Bond, CBS newsman to speak at MU graduation ceremonies

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COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) — A retiring U.S. senator and a University of Missouri alum with a long career as a TV journalist will be among the speakers at graduation ceremonies.

Sen. Kit Bond will speak at the May 15 ceremony in the Hearnes Center for the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources. Bill Geist of CBS News speaks to the journalism school that evening in Mizzou Arena.

Other commencement speakers for various schools and colleges include state Department of Natural Resources director Mark Templeton; assistant Homeland Security secretary Alexander Garza; University of Missouri system president Gary Forsee; and National Bar Association president Marilyn Thompson.

Missouri plans to award more than 5,500 diplomas this spring.
Before MU’s Class of 2010 graduates next weekend, some seniors took part in the Senior Sendoff tradition Wednesday afternoon. Participants assembled on Francis Quadrangle and walked north through the columns toward downtown Columbia. The walk symbolizes the students’ transition from academia to post-college life. The event concluded with a picnic and concert on the Mel Carnahan Quadrangle, where students 21 and older received a free beer. Here, MU seniors Nick Woodbury and Matt Shepley describe what the event means to them as soon-to-be graduates.

Francis Quadrangle was overrun with MU seniors as the Senior Sendoff celebration began at 4 p.m. Wednesday. After walking north between the columns, seniors headed to the Mel Carnahan Quadrangle for free food and drinks, as well as a performance by The Hatrick.
Site test-drives risky business

Stick figures act out sex dilemmas.

By Janese Heavin

Wednesday, May 5, 2010

You wake up the morning after a drunken stupor and realize you’ve had unprotected sex with a fellow partygoer. What do you do next?

It’s a scenario University of Missouri students will be able to play out from the safety of a computer screen next fall.

The student health center’s Sexual Health Advocate Peer Education team is launching an interactive website aimed to educate students about consequences of their choices before they have to make real-life decisions, said Heather Eastman-Mueller, the curriculum coordinator for SHAPE who’s helping to oversee the project.

The website, funded with an internal MU grant, was created based on feedback from students who participated in a series of sex education and awareness surveys this semester. Administrators and students will spend the summer tweaking it before launching it to all MU students in the fall.

The site includes a forum where students can ask personal questions about sex anonymously and await answers from SHAPE’s peer educators. It also includes information about abstinence and a section specifically for those who are gay, bisexual or transgendered.

In the interactive zone, students can play out a dozen or so virtual scenarios. The choose-your-own-adventure format lets students make their own choices, although some begin after careless sex decisions have already been made. At that point, participants have the choice of getting tested for a sexually transmitted infection.

Careful: Choosing to ignore a symptom such as painful urination will only result in worsening symptoms. That said, opting to get tested more than likely will lead to a diagnosis. Eastman-Mueller warned that the virtual scenarios aren’t likely to let participants get away with anything without consequences.

Not all scenarios include intercourse. One scene, for instance, asks what you would do if left alone with your best friend’s attractive partner. In that case, making the wrong decision doesn’t necessarily lead to disease but could cost a friendship.
For now the scenes are played out using images of what are essentially genderless stick figures and aren't sexually graphic. By the time the university launches the website, designers hope to give participants the option of customizing their avatars.

Doing so will ask students to not only select a cartoon human image but also select from an array of hobbies, musical preferences and other interests. Eastman-Mueller hopes collecting that information and comparing it with how students make choices will reveal any trends between personal interests and sexual behavior.

The website isn't intended to promote either sexual encounters or abstinence but only to get fact-based information to students, Eastman-Mueller said.

"It provides evidence-based information in an innovative, interdisciplinary and creative way in which students receive information," she said.

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Ultrasound Speeds Up Biodiesel Production

The same technology used to image fetuses in the womb could lower the cost of biofuels.

Wed May 5, 2010 03:00 AM ET | content provided by Brandon Twichell

Biofuels are an increasingly admired source of alternative energy in times of unstable gas prices.

Production of biofuels, however, is quite slow -- about an hour to produce a few hundred milliliters in a laboratory, which is not efficient, especially when demand is high. That is why researchers at University of Missouri's Agricultural Engineering department are working on a unique way to speed up the production process to mere minutes, allowing supply to meet that high demand.

Read on, or listen to the podcast:

Ultrasound Speeds up Biodiesel Production

When gas prices skyrocket, people look to alternatives that will get them off oil. Biofuels, fuels made from biological sources such as plants, vegetables and even algae, are one such option. Making a biofuel is a complicated and time-consuming process that ultimately drives up the costs. Assistant Professor Bulent Koc of the University of Missouri may have a solution. He's investigating how ultrasound technology, the same kind used to image fetuses in a mother’s womb, can speed up biofuel production. If it works, it could lead to higher supply in the marketplace at a potentially lower cost.

The conventional process of making a biofuel involves mixing the oil derived from the plant with an alcohol, usually methanol. During mixing, the alcohol reacts chemically with the oil, stripping away fatty acids that make the oil too thick for use in a fuel tank as is. The mixing process usually takes an hour to produce just a few hundred milliliters of biofuel because the mixers are not very efficient.

