

THE OAKLAND POST

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY'S INDEPENDENT STUDENT NEWSPAPER

JANUARY

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— 2014 —

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A Q&A WITH BECKIE FRANCIS

Former women's basketball
coach Beckie Francis breaks her
silence.

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TOUGH PILL TO SWALLOW

HealthCare.gov receives
low enrollment from
college-age students

PAGES 6-7



IN MEMORY OF MAYA

OU student dies in car
accident at end of Fall
2013 semester

PAGE 12



ontheweb

The City of Auburn Hills put up new banners on its light posts downtown, showcasing the community's partnership with Oakland University.

www.oaklandpostonline.com



PHOTO OF THE WEEK

A COLD DAY IN HEAVEN AND HELL // A student walks past the 'Saints and Sinners' fountains during the Oakland University closure. OU was closed due to extreme winter weather Jan. 6-7, originally having been slated to open for the Winter 2014 semester. Some areas of the campus remained open for resident students who were moving onto campus, while classes were postponed until Wednesday, Jan. 8. *SALWAN GEORGES // The Oakland Post*

Submit a photo to editor@oaklandpostonline.com for a chance to be featured. View all submissions at oaklandpostonline.com



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CAUGHT IN THE VORTEX

Extreme winter weather tore through Michigan, leading to several closures — including Oakland University, which delayed its Winter 2014 semester by two days.



14

MAKING MOVES

Two Oakland University Club Football players are vying for semiprofessional status, trying out for the Saginaw Sting and the Port Huron Patriots.



16

MR. FREEZE

Copy editor and curmudgeon Brian Furski thinks we're all taking the winter weather way too seriously. Check out what he had to say about our frigid phobias.

POLL OF THE WEEK

What did you think of two snow days marking the beginning of the semester?

- A** It was great having an extra two days of vacation
- B** OU needed to do it to keep us safe
- C** I feel ripped off; I paid for classes
- D** All my classes are online anyway

Vote at www.oaklandpostonline.com

LAST WEEK'S POLL

What are your plans for Winter Semester 2014?

- A) Getting ready to graduate**
19 votes | 35%
- B) Taking care of prerequisites**
18 votes | 33%
- C) I won't be here; I'm graduating Fall 2013**
11 votes | 6%
- D) I won't be here for other reasons**
12 votes | 22%

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

JANUARY 10, 1996

Dr. John Gardner was appointed as the new School of Business Administration Dean for Oakland University.

JANUARY 14, 1980

Students had to wait two to four hours for financial aid awards, due to a new law forbidding dispersion of money before the first day of classes.

JANUARY 10, 1964

Enrollment at Oakland University dropped to 1,256, down from the previous record of 1,498, due to dismissals, dropouts and suspensions.

BY THE NUMBERS

WINTER WEATHER

20

inches of snow in some areas of Michigan

-3

low temperature in Oakland County

2

days OU was closed

6

deaths reported as a result of the polar vortex

-20

Degrees in the Upper Peninsula

STAFF EDITORIAL

Don't give OU the cold shoulder over its snow day decisions

Oakland University just can't win. If they keep classes going, people complain. If they cancel classes, people still complain. They're in a fight they just can't win, and the student body won't let them step out of the ring.

On a recent Facebook status notifying people of its closure on Tuesday, Jan. 7, which now stands at 92 comments, 53 are negative and directly attack the university.

It's that misplaced anger and misguided judgment that makes the student body all the more ugly, and all the more dangerous to the university's ability to make a effective decision in a reasonable time.

Oakland University is not the cause of poor weather, nor does it want it.

It wants to run classes on time—that is how it earns money to operate. But it also doesn't want commuters, who are the majority of its student body population, traveling in hazardous conditions.

After all, you can't sign up for classes next semester if the winter claims your life this

"On a recent Facebook status notifying people of its closure on Tuesday, Jan. 7, which now stands at 92 comments, 53 are negative and directly attack the university. It's that misplaced anger and misguided judgment that makes the student body all the more ugly, and all the more dangerous to the university's ability to make an effective decision at a reasonable time."

semester.

So why must the university receive such fallacious contempt from its students?

Would it not be more effective to step aside and allow the university to make its own decisions, and accept that it is informed enough to do what is best for its campus?

In other words, trust that the university knows its own business.

Some may be angry about their professor's schedule, which will now be altered due to university actions.

But, like the university, professors are not incompetent to their business. They will alter their schedule, and will make time to cover course work.

Aside from that, the only day that will be missed is the first—a day generally assigned to going over a syllabus and what is to be expected in class.

Filler work. A day spent doing nothing.

There is no logical reason to be upset with Oakland University. They're making an informed decision with the concern of the students in mind.

