

12-2-2008

## Independent- Dec. 2, 2008

Lenny Ocasio

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# INDEPENDENT

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Member of the Associated Collegiate Press

Tuesday, December 2, 2008

Vol. 24, Issue 25

## Roof repairs require questionable state funding

by Michelle Jacobson  
Opinions Editor

Facilities management has been working throughout the fall and will continue through spring to complete necessary campus roof repairs, relying on operating funds instead of capital renewal money that was appropriated four fiscal years ago.

A roofing firm evaluated the roofs in 2007 to determine which

ones needed the most attention. According to Gary Bryan, director of maintenance and construction for Facilities Management, most of the repairs will be completed by the end of this fall. These repairs cost anywhere from \$100,000 to \$150,000.

The largest maintenance item is the retarring of the Science Building, which will be completed in the spring. Complete roof replacements,

including the replacement of the PE building, could cost up to a million dollars, according to Bryan. This is where the capital renewal money would go.

Northeastern Illinois University was appropriated capital renewal money in 2004, but the money has yet to be released by the state government. This is because there isn't enough bonding authority to back the release of the money, according to Vice President

for Finance and Administration Mark Wilcockson.

In order to receive capital renewal money from the state, a new capital plan would need to be passed.

"We're confident that the state will get a capital plan passed, said Wilcockson., "but how they'll treat old appropriations once it's passed, I don't know."

"They might pass a whole new set of appropriations and pass bonding

to fund those new appropriations and kind of ignore the old ones," said Wilcockson.

Until the school receives capital renewal, Facilities Management must rely on operating funds to complete any repairs. This means that money that would usually fund projects like the establishment of student lounges, such as the one on the first floor of the classroom building, would instead be used to fund any necessary repairs.

## Student Artwork is 'Vanishing'



This is one of the artworks stolen from student artist Jenica Nieves.

Many pieces of student artwork, including a piece ironically titled "Vanishing", have been stolen from the Salme Harju Steinberg Fine Arts Building. Incidents of theft were reported to the NEIU police on Oct. 9 and Oct. 15, where art pieces were stolen from the hallway display. The pieces were valued at under \$300 dollars. Both cases are still under investigation.

Senior Jenica Nieves, artist of "Vanishing", had her artwork stolen from the hallway. "The art department expects us to be professional in terms of presentation, but yet they fail to insure the students' work if it becomes stolen and that

by Theresa Celmer  
Staff Writer

is unacceptable," Nieves said. "Honestly, this experience has left me heartbroken. I have worked so hard to lead up to this moment, to be able to showcase my artwork."

"My fellow colleagues and I have enough to worry about without adding to the stress and fear of our hard work being taken by someone who has no common decency or respect for the amount of effort being put in, and I think it's disgusting."

The Image Arts Club has discussed options of putting cameras in to

protect student artwork, since at least one piece of gets stolen every semester.

Art department chair Mark McKernin also said, there isn't enough space to display student artwork and when the fine arts building was built, the hallway was meant to display the student's artwork. McKernin said that the best thing to do to stop this from happening was to find a hanging system that could lock the artwork in place. He said that there already is a bid on one.

"It's a shame that we have to live in an environment and worry about things being stolen," said McKernin.

## Open Faith discussed at NEIU

by Magda Dzialoszynska  
Staff Writer

On Nov. 12 NEIU hosted the 10<sup>th</sup> annual Interfaith Conference, this year devoted to "Faith and Leadership." According to the mission statement, the aim of this initiative is to "promote the positive role of understanding and tolerance as a healing and constructive force in life." By inviting representatives of different faiths who are also community leaders, the organizers hope to increase NEIU students' awareness of the diversity of religious beliefs in our society, as well as enhance their understanding of how spirituality can help make leadership better.

The conference had the form of three panels, during which the attendees had a chance to hear from the school's faculty and a variety of guests from different religious groups prominent in Chicago. These included Jews, Jains, Zoroastrians, Sikhs, Muslims, Methodists and Baha'is.

Narendar Rao, professor of finance in NEIU's College of Business and Management, moderated one of the panels, and expressed that it will "promote a dialogue between religions, and create awareness because that is where respect comes from."

After professor Rao's introductory

remarks, the stage was taken by Manish Shah, a member of the Jain Center of Metropolitan Chicago. He offered comments on this year's presidential election, and the three rules of Jainism he saw at work in President-elect Barack Obama's campaign and political platform.

The first of those concepts is Ahimsa, the principle of nonviolence, which Shah thought was reflected in Obama's objection to the Iraq War. He mentioned Aparigraha which proclaims non-possessiveness and the lack of desire for material goods. This concept, Shah said, was present in the Democrat's critique of Wall Street greed and his views on how to deal with the economic crisis. Anekantavada -- the multiplicity of viewpoints -- which he claimed was embraced by Obama and exhibited by many of his supporters who responded "So what?" to the rumors that he was a Muslim. In view of that last principle, Shah encouraged everyone to explore the ethnic and religious diversity of Chicago, for example by visiting a house of worship different than their own. He concluded by citing Gandhi's famous formula, "Be the change you want to see in the world."

Mehroo M. Patel, a community

**See Interfaith, pg. 3**

## "Legacy" documentary film discussion gives voice to social problems

by Micah Roberson  
Features Editor

Separately or conjoined, drug addiction, poverty and violence are a part of life in many communities.

The documentary "Legacy" tells the story of how a family deals with all three challenging social problems that plague America and other countries.

"['Legacy'] is about welfare, public housing, a single mom raising kids and grandparents raising kids, addiction, and community violence," said Tod

Lending about his film on Thurs., Nov. 20, before showing clips of "Legacy." Lending also showed clips from his other film, "Omar and Pete."

Lending stated that what makes a documentary work "is the relationship." Lending applies what he refers to as "longitudinal film making," which means that he's not limited to only film making, but that he's a "friend, social worker, and a therapist." In terms of an approach to film making, Lending stated that "longitudinal film making breaks tradition," but "relationships

can make the story."

Lending explained that "wearing different hats was a challenge to making the film," but he described a situation where his "longitudinal" approach was beneficial. For example, Lending described how he was able to gain access to a drug treatment program for one of the family members in the documentary after she was initially denied. Additionally, Lending described how he enabled the return of a dress to a clothing store for a "Legacy" participant, after

the return of the item was denied for what clearly appeared to be racist and discriminatory reasons.

Lending discussed another documentary titled "Omar and Pete," a film about newly released prisoners who participate in a social service program designed to help newly released inmates. The service, called the Maryland Re-entry program, provides, housing, mental healthcare and additional support to former inmates.

During the question and answer

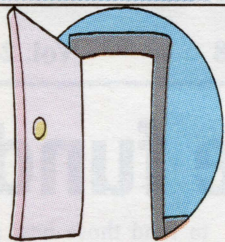
portion of the discussion, Maria Chaves, with the Adult and Women Student Programs at NEIU, inquired about Lending's choices of people and subjects to focus on for documentaries. Lending stated that he "looks for people that he can connect with," and he "looks for stories that present hope." Hope is important to Lending because he stated "the first person I feel

**See "Legacy", pg. 3**





# December 2008 Student Union



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Student Union

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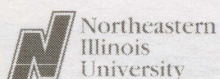
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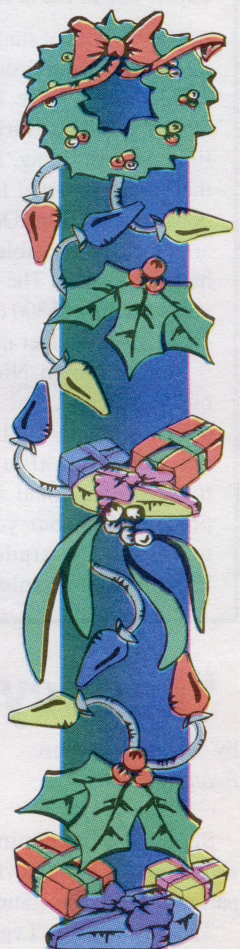
We will be serving cookies, hot chocolate & egg nog through out the event.

Sodexo Hot-Line will have a holiday meal!

Check out our Holiday Art Display on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Lobby

### Program:

- 1:00-1:30pm Children Choir
- 1:30-1:45pm Performance by Urban Sankofa
- 1:45-2:00pm Gingerbread contest
- 2:00-2:30pm Performance by David Ruddy
- 2:30-2:45pm Black Heritage Gospel Choir
- 2:45-3:00pm Announcement for the wreath and window display winner!



For more information about an event, please visit our website at [www.neiu.edu/~sudept](http://www.neiu.edu/~sudept), contact the Student Union at 773-442-6099 or [student-union@neiu.edu](mailto:student-union@neiu.edu) or the Information Center at 773-442-4290 or [info-center@neiu.edu](mailto:info-center@neiu.edu). Events subject to change





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The *Independent* is published every other week except during summer and semester breaks. Deadlines are nine (9) days prior to the issue in which a contribution is to appear. Views expressed in letters are those of the university community and not those of the Editorial Board.

The Editor-in-Chief is responsible for the content of the *Independent*, and views presented do not necessarily represent those of the administration, faculty or students.

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## Interfaith continued from pg. 1

leader for the Zoroastrian Community in Chicago, gave an example of what this change might look like. She first outlined the philosophy behind her beliefs, which consist of "living one good life," "building a bridge across faiths" and "reciprocating to one's community."

Patel recalled the moment when she and her husband realized they had become successful in their lives, and decided it was time to heed that third principle. They visited the Maharashtra province in their native India and instantly found an initiative they could help develop. At the time they visited, India was in dire need of qualified medical personnel and so they helped set up a College of Nursing in the town of Panchgani. Strengthening her case with her own example, Patel urged conference participants to try to give back to their communities and search for such leadership opportunities. "You are all potential leaders, future or present," she concluded.

