Mourners' seek an audience

Host frustrated as show nears end of its run.

Photo by Gerik Parmele

Fans of the local television show "Pepper & Friends" participate in a mock funeral Monday morning at Speakers Circle on the University of Missouri campus. The program will end its run this week.

By Janese Heavin

Monday, September 14, 2009

Advertisement

Paul Pepper is peeved. For months, he has held his tongue about KOMU's decision to cancel his long-running local TV program, focusing instead on thanking the people who put the "friends" in "Pepper & Friends."
Nancy Atkinson reads names of guests who have appeared on “Pepper & Friends” during the mock funeral.

But this morning, he openly expressed frustration that the University of Missouri and KOMU General Manager Marty Siddall continue to blame budget shortfalls for the cancellation.

“I go between feeling really sad and saying goodbye to so many people to then feeling anger because I realize this really did not have to occur,” Pepper said. “It’s a sham. If, indeed, the show is losing money, there were options and options put forward by me and others to try to save this, and every one of them was rejected.”

“Pepper & Friends” will air for the last time Friday, despite ongoing efforts to save it since the decision was announced in May. This morning, Siddall continued to cite economic woes.

“We recognize that we had viewers and advertisers who really appreciated the show and the community service it provides,” he said. “Unfortunately, it came to a time when the economy impacted us.”

Siddall said he has had a couple of advertisers offer to pay more to save “Pepper & Friends” and that Pepper and co-host James Mouser offered to reduce their salaries.

“However, the deficit the show is running is far more substantial than what’s been offered,” Siddall said.

Pepper doesn’t buy it. He said the salary reductions alone would save $42,000 — more than half of the reported $74,000 deficit. He pointed to an MU statement last month that said the show cost roughly $222,000 to produce and generated about $148,000 in advertising dollars last year.

“No matter how I look at it, it doesn’t make any sense to me,” Pepper said. “I’ve lost faith in them and respect for them.”

So have dozens of community members. About 15 gathered today at Speakers Circle on campus to hold a memorial service for the show and to once again beg higher-ups to change their minds.
“I’ve never seen anything as humiliating and disgusting as the way all of this has been handled,” said event organizer Nancy Atkinson. “We’re losing the best treasure we have, and it’s breaking my heart.”

Protester Joe Alder questioned whether canceling the morning talk/variety program violates the spirit of the land grant charter that established MU, which charges the university to serve all citizens.

Siddall said the station could have pulled the plug on “Pepper & Friends” months ago but opted to “break with tradition” to give the hosts and fans a period to adjust. “They are true community icons, and their work is very much appreciated,” he said.

This week, viewers can expect the show to recap its 27-year history. Starting next Monday, KOMU will air “Access Hollywood” and “Inside Edition” in Pepper’s former 11 a.m. weekday time slot. Those programs aired at 1 p.m. but are being replaced with “The Dr. Oz Show.”

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This article was published on page A10 of the Monday, September 14, 2009 edition of The Columbia Daily Tribune.
Kids get jump start on medical career

Grant Elementary School fifth-graders Portia McLaurin, left, and Serenity Cave learn how to perform infant CPR during a meeting of Caleb, The Science Club on Saturday morning. Helping them is Christine Pautler, a medical student at the University of Missouri.

By Janese Heavin, Monday, September 14, 2009

Christina Oyelola, 14, wants to be a pediatric surgeon someday.

And why wouldn’t she? For the past five years or so, she’s had a chance to experience all sorts of neat medical activities.

“I liked looking at the cow’s heart the best,” said Christina, a freshman at Jefferson Junior High, adding that she doesn’t get squeamish.

Christina is a regular at Caleb, The Science Club, a 15-year-old medical program for students in fifth grade through high school.

Don’t let their ages fool you, though. These students are learning about the same topics medical school students study. This year’s syllabus includes CPR training, a lesson in radiology and dissection of an animal’s heart, said Ellis Ingram, club founder and an
associate professor of pathology and anatomical sciences at the University of Missouri School of Medicine.

"This is no small endeavor," Ingram said. "We're really presenting the students with a serious academic challenge."

Caleb is held one Saturday a month. Students are paired with medical school students who serve as mentors. Afterward, students eat lunch with their mentors in university dining halls.

Ingram funds the program mostly through volunteers and out of pocket. MU's enrollment department helps out with meal tickets, hoping the program will encourage students to someday become Tigers.

The program got a financial boost in 2004 when then-President George W. Bush honored Ingram with a Presidential Award of Excellence for his mentoring efforts. The award came with a $10,000 grant, which has helped sustain Caleb.

