

## Exposure to 'gender-bending' chemical higher than thought

**Exposure to a so-called “gender-bending” chemical found in household products is greater than previously thought, research suggests.**

By Martin Beckford, Health Correspondent 4:01 AM BST 06 Jun 2011

More Bisphenol A, which can interfere with the way hormones are processed and so may affect fertility, is absorbed into the blood and accumulated through diet than previous lab tests had shown.

Scientists fear it may mean that humans are at greater risk from the substance, found in the lining of food and drink containers as well as baby bottles and plastic cutlery.

**Cheryl Rosenfeld, associate professor at the University of Missouri who carried out the new research, said: “People are primarily and unknowingly exposed to Bisphenol A (BPA) through the diet because of the various plastic and paper containers used to store our food are formulated with BPA.**

“We know that the active form of BPA binds to our steroid receptors, meaning it can affect oestrogen, thyroid and testosterone function. It might also cause genetic mutations. Thus, this chemical can hinder our ability to reproduce and possibly cause behavioural abnormalities that we are just beginning to understand.”

Previous research had been based on giving mice a “single exposure” to the chemical, which is widely used to harden plastic products.

But in the new study, published in the journal *Environmental Health Perspectives*, the lab animals were given a “steady diet supplemented with BPA throughout the day” in order to mimic the long-term exposure that humans have to it in everyday life.

Researchers found a “significantly greater increase” in the active form of the chemical absorbed and accumulated in the mice who received a steady diet of it, compared with those who received just one dose.



# Positivity deters binge-drinking

Study: Tone of message is key.

By **JANESE SILVEY**

**Warning college students that they could end up hurt in a car crash or passed out in a puddle of puke if they binge-drink doesn't work, a University of Missouri doctoral candidate has found.**

But telling them they're a lot more likely to make it home safe with happy memories of a fun night out if they don't binge just might do the trick.

**"College students want to know how an action will help them, not how they could be hurt," Joonghwa Lee said. "Not many college students respond well to threats."**

Lee, who is studying advertising at the Missouri School of Journalism, recently wrapped up a study that found positive messages are more effective than negative ones when it comes to curtailing binge-drinking.

He and fellow researchers showed college students two types of public service announcements specifically designed for the survey that focused on academic performance, safety, health and relationships.

For the latter, Lee showed students a negatively framed ad portraying a nearly nude woman passed out on a floor next to beer bottles warning that it's terrible to wake up and remember vomiting in front of friends.

On the flip side, a counter ad portrays two smiling women holding full glasses of wine with the promise that avoiding binge-drinking makes good times last longer.

That ad proved to be the most effective of all eight messages used in the study.

Most professional public service announcements aimed to deter binge-drinking focus on negative threats, though. Seoyeon Kim, a master's student at the journalism school who assisted, said the study shows a need for more positive campaigns when trying to reach college students.

"When we looked for examples of existing gain-framed anti-binge-drinking PSAs, we found very few," Kim said in a statement. "Our results suggest that when practitioners plan college binge-drinking prevention messages, they need to ensure that the audience-specific content has potential value. Different audiences respond differently to various message framing styles. Practitioners should better evaluate their audience to make their messages more effective."

The research, presented at the International Communications Conference in May, comes on the heels of a similar study conducted at the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University in Illinois.

Researchers there found that ads that attempt to make people feel shame or guilt about drinking trigger emotions that might make a person defensive and end up drinking more.

Kim Dude, director of MU's Wellness Center and the person who oversees alcohol prevention, wasn't available to comment about the research findings.

Traditionally, the Wellness Center relies on a strategy known as social-norming to curtail risky behaviors such as excessive alcohol consumption. The idea is to show students that binge-drinking isn't as common among their peers as they might think it is.

Reach Janese Silvey at 573-815-1705 or e-mail [jsilvey@columbiatribune.com](mailto:jsilvey@columbiatribune.com)

# COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

## MU program trains teachers in ninth grade physics education

By SIMONE FRANCIS

June 3, 2011 | 7:52 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Science teachers from across Missouri will be in Columbia to participate in a leadership program for ninth grade science education in their districts.

**A TIME for Physics First, an MU teaching academy for ninth grade science teachers, will be held June 6 through July 1. Four days a week, teachers will learn physics content. On the fifth day, teachers will discuss and develop their leadership skills.**

At the end of the program, teachers will create an action plan outlining how they will be a leader in ninth grade physics education in their school districts by teaching content or methodology.

By participating in the program, these teachers and their school districts have made a commitment to begin and continue teaching physics at the ninth grade level.

The program is a partnership between MU and 39 Missouri school districts, according to the [program website](#). The program is being offered amid calls from educators across the country for physics to be taught in ninth grade, before biology and chemistry.

Training is funded by a \$5 million grant from the National Science Foundation Mathematics and Science Partnership Teacher Institutes program.