If you want to promulgate for bitter hatred, at least choose a target everyone can enjoy: Michigan's terrible weather.

If slack has ever needed to be cut, it's here.

The staff editorial is written weekly by members of The Oakland Post's editorial board.

Corrections Corner

The Oakland Post corrects all errors of fact. If you know of an error, please e-mail oakpostmanaging@gmail.com or call 248.370.2537. You can also write us at 61 Oakland Center Rochester, MI 48309.

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EDITORIAL

Memoirs from a grizzly history at OU

Dreaded case of 'senioritis' strikes one senior early this year

It's the beginning of the end. Of my last semester at Oakland University. I've felt the pain of commuting from 45 minutes away in blistering cold weather. Just like a snowflake, I've drifted apart from my high school friends. And of course, I have met many girls who ended up having hearts colder than the icicles hanging from the Oakland Center. Love life aside, I have learned a lot from my experiences at OU. I began bleeding black and gold back in 2010.

I was just a kid from Commerce who would drive halfway across the Earth twice a day to get me one of them fancy educations. On my first day of school, I had sociology with a pompous professor who just laid on his desk and prattled on about how he was right and you were wrong. For some reason, I felt compelled to introduce myself to this man. (Because they tell you to do that in high school.) "Hello, I thought I'd introduce myself. I'm Scott Wolchek." His response:



SCOTT WOLCHEK editor-in-chief

"So?" I dropped the class. There are multiple lessons to be learned from that story.

1) Ratemyprofessor.com sucks and 2) Professors will learn your name if you show even a remote interest in the material, you don't have to do what freshman Scott did. One of the harder lessons that I'm sure a lot of people go through is that, by my second semester, my friends were drifting apart. I had to make some new ones.

This can be quite difficult at OU because, perhaps you have noticed, most students are commuters and don't really stick around to talk. I overcame these obstacles by mastering the art of the sly comment. You know what I mean. If I was still in that sociology class I mentioned earlier I would say: "I like how our professor is too cool for chairs." Simple statements like that to the person next to you can make some easy-peasy companionship. The other way I've made friends at OU was by joining a student org at the end of my junior year. (Don't worry, I won't get preachy on you and tell you joining

an org is the experience of a lifetime.) Getting involved actually put me in some fairly precarious situations. The biggest was that I had to manage The Post while taking five classes at the same time. Although you may not relate to that specifically, if you have had to balance a job or two as well as go to school, you can probably feel my pain and I can feel yours. I am not really sure how I got through it. I eventually realized that the experience had changed me. I am no longer the commuter kid who sat in the TKE corner freshman year. I am a guy who has learned how to deal with people who hate my guts. I am a guy who practically lives in the basement of the OC. I am a guy who finally found the courage to ask the girl I always had a crush on out on a date (she said no). I am an Oakland University senior, and I just want to graduate.

Scott Wolchek is the editor-in-chief of the Oakland Post. Email him at editor@oaklandpostonline.com

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Affordable care in hands of Gen-Y's

Health care plan success hinges on enrollment of young demographic

Timothy Pontzer
News Editor

Napoleon had Waterloo. Within these borders, Custer had his last stand at the Little Big Horn. Carter is remembered for the Iranian Hostage Crisis. Bush left much of his legacy in Iraq.

Each of these disasters cost the doer dearly, mistakes that will forever be associated with their respective names.

And now, some believe that President Obama is on the brink of joining that list, with his potential gaffe bearing his namesake.

Signed into law in 2010, 'Obamacare' is the most drastic and significant change to the American healthcare system since Medicaid and Medicare in the sixties. Officially billed as the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, it brings about sweeping changes, most notably requiring insurance companies to cover all applicants with a set of minimum standards regardless of preexisting conditions.

Disastrous debut

The implementing of the program has been very rocky. To begin, the official website marketplace, www.healthcare.gov, has been a complete disaster. While the glitches have made Obamacare an easy target for late-night jokes and Republican attacks, it has greatly hurt the initial rollout.

Nicole Asmussen, an assistant professor in the Political Science department at Oakland University, explained that the website issues caused the whole program to start on the wrong foot.

"October and November was definitely not a good period for the Obama presidency," Asmussen said. "With the site problems, the startup was just a mess, but we will have to see how it plays out in the long run. What it really comes down to is the fact that if young people do not sign up, premiums will go up."

This uncovers a problematic trend for Obamacare. Amidst all the layers - the website, a government shutdown, confusing prices, and more - what lies at the heart of it all, is the young blood needed to keep that heart pumping.



Photo illustration by Jon Davis

A typical person in their 60s uses \$6 in health care services for every single dollar utilized by someone in their 20s, according to AP.

