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Sophia Wisniewska will leave her position as head of Pennsylvania State University’s Brandywine campus to assume the role of USF St. Petersburg’s new regional chancellor on July 1.

Wisniewska, 61, was one of 74 candidates for the position. In an email to USFSP students and faculty, USF President Judy Genshaft, who had the final say in appointing a chancellor, said she believes Wisniewska “has the experience and vision to continue the tremendous progress we have witnessed at USF St. Petersburg.”

In a phone interview on March 21, Wisniewska said she will spend her first few months on campus drafting a strategic plan that will serve as the blueprint for the next five years. Having only visited the campus a few times and living more than 1,000 miles away, the Russian language and literature scholar knows she’ll have her work cut out to remove large pieces of debris from the water.

“I was wondering why more wasn’t done,” Henry said. “But imagine right after. I was humbled. I wasn’t quick to say they should do this or they should do that.”

None of the students on the trip knew what to expect. “We were all excited and curious,” she said.

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Wisniewska is new regional chancellor
Conference aims to inform

By Jane McInnis
CROW’S NEXT CORRESPONDENT

U.S. ambassadors, journalists and a three-star general will make their way to USF St. Petersburg this week, opening conversation on issues from abroad and at home.


"It was not for academics or diplomats or anybody to sort of strut their stuff; it was done for educational purposes for the local people, and that was the stated goal," McElhaney said.

The conference grew substantially each year with public interest and today is the largest of its kind with topics ranging from the "DIY Hipster Economy" to the future of world recession. It boasts discussion panelists such as Ted Turner and Arianna Huffington. Roger Ebert, an avid supporter of the conference, was quoted for saying the conference was the first place he had ever heard of feminism, black power, gay rights and a powerful discussion about the Internet.

McElhaney was a panelist at the conference last year. He now lives in St. Petersburg after retiring in 2007 from being a U.S. ambassador to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

His committee is built on the belief that an informed public is crucial to a democratic society. They began planning the conference a year ago, calling on friends from Washington, D.C. and beyond to speak about issues they care about. McElhaney explained the committee was developed "on a shoestring," with all speakers coming to St. Petersburg on their own dime.

"It’s different from people reading prepared statements and articles," said Thomas Smith, director of USFSP’s Honors Program, which is co-sponsoring the event.

"The idea behind the conference is to bring together people who don’t usually talk to each other about international affairs on a panel and see what transpires," he said, emphasizing the freewheeling atmosphere of the event.

"The two-day event offers a broad selection of nine topics ranging from America’s energy policy to the future of world recession. While it was suggested that McElhaney market the event by gimmicks or bringing in a celebrity to garner attention, that wasn’t what he was looking for. "Famous people have a whole lot of reason not to be frank about some things. What I want is for people on panels to talk openly about different issues — about energy efficiency, about Latin America, about diplomacy — because that’s how people can really get a peek into stuff."

Admission is free; at least 200 seats will be available on first-come, first-serve basis. McElhaney recognizes students have class schedules, but welcomes them to drop in during discussions throughout the day. Audience participation is encouraged, with time set aside for questions and comments to open up the discussion.

The conference began in 1948 in Boulder, Colo., as the Conference on World Affairs, by a University of Colorado Boulder professor who wanted to expand the public knowledge of the 20,000 citizens in the city.

news@crowsneststpete.com

It’s important for people to see

Continued from front page

It’s been six years since the category five hurricane made landfall in Louisiana and devastated the city of New Orleans. In total, 1,464 died in Louisiana from the storm. Henry says that made the trip worth it. "You wake up with a lot lessBs" he said. "You wake up with a lot less headaches."

The downtown area may not look like it was ever flooded, but areas like the Ninth Ward are still devastated. "It’s important for people to see for themselves," Henry said. "To meet the people who experienced it, that were there."

At one point, a professor from Tulane University stopped by to tell the USFSP students that they were helping to restore faith in young people. "You meet the people who care about them," Henry said. "You care about them."

She recommends students go on an alternative spring break rather than the traditional one. They will get a lot more out of it, she said. "You wake up with a lot less headaches."

news@crowsneststpete.com
**Students want better dining choices**

**By Amanda Starling**
**Staff Reporter**

The Dining Services Committee will soon reveal new dining options for the 2013-2014 school year, aiming to increase affordability and variety at the Reef.