Teachers will receive four units of graduate course credit for the class. During the academic year, teachers will receive one credit for a required online course.

Some educators say teaching physics before other sciences provides a better foundation for the understanding of biology and chemistry.

Science Teachers of Missouri probably will not take a stance on the issue, said Vice President Eric Hadley.

One criticism of teaching physics early is that ninth grade physics is conceptual; therefore, students don't learn as much math, making them less prepared for physics classes in college.

Any exposure to physics at all is better preparation than none, said Meera Chandrasekhar, MU physics professor and co-principal investigator for the program,

In most high schools, students take biology then chemistry then physics. Chandrasekhar said with the current system, many high schools students do not take physics at all, and "when they come to college and want to major in science or engineering, their physics course is demanding."

"Learning physics, even at a conceptual level in ninth grade, would give students some exposure to physics," Chandrasekhar said.

Marilyn Gardner, director of communications and membership at the American Association of Physics Teachers said the push to teach physics before other sciences is not yet an organized movement.

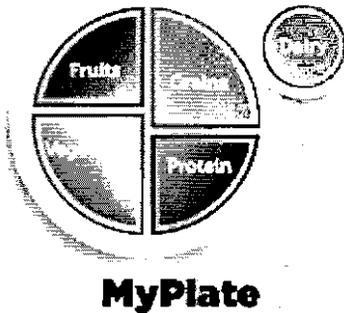
"There are a lot of people in physics education that think it's a good idea," Gardner said. "They support the discussion, but the AAPT does not endorse it."

Two teachers from Jefferson Junior High School and three teachers from West Junior High School in Columbia will participate in the teaching academy.

# Food habits hard to change, but expert says new MyPlate logo helps

By **JANESE SILVEY**

Showing Americans how much room fruits, veggies, proteins and grains should take up on their dinner plates probably won't change eating habits, but it is simpler than the old-fashioned food pyramid.



**That's from Ellen Schuster, a University of Missouri nutrition expert who weighed in this morning on the new MyPlate initiative unveiled yesterday by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.**

MyPlate is the official logo of the USDA's dietary guidelines and the center of a new ChooseMyPlate.gov campaign to educate people about nutrition.

Unlike its pyramid predecessor — which advised a hefty load of grains, a few servings of vegetables, a couple of fruit servings and smaller portions of meat and milk — the plate is half-loaded with fruits and vegetables with smaller sections allotted for meat and grains. A side cup is allowed for dairy products in the new dietary icon, but the fats and sugars previously allowed at the top of the pyramid are nowhere to be found.

In a news release announcing the new initiative yesterday, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said the plate is designed to be an uncomplicated reminder to make healthier food choices.

First lady Michelle Obama also weighed in, saying busy parents still have time to look at their child's dinner plate and make sure it's assembled with the right foods and proportions.

That's what Schuster likes about MyPlate — it's a concept adults and children alike can understand. "The thing I like about the plate is that we've got to start early with kids," Schuster said, adding that children might be tempted to tell Mom or Dad when their own plates don't match the MyPlate they learned about in school.

One problem with any food-portion guide is a lot of dishes have ingredients from each food group. Even with a handy premade plate, people still are going to have to guess the portions when they're eating dinners such as tacos, stir-fry and chili, Schuster said.

"That's always been a challenge," she said. "But if you can look at your plate and see that half is fruit and vegetables, that's a big improvement over what we have now."

Schuster also knows people often eat from packages on the run but said she hopes the plate concept reminds parents about other benefits of sitting down and enjoying a family meal.

Although the new food icon might not change habits, Schuster said it will be successful if it helps get dietary information out in an easy-to-understand way and if it's a concept accepted by people.

USDA is trying to gauge the latter through social media, asking consumers who do put the plan into action to take pictures of their plates and share them through Twitter.

*Reach Janese Silvey at 573-815-1705 or e-mail [jsilvey@columbiatribune.com](mailto:jsilvey@columbiatribune.com).*

# Missourinet

## Nutrition expert says MyPlate food guide is not the solution (AUDIO)

by Allison Blood on June 5, 2011

in [Health & Medicine](#)

In response to the replacement of the Food Guide Pyramid with the MyPlate icon for guiding healthy eating habits, a University of Missouri nutrition expert says it's an improvement, but it's not going to solve many American's diet problems.

Ellen Schuster says while the plate model is easier compare to normal eating routines, it still won't account for all the food options Americans have.

Schuster says people will still need more in-depth diet education, such as comparing a cup of mashed potatoes to a baseball, or a serving of meat the size of a deck of cards.

The MyPlate graphic uses colored sections of a round plate to show the portions of protein, fruits, vegetables and grains people should be eating, but it also has a cup symbol for dairy, such as milk or yogurt.

Though there's portion guides for food, there's no guide for fluid intake. Schuster says that's because for the average person, if they meet their daily fruit and vegetable requirement, they'll probably meet their fluid intake quota too.

