



THE HOUGHTON STAR

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Faculty Profile: Brandon Johnson

By Amy Buckingham

STAR: Can you tell me a little about yourself?

Brandon Johnson: "I'm the Associate Professor of Music and Director of Choral Activities here at Houghton. Before I came to Houghton, I completed my undergraduate education at Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota and went on to Westminster Choir College and the University of Arizona for my graduate studies. I taught a high school choral program for four years, then my family and I moved to Houghton where I have worked for six years."

STAR: Can you tell me about the choir tours?

Johnson: "Our first choir tour of the spring was this past weekend. We sang at a Christian School in Oswego, in Scranton, and in Albany. In Albany, we performed at the Troy Savings Bank Music Hall, which is one of the most respected halls for choral music in the United States. It is often used for professional recording purposes. Our final concert was in Providence, Rhode Island, for the Eastern Division of the Music Educators National Conference (MENC). This conference encompasses not only choral groups but also other branches of the musical community. MENC is a substantial and respected organization that allows for great opportunities for music students. Each year, schools apply to MENC in hopes of being chosen to perform. This is the second time that Houghton has been chosen to perform. This award affords opportunities in networking and raises Houghton's status within the music world. It gives Houghton musical credibility, showing Christian students that they don't need to sacrifice anything to come here."

"The second choir tour is one that we do over Mayterm. Every three years, the College Choir goes overseas to perform along with the Houghton Philharmonia. This year, we'll be going to Spain,

• Profile continued on page 2

Evangelicals for Social Action Seek to Raise Awareness During Human Trafficking Week

By Monica Sandreczki

Last week, March 7-13, Houghton's Evangelicals for Social Action (ESA) group facilitated Human Trafficking Week. Ashley Couch and Daryl Harshbarger, members of ESA were the coordinators of the event.

"This week was sort of the brainchild of Daryl and I," said Couch. The two spent about 30 hours in preparation for this week. According to Harshbarger, the ESA cabinet also contributed input.

ESA created Human Trafficking week to raise awareness for human trafficking in America and around the world. On Thursday, the club featured a documentary film, *Dreams Die Hard*, produced by the Free the Slaves organization, with a short presentation following. Ac-

ording to Harshbarger and Couch, 45 people attended. Both agree this was a very good turnout.

"I wanted people to come at first because I didn't want it to be a failure," said Couch. "But then, at the beginning of the documentary, I realized that it didn't matter if only five people showed up. If it was for our glory then it would be very embarrassing that only five came, but since it was for the glory of God, it didn't matter." The following evening there was a themed coffeehouse focused on justice and deliverance.

This coffeehouse provided the opportunity to write President Obama, New York Governor David Paterson, and to their own personal friends and family. Letters to friends and relatives were geared to inform recipients about human traf-

ficking and how they can help. In writing to President Obama, people were encouraging him to read a 50 page document that details where human trafficking is prevalent, what the problem is, and what he can do to address it.

Letters to Governor Paterson encouraged him to sign the Safe Harbor Act, an act that would affect how prostitutes or other persons in need of security (PINS) under the age of 18 are processed under the judicial system. This act would also provide training for law enforcement officers, especially in how to deal with specific situations and care for victims of human trafficking. Currently, there is only one shelter in the United States for people who have been victims of human trafficking and it only houses

• Awareness continued on page 3

Lecture Series: Joireman on Nairobi Property Rights

By Rebekah Miller

On Monday Houghton had the privilege of welcoming Sandra Joireman, associate Professor of Politics and International Relations at Wheaton College, to speak as a part of the College Lecture Series. Splitting her message to Houghton in two parts, Joireman addressed embracing the will of God in regards to her personal life in Chapel on Monday and her research on property rights in the Kibera Settlement in Kenya on that night.

As part of a larger project in which Joireman compared property rights in the African countries of Kenya, Ghana and Uganda, Joireman travelled to the Kibera Settlement in Kenya to obtain firsthand experience and research about property rights in the 3.5 kilometer-wide settlement. Defining property rights as "rules that govern access and use of assets" she gave the example of a home as an asset for which the owners have certain rights and privileges. These rights are important, Joireman argued, because clear property rights contribute to economic growth while unresolved property disputes generally result in violence.