The last speaker was Raijnder Singh Mago, who is responsible for public relations of the Sikh Religious Society of Chicago. He too began by familiarizing the audience with

his faith, which is the fifth most numerous in India, with a diaspora of over one million people. As Mago explained, the essence of Sikhism is open-mindedness and respect for the followers of all other religions, to the point where if you study and follow faithfully the tenets of any given religion, you also can call yourself a Sikh, for "Sikh" means "student". Sikhism, he said, is a goal-oriented faith, which seeks a truth and tries to implement it with conscience. Conscience precisely, as well as compassion, contentment, righteousness and humility are the staples of dharma – a virtuous way of life that Sikhs embrace. Mago expressed hope that contemporary leaders embrace it too.

Sheila, who is a psychology major at NEIU, admitted that Mago's remarks got her interested in Sikhism. "It's different and I would like to learn more about it," she said. The fact that this one panel might have such an effect on students made Assistant Dean for Academic Development Yasmin A. Ranney very glad. She is proud of how the Heritage Conference Series, which Interfaith is a part of, has been gaining popularity over the last ten years. "If we reach one student during an event, we have done our job," said Ranney.

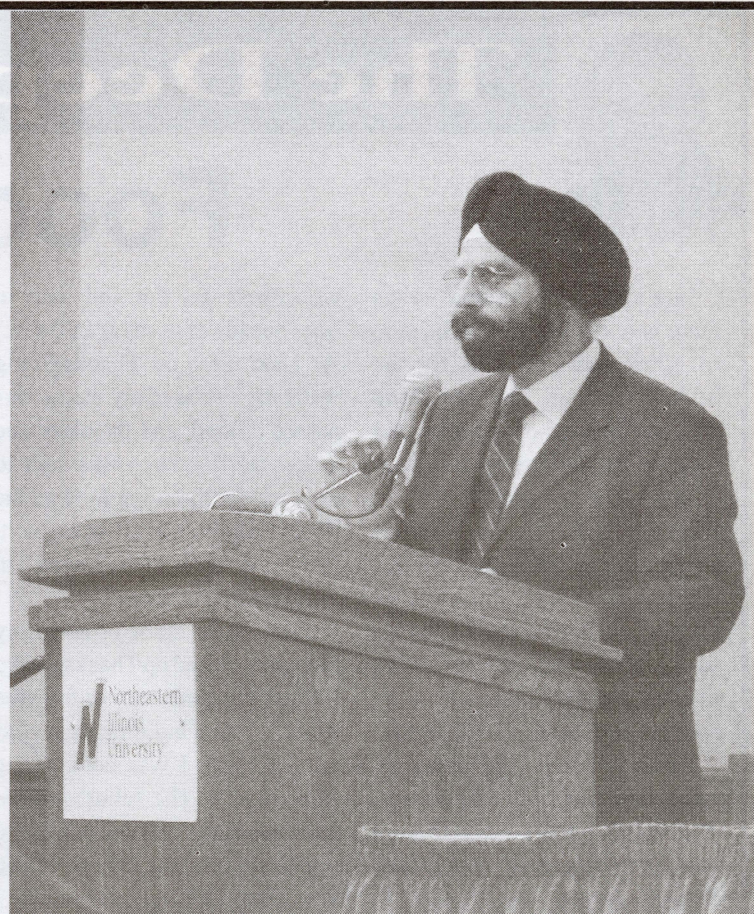


photo by Michael McNelly

**Rajinder Singh Mago, Public Relations from the Sikh Religious Society of Chicago, gives a speech on Sikhism, the importance of truth, and helping the underprivileged during the Interfaith Conference held in the Golden Eagles on November 12.**

## "Legacy" continued from pg. 1

accountable to is the subject. Second is the community." Lending mentioned how "Legacy" was approved by the church group ITC because "Legacy" "presented hope."

An audience member asked Lending what he could do to help and Lending responded: "Join a community organization."

Lending next mentioned "poverty of spirit" and a "lack of drive," among some poor people. In response, Chaves explained that "drive" will be inadequate to remedy the suffering of a segment of poor people due to the complexity of the problem. Another question was raised about the apparent faster success of immigrants in America compared to poor blacks.

In response to the question, Antoinette McConnell, Assistant Dean of Students, mentioned the "fragmentation in the black

community" and that "it wasn't always like this." She stated that she "remembers a time" when blacks "were more helpful" to each other.

Another audience member mentioned the reality of the poor quality of education in poor communities as a contributor and cause for poverty.

Lending mentioned the two major "turning points" in his life. The first was viewing his friend drown. That event taught Lending the "fragile, sacredness of life," and to "pursue what you are interested in." The death

of his friend displayed for Lending how a family copes with the death of a loved one, a subject that he revisits in "Legacy."

The second "turning point" was when he worked on a farm when he was 16 years old. Lending stated that he was impressed with the hard work of the farmer, who worked from "sun up to sun down." However, Lending mentioned that the farmer was racist. Lending mentioned that the farmer told him, "the only good n---- is a dead n----."

# English 101 courses revised for Spring 2009

by Michelle Jacobson  
Opinions Editor

Beginning next semester, all English 101 courses will be aligned to produce the same learning outcomes as part of the five-year Title V Grant that was awarded in 2007.

The revision of English 101, along with the establishment of required writing intensive courses in every discipline and the construction of the Center for Academic Writing, is part of the "Improving Retention through Academic Literacy" project which is funded by the Title V Grant.

The grant was awarded as part of the Higher Education Act based on Northeastern Illinois University's status as a Hispanic Serving Institution.

Vicki Byard, an English professor at NEIU, was named coordinator of the First Year Program in Jan. 2008 and has since been working with other professors to revise English 101 syllabi to include seven specific learning outcomes that were approved by the English Department. The goal of aligning English 101 courses is to better prepare every student for their writing-intensive courses.

"We want to make sure that when students leave 101, that they'll be ready for those writing intensive courses, that they'll have the skills that they need in terms of the writing to then be able to succeed with the disciplinary writing that they'll be asked to do," said Byard.

The English department is also hiring more full-time instructors who teach only English 101. These instructors will be required to teach seven sections of English 101 a year.

Some other goals of the revision and alignment of English 101 are to get students more used to using electronic resources such as Blackboard, to provide a smoother transition from the English Language Program into English 101, and to define grading standards for every section so students who take 101 feel confident that the grade they're getting is what they would get with a different teacher, according to Byard.

Since the grant is for five years, some long-term goals are to develop hybrid classes that are both online and in the classroom, to develop strictly online courses, and to address English 102 and make sure there is more similarity across sections of that course as well.




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# The Deep End

MIKE ARCH News Editor

## Food on the floor

In a time of economic crisis there is one thing we can be sure of: great deals on gifts for the holiday season. The one thing we can't be sure of is getting the most of the holiday season. I am traditionally "Mr. Bah Humbug." Recently, I have found myself in the holiday spirit. My holiday décor started to go up right after Halloween. It's not that I'm trying to keep up with the shopping malls; I just wanted some warmer weather for putting up the lights.

I have found myself enjoying, rather than despising the holidays. It used to be the only thing I looked forward to was Black Friday, my one day a year to throw a few elbows. (Black Friday is the shopping day right after Thanksgiving for those of you

who don't get out and wait in lines outside of stores at 1:00 a.m.) As I sat there on Thanksgiving watching as one of my nieces was passed around, and the older one in her terrible twos was sent to time-out for throwing food on the floor, I couldn't help but enjoy it. (Maybe it was because I wasn't in time-out for a change.)

There was a sense of normalcy in a crazy, mixed up Thanksgiving. My sister recently moved from the suburbs into a building right next to El Centro. I was not looking forward to it. The suburban born and raised guy I am doesn't like to search for parking. (Those of you who go to El Centro know why I wasn't looking forward to it.)

Once I got to her apartment, it was home. I figured out that

home is not where you live, it's the people around you.

Now I get back to the holiday decorations. I received many decorations for the outside of my house that used to belong to an uncle. It was a Christmas marked by tragedy that started to turn my bah humbug attitude around. As I repaired the light in a plastic toy soldier, that Christmas came back to me.

The uncle that was responsible for that toy soldier had passed away days before Christmas 2001. The Bears were having an OK year led by Kyle Orton, and a Bears playoff game was to follow in January. We received a phone call that my uncle was in the hospital (not that uncommon of a thing he had an ongoing heart

condition.) Many times he was told that this hospital visit would be his last and many times he proved the doctors wrong. It got to a point where they just gave up and said, "You will die young so get things in order." He was 44 at the time of his death. Funeral arrangements were rushed to get them in before Christmas day.

That Christmas was a strange one. My grandparents typically spend the holiday at their winter home in Texas, but they rushed home. My uncle, who had plans to spend Christmas with his in-laws in southern Illinois, was home for the holiday. My mother, who was planning a small Christmas dinner for the family changed her plans.

The family was together over the holiday, but the nagging reason

why we were all together was on the mind of everybody even though nothing was said about it.

I learned to enjoy the time spent with family instead of dreading it, even if spending that time takes you into an area with little parking. You never know if it may be the last holiday you see Grandpa, Aunt Marie, or in my case, Uncle Ron.

This past Thanksgiving holiday I had an opportunity to watch football and food being thrown on the floor. The football was more exciting, but the food on the floor made this Thanksgiving special. As I get older, I lose family and I gain others, but wherever my family is will always be home. Good luck and try to survive finals. Happy Holidays, and next year it starts all over.

## Brass Band Receives \$1,017 for trip

by Laurie Lickov  
Staff Writer

A bill to give the Brass Club of NEIU money for 17 of its student to attend a concert at the Chicago Symphony Center was passed on Nov. 6. The president of the Brass Club, Liz Lefeu attended the meeting on behalf of the club.

The requested amount was \$1017.00. A contingent on signed travel agreements for attendees was brought up for debate. Info for the event was placed around campus, including the SGA board, but according to Lefeu they were taken. "I'm a little sad about that," she said.

Approval for the bill had been given prior to the meeting, which brought up confusion on both sides. Lefeu stated that after a week she now had 17 signed travel agreements, the club had originally asked for funds for 25 guests.

Lefeu also learned that the bill had not been approved, and stated that, "there is no need even for a travel agreement because you haven't even assigned any money to anything." She was interrupted by a senator "that's not true, that's not true," the senator argued.

