Atheists score well on religion quiz

By DAVID YONKE BLADE RELIGION EDITOR

Published: October 2, 2010

DENVER - Dave Silverman was poring over the results of the latest survey by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life and smiling broadly.

"I am a very happy person," said Mr. Silverman, president of the American Atheists Inc., at the group’s booth at the Religion Newswriters Association’s annual conference here last week.

The reason: Data showed atheists and agnostics know more about religion than do most Americans. Of the quiz’s 32 questions, atheists and agnostics, on average, answered 20.9 of them correctly. Right behind were Jews, answering an average of 20.5 questions correctly, and Mormons, with 20.3 correct answers.

Other groups, in descending order of correct answers, were:

- White evangelical Protestants, 17.6
- White Catholics, 16.0
- White mainline Protestants, 15.8
- Nothing in particular, 15.2
- Black Protestant, 13.4
- Hispanic Catholic, 11.6

Overall, Americans got exactly half the answers right, with an average score of 16 out of 32.

Mr. Silverman saw it as a chance to pat fellow atheists on the back. "When it comes to criticism of religion, we know what we're talking about," he said. "Atheists often reach their conclusions about the universe by examining the claims of religion and then finding these claims to be wanting."

Greg Smith, a Pew Forum senior researcher, previewed the survey results for journalists at the RNA conference.

Debra Mason, journalism professor at the University of Missouri and director of the Center on Religion and the Professions, said the lack of religious knowledge is a factor in recent religious conflicts such as the controversy over proposed mosques in New York and Tennessee and a Florida pastor's threat to burn Qur'ans.
"The more you know about religion, the less likely you will be swayed by misinformation, and right now many people are being swayed," she said. "We are in an era in which conflict about religion in the public sphere is at an extreme level."

Mr. Smith said education was the single most important factor in predicting religious knowledge, with college graduates averaging eight more correct answers than people with a high school education or less - 20.6 to 12.8.

Other factors linked to religious knowledge included reading Scripture at least once a week, talking about religion with family and friends, and higher levels of religious commitment (people who said they attend religious services at least once a week and who said religion is very important in their lives).

The multiple-choice questions were intended to address a broad knowledge of religious knowledge rather than the most essential facts about religions or religious trivia, the researchers said.

Among the questions asked were: "What was Mother Teresa's religion?" (Catholic); "What was Joseph Smith's religion?" (Mormon); "What religion do most people in Pakistan consider themselves?" (Muslim), and "Which Bible figure is most closely associated with remaining obedient to God despite suffering?" (Job).

Only 2 percent of those surveyed answered 29 or more questions correctly, and only 8 of 3,412 respondents scored a perfect 32.

About 70 percent of those polled knew the Constitution bans the government from establishing an official religion or interfering with the free exercise of religion, and 89 percent of those surveyed correctly said a teacher cannot lead a class in prayer.

But the survey revealed some misperceptions about religion and the Constitution; Mr. Smith said that 23 percent wrongly thought the Constitution forbids teachers from reading from the Bible as an example of literature.

"People assume that restrictions on religion in school are much more tighter than is actually the case," Mr. Smith said.

Many religious groups scored poorly on questions about their own faith.

Forty five percent of Catholics polled, for example, did not know that the church says the bread and wine in Communion become the body and blood of Jesus, and 43 percent of Jews did not identify Maimonides, a venerated 12th century rabbi, as Jewish.

The survey, the first on the topic by the independent Pew Forum, was based on phone interviews in English and Spanish with 3,412 adults from May 19-June 6, with a margin of error of plus or minus 2.5 percent. There were not enough Muslims, Buddhists, or Hindus polled to list them in separate categories, although their answers were included in the overall population.

Survey results and the 32-question poll are available online at pewforum.org.
The stock market just wrapped up one its best Septembers ever. But if investors threw any parties, they didn't invite me. Nor did I see any balloons or confetti floating around.

My suspicion is that Americans are still a little too shell-shocked for much celebrating. The economy is sluggish, anxiety over jobs remains high and many people are focusing more on other financial priorities such as cutting debt and building up emergency savings.

But recent studies suggest that Americans are becoming less risk-tolerant in general and perhaps even less rational in terms of assessing trade-offs.

For instance, the overall willingness of mutual-fund investors to accept risk still hasn't rebounded from the financial crisis, reports the Investment Company Institute.

