner said.

Jason Storms, a junior studying English and psychology, said a creative writing BA would be a "great opportunity" for OU. He said the program could set him up for a M.F.A. or Ph.D. in creative writing and provide him with "artistic skills I could enjoy throughout my life," regardless of whether he used them professionally.

"I think it is no secret that Oakland University has some phenomenal artistry being crafted across the disciplines, and I think it is time that we bring our literary artistry into the light more, which I think a creative writing major would do," Storms said.

Hoepfner said the program would be ready to launch in the fall with existing faculty, though it wouldn't be able to roll out the second phase — screenwriting and TV writing — for a few years.

OU currently has one faculty member hired as a creative writer, but whether the university will have a creative writing major remains unknown.

"We're into an area nobody really understands," Hawkins said. "Stuff may just sit ... we just don't know."

## campus briefs

### English poetry contest

The English department Ekphrasis poetry contest challenges anyone in the campus community to create poetry based on a work of art. The work can be in any medium and either an original or reproduction. Entries are due at 5 p.m. on Friday, April 1. For more information, contact Gladys Cardiff at 248-370-2259.

### 'Borders and Frontiers' explored

The opening reception for the new OU Art Gallery exhibition "Borders and Frontiers: Collage and Appropriation in the Contemporary Image" takes place 5-8 p.m. on Saturday, March 5. The free exhibit is on display in 208 Wilson Hall until April 10.

### John Gallagher presentation

Free Press urban redevelopment writer John Gallagher will give a one hour presentation at noon on March 4 on how to make Detroit a better place for future generations. Among the topics covered will be ways in which the city can become more green and economically viable. The event will take place in Kresge Library. Contact Kath Borg at 248-370-2486 for further details.

### European Night

This year's celebration of European culture will be held from 4-7 p.m. on Friday, March 4 in the Oakland Center Gold Rooms. Live performances and samples of traditional European foods will be available. The event is free and open to the entire campus community.

— Compiled by Kevin Graham, Staff Intern



# Celebration ends with '70s festivities

By **ANDREW CRAIG**  
Staff Reporter

As February came to an end, African American Celebration Month at Oakland concluded a busy 30 days in proper fashion with a '70s style dance party.

Many attendees sported their '70s best, from bell bottom pants to go-go boots.

The event capped off several others throughout the month with music, dancing and refreshments, providing the evening with a lively atmosphere. Some of the students in attendance participated in a spirited lip-sync contest to their favorite '70s beats.

Robin White, AACM co-chair, viewed the style of the finale as fitting to the month-long theme.

"That era (the 1970s) was a big time for freedom and for people as a whole," White said. "The music was changing too — a lot of things were. It was a very powerful era."

OU junior Ryan Candela admitted the music pulled him into the Gold Rooms for the party.

"I heard the music, so I stopped

in to see what was going on," Candela said. "The mood was really energetic, and there was free food too."

RED COW (Revive, Experience and Dream. Change Our World) was host of the night's festivities, but was only one of many sponsors of the recent AACM events.

Rodrina Moore, president of RED COW and AACM co-chair, was on hand for the '70s party.

"We tried some new things with the best dressed and lip-sync contests, and I think they both really went well," Moore said. "We had a good turnout too, not just tonight but with a lot of the events."

For Moore especially, the significance of the celebration grew with each event. She was a recipient of this year's Keeper of the Dream Award on Jan. 17, the opening day of AACM.

Other highlights of the celebration were "Taste of Africa," where students could sample intriguing African American cuisine, and "Tunnel of Oppression," which aims to spread awareness about the effects and causes of trials that



SINEAD CRONIN/The Oakland Post

Oakland University's month-long African American Celebration concluded with a 1970s style party.

minorities have to confront. Due to inclement weather resulting in university closures, however, "Tunnel of Oppression" was rescheduled for March 7.

Many organizations took part in AACM 2011 to promote understanding of diversity and ap-

preciation for African American heritage and history.

The School of Education and Human Services, Kresge Library and the Center for Multicultural Initiatives also sponsored AACM events, along with other groups, to help expand on the work of

previous year.

"From the opening celebration and through the other events, we had good turnouts," Moore said. "The attendance was multicultural, not just African American students. I think that's good for the community and on campus."

## OUSC election campaign season back in full swing

By **KAY NGUYEN**  
Editor-in-Chief

The Oakland University Student Congress election season is off to a running start.

Candidates for student body president and vice president were finalized after Tuesday's 5 p.m. deadline for turning in election packets passed.

OUSC administrative assistant Christina Quigley said the candidacies would not be official until the packets that were turned in are checked thoroughly for completion.

Packets became available in early February.

Students running must have obtained 250 student signatures in order to become candidates in addition to fulfilling academic requirements. A typed statement is also necessary.

Those approved will be running in the general election, provided each candidate attends one mandatory orientation session Thursday or Friday.

While the elections committee made up of Quigley and other students has named no official candidates, some students have launched their campaigns already.

Shakita Billy and Eric Sturgis, Tom Cruz and Brett McIsaac, Benjamin Eveslage and Elisa Malile are the known tickets for president and vice president, respectively.

On Tuesday morning, Eveslage and Malile announced their candidacy via e-mail to student organization leaders followed by an official e-newsletter.

Billy and Sturgis have a campaign banner hanging near Pioneer Food Court.

Cruz said that he and McIsaac, both members of the Tau Kappa Epsilon fraternity, announced their intent to run for OUSC

executive office in late October.

At press time, as the deadline was looming, Quigley said she had received four packets.

Legislator candidates, who do not have to collect signatures, will also be on the ballot. There is an anticipated uptick in the number of people running, creating a contest for the first time in recent memory.

The official campaign period will begin at the student congress candidate meet-and-greet and dance-off event, which will be held Monday, March 7 in the Fireside Lounge at noon.

A debate between the vice presidential candidates will take place March 18. The presidential hopefuls will face off March 23.

Voting will take place March 28-30 and winners will be announced April 1.

In addition to picking a presidential ticket and 2011-12 OUSC legislators, student will vote on ballot proposals.

### Important Dates

**Monday, March 7** — Candidate Meet and Greet, noon, Fireside Lounge

**March 18** — Vice Presidential Debate, noon, Fireside Lounge

**March 23** — Presidential Candidate Debate, noon, Fireside Lounge

**March 28-30** — Voting Days, Fireside Lounge and online

**April 1** — Announcement of Winners, noon, Pioneer Food Court



# 'OU Can Tri' second annual triathlon

By KAITLYN CHORNOBY

Scene Editor

For Oakland students looking for a challenge, the recreation center is offering another way to get fit and have something to show for it.

The second annual "OU Can Tri" triathlon will be held on Sunday, March 20. Each participant has his or her own designated time to do a 10-minute swim or water walk, a 20-minute bike ride and 15-minute walk or run in OU's aquatics center and machine room.

The male and female participant with the most covered distance will win a medal. Although the rec center was pleased with a 32 participant turn out in their first year, Leah Dupuie, the graduate assistant for wellness and group exercise at the rec center, said their goal this year is 50 participants.

"There is no better feeling than competing in and finishing a race," Dupuie said. "An indoor triathlon is great because it not only tests your aerobic endurance while running, but also while cycling and swimming under controlled conditions."

All students, faculty and members of the outside community are invited to participate. No try-outs are necessary.

Dupuie said the idea of the indoor triathlon was developed to give students the opportunity to enter an event they might not have otherwise considered participating in. She said the familiarity of the rec center might empower participants to give it a try.

"Since the Recreation Center is open for all students to use, we had hoped more students might consider participating in a triathlon if they were familiar with the environment," she said.

While individuals may consider themselves strong in one leg of the competition, teams are also welcome to sign up to compete.

"We want everyone to be able to say they have participated in a triathlon," Dupuie said. "Whether in one, two or all three of the events, it is an accomplishment to compete in and finish any race."

