Governor says life sciences to aid state, regional economies

Maria Sudekum Fisher • The Associated Press • March 9, 2010

Kansas City -- State and regional economies can benefit from Missouri's push into biotechnology and the life sciences, Gov. Jay Nixon said Monday.

"There is no sector of our economy riper for opportunity than the life sciences," the Democratic governor said, speaking to about 300 scientists and businesspeople at the Missouri Regional Life Sciences Summit.

The two-day gathering at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, which wraps up Tuesday, is aimed at building new partnerships with the potential for creating jobs.

"Missouri is already home to 4,000 agribusiness and life science companies," Nixon said. "That's an enormous asset that we can leverage.

"We want our life sciences and biotech companies to grow because they create good jobs and pay good wages."

Among the companies and organizations sponsoring or attending the conference were the National Agricultural Biosecurity Center at Kansas State University, the University of Missouri, Cerner Corp., and Bayer Animal Health.

Nixon plans to push a variety of new business incentives, despite protracted budget problems in the state. He discussed one of those incentives Monday -- the Missouri Science and Innovation Reinvestment Act or MOSIRA, which would entail reinvesting state income taxes from science sector companies into new businesses.

Sen. Kit Bond, R-Mo., who also spoke at the conference, said "biotech is moving out of the lab and into the marketplace."

"Right here in western Missouri ... this is the heart of animal health in the U.S. and the world," Bond said.
He added that "this is an opportunity for science to provide more opportunities both in developing new science" and in creating jobs as "ideas come into the marketplace."

The industry can play a key role in helping replace jobs being lost in the current economy. Bond said.

State Sen. Jolie Justus, who spoke during a panel discussion, said Missouri has long concentrated on providing tax credits and incentives for companies that are less immediate and more "down the line."

But the Kansas City Democrat said that may be about to change with the recent appointment of David Kerr, former Kansas secretary of commerce, to be Missouri's new director of economic development. Kerr replaces Linda Martinez, Nixon's original pick for the position who resigned in September.

"We have got an economic development director who wants to start talking about some upfront money," Justus said. "All options need to be on the table."
Biotech needs capital, summit attendees are told

By SCOTT CANON

The marketplace should be drooling.

Bioactive glass that turns to bone and releases healing ions. Early cancer detection with urine tests. Vaccines for dengue fever.

One expert after another talked about laboratory wonders and the promise they hold at Monday's Missouri Regional Life Sciences Summit.

Yet there was frustration, too, at the University of Missouri-Kansas City conference about finding investors to bridge the gap between technological breakthrough and ready-for-market development.

Consider the venture capitalists, bludgeoned by the market collapse of 2008. The number of venture capital firms dropped by 22 percent between 2006 and 2009.

"The availability (of venture capital) in the first part of 2009 really ground to a halt," said Thomas Melzer, the co-founder of RiverVest, a venture capital firm that specializes in medical applications.

A panel of lawmakers called for tax dollars to support life science technologies. Former Kansas state Rep. Kenny Wilk said a 2004 state law that used growth in tax revenues in the biosciences to back research helped landed the $600 million-plus National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility in Manhattan.

Missouri lawmakers argued for passage of the Missouri Science and Innovation Reinvestment Act. It would set aside tax revenue from biotech and high-tech companies to recruit scientists, underwrite research and launch technology firms.

"Right now," said Missouri state Sen. Jolie Justus, "we're getting our butts kicked by Kansas."
Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon also repeated his push for the high-tech tax set aside as a "smart investment with the potential for a quick return."
Kansas City regional life sciences summit will discuss collaboration
March 8, 2010 12:11 PM ET

Mike Sherry

The two-day regional life sciences summit at the University of Missouri-Kansas City promises detailed discussions about the main theme: animal-to-human health collaborations.

But keynote speaker William Danforth, chancellor emeritus of Washington University in St. Louis, kicked off the gathering Monday morning by framing the summit in philosophical terms.

