Students Mark Tuition Freedom

A s part of the Cal U for Life initiative, students celebrated Tuition Freedom Day on Feb. 15 with a march across campus and a rally at the Performance Center.

Tuition Freedom Day is the mathematical date when the tuition funds that students or their families paid for the 2010-2011 academic year are exhausted.

This year that date was Feb. 17.

“Although state appropriations are declining, it is still support nonetheless. Without the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania’s support , you could have paid over $10,000 this year in tuition alone! We students indeed have a great... — Continued on page 2

Creative Teens Win Scholastic Awards

M ore than 180 talented middle school and high school students were honored in Steele Hall Mainstage Theatre this month for their participation in the 2011 Scholastic Art and Writing Awards of Southwestern Pennsylvania.

Students enrolled in public or parochial schools throughout Washington, Fayette, and Greene counties were invited to participate in the annual awards program. This is the second year that Cal U hosted the awards.

The mission of the Scholastic Awards is to nurture the talent of young artists and writers. The regional affiliate here at Cal U seeks to stimulate, promote and reward creative excellence in the visual arts and creative writing.

“I was so excited to see all of the participants’ work and to see that there are indeed other people out there that love and appreciate art just like I do,” said Lauren Mahokey, a junior at Gibel Catholic High School.

“I was very surprised and very thrilled to have gotten a merit award. It meant a lot to me and made me feel that maybe I really could try to pursue a degree in art,” Eighth-grader Faith Gaffney, who attends Central Christian Academy, said she already is looking forward to next year’s program.

“I was only hoping to get into the show, let alone get a Silver Key!” she added. — Continued on page 3

Meteorology Club Wins Carnegie Science Award

T he Cal U Meteorology Club, the Southwest Pennsylvania chapter of the American Meteorological Society, has been named an honorable mention recipient of a Carnegie Science Award.

The award was announced Feb. 3 during a media luncheon at the Carnegie Science Center on Pittsburgh’s North Shore.

The club will be recognized in the University/Post-Secondary Student category at the science center’s 15th annual awards ceremony, scheduled for May 6. In addition to honoring award winners, the event includes a silent auction, dinner and a keynote address by Anousheh Ansari, the first female civilian space explorer.

Carnegie Science Center established the Carnegie Science Awards program in 1997 to recognize and promote innovation in science and technology across western Pennsylvania. More than 250 individuals and organizations have been honored.

Last year Cal U Meteorology Club received the Chapter of the Year Award from the National Weather Association. The club is the NWAs Three Rivers Chapter. Club members and their faculty adviser, Dr. Chad Kauffman, accepted the award in October at the NWAs 35th annual meeting in Tucson, Ariz.
Contest Preps Students for History Day

Students Mark Tuition Freedom Day

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deal to be thankful for.”

In conjunction with the rally, 200 pieces of cake were distributed to students outside of Taylor and Byrnes in the Natali Student Center.

“This was all about awareness,” said Ryan Jerico, coordinator of student and young alumni programs. “Our students appreciate the support they receive, and they demonstrated that.”

Also offering remarks at the rally were James Lokay ’02, a reporter for KDKA-TV and a member of both the Alumni Association and the SAI board of directors, and Brittany Balaz, chair of the 2011 Senior Gift Drive Committee.

Lokay urged students to remember the help they are receiving and to “pay it forward” by contributing to scholarships once they establish themselves in the workforce.

“Every generation at Cal U must leave its mark, and you can do that by helping the next generation of students,” Lokay said. “We must always do what we can to make things better.”

Echoing Lokay’s sentiments, Balaz announced the kickoff of the 2011 Senior Class Gift Drive. The goal is to surpass last year’s total of $8,000. To help increase participation, President Angela Aarons, has appealed to every member of the General Assembly and submitted to newspapers in Harrisburg and throughout western Pennsylvania.

“It is very important that we make everyone aware of our appreciation for the generous amount of money invested into our education,” Keener said.

Students Express Thanks

NOTE: This open letter was submitted to newspapers in Harrisburg and throughout western Pennsylvania.

To the legislators and taxpayers of Pennsylvania:

The students at California University of Pennsylvania write this open letter in the spirit of gratitude.

Thanks to your support of public higher education, we will be attending our state-owned university free of charge from Feb. 17, 2011, through the end of the academic year. That date marks Tuition Freedom Day, the mathematical date when the tuition funds that we (or our families) paid for the 2010-2011 academic year are exhausted.

For the rest of the spring semester, our education will be paid for by a combination of state funding, appropriated through the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education, and privately funded scholarships. Those critical non-tuition dollars keep our university running.

By helping to finance our education, you have given us the ability to build a more promising future. We could not have achieved this dream without your financial support.

Soon many of us will be teachers, healthcare professionals, business owners, technicians or other productive members of the workforce. We also will be taxpayers, “paying it forward” to another generation of college students.

Recognizing this, we sincerely thank the General Assembly — and every Pennsylvania taxpayer — for investing in our education.

Since 1852, California University has been a beacon of hope for students, and we are determined to play a positive role in the future of our university, our commonwealth and our great nation.

