

## Hillel and NAACP host 'speed-friending' event

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traveled to Selma, Montgomery and Birmingham, Ala., to learn about the relationship between blacks and Jews during the Civil Rights Era.

Through lectures before the trip, visiting Martin Luther King, Jr.'s church, walking the route of the bus boycott and touring a synagogue that was bombed because of a rabbi's involvement in the fight for racial equality, students from seemingly disparate backgrounds saw first-hand how interconnected their histories actually are, according to College senior Dan Ross, who went on the program his freshman year.

"Being a Jew with Southern roots, it was going back to where I'm from and looking at it in a new perspective," he said. "It was special to see that my people were involved with this great movement for justice."

While Ross said he learned and grew personally from the trip, he knows the coalition between the two communities is bigger than his own

experience.

"The black-Jewish alliance used to be significantly stronger than it is today," he said. "We're looking for a stronger relationship in the future."

Because of this unique, shared history, students remain committed to nurturing the relationship with events like last night's and the ASB trip.

"There are common themes in their histories that trace back historically and that make this collaboration happen at Penn," said College senior and Hillel President Deena Greenberg, who also has participated in the program, adding that she hopes last night's event was "one of many future events to continue our collaboration and cooperation."

"We have to recognize our connections and to understand each other's histories," said College senior Asantewaa Poku, NAACP vice president of executive affairs. "While dialogue and talking about race relations is really important, it's also just good to come together and make friends."

## 'Musicians on Call' members perform for hospital patients

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unique because they're at the bedside," said Kim Winnick, director of marketing at WXP. "Patients really respond to the personal nature of these performances — there's an intimate, one-on-one connection."

WXP's Musicians on Call program is a branch of the larger Musicians on Call organization, founded in 1999 in New York City.

When musicians Michael Solomon and Vivek Tiwary found that some hospital patients were unable to attend their regular performances, they began traveling from room to room, playing for patients who couldn't attend the concerts. They created Musicians on Call after receiving praise from hospital patients and staff.

"You can feel this magic happen, where — whatever's going on — it just got a little better," Solomon said.

Over the past ten years, the group has spread to Philadelphia and Nashville and now helps volunteer musicians play for over 1,000 people per week in 20 different hospitals.

In 2004, the organization partnered with WXP to reach patients at HUP, and recently has expanded to serve four different area hospitals.

WXP now calls on a list of about 30 musicians to perform weekly at well-attended

events.

"This is just a very human endeavor," said local musician Dave Falcone, who is part of Musicians on Call. "They touch us as much as we touch them."

The organization has grown fast. Since 1999, the group's musicians have played for over 100,000 patients around the country.

According to Winnick, the organization aims to expand to more cities and hospitals. It hosts several fundraising concerts each year featuring artists ranging from Miranda Cosgrove to Yo-Yo Ma.

In addition to its in-hospital events, Musicians on Call runs a "CD Pharmacy" program, which distributes donated CDs and CD players to patients in need of entertainment.

"This particular program has been a real godsend to many of the kids," said Richard O'Reilly, chairman of pediatrics at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Hospital. "It brought children out who were really very, very quiet. It really makes for a more positive experience."

Lynn Schuchter, chief of hematology at HUP, was also impressed with the organization's success.

"To have somebody come in and connect with [the patients] through music is incredibly healing and incredibly powerful," she said.

## Getting advice for study abroad at Penn

*Students discuss experiences abroad at Weigle Commons*

By **TRISHULA PATEL**

Contributing Writer

Last night, Weigle Information Commons was transformed into a global landscape that spanned countries as far apart as China, Latvia, Botswana and New Zealand.

Visitors collected their "passports" at the entrance to the Student Experiences Abroad 2009 event, which gave them access to different countries located in the various rooms of the Commons.

With an international buffet, cake-cutting ceremony and raffle draw, the area was buzzing as prospective study abroad students chatted with the presenters, who had been asked to discuss their own experiences abroad.

Every one of the presenters agreed their time abroad had been "awesome" and were voracious in their descriptions of the great times they had, both socially and academically.

College junior Brandon Gollotti and College senior Jared Kassan, both of whom studied in England for a semester, said they felt they had gained more of an international experience than they would have spending the semester at Penn.

Kassan added that the students at the London School



Ted Koutsoubas/DP Senior Photographer

Penn Abroad and Penn Libraries held a joint event at Weigle Information Commons where former and potential study abroad students discussed their experiences.

of Economics and Political Science where he was based were "a lot more aware of what was going on in the world" than the natives of his California homeland.

Gollotti said being abroad lent him a greater understanding of how foreigners view the U.S., which added to his own sense of identity as an American.

And the European countries are certainly not the only prom-

ising study-abroad options.

Michael Steele-Eytle, representative for the "beautiful" islands of Trinidad and Tobago, encouraged students to consider studying in the Caribbean, especially those interested in ecology or cultural and ethnic studies.

Pat Martin, associate director of Penn Abroad, strongly emphasized the all-around benefits of Study Abroad.

"The personal growth, maturity, independence and confidence that Penn Abroad returnees showed was a reflection of how self-enriching the program can be if you are flexible and open to understanding and adapting to new situations," she said.