Sodexo and Student Government representatives met March 21 to discuss accessibility of campus meals. The committee agreed that students needed an incentive to purchase meal plans through the enhancement of current options or an increased variety.

Use of meal plans for fall 2012 was at 41 percent for Gold and 63 percent for Green — meaning a lot of wasted money for students.

Surveys conducted by Sodexo showed that convenience and taste were the top dining priorities for the 167 participating students. They also desired settings similar to Chick-III-A, Panera Bread and Subway. Over 130 of the 167 students said they'd be willing to spend more on a meal plan if it meant a better dining experience.

Meal plan costs will increase by 3.3 percent next semester as per the contract, despite the university’s 17 percent revenue accruing from Sodexo commission.

“We shouldn't necessarily have to pay to keep Sodexo profitable while the university is also taking a cut,” said Lazard Anderson, director of SG's University, Community and Government Relations.

Anderson presented a memorandum for Sodexo to consider for meal plans. Proposed options included a “declining balance” system and an alternative meal plan system with “light” and “premium” options. The light option would run “$250 less than the standard rate.” A premium meal plan would be “$250 more than the standard rate.”

The “declining balance” would include individually priced items. Meal options would be priced like “Shark Bites” and any unused meals would be able to be used at another meal, rather than being skipped. Gold plans would drop from 336 to 330 meals a semester while Green Plans would rise from 110 to 187 meals a semester. Reef meal combos would shift to a standard $6 price plus tax.

“The goal is to make a better deal for the students, not Sodexo,” said Josef Rill, assistant director of auxiliary services.

Sodexo representatives voiced concern over this memorandum, particularly with regard to revenue loss on campus. They said enacting the light and premium meal plans options for 50 students would lead to a $25,000 revenue difference. Regardless, light and premium plans may be considered for spring 2014.

“It’s our second year in this and it’ll take a few years to work out the bugs,” said Heather Klisanin, residence community manager.

New food venues have been proposed for fall 2013, including a WOW Cafe and Wingery in the Coquina Club. The sports bar atmosphere would accept meal plans and Shark Bites. Renovations, a student job fair and training for the restaurant would be all held over the summer. It has also been suggested that Red Mango be replaced with a cafe such as Panera Bread. The proposals have drawn concern from off-campus staples the Tavern and the Grind.

“They have something unique to bring to campus. We don’t want to stomp on [the Tavern and the Grind] but work around them,” said Julie Jakway, of Administrative and Financial Services.

Summer meal plan options will be decided Monday, March 26.

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**Messy election headed to trial**

**By Mike Hopey**
**Staff Reporter**

Students will finally find out who will represent them as president next year on Friday, April 5. That will be the date that the Student Government Supreme Court will hold a trial to decide if the violations against the winning campaign of Mark Lombardi-Nelson and Christa Hegedus will be assessed.

The violations were originally illegally assessed after the election, though rules state they must be assessed as they occur. The mistake allowed Lombardi-Nelson and Hegedus to win the election. The trial won’t be to assess the validity of the charges, but whether or not they should be assessed.

A ruling in favor of reassessing the points would mean James Richards and Jordan Iuliucci would win the election by default. Richards requested the trial. The Election Rules Commission, led by Supervisor of Elections Vincent DeCosmo, will be the defendant in the trial.

The winning campaign sent a mass text message after the trial's announcement asking for support.

“They are trying to reassess the points that were unjustly given to Christa and I in the first place. We need as many people as possible to fill [University Student Center] ballroom 3 with our support. Please tell anyone and everyone to be there,” read the message, sent from Lombardi-Nelson’s phone.

Lombardi-Nelson said he disagrees with the charges because his campaign was not given time to correct the mistakes. He said they also deserved recognition of his plan to offer voters coupons to the Tavern, and that DeCosmo knew about the activities in his campaign that were later declared illegal.

In one instance, Lombardi-Nelson said DeCosmo told him not to worry about campaign stickers that were put on a banner paid for with activities and service fees. Campaigning with A&S-funded materials is a violation of campaign rules.

“One week he said they were unfair,” Richards said in an online interview. "He's not going to just admit to it. He knows that the charges are accurate. The ball isn't in his court though, the case is against the ERC."

It is unclear what supporters for the Lombardi-Nelson/Hegedus ticket will be able to contribute to the proceedings. A request to DeCosmo went unanswered at time of publication.