She says people who want a more in-depth look at what foods they should eat, how much water they should drink or how many calories they should take in can go to the USDA's Website.

# COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

## Big 12 giving pay raise to 10 league teams

By DOUG TUCKER/The Associated Press

June 3, 2011 | 5:05 p.m. CDT

KANSAS CITY — The Big 12's lower-revenue schools walked out of the conference's meetings Friday with a multimillion dollar pay raise.

Previously, the Big 12 distributed 57 percent of football and basketball TV dollars equally among its 12 members. But with Colorado and Nebraska gone, the 10-team league has decided to spread 76 percent of the dollars equally. It is one of the biggest changes since the Big 12 was formed in 1996 and was agreed upon unanimously Friday, the final day of conference meetings.

Commissioner Dan Beebe declined to speculate exactly how much this will mean to lower-revenue members such as Kansas, Baylor, Iowa State and Kansas State. But he agreed it will be "millions," given the new \$1.17 billion football deal with Fox taking effect in 2012.

**"The important thing is we're dealing with a lot more revenue, so everybody feels good about the contract and giving us the flexibility and resources to be more competitive," said MU Chancellor Brady Deaton. "And there's also the growing recognition that to be a strong conference, we've got to have every member be strong and competitive in an ongoing basis in all sports."**

The unanimous vote also underscored the atmosphere of peace and prosperity that has replaced the rancor and uncertainty that threatened to tear the league apart in 2010. Meeting in the same midtown hotel in June 2010, Big 12 members were fighting over whether to remain together at all. Colorado ended up going to the Pac-10 Conference, and Nebraska dropped out to join the Big Ten, nearly falling into litigation with the conference over the financial penalty it would pay for withdrawing.

For several weeks, the league teetered on the brink of extinction. Expansion-minded conferences such as the Pac-10 and Southeastern Conference made moves to pick off the Big 12's choice schools such as Texas, Oklahoma and Texas A&M.

Had they split up, Kansas, Iowa State, Baylor, Missouri and Kansas State would have faced the harsh reality of life without membership in any major conference. The "forgotten five," as they came to be called, went so far as to offer Texas a portion of their conference revenue as an incentive to hold the league together.

But with the promise of a much more lucrative television contract, the 10 remaining schools did stick together. Now they agree they're richer, happier and better off.

"There was some angst," said Texas A&M Athletic Director Bill Byrne. "But I can't tell you how pleased I am with the way it ended."

Everybody, except perhaps coaches, is also pleased with having a round-robin football and basketball schedule, made possible by a 10-member league.

"We didn't plan it, exactly, but what we've ended up with is probably better than we would have planned," Texas Athletic Director DeLoss Dodds said.

Everyone also seems happy to be doing away with the football championship game that pitted the North and South division winners against each other. Now there will be no divisions.

"I think it hurt more than it helped," Dodds said of the previous setup. "I like where we are not having the game."

The remaining 24 percent of television money will be distributed according to several criteria, including number of appearances, quality of competition and willingness to move games to accommodate television. The new plan does not affect so-called third-tier rights such as Texas' new Longhorn Network.

Whether the more equitable revenue distribution would have been adopted had Nebraska remained in the Big 12 is impossible to say.

"It's hard to speculate," Beebe said. "Nebraska's point was not to do this as equally as some of the others (wanted). How they would have weighed in, and Colorado, we really don't know."

Nevertheless, the huge boost in revenue for all 10 members will be substantial.

"It's very significant," Deaton said. "We're all faced with multiple fiscal challenges. This enables us to make sure we have the right programs in place for all our student-athletes."

The league is spending part of its new money on polishing its image and brand. After contracting with GSD&M Idea City in Austin, Texas, the league will launch a media blitz at the start of football season.

"There was a moment of critical decision for our states," Deaton said. "Because of that, there's no question the collegiality is (present). Maybe smaller numbers, having two fewer members, helps a bit because you get more interaction among the 10 and everybody's just working together real well. It's a good time for the conference."

## Cicadas win scientific spotlight at MU

By **RUDI KELLER**

When a male cicada is searching for a mate, he will sing the same song for hours. When a female wants a male, all she has to do is flick her wings, which makes a noise like snapping fingers.

The insects are susceptible to a fungal parasite that makes the males snap their wings like females and causes females to mate repeatedly, something uninfected females do only once. Once a male cicada is infected, "they never turn off," said David Marshall of the University of Connecticut. "They keep flicking and flicking and getting molested by other males."

**Those are some of the findings Marshall presented yesterday during the first lecture of the 13th Invertebrate Sound and Vibration International meeting in the Bond Life Sciences Center on the University of Missouri campus. Marshall has studied cicadas on several continents.**

Timed for the emergence of the 13-year cicadas, the conference over four days will conduct field trips and present research. More than 100 participants from the United States and nine other countries are attending.