Jennifer Hite, a senior majoring in wellness health promotion and injury prevention, is returning for her second year of participation in the triathlon. She said she enjoyed 2010's triathlon and felt it was organized with a friendly staff.

"Last year's first triathlon was a success," Hite said. "I hope this year the event grows, and I'm in hopes that it will be a continuous event."

She plans to graduate in April, and expresses interest in participating after she graduates.

"I think that they should offer a discounts to alumni that would like to participate," Hite said. "I will soon be an alumni and would love to participate in it next year."

Cost for individual registration is \$25 for students and non-student members and \$40 for non-members. Team registration is \$45 for student and non-student members and \$60 for non-members.

Those interested in participating can register at the Welcome Center by March 13.

## police files

### Cheesecake fraud

On Tuesday, Feb. 15, OUPD responded to a call regarding retail fraud at Chartwell's in the Oakland Center. It was reported that a student took a slice of cheesecake from Chik-Fil-A. A Chartwell's employee witnessed the student leave the food court and sit in the dining area. Upon being confronted by the Chartwell's employee, the student admitted to taking the cheesecake. The student offered to pay for the cake, but Chartwell's did not accept payment. The student received a retail fraud citation, third degree.

### Possible overdose

On Wednesday, Feb. 17, a possible drug overdose was reported to the OUPD. A mother was trying to contact her son, who lives in the George T. Matthews Apartments on campus. When he did not respond to phone calls or door knocking she entered the apartment to find her son lying on the floor. The student had a pulse and was breathing, but was unresponsive. The Auburn Hills and Rochester Fire Departments responded to the call. The student was taken to Crittenton Hospital once they were able to get a response from the student. The student used heroin the night prior.

### Late morning laptop larceny

On Wednesday, Feb. 17, a Hill House larceny was reported to OUPD. The student reported that when he returned from class, his laptop was missing from his room. The student and his roommates left their doors unsecured during night hours, so officers informed the residents to lock all doors to avoid future problems. The housing department was notified.

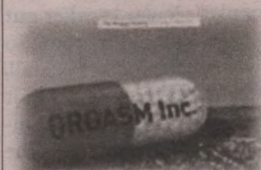
— Compiled by Jen Bucciarelli,  
Local Editor

## WOMEN AND GENDER STUDIES PROGRAM

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## Atheist club formed with a 'positive view'

By **KAITLYN CHORNOBY**  
Scene Editor

Atheists at OU, a new student organization on campus, was formed this semester with the goal of educating others on being faithless in today's society and to show that happiness and life fulfillment can be achieved without faith.

Jaimie Wall, a junior majoring in psychology, started the group after noticing there were several campus religious groups, but none specifically for atheism.

Wall said the goal of the group is to not only provide a venue for speakers, but to provide a place for atheist and other secular students on campus to meet, share stories and experience being there for each other.

The main objective of the group is to promote atheism in a positive light, Wall said.

"You hear the term 'angry atheists' a lot," Wall said. "We're not bad people; we believe in the rights of all people. It's really important to us that we get the point across that you can be a good person and not believe in God. Human goodness comes from good thinking and not religion, necessarily."

After holding a table in the OC for two hours, Wall said they received several inquiries from interested students, ranging from those who share their beliefs to those of faith with questions.

Wall said the table extracted a positive and interested response from Oakland's community.

"We're not here to stamp out anyone's beliefs," Wall said. "We're just here for people who don't believe what the majority generally believes."

Pam Hester, the president of Agape University Ministry, a Christian organization on campus, said that she recognizes Atheists at OU's right to gather, even if they may not see eye to eye.

"Part of the beauty of a university setting is the hundreds of opportunities that we have to learn from one another, and that's only because of all the students' and professors' different intellectual backgrounds, personalities and opinions," Hester said.

Wall said the group welcomes members of faith to join their events and encourages students to "make up their own minds" about the group.

"We would love for people of different faiths to come to meetings, because it gives us insight on why they believe what they do and gives them a better understanding as well," Wall said. "We hope everyone can come to the agreement that we can all believe what we want to believe, but you can't force it on other people."

According to Wall, the group is very interested in separation of church and state and how religion is integrated into the political system.

"The reason certain people can't do things is because they don't agree with a certain religion," she said. "Maybe they want to marry who they want, but they can't due to the political system. It's important to us that we say, 'You are so welcome to believe whatever you believe, and I will fight for your right to believe that!' But it's also important that the people who do not subscribe to those beliefs do not have to live by them."

Although the group has only been a student organization for approximately a month and a half, they hosted two tables and a Darwin Day party, which Wall said was a very successful event.

Resulting in standing room only, students gathered to listen to faculty speak about Charles Darwin while enjoying food and a film showing. Wall said a member of the group even dressed up as Charles Darwin for the event.

For future events, the group hopes to co-sponsor an event with the Center for Inquiry, a Michigan-based secular group, at the end of March. They also hope to hold forums, bringing different departments together for discussion.

Wall said events will be designed to inform students and present ways for the members to communicate with each other to have shared experiences.

Focused on a positive view, Wall said a strong desire among the group is to hold charity events to raise money for shelters in the local area. For the last event of the year, the organization plans to hold a canned food drive.

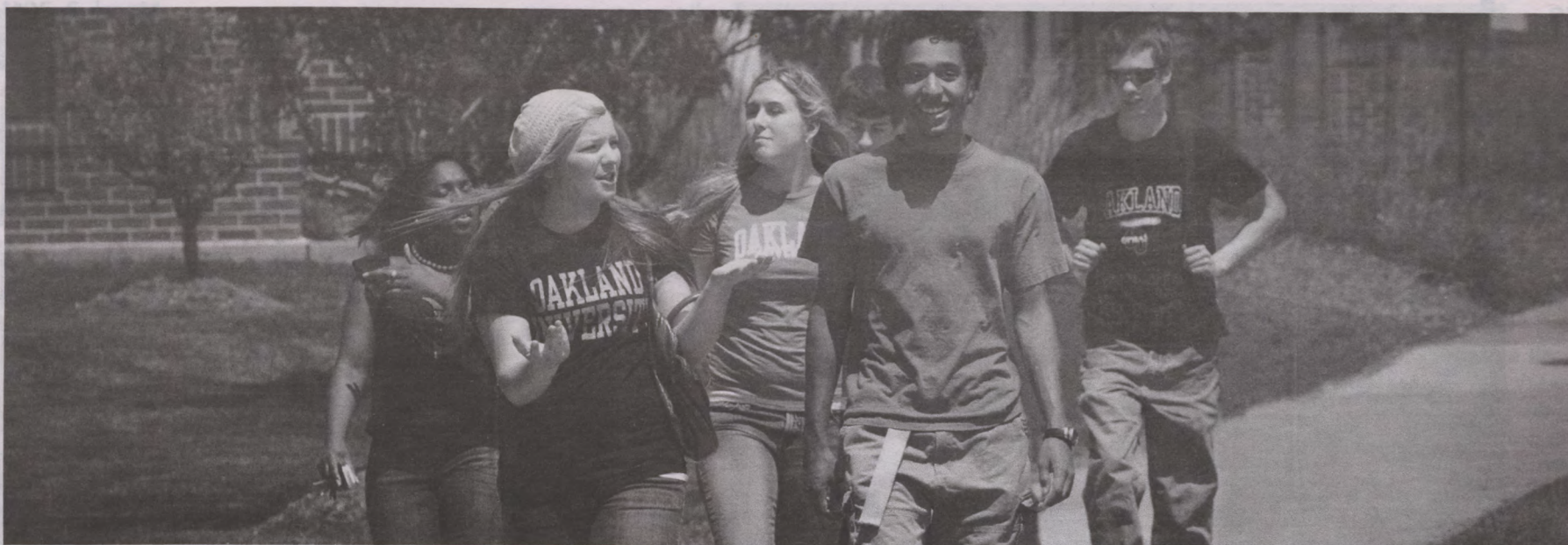
Because there is not a huge presence of atheism in the area, retired professor Richard Dawkins, a popular secular speaker out of Oxford, England, has offered to come to Oakland University. According to Wall, Dawkins is reaching out to OU because it is important to him that students are involved. Dawkins is expected to speak at the O'rena in October.