Shortly before Nelson-Lombardi sent this text message to supporters, he took to Facebook to thank those supporters and announce his unofficial win.

“I am ecstatic to announce that I have been re-elected to continue to serve as your Student Body President,” he wrote on Tuesday. “I know that this role is a Great responsibility and I will continue to give my all to make this University a better place.”

Lombardi-Nelson went on to assert the violations were false.

“We are prepared and we are ready to prove that the allegations against us are both false and unjust,” he wrote.

The Richards/Iuliucci ticket reiter-ated on their Facebook page soon after that the trial was between Richards and the Election Rules Commission.

“There are rumors going around about the allegations being false, when this in fact is not true,” the post read. “If it were a matter of truth follow the crossing ticket would be the defendant, not the ERC. The allegations are very accurate and were not dealt with properly during the election, so they must be taken care of in the manner of a court hearing.”

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**New chancellor has ‘open door policy’**

Continued from front page

But before making any big decisions, she said she will need to learn about all the risks and opportunities of the expansion.

In her new position, Wisniewska will oversee a student population nearly three times as large as PSU Brandywine’s. She said she hopes she won’t require too much training.

Along with 30 years of experience in higher education, Wisniewska plans to bring her “energy and enthusiasm” to USFSP. She has previously described herself to The Crow’s Nest as a Pink Floyd nut and health enthusiast.

She is most looking forward to building on the strengths of the institution and getting to know the students. She hopes student organizations will invite her to their meetings and events to help her get to know everyone.

Wisniewska said she has had an “open-door policy” in each of her previous jobs, at PSU and Temple University Ambler. She said USFSP students will always know where to find her.

Something as simple as walking into the cafeteria yields a lot of helpful information about the students, she said — an ideal she shares with Interim Regional Chancellor Bill Hogarth, who gained popularity through his frequent visits to the Reef.

Once a year at PSU, Wisniewska held an open forum with no agenda in which she asked students what changes they’d like to see on campus. She also sat down with Student Government leaders at the beginning of each semester to discuss their goals and how to accomplish them. The incoming chancellor for USFSP students can expect the same courtesy from her in the fall.

The Supreme Court also announced it will hold a hearing on April 12 to determine the legality of the elections themselves. SG elections were moved up earlier this year to be at the same time as the rest of the USF system. This would allow the USFSP president to be eligible to represent the whole system in Tallahassee.

The change in date required an amendment to the Student Government constitution. An amendment was approved in the election but would not take effect until 2014. The hearing will determine if the elections are valid this year.

A request for clarification about the exact consequences of the April 12 hearing were unanswered by the ERC.
11 years later, only music remains

Twelve things you missed if you didn't attend the Honda Grand Prix last weekend:

1. race a-running,
2. 1.8 miles of very dirty sidewalk,
3. 2 days of Budweiser drinking,
4. 3 days of awful traffic, and people whizzing by in annoying little carts,
5. 4 speeding fines, for trying to imitate the drivers after the race,
6. 5 pounds of weight gained from "delicious" concession stand food,
7. 6 piles of roadkill (Who didn't tell the possums about the race?)
8. 7 hours of buzzing, louder than an army of mutant mosquitoes,
9. 8 dollars (or more) for parking, miles away from your destination,
10. 9 arrests for indelent exposure that also caused nine incidents of blindness,
11. 10 dollar special at the Dali (because Indy Car enthusiasts love them some fine arts),
12. 11 tons of litter, scattered about the city, and
13. 1,200 rednecks.
14. 14 turns,
15. 25 cars.

The Indy cars were here, and you missed it. Oh, the sorrow.

By Ryan Ballogg
Staff Reporter

Eric Douthirt doesn't look much like he did 11 years ago when he first set foot on campus as an undergraduate.

His long musician's hair has been cropped short, he wears a shirt and tie and there is a noticeable lack of earrings where there used to be some. For him, the changes have occurred almost imperceptibly.

As an undergraduate studying psychology, Douthirt was more serious about music than anything else in life. He played guitar in a band called Disfunktion straight out of high school.

"That's really when I got addicted to playing music," Douthirt said. "I realized 'this is always going to be something that I'm doing.' I started chancing the dream at that point. School was important to me, but I always had this what if — I'm willing to drop everything else if music takes off for me."

Looking back, he considers Disfunktion a warm-up round that helped him to get to know the music scene and club owners.