The main problem of property rights in Kibera is that there are none. With a population of over 700,000, the government of Kenya

refuses to recognize it as settled land and labels the site "vacant" even while supplying government officials to serve in governmental roles in Kibera. Most of the population lives in what they call "dwellings" with a noted neglect of any sort of reference to a "house" or "home." These dwellings are owned by landlords who rent out the spaces to tenants at a rate of about 300 Kenyan shillings a month, a relatively meager price because of the poor condition of the structures.

Because of the inability of the government-sanctioned rental tribunals to settle property disputes quickly and cheaply, residents and landlords turn to three other main forms of resolutions: ethnic gangs, bureaucratic entrepreneurs (corrupt government officials), and community based organizations. After extensive research and interviews with residents, Joireman and her student researcher determined that while the community based organizations excelled in terms of efficacy and sustainability, they were a largely untapped source of help, assisting with only 24 tenant disputes over a three-year period.

The conclusions of Joireman's research in Kibera contend with commonly held beliefs about property rights in urban settings. While it is generally assumed that organic

institutions arising within a community will be more helpful in addressing a community's issues than formal government institutions, this was not the case with the community based organizations in Kibera. Another intuitive notion defeated by this research is the "urban bias." There is no evidence to support a better-enforced set of property rights laws in the urban setting of Kibera compared to a rural setting.

Implied by these conclusions, explained Joireman, is the affirmation of the growth of development of organic institutions where the state is weak. However, these organic institutions may or may not benefit the community. Additionally, Joireman's research reinforces research suggesting that property rights disputes can provide fertile ground for violence. After her the completion of her research, Joireman and those working with her quickly departed to avoid imminent violence surrounding the national elections.

After the lecture, questions fielded concerning details on the state of affairs in Kibera, including the territory's classification as a slum and the difficulties associated with raising the quality of living. Intercultural Studies Professor Ronald Oakerson remarked afterwards,

• Nairobi continued on page 3

Inside
this
Issue...

From the Archives:
Non-Alcoholic Beer at
CAB events?
Page 3

From the Editor's Desk:
Can "Pro-Choice" preserve
the life of the church?
Page 7

Artist of the
Week: Susie
Skillman
Page 8





THE WORLD out there

By Monica Sandreczki

UN Gives Food Aid to Kenya

The United Nations (UN) has expanded its donation of food to Kenya to cover double the amount of people it used to. The World Food Program (WFP) will now provide food to 2.5 million people. There has been a rising need of food in this African nation because of drought and rising food prices. Maize has risen 130% in price in parts of Kenya in the past year. Contributing to the lack of food is last year's political violence which caused many people to be displaced from their homes. Also worsening the food crisis is the global financial crisis causing a fall in remittances from other countries. Many families are finding it difficult to find food for just one meal a day. The WFP will also provide 1.5 million children with school meal lunches, incentive to keep them in school.

Charging Importers for Carbon Emissions

China has suggested that importers of their goods should be responsible and pay for the carbon emissions during the manufacture. "We produce products and these products are consumed by other countries, especially the developed countries. This share of emissions should be taken by the consumers but not the producers," said Li Gao, top climate negotiator in China. He says this ahead of a meeting in Washington DC that precedes a meeting in Copenhagen this December that will discuss negotiations of climate change. Delegates in Washington have said that working out Li's plan would be a "logistical nightmare." Neither China nor the U.S. ratified the Kyoto Protocol back in the 1990's, which legally binds countries to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. "Japan will not repeat Kyoto," Shinsuke Sugiyama said. "At Kyoto we were not able to involve the biggest emitters in the world by now - and that means the United States of America and China." Recently, China surpassed the U.S. as the world's largest producer of these greenhouse gases.