A looming debacle

According to a recent Time Magazine article, in order for Obamacare to work, the program needs two 'younger' sign-ups for every three 'older' people enrolled.

This is due to simple math. An AP story from last month explains that a typical person in their 60s uses \$6 in health care services for every single dollar utilized by someone in their 20s.

"Young people are essentially subsidizing the cost of older people," Asmussen said. The people that really need health services are going to make a huge effort to get it, but those that don't need it simply aren't going to. This can make for a bad cycle. The more older people that sign up, the more the costs will be. Then the following year, premiums will be higher in order to make up for the cost. Then younger people will see this and be even more scared to sign up."

"So this is a really, really big problem."

Politico recently called this important group, 'young invincibles' and revealed that the Obama administration hopes to have seven million Americans signed up for the program by the end of March - 2.7 million of them falling between the ages of 18 to 35.

For this piece, a survey was conducted of exactly 200 OU students. Ages, majors, sex, and class standing greatly varied among the group, but this potential trend of an Achilles heel emerged.

Of the 200 asked, only nine have actually signed up for health insurance that complies with the new Obamacare regulations.

Sticking with mom and dad

An overwhelming majority fell in line with Jeff Sharafinski. Sharafinski, a 23-year-old senior studying management information systems, explained why he has not signed up for a new plan.

"It is really easy to stay on my parent's plan," Sharafinski said. "Why

even try to get on that buggy website?"

Within the sweeping changes brought on by the Affordable Care Act, one potential landmine is the provision that Obama also signed into law. Shawn Dhanak, the communications lead for Get Covered America, a non-partisan, non-profit campaign designed to raise awareness for the new healthcare options being offered, explains.

"If they want, young people are now able to stay on their parent's plan until the age of 26," Dhanak said. "Before the Affordable Care Act, this used to be entirely up to the insurance industry."

While this is a blessing for many, this still keeps many young people out of the 'pool' of all Obamacare users.

Nikki Louks, a 20-year-old criminal justice major tried to jump in that pool, but once she found out about the provision, she stayed with the plan of her parents.

"I tried to sign up, but the website directed me to other insurance sites

Please see HEALTH CARE, Page 6

HEALTH CARE

continued from Page 5

and there was nothing I could afford," Louks said. "It was so frustrating that I gave up. But now since I can join my parents' insurance I am very happy. Having a preexisting condition has made getting any form of insurance next to impossible without paying an arm or a leg, so I am relieved."

Sharafinski and Louks are not freeloaders by any means. Rather, they are simply utilizing an offer that Obama himself created, and it could possibly cut the whole program at its knees.

"Many of the students I have talked to say they will just stay on their parent's plan for awhile," said Amanda Lynch, assistant professor in the Health Sciences department at Oakland. "Maybe the other young people are simply procrastinating, just like their papers."

Paying the piper

Procrastination is another worry for the system, and several students surveyed explained that they were simply waiting until the March deadline.

Other students however, are simply rejecting the idea of signing up altogether.

"I would never trust Obama, he's a liar and a crook," said Austin Puckett, a 20-year-old studying broadcasting. "I stay on my parent's plan anyway, but if I couldn't do that, I would just pay the \$100 fine and go on with my life without siding with Obama."

Puckett is not alone, young people around the country are simply willing to pay a fine instead of signing up in the program.

"The first year the penalty for not signing up is only \$95," Asmussen said. "You basically pay it when you file your income taxes, but that will increase over time."

According to Forbes, that \$95 penalty will only apply in 2014 to those who are unmarried with no dependents and an income less than \$19,500. While those parameters apply to many young people such as Puckett, the fines will only continue to rise with time.

A true blessing

While the average age is 51 for those who have actually signed up for Obamacare within the state of Michigan, the simple survey that fueled this piece uncovered a few success stories.

A recent Oakland graduate, Damien Dennis, 25, is currently working as a reporter in St. Joseph, Michigan.

"I went through the process and actually got in the very first day the website launched," Dennis said.

"However, when I got my new job, they covered me with their insurance, so I didn't need to take it. But, my dad hasn't had insurance since he left Chrysler in 2009. He's had back problems that he cannot get taken care of. He recently got an Obamacare plan he can afford and now can get treatment which is huge since he is unemployed and going to college full-time."

Another Golden Grizzly praised the new legislation, literally calling it life changing. This current student is a 22-year-old female, currently in her junior year at OU. She shared her story for this article, but asked to remain anonymous.

"I will say that is honestly a blessing," she said. "I had ovarian cancer at 16. It is embarrassing to talk about, and unfortunately it makes any insurance that I have tried to get become very expensive. Now, I can't be judged for something that I had no control over."

