

## Research says 'God spot' does not exist

### Confirms other 'G-spot' is real

Turns out the other "G-spot" is a myth.

**Researchers at the University of Missouri have found that the so-called "God spot," an epicenter of the brain responsible for feelings of spirituality and connection to a higher power, doesn't exist.** Their study instead shows that several regions of the human mind work together to produce religious experiences and the desire to connect with an omnipotent creator.

"Spirituality is a much more dynamic concept that uses many parts of the brain," said Brick Johnstone, professor of health psychology at the university and the report's prime author. "Certain parts of the brain play more predominant roles, but they all work together to facilitate individuals' spiritual experiences."

To form their conclusions, Mr. Johnstone and his colleagues studied 20 people with traumatic brain injuries that affected their right parietal lobes and found that they were much more likely to feel "closeness to a higher power."

Impairment of the right side of the brain, the report says, decreases feelings of selfishness, often sparking spiritual quests. It also can cause people to focus less on themselves and more on the well-beings of others, a cornerstone of virtually all major religions.

Christian doctors and scientists generally support that type of research, but some fear that Mr. Johnstone and others often overlook the concept of free will. Scripture teaches that God offers grace to all who want it, but forces no one to accept it.

"From my point of view, in Christianity, there are a lot of decisions involved. Being selfless is a decision," said Chris Mathes, a neuroscientist and co-organizer of the Christian Neuroscience Society. Mr. Mathes, like other members of the 2-decades-old society, is also a vocal believer in God and a practicing Christian.

"The ability to be good is given by God, but it's a choice that we make. It isn't forced upon us," he said. "I'm always very skeptical about making big leaps from some observation in the human brain to a behavior," such as compassion for others or a proclivity to break the law.

The Missouri study also found a strong correlation between increased activity in the brain's frontal lobe and participation in religious services, such as a Catholic Mass. Spiritual experiences at those services, the survey shows, are results of strong stimulation of that part of the mind.

Few in the scientific Christian community dispute the notion that their spirituality produces noticeable reactions inside the head, but, for some, the line is crossed when it is suggested that certain people are predestined to believe in God because of the framework of their brains.

"I'm not sensing a lot of controversy here, unless people start to say that you believe the way you believe because you're wired that way, that it's all biomechanical stuff," said Dr. William J. Bicket, a North Carolina surgeon and a member of the Christian Medical and Dental Association. "That's when you get into another issue, which is free choice. If I'm not responsible for my drug use, for the murder of someone else, because I'm just wired that way, I'm concerned about that" school of thought.

Some also have speculated that the brain injuries sustained by the 20 subjects in the Missouri study may have simply returned them to a childlike state of open-mindedness, where adult skepticism, or hostility toward faith, is greatly diminished.

"There might be some inhibition as adults that gets released because of that brain injury," Mr. Mathes said. "Kids can be more open to spiritual things. There may be some built-in prejudices built into the brain" as we grow older.

Previous research also has supported the idea that multiple areas of the brain come together to form one's spiritual identity. Certain parts, other studies have suggested, produce the intense emotions often felt during prayer or religious gatherings.

But when it comes to grasping the concept of God, human beings use the same functions they would to understand another earthly person, said Jordan Grafman, director of traumatic brain injury research at the Kessler Foundation.

"We think about God and religion, but God is just another guy," said Mr. Grafman, who has written extensively on the connections between brain function and spirituality. "We use all the same brain regions and social processes we would use normally to understand another person, such as someone we work with, or someone we just met. We try to make judgments about how similar, or dissimilar, that person is to us. We do the same thing with the idea of God."

While the University of Missouri research raised doubts about the existence of a religious "G-spot," a gynecological study released Wednesday claimed to have confirmed the existence of the other, more well-known G-spot.

Dr. Adam Ostrzenski of the Institute of Gynecology in St. Petersburg, Fla., said a "stratum-by-stratum anterior vaginal wall dissection" on an 83-year-old cadaver "confirmed the anatomic existence of the G-spot, which may lead to a better understanding and improvement of female sex function."



## UM president moving out of Providence Point

By JANESE SILVEY

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**Three months after he moved into Providence Point, University of Missouri System President Tim Wolfe is moving out while administrators decide what to do with the 40-year-old house.**

That's because workers have discovered mold, asbestos, electrical wiring problems and other issues while trying to make basic upgrades, said Nikki Krawitz, UM vice president of finance and administration.

And in the next five to 10 years, the system anticipates more extensive work will need to be done, such as replacing the roof and exterior siding and installing outdoor lighting, she said.

Providence Point opened in 1971 and was expanded in 1985, making the building technically a mansion at 12,630 square feet. It has four bedrooms, several dining and living areas, eight bathrooms and several other rooms that have served as office and exercise spaces over the years. All eight presidents since then, not including Wolfe, have lived there.

The future of the property had been under discussion for a year before Wolfe took office in February. Krawitz said administrators thought they would be able to make basic upgrades for minimal costs but that the additional problems quickly tacked onto the price tag. "We need to stop the investment until we know whether it's the right direction to go in," she said.

The UM System will spend \$88,000 immediately on projects — removing wallpaper, improving wiring and bringing railings and ramps up to code — in the public areas so the building can continue to serve as a place to entertain. Work on bedrooms and other private rooms is on hold.

The extent of that work will depend on whether the building will be converted to an event center or will continue to be used as a home. The latter will need a more full-scale renovation, UM Board of Curators Chairman David Bradley said.