Egypt Desires US Flexibility with Hamas

In continuation of last week's current event, Omar Suleiman, intelligence chief in Cairo, has asked that the U.S. have a more flexible

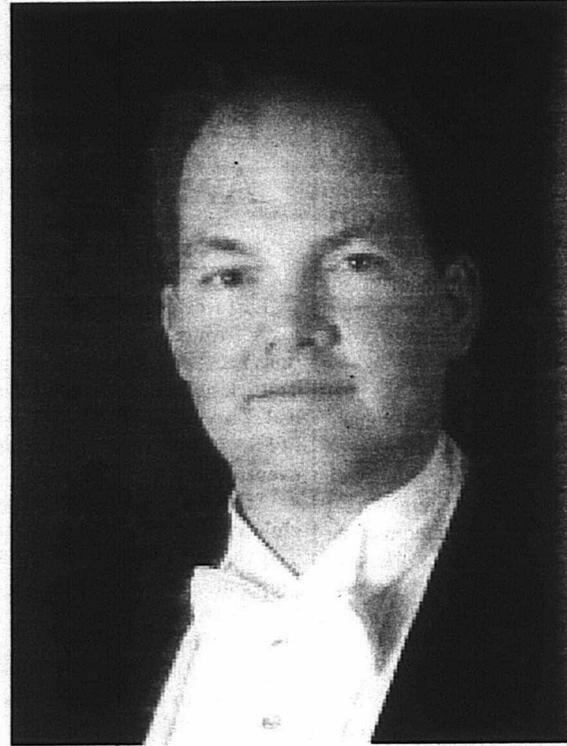
view of Hamas to help with the Palestinian unity talks. Currently, the U.S., EU, and the UN take the stance that they will not deal with Hamas until they renounce violence recognize Israel. The peace talks between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas have hesitated over this issue. Hamas's charter speaks of destruction of the destruction of Israel. However, Hamas has agreed to a long term truce if Israel recedes back to its pre-1967 borders. Egyptian and Palestinian officials have said that Egypt is suggesting the US would accept a pledge from Hamas to "respect" current Palestinian agreements with Israel, instead of "commit[ting]" to them.

Children in Sri Lanka at Risk

Due to intense fighting between Tamil Tiger rebels and Sri Lankan troops, hundreds of children have been killed in Sri Lanka and many have also been at a great loss of food, water, and medicine. According to UNICEF, children and families caught in conflict zones are at high risk for disease and malnutrition. Currently, the Sri Lankan troops have cornered the rebels in the north-eastern corner of the island, but many families are trapped in that territory. The rebels have forced civilians to move with them whenever the Sri Lankan troops advance. Several aid agencies, such as UNICEF, say that it is mandatory that civilians be allowed to move to safe areas to receive humanitarian support.

School Shooting in Germany

Germany was plunged into national mourning last week after a 17 year old boy went on a shooting massacre. Beginning in his old school, German teenager Tim Kretschmer shot and killed 12 with a pistol taken from his father. Kretschmer went on to hijack a car, and force the driver, Igor Wolf to drive at full speed away from the school, reportedly asking Wolf, "Do you think we can find another school?" Wolf eventually veered off the road and escaped the car, but Kretschmer went on to shoot two others in the town of Wendlingen, 40 miles away, before turning the pistol on himself as his capture became imminent. Kretschmer stole the pistol from his father's office. Kretschmer's father is now being held responsible for his pistol and the case is being considered as involuntary manslaughter.



• Profile continued from page 1

France and Italy. While the first choir tour is funded mostly by the school, the European trip is funded by the students and thus fewer are able to participate. So far, about 60 students are expected to take this trip, whereas about 72 went on the first. This is always an interesting trip to take as it allows the students the experience of different venues, like cathedrals, and concert going is more a part of culture Europe. For both tours, we prepare anywhere between 18 and 20 pieces, depending on the time constraints and the types of concerts we're giving. For example, we will be performing as a part of a church service and so that concert will need to be considerably shorter than our others."

STAR: What are your hopes for the future of the College Choir?

Johnson: "Well, in the near future, we're hoping to be more involved

in service projects, especially in Buffalo and that looks to be a reality, as my wife is the interim professor of Service Learning for Houghton. We're also very near releasing another College Choir album. The College Choir has been releasing recordings nearly once a year and

I am pleased with how the current recording has progressed.

"I'm really proud of the group this year. They've really shown me how the College Choir is more than just a sum of their achievements.