Cool, wet weather delayed the emergence of the cicadas, said Johannes Schul, associate professor of biology and one of organizers of the conference.

"I was really worried until last Friday when I got in my car, and as I passed my crabapple tree, I saw about 500 crawling on it," Schul said. "That is when I heaved a sigh of relief."

The lecture yesterday was also part of the Saturday Morning Science series, so Monsanto Auditorium was filled with scientists as well as families who brought children to learn about the millions of noisy bugs swarming in Mid-Missouri.

"How many cicadas are on the planet?" Lily Lough asked Marshall. Lily was there with her brother, Miles, and her mother, Laurie Lough.

The question momentarily stumped Marshall. Although there are 3,000 known species, he said there might be as many as 2,000 more unidentified. And they can be as dense as 1 million bugs per acre, he said.

"It is a big, big number," he finally said.

Although there are thousands of species, there are only seven — all in the United States — that swarm in the periodic broods like the one that emerged this year. Marshall said he has studied their sounds and mating habits for years.

"There is little, really, to compare to the spectacle of the periodic cicadas," Marshall said.

Apparently, he said, females are not too picky. They have a minimum standard, and then the lucky male is usually the first one handy when she is ready. "Until fairly recently, we weren't sure how pairs form," he said.

After two years of watching cicadas in cages with his wife, Kathy Hill, "we figured out that the female cicada signals readiness to mate by a wing flick," he said.

Finger-snapping can cause male cicadas to approach. "The males are moving through the environment," he said. "They are effectively trolling for attractive females."

*Reach Rudi Keller at 573-815-1709 or e-mail [rkeller@columbiatribune.com](mailto:rkeller@columbiatribune.com)*

# Cicada mating lecture draws high interest from community

By Ellen Thommesen

June 4, 2011 | 6:57 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Famous romance movies teach boys that singing to girls will win their hearts, but humans aren't the only species that sing for love.

The deafening chorus heard throughout Columbia is the result of hundreds of thousands of male periodical cicadas trying to serenade the perfect mate.

**More than 200 people filled the Monsanto Auditorium in the Bond Life Sciences Center at MU on Saturday morning, some of whom sat in the aisles. David Marshall, a researcher at the University of Connecticut, spoke about the unique sounds created by periodical cicadas and their mating process at Saturday Morning Science.**

The male cicadas are the singers. They fly around trees, calling out a "love song" in search of a female mate. They make the sound through their tymbals, a region of the cicada's body where vibrating membranes create the loud humming noise. The full chorus comes together when large groups of males call for mates simultaneously.

While the males provide the vocals, the females set the rhythm.

Female cicadas stay in one place for most of their adult lives. They wait in trees while the males frantically and loudly try to win their approval.

When the right bug comes along, the female flicks her wings, which makes a clicking sound. It's a subtle visual and auditory signal that she's ready to mate.

"The wing flick's precise timing contains species-specific information that the male listens for, and looks for, and identifies in the chorus," Marshall said.

The female's timed response gets the attention of the male and then the courtship process begins.

"Knowledge of the timing and nature of the female reply allows us to develop and test ideas about exactly why the songs are structured the way they are," Marshall said.

Competition among male cicadas is intense. They only have a few weeks to find a mate and reproduce before they die.

The male cicada doesn't take rejection easily. If he finds a female, but she is unwilling to mate, he might sit near her and make noises to interrupt the song of other males so she doesn't respond to them. A male may do this for hours until the female settles for him, Marshall said.

After mating, the female lays hundreds of eggs into branches. Once the eggs hatch, the cicada nymphs fall directly onto the ground where they feed on plant roots underground for the next 13 years, meaning the cicadas born this summer won't resurface in Columbia until 2024.

Marshall's presentation kicked off the Invertebrate Sound and Vibration Conference taking place in at the Life Sciences Center until Tuesday. The attending scientists plan to discuss how invertebrates, like cicadas, communicate with each other.

As the audience filtered out after the presentation, newly learned information about cicadas seemed to be the topic of every conversation.

"I thought the lecture was great. I learned a ton," MU English professor Johanna Kramer said. "You never know what you're going to learn until you listen."

After the lecture, Columbia resident John Clark stopped underneath a tree on the way to his car. Mimicking a [BBC video](#) shown during Marshall's lecture, he began snapping his fingers at the cicadas in an effort to reproduce the clicking sounds of females to see if he could get their attention.

"It's just fascinating," Clark said. "I can do my own little experiments now!"

FERTILE MIND

# The cicadas' summertime symphony is worth enjoying

By **JAN WIESE-FALES**

The Great Southern Brood, aka Brood 19, sounds like the name of band, and, indeed, the 13-year periodical cicadas that are making six-week appearances everywhere from Georgia to Iowa and westward are performing daily outdoor concerts.