Senator Codak corrected her by asking if the travel agreement then was or was not formulated for the funding. Cost per

head is \$45 plus \$5 for the group.

"Why are we paying for this?" asked Senator Minor. The question that was up for attention was whether or not the school should be paying for travel; the funding was only for tickets.

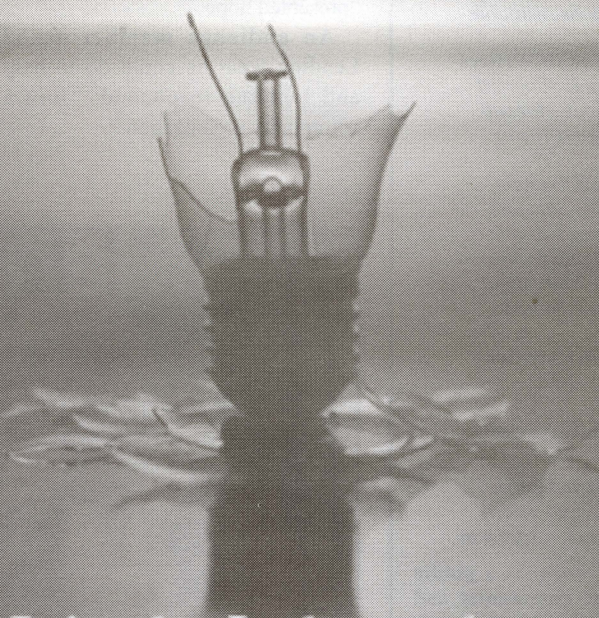
More confusion followed as to why travel vouchers were needed when travel is not covered. "Those students who are committed to going are going, and if they don't, the tickets that are not refundable must be paid to the university," said Codak.

The debate then began as to whether or not money should be given to the Brass Club, and how students would benefit from seeing the concert. Many of the senators agreed that allowing students to attend would be educational. Senator Yoon was very supportive of the bill stating, "Whenever we need help, we call them," she later said that she would be appreciative if everyone voted in favor of this bill.

Senator Beijai pointed out that this viewing would be beneficial to the students of the Brass Club, who in turn provide the school with quality entertainment." I'm all with this," he said.

The Brass Club will go to the Symphony concert, after most of the senators agreed on the funding. The meeting was adjourned early due the Town Hall meeting.

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**DUNCAN MACNAB, SENIOR WRITER AND FORMER EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

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Credit card offers can be pretty tempting, especially at this time of year. As the holidays near, most people cringe at the thought of emptying their wallet to pay for presents and party supplies. Why pay all that money now when you can charge it and pay for it later? The truth is, anyone who knows the state of our nation's economic crisis knows exactly why it is better to avoid credit this Christmas.

You can compare applying for a credit card to applying for a loan on a house. Many homeowners in the past have been tempted by the idea of 'get now, pay later'. They received loans to pay for their houses, moved in and made their houses homes, then found out that they were unable to pay back loans that they shouldn't have been eligible to receive in the first place.

The same thing happens with credit cards. That idea of 'get now, pay later' is very appealing, especially because of the way credit card companies advertise. It isn't difficult to get a credit card. Companies want you to use that card to buy things, stimulate our economy, and later charge you ridiculous amounts of interest, sometimes regardless of your credit history. Credit card companies don't know if you can afford to pay them back, and they don't care. You yourself may not know if you can afford to pay them back. The problem with 'get now, pay later' is that you don't know what your financial situation will be like 'later.' With the economy the way it is today, absolute financial security doesn't exist, at least not for the majority of people.

So no matter how many credit card offers you receive in the mail, do your best to avoid the temptation of their optimistic advertising. This isn't the time to be optimistic about finances. This is the time to be realistic. You know what you can and cannot afford, and so do most of the people that you will be buying presents for. They'll understand if you spend less this year, and you'll have the luxury of knowing that you can get it now and not have to pay later.

## Letters to the Editor Policy

Letters to the Editor must be signed with an address and telephone number for verification. Submissions must not exceed 250 words. Letters are subject to editing for space and style at editor's discretion. The editor reserves the right to omit any work submitted. Letters are on a first-come first-served basis.

Send letters to: Independent, E-049, 5500 N. St. Louis Ave., Chicago, IL 60625 or to: [neiu\\_independent@yahoo.com](mailto:neiu_independent@yahoo.com)

## What do we really expect from President-elect Barack Obama?

by **Micah Roberson**  
*Features Editor*

President-elect Barack Obama has inherited an extremely high budget deficit. He will begin his presidency with the country involved in two costly wars. The stock market is being severely challenged, to say the least. The American infrastructure is in desperate need of repair, evidenced by the bridge collapse a couple of years ago. Financial institutions are to receive massive amounts of funding to bail them out of their financial crisis. Then there's the environment, including, but not limited to, global warming.

The preceding issues that President-elect Obama is currently facing are just the tip of an iceberg. The American people have confidence in him that he can bring positive change, as evidenced by his winning the popular vote as well as the majority of votes from the Electoral College. Change was the central theme of his campaign platform. I was surprised to see the cover story of the Chicago Reader immediately after he won, which contained a drawing of him with the words "Don't Screw This Up." I was surprised because the title overlooks that "This" is already "Screwed Up." Some would argue that it's been "screwed up" for quite a long time. The title is also a subtle, indirect implication that Obama has "screwed up" things previously. Obama deserves realistic expectations from those who voted for him, tempered with the reality of what he and his cabinet are inheriting and are expected to correct.

Public figures can be made fun of, the object of jokes, publicly and privately discussed and can receive negative press. Public figures can even be made fun of on *Saturday Night Live*. The point is that Barack Obama is being asked to do the near impossible. He has the "outside of the box" thinking and creativity to approach the many problems he faces. He is liked all around the world. He has the support of the majority of American people,

evidenced by the votes he received, but to scrutinize him and to doubt him due to his recently named cabinet appointments is beyond skepticism. To criticize him before he has been sworn in is unfair because he hasn't even been given a chance to make a mistake yet. I tried to envision what "making a mistake" could look like though. It can be worse, of course; this I do know, but it's pretty bad right now folks, BEFORE his presidency.

**"Barack deserves realistic expectations from those who voted for him, tempered with the reality of what he and his cabinet are inheriting and are expected to correct."**

If the stock market continues to decline, is Obama REALLY the one to blame, or was that snowball sent rolling BEFORE he became president? If violence increases in Iraq, is Obama to blame? If global warming makes it so hot that it's 96 degrees in January right here in Chicago, is Barack Obama to blame? Sure, you can research how he voted as an Illinois senator for the past few years, but to blame HIS PRESIDENCY for what he inherited as the 44th president is unfair. To be so critical of him within three weeks of winning the election is to overlook the presidencies of those who went before him who left him the issues that he faces.

The man needs support, not doubters who are scrutinizing his every move because of the way things are RIGHT NOW. I trust his judgment for his cabinet appointments, but I had to ask myself, who is he to choose from? Who would I place? The country possibly needs the help of aliens from other planets, kind hearted musicians, blue collar workers, and people of

every race, gender and ethnicity to repair the country. Obama addressed this need in some of his speeches (with the exception of aliens). He stated that collectively as Americans we all have to create the change, but he can't have me as his secretary of state, now can he? He can't appoint his talented barber as his secretary of agriculture, can he? Even if he could, it's as if he's being scrutinized like he already appointed his barber as one of his cabinet members. Not to say that his barber doesn't have solutions to current problems, but what would the public have to say if he appointed his barber to a cabinet position? What would the public have to say if he appointed Bono, the singer from U2, as his secretary of state? Can he appoint Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie, who have done considerable charitable work, to cabinet positions? What would the public say if he appointed your next door neighbor, who you may like, for a cabinet position? Some press writers and commentators have treated him as if he made the hypothetical appointments that I mentioned. He has to choose from (Democratic) politicians to fill his cabinet.

I understand why people doubted him and continue to do so. I would be lying if I said I KNEW he would win. The truth is I didn't know that he would win. But when he did, I realized, that if there is HOPE, Obama can inspire American people to do what is necessary to help the nation recover, THEN make it advance. He can't do it by himself. I'm an artist who stays away from politics, to say the least. It's counterproductive and a waste of time to overly scrutinize and to doubt after Obama hasn't even been elected president for one month. To bash him in his first month is to hold him to a MUCH higher standard than other presidents have been held to. I forget who said this, but it's applicable, "Be the change that you want to see." You, at your best, are needed now more than ever. It will take all of us to CHANGE things.

## A major decision

by **Theresa Celmer**  
*Staff Writer*

When I was little I always knew what I wanted to do with my life. I wanted to be a teacher and help children learn. Sounds simple, right? Think again. Flash forward to sophomore year of college. After observing first graders at a local elementary school, I realized maybe teaching isn't what I wanted to do after all. So there I was, after wanting to be a teacher ever since I could remember, not knowing what to do next.

I've always liked to write. I started writing television fanfiction and creating my own stories at the age of twelve. At first, I always thought of it as a cool hobby, but never imagined that I could get paid for it. Once I realized that I could, I really started to warm up to the idea. I decided I wanted to become a writer, so I switched my

major to English. It didn't turn out quite like I expected it to. Instead of writing and using my creative skills, I now sat in front of a textbook trying to interpret what the story meant, instead of just reading and writing about what I thought about it, which some students might find interesting, but it was not for me.

Around that time I started taking media classes for my minor and even decided to join the newspaper as a staff writer. It was then that I realized I enjoyed learning about media and how to write the correct grammar for media writing. As the old saying goes, "third times the charm" and I am now pursuing a bachelor's degree in communications, media and theater with a minor in media.

So, for those who are struggling with either choosing a major for the first time, or thinking about changing a major, I know that it can

be a confusing and possibly stressful experience because it changes and shapes the rest of your life. But there are people who can help including teachers, parents and close friends. It is always great to talk to someone when you are unsure of what career path you want to take for the rest of your life. I think one helpful tip to get students through these confusing times is to ask yourself if you are happy with what you are studying in your classes. Will you possibly enjoy what you are learning and enjoy it as a career in the future? If the answer is yes, then you probably made the right choice for yourself. If not, that is okay too. Just remember it is your life that you are living and that asking yourself questions and having a great support system including friends and family will lead you to the road you have always wanted to follow or perhaps like myself, you will choose the road less traveled.