The things that we do are represented

by how the students feel and what they get from the College Choir experience. Students emerge with something educational as well as spiritual from the music and the tours in which we share. There are so many valuable things that go on behind concerts, in the depth of the day-to-day work. It's rewarding to see students not there purely for the credits, but for the love of the experience."

"The College Choir is more than the sum of their achievements."

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FROM the Archives

By Amy Buckingham

A recent article in the Star detailed the ongoing arguments about Houghton's alcohol policy, which is one of the more contested aspects of the community covenant. The policy is under review right now by the Taskforce on Community Responsibility, with a decision expected in the next few months.

To give some perspective on the place of alcohol at Houghton, this week's From the Archives looks back 16 years, to an article by Christine Arthur about Winter Weekend (now Purple and Gold week) in February 1993, when CAB set up a non-alcoholic bar in keeping with the "Roaring Twenties" theme. The bar served non-alcoholic beer as a beverage choice; the resulting campus-wide conversation provides some insight into how previous students have responded to discussions about alcohol at Houghton.

Winter Weekend, a tradition at Houghton College, brought about controversy this year. The controversy was over a non-alcoholic bar, used to achieve a certain effect in the weekend's theme, "The Roaring Twenties". This bar was sponsored and set up by the Campus Activities Board.

There were several members of the Houghton Community who found the consumption of imitation drinks both un-Christian and evil, while others said that it was, "no big deal" and simply shrugged the whole thing off.

Dean Danner, after listening to complaints from both students and faculty, evaluated the situation and established a new policy for CAB. These new ramifications include:

1. No event will be sponsored that serves imitations of alcoholic drinks.

2. "Near Beer" will not be served

at Houghton College.

3. The principle of "Avoiding the appearance of evil" will be the operative principle in the planning and conduct of all CAB events.

CAB president, Elaine Armstrong found Dean Danner's approach to the situation both "impersonal and unfair. I was in his office twice last week and he never once mentioned that CAB was wrong in having the bar," said Armstrong. "I see no reason why there was no confrontation."

Freshman CAB member John Below commented, "The theme, The Roaring Twenties, was a time frame enclosed by prohibition. The bar idea was a way to recreate the twenties. In that era, virgin bars were the norm. We weren't trying to offend anyone nor did we break the code."

Danner's attitude was that "in drinking even non-alcoholic imitations, Christians are trying to walk as close to the edge as possible without going over. We should primarily put all of our strength into our walk for Christ, and not concentrate on pretending like we are secular."

Student response: How did you feel about the bar?

"Consistency may offend, but always demands respect. Hypocrisy may please, but always results in shame."-Sean (SPAZ) Spazioni, sophomore

"Why do we as Christians have to copy the world's example of what's 'fun'? Can't we as Christians have fun without alcohol? I think that as a Christian College, we can show the world that we don't need any of their empty artificial ways of having fun."- Brenda Verbrugge, senior

"I feel that the speakeasy was a creative and unique way to expose Christians to non-alcoholic

alternatives. I appreciated the time and effort that CAB invested to give Houghton a taste of the 20's by using non-alcoholic substitutes. Perhaps some Christians will never have reason to be tempted into alcoholism."-Wendy Hoffman, senior

"Non-alcoholic beer? I just don't see the need for that here. We're pushing our limits for the sake of feeling rebellious or 'like everyone else.'" -Nate Ransil, senior

"It didn't bother me, but the drinks weren't made very well."- Meleinnie Fernley, freshman

"I personally felt that thing started out okay. The idea fit with the theme of "The Roaring Twenties" but, I feel that, if we as a community are trying to show that we are Christians, we really shouldn't be trying to fake being non-Christians. One half percent alcohol won't kill anyone; there is more alcohol in mouthwash and cold medicine. The O'Doul's wasn't a big deal, it's the idea that we should avoid."- Jonathan McCarthy, freshman

"It didn't hit me either way."- Kyle Stevenson, freshman

"In one aspect, it was pretty neat that they respected the fact that we were mature enough to handle non-alcoholic beer. On the other hand it seems funny that we HAD to sign a pledge that stated: no drinking, no dancing, etc. and yet, the college sponsors drinking...even in jest?"- Cara R. Salvant, freshman

"I think that it was wrong. O'Douls has the appearance of beer. In the Bible, it says that we should shun every appearance of evil. It was also produced by Anheiser-Busch. The money spent on this goes towards the production of alcoholic beverages, which is un-Christian and could kill a close friend or relative in a drunk driving accident."-Phil Phanuf, freshman

• Nairobi continued from page 1

"Joireman's research on property rights in Africa is really interesting stuff. For one thing, she's interested in learning how Africa really works. She doesn't assume that just because the state fails to protect property rights that property rights go entirely unprotected."

