

Verbatim



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Member of Brownell faculty reaches out to Haiti; Amy Becker family welcomes three new members

By Allison Brockman

As students of Brownell Talbot, all of us know of disaster in our lives and in the world. No one can honestly admit that he or she has not seen or heard the tragic news of the recent earthquake in Haiti, the death toll of which is now being estimated at over 200,000 people.

The real tragedy of Haiti is that even before the earthquake, 56 percent of the population lived on less than \$1 per day, and three-quarters of the population described their economic situation as bad or worse.

So what do all of these images and statistics mean to you? We all frown at the news stories and grimace at the newspaper headlines, but have we really done anything to reach out to the people of Haiti? For seventh grade teacher Mrs. Amy Becker and her family, the answer to this question is an astonishing one: she and her husband Thomas she have adopted three children from the poverty-stricken country. The three join her other daughters, Mary Beth, an eighth grader, and Anna, a sixth grader, both at Brownell.

Becker's journey has been a long and meaningful one; she was matched with the first of the three children, Vialancia, in June of 2007 from an orphanage known as Holt Fontana, which she described as "a loving and family-style orphanage."

Becker said, "... the country was truly a place of need. So when we came home we asked to be matched again." Their second match brought them two Haitian twins, Jean and Jeannette.

To any parent, having three more children may sound crazy, but for Becker, it was only natural. "I just wanted to have more children in the house, so I didn't care what country," said Becker.

"Thomas had done a mission trip to the Dominican Republic the summer before, and there he saw how the poor Haitian children were treated. They came across the border to beg or work for money to take home. So when we learned that Holt International had a Haiti program we chose that," continued Becker.

With the earthquake hitting in the midst of the laborious adoption process, the Becker family was forced to remain optimistic through their worries about their soon-to-be children. Becker tells us that her relief came when "the US decided to grant humanitarian parole to Haitian children who had parent matches," and that fortunately, "the US government and



Photo courtesy of Amy Becker

Anna Becker, a Brownell-Talbot sixth grader, and her sister Mary Beth, a B-T eighth grader, entertain their new family members, Haitian twins Jennette and Jean and six-year-old Vialancia, at Henry Doorly Zoo. Following the Haitian earthquake, the Becker family's bid for adoption was fast-tracked to allow the children to join them sooner.

Holt International really went to bat for us and pushed the twins through."

Becker suggests to students that "donating to well-known and reputable organizations will help... a less exciting way to really make change is to stay informed, know about the countries of the world. The eyes of

Yakking Raiders grab 4th consecutive State Championship

By Bret Perry

Once again, after conquering their District and Conference competition, the Yakking Raiders advanced to Kearney to take on the rest of Nebraska.

And once again, the Yakking Raiders returned home with a State Championship in speech.

The BT Forensic team won their fourth consecutive state title in speech. Four consecutive championships is a tremendous accomplishment as Coach Chris Hamel pointed out before their departure to Kearney when he said, "Four back-to-back championships is a big deal. Now we're talking state records!"

Of the 18 BT competitors who attended, 11 placed. Of the 11 Raiders who medaled, six had medaled the previous year, and of those six, senior Ian Suiter, junior Tory Wilson and senior Erika Larose were back-to-back State Champions.

With this success, the Yakking Raiders dominated their competition. The Raiders finished with a total of 196 points, a significant increase from last year's 138 points.

The Yakking Raiders have been working toward the State competition since November 2009. Throughout the season, pieces have been scrapped



Photo courtesy of Sara Nordstrand

Members of the State Championship Forensics team celebrate their victory on the winners' platform in Kearney in March. This was the team's fourth back-to-back championship.

and modified, drafts have been reworked and the Varsity roster has been changed constantly.

The Yakking Raiders would not have been able to improve significantly throughout the season without the large amount of time spent with Coaches Hamel and

Mike Recker.

With four State Championships, the Yakking Raiders are already looking ahead. Currently, the team is assisting the middle school speech teams, but many upper schoolers have already begun planning for next year.