## Two holidays, one family

by Adam Salamon  
Staff Writer

More and more, families of different religions and faiths are marrying in America. I, myself, have been married for 11 years to my beautiful wife, who happens to be Catholic. I'm Jewish, and although we aren't super religious people, God is important to both of us. Therefore, when we decided to get married we agreed that we would get a special dispensation from the Catholic Church, but get married in a synagogue, so our marriage would be sanctified in both of our religions. We also agreed before our marriage that when we had children we would raise them in the Jewish faith. Well, three kids later (my kids are four, six, and eight) I can say my wife has done a wonderful job creating a Jewish home for our children to be raised in. She worships with us, cooks the best matzo ball soup and kugel in Chicago, and is an active member in our congregation. She is also a wonderful wife and mother, not to mention my best friend.

My "honey" is the person that I chose to marry though, and having dated her for five years before we got married, I felt confident that I knew what to expect from her once we were. What I could not anticipate, however, was the warmth and love that my in-laws would show us in regards to celebrating our family's holidays with us.

My children's best friends are their cousins, who are my sister-in-law's children, and they are Catholic. It really isn't a big deal, but that's because my in-laws (my wife's mother, her two brothers, and her sister's family) are gracious enough to come celebrate Hanukkah with us every year at our house, while we

reciprocate by celebrating Christmas Eve with them at theirs. I can't tell you how much it means to me that they all share in our celebration of The Festival of Lights, and I love sharing in their Christmas spectacular. I have some special in-laws and I know it and appreciate it.

That doesn't mean that having an extended family with more



Graphic by Tracy Ellen

than one religion in it is always a simple matter though. Sometimes, like this year, Christmas and Hanukkah occur at the same time. When this happens, we work around the overlap by scheduling our party either before or after Christmas Eve, depending on

when Hanukkah lands on the Jewish calendar that particular year. Then, on Christmas Eve, we bring our menorah with us over to my in-law's house and we celebrate both holidays together.

My wife's family is Polish-American, and one of the more complicated things we've had to solve is how to incorporate their family tradition of breaking off pieces of Oplatki, which is a Polish Christmas wafer, and exchanging the pieces with loved ones while wishing them peace, love and happiness for the upcoming year. It is a beautiful tradition, and one that my mother-in-law brought with her from Poland. The problem for my family is that the wafers are like those given for communion, and represent the body of Christ. Because of this, we don't think that it would be "kosher", by either religion's standards, for us to eat them. At first, we would give a kiss and bless each other, but my wife's family would eat both of the wafers from the exchange.

Now we have solved the problem in a unique way, but one that keeps the family tradition intact without worrying about religious protocol. Because the symbolic meaning of Oplatki involves the breaking of bread with family, we now also have matzo to break and bless, along with the Oplatki, so that we feed them their Christmas wafers and they feed us our famous unleavened bread. The family tradition of the "breaking of the bread" is now intact!

Our holiday system may not be perfect, but for our families it works well, and the important thing is that we are all together on these significant occasions. Lucky for me, love and respect has transcended all in my family. My holiday wish for you is that they will do the same in yours. Peace, God bless, and have a happy holiday, whatever it may be!

## Trivializing friendship: A deadly media sin

by Whitney Behr  
Staff Writer

We hear about sins of the media every day. There's always someone going on and on about how the media sets up unrealistic expectations for women, represents minorities unfairly, or desensitizes children to violence. We've grown used to these arguments. I'd venture so far as to say that we're desensitized to this idea, but we must never let our guard down because that's when we're most at risk for believing what they tell us.

One such media sin is the trivialization of friendship. My friend Angela in the form of a seven-page letter first brought this to my attention a few months ago. Yes, we write to each other, even in the age of e-mail and Facebook. Pay attention to your reaction to that last statement while you read the following.

She was frustrated with the behavior of a young man she'd gone out with. It wasn't that he made her pick up the tab or that he made some rude sexual comment. When she said she had to go because she had plans with her girlfriends, he said "Just blow them off. It's no big deal. I want to make dinner for you." She was incensed that he would consider standing up her friends in favor of

someone she'd hardly met to be "no big deal." She was insulted that he thought she would make plans with her girlfriends and intended to cancel in the event that any "real" plans with a man were to come up. Further, she was startled to consider that this might be the sign of a much bigger problem.

What if that one guy isn't the only one? What if women's relationships with each other are widely seen as silly ways to pass the time until a husband comes along?

As many of her letters do, it got me thinking. She wasn't being alarmist. It happens all the time. We've all witnessed or experienced a friend disappearing off the face of the planet as soon as he or she gets a significant other. We don't want to say anything for fear of being considered to be "just jealous" or a "bitter singleton", but many people who lose friends to new beaus or even to marriage aren't saying "I want a boyfriend, too," but rather simply "I just want my friend back."

It can be argued that non-sexual friendships have the potential to be more authentic, as they are not influenced by the chemicals and pheromones that drive romantic relationships, and yet they are seen as less important or, in some cases, simply homosexual in nature. I don't deny that sex is a major motivator

in the human scheme of things, but I believe it cheapens us as a society to insinuate that sex is the only reason we do anything.

The emphasis we put on romance is misguided. As Angela so aptly put in her rant, "Socrates and Plato had wives, but who cares?" People are capable of so much more than simply chasing after romantic relationships. She and I are constantly being scrutinized for our closeness. Many people don't understand how two women can be so close without talking about men or shoes very little if at all. This is simply because they don't see examples of it anywhere around them.

Friends everywhere, stand up for yourselves! Women can be friends without being Carrie Bradshaw and her girls. Gay men and straight women can be friends without being Will and Grace. Men can be friends without being sports-crazed, grunting Neanderthals. These relationships can be stronger than romantic ones and should not be taken lightly.

It is our job to educate ourselves about these things. If we don't make the effort to reprogram ourselves, we will be an empty society full of two dimensional people who perpetuate the media crimes being committed against them.

## VOICE OF THE CAMPUS

Semester's end...

finally



by Lenny Ocasio  
Editor-in-Chief

This semester is almost at an end. I, for one, am happy that it is and I bet many of you are happy as well. Classes are now about to try to cram a semester worth of knowledge into an almost-two-hour exam period. I hope that many of you have good plans for winter break. For those who are graduating this December, congratulations and good luck in all your endeavors.

This marks the end of my first semester as Editor-in-chief for the *Independent*. Being a leader was a new experience for me. I willingly admit that I am more a follower and not a leader. Throughout this semester, crucial skills I never knew I had came into play. Being persuasive and outspoken has never been my strong suit and yet now I was expected to convince people to do their jobs right. Being the last word on any major dispute is not something I was used to. It has been an interesting semester to say the least.

Being the EIC was like a trial of fire on leadership. I had to learn how to make sure everyone was doing their job and the paper came out on time. In my time on the newspaper, I had seen how hard everyone had worked to get 16 pages of good, solid content every other week. Being able to rely on responsible editors and fellow officers is the only way to make sense of all the disorder.

I am very happy with our efforts this semester and I would like to thank everyone who was directly involved in making this semester. That means all the writers, photographers, editors and officers that spent their free time to bring the best newspaper to the rest of the campus. Thank you all for your hard work.

I would also like to thank everyone who gave me feedback on how I was doing. I loved being able to walk into a room and have someone just say, "I read your column." It did not matter whether they liked it or not, although I hope they did, but I loved that they picked up the newspaper and read the words that I spent a lot of time and energy writing. It was wonderful to know that people are reading the newspaper and most people are willing to share their opinions of how we are doing. The first time it happened, it was startling. Now, I am glad there are people coming up to where I work and telling how much they love the direction the newspaper is going.

Keep sending your feedback. We at the *Independent* love getting an idea on how this column and the newspaper are doing. We would also love to know about events on campus that you are doing. You can contact me at L-Ocasio@neiu.edu.

**Online-only opinions!**

**-Evil:Gangs, guns, drugs, war and...video games?**

**-Where are all the 'pull yourself up from your bootstraps' people when you need them?**

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



# ENTERTAINMENT



## LIVE THE SPIRIT

by Cheryl Lyman  
Entertainment Editor

Even though the Olympics are over for the next few years, the words 'live the spirit' ring true always. These words are often written when Euripides "Rip" Kastaris signs a piece of work for someone. Rip embodies this philosophy, not only in his artwork, but in his life as well.

Kastaris was recently on campus at Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) for the Centers of Globalization: Greek-American Conference held on Nov. 13-14. He presented *Mosaic of Eternity—Byzantine Spirit in a New World*, a video he produced about iconic art and architecture. There were also some of his paintings and prints available for viewing. His work gets to the heart of the subject, no matter what it is, whether it be athletes, Greek gods/goddesses, landscapes or angels. His use of jewel tones and gold leaf make his paintings pop.

Born in Greece, Rip moved to the United States at an early age. His passion for art has led him on many adventures, including being commissioned to do original work for four consecutive Olympic games. His piece de resistance *Kyklos - Circle of Glory* is a monumental tribute to the games. A labor of love and pain, the mural/sculpture hangs in its permanent place in Athens Olympic Stadium.

His exhibit, *Rings of Fire*, can be seen at the Hellenic Museum and Cultural Center, through Jan. 4, 2009 during normal museum hours. He will also be having a private reception for the Chicago 2016 Olympic Bid Leadership. "I really think art and the

Olympic ethos are of great interest to all people, and sense that Chicago will be on fire again soon, but this time it will be the Olympic cauldron and the spirit within the city," he said.