Back in the early days of modern science, Danforth said, pioneers such as Sir Isaac Newton could make great leaps largely on their own. Things are too complicated to do that now, he said.

"In today’s world, there’s not much that any of us can do alone," Danforth said, later adding: "We’re long past the limits of a single brain."

Scientists have adapted by becoming effective at working in large groups.

And, he said, the more than 400 registrants at the conference have the opportunity to show what the sharing of knowledge can do.

“If we are open, honest and trusting," Danforth said, “we can set an example for the nation.”

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Kansas City Animal Health Corridor stretches into a belt

Forget the KC Animal Health Corridor.

That’s the stretch between Kansas State University and the University of Missouri that regional life sciences boosters market as one of the biggest concentrations of animal health companies in the world.

Organizers of a two-day life sciences summit that began Monday at the University of Missouri-Kansas City are touting the scope of the area’s animal health industry as much more than just a straight line between Manhattan, Kan., and Columbia, Mo.

Kansas and Missouri actually are part of the Midwest Bio-Innovation Belt, according to the program guide for the summit.

As such, the guide places the region between some of the most iconic innovation centers in the nation — in California, North Carolina and Boston.

“During these challenging economic times, the time is right for the region’s businesses and research universities to work together to improve lives,” UMKC Chancellor Leo Morton and University of Missouri Chancellor Brady Deaton wrote in the program guide. “We have an opportunity to emerge as the biosciences powerhouse, much like Silicon Valley, Research Triangle, or Route 128.”
Experts: For better science, collaborate

Biosciences are focus at summit.
By Janese Heavin

Monday, March 8, 2010

Some 50 years ago, William Danforth received a small grant to research enzyme change at Washington University in St. Louis. He worked alone, cleaning his own glassware, analyzing results and, ultimately, owning any success or failure that stemmed from his work.

“That was then,” Danforth said this morning.

Today, scientific discoveries and breakthroughs require collaboration among researchers who bring to the table different areas of expertise and those with the know-how to turn discoveries into actual products, he said.

Collaboration is the theme today on the University of Missouri-Kansas City campus, where higher-education administrators, researchers, government officials and business leaders are convening for a regional life science summit.

The program, “Animal to Human Health Collaborations,” is sponsored by the Columbia campus and continues through tomorrow.

Danforth, now chancellor emeritus at Washington University, used his keynote address this morning to challenge researchers to collaborate and use one another’s specialized skill sets to solve problems.

Unlike the individual research of yesteryear, “problems are larger and more complicated, and discovery of important new information is much more difficult,” he said.

Collaboration requires specific traits, namely trust, Danforth said. Scientists must trust one another and be willing to share ideas and credit, he said.

“Selfishness is out,” he said. “Unselfishness and cooperation are in. Hype is out. Modesty is in. ... It was a lot easier 50 years ago, but scientists adopted cooperative behavior not because it’s easy but because it works better.”

The two-day summit, which is being broadcast on the UM System’s Web site at www.umsystem.edu, features 48 exhibits and more than 100 posters outlining research projects at each of the four campuses.

Speakers and panelists were expected to address specific research projects, advances in biosciences that ultimately will affect “the food we eat and the medications we take and the medical therapies we use and even the way we expand energy,” MU Chancellor Brady Deaton said.
Those innovations should help the country replace manufacturing industries that aren’t likely to return, said U.S. Sen. Claire McCaskill, addressing the audience via a video message.

“As we look forward at where the new wave will be, I believe it will come, at least in part, in advances in biotechnology and life sciences,” she said.

“I challenge you to seek out your fellow Midwest scientists. The coasts don’t have a monopoly on talent. We have some of the brightest folks in the country and the world. Working together will make it easier to succeed in my second challenge to transfer your knowledge of science and technology into products and businesses right here in Missouri.”

Calling it a “world-class meeting of the minds,” UM System President Gary Forsee said the ultimate goal of the summit is to form partnerships that will create “new businesses, more jobs, greater research collaboration and invention.”