Dhanak hears cases like this all the time, and points to them as a reason why he calls Obamacare historic.

"This is not about politics, this is the law of the land now," Dhanak said. "Now, folks for the first time in Michigan's history people have an unprecedented opportunity to receive quality health insurance without worrying about being denied due to a preexisting condition."

Still, as this new system can certainly help people, it clearly still has many hurdles. According to a Washington Post article from earlier this month, less than one-third of people ages to 18 to 29 plan on enrolling in Obamacare.

"Will this cut the program at its knees? It certainly could," said Professor David Dulio, who chairs the Department of Political Science at Oakland.

"Some have talked about the 'death spiral' for Obamacare where if enough 'young and healthies' don't sign up the program would not work out financially. I think the White House would do everything in its power to salvage the program. It's too early to tell what options would be on the table for them, but I think there are some and I can't imagine they aren't looking ahead to plan for that constituency...if they aren't, they aren't doing their job."

Ultimately, while it slightly strange to think, the ultimate success or fail of this program - and possibly the legacy of a truly historic presidency - could be in the hands of the Y Generation.

Contact Timothy Pontzer at news@oaklandpostonline.com

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Beckie Francis: 'It is time to set the record straight'

After months of silence, former women's basketball coach, Beckie Francis, has decided it's time to speak up about her June 2013 dismissal. The Oakland Post sent Francis a series of questions in late October regarding her termination, accusations of emotionally abusing her players and her relationships with athletics director Tracy Huth and men's basketball coach Greg Kampe. She responded this week. Assistant athletics director, Scott MacDonald said Huth had no comment. Kampe could not be contacted, according to MacDonald.

Because of the non-disparagement clause in her OU contract, Francis declined to answer a few of the questions. The following is an unedited version of her answers.

— Scott Wolchek

After your dismissal in June, you took the high road. Why have you decided to respond directly now? What do you want us to know?

Francis: I was advised by my attorney not to speak. I am answering your request now because there have been misstatements in the media and the university has released statements. It is time to set the record straight from my point of view. Since there is potential legal litigation, I cannot answer all of your questions.

OU athletics officials have publicly stated you were dismissed as the women's basketball coach for "indications of conduct and behavior...that "if true" could be malfeasance and materially adversely affect the orderly or efficient operation of the wbb program". What is your reaction to the statement?

Francis: I am unaware of any malfeasance on my part or any actions taken by me that "could materially adversely affect the orderly or efficient operation" of the program. My team has always been in the 90th-100th percentile of Women's D1 Basketball with regard to academic performance and graduation rates. Last year we ranked # 11 of 349 schools with a GPA average of 3.5. We had no arrests, no team GPA issues, no APR/eligibility issues. I am extremely proud of my players and our team.

It seemed strange to us that the statement included "if true" when referring to these indications of conduct and behavior. What was your reaction to the phrase "if true"? What exactly does that mean? It sounds almost as though the University isn't sure you've done anything wrong.

Francis: I don't know what it means, either. As I said above, I do not think I did anything that would amount to "malfeasance". Nor have I been given any information which would suggest otherwise.

In a statement that addressed the university community, OU's Interim Pres. Betty Youngblood specifically addressed these allegations. It said: "I want to assure you that protecting the freedom of religious, cultural, political and other forms of expression has been and always will be a high priority at Oakland. At the same time, we hold the freedom from the imposition of others' views is equally crucial. As soon as the allegations of religious discrimination came to light, the university acted swiftly to investigate. The University did not tolerate such conduct and will not tolerate such conduct moving forward." What are your thoughts on this statement?

Francis: I also believe that "protecting the freedom of religious, cultural, political and other forms of expression" should be a high priority, and I conducted myself accordingly. I never engaged in religious discrimination of any kind and as far as I am aware there have never been any findings to the contrary. Two years ago I was asked by the AD not to pray in the locker room with the players before games and to let the players select the movies shown on bus trips. I complied and never heard of another issue until now.

A former OU WBB player has gone on the record with us, as well as local media, with allegations that you favored athletes who shared your Christian values and infringed on the religious beliefs of non-Christians. What's your



view on these complaints.

Francis: That is totally inaccurate. Players played in games based on the player's performance in practice. No one played more than someone else because of their faith or their church attendance. Obviously we would not have been a successful program if religion were the criteria. I never engaged in religious discrimination and there is zero evidence to support that.

Personnel files show that prior to being dismissed, you routinely received positive reviews, regular raises, and bonuses based on the academic performance of your players. You posted a great win-loss record in 13 seasons with OU and led the Golden Grizzlies to the NCAA tournament twice in your tenure. In other words, you were pretty good. Did you see this coming?