Bonnie Keener
President, Student Government Association
California University of Pennsylvania

(Submitted on behalf of California University’s 9,400 students in accordance with a resolution passed unanimously by the Student Senate on Nov. 22, 2010. A longer version of this letter was submitted to every member of the Pennsylvania General Assembly shortly before Tuition Freedom Day.)

Education and history met when 158 eighth-grade students from Belle Vernon Area, Carterets, Trinity and Uniontown Area school districts competed in the fourth annual Primary Sources History Day contest in the Performance Center.

The History Day competition is sponsored by the Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources program.

First, second- and third-place medals were awarded in junior and senior divisions for outstanding exhibits, documentaries, performances, websites and research papers. All participants received framed certificates.

Judges and event volunteers included Cal U history/political science and education students, University faculty, current and retired educators, and community members who belong to local historical societies.

The event was modeled after the National History Day competition. For many students, the Cal U contest was a warm-up for next month’s regional competition, to be held at the Senator John Heinz History Center in Pittsburgh.

One of these students was Ashley Gillow, of Bellmar Middle School in Belle Vernon. She and classmates Rachel Parzynski and Jordan Bell created an exhibit depicting the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott, which was sparked by Rosa Parks’ refusal to give up her seat for a white passenger in Montgomery, Ala.

“At the time it was just a boycott, but her actions did so much for African-American civil rights,” said Gillow, whose group began working on the project in September. “It’s still talked about more than 50 years later, and we learned so much from the project.”

Sewickley Academy made its first trip to the Cal U event simply to observe and help prepare for the regional competition.

“This has been really interesting and very competitive,” said Sewickley Academy student Katie Gideon. “Coming here has given us a good feel for what to expect — and a lot of good ideas.”

Dr. Michael Brna, director of Cal U’s Teaching with Primary Sources program, said the quality of the event has improved each year.

“Last year’s high quality of student entries was evidence that sponsor teachers do a fantastic job of helping students understand the value of using primary sources in the contexts of history and theme,” he said.

“We give special thanks to the volunteer judges and Heinz History Center representatives who made the day a complete success.”

Ross Farmer, a social studies teacher at Bellmar Middle School, has brought his students to each TPS History Day competition at Cal U. He believes it’s an excellent prelude to the regional competition.

“It gives our students an opportunity for enhancement, to be creative and show off what they are capable of outside the norm of taking a test or writing a research paper,” he said.

“They receive a tremendous amount of feedback and constructive criticism here. They need to use the feedback to make improvements and finishing touches.”

Last year one of the Bellmar documentaries won the statewide History Day competition. However, Farmer believes the Cal U competition does far more than just help students succeed at the next event.

“They are learning to do bibliographies and using primary sources of information, the type of skills the students will need in college prep classes in high school,” he said. “Instead of just running to Wikipedia to do a research paper, this competition forces them to do accurate research. If not now, then down the road our students will realize this competition is a tremendous benefit and springboard for them.”

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Kids Take Tips from Track Team

In addition to running, jumping and throwing, Cal U’s track and field teams are getting their kids by working with youngsters ages 6-12.

Since January the coaching staff and team members have been conducting a track and field program on Tuesday or Thursday evenings at the LeMoyne Multicultural Center in Washington, Pa.

“We teach them how to run track by showing them the proper techniques of hurdlng, passing the baton or even jumping,” said Roger Kingdom, two-time Olympic gold medalist and Cal U’s men’s and women’s head track and field coach.

“They are learning by doing, but the kids are having so much fun with it. When you have fun with what you are doing, a person tends to put forth a better effort and be more receptive to absorbing the information.”

Kingdom is a longtime friend of Joyce Ellis, Lemoyne’s executive director, who led the effort to rejuvenate the center four years ago.

Ellis praised Kingdom and Cal U assistant coach Jayson Resch for helping the youngsters build athletic skills and introducing them to some college-age mentors.

“We have a whole generation of kids (in Washington) who really do not have any recreation centers to go to or anywhere to receive technical instruction in track and field,” she said. “This gives the Cal students a community service opportunity and a chance to meet kids they otherwise would never meet.”

Kingdom emphasized that his student-athletes are having as much fun as the aspiring track and field competitors.

“I was wondering if they would see this as being a chore or an opportunity,” Kingdom said. “But they have not stopped laughing or joking about it yet, and each week we take more and more of our team down to the center.”

Cal U’s track coach has run many youth camps and clinics through the not-for-profit Roger Kingdom Foundation.

Kingdom emphasized that his group’s unofficial photographer.

One of many Cal U team members to enjoy the volunteer work is junior Jerica Snoedden, a team captain and elementary education major. She used to give swimming lessons, and this was her first time offering track and field instruction to children. She also has become the group’s unofficial photographer.

“I definitely have had a lot of fun, and I think it is something different for the children,” she said “I believe they like working with us, and we like interacting with them.”

Despite wintry weather, nearly 30 children have attended each session, Kingdom said.