Monica Sandreczki, freshman, had this to say: "Ms. Joireman... was extremely interesting and educated...I haven't learned very much about development yet, so I still carry these high ideals that all grassroots work will solve every problem, and to know that it hasn't in this case, leaves me not knowing what I would do next if I were working in development in Nairobi."

As a friend of Joireman, Professor of Education Connie Finney found herself surprised at how relevant and interesting she found a topic very much outside of her field. "I thought the lecture was fascinating," she said. "It dealt with an issue that we basically take for granted in the US and it showed in what ways the US government functions quite effectively while that level of functioning is not a given in other parts of the world."

• Awareness continued from page 1
7-9 people.

The coffeehouse also featured several performers including Hannah Barney, Jordan Green, Nicki Gabree, Jessica Stoddard, Aimee Kelly and Bethany Fonda among others.

It was the prayer of Harshbarger and Couch that attendees would see the inhumanity of human trafficking and that participants' hearts would break and be impassioned to move.

Throughout the week, there was a table with a display board set up in the Campus Center with pictures and stories about trafficking. ESA also collaborated with Global Christian Fellowship (GCF) in having prayer that focused on justice.

According to Couch, ESA is planning on having a screening on the second film of *The Invisible Children* later this year.

Other events that ESA has put on this year include hosting guest speakers at meetings, putting on a living gift market at a local craft fair to raise money and having a clothing drive for the Buffalo city mission.

ESA meets every Tuesday night at 8pm.

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Movie Review: Who's Watching the *Watchmen*?

By Lindsay Hansen

There are classic villains and there are classic heroes, yet neither of these appears in *Watchmen*. This new movie is based on a comic book series published between the years of 1986 and 1987 and later compiled into a single volume graphic novel. It has since acquired quite a cult following. This fan base has waited since 1987 for a movie adaptation. The question after its release is, as always, whether or not the movie lived up to its book form.

Watchmen places the superheroes into the real world, making them players in world events: the Vietnam War is over, but nuclear war with the Soviet Union is a very real threat. No one is sure whether to view the *Watchmen* as good guys or bad guys. After being disbanded, they begin to see members murdered. They decide to work together to try to find a solution, but find themselves becoming part of the problem. In this way no one is really a "hero" or a "villain."