Awhile after Disfunktion went defunct, he joined a more serious endeavor in 2003, when he was about halfway through his undergraduate studies. The band was called Weak Sauce, and they were famous — at least in St. Petersburg.

With a sound that Douthirt describes as Sublime meets Incubus, they played sold out shows at State Theatre every few months, and toured around Florida some weekends.

"Weak Sauce was the big confidence builder. It was no longer that we were at the mercy of club owners," he said. "We had a little more power, a little more say. As long as you have enough people, you have the power. That's when as a local band you can do pretty well."

A key strategy they figured out was not overplaying in the area.

"It's almost economics. If you reduce the supply you can increase the price. It came to the point where we played only once every four or five months in town, but we would sell out State Theatre," Douthirt said.

Myspace introduced the band's music to so many people that they didn't recognize most of the crowd at their shows. But they were singing along to every song. For Douthirt, those were the moments made it worth it.

The band remained incredibly busy, all the time. Douthirt wanted to give music a fair shot. After finishing his bachelor's degree, he worked full time for a couple years to support his dream. The band recorded a full-length album, "Nightmares and Daydreams", as well as an EP and a live album.

Eventually though, he said, his bandmates ran out of steam. Despite their local success, they were either breaking even or losing money when they traveled, and their fan base had hit a plateau. The lead singer said something about calling it off and the others grudgingly agreed that it was time. Weak Sauce disbanded in 2007.

"We were just exhausted. We had our personality issues and whatever, but that's ultimately what did it."

Douthirt took some to recharge, and started thinking about a career outside of music a little more seriously. He never saw himself as the business school type, but started meeting people in the profession and realized it might work out for him. With expanded horizons, Douthirt applied and got into the MBA program, while continuing to work in the admissions department. "I took the leap to explore things outside of my comfort zone and found out that I really enjoy it," he said.

Douthirt let music take a back seat in his life, but about six months after Weak Sauce broke up, he had a realization.

"Having a musical outlet is basically an essential part of me," Douthirt said.

Along with Paul and Brad, the drummer and trumpet player from Weak Sauce, Eric joined forces with two friends from another band called Soulfind that had also just broken up. This time, everyone involved was on board just to have fun. They decided to call themselves Rise of Saturn.

"We've gotten together once this year, and it was just to rehearse. Everyone in the band has so many things going on, it's turned into much more of a hobby. Sort of like our social life whenever can," Douthirt said. "We're not out there pounding the pavement."

"[Music] keeps me sane at the end of the day. In any way, shape or form, and even if I don't have time for a band. Just me, a keyboard, guitar and computer."

Rise of Saturn has recorded one album, "Sex, Drugs, and Comic Books."

"Rise of Saturn ended up being pretty weird," Douthirt said. "I had no idea what it was going to turn into. We're much more like whatever goes. We actually have two drummers, so that's different."

Music remains his creative outlet, but Douthirt has his mind on other things these days.

"I'll always have music. Not having it is not good for me. But I just got married in October, and we're talking starting family soon," he said. "My focus has changed, and that is a big motivation for me now. I'm a completely different person than when I was an undergrad."

Now, as an assistant director in the Office of Admissions, his job is to try and attract students to USF St. Petersburg. It is a very different place than when he started. As with the changes in his personal life, they were so gradual that he didn't always realize they were happening.

"Some days I think about, and other days its second nature," Douthirt said. "I prefer the bigger feel, I prefer the energy. I'm responsible for bringing in students, so it makes my job a little easier, too."

For Douthirt, it doesn't feel like so much time has passed. And he has some advice for students who are in a similar position to the one he was in back then.

"My advice is to be willing to step outside of your comfort zone. You might be surprised what interests and energizes you," Douthirt said.

"[Music] keeps me sane at the end of the day," he said. "In any way, shape or form, and even if I don't have time for a band. Just me, a keyboard, guitar and computer."

For more about Rise of Saturn, visit riseofsaturn.com.

arts@crowsneststpete.com
This isn’t our St. Pete

“Spring Breakers” isn’t a movie; it’s a colorful mind-numbing experience. Director Harmony Korine (“Kids”, “Trash Humpers”) brings audiences into his depraved re-imagination of St. Petersburg for the next 90 minutes. After a lengthy opening party montage set to Skrillex’s “Scary Monsters and Nice Sprites”, the movie cuts to stars Selena Gomez (“Hotel Transylvania”), Vanessa Hudgens (“Sucker Punch”), Ashley Benson (“Pretty Little Liars”) and Rachel Korine (“Trash Humpers”) as college students far away from the party frustrated with their lives in need of their own spring break adventure.