In a recently released survey of 4,200 fund-owning households compiled in May, the institute found that only 30 percent of households were taking substantial or above-average risks - unchanged from May 2009 and down from 37 percent in May 2008.

For the past couple of years, the ICI has noticed more investor cash flowing into bond funds than riskier equity portfolios.

To some degree, this reduced tolerance for risk can be explained by the gradual aging of the population, noted the ICI's chief economist, Brian Reid. Investors generally get more conservative as they age.

But also, investor behavior is affected by what has been happening in the financial markets - meaning that investors seem to be chasing positive returns in the bond market while remaining leery about the stock market.

Investors on balance don't come across as being especially opportunistic. People who might be enticed to buy a new car or appliance with a price cut don't react the same way when stock prices drop to a discount.

According to another study, by the University of Missouri, investors seem to be growing less willing to assume risks.

Rui Yao, an assistant professor in the Personal Financial Planning Department in the university's College of Human Environmental Sciences, found that the risk tolerance of investors rises and falls with movements in the stock market. People invest more when returns are high and less when returns are low or negative.
This buy-high, sell-low tendency has been observed before, and it leads to ineffective investment tactics and unnecessary losses, she said.

"The ideal strategy is to buy stocks at a low price, with the hope of selling them at a higher price," Yao said in a statement. "However, many investors seem to be unwilling to take risks when the market is at a low point and seem content to only invest when the market is at a high point."

To assess risk tolerance over time, Yao examined research conducted by the University of Michigan dating to 1992. In that study, participants were asked hypothetical questions about various trade-offs and then were assigned to different risk-tolerance groups based on their answers. Overall responses were then compared with the status of the stock market each year.

Yao's study, published in the *Journal of Economic Issues*, found that many Americans are not behaving according to rational economic assumptions. She said such changes in risk tolerance in response to market returns may indicate investors, and possibly their advisers, overestimate their ability to understand risk and assess their tolerance for it.

She considers improved financial education as the best way to help people work through these issues.

To the extent more people might learn to become better investors, workplace 401(k)-style plans could be among the best venues for doing so.

Increasingly, these employer-sponsored programs have become the gateway to mutual-fund ownership and stock-market exposure.

According to the ICI's study, more than 70 percent of fund-owning households that bought their first fund within the past five years did so through a retirement plan at work. By comparison, only about half of those who made their first fund purchase at least 20 years ago did so in a 401(k) plan.

Through these programs, many employers are making third-party investment advice available for participants. Many also are enrolling workers automatically, putting them into age-appropriate default investments (usually funds with a stock component) and even boosting their contributions automatically over time.

All these steps are showing promise. They're encouraging people to sock away money and keep doing it long enough in suitable investments to make a meaningful difference over time.
Protests at military funerals gall but likely are protected speech

Fallen soldier's father's pain versus free speech goes to court this week

By Michael Doyle

McClatchy Newspapers

Updated: 10/04/2010 01:01:27 AM CDT

WASHINGTON — The most vexing free-speech fight in years confronts the Supreme Court on Wednesday, pitting a loud-mouthed, anti-gay Kansas church against a grieving Pennsylvania father.

The father, Albert Snyder, has already won the popular vote hands-down. Forty-eight states support him. So do 42 senators and all the major veterans organizations.

The constitutional tally, though, isn't nearly so simple.

"The government may not curtail speech simply because the speaker's message may be offensive to his audience," University of Missouri Law School professor Christina Wells noted in a legal filing.

In Snyder v. Phelps, justices will decide whether to protect speech that Wells characterized as "provocative, offensive and disrespectful." Wells acknowledged it might even be considered "contemptible."

But for all the pain they may have caused, the public rants against homosexuality by the Westboro Baptist Church of Topeka, Kan., might just be found to be protected by the First Amendment.

"This is obviously an emotion-laden case," said Steven Shapiro, legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union. But "the First Amendment was designed to protect unpopular speech against (the majority's) distaste. At the end of the day, I think that's where the Supreme Court ends up."
Most everyone outside of Westboro Baptist Church expresses outrage over its members' exploitation of the funeral of Matthew Snyder, Albert's son.

Matthew Snyder was a 20-year-old Marine serving in Iraq when he died in a noncombat vehicle accident in March 2006. The family planned a private service at a Roman Catholic Church in Maryland.

