Shippy peer educator at KU

The University of Kansas' Learning Communities program announced its 23 peer educators for fall 2007. The peer educators, including Melissa Shippy, senior in humanities, international studies and microbiology, and graduate of Maize High School, are KU students who serve as academic resources and mentors to help first-year KU students adjust to campus life.

Among the benefits of Learning Communities are key interaction with faculty, as well as a supportive network of other students, peer educators and professors and supplemental learning opportunities in the classroom and the Lawrence community.

Each Learning Communities group typically consists of about 20 students enrolled in two courses and a seminar that focuses on a particular theme. Each group has its own faculty facilitator with coordination assistance from the peer educator.

Students enroll, then are assigned to specific Learning Communities based on their major, courses they take or experiences related to the overall theme of the communities. For fall 2007, 21 communities are available to incoming freshmen and there are offerings for upper-level students. Courses can be used to fulfill requirements in most professional schools at KU.

Learning Communities are either residential or nonresidential. In the case of residential courses, the participants and peer educator live on the same floor in student housing designated for the Learning Communities program. Students in nonresidential Learning Communities can live either on or off campus, and the peer educator arranges meeting times for study groups and social activities.

Shippy is the daughter of Chet and Judith Shippy.
University: Deficiencies led to release of student records

TOPEKA (AP) — A breach of about 600 students' privacy occurred at the University of Kansas last month because its math department didn't follow standard policies for destroying discarded documents, officials have concluded.

But the university said Friday it had corrected the problems and had notified students and staff whose personal information was included in the documents.

The problems in handling documents became known when someone mailed documents anonymously to three newspapers. The packets came with letters saying the papers had come from either the department or the university's recycling center.

It was the second report of such a privacy breach in two months.

The records included what appeared to be graded exams, job applications, change-of-grade forms, class rosters, seating charts and copies of health insurance cards and immigration forms, according to editors at the newspapers. Many contained Social Security or other identifying information, and a few contained credit card numbers, the university said.

"As best as we can tell, there were a variety of things that happened," said spokesman Jack Martin. "It just appeared to be a situation where the policies were not followed with regards to destroying documents."
Philanthropist Oldfather dies

LAWRENCE AP) — A Lawrence woman who donated 4 million dollars to establish the Douglas County Community Foundation has died at age 88.

Hortense Oldfather died late Tuesday at a Kansas City hospice. The cause of death wasn't announced.

Oldfather moved to Lawrence from Milwaukee in 1950 when her husband joined the University of Kansas law faculty. Her husband, Charles Oldfather Jr., died in 1996.

A foundation officer says Oldfather received an inheritance in the 1970s that came largely from her father's early involvement in the Pioneer Hi-Bred Corn Company in Iowa.

The Oldfathers donated millions of dollars to community organizations and to the University of Kansas. Their gift established Oldfather Studios, which houses the university's film department.
Caldwell honorees

Caldwell High School students were awarded dictionaries for their academic achievements by the University of Kansas on Wednesday night, Sept. 19, 2007. Those honored were, Abbey Bannister, pictured at left, and Hayley Bruey.

Teresa Lee photo
TOO RACY FOR HALLOWEEN?

Johnson Co. case may inspire local costume review

BY DEB GRUVER
The Wichita Eagle

Many people gravitate toward the wild side at Halloween — naughty nurse or flasher costume, anyone? — but a grand jury in Johnson County recently decided that four costumes went too far.

The grand jury ruled the costumes — stocked where children could see them — were obscene. On Wednesday, however, Johnson County District Attorney Phill Kline agreed not to pursue the case against Overland Park's Spirit Halloween store.

Wichita has two Spirit Halloween stores, which carry the costumes in question. Most of the costumes also are pictured on the company's Web site.

Jan Beemer, president of Operation Southwind, the
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The group discussed the costumes at its last meeting, Beemer said.

"It's on our agenda," she said. "I'm sure we'll go check it out." Tiffany Coloka, the owner of Wichita's Spirit Halloween store, said adult-oriented costumes are behind the counter and should be covered, much like adult magazines are at some stores.