Francis: No

When and how did you first learn that you might be dismissed?

Francis: I was sent an email to report to the campus general counsel office.

Were you given an opportunity to respond?

Francis: They gave me 'topics' that they said they were investigating, to which I responded to the best of my ability. I was not given any specific incidents to respond to.

Shortly before the beginning of the 12-13 season, you revealed that you were a victim of sexual child abuse by your father. You have become an advocate for victims of sexual abuse, and the

TIMELINE

April 2013: OU begins an internal investigation of Francis.

May 2013: Francis is suspended.

June 12, 2013: Gary Russi, president of OU and husband of Francis, resigns. Two hours later Francis' dismissal is announced by the university.

November, 2013: Francis' attorney, Deborah Gordan, sues OU for Francis' unredacted personnel file. Judge Martha Anderson rules the university must provide Francis with the file.

United States Basketball Writers Association gave you its 'Most Courageous' Award. Was your decision to go public connected to the university's decision to dismiss you as coach?

Francis: No comment.

How would you characterize your relationship with (Greg) Kampe?

Francis: No comment.

Do you think he played any role in your dismissal?

Francis: I cannot comment on that.

What about Tracy Huth?

Francis: I cannot comment on that either.

You have indicated you want to focus on future endeavors and 'on making a difference.' What are these efforts?

Francis: I look forward to future speaking engagements. I will continue to be an advocate for survivors of rape, sexual assault and childhood sexual abuse.

We've heard you're considering a run for public office. Do you have any plans to aspire to a political career?

Francis: Maybe someday. Not right now. I am a big advocate for women to run for leadership positions and to get involved in public service.

In your view, why were you dismissed?

Francis: I cannot comment.

Scott Wolchek is editor of The Oakland Post

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due to factual errors by the author.

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due to factual errors by the author.

Grizzlies hibernate for two more days

As a new semester begins, Oakland University closes during polar vortex

Jon Davis
Photo Editor

1. Due to the unusual amount of snowfall, OU used bulldozers to clear the parking lots.
2. Although most students moved back to their dorms Sunday, Jan. 5, the Oakland Center was closed Jan. 6-7.
3. A bicycle sits outside O'Dowd Hall with its front wheel nearly covered in snow.
4. The few vehicles that remain in P1 were immobilized by the dense snow.
5. Kresge Library, such as other campus facilities, was closed during the storm and reopened Jan. 8.



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Jon Davis / The Oakland Post

The presidential search committee discusses possible candidates, but the big question everyone wants to know is "when will we have a new president?"

Looking for a leader

Search team now includes 'every constituency'

Oona Goodin-Smith
Staff Reporter

It is no secret that Gary Russi left some big shoes to fill when he retired from his 18-year reign as Oakland University President August 2013. However, at a meeting Dec. 9, the university's Board of Trustees strengthened the national quest for our newest leader with the announcement of four new additions to the Ad Hoc Presidential Search Committee.

The newest members, including Student Body President Brandon Hanna, Professor of physics Andrei Slavin, Registrar Steven Shablin, and Associate Professor of marketing Janell Townsend, "represent every constituency now," according to Trustee Richard DeVore.

"I'm very excited and look forward to representing the student body as the official student representative on the Presidential Search Committee," Hanna said. "It gives me the opportunity to best voice student concerns and opinions during the selection process of the new president of Oakland University."

Slavin, a published author and chair of the physics department; Shablin, OU's Registrar since 1998 and senator for the AP Assembly; and Townsend, an associate professor of marketing and international

business with a Ph.D. in philosophy from Michigan State University, help to further diversify the committee, originally established on October 7.

"I think any good committee should be made up of a wide spectrum of voices to get the fairest representation possible," Japanese major and OU junior Mitchell Johnson said. "Oakland has done a good job with this."

During the meeting, the board also approved R. William Funk & Associates as the Presidential Search Firm, which will assist the Ad Hoc Presidential Search Committee in the search for the university's next President.

With the formation of the search committee off to a promising start, the inevitable question remains: when will we have our new president?

While the future remains clouded, we can look to the past for clues.

At the University of Idaho, a public university similar in enrollment and make-up to OU, President Duane Nellis accepted an offer at Texas Tech in March of 2013, leaving an opening for U of I's top administrative role.

After a search committee was finalized in April 2013, the list of finalists for the position was compiled by mid-September and the new president, Dr. Chuck Staben, was announced on November 18.

If OU follows in the University of Idaho's footsteps, Grizzlies could be looking at a new president in a matter of months.

Students continue to remain optimistic on the future of Oakland University and its leadership.