Currently, Atheists at OU meet every other Thursday in the conference room in Pryale Hall from 10-11 a.m. Its next meeting is this Thursday.

"Even if you take one shred of what we say to heart, religious or not, mission accomplished for us," Wall said. "We want an open mind and to encourage people to think reasonably."

For more information on the group, visit its Facebook page or contact Wall to join the mailing list at [atheistsatou@gmail.com](mailto:atheistsatou@gmail.com)





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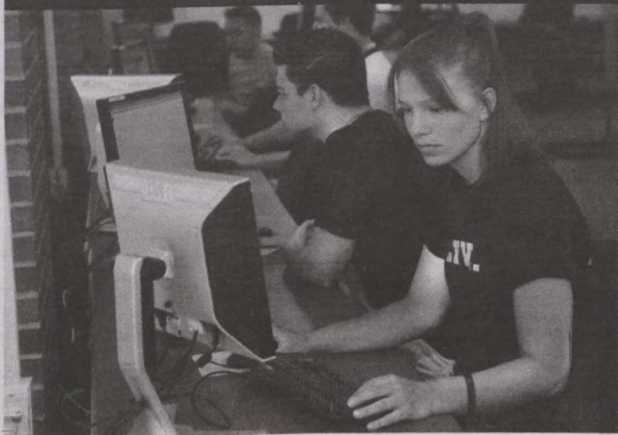
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## Men's Basketball Summit League Tournament Preview

By **DAN FENNER**

Senior Editor

All season long, Oakland University has been the team to beat in the Summit League, serving as the measuring stick for other conference teams and playing each game with a target on its back.

After amassing a 17-1 conference record for the second season in a row, the Golden Grizzlies (22-9 overall) enter the Summit League Tournament as the No. 1 seed again, knowing they'll need three victories to take part in March Madness later this month.

Last year's team accomplished that feat relatively easily, winning all three tournament games by double-digits. But the look and feel to the 2010-11 squad is significantly different. Four of the top seven players from a year ago are no longer with the team if the injured Blake Cushingberry is counted. New playmakers have emerged to join Oakland's trio of seniors.

This season's version of the Golden Grizzlies relies heavily on its high-powered offense, which ranks third in the nation at 84.8 points per game. Complementary to OU's scoring success is a rebounding game that ranks as the best in the conference.

The area of concern for Oakland is its defensive play, especially of late. While it's difficult to criticize a team that lost just one conference game, the Grizzlies' defensive regression over the latter half of the Summit season should be enough to instill an honest notion that they're not unbeatable in the tournament.

There have been nights when Oakland's ability to score points well into the 90s was not simply superfluous. Teams like South Dakota State and IUPUI have pushed OU to its limits defensively, add-

ing to the possibility of a tournament upset should the Grizzlies suffer an inevitably poor shooting night.

Head coach Greg Kampe spoke all season long about finding different ways to win basketball games. The Grizzlies have demonstrated the ability to pull out victories on nights when their offense went cold, but Oakland's calling card has unquestionably been to simply outscore its opponents on most nights.

In a single-elimination tournament, OU's chances of coming out unscathed will increase dramatically if it can return to the defensive form it displayed near mid-season.

### Key contributors

Oakland boasts two of the league's top 10 scorers in senior Keith Benson and junior Reggie Hamilton. A supporting cast that includes 3-point sharpshooter Travis Bader and the highly-efficient Will Hudson give OU the most diverse scoring attack among teams in the field of eight.

Benson's track record speaks for itself. By averaging a double-double and swatting away an average of nearly four shots per game, he remains the most imposing player in the Summit League.

Keeping Benson out of early foul trouble will be one of the most obvious, yet critical factors in Oakland's tournament run. It should be no coincidence that the three most recent losses on OU's schedule each saw this fear realized, with Benson fouling out twice and forced to spend long stretches of games on the bench. He averaged just 22 minutes in those three losses, or 10 less than his typical allotment.

Hamilton's emergence as both a dynamic scorer and assist man has really helped to balance Oakland's

offense. In 18 Summit League contests, he has averaged 18.5 points and a conference-best 6.3 assists per game.

Hamilton's ability to take over a game offensively, as witnessed in both matchups with IPFW, will bode well for Oakland in the tournament.

Recall that it took a 36-point effort from Derick Nelson to defeat IUPUI in last season's championship game. Hamilton has that type of potential should it become necessary.

Ultimately, it may be Oakland's depth that presents its biggest advantage. With the benefit of a nine-man rotation, Kampe can throw any number of lineups on the court and often change the pace and style of play at will.

With senior Larry Wright now providing instant offense in his role coming off the bench, player substitutions rarely result in decreased scoring potency for the Grizzlies anymore.

### No easy task

With tournament seeding finalized after Saturday's season finale, Oakland's path to the championship game is now in focus.

A first-round draw with eighth-seeded Southern Utah offers OU a somewhat precarious matchup since the two teams will be squaring off for the second time in eight days.

The Grizzlies defeated the Thunderbirds with relative ease in both meetings this season, but the prospect of beating any team for a third time in a season is always a challenge.

The other first round matchups each provide considerable intrigue and should be closely contested.

To Oakland's benefit, Oral Roberts and IUPUI are the second and third seeds, respectively, meaning OU's stiffest challengers are



BOB KNOSKA/The Oakland Post

The top-seeded Golden Grizzlies will open the Summit League Tournament Saturday at 7 p.m. EST against No. 8 Southern Utah.

poised for a second round meeting should they avoid the early upset.

A win against Southern Utah would mean a second-round game against the winner of the IPFW and SDSU matchup — still no easy test for Oakland en route to a potential championship game return.

Overall, the quality and competitiveness of the eight tournament teams has improved over last season when only three teams appeared suited to win it all. While Oakland's 17-1 record stands four games above second place ORU's 13-5 mark, the parity of the regular season looms large

with seemingly any team capable of knocking off another.

A win in Tuesday's championship game (9 p.m. EST, ESPN 2) would send the Grizzlies to the NCAA Tournament for the third time in school history, likely garnering a 13 seed and a prime opportunity to build off an already accomplished season.

Throw the records aside; Oakland's three-game run to the post-season begins now.

Follow @DanFenner on Twitter for updates and analysis throughout the tournament March 5-8.



# Club lacrosse aims for 5th division title

By **SHAWN MINNIX**  
Copy Editor

Last year, the Oakland University women's club lacrosse team had the best season in the program's history, capturing its fourth straight divisional title with a record of 16-4 and qualifying as the No. 2 seed for the Women's Collegiate Lacrosse Association Div. II National Championship held in Scottsdale, Ariz.

This year, the Golden Grizzlies are looking to have a repeat performance, but a difficult schedule awaits them. The team is currently ranked seventh in the Div. II rankings, and head coach Towbey Kassa expects them to compete at the high level they have established and continue the program's success over the past few seasons.

"I want to win another division, to make it five straight and make another run," Kassa said. "To finish in the top 10 in the country would be great."

Good collegiate teams are usually led by senior leaders, and this team has two of them in defender Charlotte Rose and attacker Ashley Krisfalusi. Both are captains and Kassa said they are critical to the team's success.

"Charlotte, on the defensive side, really gets the girls going," Kassa said. "She's been in the system for four years, and the same thing with Ashley on the offensive side. She's really helping the new girls develop. Their presence is just huge out there."

Oakland's season started in mid-February with a tough opening set of games against both club squads from the University of Michigan at Oosterbaan Field House in Ann Arbor, which has been a house of horrors for Kassa since his playing career at

Oakland began. The Grizzlies took the first game against the Michigan B squad, 13-11, and then fought hard in the second game but lost to Michigan's top Div. I squad 19-6.