It has been two weeks since I first noticed hundreds of empty brown cicada exoskeletons around the yard, clinging to every available surface: plants, trees, posts, walls and even car tires. It took a few more days for me to actually spot the thousands of adult cicadas on the move because they generally require five to six days to "harden up" after splitting and exiting their golden-brown shells. As cold-blooded critters, they also need pleasantly warm temperatures to fly, and our cool spring weather has not been ideal. More than a week passed before I heard them singing. And now, as afternoons have finally warmed, they're coming through loud and clear — annoying yet so intriguing.

**The University of Missouri's College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources held a sort of cicada news conference to get the word out about this particular brood of these mysterious insects. Even those who don't connect much with the natural world are connecting with cicadas. With billions of the not-so-bright, single-minded little buggers doing their periodical-cicada thing, they're unavoidable.**

For 13 years, this brood of *Magicicadas* has been invisibly cycling through five stages of growth beneath our feet only to emerge and engage in frenzied reproductive behavior, frantically thrumming, buzzing and clicking for mates.

If you are the sort of person who is creeped out by insects, these sizable, red-eyed, black bugs with orange veined wings might well seem threatening. But they don't bite, they don't sting, and they're not poisonous to your pets. Unless you are another cicada or a twig, they couldn't care less about you.

The main message from those in the know is, and I'm paraphrasing: There is no need to get your undies in bunch over cicadas. Instead, enjoy the show, which won't happen again for another 13 years. Cicadas' nearly deafening 100-decibel chorus is just about the worst they have to throw at most folks, though their egg-laying behavior can cause damage to trees and shrubs.

Female cicadas literally saw Y-shaped slits in pencil-size branches of trees and shrubs and lay as many as 600 eggs, 20 to 25 in each incision, weakening and even killing the ends of branches. That includes fruit trees, especially young trees such as the five cherries and four apples planted here at Mole Hill in recent years.

There really isn't much you can do about it except some maintenance pruning. In a few years, everything will be back to normal.

Chris Starbuck, MU's woody trees and shrubs expert, said smaller trees and shrubs might be protected with quarter-inch mesh net, though that, too, could prove detrimental to the plant's growth. He also said treating the tips of branches with a sticky pest-barrier substance such as Tanglefoot might make them undesirable.

I read about someone who sprays his trees with water from the hose to dislodge the little boogers, but because they can just fly back, this seems like a pretty darn foolhardy venture. But if it makes you feel good because you're doing something — anything — to protect your homestead from the invading horde, go for it.

Please don't go on the warpath with wholesale pesticides. With as many as a million cicadas per acre, you won't make a dent and will be doing more harm than good by killing beneficial and beautiful insects such as butterflies.

MU entomologist Bruce Barrett mentioned an adaptation theory that would account for cicadas' extreme numbers: predator saturation. The bite-size bugs are a delicious food resource and are on the menu for raccoons, foxes, skunks, snakes, lizards, frogs and fish. Safety in numbers — even if a half million are eaten, there are another half million to ensure they'll be around in another 13 years.

One fisherman blogged that he catches and freezes the tasty insects — also eaten by practical and adventuresome humans — so, after the din dies down a month from now, he can continue to reel the big ones in with a fat cicada on the hook.

Visit [cicadamania.com](http://cicadamania.com) for a treasure trove of observations about the periodical pests, including maps, photos, audio and video clips, a contest for spotting the rare white-eyed cicadas and a cicada wedding planner.

*Jan Wiese-Fales is a Master Gardener who lives and pulls weeds at Molo Hill in rural Howard County. You can reach her at [fertilemind@sbcglobal.net](mailto:fertilemind@sbcglobal.net)*



# MU student wins ultimate video game setup

By **CAROLINE DOHACK-MCCRARY**

To call it a mere man cave would be an injustice.

Ryan Pliske's garage is more like a video gamer's paradise.

**Pliske, a 22-year-old civil-engineering major at the University of Missouri**, was selected by Major League Gaming, the world's largest competitive video game league, for a gaming-room makeover. Pliske's new setup will be featured on the premiere episode of "Dr Pepper's Ultimate Gaming House," a production of Major League Gaming that airs Friday at [www.majorleaguegaming.com](http://www.majorleaguegaming.com).

With semester at a close, Pliske has been logging in some serious hours with his favorite games, though he says he balances gaming with other activities.

"I like to work out. I'm not able to do that when I'm in school. Right after that I immediately start gaming. I don't even want to say" for how long; "probably seven hours a day," the St. Charles native said.

And Pliske is happy to share the wealth.

As the founder of MU Competitive Gaming, a group of student video-game enthusiasts, Pliske welcomes teammates who want to swing by and play. When he graduates next spring, he will bequeath the setup to the undergrads who take over the club.

Rich Webb, known informally to MLG fans as Shibby and host of "Ultimate Gaming House," said it was Pliske's ability to play nicely with others that made him the top pick for a makeover.

