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Friends rally after MU pool accident

Woman is improving after near-drowning.

By Janese Heavin

Friday, July 31, 2009

Advertisement

If there's one thing Yirui Wei has had going for her since she nearly drowned five weeks ago, it's a network of support from the University of Missouri community.



Wei

Friends and faculty members have been at the chemistry student's bedside daily. MU administrators helped fly her parents here from China, then put them up in campus housing free of charge. Her Chinese friends are translating information between University Hospital staff and Wei's parents, who do not speak English. And members of Columbia's greater Chinese community are taking them authentic Chinese food at the hospital.

"Chinese people are not used to American food, so it is good for them to have healthy, traditional Chinese food," said Fei Gao, president of MU's Friendship Association of Chinese Students & Scholars. "It's amazing how people are willing to help."

Wei, a 22-year-old graduate student, is improving after she nearly drowned in an 8-foot-deep pool at the university-owned Tara Apartments in June. Over the past 10 days, she has made

remarkable progress, said Lesa Beamer, one of Wei's doctoral advisers. Wei isn't able to talk, but she can respond to instructions, Beamer said. She's able to sit up for short periods and was able to sit outside in a wheelchair this week. She's off her ventilator, although a tracheal tube is supplying her with extra oxygen, Beamer said.

"She can shake her head, wave goodbye and laugh if someone tells a joke," said Beamer, who had permission from Wei's parents to disclose her health information. "She recognizes people and responds, even to English. She clearly understands a great deal of what is going on around her."

Beamer isn't sure whether Wei knows exactly what happened to her June 25, when emergency crews pulled her unconscious body from the bottom of the pool. She had been swimming with friends for about 45 minutes and lost her breath in the deep end. Her friends attempted to help but were unable to, Capt. Scott Richardson of the MU Police Department said last month.

Unlike those friends, Wei had taken swimming lessons, Beamer said. "This was an accident that could have happened to any one of us," she said.

The near-drowning severely damaged Wei's lungs and brain. Doctors and nurses at University Hospital "never gave up on her," Beamer said. "They took extreme measures to keep her alive, and they worked."

Although she is recovering more quickly than some expected, Wei faces a long road of rehabilitation, Beamer said. That's why Beamer has joined the Chinese association and other friends to organize fundraising efforts for Wei's medical expenses. The groups have not scheduled any specific fundraising events but have established an account for her at Boone County National Bank.

The support Wei has received since the accident is "a testament to the kind of person she is," Beamer said. "I think of her as a one-in-a-million girl. She overcame the odds and came to the U.S. to do her studies, and now she has had this terrible accident, and she's beaten the odds again. It's just not the kind of thing that happens very often."

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The★Star

THE KANSAS CITY STAR

Posted on Sun, Aug. 02, 2009

Missouri, Kansas are releasing alien insects to do battle with invasive plants

By MATT CAMPBELL
The Kansas City Star

An alien plant species has invaded Missouri and is threatening to overrun crops and livestock pastures.

To combat the scourge weed, officials are deliberately releasing two alien insect species to destroy its roots and seeds.

What could possibly go wrong?

History shows that bioengineering projects can have unintended consequences. But agronomists and entomologists say there's nothing to worry about here.

The root weevil and the flower head weevil being introduced in Missouri will feed only on the noxious spotted knapweed plant, they say, and even if the alien insects reproduce into the millions, they will not disrupt the ecology, except in ways that we want them to.

"They are not going to become pests in themselves," said Ben Puttler, professor emeritus of entomology at the University of Missouri.

However safe the knapweed weevils may be, the record of deploying one species against another is spotted with repercussions that often are not understood for years or even decades. Some alien species can end up attacking native plants or disrupting the food chain in complicated ways:

- An alien parasite introduced in the U.S. in 1906 to kill gypsy moths did not stop that invasive species from spreading. Instead, it now attacks more than 180 native species of North American butterflies and moths.
- Asian ladybugs introduced in the 1970s to control aphids in pecan groves became so prolific they are now crowding out — and even eating — native ladybugs. They also invade households and stink.
- Parasitic wasps introduced in Hawaii before 1950 to control sugar cane beetles are attacking native caterpillars, which are a food source for birds.
- An alien weevil introduced in the 1970s to control musk thistle, another noxious weed in Missouri and elsewhere, is now threatening some native thistles in Nebraska with extinction, according to a university ecologist.

But there are many cases in which biocontrol of pests has been successful without side effects, going back to the 1880s, when an Australian beetle was released to combat a pest afflicting California citrus crops.

"Despite the risks, the consensus among experts is that properly managed biocontrol programs are invaluable," according to a 2005 report in *National Wildlife*, the journal of the National Wildlife Federation.

Many pest weeds and insects native to other parts of the world get introduced here by design or accident. In some cases, they thrive in the absence of other species that kept them in check in their native environment.