Reach Janese Heavin at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jheavin@columbiatribune.com.
Mizzou ‘cotton ball’ incident holds promise for racial progress
By Editorial Board

Katie Currid, Special to the Post-Dispatch

A racist prank perpetrated outside the University of Missouri’s Gaines/Oldham Black Culture Center 11 days ago has evoked a reassuring response.

The two undergraduates — Zachary E. Tucker and Sean D. Fitzgerald — tried to make a mockery of the bitter history of black servitude. They scattered cotton balls outside the culture center under cover of night.

But their crude handiwork was greeted with sharp and universal condemnation. Both students were identified and suspended from school.

Last week, they were arrested. The Boone County prosecutor is weighing whether to pursue criminal charges.

On Friday, the students apologized for their misconduct. They acknowledged in a statement issued through their lawyers that they had exercised “inexcusable judgment.” They claimed what happened was “totally out of character” and expressed hope “for the opportunity to prove this to the community.”

The university and student organizations, meanwhile, responded with a campus-wide celebration of unity on Friday. Other public programs are in the works.

This much is clear: Missouri’s flagship public university and the community in which it is situated will not tolerate overt racist behavior, even if it stems from a stupid jest.

Do the students have the courage, the community the imagination and victims of the misconduct the willingness to work toward a more lasting resolution?

That may come through “restorative justice,” a movement centered on providing a forum for offenders to take responsibility for their actions by accepting punishment and trying to repair the
harm they have done. Offenders are counseled to acknowledge and understand the impact their actions have had on others and to take concrete steps to make amends.

One compelling example: Aaron Poisson of Cumming, Ga., served nine months in jail for running over and killing Roger Kreutz on March 3, 2008. Mr. Kreutz, 54, a businessman, had tried to stop Mr. Poisson from fleeing with a stolen tip jar from a Crestwood Starbucks.

Last weekend, Mr. Kreutz’s family and friends allowed Mr. Poisson, 21, accompanied by his father, to participate in a ceremony in which Mr. Kreutz’s ashes were spread beneath a tree planted in his memory.

The families embraced. It was a poignant exercise of contrition and forgiveness as well an example to this community.

Marc H. Morial, president of the National Urban League, was in St. Louis on Monday as part of the organization’s centennial celebration. When asked about the incident at the University of Missouri, he observed that “one of the fundamental aspects of the civil rights ethos” as laid down by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is a “redemptive component.”

It asks, he said, how what occurred can be made “a positive learning experience that changes (the offenders’) behavior for the rest of their lives?”

The cotton balls at the University of Missouri can’t be un-tossed. But simply focusing on punishment is the easy way out.

The University of Missouri and its students have a special chance as a learning community for a just and productive resolution.

They should help Messrs. Tucker and Fitzgerald make good on their promise to prove that what occurred does not reflect their true character.

(No Ratings Yet)

Tags: Boone County, Columbia, cotton balls, eddie roth, Marc H. Morial, restorative justice, university of missouri, Urban League
Hate crime might be hard to prove for cotton ball prosecutors

By Rob Bratney

COLUMBIA — An attorney for one of the MU students arrested in connection with the Feb. 26 cotton ball incident at the Gaines/Oldham Black Culture Center doubts that prosecutors can make a convincing case that this was a hate crime.

"We don't believe (hate crime laws) apply," said Christopher Slusher of Columbia, the attorney representing Zachary Tucker.

Tucker, 21, and Sean Fitzgerald, 19, issued an apology through their attorneys Friday morning, saying they "deeply regret the pain their actions have caused others and the negative attention this incident has attracted to the campus and community."

In the statement released by Tucker's and Fitzgerald's attorneys, the night's events were attributed to a "series of foolish acts" including "riding" the tiger statue on the campus's South Quad and hoisting a pirate flag at Crowder Hall, the MU ROTC building.

Mike Waldhauser, commander of MU's Naval ROTC unit, confirmed that an Air Force ROTC commander saw the flag the following morning, removed it and contacted authorities. Nobody at the time thought it was related to the cotton balls, Waldhauser said.