Gomez is the stereotypically religious member of the group of friends who finds herself along for the ride, despite her friends’ terrible influences. There is a degree of fun to be had seeing Disney girls (Gomez and Hudgens) go bad. Eventually the group manages to gather money for a spring break trip (through not so legal means) and make their way down to our very own St. Petersburg, though not one that we’re familiar with. It’s at that point where the movie becomes a prolonged music video, with lots of shots of extras partying, drinking, smoking pot, getting naked and snorting cocaine.

It sounds gratuitous, that’s because it is. But at the same time, its hypnotic — the editing, cinematography and music are absorbing in these scenes. For those who disapprove of the content, at least admire the filmmaking.

When things do go wrong for the four leads, James Franco (“Oz the Great and Powerful”), fully committed to his role as the rapper named Alien, comes into the picture to bail them out. This is when the director finally finds his story again and sends these characters down a darker path. It’s interesting for a while, but the movie loses its fast pacing and the director’s habit of letting scenes repeat themselves becomes bothersome. The film loses manages to lose its grounded tone entirely in its preposterous fever dream-like climax. And the only thought left by the end of the movie is, “What was that?”

It’s hard to tell someone if he or she will like “Spring Breakers.” Some will call it trash, others might appreciate it for showing something not often seen in movies. “Spring Breakers” is, at the very least, worth seeing at some point as long as you have an idea of what you’re getting into.

“You can take the man out of the army but you can’t take the army out of the man.” - George S. Patton

The Croods are a caveman family made up of a rebellious daughter, an overprotective father, a brainless brother, a caring mother, a wild child and a crotchety mother-in-law, and they are here to entertain any child that might find “The Flintstones” a little too ancient. The voice cast Emma Stone (“The Amazing Spiderman”), Nicolas Cage (“Ghost Rider: Spirit of Vengeance”), Clarke Duke (“Sex Drive”), Catherine Keener (“The 40-Year-Old Virgin”) and Cloris Leachman (“Raising Hope”), do great voice work in their respective roles.

As a family man, overprotective father Crug has done his best to keep his family safe in their cave despite his daughter Eep’s desire to wander around. It’s at that point where the movie becomes a prolonged numbing experience.

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“Olympus Has Fallen” is a movie so patriotic that it practically bleeds red, white and blue.

We find our lead characters dealing with the fallout from a tragedy that took place 18 months before when Korean extremists suddenly execute a plan to take over the White House. This attack involves a lot of heavy artillery on the ground and a gunship in the sky, leaving a countless amount of dead bodies.

The filmmakers rely on emotionally charged imagery to invest audiences in wanting to see the villains get what’s coming to them: countless American civilian deaths, the destruction of famous American monuments and the American flag filled with bullet holes getting tossed onto the ground (in slow motion). To a degree it is effective, but it is hard to forget how ridiculous the whole affair is.

Once the president, played by Aaron Eckhart (“The Dark Knight”), is taken to the bunker below the White House by the extremists, it’s up to the miraculous sole survivor of the initial White House assault to save him. The former presidential bodyguard, Mike Banning (played by Gerard Butler of “300” fame) does so mostly in hopes of redeeming himself for his failure in the movie’s opening.

As day becomes night and the power goes out in the White House, Banning has to rely on his special forces training to take out the enemies one-by-one. It’s at this point the movie starts to eerily feel like the first “Die Hard” movie.

Meanwhile, with the president and vice president (ahem) tied up, the speaker of the house (Morgan Freeman, “The Dark Knight Rises”) becomes that acting president and instructs Banning about what he needs to do while slowly figuring out what the extremist are trying to accomplish.

It’s easy to write off “Olympus” as a dumb action film with it’s over the top scenarios, cheesy one-liners and ridiculous premise, but it’s hard not to be attached to these characters. The main villain, Kang (Rick Yune, “The Man with the Iron Fists”), is an effective bad guy and has no issue adding more Americans to film’s already ridiculous body count.