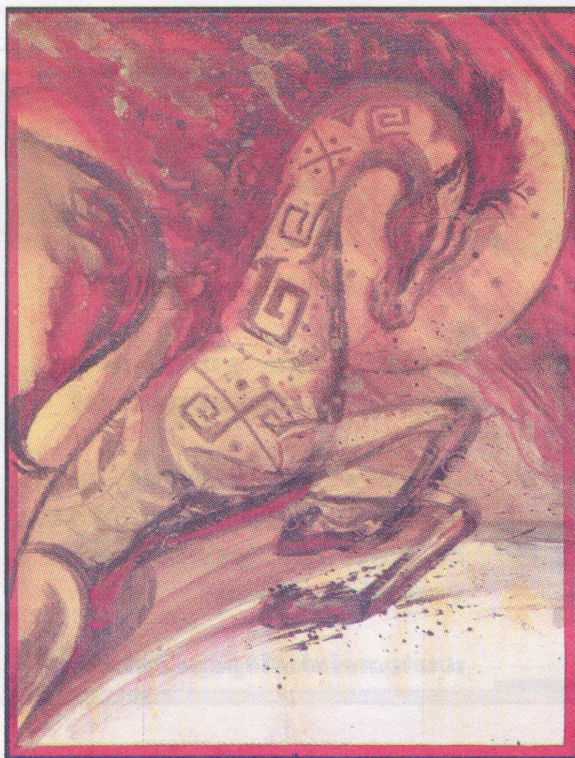
Kastaris has been featured on television and radio shows, won several awards, worked with rock legend Sting and church groups. With all the fame and publicity, one would think he would be snobby or consider himself elite. My experience with him was that he was just like you and me. I never would have guessed that he was so brilliant or internationally known. He is truly a humble man and he states that all the hardships and tough times he has gone through "were a boot camp to excellence." He also volunteers with grade-school children in St. Louis, where he currently resides, working with students to make projects that get sent to sick kids.

No matter whether Chicago wins the bid for the 2016 Olympics or not, it would be wonderful for Kastaris to continue his legacy of artistry for the games, bringing his bit of magic into the lives of people the world over.

For more information on The Hellenic Museum and Cultural Center visit [hellenicmuseum.org](http://hellenicmuseum.org). Rip's studio Web site is [www.petrifineart.com](http://www.petrifineart.com).



"...SENSE THAT CHICAGO WILL BE ON FIRE AGAIN SOON, BUT THIS TIME IT WILL BE THE OLYMPIC CAULDRON AND THE SPIRIT WITHIN THE CITY."  
- RIP KASTARIS





Opposite counterclockwise from top:

Kyklos - Circle of Glory;

Higher, Swifter, Stronger (2008 Beijing Olympic Victory Horses);

Sanctuary

Right:

Rings of Fire



Bottom left to right:

The artist, Rip Kastaris;

Quiet Stream;

Messenger

all images courtesy of  
Euripides Kastaris

# The Stamp Scarfing Around

by David Mitchell  
staff writer

Winter wear can be tricky. With all the necessities involved in keeping warm it can be hard to maintain a healthy level of personal style. But it *is* possible, folks! The key to maintaining your personality from underneath that puffy, fluffy (but warm) monstrosity is to accessorize! Gloves, scarves and hats are your best allies in the battle against cold-weather fashion blues! My personal favorite, however, is the scarf. A scarf can take you from the blizzard, to class and then out to a party afterwards.

There are many different



2

wrap. Simply drape the scarf as before, but toss the longer end around one shoulder allowing the shorter end to drape down one side of the chest. I like this one on your standard knit, polo-striped scarf with those adorable strands of yarn at the ends. This look is good with a pea-coat.

The third style has known a great amount of popularity in the past few seasons. This is what I'll call the half-loop. All you have to do to achieve this look is fold the length of the scarf in two and drape it around your neck as with the full-length. Pull the two loose ends through the end that creates the loop and tighten to your own comfort. This is great for your biggest, softest, fluffiest scarf. It



4



1

shapes, styles and colors of scarves, in just as many knits and materials to choose from. A good friend recently asked me what some appropriate methods of tying a scarf were. I have provided a few pictures that will help illustrate my instructions.

The first style I'm showing here is a simple knot. Simply drape the scarf around the back of the neck and let one side fall shorter than the other. Take the longer end and wrap it around the shorter, pull it through the center and let it fall over the shorter side in the center of the chest. This is good for a scarf with a pattern - something you'd like to show off.

The next style is the classic



3

pulls it closest to the neck and creates the extra layers that really keep you nice and toasty on that long trudge to the bus stop.

Last, but certainly not least, is the double-over. Drape the scarf (at full length) from the center section, but this time from the front of the neck. Simply take either end and wrap them around until they hang down either side of the chest. This is good when you want to wear a scarf without the jacket as part of an outfit.

Thanks for any and all feedback on the Web site! If anyone wants to e-mail me directly (questions, comments, ideas) you can reach me at [the.stamp1@gmail.com](mailto:the.stamp1@gmail.com). Happy layering!

photos by David Mitchell



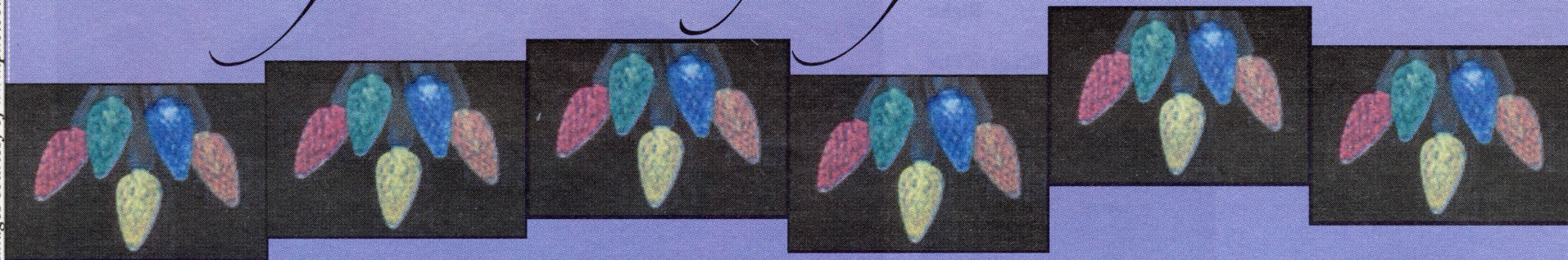
# Diversional Discourse

by Cheryl Lyman  
Entertainment Editor  
c-lyman1@neiu.edu

*If it makes you feel better*



Images courtesy of www.photobucket.com



Bah humbug. Go on, say it out loud. Try it out in a few different voices and inflections. It's fun. Bah humbug is a fun phrase, no matter how you say it. It might even make you feel better. You don't have to mean it in the classic way, as per Ebenezer Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*. If it makes you feel better, then say it.

You don't really hear that phrase much, except at this time of the year. There are many different things that you only hear and see between Halloween and New Year's Day. Besides the obvious Christmas songs and movies, there are: lights, decorated yards, houses, trees. Shop windows all over the city get dressed up for the crowds, hoping to pull some poor shopper in and make a sale.

Some people hate the holiday season, for whatever reason. It is overly commercial, it can be difficult for people who have lost loved ones, or are not on good terms with their family. I understand this. I have mostly fond memories of holidays, but there are painful ones as well. My husband was diagnosed with cancer on Dec. 26, 2002. He didn't live to

see the decorations of 2003. Depression and suicide rates rise during the darkest part of the year. The nights get longer through the end of December, and the days are often overcast, even if it isn't raining or snowing. Once the freshness of new fallen snow wears off, the piles of it that have been cleared off the street are gray and dirty.

What better time of year is there to decorate everything festively? Despite the over-commercialization of the 'holiday season,' be it Hanukkah, Kwanzaa or (yes, the biggest culprit) Christmas, it really can be a positive, happy time. People have been dressing their houses or halls for many different reasons since the beginning of time. Hang a garland, light a candle, put out your favorite sparkly ornaments - it improves the atmosphere of the room. Improved atmosphere helps improve the mind and spirit.

People gather together for celebrations. They don't always have to have a reason; they find one. Of course, this is always true, but especially at this time of year. Getting together with family, friends,

even co-workers, provides something that everyone needs at least a little: a sense of belonging, of community. Being around people you care about, and who care about you, promotes well-being.

If there are hard feelings between family members, now is a brilliant time to patch up the problem; next year may be too late. Remember to celebrate lives that are no longer with you. Remember a disaster story from a past season - the burnt turkey, the tree that fell over, the embarrassing gift, the drunk relative (yes, even if it was you) - it may not have been funny then, but chances are, you can laugh about it now. No, I've never burnt a turkey, but you understand what I mean. Laughter is good. It keeps you young and energetic.

When the mind, spirit and body are healthy and happy, everyone benefits. People are friendlier, and more caring to others, when they themselves feel good. By acknowledging that the trimmings of the season are meant to provide light in darkness, hope for the future, and a feeling of joy, wonder and fun, you can be free to just relax and enjoy it.

As the sun sets earlier and earlier, we, as people, need to find ways to keep the light in our lives. Be it candles, strings of twinkling lights, or the effervescence of favorite people around us, the glow is a valuable tool for getting through the winter months. Just because singing carols and watching *It's a Wonderful Life* (again) is enjoyable for me, it may not be your cup of tea. Find a different blend.

Sure, I'll complain about the cold and the weather. I can't do anything about it. I can't do anything about the amount of commercials bombarding TV, radio and newspapers which try to get me to buy something for everyone I know. I can, however, enjoy the little things that improve my attitude. I love the lights, the music, the movies, the parties and the food. They make me feel good. So if saying bah humbug makes you feel better, go for it, and while you are at it, find a way to make someone else feel better, too. Give a piece of your light to someone who doesn't have enough. Making someone else happy is a good way to feel better about yourself. Everyone needs that.



by Jonathan Gronli  
Associate Editor

## Beyond the veil of madness

### The psychic strain



The *Stir of Echoes* franchise is an incredibly well-thought-out and well-researched set with a book and two movies. The film takes the sixth sense, and puts it into a universally personal view.