Tucker's family declined to comment, and the Missourian was unable to reach Fitzgerald's attorneys, Milt Harper and Kevin O'Brien, also of Columbia.

Eric Miller, associate professor of law at St. Louis University, said that despite the suspects' apologies, prosecutors might still have a case for a hate crime.

To win a tampering conviction, the prosecution will have to prove the cotton balls interfered with the enjoyment of the culture center property, Miller said. To make a hate crime charge stick, they would have to prove the cotton balls are a reference to race, such as slavery and cotton picking, and that they would not have had the same meaning if they had been placed in front of a fraternity house or a women's center, for example.
The Missouri statute on hate crimes also comes with a list of aggravating factors that, if proved, can enhance a Class D felony to a Class C, Miller said. Racist motivation is one of those aggravating factors.

Slusher said that Tucker, along with his parents, apologized in person to Nathan Stephens, director of the Black Culture Center, before Tucker hired an attorney.

"He was apologetic," Stephens said. "I expressed no ill will towards him... and on behalf of the Gaines Oldham Black Culture Center, we accepted his apology."

Stephens added that he is interested in seeing Tucker's development in understanding that "these events are harmful toward more than just minority groups."

Slusher said Tucker might not have understood how the community would react to the vandalism.

"I think they have an understanding of the the message now," he said. "I don't think they understood how it would be received."

Missourian reporters Ally Anderson and Jessica Stephens contributed to this report.
UPDATE: Students gather in show of unity after cotton ball incident

By Ally Anderson, Bryan Richardson

MU junior Alana Young and freshman Sierra Watson join hands during a group prayer at the unity event organized by the Gaines/Oldham Black Culture Center on Friday night at Jesse Hall. Attendees were encouraged to wear blue to represent unity.  † KATHERINE ORIEZ / Missourian
COLUMBIA -- One week after cotton balls were strewn in front of MU's Gaines/Oldham Black Culture Center, MU students and community members who gathered for an anti-hate rally said they wanted to forgive and move on.

Forgiveness and unity were the main themes of the Legion of Black Collegians' anti-hate observance Friday night.

Participants were not reluctant to be vocal about how they felt, but their reactions were mixed.

"When I first found out about the incident, I was angry, but now I am just saddened," said Kristen Andrews, activities chairwoman for the Legion of Black Collegians. "Hearing that they issued an apology helps, but only if it was sincerely given. It is in my nature to forgive."

Two MU students were arrested Tuesday in connection with the incident. They were charged with second-degree tampering, and police are classifying the charge as a hate crime. Earlier Friday, the students issued a statement through their attorneys apologizing for their actions.

Lisa White, a junior and vice president of the Legion of Black Collegians, said the organization would meet with the two students, Zachary Tucker, 21, and Sean Fitzgerald, 19, to discuss their actions.

"I'm really religious, so I would like to forgive them, but I would like them to know it still resonates with me," White said. "I hope the university takes their actions into account, as well as take into account the student voices on this matter."

The student voices are not just those of the Black Collegians, but students across campus from all backgrounds.

"All facets of diversity are feeling the impact," she said.

Many participants wanted to send a message that this kind of behavior will not be tolerated at MU.

"This is a good event to follow up what occurred at the Monday town hall meeting. Problems still exist, but it is a surprise when they surface," MU Deputy Provost Ken Dean said. "I thought we were moving along at a progressive pace. It's disheartening."

It is important to react and respond, to show that this is not an acceptable thing to do, he said.
"We are going to continue working to make sure everyone feels good, safe and welcomed at MU," Dean said.

For some it was not just about forgiveness, it was about learning a lesson.

"They were being ignorant," MU freshman Stacy Ike said. "But I am forgiving them because that's what it's all about. They have to learn from this. The suspensions and learning from it is more important than jail time."

Tim Noce, president of the Missouri Students Association, said the incident brought about renewed student interest in promoting diversity.

"We've got to follow through with all of the ideas that were brought to the table this week, whether we're students, staff or faculty," Noce said. "This is a beginning of a new era, not the end just because time has progressed."