Koc, an agricultural and biological engineer, had used ultrasound technology as part of his research in the past to look at different properties of food. For example, he figured out concentrations of alcohol in wine by measuring the velocity of the sound waves within the wine and how long they took to bounce back. When he came to the University of Missouri, the agricultural engineering department required him to focus on energy rather than food, so he applied it to biofuel production.
The ultrasonic wave process works like this: a desktop computer-sized device, known as an ultrasound generator, drives an ultrasound transducer, the machine that makes ultrasonic waves pass through a mixture of methanol and vegetable oil. These waves heat the mixture of oil and alcohol, creating bubbles that eventually burst. The bursts release high pressure and temperature, which break the molecular bonds in the fluids, allowing the two liquids to mix at a much faster pace. After the molecular bonds break, the fatty acids release, producing the by-product glycerin, and the remaining molecules recombine into a biodiesel.

“We wanted to see the effects of ultrasonic energy on glycerin separation time, that means reducing the production time of biodiesel.

Unlike the conventional process that takes an hour to produce a few milliliters, this process takes just five minutes to make about the same amount.

Leon Schumacher, a collaborative researcher who has worked with biofuels since the early 90’s and is the department head of Agricultural Engineering at the University of Missouri, believes one of the main problems of biodiesel production is its cost. He’s hoping that the use of ultrasonic waves can help make biodiesel cheaper for both consumers and producers.

“It does cost money to convert to a biodiesel. It’s not a free process, and the end result is that if we can minimize that, that would be a huge win for the biodiesel industry.”

Koc has used the technique on different vegetable and cooking oils, including soybean, sesame, peanut, and canola oils, with notable success. The main challenge with using ultrasonic waves, however, is that the machine transmitting the waves heats up quickly and can become damaged. Koc thinks this problem could be fixed with a machine that circulates a cooling liquid around the ultrasonic device.

“You would have a cooling jacket around the ultrasonic transducer. This way you could maintain the temperature of the device itself so that it doesn’t overheat or get damaged.”

Koc has not yet made the cooling device. Currently, Koc and Schumacher are testing the ultrasonic biodiesels in diesel engines.
Sen. Kit Bond, MU expert have questions in Times Square incident

by Ryan Famuliner on May 5, 2010

in Crime & Courts

As Federal investigators search for answers in the failed Times Square bombing and the events leading to the arrest of Faisal Shahzad, a University of Missouri professor and Senator Kit Bond have their own questions.

MU professor Paul Wallace teaches courses on terrorism, has written numerous articles about it, and even testified as an expert in a terrorism case. He says there are three basic, important questions in this scenario. Did Shahzad act alone? Did he get training while in Pakistan? And is he affiliated with a terrorist group?

Wallace says it’s possible Shahzad did get training from the Taliban, based on where he was living in Pakistan. Wallace says members of the Taliban are accumulating in Karachi as they’re being pushed out of other areas of Pakistan. He says it’s easier for them to hide among the city’s population of about 15 million people. It’s been reported Shahzad recently spent time there.

“He certainly had the opportunity. My feeling, and this is just from the limited knowledge so far, is that he probably received some training but wasn’t a good student. Because (the bomb) didn’t go off,” Wallace said.

Wallace says Shahzad also could have been inspired by the group. He says a true “lone wolf” is uncommon.

“I would think there’d be a couple of his friends who would also be involved in this, in terms of the reinforcement of such a radical step,” Wallace said.

Senator Kit Bond, the ranking member on the Senate’s intelligence committee, says we’re lucky the bomb and Shahzad were caught before they could do any damage. But he says it’s troubling they were both caught at the last minute. He wants to know if we could have seen this coming, and why Shahzad wasn’t arrested until he was already on a plane.

“How could someone who’s on a no fly list get on an airplane? It’s a question of when they got the no fly list out. They knew who Shahzad was by Sunday,” Bond said.
Bond also has a question about the arrest itself.

“We want to know who interrogated the terrorist. Why did you offer him Miranda rights, saying he could keep quiet get a lawyer? Fortunately he didn’t, but it is absolutely disconcerting and very troubling,” Bond said on a conference call with reporters.

Bond says suspected terrorists are not entitled to the same procedural safeguards as normal criminal suspects.

Wallace says going forward; the most important aspect of the investigation will be what intelligence can be gathered from the incident.

“It’s possible that if he has associates he’ll be talking about them. Which could lead you to a longer trail,” Wallace said.
Newsy raises $2M in capital

Newsy.com, an online video news site that monitors and analyzes world news coverage from various media, said Wednesday it has raised $2 million from angel investors for a total of $2.7 million since February 2008.

More than 70 percent of the funding in this round came from angel investors in St. Louis, founder and President Jim Spencer said.

The company said it would use the money to build revenue, distribution and marketing partnerships, and grow its news operations.

Newsy.com, a division of Media Convergence Group Inc., relocated to Columbia, Mo., from the Silicon Valley in June 2008. It operates from a $250,000 digital newsroom it built across from the journalism school at University of Missouri in Columbia.