Fred Phelps Sr., Westboro's 80-year-old pastor, thought the Snyder service could serve his church's purpose. The fundamentalist church, founded in 1955, has about 70 members, about 50 of whom are Phelps' children, grandchildren or in-laws.

Phelps wanted to use the funeral service as a pulpit to convey his belief that God was punishing the U.S. for tolerating homosexuality.

"The purpose of picketing in connection with funerals is to use an available public platform, when the living contemplate death, that there is a consequence for sin," the church's Topeka-based attorney, Margie J. Phelps, explained in a brief.

Margie J. Phelps is the daughter of Fred Phelps Sr. She will argue the case Wednesday, defending what the funeral protesters did.

Among the protesters' signs were "God Hates You" and "Thank God for Dead Soldiers." One sign included, a legal brief said, "a picture of two males performing anal sexual intercourse."

The seven protesters were about 1,000 feet from the church, and Albert Snyder didn't see the protest signs until viewing a television news show that night. Snyder, however, said the demonstration and a related "epic poem" posted on the church website exacerbated his diabetes and depression.

"Someone could have stabbed me in the arm or the back, and the wound would have healed. But I don't think this will heal," Snyder testified.

He sued, claiming intentional infliction of emotional distress, and won. A jury in 2007 awarded $10.9 million. A judge subsequently lowered the award to $5 million.

The 4th Circuit Court of Appeals overturned the judgment, in part explaining that the protesters' signs "clearly contain imaginative and hyperbolic rhetoric intended to spark debate," and were not impugning the Snyder family.

The 48 states that support Snyder's appeal retort that many legislatures have enacted laws limiting funeral protests. These laws could be undermined if the church wins. The states also contend that funerals are uniquely deserving of freedom from interruption.

"No traditional, necessary or even marginally valuable method of protest will be lost by holding the Phelpses accountable for their emotional terrorism," former acting solicitor general Walter Dellinger argued in the states' brief.
Previously, though, the Supreme Court has protected even grotesque exaggerations despite the pain they may cause. Notably, the court in 1988 unanimously rejected a $200,000 judgment against Hustler magazine for a satirical ad targeting the Rev. Jerry Falwell.

It depicted Falwell as supposedly having drunken carnal relations with his mother, among other things. In rejecting Falwell's suit, the Supreme Court stressed a painful constitutional principle that is likely to recur Wednesday.

"In the world of debate about public affairs, many things done with motives that are less than admirable are protected by the First Amendment," the late Chief Justice William Rehnquist wrote, "even when a speaker or writer is motivated by hatred or ill-will."
MU deal changes concessions at games

By Kris Hilgedick
Saturday, October 2, 2010

University of Missouri sports fans already might have noticed an expanded selection of food choices at events this fall, the result of a new partnership between its athletic department, marketing partner Learfield Sports and food service company Levy Restaurants.

For years, fans have grown comfortable with a limited fare of popcorn, nachos and burgers.

"Here’s a wrapped hot dog, and there you go," said Timothy Hickman, senior associate athletic director of operations, describing the old status quo.

Under the new partnership, which started Sept. 1, products available at games include smoked brisket, Italian chopped salads, gooey butter cake dippers and veggie burgers.

For years, managing concessions was a task the athletic department handled in-house with two full-time employees, Hickman said.

“We decided to look outside of our operation for two reasons,” he said — improving customer service and revenues for the university. “While we feel we’ve done a perfectly good job” of selling concession items, “revenues have flattened out.”

As staff pondered how to boost concession sales, Learfield was seeking ways to grow, he said.

“We began talking to MU over a year ago,” said Roger Gardner, Learfield vice chairman.

Considered a leader in collegiate sports marketing, Learfield owns the multimedia rights at MU and 50 other schools. Learfield — via its subsidiary Mizzou Sports Properties — procures sponsorships and sells advertising for all on-site signage at the sporting venues and on MU’s website. It has held the university’s radio rights since 1975, and it broadcasts some MU basketball games on TV.

In exchange, Learfield contributes to the athletic department’s bottom line, to the tune of about $4 million a year, Hickman said.

Recognizing their expertise wasn’t in food service, Gardner said Learfield approached Levy Restaurants more than a year ago. “We needed a partner,” he said.
Founded in Chicago in 1978, Levy Restaurants pioneered the concept of fine dining in a stadium setting at that city’s Comiskey Park. In Missouri, Levy sells food at St. Louis’ Edward Jones Dome and Scottrade Center and Kansas City’s Sprint Center.