Earlier in the afternoon Friday, students gathered at the Gaines/Oldham Black Culture Center to show the community wouldn't be defined by one incident.

The community was invited to the center Friday between noon and 3 p.m. to demonstrate its solidarity, and attendees were encouraged to wear blue. According to the event's Facebook page, light blue represents unity, healing, tranquility and understanding; dark blue represents knowledge, power, integrity and seriousness.

At the event, attendees signed several "Pick Unity" posters. Among the signers were University of Missouri System President Gary Forsee and Chancellor Brady Deaton.

Forsee said the gathering at the center was an opportunity for him to show support for the students. He views the UM System and MU's campus as a family.

"It's important that family rallies together, especially in what has been a difficult week," Forsee said.

Deaton said the gathering allowed the community to come together.

"It reflects a genuine concern to not let an ugly act mar the progress we've made over the years," Deaton said.

"(Deaton and Forsee's actions go) beyond professionalism," said Nathan Stephens, director of the Black Culture Center. "It shows people caring, and that's remarkable."
Open Column

Quote choice points to lazy journalism

Monday, March 8, 2010

Editor, the Tribune: This is a response to the article titled “Cotton litters lawn at black culture center” by Janese Heavin, published Feb 26. A black student was quoted as saying “every minority on campus should be outraged, just as whites should be embarrassed.” In an article that is supposed to be informative and not an opinion piece, I don’t see why this quote was used.

I am not condemning the student who made the quote. It is possible she was misquoted or had poor word choice during an emotional moment. I don’t understand why the student was used since she did not represent the black culture center and has as much knowledge of the incident as the next person. Heavin unintentionally made this student the spokesperson for all black people. She made this an issue of minorities versus white people rather than what the article was truly about: an idiotic prank by “two individuals dressed in dark clothing.”

It would have been more beneficial if Heavin had quoted a representative of the black culture center rather than a random individual. The fact that Heavin used this student by name is also another level of unprofessionalism. Racism is a highly sensitive subject, and Heavin has opened this young student to criticism from people who don’t know her.

Heavin’s article fell short of the professional level I expect from the Tribune. She and the editors have fallen victim to something that is increasingly plaguing today’s media: lazy journalism.

Nathan Pierson

6214 N Winthrop

Chicago
Program to commemorate Mark Twain's literary contributions

By Trey Prothro
March 9, 2010 | 12:07 a.m. CST

COLUMBIA — MU will host "Mark Twain: A Centennial Celebration of the Life and Legacy of Samuel Langhorne Clemens, 1835-1910." commemorating the 100th anniversary of the iconic author's death. The weeklong event will commence on March 17.

Ron Powers, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and native of Mark Twain's homeland, Hannibal, will be the guest lecturer for the week. Powers will lead three themed lectures from March 17 to 20.

Mark Twain enthusiasts Louis Budd of Duke University and Bruce Michelson of the University of Illinois will join Powers on March 20 for a panel discussion along with Tom Quirk, professor of English at MU, who will lead the panel.

Twain's writing applies to challenges we're facing today, Michelson said. "He's the kind of writer that dives into the contemporary circumstance with everything he's got."

The event will focus on the history and contributions Mark Twain left on the literary world and the relevance they still carry today. Michelson believes the image of Twain being a "front-porch-by-the barrel country boy" is a misconception.

In addition to the lectures and the panel discussion, the State Historical Society of Missouri will open an exhibition featuring original artifacts of both Mark Twain and Thomas Hart Benton that will run Saturday through Aug. 31.

The opening reception will feature clothing designed by textile and apparel management students at MU. The garments draw inspiration from the Mark Twain era and will relate to the artifacts and artworks on display, said Joan Stack, curator of the art collection at the society.
The exhibition will also feature an unpublished original, typewritten manuscript by Mark Twain from "The Gilded Age." The event is being organized by the MU College of Arts and Science.
Exercise helps if weight is regained

COLUMBIA, Mo., March 8 (UPI) -- Many who lose weight subsequently regain it, but U.S. researchers say exercise can maintain the health benefits of weight loss, such as lower blood pressure.