The original *Stir of Echoes* film is based off of, what is arguably one of Richard Matheson's finest stories, *A Stir of Echoes*. It was also one of the best and purest contemporary ghost stories published. The idea of it was that after a time of being hypnotized, Tom Witzky (played by Kevin Bacon) gains psychic powers that allow him occasional glimpses of the past, of present ghosts or the future itself. Little does he know that his son Jake has had the ability all the while, and has been talking to the ghost of a woman murdered in their house before they moved in.

It was followed up with the *Stir of Echoes 2: Homecoming*. It, along with many movies that have been coming out since late 2006 and early 2007, brought the war on terror home, while staying true to its roots. It also mixed in a level of the mystique and mysticism of *Jacob's Ladder*, which followed a veteran who is tormented by his deeds during his tour of duty. Unfortunately, since the psychic ability popped up with a traumatic, near-death experience, Ted Cogan (played by Rob Lowe) is also tormented by the deeds of someone else. The ghost of someone who died while he was out of the country, as well as the ghosts of the family who died by delayed reaction to his command to fire a warning shot, are all following him.

The book, and original movie, were perfect just the way they were. They both had an incredible load of atmosphere to them. Every little nuance that they threw into the picture worked like a charm. They worked perfectly in the context that they were presented in. The original *Stir of Echoes* movie had a great cast that had a lot of chemistry together. That made the ghostly tale all the more believable. The soundtrack was the perfect mood setter and the camera and lighting work, although simplistic, ended up heightening the emotion of each individual shot.

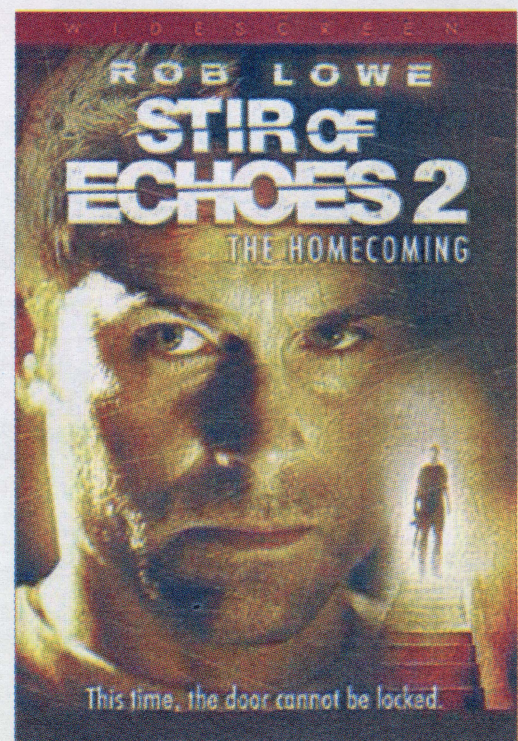
*Homecoming* is a different story though. Yes it is an adequate ghost story, telling tales of anger, regret and redemption. However, it could've been so much better. What worked in it was the intense level of guilt that was portrayed by Rob Lowe. The story was also one that gripped the mind. Lowe and the intelligent story were literally the saving grace of the movie. Also, things popped up that referenced things which were cut out of the original film's story, but were in the book. *Homecoming* was just mediocre. What they did right was dead on. What they did wrong ended up diminishing the film.

The cast was great, but the chemistry between the actors and actresses wasn't believable. The soundtrack was perfect for setting the mood, but it was misapplied at times. The story was intelligent, moving and unsettling like

a true horror movie should be, but camera work, lighting and a reliance on shock didn't make it quite as cohesive or unsettling as its predecessor. It works as a sequel but suffers the same problems as the stereotypical sequel.

The *Stir of Echoes* franchise is one of the best true horror franchises out there, and is worth the time of anyone who really wants to explore the psychic strain. Enjoy and open your mind once in a while. There's no telling how much more you will see.

If you want more information on psychic phenomena, or ghosts from unsolved mysteries and known crimes alike, you can contact Jonathan Gronli at [jon.gronli@gmail.com](mailto:jon.gronli@gmail.com)



Images courtesy of www.evolutionx.com



# Love & Life

Magda Dzialoszynska  
Staff Writer

The Grammy-nominated R&B singer Eric Benet has been around for almost a decade now, and his recently released fourth solo album is the work of a maturing artist. *Love & Life* is advertised as a comeback to his Wisconsin roots, a tried and tested production team, and the sounds of classic R&B, gospel and jazz that he grew up with. Benet claims that his previous albums all mirrored where he currently was in his life, and this one is no different. "I'm in a good place in my life and it's all reflected in these songs," according to Benet.

As the title suggests, Benet is living a life of love, and these are the two themes that inform most of the 12 tracks that make up his new album. *Love & Life* is a compilation of soulful, feel-good tunes, sung in the voice of someone who has been through a lot and has now finally discovered the joy of living. Too bad that such maturity often comes at the expense of creativity and artistic experimentation. Once you've listened to the album a couple of times it pretty much becomes a blur of mellow sounds, none particularly memorable.

Most of the songs, such as "Love Patience & Time", "Don't Let Go" or "Sing To Me" are just variations on those much-exploited musical and lyrical R&B motifs that we've been recently hearing from Kenny Lattimore, Craig David or even Usher, often with better result. Some others, including "Everlove", sung with Terry Dexter, or the first single

"You're the Only One", are very much in the classic soul vein of Luther Vandross or Lionel Richie, which seems a little outdated today. However by virtue of their catchy choruses, the latter together with "Weekend Girl" are potential ear-bugs, only of the annoying kind, unfortunately.

Once you're almost ready to put the album on a distant dust-covered shelf, you may still consider giving it a second shot. This pays off because, with time, you end up discovering some redeeming qualities in some of Benet's songs. There are no gems on *Love & Life*, but on closer inspection you will find a couple of nuanced tunes that might make it into your iPod music library for good. You might, for example, grow to appreciate the subtle Latin flavor of "Spanish Fly" or the groovy, gospel organs so prominent in "Chocolate Legs." "Iminluvwichoo", a duet with Hungary's Linda Kirally, may initially seem like just another sleek R&B tune, but the chorus, sung in a synthesized voice allows it to stand out. Although it may seem like a risky move and will not necessarily be appreciated by everyone, at least it is one instance of Eric Benet going off the beaten path.

If you spot *Love & Life* on the shelf of a music store, the cute face peering from the cover might very well



Image courtesy of www.ericbenet.net

trick you into buying the CD. I would think twice though. Although it might make for nice musical background for a laid-back evening at home or in a bubble bath, you may just as well tune into a smooth jazz/R&B radio station, without having to pay a cent. On the other hand, if you're into mellow, feel-good rhythms of all sorts and at all times – don't hesitate as you'll get just what you like.

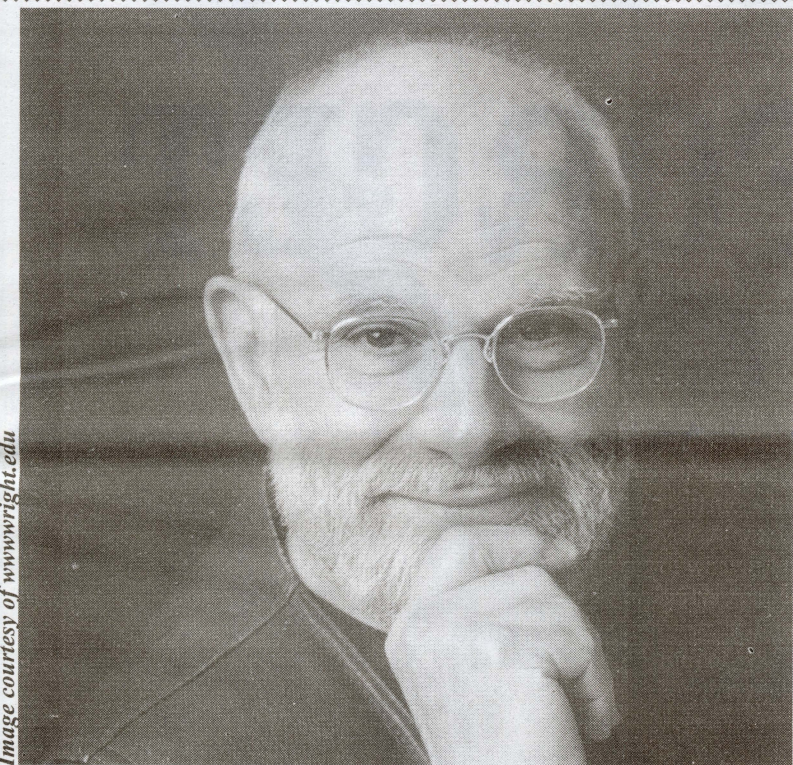


Image courtesy of www.wright.edu

## Love music? Here's why

by Jonathan Gronli  
Associate Editor

Oliver Sacks, a practicing physician and professor of neurology and psychiatry at Columbia University's medical school, recently released his newest book. *Musicophilia* is a study into why people love music, or why they can't seem to understand it.

Sacks follows his standard style of writing, putting case studies in a way that is easier to understand, and is ultimately more entertaining to people outside of the neurology and psychiatry fields. He presents each little anecdote that he brings up in a personal way that a lot of people can relate to. He also takes the time to put technical terms and conditions in layman's terms so that a reader who doesn't know anything about the field can understand.

He does refer to a lot of case studies that he, himself, had worked on, as well as material that he used in his nine previous books and manages to throw some fun little factoids into the mix. An example is in the chapter "Amusia and Dysharmonia." He brings up a notable revolutionary in the rush of stories about tone and rhythm

deafness. In the mix of stories, he brings up Ernesto "Che" Guevara being rhythm deaf and citing the example that Guevara was seen dancing a mambo while the orchestra played a tango.

Sacks covers quite a bit in this book, mixing in a lot of topics. He talks about different types of deafness. He adds in the onset of random pulls towards playing music, whether or not the person plays well. Whether it's musical hallucinations or just memory being enhanced by memory, it remains an intriguing topic that will grip any curious mind willing to venture into this book.