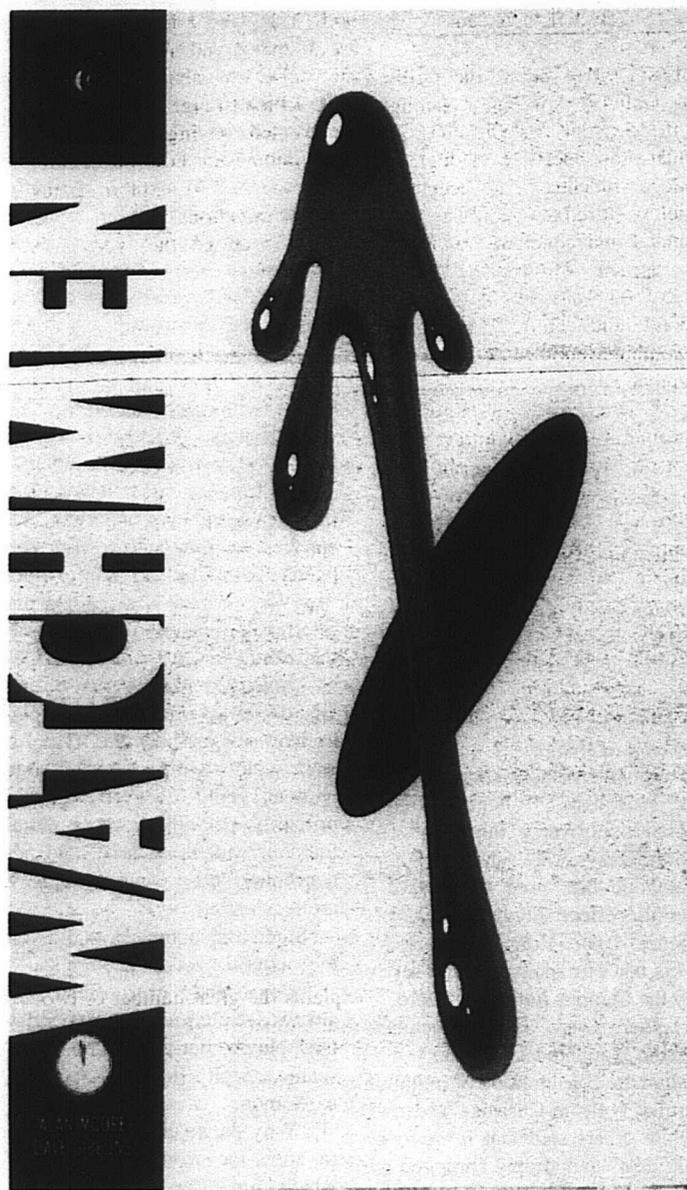
Technically, the movie is a work of art. From the opening scene to the end, each shot looks like a panel from the novel. The opening sequence, set to Bob Dylan's "The Times they are A-Changing," is a series of single frame snapshots portraying the passing history of the superheroes. It bridges the gap between the novel and the screen effectively. The combat is exaggerated and unreal, reflecting the origins of the story. The

convincing and vivid movie invites the viewer to participate in a two-and-a-half-hour alternate reality experience.

The message of the film can be received in varied and conflicting ways. Author Alan Moore stated that the message could only ever be conveyed through the unique medium of the comic book. He also expressed concern about a lack of translation in the film, but this seems to be an unnecessary anxiety. Superhero movies are as common now as comic books were in the 80s.

The film's greatest weakness is its length. At almost three hours long, it eventually becomes difficult to watch. It also raises the question of whether long sequences—especially extended graphic violence—is necessary. The film does succeed in developing each of its characters in a way that remains truthful to the novel, much to the appreciation of prior fans.

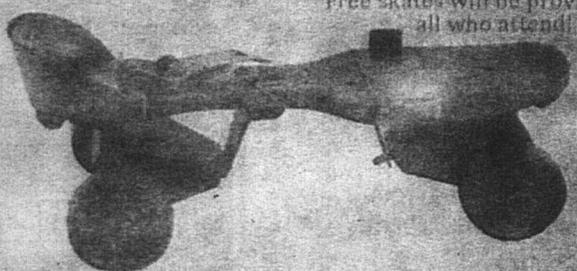
Watchmen creates a refreshing change, casting the fictional world in a more realistic color of grey rather than depicting evil as black and white, as many comic book stories do. The movie also asks some hard questions: should a minority be punished if a majority can be saved? The viewer will likely leave the theater feeling uncomfortable with the outcome, providing them with the beginnings of an answer to the film's most stimulating question: who watches the *Watchmen*? 



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Friday, March 20th

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Students Receive Honors at Student Juried Art Show

By Jeff Andersen

Last Friday night, the Ortlip Art Gallery saw the opening of the Student Juried Show, an annual show open to all Houghton College students. The reception, which occurred at 7 pm, was well attended and concluded with the presentation of awards by the art faculty for Best in Show, First, Second and Third Place, and Honorable Mention (see below for recipients).

This year's show featured a large number of works representing a broad variety of disciplines and approaches to art, from more traditional landscape watercolors to spray-painted stenciled work to whimsical multimedia caricatures to introspective digital videos. Colleen Barry, curator of this show and an assistant art instructor here at Houghton, mentioned that "It was nice to see a wide variety of media...it represents well the potential of the student



Photo by Amlee Kimer

A variety of media submitted by students is currently on display.

body." Senior Lydia Cleaveland, an art major and a participant in the show was also pleased that such a broad range of media was represented, saying, "I feel that it communicates how the faculty encourage us to explore many different directions."