Kassa was still pleased with the split, as the win over Michigan B gave him his first ever win at Oosterbaan and put an end to his long losing streak.

"Finally getting that win, it just felt it was a relief," Kassa said. "I could say that I went into Oosterbaan, and even though it wasn't their Div. I, it just felt good to get a win at that place that has given me so much grief over the years."

The Grizzlies have lots of motivation to get back to the National Championship, if only for how their season ended last year. Three straight losses in Scottsdale left much to be desired, and none were as painful as the first one, a heartbreaking 17-16 loss to Southern Methodist University that knocked them out of contention.

The more difficult schedule this year includes a four-game trip to Texas to participate in the Lonestar Showdown in April and a rematch against SMU as well as other top teams. Kassa believes the women will be ready and highly focused to exact a bit of revenge on the Mustangs.

"Losing that game by one goal and being the way that we lost and the circumstances, the girls really want to go out there and win to prove we are the better team," Kassa said. "It will be a good test."

Oakland's next game is scheduled for Thursday, March 10 at 8:00 p.m. against Wayne State University at the Ultimate Soccer Arenas in Troy.

More information on the team, including a roster and full schedule, can be found at [www.oaklandlacrosse.com](http://www.oaklandlacrosse.com)



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# Women's Basketball Summit League Tournament Preview

By **RYAN HEGEDUS**  
Senior Reporter

After suffering a first round upset against Western Illinois last year, the Oakland University women's basketball team (18-11, 12-6) is hoping for better results at this year's Summit League Tournament, where the fourth-seeded Golden Grizzlies will face No. 5 Southern Utah on Sunday.

Unlike last year's squad, this year's team is not a favorite to win the conference championship.

Top-seeded Oral Roberts defeated the Grizzlies twice this season and the Golden Eagles are considered to be the tournament frontrunners.

Oakland struggled against top Summit League competition this season, as the Grizzlies went just 1-5 against the top three seeds — ORU, IPFW and defending champion South Dakota State.

OU split the season series with its first round opponent, Southern Utah. The Grizzlies defeated SUU 68-39 at home on Dec. 2, but lost to the Thunderbirds, 60-49, on the road last weekend.

The key for the Grizzlies will be to avoid falling behind early as they have been prone to doing over the last month. To avoid similar results in the tournament, the team must improve its shot selection.

In the last five games, Oakland is shooting just 34.1 percent from the field and 32.4 percent from three-point range.

Those percentages drop even more when discounting the team's 23-of-58 performance in a win against North Dakota State on Feb. 21.

For the Grizzlies to win their first conference tournament title since 2006, several players will have to find the form the team displayed early in the conference season.

Sophomore forward Bethany Watterworth averaged 17.9 points and 6.8 rebounds this season, and reached double-digit scoring in all but one game. Watterworth will need to match those averages and stay out of foul trouble for her team to have a serious chance at winning against the top teams in the Summit League.

Junior guard Sharise Calhoun was second on the team with 12.6 points per game and third in rebounding with 5.4 rebounds per game. Calhoun provided clutch play in several games down the stretch of the season, and will likely be counted on to do the same in Sioux Falls.

Calhoun's free throw in the final seconds gave the Grizzlies a 62-61 win against IUPUI on Feb. 5, and she scored 13 points to go along with five assists, five rebounds and

three steals in the team's 63-61 win against UMKC on Monday.

After missing three games with an injury, junior Brittany Carnago returned to the Oakland lineup for the last two games of the season.

Carnago has averaged 7.0 points and 5.1 rebounds per game so far this season. The 6-foot-4 center also averages three blocks per game, which ranks 10th in the nation.

Having a healthy Carnago is crucial for the Grizzlies' tournament hopes.

Her defensive presence was felt almost immediately. In the three games without her, Oakland gave up an average of 68 points per game, nearly 10 points higher than their season average of 58.9 points allowed, which ranked first in the Summit League.

In addition to the strong play from veterans, several of the team's younger players have been valuable members of the rotation this season.

After injuries and player departures decimated the roster in December, many of the players had no choice but to assume a larger role. At times, the Grizzlies have played games with just eight active players on the roster.

As a result, nearly the entire roster has been able to gain valuable game experience which could prove to be beneficial once team



BOB KNOSKA/The Oakland Post

The fourth-seeded Golden Grizzlies will face No. 5 Southern Utah in the Summit League Tournament Sunday at 1 p.m. EST.

depth comes into play.

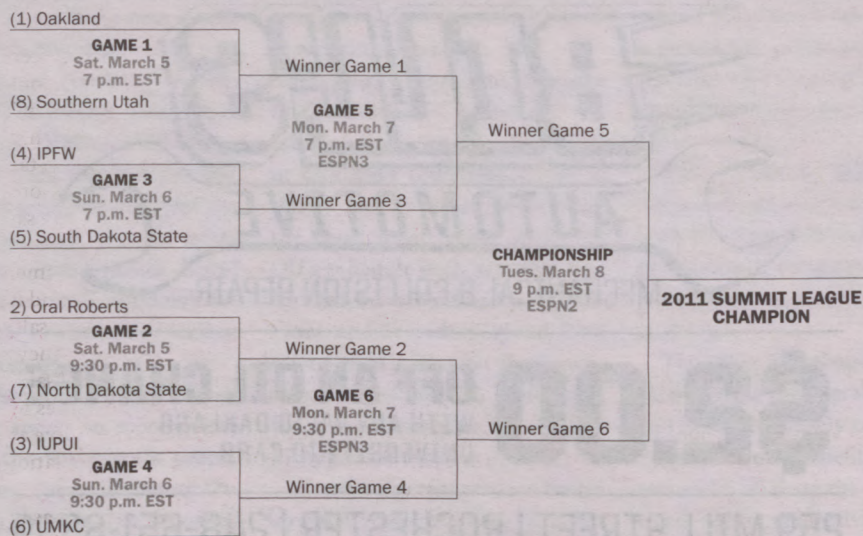
Freshman guard Zakiya Minifie has blossomed into a rebounding phenom, averaging a team-leading 6.9 rebounds per game.

Freshman guard Malika Glover has started 10 games and averaged 5.9 points per game, while redshirt

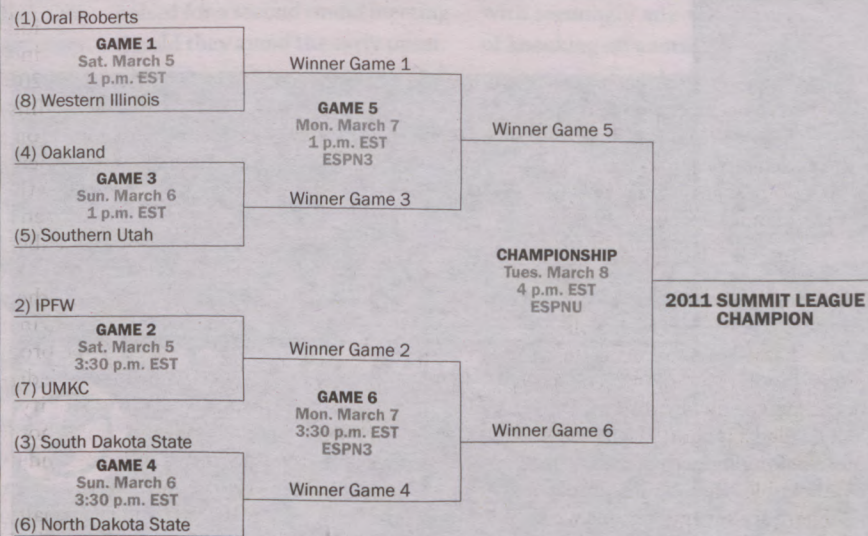
freshman guard Elizabeth Hamlet has started 12 games for Oakland, averaging 4.8 points per game and providing solid defense.

The Grizzlies have previously won the Summit League Tournament as a No. 2 seed in 2002 and as a No. 6 seed in 2006.