The activities are open to anyone, but the club especially strives to encourage black students to become familiar with science.

"Especially for minority students, when they see a medical student who looks like them, they make a connection," Ingram said.

That's also a goal for the Student National Medical Association, which hosted the discussion and hands-on CPR exercise Saturday in Acuff Auditorium in the medical school.

"We endeavor to encourage diversity in medicine," said Julie Watkins-Torry, a second-year medical student.

Wanting to be a doctor isn't a prerequisite to join the club, nor are all club members aspiring to work in the field of medicine.

"They come because they're challenged," Ingram said. "We have lofty expectations, and they rise to the challenge. They're serious about academics. ... We're creating an appetite for learning, an appetite to become leaders, and because of that we're creating a new culture of aggressive learners."

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This article was published on page A10 of the Monday, September 14, 2009 edition of The Columbia Daily Tribune.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Personal publishing machine coming to University Bookstore

By Corey Motley
September 15, 2009 | 12:01 a.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — University Bookstore is buying a new vending machine.

But it's not like any other vending machine available.

It has the power to queue, print and bind more than one million published books from nearly 8,000 publishers right in front of your eyes. Fewer than 20 exist in the world, and MU's will be one of three at universities nationwide; the others are at Brigham Young University and the University of Michigan. It's costing the bookstore about $75,000.

Built in Lebanon, Mo., the Espresso Book Machine from On Demand Books in New York City is literally an in-house printing press.

The EBM will be installed on the bottom floor of the bookstore in between the textbook section and TigerTech. It will available for about 10 hours a day and will be run by bookstore employees. MU is scheduled to receive the machine Sept. 21; an opening event is planned for Nov. 4.

The EBM can print paperback books, from 40 to 830 pages, for about a penny per page, according to On Demand Books' Web site. A 300-page book can print in about four minutes. The bookstore will build a small profit margin into the cost for using the machine, but it will mostly go to pay for upkeep and operating expenses, said Michelle Froese, public relations manager for MU Student and Auxiliary Services.

Heather Tearney, Mizzou Media coordinator with the bookstore, visited the Espresso Book Machine plant in Lebanon and watched the machines work as engineers constantly tweaked them.
“Every part of the machine, separate from the printers, is made specifically for that order,” Tearney said. Essentially the machines get better with each one sold.

On Demand Books uses a service called Espressnet to queue all the published books available for print within its interface. Tearney said she doubts best-sellers such as the “Twilight” series or Stephen King novels will be available to print. Some publishers keep popular series or authors exclusively to themselves, similar to those popular musicians who don’t allow iTunes to sell their albums.

Tearney said MU will start its own line of books called the University Classics. In the collection, classic titles such as “Frankenstein” and “The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn” will be published with introductions and summaries written by MU faculty and graduate students.

Froese had a copy of “The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn” in her office tucked on the bottom shelf of her bookcase and didn’t hesitate to show it off. The book, printed from an EBM, served as a prototype for the University Classics series. A logo and small picture of the famous MU columns were on the lower section of the white cover, a color graphic in the center of it. It looked like any other paperback.

Tearney said the EBM has two printers, one for the covers and one for the pages. When the EBM ships to MU, only the cover printer will support color printing; University Bookstore is slated to receive a page printer that supports color printing in 2010 from On Demand Books.

Assembling out-of-print titles is also a possibility with the EBM. Froese said that a lot of times if a book is no longer in print, a small royalty fee can be paid to print it.

Froese also said the machine would be good for graduate students who want to print extra and considerably less-expensive paperback copies of their dissertations; the EBM is not intended to print the formal dissertation, which might be required in hardback.

The EBM can print anything from a standard PDF file, which users can upload from flash drives.

University Bookstore is responsible for supplying paper, cover stock, ink and glue for the EBM. A box of glue dots has already been delivered to Tearney’s office.
Tearney said she has had inquiries about the machine from people in Michigan, Kansas and Chicago who are interested in using the EBM to print their own work. Right now, Tearney is seeking out Columbia-area writers interested in testing out the EBM during the opening event on Nov. 4 to print some of their own work.

Tearney is excited about the color page printer coming next year. She said an idea of parents using the EBM to chronicle their children's artwork is floating around her office. Another idea is printing family cookbooks for Christmas gifts. Everyone in her office seems to have new ideas every day for different applications for the EBM.

"The potential for this machine is really unlimited," Tearney said.