"There are lots of good things on the horizon for Oakland with the various construction projects that Interim President Youngblood has done a great job overseeing," Christian Jones, a senior and communication major said. "With these additions, I hope the new president can lead Oakland through the next chapter of our school's story as we start competing with programs at larger universities."



Photo courtesy of News at OU / The Oakland

Student dies in two-car collision

Friends, family, and faculty honor Maya Michelle Horton's life

Oona Goodin-Smith
Staff Reporter

Oakland University suffered a loss when a car accident on the night of December 12 claimed the life of 19-year-old psychology major Maya Michelle Horton.

The Clinton Township sophomore's 2001 Ford Taurus was struck at 8:13 p.m. as she tried to cross eastbound Metropolitan Parkway from Union Lake Road in Harrison Township as she was attempting to go west near her house, Macomb County Sheriff Anthony Wickersham told The Macomb Daily.

Horton was taken to McLaren Macomb Hospital in Mount Clemens where she was pronounced dead.

The 2012 L'Anse Creuse graduate also worked in the Office of International Students and Scholars on campus.

"She was just a beautiful person both inside and outside. She was very loving, very caring and just a very genuine person," said ISSO Assistant Director

Petra Knoche told News at OU.

Horton had many responsibilities in the ISSO, including administrative work, assisting international students with questions and requests, and helping to coordinate various events, according to News at OU.

"I knew Maya for a little bit while she worked here," said her friend and co-worker Kialli Curtis. "We both started around the same time. She was a really fun person and always made work fun and light even when it wasn't. She was a really down-to-earth-person."

Co-worker and friend Eva Hill agreed. "No matter the situation, she always kept it fun. She stayed in our apartment between classes. She was determined and outspoken, very outspoken."

"She was a very hard worker and we loved having her in the office," Knoche told News. "She will be in our thoughts and prayers and everyone in the ISSO will truly miss her."

The 50-year-old driver of the car that hit Horton

"showed signs that he was intoxicated and was arrested on the spot," according to Wickersham.

He could be charged with operating a vehicle while intoxicated or operating a vehicle while intoxicated causing death, punishable by up to 15 years in prison.

Kelly Allen, school spokeswoman for L'Anse Creuse High School told The Macomb Daily that the entire student body and staff are saddened by the tragedy.

"Our staff is so close to our students and Maya was so young," Allen said. "Our students go ahead and do amazing things but her life was cut short."

Horton was also engaged. "She was getting married and we were all excited for her," said Curtis.

"I know that she overcame a lot of obstacles in life and handled it all with a lot of grace," said Knoche. "She was a very strong person."

A service for Maya was held on Wednesday, Dec. 18, at Andrews & Hardy Funeral Home in Detroit.

Proving grounds on the gridiron

Football club's Chris Harris finalist for NFL contest



Courtesy of OU Football Club

The winners for the "Together We Make Football" contest will be announced in the next two weeks during the NFL Divisional and Conference Championship game on Fox.

Matt Saulino
Staff Reporter

Chris Harris, 33, a defensive lineman of Oakland's first-year football club, is a finalist for the NFL's "Together We Make Football" contest.

Winning would send Harris to February's Super Bowl XLVIII in New Jersey. The winners will be announced in the next two weeks during the NFC Divisional and Conference Championship game on Fox.

After seeing a commercial for the contest on NFL Network, Harris, a graduate student, wasted no time typing up his entry.

"I knew early on I had a gift for football. My dad, my brothers, my uncles, we would go outside and play," Harris said in his video bid for the contest.

Hardships

Harris weighed 500 pounds in high school and was bullied because of it. "The downfall of my high school life was when I found out how easy it was to just walk out the door," Harris said in the video. "I just walked out of school and nobody stopped me and nobody said anything."

That door led Harris down a dark alley of depression and alcoholism, which led to him becoming suicidal, as well. Things began to look up once Harris' mom saw a flier for the semi-pro team Motor City Cougars and their tryouts.

"I couldn't see myself living to even be 20," Harris said. "In 2004, my mom had seen something in the newspaper looking for football players. She called

them and told them that I'm coming. It gave me something to live for."

But again in 2008, Harris encountered more hardships.

"My cousin was murdered and it was right around the time my grandfather had passed, it took me to a really dark place," Harris said in an interview with My TV20 Detroit.

Progression

Football helped Harris fight through obstacles and keep going. Once Harris began studying to get his masters in counseling in OU's graduate school, he came across a flyer about Oakland starting up a club team.

"He wanted to become an officer, and he wanted to do everything he could to get the club started," club adviser and wide receiver Nic Bongers said in Harris' video. "He always wants the next chance to get better."

"I think it's great, I mean he's come a long way," said Football Club quarterback Brandon Tucker. "I think we all have noticed that being with him around Oakland."