Hickman and Gardner hope they’ll be able to use Mizzou Sports Properties’ marketing experience to drive concession sales. For example, a scoreboard ad might entice customers to buy a “Mizzou Dog,” a one-third-pound hot dog topped with chopped brisket and onion straws.

In exchange for the right to sell in the university’s venues, Levy and Learfield have agreed to remit a portion of the revenues. Hickman said if an event’s crowd size is above 5,000, the university keeps 45 percent of the commission. If the crowd numbers less than 5,000, the university keeps 20 percent. It's a way of making sure Levy remains interested in serving MU’s smaller events, Hickman said.

The contract also allows Levy to take over “premium catering” sales next fall. Currently, University Catering — MU’s in-house service — provides food in arena and stadium suites and the clubs.

MU spokesman Christian Basi said University Catering has served the athletic program for three years, with annual gross sales of $725,000. He said the one-year lead time will give the organization the flexibility to adapt to the change. “It will allow us … time to identify expense reductions or revenue opportunities,” he said.

He said it’s too soon to know if University Catering will experience layoffs.

The contract requires Levy to invest $500,000 to improve concession stands, primarily at Memorial Stadium, within 18 months.

Levy retained both of MU’s concession managers to work in Columbia.

Hickman said last year’s profits for MU’s concessions were $1.1 million. “That’s where we’ll start from,” he said, noting he thinks Levy’s involvement will boost sales. “Sure, we could lose money. But they have 100 percent of the costs. It’s less risk for us.”

So far, Hickman said the enterprise hasn’t seen a big difference in sales. “But we’re getting up to speed,” he said.

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UM employee premiums increase for third year in a row

By Walker Moskop
October 2, 2010 | 5:31 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — University of Missouri System employees’ medical insurance premiums will increase in January for a third consecutive year.

Effective Jan. 1, the 13 percent premium increase will mean that employees on family plans will pay an extra $40 per month, and monthly premiums for single employees will increase by $14, said Betsy Rodriguez, vice president of human resources for the UM System.

Twenty-one percent of UM employees are enrolled in family plans, the most expensive health insurance option offered by the UM System. The largest share of employees, 47 percent, are on single-person, employee-only plans, she said.

“The university recognizes the impact medical premium increases will have for both faculty and staff,” Rodriguez wrote in an e-mail. “However, the university is facing higher medical costs and we simply can’t offset those any longer without passing along a portion of the increase to our employees.”

Causes behind premium increases

Rodriguez indicated that employee health has had a significant impact on the higher costs. She said in a recent benefits survey, one-third of employees rated themselves as being “unhealthy.”

According to UM’s claim administrator, roughly 7,800 of the 37,000 plan members didn’t go to a doctor between April 2009 and March 2010, Rodriguez said.
During the past seven years, the medical benefit costs for employees enrolled in the UM Choice Health Care Program, one of two available programs, have seen an increase of about 9 percent per year, with some years incurring an increase as high as 23 percent.

Because UM has a self-funded plan, premiums are driven directly by claim costs.

"In a majority of cases," Rodriguez said, "these claims can be reduced through early detection and treatment of diseases."

Rodriguez said UM has been using a reserve fund to mitigate extreme fluctuations in premium costs, which have increased at an average annual rate of 7 percent during the past seven years.

But rising health costs aren't the only factor driving the premium hike.

Rodriguez said that a smaller portion of the increase is due to state-mandated health care reform provisions, which include the extension of coverage to dependent children on parents' family plans until age 26 and an expansion of coverage for autistic children.

Rodriguez did not have an estimate of how many employees will take advantage of the expansion of coverage for dependent children, or how it will affect employee expenses.

At the UM System Board of Curators meeting in Springfield last week, Rodriguez said there will be no change in the university's current premium payment arrangement, in which the employees pay for 27 percent of the premium costs and the university pays for the other 73 percent.

She said the rise in medical premiums would be the only increase in employee expenses, but added that the dental plan premiums will stay the same, and life insurance and vision premiums will go down.

Cost reduction strategies

"Encouraging employees to utilize our wellness program is the single largest opportunity for the university to lower its premiums," Rodriguez said.

She said the program is important for both reducing costs and improving employee health.
At Missouri University of Science and Technology, a wellness-incentive program called "Miners on the Move" is being piloted. According to its website, "Miners on the Move" offers faculty $150 and other prizes if they successfully complete the program. If it is successful, Rodriguez said the system hopes to introduce the program at all UM campuses next year.