Tom R. Thomas, professor at the University of Missouri in Columbia, and colleagues put overweight men and women on a diet and a supervised aerobic five-day-a-week exercise plan for 4-6 months.

After losing weight, participants were separated into two groups, one that exercised and one that didn't. The non-exercise group experienced rapid deterioration in weight-loss induced benefits. The exercise group maintained improvements in almost all measures, including oxygen consumption, blood pressure and glucose.

Exercise didn't maintain blood cholesterol and abdominal fat loss, the study said.

"Although many people are successful at losing weight through diet and exercise, the majority of them will relapse and regain the weight," Thomas said in a statement. "The findings support the recommendation to continue exercising after weight loss, even if weight is regained."

The study is published in the Journal of Applied Physiology.
Your diet could indicate your baby's gender!

*Want a baby boy? Well, then eat full breakfast and fatty diet during early pregnancy, suggests a new study.*

**According to the University of Missouri study**, what women eat while they are in the early stages of pregnancy influences the sex and **health** of their unborn baby, reports *The Telegraph*

Women who eat a full breakfast and a high fat diet at the time of conception are more likely to have a boy, scientists claim.

A low fat diet with periods of long fasts favours girls, the researchers have found.

Dr Cheryl Rosenfeld, of the University of Missouri, and colleagues said: "High calorie diets generally favour birth of males over females, whereas low calorie diets tend to favour females over males.

In humans and mice, food restriction and a suboptimal diet during the period around conception and early pregnancy also lead to a surfeit of daughters, most probably due to selective loss of male foetuses, the most vulnerable sex in the womb."
The Tribune's View

UM same-sex benefits

Contoured by biased state law
By Henry J. Waters III

Monday, March 8, 2010

As University of Missouri System President Gary Forsee decides whether to provide benefits for same-sex domestic partners, he will have to contend with Missouri's discriminatory law against legal same-sex unions.

Faculty councils at MU and UM-St. Louis have voted to provide benefits. UM curators and President Forsee will face the provability issue.

How does a couple prove they have a qualifying partnership when they can show no official documentation akin to a marriage license for heterosexual couples? This is no indictment of dedicated couples. Blame state law — that is, unless you believe homosexual couples should not be allowed official status, in which case you do not believe the university should grant rights and privileges equal to those enabled by traditional marriage.

Society is moving rather quickly toward legal recognition of committed same-sex partnerships — sometimes called unions, sometimes marriage — but Missouri and most states still have not given official permission. Sad to say, I predict our state will be among the last to recognize this basic premise of nondiscrimination. Meanwhile, what do leaders of a well-meaning institution like the University of Missouri do to move forward on their own campuses?

The only option is to accept a declaration of committed partnership, a sworn statement that the partners intend to remain together in exclusive fealty, nothing more substantial than any hetero couple could make after a Saturday night when feelings of undying love rush to the fore. Of course, a new university rule would not allow girlfriends and boyfriends to earn married-couple privileges merely by stating an intention of lasting association.

How will the university grant such unmarried promises to same-sex couples while requiring a legal marriage license for couples including a man and woman, substituting one form of discrimination for another?

I understand some venues have instituted such systems, relying on elements of proof other than marriage licenses. As President Forsee decides how to handle this hot potato, no doubt he will gather such information. Adding domestic partner benefits might cost about $2.2 million, but the main consideration should be "what is right," an imperative many supporters believe must prevail.
Many worry the conservative state legislature might take it out on UM budgets if same-sex benefits are granted. Indeed, some members of the legislature would try to do just that, but after an obligatory round of huffing and puffing, most surely would let the debate over university funding resume its normal course, not a perfectly amicable discussion in any event.