## MEN'S BASKETBALL BRACKET



## WOMEN'S BASKETBALL BRACKET





# OU prepares for steep cuts

By **MIKE SANDULA** and  
**NICHOLE SEGUIN**

Managing Editor and Features Editor

Gov. Rick Snyder's proposed budget cut could reduce Oakland University's state appropriations by almost a quarter.

It still needs to pass through the state legislature, but if approved, Snyder's budget would severely strain the budgets of Michigan's 15 public universities.

Central Michigan University is projected to face the highest possible cut — 23.3 percent — while Eastern Michigan University should see the lowest, a 19.3 percent reduction. OU is expected to receive a cut of up to 22.6 percent, the second highest.

Each university, however, has an opportunity to see only a 15 percent reduction.

Russi explained that Snyder recommended taking the five-year average of the tuition increase for all 15 public universities and staying under that number, which is 7.1 percent or less. OU's projected cut ranges from \$11.5-7.5 million, depending on whether they earn the tuition incentive grant.

Russi said it's too soon to tell what the university will have to do to make up for the loss in state revenue, and the future is even less certain.

**"We don't have a lot of flexibility."**

— Gary Russi  
Oakland University President

"(Snyder) proposed a two-year budget," Russi said. "The second year is really critical. What they're proposing is that it would be formula-funded. This would be the first time in the history of education — but the formula is not defined. So 2013 is still up in the air and will really represent a clean slate, so the money that we were to get this year ... is not guaranteed for '13, so we're trying to figure out what all that means and at this point we don't know."

OU's current state appropriation is \$50 million. Its general fund is \$180 million, according to Tom LeMarbe, director of budget and financial planning. LeMarbe's

department works toward planning and developing the university's operating budget and must account for changes like the upcoming fiscal budget.

"I haven't had a chance to meet with Dr. Russi yet, (but) my guess is we'll be looking at everything as we try to balance the '12 budget, including reserves," LeMarbe said.

In a meeting on Feb. 18, Russi and others confirmed OU's four priorities: Support strategic visions, protect and enhance the academic mission, provide excellent student services and minimize net tuition cost.

"These are extremely important because these are guideposts to the reductions that will occur on this campus," Russi said. "Without these ... you just sort of randomly go through with proposed cuts and just pick them and so on. You can't do that. You really need to establish some solid foundations for why you're cutting and what you're going to protect. This is what we're going to protect."

With 86 percent of OU's budget going toward "fixed costs" — salaries, utilities and insurance, to name a few — Russi said the university doesn't have a lot of room to

move around.

"In other words, we don't have a lot of flexibility. When you have fixed costs, those are things that you have to make major changes to deal with them," Russi said.

At the Feb. 17 University Senate meeting, Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs Virinder Moudgil said the university needs to "start planning now."

"I was at a national provost's meeting last week, and I'll tell you, almost all were scared," Moudgil said. "There were Michigan provosts there who said they did not know how they were going to do their job with the budget cuts coming their way."

Russi is asking for campus-wide feedback from faculty, staff and anybody that has an idea on how to fix the budget by the end of the day on March 7.

"We've got to move our agenda along, so we have a sense of urgency and we need this feedback," Russi said. "We need it as quickly as we can get it, so I'm excited about the opportunity to listen and hear, and (the vice presidents and deans) will look at every idea."

— Kay Nguyen contributed to this report

## College students cut costs by living in closets

By **JEN BUCCIARELLI**

Local Editor

College students who are trying to save money are renting closets in homes and apartment buildings around Oakland University, breaking occupancy ordinances and creating fire hazards.

Authorities reported five incidents in the past year, enough to call it an ongoing problem that causes a fire hazard and puts other occupants of the dwelling in danger. There have been no reported fires, however.

The Auburn Hills zoning ordinance states that no more than two people can live in a single-family dwelling — either a rental home or apartment — who are not a "family unit." A family unit is defined as a single family or a single boyfriend-girlfriend relationship, police Lt. James Manning said.

Students who violate the ordinance face eviction and a citation, said Auburn Hills Police Sgt. Michael O'Hala.

The hazard of extra residents living in closets or basements involves a lack of quick fire exits, said Josh Boyce, a fire inspector for the Auburn Hills Fire Department.

The illegal tenants also raise the risk of fire by having more belongings, which translates into "more accessible combustibles that wouldn't normally be there," Boyce said.

"There are several reasons we are addressing this," O'Hala said, "one is safety and the other is quality of life

issues."

While it is not limited to the OU population, O'Hala said, students account for one third of the total residency for four of the major apartment complexes in the city.

Baker College and Oakland Community College students are amid the mix of renters, said Cpt. Mark Gordon of the Oakland University Police Department.

Zoning ordinance violations have been a problem for years, and "we saw an increase in the number of incidents involving students in 2009 and early 2010," Manning said.

Homes in Auburn Hills that have received violations in the past include some on Simmons, Dexter, Squirrel and Allerton roads and Cherryland Street, O'Hala said.

With the decline in the housing market, Manning said his department has seen a rise in the number of rental properties so the number of rental-home zoning violations has increased as well.

But, Manning said the number of incidents involving apartment complexes in the area continues to hold "a slight edge over the rental properties."

O'Hala believes the driving force behind this type of violation is affordability.

"It's clear that it's more affordable for say, five or six people to split rent and utilities (costs) than it is for one or two people," he said.

O'Hala said the penalty for violating the zoning ordinance is a municipal civil infraction.

Once the violation — having more than the legal number of residents in one location — has been determined, "the landlord or renter found to be in violation of the zoning ordinance is identified, they are advised of the fact and given a reasonable opportunity to comply with the ordinance," he said. "If they fail to comply, a citation is issued and the landlord or renter is ordered to appear in court to answer the charges."

Because the zoning ordinance violation can be deemed a local or state issue, "there is no set fine — it's determined by a judge," said Debbie Liponoga of the traffic department at Oakland County's 52nd District Court, 3rd Division.

With repeat offenses, O'Hala said, "the court can take increasingly harsh penalties to alleviate the violations."

The process for handling renter violations is the same for the landlord involved.

Beacon Hill Apartments, which has leased apartments since 1987, has had a good relationship with OU and its students, said Jim Torre, the apartment corporate sales director. Renters who do not comply with residency rules face eviction proceedings within 48 hours, Torre said.

"We do not actively search or inspect the homes or apartments to locate violations," O'Hala said. "If we answer a call at a particular location and observe the violations, we address it at that time."

To avoid the situation, O'Hala said, is as simple as knowing the zoning ordinance and its restrictions.



## NEWS BRIEFS

A look at significant current news events from around the globe:

### 1. Germany

Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg resigned from his position as Germany's defense minister on Tuesday due to allegations accusing him of plagiarism. Guttenberg's decision was prompted when Bayreuth University's revoked his doctoral title for violating academic standards by not properly crediting sources in his thesis. The announcement shocked the country — Guttenberg was Germany's most popular politician, according to AP reports.

### 2. Libya

The 192 U.N. member nations voted Tuesday to suspend Libya

from the U.N. Human Rights Council. The General Assembly felt the move was necessary because of the Gadhafi regime's "gross and systematic violations of human rights" toward protestors. Currently, the U.N. Security Council and the United States have imposed sanctions on Gadhafi, his family and top associates, and other members closely affiliated with his regime.

### 3. United States

President Barack Obama submitted a \$3.73 trillion budget on Monday, although most of the cuts would be postponed until after the next presidential election. Obama said the budget was one of "tough choices and sacrifices." The Obama administration is predicting an all-time peak in the nation's deficit, followed by a sharp drop in 2012, aided by the reductions of



Social Security and business taxes. Many Republicans and even some Democrats are leery that the president is taking too timid a stance on future budget deficits.