Rodriguez also said UM frequently reviews insurance plan designs and administrator arrangements for ways to reduce medical costs.

With regards to unnecessary medical expenditures, she said UM has “some areas of potential overuse.” To help prevent unnecessary medical costs UM currently requires preauthorization of expensive procedures and reviews them for “medical necessity and appropriateness,” she said.

“Together with our administrator we routinely review areas of potential high-cost and ways to mitigate these costs,” Rodriguez said.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU researchers believe high levels of BPA dangerous

By Jing Zhao
October 1, 2010 | 4:13 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — A new study by researchers at MU and other scientists at the University of California-Davis and Washington State University concluded that human exposure to bisphenol A, a toxic chemical found in many consumer products, is eight to 10 times higher than the EPA “safe” daily intake dose and poses a threat to human health.

A National Institute of Health study in 2005 measured BPA. The research found people with high levels of the chemical would be much more likely to have a variety of health problems including heart disease, diabetes, obesity and cancer.

Julia Taylor, lead author and associate research professor at the MU, said many earlier estimates of human BPA exposure were in the range of less than 1 part per billion, although "one or two estimates were quite a bit higher."

The most recent research found human exposure to BPA is closer to 500 parts per billion, Taylor said. “It’s a huge difference. Our data support new estimates of human exposure proposed earlier this year.”

The new study discovered that women, female monkeys and female mice have major similarities when it comes to how BPA is metabolized.

“Our paper shows that as BPA is metabolized the levels of BPA in blood are very similar in mice, monkeys and humans,” Taylor said. “Since human and mice have the same blood level of BPA after exposure to the same amount of BPA, if that amount causes harm in mice, it could cause harm in humans.”
"This is particularly important because the amounts of BPA that harm health in lab studies on mice are lower than those which lead to the blood levels of BPA found in the average person," Taylor said.

The study was published online in the Sept. 20 NIH journal, Environmental Health Perspectives. It was authored by researchers at the MU Division of Biological Sciences, Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Lab and the Department of Biomedical Sciences, in collaboration with scientists at the University of California-Davis and Washington State University.

BPA is one of the world's highest production-volume chemicals, with more than 8 billion pounds made per year. The chemical is in the plastic used to line food and beverage cans.

"We have traditionally thought that food and beverage containers which are made out of polycarbonate plastic is the major source of BPA exposure," said Sonya Lunder, senior analyst for the Environmental Working Group, non-profit organization in Washington, D.C. "And this includes baby bottles and sport drink bottles. However federal agencies have not thoroughly accounted for the variety of BPA uses."

"In addition to food, we know that people have daily contact with BPA-treated paper, and that hospitalized infants receive lots of BPA—likely through PVC medical tubing." Lunder said.

Other daily products contain BPA include some of the thermal paper used for sales receipts, CDs, dental sealants, some children's toys, eyeglass lenses, and some epoxy adhesives.

Many scientists have urged Food and Drug Administration to ban the use of BPA. "We have sent comments and letters to FDA about the safety of BPA and our concern about baby safety," Lunder said.

The FDA has refused to ban BPA, recommending additional studies instead. The agency decided there were uncertainties regarding interpretation of these studies and their potential implications for human health effects of BPA exposure. These uncertainties included: the relevance of some animal models to human health, differences in the
metabolism of BPA at different ages and in different species, and limited or absent information for some studies.

The MU researchers work with Frederick vom Saal, curators' professor of biological sciences at MU and a leading authority on BPA and human health.

The researchers have renewed their request for stricter governmental regulation for BPA.

“Further evidence of human harm should not be required for regulatory action to reduce human exposure to BPA,” vom Saal said in prepared remarks announcing the latest research findings.
Researchers believe dinosaurs were larger than previously thought

By Janese Silvey

Friday, October 1, 2010

Turns out, Brachiosaurus — that giant, plant-eating dinosaur with the giraffe-like neck — might have been even taller than we thought.

**Researchers from the University of Missouri and Ohio University have found that dinosaurs had thick layers of cartilage in their joints, space not historically accounted for when fossils are reconstructed.**

Casey Holliday, lead author of the study and an anatomy professor in the MU School of Medicine, and Lawrence Witmer, an anatomy professor at Ohio University, reached that conclusion by studying modern-day relatives of dinosaurs. What they found is reptiles build their joints with different amounts of bone and cartilage.