Photo Credit: <http://thealbumproject.net/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/ppm.jpg>

The Best of Style and Sound: April 2010

By Cygne Cooper

Sounds: While at the past two Lollapalooza festivals, I've made it my goal to find musical artists who tickle my fancy for electronic and enjoyable music. Much to my dismay, most of the smaller artists playing and/or singing their hearts out at the fest aren't as alluring as their headliner counterparts. However, I speak on not every band's behalf.

When I was in Chicago last summer in search of such musical gems that did, in fact, impress the concert-goers and myself, I came upon Passion Pit in a very unusual way. Moving and grooving to the sounds of Michael Angelakos' high-pitched vocals accompanied by dizzying synths at the Hard Rock Music Lounge afterparty, I realized two things: one, I didn't have to be at a Lollapalooza concert to find such a captivating band; and two, this electronic band was growing on me at a pace similar to the quick beat of its music.

My repetitively putting their CD on repeat while I'm driving shows that I've become a fan since I first saw them last August. Not only does Passion Pit produce perfect tracks to wiggle around to on the dance floor, other songs from their albums (they've only released two since their start in 2007) show the softer side of electronic pop, though Angelkalos' vocals rarely fall under the category of "soft."

The band is surely something of an acquired taste, but it never hurts to try new things. So, if I've spent this past 200-some words preaching to the choir, I'm sure you can attest to their excellence. Yet, if you're a bit skeptical, I encourage you to check out their latest album, *Manners*. I hope you're pleasantly surprised.

Styles: Though I do love an occasional break from 100-degree summers, I never thoroughly appreciate winter and all that comes with it. Walking through slush is hardly enjoyable, if not terrible, and when I do walk through it inside or outside of school, I always find myself wanting one thing and one thing only – a good pair of boots.

Not only are boots useful throughout the harsh Omaha winters (six snow days, what?), they're in style for fall fashion. Sporting them thigh-high along the runways of Rodarte or trying on a new pair in Von Maur's infamous shoe department, boots are in... and will probably always be.

My recommendations are as follows: Ladies – embrace your inner fashionista and try a slightly taller boot this season. I'm not saying you should invest in an over-the-knee pair like I did, but anything around your upper calf can elongate your figure and improve your style as easy as it is to put them on. Gentlemen – go rustic this winter with a traditional pair of leather ankle or riding. Not only will they protect you from the frigid floor of the Midwest, they're bound to grab more attention than the dunks you're wearing now.



Photo Credit: http://www.domycollegeapplication.com/images/college_application.

Don't procrastinate on those applications!

By Sara Nordstrand

It is the middle of February, and I am still not done with applications concerning college. Currently, I have at least seven more scholarship essays due in three weeks. My advice to all upcoming Brownell-Talbot seniors is to finish your applications early. This may sound easy, but in reality it is quite a challenge. I began my process the first week of October and sent my last honors college application in on Valentine's Day. Maybe I was bit crazy applying to eight schools, four honors colleges, and for a minimum of eight outside scholarships, but this experience has taught me some good tips to pass down.

If you are a freshman: study, study, study. During your freshman year, you should establish good study habits, learn time management and begin to consistently volunteer in the community.

If you are a sophomore: improve. During your second year of high school, you need to commit to core activities and grow in your area. Stay constant with your course load throughout your four years and learn to gauge what you can handle.

If you are a junior: write! During your junior year, you need to establish a voice in your writing so the message will be clear to admission committees. Listen to teachers when they urge you to begin brainstorming essay topics.

If you are a senior: organize and prioritize. At the beginning of the year, compile a master list ranking your schools based on deadline, tuition cost, location, class size, acceptance rate and overall atmosphere. Then establish relationships with your state representative and send in your application.

Hopefully these tips will lay a stronger foundation for your future through high school.