While she said people should have open minds about Halloween, "I have three children. I can understand if somebody came in and their child saw something that was inappropriate. (Costumes) like that should be behind the counter and should say 'Adults Only,' and adults should ask to see them."

Tyler Garretson, who represented the Overland Park Spirit Halloween store, said the store agreed to move the costumes in question to a back storage room. Adult customers can ask for them by name, he said. The costumes already had been marked “Adults Only,” he said.

Spirit Halloween has about 550 stores across the nation. They are typically open an average of seven weeks each year. Kevin Mahoney, general counsel for the company, said Spirit Halloween has no plans to make changes at any stores except in Overland Park.

Beemer said it's not in Operation Southwind's plans at this time to petition for a grand jury investigation about costumes. But if the group finds costumes obscene, it could decide to do so, she said.

An anti-pornography group, the Kansas City chapter of the National Coalition for the Protection of Children and Families, organized petitions in the Johnson County cases, which also included indictments against two sexually oriented businesses last month.

Defining obscenity

What's obscene is definitely subjective, said Richard Levy, J.B. Smith distinguished professor in constitutional law at the University of Kansas.

"There's more explicit sexual material readily available" because of the Internet, he said. "That reality affects the contemporary community standards."

There's a three-part test for obscenity, he explained:

- The dominant theme of the work (in this case, a costume) as a whole has to appeal to the prurient interest.
- It has to have patently offensive depictions or descriptions of sexual conduct that's judged by community standards to be obscene.
- It must be lacking in serious artistic, literary, scientific or social value.

There's no legal definition of community standards, Levy noted.

"It's more, 'This is what the jury thought,'" he said.

Levy also noted that a grand jury is only a charging body.

"Its determination would not be binding on the jury (hearing the case)," he said. "The defense would have an opportunity to respond with evidence to counter the community standards being asserted by the prosecution in a case like this."

The costumes in question ranged from a "snake charmer" that features a serpent in the crotch area to one involving a sheep.

Levy said that if you put the same costumes in an adult shop, "it probably would be nothing."

"An interesting question would be suppose somebody is wearing one of those costumes in public and they are arrested for indecency," he said. "That would make for a pretty interesting First Amendment case."

Risque has its place

Halloween is a time to express yourself in a way you normally wouldn't feel comfortable doing, said two Wichita State University students.

Theodora Stevens, a junior, said she and her friends usually gravitate toward the risque side at Halloween.

"The excuse is we can only do this once a year," she said.

Stevens said she and her friends have dressed as naughty nurses and "soldier girls." An '80s-themed costume had them wearing fishnets.

Stevens did say that she considers who will be at a Halloween party when she's choosing a costume.

Such costumes would not be appropriate at a public party where children or teens might be present, she said.

"You have to do it around people who will accept it," she said.

A.J. Crust, also a junior, said he doesn't dress up as much as his friends do at Halloween.

"A lot of my friends do go all out," he said. "A lot of times it is something that might be construed as a little too sexual.

"I think it is important to realize that if you're going to be wearing the costume around children, that is an issue," he said. "If you're out trick-or-treating on the road, that's a problem. But if you're going to a private party, it shouldn't be an issue."

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KCP&L chief says coal needed in state’s mix

Associated Press

LAWRENCE – A regional utility’s top executive acknowledged the dangers of global warming and promoted conservation Thursday, but he said coal-fired power plants still will be needed to satisfy rising demands for energy.

Bill Downey, president and chief executive for Kansas City Power & Light Co., spoke during a conference where two Kansas scientists also outlined potential problems that climate change could cause. They include hotter summers and shorter crop-growing seasons in western Kansas, they said.

Discussions at the University of Kansas conference were timely because of a debate over proposed coal-fired power plants in Kansas and Missouri.

Environmentalists worry about coal plants’ potential emissions of carbon dioxide, which most scientists see as a major contributor to global warming.