### 4. New Zealand

The death toll resulting from

the earthquake that struck the New Zealand city of Christchurch on Feb. 22 is now at 159, according to police. Superintendent Dave Cliff confirmed Wednesday that four more bodies had been discovered among the rubble and said he feels that the final death toll is

likely to be around 240. Some of the bodies, he added, may never be able to be salvaged due to the force of the collapsing buildings.

— Compiled from AP Reports by Sarah Wojcik, Senior Reporter

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## A familiar face for children

### Lowry Director knows each of her 161 students

By LAURYN ANDREWS  
Staff Reporter

Cheerful chatter, glittery pink play dough and colorful artwork surround toddlers and preschool students on the first floor of Carlotta and Dennis Pawley Hall.

Julie Ricks-Doneen is the Director of the Lowry Center for Early Childhood Education, a program that educates children from age 11 months to 5 years.

The early childhood program was named after Oakland University graduate student Matthew R. Lowry, who was one of the first to enroll in OU's Early Childhood Master's program.

As part of a class project, Lowry envisioned an early childhood program on OU's campus.

Lowry's vision became a reality when the center opened in converted chicken coops, located near Meadow Brook Hall.

By August of 2002, the center moved to the School of Education and Human Services building, Carlotta and Dennis Pawley Hall.

"Lowry started as being very child centered ... we continue that same philosophy," Ricks-Doneen said.

Ricks-Doneen received her Ph.D. in psychology from Michigan State University and has been the Director of Lowry for two years and she has been a member of the Oakland University community since 2005.

She arrives at Lowry around 7:45 a.m. and begins her day by checking-in with classrooms.

Around 9 a.m., she greets parents and students with a warm smile as they walk through the center's glass doors.

"I love to see the growth and see their interests unfold ... how they learn to interact with peers and how they creative they can be," Ricks-Doneen said. "It's really cool to watch a child go from the toddler room to down the hall."

After everyone is settled in their classrooms, Ricks-Doneen may spend time observing Lowry's teachers and pupils.

Ricks-Doneen knows each and every one of Lowry's 161 students.

"She is really great; she goes in and



The director of the Lowry Center for Early Childhood Education, Dr. Julie Ricks-Doneen works with students, meets with parents and assisted in establishing the Early Education and Intervention Specialist Degree Program that will be offered in the fall.

SINEAD CRONIN/The Oakland Post

out of the classrooms a lot. Her face is well-known," junior Elementary Education major Lauren Little said.

When Ricks-Doneen is not spending time in Lowry's classrooms, she is managing the many business aspects of Lowry that make the program a success.

She manages both the federal and state grants that help to fund the center.

Grants from the State of Michigan help to fund Lowry's preschool, as well as the Great Start Readiness Program for four-year-olds. Federal grants help to keep costs affordable for OU students who have children.

Ricks-Doneen also spends much of her time writing and working on further research.

She is the Assistant Professor of the Department of Human Development and

Child Studies and assisted in establishing the Early Education and Intervention Specialist Degree Program, which will be offered in the Fall of 2011.

One of the courses being offered in the new degree program, Ecological Foundations of Early Intervention, will be taught by Ricks-Doneen.

Outside of the classroom Ricks-Doneen enjoys participating in community service projects.

She is constantly searching for new ways to incorporate Lowry in the campus community.

"I am always thinking about how Lowry will be intertwined in the new programs," Ricks-Doneen said.

Ann Ratteree, a Lowry preschool teacher, who has taught at the center for more than 12 years, has previously worked with Ricks-Doneen.

"She gives us our freedom, to try new things, to try a new idea," Ratteree said.

Ricks-Doneen also encourages OU stu-



dents to "come and visit" Lowry whenever they can.

She believes that spending time with children is the best way to determine if a career in education is "a good fit."

Ricks-Doneen wants individuals in the OU community to know that Lowry welcomes students from all departments.

With permission, students can visit Lowry for observations, class assignments and research at all levels.

"We serve our students," Ricks-Doneen said.

People often tell her that the Lowry Center for Early Childhood Education is one of the best kept secrets, but they are not trying to keep it that way. All students are welcome to visit.

a DAY in the LIFE of...





## PROFESSOR PROFILE

### Kevin Laam Associate Professor, English

Kevin Laam has always had a passion for English.

"I love language and I sometimes wish I could find the easier word, but it's oftentimes the more extravagant and complicated words that occur to me first," Laam, associate professor of English, said. "Generally speaking, I've always been a language hound."

Laam is different from most literature professors, focusing on ideas of happiness in Renaissance literature of the 16th and 17th centuries.

"(It's) how different poets and playwrights theorized and conceptualized the pursuit of happiness and what it meant to be happy," Laam said.

Lately, Laam is researching various discourses of conciliation that circulated in early modern English.

In the classroom, Laam strictly stays away from PowerPoint presentations.

"I do try to be conversational and humorous in the way that I present materials because most of the classes that I teach," he said. "Sometimes what that means as an educator is just really being a dork and being a geek and letting my fandom for the material show."

Laam also tries to mix things up and keep things energetic in the classroom with "a little bit of lecture, a little bit of writing stuff on the board and a bad joke here and there."

Laam teaches ENG 105: Introduction to Shakespeare, ENG 241: British literature survey, ENG 301: Poetry, ENG 355: Renaissance Literature, and ENG 316: Milton and upper division and grad-level courses.

Laam also follows sports, particularly NBA basketball, and declares himself a pretty intense music enthusiast.

"I'm an '80s guy, so (I listen to) a lot of really terrible '80s pop music," Laam said. "But really, all sorts of music, everything from independent rock to classical music to even a little country."

Laam's students reiterate his self-assessments.

"I like him because he is passionate about the subject, which makes class more entertaining. The only difficult thing is that his knowledge is intimidating," senior Lindsay Rivenburg said.

— Sarah Wojcik, Senior Reporter



Photo courtesy of Tara Michener

Tara Michener travels all over the East Coast and Midwest to promote her books. So far, she has written two short stories, a chapter book and is working on a novel for young adults.

# Showcasing diversity

## Grad student writes confidence-boosting books for kids

By **NICHOLE SEGUIN**  
Features Editor

Tara Michener, a student in the master's program at Oakland University, aims to help children learn to appreciate themselves.

Michener and her husband Jason, who have been together for a total of seven years, were married in January 2005. She said that their relationship was "different from the traditional couple," because he is white and she is black. She created her "Who I Am, Not What I Am" series after questions arose from peers about their future children.

"I wanted to showcase diversity," she said. "While we were dating, people were asking what our kids would think about being mixed. My books are a helpful way for parents and educators to teach without it being awkward."

Michener's books aim to educate children about being different through stories about kids with mixed parents, adopted parents and children struggling with self-image and esteem. She has written two short stories, a chapter book and is currently putting the final touches on her fourth, a young adult novel.

Michener and Jason work as a duo, with her writing and him illustrating. Together, the family travels the country promoting the books and their messages to young children all around the East Coast and Midwest.

"The (first) book started from innocent ignorance from children and then transformed to train and teach kids about what they didn't know," Jason said. "Tara couldn't find a good book for children about these topics, so she wrote her own. Our relationship was key, and it only grew from it."

Jason, also her creative director, is in charge of illustrating the books, designing the promotional materials, shoot-

ing pictures and videos, minor website maintenance and general promotion and market expenditures. He says that he was surprised at the growing popularity of the books.

"Tara is so creative, she keeps me on my feet," he said. "It first started with books, and then launched. Now, we're involved in the revitalization of Detroit, school presentations and she's back in school for her master's degree. I don't know where she's going to take it, but it has been an exciting ride so far."

Michener is also Founder and President of the Black Women in Business Brainstorm, a networking group that helps minority women and those interested enhance their public speaking, business skills and implement those strategies in the professional world, and also works with the "Be A Part of Their Story" literacy project, which partners with local non-profit organizations to give low-income children autographed books for free.