The biggest flaw of the movie is its nighttime setting, which makes some of the action hard to see, but a nice explosion every now and then lights up the screen well enough.
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6 editorial

The freedom to not be a jerk

Here's something obvious: the new dorms in the University Student Center are nicer than the slightly older ones in Residence Hall One. In RHO, the furniture is a little bit worn. Sometimes there are leaks and carpets need to be replaced or removed. It's not unlike the difference between the back corner of a Salvation Army and a shiny showroom at IKEA.

Obviously, those differences will diminish as the USC's shininess wears down to a dull luster as the lives of thousands of students move through. And RHO will get more than a few makeovers before it's knocked down to make room for something bigger and better. But for now, it's hard to argue that the two dorms are equal.

Here's something that should be obvious, but apparently isn't: both on-campus housing options deserve equal respect. Some students treat RHO like they're on some sort of perpetual spring break — like Harmony Korine's vision of St. Petersburg actually exist, and it's on this campus. The students who come to school to learn are roomed with the students who come for the "college experience," that mythical panacea of endless partying that doesn't exist within 50 miles of campus. There have been complaints about urine in the hallways, vomit in the elevator and furniture gone missing, only to turn up in a student's room a few days later.

It's true, you pay a decent amount to live in those spaces for your quarters might not be up to your expectations. It's true, you have certain inalienable rights that RA's and administrators sometimes encroach on.

But other people pay to live there, too. And they didn't sign up for your messes. Your irresponsibility. Your devil-may-care—because-I-don't-live-with-my-parents-anymore attitude.

Here's something not obvious at all until you're out of school and jobless, like so many of us are: you need to do better.

You've heard in a million times before. Or maybe you haven't heard it at all. But you need to be involved in college to get a job when you're done. The piece of paper with your name and a golden seal will crack a door or two, but it's your accomplishments that will really throw them open.

Sure, a shindig every now and then cleanses the soul. But if you're focused on partying, you're probably not learning the sort of lessons college is supposed to teach.

Join Student Government. Attend a Harborside Activities Board meeting. Start a club. Come write an article or two about something you love.

You don't have the right to throw up in the hallway outside of your RA's door. But if you're a great student, if you give back to your community and put down those foundation blocks for a solid career, be or she might look the other way just this one time.

What more could you ask for in life?
Religion? No thanks. Have my cat

By Tyler Killette
Staff Columnist

I make fun of my 15-year-old brother for going to church. I’m a terrible sister and a terrible person but I’m also part of a growing population in the United States. America is losing its faith. According to a survey published by the University of California Berkeley earlier this month, religious affiliation in the United States is at its lowest point since it began to be tracked in the 1930s.

Of those surveyed, 20 percent claimed to have no religion, compared to 5 percent in 1972. And the younger and more liberal you are, the more likely you are to be part of this holl-bound division of the American population.

The survey found that more than one-third of 18-24-year-olds and 40 percent of liberals claimed no religion. Not especially surprising, since 18- to 29-year-olds have dominated liberal demographics for the past decade, according to Gallup polls.

The year I spent at St. Patrick’s Catholic preschoo was the most religious of my life. There was also that time I “found Jesus” on a camping trip my senior year of high school, but I don’t think that counts. Simply put, I’ve just never related to religion.

When my brother decided to get baptized a few months ago, I worried. I feared he was being brainwashed with narrow-minded conservative beliefs. On a family road trip over spring break, I grilled him about his Christian-ness throughout the seven-hour car ride.

“Do you think gay people are going to hell?”

“Do you endorse slavery? Because the bible says you can have slaves as long as they aren’t your neighbors.”

I also made sure to toss out an insensitive comment about being in a “place of God” every time we passed a church. It was all in fun. Mostly.

I’ve realized, however, that anti-gay sentiments, the belief that one man may own another, Immaculate Conception and (God forbid) creationism, have nothing to do with my brother’s choice to go to youth group each week. For him, church is a place to be with friends; a place to discuss life’s hardships and wonders without judgment.

The sense of community found in youth groups, bible studies and church services (believe it or not, I’ve been to a few) is unparalleled and I don’t blame anyone for wanting that in their lives. I think it’s great that so many students are involved with religious groups on campus. At a small school like ours, having access to people with common beliefs and interests is an invaluable opportunity.

I think it’s a beautiful thing when someone believes in something so fervently that they base their entire personal and religious life on it. I find it sort of discouraging that so many young people are turning away from religion. It isn’t just about “God” or “Jesus” or whoever has the higher power of their choosing happens to be: it’s about faith and believing in something.