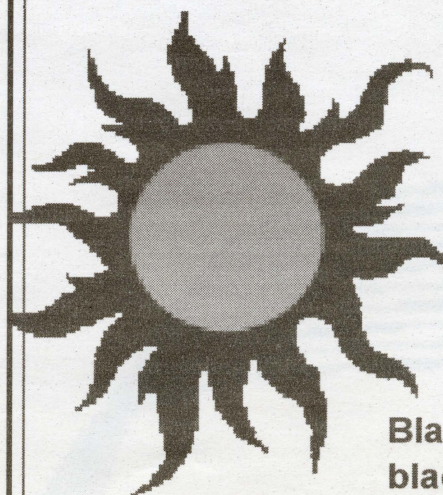
Sacks has a lot of humor, and loves the topic of music and its pull on our minds and hearts. It shows in the depth he is willing to go into the topic. The general tone of the writing borders on musical as well as in terms of the pacing and rhythm of the voice he gives through the page.

For lovers of music and the mind, this book is perfect. Even if you're only interested in music or the mind alone, this is a great book with a wealth of information that you'll love. There's no harm in adding this book to your collection.



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## FEATURES

# Latino(a) Cultural Center becoming a reality on NEIU campus

by Micah Roberson  
Features Editor

It appears there will soon be a Latino(a) Cultural and Resource Center on or nearby the NEIU campus. "After 20 years, the cultural center is becoming a reality," according to Xavier Luis Burgos, Chief Editor & Designer of 'Que Ondee Sola' magazine.

Union for Puerto Rican Students (UPRS) and 'Que Ondee Sola' magazine held a panel meeting and discussion during activity hour on Nov. 20, 2008 in CLS-1001 to discuss the upcoming opening of the cultural center. NEIU receives a large amount of state funding because of its "Hispanic Serving Institution" status that is recognized by the state. Latino(a) student groups desire to see a cultural center established to meet their specific needs using state funding.

Each panelist present for the discussion has a connection to UPRS, or is connected to the completion of the cultural house/center in some capacity. Panelists included Eduardo Arabu, Dr. Victor Ortiz, Ruthy Venegas, Erica Granados De La Rosa, Eric Lopez and John Rivera.

Ortiz, program coordinator for Latino & Latin American studies, stated the cultural center will provide students with "...exposure, experience and skills to be successful in society." Additionally he stated the center will provide the students with "...options, resources and opportunities to further goals."

Arabu, student trustee, Intercultural Initiative Committee, stated the "space and time for construction and the money for the project has to be used by June 2009." Arabu made it clear that the main problem is beating the time issue. Arabu stated that he wants to see a leadership program developed for

students to obtain skills to be successful in the real world. He also said the center will be an Africano resource center, an Asian resource center and a Latino(a) resource center.

Venegas, president of UPRS and Intercultural Initiative Committee, said "blueprints have been given each week." She also stated that she felt she wasn't taken seriously during some meetings about the new center.

Granados, a sociology student at Loyola University described the conditions of the room set aside for the cultural center at Loyola. She stated the center is actually a "room in a basement, it's difficult to access, no internet is available and there are only a few chairs and a table. There is no

*It's easier to seek help when you realize you come from the same background and community as the people who will be at the center."*

- Erica Granados  
UPRS Member

cable television and the room is being threatened to be taken away. Loyola doesn't practice Affirmative Action yet claims diversity. There are 170- 200 Latino students in a school of 15,000 students. There is a poor retention rate of black students." She also suggested to the audience to "educate yourself on why there should be or shouldn't be a cultural center." The NEIU's UPRS has intentions for a first rate center, a space far different from what Loyola offers.

Rivera, vice president of UPRS at UIC, discussed the benefits of having a cultural center from his experiences at

the cultural center at UIC, called "Lecture Center B or Latino Cultural Center." He stated that when NEIU receives its cultural center, movies can be shown like *Chicago's Puerto Rican Story*, you can have study sessions, UPRS meetings and movie nights at the Center.

Lopez, an NEIU Alumni and former president of ChiMexLa stated that last year he "initiated the process of the cultural center, met the NEIU President and stated the case for the cultural center" and that he was placed on the presidential steering committee. He stated the Cultural Center would acknowledge a different perspective, offer advising and counseling and engage students in ways that are not being done presently.

Possible locations for the center thus far are the second floor of the Student Union building, the second floor above Beck's Bookstore, or a house in the surrounding area.

There will be an upcoming meeting where blueprints will hopefully be approved and the process for construction of the center can begin in March 2009.

Burgos stated the "Latino center should be a dignifying space. It has to be more than a study area and event holding area. It will centralize programs and services and be a model; classes can be held there too."

Recruitment and retention at NEIU are statistical reasons for the center. Latino(a) students comprise 27.1 percent of the population and 41.4 percent of the incoming freshman class. Latino(a) faculty statistics are smaller. There are only 3 Latino(a) professors at NEIU.

Every panelist spoke passionately about the cultural center, which clearly answered the question "Why a cultural center?" At the beginning of the discussion, Erica Granados, a member of UPRS, handed me documents for the discussion and I took the opportunity to ask her about the need for a cultural center. She stated "It's easier to seek help when you realize you come from the same background and community as the people who will be at the center."

## Meet two vegetarians!

by Micah Roberson  
Features Editor

The Animal Rights Club, a new NEIU student group, is maintaining their momentum, as evidenced by their second bake sale and fundraiser held on Nov. 19, 2008 in Village Square.

For sale or donation were healthful vegetarian samosas from the Indian Student Association, taffy apples donated from the Anthropol club, and "Fair Trade" chocolate bars and delicious apples from Whole Foods (Sauganash). According to Regina Torres, president of the Animal Rights Club, "Whole Foods donated the items for the bake sale because the Animal Rights Club is environmentally friendly, promotes the vegan diet, and represents health and diet issues." Torres explained the inclusion of the items from the other student groups by stating that she was simply "working together with other groups to expand on resources for the bake sale and fund raiser."

Torres stated that the group will do-

nate a portion of their proceeds to a group called ARC, which is Chicago's Treehouse Foundation. Chicago's Treehouse Foundation is a "no kill" shelter specializing in the rehabilitation of sick, injured, abused and stray cats. Torres stated that the shelter "does not believe in euthanization."

When questioned about her dietary choice to be a vegetarian, Torres stated that "...ever since a child, I was more prone to eating vegetables than meat," and that she "became a vegetarian during adolescence." Also, she stated that as a chef she "saw a lot of disturbing things with meat."

Torres also was honest to admit that she took a one year break from vegetarianism due to the "culture and environment of a boyfriend." Also, she honestly stated that for her, vegetarianism wasn't an overnight choice. She stated that she had to consider what makes her happy,

what makes her feel good. Presently, she is paying attention to ways to improve her diet and lifestyle choice of being a vegetarian. She stated that being a vegetarian includes clothing choices and using sham-poos that don't test on animals.

When asked why she formed the Animals Rights Club, she stated that she "wanted to do something about animals beyond just caring about them, and there wasn't a student group at NEIU that addressed this."

Also, I spoke with the club co-founder, known as Charlie. Charlie became a vegetarian two-and-a-half years ago after he "realized there's no difference between killing animals and people, ethically, it's the same." He stated that his two main reasons for wanting to co-found the club was that he was already interested in animal rights and that he wanted a club like this to exist on campus.

Charlie wants people to be logically

consistent, meaning that people who think that they are good people should apply their goodness to animals too.

Charlie has strong philosophical beliefs about vegetarianism and how the diet relates to people and their choices. Charlie stated that he doesn't argue with people who believe in cruelty to animals and people and that people who believe in cruelty to animals should not be allowed to hold prominent positions in major corporations. "It's a matter of ethics," according to Charlie. Charlie plans to write a book about the vegetarian diet and to explain his other views.

If you would like to meet two fun and interesting people, attend an Animal Rights Club meeting. Introduce yourself to Torres or "Charlie," but don't ask them if they want to go with you to have a burger. For Feb. 2009, the group is planning an event with the Green Cycle Group, an environmentally conscious campus group.



# Did you donate blood?

by Micah Roberson  
Features Editor

For a variety of reasons, donated blood is necessary. Accidents and organ transplants are just two examples that may require a person to receive blood from someone else.

On Nov. 25, in Alumni Hall, FHP (Future Health Professionals) and SGA (Student Government Association) offered a blood drive for students at NEIU's main campus.

In addition to snacks, free t-shirts were available and there was a drawing for an ipod. David Benjaih is the current webmaster for FHP and is a Student Government senator. Previously, Benjaih has functioned as the FHP president (two years), the vice president (one year) and the treasurer (one year). Benjaih explained that FHP was originally called Future Physicians Society and then became all inclusive, accepting members with interests in becoming chiropractors, nurses, veterinarians or other health related fields.

Benjaih explained that blood drives are

done minimally every 56 days. "The group does five drives every year, and the drives are scheduled with the greatest frequency of donor availability and student convenience, we avoid finals. So, it's done early and late in the semester and the last one was Sept. 22 and the next one is sometime between Jan. 20 or 28, 2009," stated Benjaih.

"The Sept. 22 drive was a two day event," according to Benjaih. "November and January are one day drive events, and the late March or early April drive is a two day drive, and will occur after spring break. There will be another blood drive in late June or July, which will be a one day event."

On a table at the entrance of the blood drive event was a booklet that contained information about restricted donors and the reasons why

blood couldn't be accepted. Then there was an interview prior to the extraction of blood. According to Benjaih, people who have been in countries with infectious diseases

in the last year and most Europeans can't donate blood due to mad cow disease." If someone has

visited a country with known infectious diseases, there's a latency period of one year after being in an area with infectious diseases.

To get people to donate blood, Benjaih uses a salesman's approach. He stated that you just have to contact people, and it's a matter of

getting out there and talking to people. He said that personal contact gets a response and the impulse buying approach is more effective, meaning when someone can donate blood immediately after saying they will is more effective than pre-recruiting, which is when the group sets appointments for blood donations in Village Square two to three days before the actual drive.

It is apparent that Benjaih is passionate about what he does and his passion is conveyed while he stands in the hallway and attempts to get people to donate blood. Benjaih agrees that he does have a passion for it and enjoys doing it. It's a great expedient to saving lives. 80 percent of all persons in the first world will require a blood transfusion before death, and only five percent of persons in the first world donate blood.