"What we normally do is we hook up just one individual winner. The makeover is for one person. What's different was that it wasn't just for himself; it was actually for his entire gaming club. This time around, we were hooking up 35 people. That struck a big chord for me," Webb said.

Additionally, Webb was impressed by Pliske's efforts outside the gaming club.

"His goal in running tournaments is to donate games and money to children's hospitals. Kids in hospitals can escape reality. Going there and hooking him up was a good choice," Webb said.

The gaming room now resides in Pliske's rental space in Columbia. Eventually, it will have to come down when Pliske graduates and moves away.

"We're going to have to disassemble it. I'll probably have to paint over it," Pliske said.

But the dream will live on.

"The idea is to get a LAN center on campus. Using that equipment, maybe they could do it. It should be connected with the school and not just me," Pliske said.

And what a LAN center it is. The setup features eight Xbox 360 consoles, eight MLG-certified monitors, a gaming laptop with the real-time strategy video game "StarCraft 2," eight "Halo Reach" discs, eight sets of Astro A40 gaming headsets, four pairs of Gunner Optic gaming glasses and several sets of tangle-free ear buds.

Because Pliske was studying for final exams during shooting, he wasn't involved in the planning of the garage's makeover beyond clearing it out before the MLG crew got there.

"My garage had nothing in it. ... They painted it and put it together," Pliske said.

Because Pliske's favorite game is "Halo," the crew used "Halo" colors — the left wall is red, and the right wall is blue. The crew treated the back wall with a product called Idea Paint, which turned it into a giant dry-erase board.

"If he wants to run a tournament, he can use that dry-erase board to draw out the bracket," Webb said.

Pliske said he could probably have as many as 16 gamers in the garage at one time.

*Reach Caroline Dohack-McCrary at 573-815-1727 or e-mail [cedohack@tribmail.com](mailto:cedohack@tribmail.com).*

## Wild weather, predictions go hand-in-hand



*1 of 4* [Parker Eshelman](#) · [Buy this photo](#)

A thunderstorm bears down on Columbia May 25. The storm produced a tornado in Sedalia and brought heavy rain and lightning to Columbia. Unusual weather around the world this year has prompted a chorus of doomsday prognosticators.

By **JANESE SILVEY**

### **MU MENTION ON P. 2**

The day after the rapture didn't happen, Tammy Cady's home and belongings were sucked up in a twister of Old Testament-style proportions.

Cady is a communications director at College Heights Christian Church in Joplin. Like many, she was never convinced May 21 was going to be the beginning of the end, even though doomsday preacher Harold Camping was sure Jesus was coming back that day.

But she also doesn't think the crazy weather lately is just a coincidence, and she wonders whether God's trying to tell us something.

The "earthquake, tsunamis, tornadoes — it seems like one thing after another," Cady said.

She's among a majority of white evangelicals — 59 percent to be exact — who say they think natural disasters are a sign from God. That's according to a survey the Public Religion Research Institute and Religious News Service conducted after Japan's earthquake and tsunami. The poll also found, though, only about 38 percent of the population in general blames God when Mother Nature is in a bad mood.

### **DEAD BIRDS, DISASTERS AND ZOMBIES: OH MY!**

Disasters and end-of-the-world fears seem to go hand in hand, making doomsday predictions especially conversation-worthy in 2011.

The year began with reports of red-winged blackbirds dropping dead from the skies over Arkansas, Louisiana and Sweden.

February brought blizzards that crippled the country. Then the disasters struck Japan, and floodwaters rose across the United States, followed by the outbreak that has made this year among the deadliest tornado seasons.

Last week, a volcanologist at Cambridge University warned there's a one-in-500 chance of a supervolcano erupting this century. Of course, Iben Browning also hedged a 50-50 bet that an earthquake would strike the New Madrid fault in 1990, and that didn't happen.

But wait, there's more.

A recent study warned cellphone signals are killing off honeybees. Because the insects are responsible for pollinating most of our food crops, it has been suggested that when the bees die off, so do we.

There's even a plague of locusts invading the Midwest. OK, they're actually cicadas, but early colonists not familiar with this particular variety thought they were the biblical bugs.

Oh, and last week the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention posted on its public health blog instructions for dealing with a zombie apocalypse — which happen to be the same tips for preparing for any emergency. But the image of a wild-eyed zombie on the official CDC website is a little unnerving.

So what's going on?

The latter, of course, was nothing more than a clever marketing campaign to get young people to read an emergency preparedness pamphlet. As for the periodical cicadas, they come every 13 years. And state officials in January had logical explanations for the dead birds. In Arkansas, for instance, the red-winged blackbirds were apparently sleeping when a loud noise startled them, and they freaked out.

No doubt the Bible is full of some nasty weather forecasts for mankind's final days, but the world has seen these storm patterns before.