In Kansas, Sunflower Electric Power Corp. is seeking a state air-quality permit for its $3.6 billion plan to build two-coal fired plants in southwest Kansas. In Missouri, KCP&L is building a coal-fired plant northwest of Kansas City but promised environmentalists in March to develop wind power and energy conservation programs.

Downey said helping consumers reduce their energy use shows great promise but demand will still require higher energy production, including electricity from coal-fired plants.

Technology to make coal burn cleaner and to capture and store carbon dioxide is an important part of reducing CO2 emissions, he said.

“Coal, oil and natural gas will remain indispensable,” he said. “It’s a hard truth that a rapidly growing world economy will require large increases in energy supplies over the next quarter-century.”

According to federal statistics, the U.S. generates almost half of its electricity from coal-fired plants, and Kansas and Missouri rely even more heavily on them.

Three-quarters of Kansas’ electricity comes from coal-fired plants, while the figure is 85 percent for Missouri.

The federal government expects Americans’ demand for energy to grow over the next several decades, and Downey said KCP&L’s experiences back up that assumption.
Campaign seeks to curb students' debt

Groups urge colleges to impose restraints on the marketing of credit cards on campus.

By PAUL WENSKE
The Kansas City Star

Campus credit-card marketers are out of control and entrapping students into years of debt, say a national consumer group and a coalition of college officials and student leaders.

Students lacking financial savvy are barraged by credit-card offers starting their freshman year, said Becky Timmons, an official with the American Council on Education. She spoke at a news conference Wednesday in Washington.

Led by the consumer group U.S. PIRG, the coalition launched a national campaign to pressure colleges to halt a trend they say is increasingly burying students under credit-card debt that averages $2,000 to $4,000 and haunts students long after graduation.

They want colleges to adopt principles banning freebies and blocking credit-card issuers from obtaining lists of student names. They would also create more financial education courses and prohibit credit-card issuers from negotiating marketing deals with student groups. The campaign is financed by the Ford Foundation.

Banking and credit-card officials, however, said Wednesday that credit cards — used responsibly — are a good way for students to learn about handling credit wisely.

The consumer and education groups insist that they are not against credit cards. But they maintain that offers of gifts, meals and trips make them too alluring. They say students sign up for the cards and find out too late that they carry huge interest rates and high fees.

University of Kansas sophomore Francesca Chambers of Paola agreed that there is a risk that students can end up deep in debt by using credit cards to pay for housing, books and other necessities. But Chambers said a credit card also came in useful when her financial aid was delayed.

The University of Kansas bans credit-card marketing during the first three weeks of a semester. But marketers can still reach out to students at bookstores and athletic events.

Paul Shang, assistant vice chancellor for student development at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, said the school banned issuers from soliciting students on campus about four years ago.

And the University of Missouri-Columbia prohibits card issuers from handing out freebies and limits their visits to 10 days a year.

To reach Paul Wenske, call 816-234-4454 or send e-mail to pwenske@kcstar.com.
Empty Nesting 102

Note the title of this piece is not Empty Nesting 101. That's because last year at this time I wrote my first piece on empty nesting when our youngest child joined her brother and moved off to college at the University of Kansas. So this is the second time I have done this, and no, watching them recently leave for college wasn't easier the second time around.

Even though their time at home this summer was a mere twelve weeks, I immediately, upon their arrival home, resumed the role of the hands-on mom; neatly folding their clothes and putting them away, slipping them a twenty every now and then to buy gas, making their favorite foods and calling in their prescription refills when needed. Forget the fact that they were old enough to vote, sign a lease, go on vacation alone and die for their country. I was their mom. They needed me... didn't they?

My answer to that question changed almost daily. For instance, my daughter definitely didn't need me on matters of working, studying, or filling her leisure time. But if she needed health advice or a gift idea for Father's Day, I topped her list of experts. And after my son firmly informed me he didn't need my help with his class selection for fall, he did come to me for advice on housing and roommate options.

Like most moms, I lived for those moments when they needed my help or sought my counsel. I was the glue - a matriarch in the truest sense of the word - the Rose Kennedy of the McFarlane clan.