Already, the system has upgraded air conditioning in an upstairs bedroom, where one of Wolfe's twin teenagers stays while visiting. And because Wolfe's family still lives in Massachusetts, he did not bring personal furniture with him.

Providence Point is not fully furnished and until this year lacked a television. UM purchased a large-screen television with a sound system for the home after Wolfe moved in. Krawitz said that was important because the president is expected to use the large public rooms for entertaining, which sometimes includes watch parties for away games. Money for the TV came from gift dollars from the Jordan Foundation out of St. Louis, she said.

Wolfe is still living in the house while the university locates temporary housing for him in Columbia. It's yet to be decided whether the UM System will rent a home for him or pay him a housing allowance. Chancellors at MU and at the Missouri University of Science and Technology live in campus housing, but UM-Kansas City Chancellor Leo Morton, who resides in his longtime home in Kansas, is given a \$4,400-per-month housing allowance.

Former UM President Elson Floyd upgraded the kitchen at Providence Point in 2005, but it's not an industrial kitchen, which is needed for large gatherings, Krawitz said. Other than that and renovations to a master bathroom, there have been minimal upgrades over the years.

"Over the past 10 years with budget constraints, it's difficult spending a dime on anything that does not directly benefit teaching," Krawitz said.

# Providence Point renovations might displace UM System President Tim Wolfe

By Breanna Dumbacher

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**COLUMBIA — When University of Missouri System President Tim Wolfe's family comes to Columbia this summer, they will not be living at Providence Point, where the system president usually lives.**

During routine work on the house, MU workers uncovered about \$88,000 worth of renovations at the home that need immediate attention, said Nikki Krawitz, UM System vice president of finance and administration, in a news release. Wolfe has not yet moved out of Providence Point and will not do so until the UM System arranges temporary housing, Krawitz said.

These renovations include the removal of mold in several rooms and asbestos in the subflooring and on the walls. When the issues were discovered, the fireplace, electrical system and a stairwell banister also did not comply with code, the release stated. Some of these issues, such as the mold and asbestos, have already been fixed while others are still being worked on, Krawitz said.

The \$88,000 estimate also included basic renovations, such as repainting the walls and replacing flooring and light fixtures, among other things, Krawitz said.

Funds for the improvements will come from grants specifically allocated for improvements at the residence or from earnings from investments, Krawitz said. Tuition revenue and state appropriations will not be used to fund the renovations, according to the release.

## **Where the Wolfes will go**

While renovations are made, the UM System will provide Wolfe with temporary housing, Krawitz said. Currently, the location and cost of that housing is still being discussed.

University funds will pay for the housing as part of Wolfe's contract as UM System President, Krawitz said.

Krawitz said the plan for the temporary housing is to find a place large enough to house Wolfe and his family. She said the family will likely not move back into Providence Point unless the funds for the renovations are raised.

### **The future of the house**

Krawitz said in the release that the building is more than 40 years old, and in addition to these immediate renovations, the building will likely need more extensive work in the next few years.

This additional work will address the building's roof, windows, doors, siding, heating and air conditioning needs, repaving of the drive and parking areas, and updates to the bathrooms and kitchen, she said. The house also needs more furniture and new carpet in the private quarters, she said in the release.

These renovations are currently on hold because they would cost several hundred thousand dollars and the system is trying to be fiscally responsible, Krawitz said.

"That's why we've stopped and we've stepped back," Krawitz said.

The extra work on the house will be on hold until a decision is made within the next year about what the house will be used for. Options for Providence Point could include:

- A place where the UM System President, the MU Chancellor or other university community members can host public events.
- An event and conference center.
- A place to house high-ranking visitors.

Krawitz said these possibilities and others are still being discussed.

*Supervising editor is Elizabeth Brixey.*

# COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

## Missouri Tigers to participate in Governor's Joplin Habitat Challenge

By Antony Lee

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**COLUMBIA — Missouri athletes and coaches will participate in the 2012 Governor's Joplin Habitat Challenge, which looks to build 35 homes for residents affected by last year's tornado.**

Missouri Tigers, as well as members of the Kansas City Chiefs, Kansas City Royals, Kansas Speedway in partnership with NASCAR Unites, St. Louis Blues, St. Louis Cardinals and St. Louis Rams will go to Joplin to help build homes and bring more attention to the project, governor spokesman Scott Holste said.

"Having the high visibility of Missouri's sports organizations has really helped turn out enthusiasm for the project," Holste said. "We've had more than 2,000 people volunteer online to be part of the effort."

The 35 homes, to be built by the Joplin Area Habitat for Humanity, will be divided into seven different neighborhoods. Each neighborhood will be assigned a sponsor from among the seven Missouri athletic organizations, and so far, the Missouri Tigers are in the lead with the most volunteers, according to the challenge's website. Athletes and other members of each organization will visit their sponsored neighborhood to help build the houses alongside volunteers and professional builders. Scott Clayton, the executive director of Joplin Area Habitat for Humanity, said he was "incredibly excited" to have athletes from across Missouri help out with the project.

"We're accepting families, and we're in the process of acquiring the properties," Clayton said. "We're looking to begin in early June."

Gov. Jay Nixon announced the first families selected to receive homes during the Mizzou Athletics Caravan's stop in Joplin on Tuesday. Volunteers can sign up online to be a part of the Governor's Joplin Habitat Challenge.

*Supervising editor is Jeanne Abbott.*

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