The university routinely must overcome, or live with, the antagonism voiced by too many in Jefferson City who believe MU in particular is a hotbed of the radical left always wanting more money with nothing to show for it. For that cadre, same-sex benefits hardly will make things worse. For most, let us pray, it won't make that much difference and university-lawmaker relationships will proceed as usual.

HJW III
Who are you? The answer might be in your favorite song

By Doug Davis

COLUMBIA — Imagine you are a successful music producer; you chat it up with the big names in the music business daily. One day, you get a chance to see 10 years into the future and discover that you have become a tenure-track neuroscientist.

Minus the crystal ball bit, that's the path of McGill University psychologist and behavioral neuroscientist Daniel Levitin, the keynote speaker for this year's MU Life Sciences and Society Symposium. The theme of this year's symposium is "From Art to Biology and Back Again."

What do behavioral neuroscientists do? According to the Society of Neuroscience, a professional organization for neuroscientists, behavioral neuroscientists learn about human and animal brain function by using brain scans to determine which parts of the brain are active during activities such as seeing, speaking or remembering.

Stefani Engelstein, an associate professor of German and director of the MU Life Sciences and Society program, said the program seeks speakers who have an interdisciplinary approach to their work. With the diversity of Levitin's career path as a musician, a music journalist and neuroscientist, students would love listening to him, she said.

Levitin said the transition from music business to neuroscience wasn't the smoothest road. He started college studying science but was also playing in a band and wanted to be a musician. He decided he couldn't do both, and music won the coin toss.

But no matter what job he has done in life, he's used an analytical approach, stripping things down into their basic components to see how they work together. Levitin called it a "quirk of curiosity." The recording studio's mixing panel took the place of the science lab's centrifuge for the next 15 years, while he worked his way up to producer at San Francisco's 415 Records company.
Levitin's career in music started to change in the late 1980s when large conglomerates with no previous music industry experience started buying up music producing companies, including the one where he worked.

They wanted hits and quick profits, not to find and nurture the talents who make the hits, Levitin said. His experience told him that the new business model could not sustain itself long-term; he started sitting in on classes at Stanford University while still working as a producer.

He attended classes in different disciplines, as varied as art, neuroscience and psychology. Among those, "neuroscience classes really caught my interest," Levitin said.

The neuroscientists were coming up with hypotheses they could test with experiments, Levitin said. He said that process appealed to his analytical learning approach. He left his producing job, finished an undergraduate degree at Stanford, then master's and doctoral degrees at the University of Oregon.

Having a musical background influences his research today. He is the director of McGill's Laboratory for Music Perception, Cognition and Expertise. The lab's general focus is to study how people and music have evolved together and affected each other over the course of history.

The lab's researchers learn about musical cognition by determining what areas of a person's brain "light up" or show stimulation on a magnetic resonance imaging device while listening to music. This process helps chart out what brain structures participate in perceiving musical elements such as tone, timbre or rhythm.

But why reduce the musical experience to its component parts? Won't that take something people enjoy because of its magic and mysterious qualities and turn it into a stale chapter in a science textbook?

An emphatic "no" was the reading audience's answer to that question when Levitin's first book, "This Is Your Brain On Music: The Science of A Human Obsession," came out in 2006. The book stayed on The New York Times bestseller list for more than a year. But Levitin said getting to the point where non-scientist readers would want to read the science he tried to communicate in the book was tough.

The publisher read each chapter as Levitin submitted them and kept saying, "It's too dry, it's a textbook," pushing him to give more personal detail to hook readers. That was hard for
Levitin. The essence of what the publisher wanted, he said, was "a feature for The New York Times Magazine, but they told me I was just giving them the news section."

Levitin tapped into his teaching experience to help get his ideas across in a way that would inform without turning readers off with technical detail. He teaches introductory psychology to students with no previous background in it. He said the fact that he started learning science in his mid-30s helped as well, because he recalls what it was like to learn the basics.

The experience of writing his second book, "The World In Six Songs: How the Musical Brain Created Human Nature," was different from the first. He had an audience, having sold more than 500,000 copies of his first book. He felt at ease putting more about neuroscience into that book.