Photo by Mark Smith

Students attend Model UN Conference

By Bret Perry

For the first time, Brownell-Talbot sent a team of students to UNO's annual Model United Nations (MUN) conference. Juniors Bret Perry, Tory Wilson and Carey Hughes represented the delegation of Brazil. Perry, Wilson and Hughes won the award for "Being the Best Prepared" team and were one of three delegations to get a resolution passed that focused on terrorism. All three students said they had an enjoyable time and look forward to next year's conference.

verbatim is an online student newspaper published quarterly at Brownell-Talbot School, 400 North Happy Hollow Boulevard, Omaha, Nebraska 68132 (402) 556-3772 mawaterm@brownell.edu brperry@brownell.edu

Editor-in Chief: Bret Perry
Page Editor: Louise Duncan

We welcome your comments. Please send them to the e-mail addresses above, or bring them to the journalism office. Unsigned or offensive letters will not be printed.



Junior Rachel Fowler leaps for a layup. Both Fowler and her twin sister Megan served as leaders with two years of experience under their belts. Photo by Kelsey Simkins

Girl's basketball: a team game

By Linda Liu

Girls' basketball has strong teams and one goal: to win as many games as they can while playing well.

With the help of Coach Kroupa, Coach Brown and Coach Herzberg, the girls' basketball team had quite an exciting year. The team this year consisted primarily of sophomores and juniors with a couple of freshmen and one lone senior proudly representing her grade, Tabia Yapp.

The girls' team was great at working together to achieve a common goal. As freshman Denise Dantzler put it, they "just needed to work on playing a whole 32 minutes of good solid basketball. And after that we're just really good."

One characteristic of this team was that the entire team contributed throughout the entire game.

However, the team still needed to work more on their layups and inside shots according to freshman Cami Oyler who also says that being a freshman really didn't change how she was treated by the others on the team. "They all just come together to work hard and play a great sport."

And that's why they play basketball. Everyone liked the practicing and conditioning that they can also put to use in other sports later in the year, such as track. When asked about what it feels like to be on the court and playing, Dantzler said, "I like the adrenaline. It's really fun."

From the fan's point of view, coming to the basketball games is fun, too. Cheering on the team, watching the athletes dribble the ball down the court and make that basket with a swish are all great!

Swimmers move in the right direction; qualify for State

By Briana Simusa

Most people think swimming is just a fun thing to do in the summer, but for the people on the Swim Team it is a serious sport.

Junior Meredith Brockman said, "Swimming is a great activity that people should explore."

With the help of Coach Kirkman, the Swim Team had quite a successful season. They spent every day after school practicing, while others go out with friends. So why swim? Sophomore swimmer Dane Surbeck said, "My father swam, so I followed in his footsteps and, in my opinion, it is also the best sport to do."

Most members of the team agreed that in swimming, their favorite stroke is freestyle, but a few have their own favorites such as fly or backstroke.

The entire team is comprised of student from Concordia, Roncalli and our very own Raiders. Junior Fiona Loggie said, "At the beginning of the season, it may seem hard but, if you stick it out it will be very rewarding."



Sophomore Zach Ehresman breaks away from his opponent. Despite being an underclassman, Ehresman played a key role in the 2009-2010 season. Photo by Kelsey Simkins

Boy's basketball: reaching expectations

By Randon Rohlfs

With four returning starters and a new starting player returning from Central, the Brownell-Talbot Boys' Basketball team began the season with high expectations.

Senior leadership from Alex Terry and Jack Zukaitis allowed the boys to remain a threat to all teams on the schedule.

In the first game BT scored 72 points in a win against Omaha St. Peter Claver. The Raiders began streak with a win at Mead (the returning State champions) before Christmas break and continued winning eight of their first 10 games. The Raiders also went on the road and, in overtime, defeated Sydney who was ranked No.15 in 2-A/1-A in Iowa with a 15-point showing by Zukaitis.

Until Feb. 9, the boys also has an undefeated streak at home, which lasted six games, until a 40-50 loss to bitter rival, Nebraska City Lourdes.