"And I mean he's a good role model for me, because he's always talking to us, hyping us up, giving us a lot of supportive info and stuff like that. I really hope he does get this chance to go to the Super Bowl, and it'd be a great experience for him and he's definitely well-deserving."

Harris already feels like a winner for just being able to tell his story, and his goal as a counseling student is to help people find their saving grace.

"Any time I got really down, football would come knocking," he said. "And that's why I love football."

Run, Oakland, Run

Grizzlies lace up to tag along the running craze

Oona Goodin-Smith
Staff Reporter

Despite below-freezing temperatures and snowy conditions on Thanksgiving morning, OU engineering student Khanh Bui braced himself behind the start line of the 2013 Turkey Trot 10K race, held in downtown Detroit.

"I was tired after, and the cold made it so much worse," said Bui, 19, of his first-ever running event. "But I also felt really satisfied. Six miles was a big accomplishment for me."

Bui was far from the exception that day. The race, held annually, boasted its highest enrollment in its 31-year history, with over 22,000 registered runners and 19,500 finishers participating in its themed events including the namesake Turkey Trot 10K, Stuffing Strut 5K, Mashed Potato Mile and the newly-added 10 mile Drumstick Double.

Harder, Better

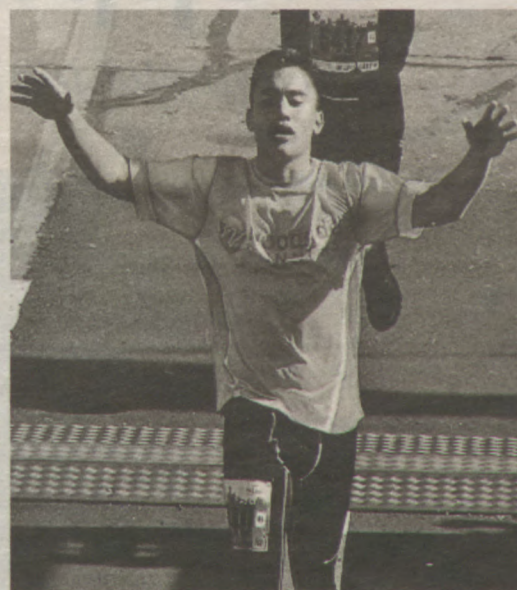
The sport of running in America has grown exponentially over the past decade, enjoying an 80% increase in race participation since 2000, according to reports from runningusa.org. In the past year alone, the number of running events in the US totaled 26,370, an all-time high.

"The demographic seems to be pretty evenly spread when it comes to running," said Jeremy (last name withheld), the manager of the Troy New Balance store, a sponsor of the Turkey Trot. "Sales [in running footwear and apparel] have definitely peaked this year, though."

Running USA refers to this immense growth as "The Second Running Boom," and attributes the newfound interest in the sport to "new, fun, hip events and running series," among others.

"The Second Running Boom" appears to be taking over Oakland University, too, as more students and first-time runners have decided to lace up and take the step to sign up for races.

"I'm not a runner and didn't practice at all beforehand," Bui said. "My



Courtesy of Khanh Bui

Khanh Bui at this past year's Turkey Trot in Detroit.

sister had to talk me into it. I felt great after."

Faster, Stronger

Senior Charlie Lapastora can relate to the feeling of accomplishment involved in completing a race. After making the decision to run this October's Detroit Free Press Marathon last April to benefit deprived children in India and Thailand, the OU communication major trained for six months in preparation for the event.

"It's such a cool feeling to be able to say I ran 26.2 miles even though I'm not a runner," said Lapastora. "Each step was a step of faith, and when I crossed the finish line, it was probably one of the most fulfilling moments of my life."

Lapastora, who ran with his friend in his marathon, stressed the importance of running with others. "When you're training with people, you develop close friendships," he said. "You can relate to the struggle."

Bui agreed. "I'm really glad I had my sister there to push me," he said of the Turkey Trot. "Now I can see myself keeping up with running. I think it'll help keep me in better shape and I actually wake up early to run now. I feel so much more confident in myself knowing that I can run long distances," he said. "It was a really cool experience and I can see why more people are participating in things like this."

Stepping up their game

OU Football Club's Overton, Tucker push for semi-pro league play

Jake Alsko
Sports Editor

Reginald Overton and Brandon Tucker of the Oakland University Football Club are vying to play semi-professional football this spring in the Continental Indoor Football League.

Overton has secured a roster spot on the Saginaw Sting as a defensive back/wide receiver while Tucker is still competing to make the Port Huron Patriots final roster at the same two positions. Overton played wide receiver/defensive back for the Grizzlies this past year while Tucker played quarterback/defensive back.