"So far, we've worked with Lighthouse of Oakland County, Operation Kid Equip and Little Girls, Big Dreams," Michener said. "Kids are actually lined up to watch the presentations and get the books. You'd think every child has been to a bookstore before, but that's not true. Some kids are excited about literacy."

Though she only started at OU this winter for a master's degree in counseling, Michener obtained her bachelor's at Madonna University in journalism and public relations. She quit her old job in diversity and human resources to take up writing full-time.

Michener's dreams include meeting Oprah and making all kids feel good about who they are, regardless of what they look like, or what conditions they grew up in, and to have someone bring her the Diet Coke and Twizzlers she mentions in her biography in every book to one of her presentations.



## From sea raiders to reptilians

By **KAITLYN CHORNOBY**  
Scene Editor

Gore Verbinski has directed a large collection of films with varying genres, including the "Pirates of the Caribbean" films. For his most recent upcoming film, "Rango," Verbinski is taking on what he has determined his favorite genre — Western — and a new endeavor: animation.

"Rango" stars a chameleon who dreams of being a hero. He finds himself in a Western town full of bandits and strives to protect it. "Rango" will hit theaters on March 4.

Voicing the part of the main amphibian, Rango, is Johnny Depp, who has starred in several of Verbinski's films in the past.

Verbinski said that since the two are similar in age with similar musical influences, he was able to develop a language to force the strongest work out of Depp.

"Certainly with Johnny doing so much work together we developed a shorthand — I mean, a lot of times I'll speak in almost in sound effects and nonsensical words," he said. "You know, go up between takes, go up and underline one line dialogue and

say, 'more fuzz here,' 'more spank on this one.'"

The director also added that a strong trust has developed between himself and the Oscar-winning actor. Verbinski said Depp committed to the part even without reading the script and became excited after seeing how the story would feel.

"I said (to Depp), 'I'm going to smoke on this animated movie about a lizard with an identity crisis,' and he just went, 'fantastic, let's do that,'" Verbinski said. "He was just in based on trust and knowing that I'm going to try my hardest not to let him down."

Being his first animated film, Verbinski admitted it was a task to think in terms of creating everything without an immediate product. He said he has a lot of newly found respect for animation directors and their ability to work from scratch.

"It's a lot harder than I ever imagined," he said. "There are no gifts. Everything is manufactured and created."

Verbinski added that he will be listening to the sound more. Since Rango will only have a soundtrack added to the animation, he said there is a lot more

meticulous editing to scripted lines to create a cadence.

"To see this team of 40 animators really kind of bond together and everybody kind of collaborating and talking about each other's shots and really knowing what's going on underneath the skin of the character at any moment in the film, I could ask them questions (and) they can describe and define the emotional state of the character prior to having mechanical discussions," Verbinski said.

Although stepping out on a limb to work with animation, Verbinski said he enjoys producing Western films after having watched films such as "Duck, You Sucker" and "Once Upon a Time in the West" as a child.

"I saw them probably at an age-inappropriate period and felt like I was, you know, sneaking into a forbidden world," he said. "And so, I'm a fan of Western but really the most modern Western, The sort of, 'the myths are dying and it's the end of an era,' 'progress is inevitable for us,' 'the railroad's coming.' Those sort of things are — have always been — present in my DNA."

Verbinski has stressed that "Rango" is not only for children.



Photo courtesy of Paramount Pictures and Nickelodeon Movies  
Director and Producer Gore Verbinski (standing) behind the scenes.

Although he admits animation is considered a genre for "kids and moms," he worked to break the stereotype and add elements that would appeal to adults as well.

"Why does animation have to be linked with Happy Meals, you know? It's just a technique to tell a story," Verbinski said.

He said although "Pirates" was a family film, he does not set out

to make a movie for a specific audience, but rather a movie he himself would like to see.

Verbinski continues to discuss the evolution of the characters and what he finds appealing in the Western genre.

For the full story and more commentary by Gore Verbinski, search the term "Rango" at [www.oaklandpostonline.com](http://www.oaklandpostonline.com)

## Musician is 'Ready' to continue first headlining tour

By **MEGAN SEMERAZ**  
Staff Reporter

Jordan Witzigreuter lounged in the back of his busy tour bus, fidgeting with his consistently beeping cell phone. Although Witzigreuter, better known as the sole member of "The Ready Set," seems like an ordinary 21-year-old, this past year has been anything but ordinary for him.

Witzigreuter, from Fort Wayne, Ind., released his major label debut album, "I'm Alive, I'm Dreaming," last summer. The album debuted at No. 3 on Billboard Heatseekers, but the first single, "Love Like Woe," became an instant top 40 hit.

The Ready Set recently embarked on their first headlining tour — The Glamour Kills Tour. The Crofoot Ballroom in Pontiac was the third stop of the tour.

"It's really fun; there has been a lot of

energy and every show has been sold out so far, so it has been a blast," Witzigreuter said.

The Ready Set, accompanied by a live band onstage, has performed in Michigan numerous times and played their first headlining show in Pontiac in The Pike Room.

"It's pretty awesome going from that to the bigger, cooler room (Crofoot Ballroom)," he said.

At the start of the Glamour Kills tour, The Ready Set premiered a new single, "Young Forever," a song Witzigreuter is proud to call "different."

"I'm really excited that the second single is as different as it is from 'Love Like Woe' because I don't want to be the artist that puts out the same song over and over trying to get a successful single or something," Witzigreuter said.

In all of his success, Witzigreuter has

stayed fan-oriented by meeting fans after shows, tweeting and maintaining a blog. With all that he gives back to fans, they know just about everything about him.

"I think I have a hard time keeping most things private," Witzigreuter said. "I think things are pretty much out there in the open with things like Twitter."

With a rigorous touring and press schedule, Witzigreuter has played his music for thousands of fans across the country.

However, offstage the singer considers himself calm and soft-spoken — the opposite of the loud person he portrays himself as onstage.

"(I am) kind of shy, very happy and easily interpreted as something that I'm not," Witzigreuter said.

When he is not on tour, Witzigreuter is still heavily focused on his music, writing songs and planning out his future tours.

This year The Ready Set has plans to drop a large amount of new music.

"I did like 20-something new songs," Witzigreuter said. "We'll probably do another EP in the summer. The hope is to do another album before the year's over, so this is going to be a lot busier year for releasing new music than last year was."

The type of music Witzigreuter listens to ranges from indie-rock acts such as "You, Me and Everyone We Know" to electro-dubstep artist "Skrillex" and all electronic music like "deadmau5."

"It's really random, but I get in like little phases where I'll listen to the same thing only for like two weeks," he said.

The Ready Set will continue touring over the next year and will return to this state as part of The Warped Tour on July 8.

For more information on The Ready Set, visit [www.thereadyset.com](http://www.thereadyset.com)



# records & reels



## RADIOHEAD // "The King of Limbs"

The eagerly-awaited follow up to 2007's Grammy-award winning "In Rainbows" finally released — and Radiohead did not disappoint. Although the album is only eight songs, its electronic-heavy sound and minimal guitar work shows how creative they can be in space. Although many compare this album to previous releases, its 37 minute length proves Thom Yorke is still one of the best alternative vocalists.

## DRIVE-BY TRUCKERS // "Go-Go Boots"

"Go-Go Boots" is The Drive-By Truckers' 11th album and was produced by longtime producer David Barbe. Last year the boys recorded over 40 songs and split them up into two records. The first CD, "The Big To-Do" was more of a straight up rock record, while "Go-Go Boots" is a return to their country roots.



## G.LOVE // "Fixin' to Die"

When Scott of the Avett Brothers asked G.Love to tour with him, he wasn't expecting to help produce G.Love's newest release "Fixin' to Die." G.Love abandons the hip-hop genre that made him a hit to make a sincere country album with his blues roots.



## TAKE ME HOME TONIGHT // 114 min. // R

The directionless 23-year-old Matt Franklin (Topher Grace), who just graduated from MIT, decides to put his success and maturity on hold by working behind the counter at a mall video store. Everything comes to a stop when his high school crush Tori Frederking walks into the store one day and invites him to an end-of-summer party. Matt thinks this will be his big chance to land the girl of his dreams, but the night is going to be more complex than he ever imagined.