At the Falls City game on Feb. 12, also Senior Recognition Night, the boys beat Falls City for only the second time in 25 years and completed an original goal of earning double-digit wins. Throughout most of this season, the boys lived up to their high expectations.

With junior Cody Rotert handling the ball, junior Stephen Woods rebounding, sophomore Zach Ehresman shooting hot from downtown, Senior Zukaitis getting second-chance points, junior Paul Harding playing the sixth man, and senior Alex Terry providing leadership, the season was rewarding. And with so many underclassmen returning, the future is bright.



Freshman Allison Brockman and junior Blakely Heckman work on their endurance. Heckman improved her career times over the course of the season. Photo by Julie Lasto

The majority of the team qualified for State and junior Blakely Heckman was able to break her career record.

When asked for any final comments, Loggie had this to say: "Oh gosh, just look at our shirts!"



Photo Credit: <http://vrempire.com/Image/Blogimg/20100215-AvatarvsTitanic/Avatar-Movie-Poster.jpg>

Avatar: a must see

By Briana Simusa

Set in 2154 on Pandora, a distant moon in the Alpha Centauri-A star system, *Avatar* is about a clash between the moon's Na'vi clan and the human beings who have traveled light-years to mine the moon's precious minerals in order to ward off an energy catastrophe back home.

Since the earthlings are mostly soldiers, and since their mission involves completely destroying their home, the Na'vi, who resemble 10-foot-tall, taffy-pulled, long-tailed, yellow-eyed versions of the Blue Man Group and speak what sounds like a cross between Maori and Yiddish, are understandably unfriendly. But one of the earthlings, an ex-Marine named Jake Sully (Sam Worthington), makes some headway.

In my opinion this was a very great plot to follow, although in the middle of the movie it got a little slow. It also got a little sad close to the end when their home tree...well, I won't reveal that.

But Pandora is still a great place to park yourself for three hours. And you get to keep the 3-D glasses. **Grade: A** (Rated PG-13 for intense epic battle sequences, sensuality, language, and some smoking.)

The State of the Union: Pros & Cons

Point

By Patrick Riley

The major theme in this year's State of the Union Address was the economy. But, before he got to the main part of the address, President Obama started out by telling us he did what he had to do.

He said that he wouldn't just do what was popular but what was necessary. This statement revealed a true aspect of the Presidency, mostly pointed at his critics. When you are the President you cannot just do what will be popular, you have to do what you think is the best option.

In the beginning of his speech, the President pointed out that he would propose a fee on the biggest banks in or-

der to repay the taxpayers who had kept them afloat. This is a great idea; if these big banks can afford to give millions in bonuses, then they have the money to pay the people back.

The President also proposed creating more jobs through clean energy projects. This creates a plan to build a new set of clean and safe nuclear power plants. This plan solves two major problems in this country: our energy problems and our job problems.

President Obama stepped on the idea of being able to export more of our goods by making key partners in Asia. The President set a goal to double our exports

over the next five years; this plan would support two-million jobs for Americans and help boost our economy exponentially.

President Obama also wants to reform our education system so that instead of supporting failure it would support success, especially in math and science. This would allow our country's students to compete with those of China or India.

President Obama talked about decreasing our budget deficit by going through the budget and cutting out things that are of no need and don't work. This is quite important because many programs are getting millions of dollars, when they don't work properly or at all.

One of his final subjects was the War in Iraq; the President stated that he wanted all combat troops out of Iraq by the end of August. This goes with his promise during the campaign to end the war in Iraq.

There were many subjects covered in this year's State of the Union Address, too much to go in depth.

But President Obama made plans to improve our nation's economy, create more jobs, create more sustainable energy, strengthen our education system and pull out of Iraq.

All these subjects and the many others he covered will help our country get back on the right track.

Counterpoint

By Tory Wilson

The State of the Union Address on Jan. 27 was initially surprising to many Americans. It was Clintonian in the sense that there was something for everybody, yet when he lapsed into discussing fiscal responsibility, the speech was reminiscent of former President George W. Bush.