"The tryout was on Dec. 7, and I didn't even decide on doing it until the day before," Overton said. "The club team had originally planned on playing a game down in Florida, but that fell through and I figured I'd give it a shot since I had the time off."

Saginaw's training camp opens Jan. 20, and Overton said that the Sting are giving him a chance to compete for a starting job.

"Things happen so quick in arena football so I'd imagine the coaches see me as a potential physical corner to throw off the timing for opposing offenses," he said.

"If I make the roster and I sign my contract, I'm not going to accept any money because I want to play next year at Oakland."

Brandon Tucker
OU Football Club

Tucker's tale

Port Huron's tryouts were originally supposed to run from Jan. 5-9, but the team was forced to cancel the first two days due to the inclement weather conditions, according to Tucker.

The Patriots runs a spread offense similar to what Oakland ran this year, so Tucker doesn't anticipate a particularly difficult transition if he makes the team.



Photo courtesy of OU Football Club



Jake Alsko / The Oakland Post

"They ran it at Oakland, so I'm pretty familiar with it," he said. "Especially (since) I'll be wide receiver. So it's going to be hard, going to be more one-on-one kind of stuff, but I think I'll be fine with that."

Overture of Overton

Overton is finishing up graduate school this semester, so he may be finished playing for OU, but he'd "love to coach and help the team out in any way" if he remains in the area once he completes his degree.

However, Tucker plans to be back.

"I'm supposed to get paid," he said. "But if I make the roster and I sign my contract, I'm not going to accept any money because I want to play next year at Oakland."

Overton said the minimum pay for the CIFL was \$50 a week, while Tucker said the highest-paid players can make several hundred dollars a week.

The Patriots finished 4-6 in 2013 while the Sting went 9-3, losing to the Erie Explosion in the CIFL Championship 37-36. The CIFL's season begins Feb. 3.

The OU Football Club finished its inaugural 2013 season with a 5-2 record with two wins coming by way of forfeit.

The OU Football Club will continue to practice throughout the offseason and officially take to the field in the fall.

Contact Sports Editor Jake Alsko at sports@oaklandpostonline.com

(TOP) Reginald Overton on-field during an OU Club Football game. Overton has secured a spot as a defensive back/wide receiver on the Saginaw Sting, a semi-pro team in the Continental Indoor Football League.

(BOTTOM) Brandon Tucker tried out for the Port Huron Patriots, also a team in the CIFL. Tucker, who played as quarterback and defensive back for OU last year, tried out as a wide receiver for the Patriots.



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Mouthing Off

SATIRE

The wrath of Hercules

Brian Figurski
Copy Editor/ Domsday prepper

Welcome back to class, Grizzlies. Yes, 2014 arrived and brought a demonic snow catastrophe and subzero temperatures.

Some are calling it a polar vortex. Some have vowed it to be the great Roland Emmerich comeback film. Some have already casted Jake Gyllenhaal as the lead for "Snowpocalypse 2: The Night Before The Day After Tomorrow."

Call it whatever you want, as

we're all kind of meteorologists in that, as undergrads, our degrees are nonexistent in relation to our jobs. I call it... Motherpunchin' snow day!

It seems that most of metro Detroit anticipated a standstill. Grocery stores' shelves were practically raided clean of milk, eggs and bread, like this storm would include a hibernation of my real father proportions.

If you are preparing for the apocalypse, thank you for a decent parking spot in P1 for The First Day of Class: The Day After The First Day of Class.



Haley Kotwicki/The Oakland Post
Heeeeere's Brian! Brian Figurski re-enacts the frozen from "The Shining."

Yes, Oakland University canceled Monday's classes on Sunday. As if you were planning on actually coming to class anyway.

And then on top of that, OU canceled the second day of the semester due to the bitter chill of negative degree weather! Two snow days? Unprecedented!

It actually deserved to bear the ridiculous title The First

The views expressed in Mouthing Off do not necessarily represent those of The Oakland Post.

Day of Class III: The First Day After the Day That Never Came Present Future Viking Blood Hurricane. It'll somehow make more money than the first two.

Back on point, I wanted to stock up for the coming storm. Meijer was like Black Friday for the paranoid cryophobic, which I never knew was a reasonable term for so many people, or was a term before I used Google 20 seconds ago.

I stocked up on cereal, because frankly, seven boxes of Cheerios in the basement-turned-blizzard bomb shelter never makes sense. Why was I so fretful?

But, I think we all need to chill out. There will be no plow pushing frozen corpses into burial pits. There'll be a day after tomorrow. It'll be playing on TBS.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

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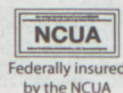
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