The theory of biocontrol is that it is better to introduce those controlling species than to rely solely on chemical killers that can be costly, harm desirable species and contaminate groundwater.

"We resort to herbicides when we have to, but we try to take advantage of Mother Nature where we can," said **Bob Schultheis, a natural resource engineer with University of Missouri Extension**. Schultheis is based in Marshfield, Mo., on the front lines of the spotted knapweed war.

The plant is a member of the aster family and can grow more than three feet tall. It produces showy pink or purple flowers and 1,000 seeds or more per plant. It might look pretty, but its roots exude a chemical that is toxic to other plants. That means it crowds out and displaces food crops and forage for livestock.

"This is a very bad plant," said Tim Banek of the Missouri Department of Conservation in a recent bulletin warning farmers and the public. "It can grow from small infestations to being out of control before you know it."

Spotted knapweed is thought to have come to North America from Eurasia on boats in the 19th century or earlier. It now has spread to 45 states, and it began showing up in Missouri a few years ago, probably brought in with hay during times of drought here.

For now, spotted knapweed is mainly clustered in southern Missouri, with pockets north of St. Louis and around Kirksville. It has not yet become a problem in the Kansas City area.

Spotted knapweed is not considered as serious a problem yet in Kansas, but it is on the state's watch list. It has been particularly devastating in parts of Montana, where economic damage was estimated at \$42 million in 1996.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service regulates imports and releases. Twelve species that control spotted knapweed have been approved for introduction in the United States, beginning in 1973.

Among the effective species are the root weevil and the flower head weevil. Each lays eggs that attack the root or the seed of the spotted knapweed, killing the mature plant or reducing its ability to reproduce. Officials in Montana have reported success in controlling the spread of spotted knapweed using the weevils and an alien fly species.

"So far, they have not been found to affect any nontarget plants," said Tim Schnakenberg, an agronomy specialist with University of Missouri Extension in Galena.

Missouri is getting its weevils from a commercial supplier in Montana, which promotes the root weevil as "the king of spotted knapweed control" and sells 100 of them for \$140. Each release can produce millions of insects in just a few years.

Missouri began releasing root weevils last year and flower head weevils this year. Kansas planned to begin releasing weevils this summer in the northeastern part of the state.

PLANTS POSE A THREAT

Other invasive species being watched in Missouri and Kansas:

- Hydrilla, an aquatic pest plant that was recently discovered in a park pond in Olathe. The city is applying a chemical that is not harmful to people or fish.
- Emerald ash borer. Last year, officials confirmed the arrival in Missouri of the pest, which can decimate ash trees. Three parasitic wasp species from China are being released in the upper Midwest to combat that scourge. The wasps are “relatively specialized” toward ash borers, said Rob Lawrence, forest entomologist for the Missouri Department of Conservation.
- Poison hemlock, a 6- to 8-foot plant native to Europe that could be an even bigger economic threat to Missouri farmers than spotted knapweed. “There is a moth that attacks this weed, and we are investigating its feasibility in controlling the weed,” said **Tim Schnakenberg, an agronomy specialist with University of Missouri Extension in Galena.**



Viniculture becomes refuge from recession

Winemaking school is doing a booming business luring the unemployed

The Associated Press

Sat., Aug 1, 2009

COLUMBIA, Mo. - Soured on the real estate market, Columbia broker Bob Walters has found what he hopes is a more fruitful pursuit: growing grapes for wine. Downsized banker Mary Becker also is dabbling in the business, planting vines on the 120 acres south of Kansas City.

The aspiring vintners recently joined more than 60 others from eight states at the University of Missouri's first Wine School, which teaches the tools of a trade that has been growing exponentially. The federal Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau reports a 50 percent increase in the number of U.S. wine producers from about 3,900 in 2004 to about 5,800 in 2008.

Missouri, one of the nation's leading wine producers before Prohibition, has seen similar growth, and instructors at the **University of Missouri** say rising unemployment could encourage even more oenophiles to try to turn their hobby into a new career.

"I was quite blown away by how everyone around here was a backyard winemaker," said Rebecca Ford Kapoor, a New Zealand wine maker who two years ago joined the **university's Institute for Continental Climate Viticulture & Enology.**

The school, which focuses on grape growing and winemaking in the Midwest, offers a one-day introductory class and an advanced, three-day course. The one-day session includes an obligatory winery visit (Les Bourgeois in Rocheport) and wine tasting. But most of the time is devoted to laboratory sessions involving beakers and flasks, tips on cellar operations and sanitation and tutorials on identifying and preventing flaws in the winemaking process.

Becker said she and her husband went into winemaking inspired but without technical acumen.

Trial and error

"We had no idea what we were doing," the Holden resident said. "It's been a real trial and error."

Others enrolled in Kapoor's course quickly realized the business involved more than careering through Napa Valley in a convertible or comparing vintages in a friend's basement cellar. Successful wine producers must master chemistry and agriculture, she said.