Then, in a twist only real life can provide, I became the needy one. During the last few weeks of summer vacation, I was faced with major shoulder surgery. No fair, I cried inwardly. After all, my husband was still recovering from an accident he sustained a year ago. I had several unfinished writing projects on my desk. My sister was depending on me to help her tend to our aged mother. Plans were in full swing for our oldest daughter's Dec. 1 wedding. What was I to do?

The answer came in the form of two crazy, devil-may-care, fun college kids, who saw my needs and stepped in to meet them. They cooked food, did the laundry, put out the trash, bought the groceries, checked the mail, changed light bulbs and more. And all the while, they managed their own jobs and summer classes. Most importantly, they sat by me. They watched movies with me, brought me Cokes, and when I got better, drove me places. They were the glue.

I used to worry that I had not prepared my kids well enough for life away from home. What if they weren't independent enough? What if they didn't have the organizational skills required to make it in the real world? What if they didn't have a strong enough work ethic? What if...

And, as is usually the case, my worries were unfounded. Those people who swim around in my memories as the giggling little knuckleheads, the 24-7 tag-alongs, the people who filled my days with joy and, at the same time, my head with grey hairs, have evolved into a couple of responsible, productive and compassionate young adults. Sure, they still need me, just as much as I apparently need them. And it is through this new evidence of devoted reciprocity that we have taken our relationship to the next level; family, in the truest sense of the word. So my kids have left me with a nest that is empty again. I wouldn't have it any other way. But I am left with a heart that is full.
University of Kansas mascots to marry

LAWRENCE (AP) — Big Jay and Baby Jay are about to get married. No, this is not a marketing promotion from the University of Kansas athletic department.

Jessica Virtue and Chris Veit, a former Baby Jay and Big Jay, respectively, will walk down the aisle in October. The two met when Virtue was trying out for the mascot squad, of which Veit was already a part.

"Friday night, you start tryouts, and I remember seeing her and thinking, 'That's a really hot girl,'" said Veit from Overland Park. "The second day of tryouts, I tried really hard to be nice to her."

The two quickly became friends and, over time, began to date. But Virtue, who is from Lawrence, said it was important that they never let their characters seem like they were dating.

"I think it would be really weird for the fans if we were a little extra friendly when we were in the suit," she said.

But that didn't mean that the two didn't perform together. Although several people act as mascots, Veit and Virtue regularly were able to be "in suit" as the mascot community refers to it at the same time.

Veit said it was almost natural that the two found themselves interested in dating.

"You get a core group of mascots who are hard-core," Veit said. "Even before Jessica was in the picture, the other mascot and I would spend whole weekends together."

Virtue said the mascots would perform, then perhaps do an appearance, and then spend evenings or spare time repairing the costumes. It just made sense that they'd become close.

Albert Veit, Chris Veit's dad, said he knew quickly there was something special between the two, perhaps even before his son knew Virtue's name.

"Chris met her in the spring and then all summer long didn't see her. I would hear him mention to his friends all summer this blonde chick," Albert Veit said. "I think at that point he didn't even know her name."

But Albert Veit, who lives in Overland Park, said he could see a twinkle in his son's eyes that hadn't been there before. Albert Veit and his wife both knew this was the one, probably long before Chris Veit did.

"It's very cool. We were very excited," Albert Veit said. "They have a lot of common interests. They both enjoy sporting events and things of that nature. I would say it would probably help their relationship."

Linda Gilstrap, Virtue's mother, was surprised when her daughter told her she wanted to become a mascot. When her daughter started dating a mascot, she was even more surprised. Litté would she know how important the mascot squad would be to her daughter's life.

"They really have a built-in advantage, in that they have so many shared experiences," said Gilstrap, of Lawrence. "They're both cheering for the same team. They both have the same beliefs."

Gilstrap said Virtue and Veit have a unique relationship. They're lucky they found each other, she said.

"They're a very special couple," Gilstrap said.
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