For more information on this film and to read the interview with Topher Grace, search "Take Me Home Tonight" on [www.oaklandpostonline.com](http://www.oaklandpostonline.com)

## THE ADJUSTMENT BUREAU // 99 min. // PG-13

When David Norris (Matt Damon) is on the brink of winning a seat in the U.S. Senate, he meets ballet dancer Elise Sellas and begins to fall for her. Just as things start to get serious, David becomes aware of a group of mysterious men called the Adjustment Bureau who will do everything to stop them from being together. David must make a choice between his fate or let everything go for the woman he loves.



— Compiled by Kevin Romanchik, Staff Reporter

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## Music hazardous to health?

By BRIAN FIGURSKI

Guest columnist / losing faith in mankind

I was driving the other day when suddenly my iPod transmitter broke. As a result, I was forced to listen to the radio — you know, that ancient thing on your dashboard with all the knobs. Halfway home, I noticed my ears were bleeding. Excessively.

I detoured to a nearby hospital, and as I stepped out of the car, the bleeding ceased. Strange, I thought to myself. I got back into my vehicle.

With the radio back on, the blood again started to spurt like a fountain. "Enough is enough!" I declared and stormed into the sliding doors of the hospital entrance.

I lost another pint of blood before making it to the sign-in desk, for playing over the loudspeaker was some brain cell-destroying Ke\$ha song about glitter and oral sex.

I then realized the bleeding was not

due to the brain hemorrhage I suffered as a result of being dropped on my head as a child; rather, modern music was the culprit.

I used to only have groups like \*NSYNC and Nickelback to complain about. I now find myself longing to hear a group of whiney guys bemoan their torn heart or a constipated tool tell me to look at some stupid photograph.

Now, I'm a firm believer in not judging other people by their preferred choice of music, and Lord knows I listen to some wacky, out-there material. After all, I am the guy who suggested his high school marching band learn "Squeeze Me Macaroni" by Mr. Bungle. Though full of innuendo in its own right, however, it's rather tame compared to the straight up vulgarity of today's song titles (take, for instance, Rihanna's "S&M").

That being said, Top 40 is nothing more than a repugnant cesspool of terrible performances courtesy of mindless drones.

It's so easy to create a pop hit these days: A thumping bass line, a decent hook and a dance beat is all that's required. I could burp and fart into a microphone and, so long as I drown it in Auto-Tune, it would go triple platinum — if only in illegal downloads, but still.

Recently, A top 10 list in Rolling Stone magazine had this gem listed as the number three track: "Tonight (I'm F\*\*\*ing You)" by Enrique Iglesias. How romantic.

What has the world come to? It seems making music is now just a competition of who can contract more sexually transmitted diseases in a weeks' worth of airplay.

I already have a batch of potential song titles for my first hit single. It's a three-way tie between "Shut Up (Let My Body do the Talking)," "Calling All Whores (To the Dance Floor)" and "This Song (Uses Parentheses (With Absolute Disregard [Brackets Welcome]))".

Part of the problem is the age of these modern artists. Parents sign off on their

kids' careers while they're still warm from the womb. And, disgustingly, the droll songs pumped out these days offer little more than a tempo to gyrate in time with.

People wonder why shows like Teen Mom rule the television — on MTV nonetheless. The M no longer stands for Music, but for Mind-rotting.

The incentives for making this music continue when we shower them in grandeur and accolades: Grammys for nothing and MTV Video Music Award moon men statues, albeit the latter is the equivalent of giving someone freshly used toilet paper.

Every generation endures a wave of some terrible music style, but this cycle is a tsunami of pure garbage.

As long as we the consumer continue to gobble up these terrible tunes, Lady Gaga will continue to write songs about getting Four Loko-style drunk and urinating in public, and the Black Eyed Peas will keep destroying remixes during the Super Bowl halftime show.

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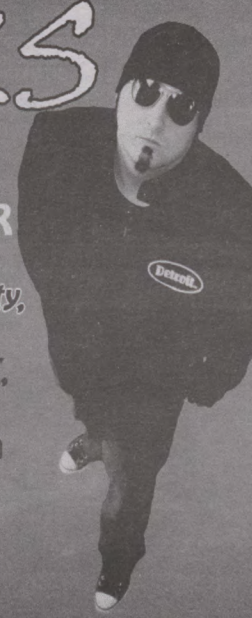
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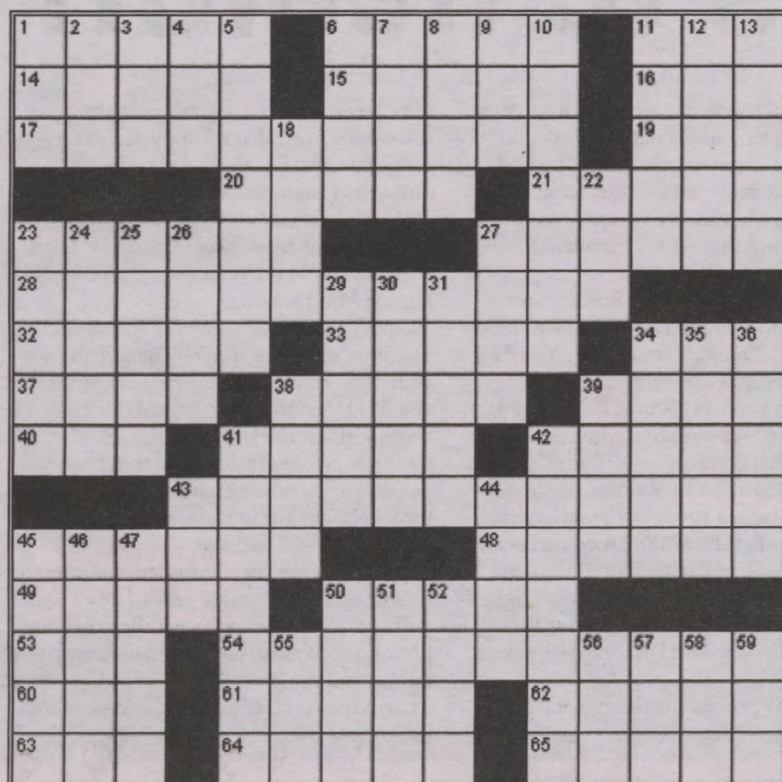




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## ACROSS

1. Any agreeable harmonious sounds
6. Drink served with marshmallows
11. Petrol
14. Heath
15. Express a thought
16. Tear
17. Translator
19. Bother
20. Shrewd
21. Proposal
23. Consecutive
27. Spreads sleeping sickness
28. The act of sending a message
32. Stones
33. Wooden pin
34. Male sheep
37. Lyric poems
38. Melancholy music
39. Indian music
40. Apiece
41. Fliers in V's
42. Birds of peace
43. Falsify
45. Renter
48. Things that happen
49. Showers

## DOWN

1. Japanese apricot
2. Ashes holder
3. Seat oneself
4. Frozen water
5. The dead body of an animal
6. Maize
7. Not closed
8. Large town
9. A single thing
10. Spray can
11. Payola
12. Anagram of "Aside"
13. Fern-to-be
18. Inner surface of the hand
22. Marsh
23. Sharpen

24. Wear away
25. An Indycar or F1 car
26. Writing fluids
27. Neckwear
29. Do-nothing
30. A drunk
31. Push a broom
34. Black bird
35. Spy
36. Sail supports
38. Not worst
39. A thorny flower
41. A Chinese herb
42. Degenerate
43. An adult male
44. Repose
45. Attempts
46. Our planet
47. Kinswoman
50. Renown
51. Out of the wind
52. Hazard
55. Needlefish
56. Propel a boat
57. Three in Roman numerals
58. Donkey
59. Mesh

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