The portion of Americans claiming no religion increased by 15 percent in just 40 years. If the trend continues, half the country could be non-religious within much of my generation’s lifetimes, and certainly our children’s lifetimes. For some reason, this worries me. I don’t know if lack of faith is going to make us a smarter, more forward thinking nation or just leave us a bunch of jaded cynics.

I wonder what my fellow members of the one-third offer as their reasons for claiming no religion. For me, the wholeness I feel from my family, my cat, crappy horror movies, puppet music, writing and iced coffee are enough. But I can’t assume an entire third of the year. Better than the Super Bowl, the BCS Title Game, better than the MLB post-season. As exciting as the NHL playoffs are, it does not hold a candle to the three weeks in early spring that occurs every year. It begins in October with Midnight Madness, the non-conference schedule in November and December, the conference schedule in January and February and the conference tournaments in March — but the NCAA Tournament that wraps up in the first week of April is truly the most special. The emotions on the players’ faces on the bench and the coaches patrolling the sidelines say as much.

As H.V. Porter once wrote back in 1939: “A little March madness may be a complement and contribute to the sanity and help keep society on an even keel.” I couldn’t agree more.

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The mysterious death of Rocket the squirrel

By Erin Murphy
Guest Columnist

USF St. Petersburg is known for its sparkling bay front, tight knit community and small size but there are little oddities unique to our downtown campus. Perhaps none is quite so mystifying as the enigmatic death of Rocket the squirrel.

A few steps from Coquina Hall, just beyond the pool, there is a small wooden cross staked in the ground. Each spring a black Sharpie is used to scribe the name of Rocket J. Squirrel. Someone has even scrawled “R.I.P.” across the top.

So who was this Rocket J. Squirrel? Was he a furry friend, a companion between classes? Or did this minuscule menace dart around campus with evil intent?

Who among us can attest USFSP squirrels are surprisingly aggressive. Eating lunch by the harbor? They’ll find you. Sipping some Starbucks by the fountain? They’ll dive and sitting passively in the library with no food whatsoever? They WILL STILL FIND YOU.

Perhaps Rocket’s untimely demise was due to his insatiable nature. Maybe he hovered around an angry eater just a second too long. But student-on-squirrel violence is pretty uncommon.

Rocket’s departure from this life most likely occurred in one of two ways: death by the elements, or squirrel suicide. Dismissing all thoughts of an intentional demise, Rocket most likely fell prey (literally) or scammeder into the road.

Who was there to witness his tragic death? How did he earn his moniker? Was there a tiny casket? The quest for the true story of Rocket J. Squirrel turns to you, dear reader.

Perhaps you are the student who built the cross. The valiant soul who pressed on in spite of the loss of an irreplaceable furry friend. The one who saw gentleness whether others only saw typical squirrel antics. The person who said a few words at the funeral. The — oh, I think we’ve all had enough. This is getting indulgent. But next time you walk out of class and pass by the pool, take a moment of silence to remember those who have fallen. Do it for Rocket.
In honor of Wheldon

By Samantha Ouimette
Staff Reporter

The slow and steady approach was the winning strategy for James Hinchcliffe. In the first race of his third season as a driver in the IZOD IndyCar series, Hinchcliffe made no mistakes both in the pit and on the track en route to his first ever series win.

Unlike some of his peers, who experienced multiple lead changes and even led many laps, Hinchcliffe stayed securely in third throughout the majority of the race. But on the final restart of the contest, Hinchcliffe passed then-leader Helio Castroneves and held on to win by 1.09 seconds.

It was, according to Hinchcliffe, an emotional win.

The race was emotional from the start. Susie Wheldon, widow of former IndyCar racer Dan Wheldon — who was killed in the 2011 IZOD series finale — waved the green flag to commence the ninth annual running on the streets of St. Petersburg. Describing the moment as “bittersweet,” Wheldon said she was happy to be surrounded by her racing family and plans to keep her two sons immersed in racing culture.

Will Power, the Australian driver of the No. 12 Verizon Team, won, but hopefully we can change that this year.

Power led the pack until lap 32, when Castroneves took over the lead coming into turn one. Castroneves, the Brazilian driver of the No. 3 Hitachi Team Penske Dallara/Chevrolet, is the only multiple race winner on the streets of St. Petersburg with victories in 2006, 2007 and 2012.