**Weather is simply more volatile than in recent years. We've spent the past few decades enjoying fairly mild weather, making recent occurrences seem rare, said Tony Lupo, professor of atmospheric science at the University of Missouri. Globally, though, the climate goes through periods of change, so from a historical standpoint, it's not unusual.**

"Is this going to continue, or is this an isolated few years?" Lupo said. "My guess is we'll see weather that's wilder. Studies have shown weather of the 1800s and before was kind of wild like it is today."

Although that volatility could mean an active hurricane season, there's no relationship between tornado activity and hurricanes or between the storms and other disasters, such as earthquakes or volcanoes, said Pat Guinan, an associate professor of climatology at MU.

As for the tornado activities this year, blame Old Man Winter.

"Basically what you're seeing this year is that we had an unusually cold winter with a lot of snow, and that atmospheric pattern has continued well into the spring season," Lupo said.

And when the cold air from the north meets moist air from the south in the middle of a strong jet stream, "bam."

### **APOCALYPSE NOW & THEN**

Apocalyptic predictions are nothing new. The Bible records Jesus telling his disciples he'd be back for them before their generation passed away.

Early Christians then figured Jan. 1, 1000, sounded like a logical date for a rapture. A preacher named William Miller predicted Jesus would return March 21, 1843, and when it didn't happen, he decided Oct. 22, 1844, was a better guess.

Edgar Whisenant was a former NASA engineer who could list 88 reasons why the world was going to end in 1988.

And who could forget Y2K, when not God but ill-programmed computers were going to destroy the world as we knew it at the stroke of midnight?

Harold Camping has been wrong before, too. He first said the world was going to end back in 1994 but later explained he'd miscalculated.

His May 21 rapture prediction had a different feel, though. While Camping was airing the prediction over his Christian radio program and his followers were splattering the warning on billboards across the country, social media gave the no-show rapture unprecedented press.

Twitter was abuzz with invitations to rapture parties and lists of songs that should be on everyone's final playlist.

Jen Reeves, an associate professor at the Missouri School of Journalism, was watching for Facebook posts from a friend overseas as the supposed 6 p.m. doomsday deadline came and went across the globe.

"It was a fun thing to talk about," said Reeves, who co-founded the Columbia chapter of the Social Media Club. "It was a social event instead of a news event."

Reeves wonders whether the same hoopla will surround the next supposed apocalypse. Camping has amended his prediction and now claims the world ends Oct. 21.

Then, if Oct. 22 rolls around and we're here to tweet about it, we still have another doomsday deadline, thanks to ancient Mayans who forgot to add a footnote to their calendar explaining why it ends Dec. 21, 2012.

That date, by the way, was on the rapture radar long before Camping made such a fuss about May 21.

The History Channel has been scaring viewers for years with programs showcasing experts who can align Mayan calculations with the Book of Revelations and other ancient doomsday prophecies.

There's even an official Dec. 21, 2012, website, where you can read up on what Nostradamus, Edgar Cayce and the Hopi Indians had to say about the end of days and then buy a "Let's Get Ready to Rapture" T-shirt. An official 2012 believers list includes hundreds of names. And, according to the official site, Sting, Shirley MacLaine and Mel Gibson have all endorsed the 2012 end.

Of course, it's tough to tell who actually believes what. That's why Craig Palmer, an associate professor of anthropology at MU who studies religious behavior, thinks apocalyptic predictions are more about trying to get people to behave.

"The key is in the talk," he said. "It's never just 'The world is going to end.' It's 'The world is going to end; therefore, you should behave a certain way: properly.'"

Of course, Palmer noted, some are more likely to heed a doomsday deadline than others, who might just use it as an excuse to party.

### **READY FOR RAPTURE, FOCUSED ON THE FUTURE**

Cady speaks matter-of-factly about her belief Jesus will come back eventually, so it's best to just be prepared at all times.

Right now, she has got pressing tasks than trying to figure out when that might happen. Her church has become a hub for distributing supplies and counselors to Joplin neighborhoods affected by the May 22 tornado.

And Cady and her husband still have to find a way to rebuild their home, which has been uninsured since he lost his job last year.

For her, faith isn't about calculating possible rapture dates but instead is a foundation that's getting her through the tough times.

Cady was driving to Joplin from St. Charles when she got word of the storm and pulled over at a hospital in Springfield to wait it out. Her husband managed to huddle in their living room unscathed. Her daughter lost her house but wasn't injured. Cady is quick to count her blessings.

"Right off the bat, one of the first things you find out going through this is the stuff you have becomes less important than the people who are still with you and the family and friends that went through it OK," she said.

It has been tough to return to her ransacked home and rummage through the rubble, Cady said, but she's convinced everything will be OK.

"God has it under control," she said. "Things do happen for a reason."