Aside from containing surprising similarities with his predecessors, President Obama's speech ultimately failed to offer any helpful ideas to solve the innumerable problems the U.S. faces.

The economy is undoubtedly the priority for Americans. The president mentioned lowering the deficit. However, an aspect of his solution, a spending freeze, will not solve the problem. He proposed a spending freeze beginning in 2011 that would "bring down the deficit" and last three years. According to Daniel Mitchell a Senior Fellow at the CATO Institute, a Libertarian think tank, and a top expert on tax reform, the spending freeze, "is a farce...

83% or more of the budget is off-limits."

Essentially, the President was suggesting that a spending freeze will cut costs and help reduce the budget deficit, but he failed to explain how leaving spending related to national security, Medicare, Medicaid and social security, the most expensive and fastest growing areas of the budget, untouched is beneficial.

Complicating the tax policy and increasing government spending by not cutting draining costs is not the solution to escaping the economic quagmire the U.S. is currently stuck in; furthermore, the President mentioned financial reform, in particular, bank bailouts. While claiming that he "hated the bailout... it was about as popular as a root canal," one wonders why an aspect of his financial reform plan is permanent bailout authority for regulators, which is the Federal Reserve for the Treasury.

Ironically, some of the ideas Pres-

ident Obama advocated in his speech have the potential to exacerbate already existing and dismal economic problems.

The economic plans discussed hold no potential for progress anytime soon. Aside from the economy, healthcare has also become as controversial as it is important. Again, the President failed to suggest anything that would truly fix a looming and deteriorating problem. He claimed that, "our approach... would reduce costs and premiums for millions of families and businesses."

Yet, the Congressional Budget Office illuminated an important discrepancy with this claim. The plan before Congress would raise premiums. In fact, premiums are going to nearly double in the next 10 years even if the plan isn't implemented, and individuals' premiums will rise 13% faster if the bill is passed than if we did not change anything at all.

The government ludicrously

claims that the plan could cut the budget deficit by nearly a trillion dollars. This figure is the result of dishonest accounting. They assume that Medicare will cut reimbursements by 23% by next year alone, then in a separate bill they repeal those cuts, claiming the \$250 billion cost isn't part of the healthcare bill, it's separate.

Then, Congress has the audacity to push those hidden costs, displayed as cuts, to individuals and small businesses. The very people the government claims to be helping with their healthcare plan are actually being harmed. Rather than increasing the competition, protecting unemployed peoples' healthcare and the uninsured in general, the government is slowly crippling the economy and ignoring the main problems with healthcare.

The State of the Union on Jan. 27 proved to be relatively unhelpful, unless the goal was to illustrate the bad ideas circulating through government.

An adventure in the checkout lanes

By Randon Rohlfs

Working in a grocery store, I see many different characters go through my checkout lane.

One man in particular made a co-worker and me crack up one day. The couple came to my line and both seemed to be in a pretty good mood. They giggled and laughed. The man pulled out a lottery ticket and told his wife he had better go get his winnings. While he began walking towards the customer service counter, she informed my co-worker and me that every week he buys a \$5 lottery ticket and wins back \$2, but acts like the big dog for winning that \$2.

After about four minutes, we turned around and saw him at a slow pace, strutting back to my checkout lane. When he finally got back, he showed his wife the \$2 and said, "Look honey, this is what it is all for, right here." His wife rolled her eyes and laughed.

"You don't even need a retirement fund anymore, do you?" I said to join in the fun.

"No, and we might even be able to take a trip somewhere exotic!" he answered back.

"How much was that ticket originally again sir?" I joked.

"Don't worry about that right now; I'm just focused on my winnings right now, oh, and honey, if you are lucky, I'll even buy you a pack of gum!"

The people you meet through your checkout lane can brighten or dim your day.

No matter what, each order, good or bad, always ends the same. "Here's your cents off gas and have a nice day!"