"People think it's all going to be romantic," Kapoor said. "It's actually really hard, dirty, exhausting work."

Finding a suitable location to grow grapes — ideally an elevated area with good drainage — is only the first step. Even the smallest commercial wine makers can expect to invest close to \$1 million in equipment and land and wait five years for their grapes to be ready for market, said Jim Anderson, executive director of the Missouri Wine & Grape Board.

"If it's a red wine, it's eight years before you'll see a penny," Anderson said.

Matt Kirby opened Cooper's Oak Winery next to his family's cooerage in Higbee nearly three years ago. He bottled 650 cases the first year and 900 the second.

The biggest challenge, he said, has been appealing to locals with limited wine knowledge. The solution: My Sweet Dear, a sweet concord wine with a label the color of fluorescent orange hunting gear and a picture of grapes dangling from a deer's antlers.

Sweet stuff

"If you're going to sell wine in Missouri, you have to cater to the area," Kirby said. "You make the sweet stuff, and then maybe they will try a nice dry white wine."

Still, a romantic image continues to lure would-be Robert Mondavis, said Chris Gerling, a Cornell extension agent and former upstate New York winemaker who taught at the Missouri school.

"People have been doing the corporate thing for 20 or 30 years, and now they're getting to the point where a new option is desirable. Or necessary," he said.

That's true for Walters, who still has his broker's license but hopes to retire to winemaking.

"Everybody's happy when you're at a winery," he said. "It's like a dream job."



Cops at MU seek outside group's OK

By Janese Heavin

Sunday, August 2, 2009

Advertisement

Accreditation officers are in Columbia this weekend to start evaluating the University of Missouri Police Department.

A team of assessors from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies plans to spend the next few days looking at department policies, procedures, operations and support services, said MU police Capt. Brian Weimer.

The on-site visit is part of the routine, three-year voluntary accreditation process.

The assessment team is composed of public safety officers from similar out-of-state agencies, said Stephen Mitchell, the CALEA program manager for MU police.

Being an accredited agency ensures that the department is following internationally accepted practices, Weimer said. And it's important to have outside assessors examining those practices, he said.

"It's not like it's just the university police department saying, 'Hey, we're doing these things.' It's an outside group coming in and saying, 'Yeah, they're following those practices.'"

As part of the assessment, agency employees and community members have a chance to make comments about the MU Police Department during an information session tomorrow. The program starts at 12:15 p.m. in Room 110 of South Memorial Union, 518 Hitt St.

Those who cannot attend can make comments via telephone between 1 and 3 p.m. today by calling 882-5926.

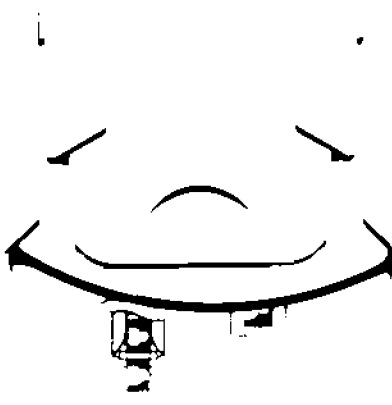
Comments, which are limited to 10 minutes, should address how the department complies with various policies and standards, Weimer said.

Those wishing to offer written comments can send them to the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, 10302 Eaton Place, Suite 100, Fairfax, Va., 22030-2215.

Once CALEA assessors complete the review, the association will decide whether to grant reaccreditation status.

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This article was published on





Pepper' cancellation a loss for community

Saturday, August 1, 2009

Advertisement

Editor, the Tribune: I was saddened and shocked when I learned that on Sept. 18, after 27 years, "Pepper & Friends," KOMU-TV's local variety talk show, is supposed to be canceled.

"Pepper & Friends" highlights local events, charities, artists and organizations. Their feature "Pet Corner" has helped to find homes for innumerable dogs and cats. Central Missouri has been very fortunate that Paul Pepper and James Mouser, who could have easily taken their talents onto larger markets, have chosen to stay here.

KOMU General Manager Marty Siddall said the reason for the cancellation is the high cost of production. I am having a difficult time understanding that when the show has loyal and dedicated sponsors, Pepper has offered to take a significant pay cut and there seems to have been enough funds for KOMU Studio A to undergo a costly upgrade.

The mission statement of the University of Missouri, which owns KOMU, supports public service; I would think "Pepper & Friends" would certainly be included in that category. Given its contributions to the community, it would be a deplorable loss and disgrace if we allow "Pepper & Friends" to be canceled.

If you share my concerns, there will be a town-hall meeting at 7 p.m. Wednesday in Room 113 of the Arts and Science Building on the MU campus. In addition, I urge you to contact Jackie Jones, vice chancellor for administrative services at jonesjk@missouri.edu and Brady Deaton, chancellor, at deatonb@missouri.edu. Please act quickly: Sept. 18 will be here sooner than you think.

Ellen M. Wolfe

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