Unlike mammals, whose limbs fit together like puzzle pieces at the joints, the ends of many dinosaur bones are rounded and lack bony projections. That indicates thick cartilages formed between these bones, Holliday said.

The team studied alligators and ostriches and determined that the lengths of their limbs include between 6 percent and 10 percent cartilage. Using a cartilage calculation on dinosaur bones, they then determined some dinosaurs might have been 10 percent taller or more. That means Brachiosaurus, previously thought to have been 42 feet tall, might actually have been significantly taller.

“This study is significant because it shows that bones can’t always speak for themselves,” Witmer said in a statement. “To understand how dinosaurs moved, we need to analyze the bones as they were inside their bodies, including their cartilage. ... Knowing how much cartilage was lost allows us to better restore the structure of a living dinosaur bone, which then allows us to better understand how dinosaurs moved and lived.”

The findings also could help museums and paleontologists more accurately reconstruct dinosaur remains.
“Different museums around the country — some have T-Rex’s knee bones touching, others have space between the bones recognizing there was soft tissue in between,” Holliday said. “The problem is inconsistencies throughout.”

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COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU researcher studies relationship between hospice communication, patient pain

By Kurt Woock
October 1, 2010 | 6:15 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — The decision to care for dying loved ones during their final days often leads to other difficult choices for caregivers. An MU researcher hopes to make one of those decisions — how best to alleviate the loved one’s pain — easier.

Debra Parker Oliver, associate professor of rural sociology and social work, has recently secured a $2.1 million grant from the National Institutes of Health to look at how improved communication between caregivers and hospice staff affects both caregiver and patient.

“The problem that most severely impacts people in hospice care is pain management,” said Parker Oliver, who is leading a team of researchers at MU and other universities.

Family members caring for loved ones often have misconceptions about pain-relieving drugs, such as morphine, and are hesitant to administer them, Parker Oliver said. They are guided by the impression, bolstered by messages in mass media, that such drugs are always bad, she said.

But for dying patients, addiction isn’t the issue. Because the average lifespan for patients who enter hospice care is only 60 days, the benefits of the drugs often outweigh the risks, Parker Oliver said.

Missouri has 132 hospice providers, according to Missouri Hospice & Palliative Care Association. Many of these providers are small, yet they provide care to large, rural areas, making it difficult for caregivers to travel to meet with hospice staff and nearly impossible for hospice staff to visit all patients, Parker Oliver said. Connecting caregivers and hospice staff with technology could lead to better care.
A pilot study conducted by Parker Oliver from 2006 to 2008 showed that when caregivers participated in patient-care meetings with hospice staff using videoconferencing technology, their fears were eased, and they had a better understanding of — and willingness to administer — pain-relieving drugs.

Parker Oliver's new study, which involves three Missouri hospice programs, stems from that research. She declined to name the programs because, on Friday, she doesn't have their permission to do so.

She and her research team plan to monitor 544 patients, their caregivers and hospice-care professionals. They will monitor video conferences every other week between caregivers and the professionals, measuring the caregiver's perception of pain after each session by asking a series of questions. The researchers will also measure patients' levels of pain on a 0-10 scale. The study, which began Sept. 15, will last four years.

The researchers hope their findings will definitively prove that caregivers' involvement with the hospice staff positively affects patient pain. They also seek to determine the cost-effectiveness and feasibility of the program.
Extension farm to open to the public

Friday, October 1, 2010

The University of Missouri's South Farm Experiment Station will open to the public tomorrow with educational demonstrations, hay rides, a petting zoo and corn maze.

The annual South Farm Showcase will run from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Classes and demonstrations will span a variety of topics, including pet care, Missouri wine, horseback riding and a demonstration of how tornadoes are formed. Kid-friendly activities such as a pumpkin-painting contest, bug hunt and pedal tractor race also are planned.

South Farm is a 1,452-acre research, teaching and Extension center where researchers study improvements in swine, beef, sheep and crop production. The farm is located on New Haven Road, one-quarter mile east of AC/Grindstone off Highway 63
Stewart Road to remain closed until fall 2012

Repairs to the MU Power Plant shut down the street.

By Jared Grafman

Published Oct. 1, 2010

Stewart Road will be closed between Providence Road and Fourth Street for nearly two years, beginning Oct. 4. Additionally, Stewart Road between Fourth and Fifth streets will be shut down for most of that time.