“We are excited about this and now have something very good going on with the center that could become an annual event,” said Kingdom. “Most important, we are giving these kids something they can believe in, something that can keep from being led by the wrong crowd.”

“You don’t have to be in the streets to have fun.”

Creative Teens Win Scholastic Arts, Writing Awards

— Continued from page 1

Heidi Marx, a senior at Waynesburg Central High School, earned a Gold Key, the highest award. Her work also was nominated for national recognition.

“Winning an award like this has given me encouragement and inspiration to keep honing my talents,” she said. “Thank you for the great experience.”

Dr. Mohamed Yamha, interim dean of the College of Liberal Arts, welcomed the participants. Students, parents and teachers to the awards program.

The young writers and artists submitted 447 manuscripts and pieces of art in January, and two panels of professionals judged the work. The judges awarded 17 Gold Keys to young artists and nine Gold Keys to young writers.

The 10-member panel judging writing included English Department professors Dr. Kurt Kearcher, Dr. Bill Hendricks, Dr. Madeline Smith and Dr. Kristia Nora.

The 10 art judges included Dr. Greg Harrison, Dr. Susan Mohney, Dr. Scott Lloyd, Maggie Aston and Richard Miecznikowski, of the Department of Art and Design.

Beginning Jan. 25, guests were able to view 256 of the art entries on exhibit in the second floor of Gallagher Hall. Cal U students who helped to stage the exhibit were Ashley Bouton, Tiffany Harris, Katie Resch, Ashley Rudacille, Samantha Sundburg, Jess Lane, Katie Mercandante, Jenn Murphy, Jonathyn Simpson and Jordan Verbofsky.

Alpha Phi Omega service fraternity members assisted. Mike Thoma produced a PowerPoint presentation the audience could view before the ceremony.

National judges at the Young Artists and Writers Alliance in New York City are now adjudicating the Gold Key art and writing.

National winners will be announced on March 8.

The Scholastic Art and Writing Awards program, which began in Pittsburgh in 1923, is the oldest and most prestigious awards program in the country. The Alliance reports that students from across the country submitted more than 180,000 entries this year.

Cody Byers, of West Greene High School, receives an award from presenters and board members Dr. Krystle Nora, an assistant professor in the Department of English at Cal U, and Sandra Boyes. Byers earned two Gold Key awards for his writing.
Former Vulcans and fans share memories of Hamer Hall

Hamer Hall has been the home court for Vulcans basketball since 1965, two years after ground was broken for the campus landmark. Basketball standout Dick Majernik — who scored many of his 1,317 career points in nearby Herron Hall before Hamer was constructed — recalled Myles Witche, Tim Loomis and Jim Boone, Cal U Hall of Fame coaches whose championship teams played in Hamer. Majernik, a retired educator and the 2000 Basketball Alumnus of the Year, also singled out Brown’s 2008 team, whose championship teams played in Hamer.

In all, Vulcans basketball teams have won 13 PSAC titles and seven NCAA Regional championships during the Hamer years. Seven of the 12 conference titles and six of the seven regional crowns were won on the home court.

Tammie McIntire-Mandich ‘90, ’91 was among the former players who attended the festivities. During her junior and senior seasons she helped Cal U’s women’s team make its first two PSAC playoff appearances, and she was part of Cal’s initial Hall of Fame class, in 1995.

“Just looking out on the gym floor brings back so many memories,” she said. “We were proud to start a winning tradition, and where the program has gone is just amazing. The 2004 team winning the national championship really put us on the map.”

Becky Siembak ’94, a star player on the national championship team coached by Darcie Vincent, helped Cal U win 68 of 71 games in 2003 and 2004, with 36 straight home wins. “Playing in Hamer was special and definitely gave us an advantage,” said the 2003 National Player of the Year. Andresky, who’s said he has always been a hometown guy, and I have seen so many great games at Hamer.”

Traveling from Florida as he has done for many of the basketball alumni days was the oldest returning alumnum, James Zell ‘39. A Hall of Fame inductee, Zell joked that he once scored 19 points in a game, the school record at the time. “He is what this is all about and is a treasured member of our basketball program,” Brown said.

Alumni like Majernik ’94, ’96 has not only played in Hamer Hall, but also has been a public address announcer, athletic administrator and now an assistant coach. A 2000 Cal U Hall of Fame inductee, she was the first Basketball Alumnus of the Year, in 2002. “I really can’t put into words all that Hamer Hall means to me,” she said. “At the same time, though, the new Convocation Center shows how much the University is progressing. It will create so many outstanding opportunities for the teams, the school and the region. It’s going to be incredible.”

The 2011 Basketball Alumnus and Alumna of the Year were announced during the event. Award winners were Tom Graney ‘77 and Cric Winter ‘84. Although the basketball teams are moving to a new arena, the women’s volleyball team will continue to play in home matches in Hamer Hall.

“We are not saying farewell. Hamer Hall will remain a vital part of our campus,” said University President Angelo Armenti, Jr. “We will build a new tradition at the Convocation Center, but we will always remember the accomplishments of the student-athletes and coaches who proudly called Hamer Hall their home. “They will always be welcome here.”