*Reach Janese Silvey at 573-815-1705 or e-mail [jsilvey@columbiatribune.com](mailto:jsilvey@columbiatribune.com)*

## Human toll of deadly May 22 tornado cuts deep in Joplin

Sunday, June 5, 2011 By ALAN SCHER ZAGIER ~ The Associated Press



**Max Copeland, a junior football player at the University of Missouri, helps clear debris from a yard near 18th and Kansas streets Friday in Joplin, Mo. A group of about 25 football players from the University of Missouri came to Joplin to help with tornado cleanup.**

(Roger Nomer ~ The Joplin Globe)

JOPLIN, Mo. -- They were regular churchgoers, devoted parents, seniors in their retirement years and children with untold promise.

Some gave their lives to save strangers, thrust by circumstance and human instinct into the role of hero. Others faced a parent's worst fear, losing their lives while also failing to protect their children from death.

Few outside the town of about 50,000 will recognize the names of the dead. But Joplin's close-knit community lost a staggering array of human capital in the May 22 tornado, including seniors who were the town's history and young people who were its future. Some lived their lives ordinarily, only to be defined in their final moments by breathtaking courage.

"I don't know how you put it in context," said Ron Sampson, executive director of Joplin Workshop Inc., where three employees -- lifelong friends with Down syndrome -- died when their Iowa Street home was destroyed. "Between the physical destruction and the loss of life, it's so overwhelming. Everybody is still in a fog."

Thirteen children died, including several students at Joplin High School, which was flattened. Two pairs of siblings were killed, and five children perished alongside a parent who also died.

Familiar faces at the cell phone store and 15th Street Walmart, three Elks Lodge members who attended weekly bingo games, and three Harmony Heights Baptist Church worshippers didn't survive the Sunday afternoon twister, the nation's deadliest single tornado in six decades.

Some were praised by name by Barack Obama in a presidential visit one week later, while others died anonymously. Still more continue on in the virtual world, their memories perpetuated in YouTube and Facebook tributes.

Among them was 18-year-old Will Norton, whose story became widely known after it was learned the tornado, carrying 200 mph winds, pulled him out through his SUV's sunroof as he drove home from graduation. His funeral, scheduled for today, figures to dwell not on the way he died but on the unusual way he lived: traveling the world, unlike most Joplin teens.

His family's travel agency allowed Norton to take to the skies. He ultimately would visit 15 countries in Europe and Africa. He became a private pilot like his father and uncle. He was headed to Southern California with plans to study film production at Chapman University and dreams of making movies in Hollywood. He honed his chops on YouTube, gaining thousands of followers as "willdabeast8888," a nod to both his first name and the African antelope he saw abroad.

### **'The face of hope'**

His father, who was in the passenger seat as the tornado bore down, remains hospitalized with broken ribs, a compressed spine, a rod in his left leg, a compound fracture of his arm and other serious injuries -- but plans to attend his son's funeral.

Will "really believed in doing good. He's kind of the face of hope," said his aunt, Tracey Presslor. "But it's not about Will. It's about all the survivors, and all the people who lost their homes or their loved ones."

The storm was especially deadly for the aged. More than a third of those who died were 65 or older, including at least 10 in the Greenbriar nursing home. Neighbors told of hearing screams when the funnel smashed the building and sent bodies airborne.

Some victims have become known for their final moments. Christopher Don Lucas, 27, worked on a Navy submarine until a back injury at sea forced him into civilian life two years ago. A father of two with a pregnant fiancée, the Pizza Hut manager rushed the other employees and at

least a dozen customers into the restaurant's walk-in freezer as the half-mile-wide tornado approached.

As the winds whipped through the store, Lucas grabbed a bungee cord to keep the freezer door shut. "He just started pulling with all his might," said his father, Terry Lucas.

Co-worker Daniel Fluharty grabbed Lucas by the waist. Waitress Kayleigh Savannah Teal, 16, held on to her manager's leg. The winds flung open the freezer, throwing the three workers 20 to 30 feet. Fluharty survived; Lucas and Teal did not. "He went out facing the tornado head-on," Terry Lucas said. "He didn't flinch."

Miles "Dean" Wells was also ex-military, a master electrician who worked at Home Depot and cared for a homebound wife with a severe muscular disease. Wells, 59, died while guiding an estimated 40 to 50 customers and employees to the back of the store for safety; a prefab concrete wall collapsed on him. Like Lucas, Wells was singled out by President Obama at a Joplin memorial service one week later.

"In the face of winds that showed no mercy, no regard for human life, that did not discriminate by race or faith or background, it was ordinary people, swiftly tested, who said, 'I'm willing to die right now so that someone else might live,'" he said.

Wells sang in the choir at First Christian Church in Webb City. In recent years, he mastered the art of whistling, recording two CDs with a third loaded on his computer, awaiting his final touches.

"His whistling sounded like a flute," his daughter DeAnna Mancini said. "He's singing in heaven now."