The FHP has made progress since their first blood drive five years ago. At the first blood drive, they received blood from seven donors. At this particular blood drive, FHP set a low goal of 35 donors. They received 42 donors, and exceeded their goal. The FHP here at NEIU and the University of Chicago are both close in terms of having the most donors.

**"80 percent of all persons in the first world will require a blood transfusion before death."**

- David Benjaih  
FHP President

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# International Day — November 20, 2008

By Tracy Ellen & Michael McNelly  
Photographers

by Tracy Ellen &  
Michael McNelly  
Staff Photographers

International Day is an opportunity for ethnic clubs and groups from Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) to partake in different cultures and to share each other's music and friendship as a family. The 33<sup>rd</sup> annual International Day Festival took place in Alumni Hall at the Student Union on Thursday, Nov. 20, 2008.

International Day was set up with tables around the room from the Polish Club, Chinese Club, French Club, Spanish Club, Korean Club, Black Heritage Club, the Hillel Club, and a table representing Alpha Psi Lambda, a Co-ed fraternity. International Day also had entertainment with acts from the Palestinian Dabkah, Urban Sankofa, Ensemble Espanol and an international fashion show. The drum beats of Urban Sankofa filled people's faces with smiles.

The international fashion show also showed a different side. A delegate from each club represented their ethnic group with the clothing they would wear in their country. Although there were many controversies about the winners, the judges made their decision. First place went to Michalina Maliszewska, an exchange student at NEIU and member of the Polish Club.

"I knew I was going to win because we are always prepared," said Maliszewska after winning the international fashion show.

Even though many people rooted for, Krzysztof Weylicki, the "Cookie," he didn't win.

"I always feel like a winner!" said Weylicki, an exchange student from Poland at NEIU.

Other events included two types of opera performances. Xiao Li Wang, a NEIU graduate student and community member, gracefully sang, while Ye Suh Yoon, a NEIU graduate student, beautifully sang Um Ma Ya Noo Na (*Mom and Sister*), as well as a piece by Handel called Lacia Chica Pianga. Other Asian-related events consisted of a traditional Korean fan dance, performed by Yoo Jin Ha in traditional garb, called Pu Chae Choom, to the beat of a modern Korean pop song. The Indian Student Association (ISA) also grouped together for a dance show they choreographed over the past couple of months.

More singing and music was involved as well. The French Club gathered together on stage to sing L'amour est Bleu (*Love is Blue*). The President of the French Club, Amanda Rzany, played a tune with skill on the piano. In addition, the Black Heritage Gospel Choir belted out harmonious melodies to Keep on Making a Way and Magnify.

The Ensemble Espanol executed a magnificent dancing performance. There were skillful movements of the feet and body to the beats of Flamenco music. The members wore Flamenco formal wear, and showed great enthusiasm and joy while dancing. There were variations in their dancing, from the ladies' performance of a trio while the others clapped in the background, to the gentlemen flaring their matador capes around while the crowd wowed and applauded in amusement.

During intermission, some came to perform their acts again to keep the crowd interested and entertained. The crowd consisted of various students and community members as well as members of the faculty. There were many NEIU foreign exchange students who attended and appeared to enjoy International Day. Hostess Mariya Yordanova, delivered a great deal of effort to please the crowd and hosted a spectacular show.



Photo by Victoria Tullock



Photo by Tracy Ellen



Photo by Michael McNelly



Photo by Michael McNelly



# Sports Rec

## Cyril Nichols - The NEIU Golden Eagles men's basketball team head coach

by Florin Trinca-Pasat  
Staff Writer

The NEIU men's basketball team is back and for good this time around. There have been little to no attempts to find an individual with a strong will, passion, love for the game of basketball, character, experience and the necessary wisdom to restart the long awaited men's basketball program at NEIU. It is with great respect that I introduce to the entire university an individual I had the pleasure to meet and interview, the Golden Eagles Head Coach.

**Coach can you state your name and tell us about your background experience in basketball?**

My name is Cyril Nichols (everybody just calls me "Coach"). I played high school basketball at Wells High school here in Chicago, college basketball in the late 80's. I had a good career. I have been blessed to be given the opportunity to coach at various universities and under some of the best coaches in this country. I have been a part of NCAA Division 1 basketball camps, NBA Basketball Clinics and also coached guys that are currently playing overseas. Enough about me because it's not really about me – it's about these students being successful. Basketball gave a lot to me and I love coaching and being a part of these guys, and other students, that come around and actively participate with the program.

**What made you come to NEIU and restart a men's basketball program?**

I really believe that where you are

in life is where you are supposed to be. At the time I was thinking about coaching in Chicago. With my background I probably could have coached at a couple of different places, but one of the alumni that played here at NEIU in the 80's when the program was NCAA Division 1, said to me one day: "why don't you go and start the program at NEIU?" We had talked about it for a while and he said, "you should just go and see the campus and just think about it." One day I was driving by the campus coming from a meeting and I stopped by and I knew this was the place for me to coach.

**How did you know the school didn't have a basketball program?**

Alumni mentioned it to me.

**How is the Basketball Program going to benefit the school and the students at NEIU now and in the future?**

Well, I don't have a crystal ball or a time machine, but I know that sports at the college level provides outlets for the players and the students. College athletics can create and should create positive outlets that will create an environment of positive energy through hard work for the players. For the student body that comes to be a part of the athletic atmosphere it creates a sense of pride and also it's an outlet for camaraderie and celebration. All in all, the student and the student athlete is a part of the whole of NEIU whether you are a player, fan, administrator or faculty.

**What is it going to take to have a successful program in place?**

Well, the fact that we have a team, is a success. In order for us to continue to grow then of course we have to put together a comprehensive plan that will involve administration, staff and alumni support.

**Coach what do you think of your current team now and their progress?**

Wow, hey, I would not trade our team (NEIU). This is all of our team, not my team; we are a reflection of this institution. If we play at another school we will represent our institution with pride and respect, win or lose. For a team that only practices for three days a week and one of the days we have a full team practice, and the other day we only get one hour (the facility closes early on Friday), these guys have picked up a Division 1 basketball program. That is almost unrealistic to think a bunch of guys that never played at this level with limited practices could retain this much information. We won our first game out of four and one of those games we lost in the last minute and the other games we were able to compete in. Also, understand that I coach these guys at a college level. I am tough on these guys on and off the court. Off the court, these guys understand that graduation is priority, being in class is priority, participating in class and getting involved at NEIU is in their best interest. I believe in student first, then athlete. I emphasize respect for yourself and your institution. Treat people with respect and be on time for class. I know this program has helped some of these guys already and some of these guys just need a push or a person that will advise and tell them the truth.

**What would you say to the faculty and administration?**

This is a great opportunity for everyone to get involved and build an atmosphere where students and administration can come out and cheer and hang out with each other outside of the classroom. The team has raised money through raffles to buy gym shoes and we are going to keep being creative to raise money so that we represent the school with pride. The recreation department has been supportive of this team. They purchased uniforms and pay for the referees and other expenses. We still need shooting

shirts and warm ups, meal money for away games and travel expenses, etc. We will just keep working and keep the faith. We know now in these tough economic times that we have to be creative to raise money. We also just need to recognize the opportunity that we have is somewhat of an obligation to serve the student population and the institution in various areas so that the campus community can at least have the opportunity to go and be involved in a game, play, talent show etc. I say, just remember that we are here for the STUDENTS, our future and this country's future depends on them. Let's all make this college experience just as good as any other college experience in the nation.

**Lastly, if there is one thing you could say to the students at NEIU what would it be?**

Come out and support the team, e-mail us or check on our Web site ([neiubasketball.com](http://neiubasketball.com)) if you want to get involved with the team. We would love to hear from you. The games are fun; we have a DJ, an announcer and hopefully a mascot soon. We could use a dance team, cheerleaders and special half time show events. We had our first raffle winner, Marci Torres and we will do another one soon. Come out and support your NEIU basketball team and have some fun.

I want to thank Coach Nichols for his time. When many have failed yet one finds and sees success in individuals, regardless of experience, a miracle is about to take place. It is a great time for this university to come together as one and support each other and the newly restarted men's basketball program. Here is the opportunity to participate and be part of the big picture whether you're a student, faculty or an administrator, it benefits all of us as one. GO NEIU GOLDEN EAGLES!!!

## CLASSIFIEDS

**Indoor farmer's markets extend the season for small farmers**

**First Evangelical Free Church is hosting a farmer's market December 7, 2008**

First Evangelical Free Church's Green Urban Living Class will host this indoor farmer's market on Sunday, December 7<sup>th</sup>, from 12 noon to 3 pm. The church and CCLP will also simultaneously host an a la carte café with fair trade coffee and items made from seasonal and local ingredients from the participating farm vendors. First Evangelical Free Church is located at 5255 N. Ashland Avenue. For more information about the Winter Farmer's Markets & Meals for Hope, including all Chicago-area dates and locations, please refer to [www.localharvest.org/farmers-markets/M19510](http://www.localharvest.org/farmers-markets/M19510). For more information about First Evangelical Free Church, please refer to [www.firstfree.com](http://www.firstfree.com) or call 773-561-4175.



Limit one ad per person/organization per issue. Ads must be 20 words or less. There is a 25 cent charge for each word over 20 words.\* All classified ads must be ordered in person at the Independent office in E-049. For more information, please call T.C. Chung, business manager, at 773-442-4585.

Name:

NEIU I. D. #:

Run Date (s):

Today's Date:

## Classified Ads Policy

Limit one ad per person/organization per issue. Student Ads of 20 words or less are free.\* There is a 25 cent charge for each word over 20 words.

All classified ads must be ordered in person at the Independent office in E-049. For more information, please call Teddy Chung, business manager, at 773-442-4585.

**Alpha Psi Lambda  
R.I.G.H.T.E.O.U.S Rho Chapter  
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**\$5.00 General Admission  
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**Northeastern Illinois University  
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**Alumni Hall  
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6:30-8:30 p.m.**

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