The company has developed iPad and iPhone applications, as well as apps for Android-based smart phones and Intel Atom-powered netbooks.
Barkley House offers haven for animal patients, owners

By Jessica Barnett
May 6, 2010 | 12:01 a.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Shelli McGregor would do anything for her dogs.

“My dogs are my children. I will do whatever I can for them to provide them with the best quality of life and care,” she said.

That includes spending time at Barkley House, a program run through the MU College of Veterinary Medicine.

Barkley House, conceived by veterinary oncologist Carolyn Henry, offers out-of-town clients of the veterinary school a place to stay while their animals receive long-term care at the veterinary school.

The house is a room at Stoney Creek Inn that has been retrofitted for animal care so that pets can stay with their owners. The room includes supplies needed to care for recovering pets and literature on pet care, as well as a back door opening onto a lawn for the dogs to use.

College of Veterinary Medicine spokeswoman Tracey Berry said the room is rare in veterinary medicine, and she isn't aware of any other such facilities.

The plan for Barkley House is to build a house with fully furnished suites for clients to stay in. The intent of the facility is to alleviate the stress of the situation for animals and owners.

The room at Stoney Creek Inn has other benefits as well.

“The Barkley House room at Stoney Creek is valuable not only to our clients but is providing us with the chance to test this concept,” Berry said.

Barkley House is run through private donations. A portion of the price paid by guests of the Barkley House room is donated to fund the project as well. It is estimated that the construction and maintenance of an entire house could cost up to $1.8 million.
One of McGregor's nine boxers, Brach, was found to have an inoperable mass on his spinal cord five months ago.

The doctors told her that Brach's time was limited, but McGregor was not ready to give up on her 8-year-old pet.

She searched and found a board-certified neurologist, Fred Wininger, at MU to consult for a second opinion.

The only problem was that McGregor and Brach live in Blaire, Neb., five or six hours away from Columbia, and Brach would require radiation treatments for several days at a time.

For McGregor and her family, Barkley House became a comfort in a stressful situation.

McGregor said Brach was initially depressed and declined fast when she left him for treatment. When she saw how bad he had gotten, she knew she had to find a way to stay with him during his stay at the veterinary hospital. McGregor says she thinks staying with Brach has helped him heal.
MU student to be on "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire"

BY Lauren Rauth

Wednesday, May 5, 2010 | 4:28 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Cassie Belek admits that while submitting her video to the "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire" website, she was wearing sweats.

"I wanted to look nice, with my hair and makeup done, but I didn't want to change my sweats," Belek said.

Her love of trivia has always been a part of her life. Ever since the MU journalism graduate student could remember she has always wanted to be on a game show.

"I just thought, why not try 'Millionaire'?" Belek said.

Belek will be a contestant on "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire." The show will air at 6:30 p.m. Friday and continue at 6:30 p.m. May 17.

In her video audition, she said if she won a million dollars, she would payoff her student loans and pay for her parents to travel to Europe.

While Belek was in China covering the China Open with the Journalism School, she found out she was in the contestant pool. She said she was not expecting to hear back so soon, let alone be a contestant.

She kept saying, "Am I really a contestant?"

After the exciting news, she began watching the show every day. "I wanted to get comfortable with the format," Belek said about practicing.

She also is a member of a weekly trivia team, which gathers on Wednesdays at Harpo's.

Chad Painter, a member of Belek's trivia team, said he was excited she will be on the show. Painter joked that Belek's only two fears for being on the show were "that she would miss a question and not win anything, or that everyone would treat her differently when she won a million dollars."

He will attend the watch party Belek and her friends are having Friday.
The show was filmed two different times because Belek was the last contestant during the original shooting, so she had to return.

The first time Belek flew out to New York City, she went by herself. The second time, her dad went with her. "I wanted to share in the excitement," said Cassie's father, Joe Belek.

"I was way too nervous to go with her," said Katie Belek, Cassie's mother. "I didn't want her to feel my nerves if I was sitting in the audience."

Both of Belek's parents said they were proud of their daughter.

When asked if she was nervous about being in the "hot seat," Cassie Belek said she was relaxed.

"I knew how the game worked, and I had friends in the audience," she said.

One contestant Cassie Belek met at the show listened to the Millionaire song before bed every night.

"He didn't want the song to make him nervous when he was on the show," Cassie Belek said.

She was also joined by her long-time Notre Dame friend, Doug Schlarman. He lives in New York City and was there during the first taping.

"I wanted to make sure she had someone in the audience cheering for her," Schlarman said.

He was not surprised she was on the show. "She tends to know a lot of useless trivia," he said.

Cassie Belek said she was thankful she had the experience and that she had a lot of fun. She has future hopes of one day being on "Jeopardy!"

Seeing the "behind-the-scenes" action helped her decide what she wanted to do after graduation.

"The associate producers were around my age, and talking with them helped me lean toward production," Cassie Belek said.

She will graduate from the School of Journalism this month and plans to move to Los Angeles to work in television production.

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