Noting that the track fits his “style of being technical and tough,” Castroneves had high hopes of stringing together back-to-back wins in St. Petersburg.

“I have the same mentality as last year: go for consistent points,” Castroneves said. “This year we want to improve those finishes into top-fives to put us in line for the championship.”

Earning the first win of his Indy Car career, Canadian Driver James Hinchcliffe celebrates in victory lane. Hinchcliffe took the lead from defending race champion Helio Castroneves on a restart from caution on lap 85 of the race.

Castroneves maintained the lead until a full course yellow was issued on lap 45 due to debris in turn 14. Oriol Servia, the Spanish driver of the No. 22 Panther DRR Chevrolet, did not pit and beat Castroneves to the blend line, taking the lead of the race. It was the first time Servia had led laps in the IndyCar series since the 2011 Indianapolis 500.

Servia’s lead lasted for about 20 laps. After trouble leaving a pit stop, Castroneves retook the lead on Lap 62 and kept it firmly under his control until the last restart of the race. It was then that Hinchcliffe made a move for the lead position.

Hinchcliffe held on to the lead through the 110th lap before cruising to victory lane for the very first time.

Speaking on his second place finish, Castroneves said that he had a much better car in today’s race than he thought he would and felt as though he had a real chance to repeat, so “this second place feels a little bit bitter.”

No. 25 Marco Andretti, who had a spectacular final five laps in his pursuit to finish on the podium for Andretti Autosport, said that he needed to finish in the top three in this race. He called IndyCar racing “a selfish sport” when asked if he felt bad after taking third place.

Hinchcliffe dedicated the race to Dan Weldon, a former St. Petersburg resident who died in 2011 during a crash in the Indy 500.

“Dan was in my mind. I had the chance to repeat, and I knew the people I was racing with,” Hinchcliffe said.

Hinchcliffe’s victory is going to mean a lot to me,” General Manager Steve Yzerman said on Sunday.

Boucher took 97-78-20 in two-plus seasons behind the bench. In 2011, his first year, the Storm lost the 2011 IZOD series finale — wove the story was dedicated to someone else.

“We have a long way to go,” Boucher said, “but I’m happy to be surrounded by my team and plans to keep our pool.”

Taking Corner 10 of the Honda Grand Prix track, race winner James Hinchcliffe holds off defending champion Helio Castroneves. This race marked Hinchcliffe’s first career win in Indy Car. Hinchcliffe dedicated the race to Dan Weldon, a former St. Petersburg resident who died in 2011 during a crash in the Indy 500.

Nathan Powell Guest Columnist

Year in and year out we all fill out our brackets for the NCAA basketball tournament. Every year we look at our brackets after the first weekend of games, and most of us just rip them up in disgust knowing that we have no shot at winning our pool.

With USF out of the tournament this year, students don’t have the opportunity to make biased picks. This may give an advantage to students who are competing against fans of other schools, as bias is one of the main causes of a busted bracket.

This was the wrong year to be a No. 5 seed, as three of the four No. 12 seeds came out victorious in the round of 64. Gonzaga, a No. 1 seed in the West region, narrowly avoided an upset by No. 16 seed Southern. A No. 1 seed has never lost to a No. 16 seed in the history of the NCAA tournament.

Gonzaga went on to lose in the third round to Wichita State.

The biggest upset that happened on day one was No. 3 seed New Mexico falling to No. 14 Harvard. Approximately 8.15 million brackets were submitted to ESPN.com for the tournament, and after the first day of the tournament that included 16 games, there were only 1,238 perfect brackets left. A miniscule 0.015 percent of brackets were perfect after just 16 games were played.

Other upsets from the round of 64 include No. 13 seed La Salle upsetting No. 4 seed Kansas State, winning by a narrow margin of two points. One of the bigger upsets of the round of 64 came on day two, when No. 2 seed Georgetown was beaten by No. 15 seed Florida Gulf Coast, stunning many and busting brackets across the country.

At the conclusion of that game—the second day of the tournament—ESPN had zero perfect brackets.

The person with the last perfect bracket had Georgetown going to the Final Four like many others did.

Many upsets went down in the first weekend of this year’s tournament.

Did you call them? Or are you ripping up your bracket as you read this?

By Nathan Powell

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