An e-mail was sent to MU students announcing the road closing.

“Vehicle traffic that normally enters campus on Stewart Road will be re-routed south on Providence to Turner Avenue or north to Elm Street,” the e-mail stated. “Pedestrians and bicyclists will be re-routed through parking lots RC16 and RC 15, on the south side of Stewart between Providence and Fifth Street.”

The e-mail also stated the road closing is to ensure the safety of pedestrians, and vehicle traffic will be re-directed north and south around the closure.

“Workers will replace a coal-fired boiler with a 100 percent biomass boiler and perform other maintenance at the University of Missouri Power Plant,” the e-mail stated. “The closure will extend east on Stewart Road to Fifth Street later this fall.”

The boiler should be ready for use in late 2012, according to the news release. Lighting will also be installed for a temporary path that will re-route pedestrians and bicyclists.

“Because so many students, faculty and staff walk or ride their bikes to campus from west Stewart Road, we wanted to make sure that we could re-route them along an alternate and safe path,” Associate Vice Chancellor for Facilities Gary Ward said in the news release.

In another project, a protective coating will be applied to the exterior of the north and south chimneys, according to the release.

“The chimneys were built in 1980 and 1981 and have sustained damage from repeated freezing and thawing,” the news release stated. “As moisture gets into the cracks and freezes, it expands. The expansion causes pieces of concrete to loosen, a process known as spalling.”
MU has been producing heat and electricity using a Combined Heat and Power system, which reduces CO2 emissions by an estimated 107,000 tons per year, according to the news release. That is equivalent to the annual emissions from more than 17,900 passenger vehicles.

“MU is recognized nationally as a leader in energy efficiency and conservation, reducing energy usage by 13 percent per square foot and greenhouse gas emissions by 39 percent per square foot since 1990,” the news release stated. “The 20-year emphasis on energy conservation has resulted in a current annual savings of $6.8 million.”
MU looks to expand E.Z. Charge off campus

The program would be available for use at select local restaurants.

By Amanda Capua

E.Z. Charge could be a payment option at off-campus locations as early as fall 2011, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Cathy Scroggs said.

"Over the past few years, we've said no," she said. "We don't see anything stopping it, and we're going to continue to explore the idea."

Campus Dining Services Director Julaine Kiehn said off-campus E.Z. Charge would work just as the on-campus program does now.

"It would be a prepaid E.Z. Charge that would be paid by credit or debit card, cash or check," Kiehn said. "It would all be paid ahead of time and never show up on the student bill."

Scroggs said the money would be in a separate pre-paid account, and students would be able to put more money in the account when they wanted to.

Students would continue to use their student ID cards for off-campus E.Z. Charge. Student charge would not be a part of this new program.

Scroggs also said no vendors have been spoken to at this time, and they are far from talking to them about the new possible program.

"They would need to buy the needed equipment, and we'll need to decide whether vendors with licenses to serve alcohol may participate," Scroggs said.

Kiehn said the restaurants would need to pay MU a percentage of each sale.

"The university lawyers will need to approve it and draw up internal procedures," said Justin Mohn, Missouri Students Association Operations Committee chairman. "We need to figure out how vendors can apply for the program."

Scroggs said there are no specifications yet, as they are still in the developmental process.

Mohn said one of the programs that was looked at when thinking of expanding E.Z. Charge was the University of Texas at Austin's Bevo Bucks.
"Bevo Bucks are a benefit to students to use both on-campus and off-campus," said Nadine Kelley, program coordinator for the Division of Housing and Food Service at UT-Austin. "It provides a cashless and convenient way for students to make purchases both on-campus and locally."

Bevo Bucks has been in place at UT-Austin for approximately seven years, Kelley said, and there are 70 off-campus and 30 on-campus participating vendors.

"Each merchant can offer a special one week out of the semester for Bevo Bucks," Kelley said. "Bevo Buck merchants can submit advertisements to our residential cable information channel for no extra charge."

Back at MU, off-campus E.Z. Charge would only be usable at restaurant locations.

"UT-Austin has a wider program with restaurants and stores," Mohn said.

Other schools' off-campus charging systems were researched, including Virginia Tech's, Scroggs said. But MU's off-campus E.Z. Charge would be its own entity.

"Barring the lawyers, we can't find a reason not to do it," Scroggs said.