After learning so much about how the brain processes music, and the effect music can have on the brain, will doctors someday start prescribing music as a medical treatment?

"Yes and no," Levitin said. "We're already living in that day, with musical therapists. But no, I don't think doctors will say 'You're depressed, take two Joni Mitchell songs and call me in the morning.' Everyone recognizes the song that gets them going in the morning."
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Adapted Gymnastics provides exercise, social opportunities for kids with disabilities

By Lauren Rauth, Vinnie Duber
March 6, 2010 | 5:26 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA — Jeff Krug had some advice for the more than 60 MU students helping out with Friday night's Adaptive Gymnastics class.

"Make noises," he said. "If they jump, say 'boink, boink.' Be silly."

The students, some from the Missouri School of Health Professions and others from the Missouri Tigers gymnastics team, volunteered at the Hearnes Center to help children with a range of disabilities play with other children while working on motor skills and social interaction.

More than 40 children between the ages of 3 and 18 participate in the weekly class associated with the MU School of Health Professions. Krug, the program's co-coordinator, is a clinical instructor at the school.

Student "coaches" volunteer every week for an hour to work with the children on gymnastics-based activities. The Missouri gymnasts were guest volunteers Friday.

Just like a real gymnastics meet, the kids went through four rotations: vault, floor, balance beam and parachute. Along the way, their coaches went with them, leading them through the various activities and constantly providing words of encouragement.

Ben Hagen, a second-year physical therapy graduate student at Missouri, has been a volunteer coach since he started graduate school.

"A lot of these kids don't get the opportunity to go out in the community and just be kids," Hagen said. "Whatever they bring in here, all of that stuff is completely put aside. We don't worry about any of those things. We come out here, have a good time and basically let them be kids."
Dieter and Amee Duff have been bringing their daughter Morgan, 7, to the Adapted Gymnasts program for more than a year and a half and believe the program has helped Morgan become more confident. Amee Duff said the program is "a platform where everyone is the same."

The program is not only beneficial to the children, but to the MU students as well.

"It's a unique learning opportunity," said Jeff Krug, the program coordinator.

Kat Kuehn, a graduate student in the physical therapy department, has been volunteering with the program for more than three years. Her favorite part about the program is interacting the kids.

"It's a good opportunity to see the other side of what we are learning in class," Kuehn said.

Constant laughter might have indicated otherwise, but numerous children said their favorite part of the night was meeting the Missouri gymnasts.

The Tiger gymnasts split up, and each had their own partner who they followed around the gym throughout the hour.

Freshman gymnast Lauren Swankoski guided a girl across the beam while freshman gymnast Sandra Ostad ran across the floor with her partner with her hands raised high in the air. Senior gymnast Danielle Guider ran to the vault with a young boy, and while he had fun jumping, she sneaked in a practice landing on a small jump of her own.

The gymnasts weren't there to teach any specific moves or critique jumps. Still, sophomore gymnast Mary Burke showed off some of her skills.

"I showed off my somersault a couple times," Burke said sarcastically. "It's getting pretty good."

Burke said her younger partners wanted to show the No. 32-ranked gymnast just about everything they did.

"They wanted to show me everything," Burke said. "Cartwheels, walking down the beam, anything they could show me."

Sophomore gymnast Allie Heizelman organized the team's involvement. She was honored by the Big 12 conference earlier this season for her community service.
Heizelman worked with a young boy who had major disabilities that made it difficult for him to walk. Heizelman, along with another Missouri student coach, and the boy's mother all helped the child out.

It was the first visit to the class for the gymnastics team, but the program itself has been around for more than 20 years.

"There is no other program like this," said Max Lewis, who is in charge of the overall Adapted Gymnastics program. "It's the only program in mid-Missouri that allows children the opportunity to play with children similar to themselves."

The night concluded with the children lining up to receive autographed posters from the Missouri gymnastics team.

Even after all of the evening's festivities were over, three children were still running and sliding across the gymnastics floor. The laughs were as loud as any during the organized activity.