As College senior Shanelah Verna, who studied in Seville, Spain, put it: "Being in Spain was like being in America, but better!"

## Stimulus could help higher ed

**STIMULUS** from page 1

many indirect ways."

The most direct benefit is making college more affordable for many Americans, he explained.

"What's important is that the government is trying to act progressively to fix the clog in the credit system," he

said.

"Penn has a lot of resources, but public institutions are getting hammered and looking at a bleak picture because students can't get loans."

Another direct benefit higher education might see from the bill is further funding for infrastructure repair at educational institutions.

"There will be a nice chunk of change allocated for colleges to renovate their buildings," Miller said.

"Penn is on a rebuilding mania," he continued, "Philadelphia is doing cartwheels over it. If Penn can get in on

the money offered by this bill, it could really get going with some more of these large-scale projects."

He stressed that the indirect benefits will be "just as significant — if not more so."

The legislation includes new policies to hold K-12 teachers more accountable, which will result in curriculum changes.

"Certainly within a year or two, we will feel these effects in changes to teacher training and recruitment," Miller added.

While he said it would be

hard to predict specifically what the bill will do for Penn, Bill Andresen, associate vice president of federal affairs, noted it is "excellent for higher education in general."

"Besides freeing up money for student loans, we will see significant increases in research dollars, and Penn has traditionally been able to take money from those accounts," he said.

The bill will move on to the Senate on Monday, and, according to Andresen, "will hopefully be on the President's desk by President's Day."

## U. drafts plan to help environment

**CLIMATE** from page 1

addition to faculty and administration, several students also sit on ESAC, including members of the Undergraduate Assembly and Penn Environmental Group.

The committee is composed of six subcommittees — academic, built environment, energy and utilities, waste management and recycling, transportation and communications — organized around the topics most critical to reducing Penn's

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carbon footprint, according to Facilities and Real Estate Vice President Anne Papageorge.

"When I went to college, there was one outlet on either side of the wall," said sustainability coordinator Dan Garofalo. "Our office equipment is so much more dense than what it used to be." He added that small actions, like not keeping electronics plugged in after they're fully-charged, make a big difference.

Penn is among those at the forefront of the 500 schools that have signed the commitment. Its draft includes recommendations to manage energy more efficiently

through monitoring real-time campus consumption at a centrally-located command center, to continue to plan new buildings and renovations that meet LEED standards — a national benchmark to determine environmental friendliness — and to increase use of renewable energy like wind power, of which Penn is a lead purchaser in the nation.

In addition to the plan, the school is looking at everything from installing light sensors in libraries to save energy, to insulating underground pipes to finding ways to encourage people to use alternative sources of transportation.

Penn is also working to make many of the changes more opaque — students shouldn't have to feel a drop

in temperature when a room is using less energy, Garofalo said.

"When I got to Penn several years ago, none of this was happening," said College senior and PEG member Michael Poll, who currently sits on ESAC. "To see that the University has taken a stance that prioritizes this important issue is really encouraging."

"No matter what we do as humans, the earth will eventually be fine — it may, however, kick us out in the process," Poll said, explaining why students should care about the issues. "We as a generation are establishing our own fate by our decisions, and particularly as members of a university, it's our responsibility to lead."

## Members of LGBT community question U. health care

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hormone injections and lab tests, and sometimes prosthetics, hair removal and mental-health services.

Each individual procedure falls under the term "transition-related care" and may be covered by health insurance, but not

when one — supposedly transgendered — person requires all at once, she said.

"Because of the way exceptions are written, very often trans people get excluded from gender-specific care," Keisling added.

For example, she said, some transgendered people may at

times require both a mammogram and a prostate exam. Their policies, which would normally cover each procedure on its own, claim these exams are "transgender related," and thus they refuse to cover either.

Lambda Alliance chairman and College junior Dennie Zastrow called failing to cover the costs of the procedure "a perfect example of the discrimination the community still faces."

But Division of Human Resources spokeswoman Terri Ryan disagreed that the policy was discriminatory.

She wrote in an e-mail that, because the procedure is denied to all plan participants, it is not in violation of the nondiscrimination policy, which guarantees the same coverage "regardless of race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, color, national or ethnic origin, age, disability or [veteran status]."

She added that through a survey, Penn determined that few other Ivy League universities cover the surgery.

Mercer, one of Penn's consulting firms, estimated that about 2.3 percent of employers cover the procedure, based on data col-

lected in October and November 2007 by the International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans.

Still, Ryan said Penn must strike a balance between the most extensive coverage possible and the need to control costs. She added that the cost of including reassignment surgery in the current insurance plan would be substantial.

Cross disagreed. She said the cost of treating the severe depression or suicidal tendencies associated with some patients amounts to more than that of the procedure. Although Lambda has no concrete plans in place to address the issue, Zastrow said the group has discussed bringing the greater issue of campus climate to the Undergraduate Assembly and intends to focus largely on transgender-related issues throughout the semester.

"It is a critical time in our country for individuals in need of health insurance coverage," said School of Law lecturer Stacey Sobel. "Transgender people deserve the same access to ensure that their health care needs are covered as any other employee."

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