Much of the work was of a smaller scale, and there was clearly a larger amount of two-dimensional work, but interestingly enough, both the Ortlip Award for Best in Show and the Paul Maxwell Memorial Award (First Place) were given to functional, three-dimensional works. Those receiving awards also included students from all years—freshman through senior. This was not contrived; the show was judged by an outside jury who were provided with no information about the artists. This year's jury consisted of Jackie Hoyt, Executive Director of the Arts Council in Perry, New York, and Linda Nichol, a metal sculptor from Livingston County. In past years, the jury has been responsible for selecting which entries are accepted as well as deciding the awards; this year the Houghton art faculty selected the works to be shown, and very few entries were rejected. This explains the great number of two-dimensional work shown: there was hardly any room left on the wall. However, this show serves as a cross-section of the work being produced by our art students, on many levels and in many different media. Art Professor Ted Murphy admits that "It's an eclectic show, but it shows the variety of work our students are creating, and especially highlights the crossover



Photo by Amlee Kimer

Arryn Prince won Best in Show for her Rutile Blossom.

between the art major and the communications major...I'm very proud of my colleagues and what they get out of the students." It's an exuberant show, demonstrating a student body that is dealing with old and contemporary concepts and media, from fauvism to anti-patriotism, and from papermaking to digital video. Junior Jennifer Puccio said, "It's amazing how much talent is here; I'm glad to be part of it." Senior Andrew Davis agreed: "These things usually make me jealous of my friends."

The Student Juried Show will be followed by the Senior Art Show, which will open April 24th.

Award Recipients
Ortlip Award for Best in Show

Arryn Prince for "Rutile Blossom"

Paul Maxwell Memorial Award (First Place)

Jeffrey Andersen for "Slouching Chair"

Alumni Award (Second Place)

Madison Murphy for "Autumn Breeze"

Ben Frank Moss Award (Third Place)

Eric Holbein for "Fenceposts"

Honorable Mention
Jessica Stoddard for "I Went to Piper Island"

Susanna Skillman for "Faucet Study"

Sally Murphy for "Pretty Lil' Girl"

Jaela Myers for "Two New Dresses"

Community Garden: "a Different Way of Looking at Community"

By Joel VanderWeele

This spring, students and community members will break ground on Houghton's first Community Garden. According to Brian Webb, who is spearheading the project along with his wife Becky Webb and Ginny Routhe, wife of Sociology professor Aaron Routhe, the garden will "provide a tangible opportunity for people to do something that's good for them and good for the earth."

The idea for the community garden came out of the Creation Care Taskforce meetings, when Professor Thomas Kettlekamp offered his land for the project. The idea of a Houghton Community Garden had been discussed before, but "when TK offered to make [his land] available, we decided to go forward with the idea," said Webb.

Kettlekamp's land, a plot of about five acres on Tucker Hill Road, will be broken up into small and large individual allotments with one large group plot of tomatoes and sweet corn. According to Webb, they "initially wanted to go with one communal plot, but logistical problems made that impossible." Although the plots will be divided among individual groups, the organizers are trying to encourage cooperation. The Webbs are planning on signing up with four other families with adjacent plots so that responsibilities can be shared.

So far, 70 people have expressed initial interest in the Community Garden, about half of which are students, half of which represent families in the community. Ginny Routhe, who has been in charge of collecting applications for the garden plots,

hopes to see "at least ten plots gardened this season... We feel on many levels that this year is a trial year and hope that word will spread of gardening success and community fun together so that the Garden grows even more next year." Webb seconded Routhe's sentiments, saying, "we're doing this not with vast gardening experience but a willingness to learn."

Both Routhe and Webb hope that that students are not put off by summer absence and explained that they hope to pair interested students up with community families for help with the planting and harvesting seasons. "It's a great way to get healthy and organic food close to home. And it's cheap... We want to provide an opportunity to garden as well as to promote more sustainable eating practices."

As well as helping organize the Community Garden project, Aaron and Ginny Routhe are converting their three-level house into a communal living arrangement called the Seed House where the Routhe's, some students, and even community members live together. "The house has a common mission of working toward shalom in our relationships with one another and our community with special emphasis on environmental stewardship within the house and beyond into the community," said Ginny Routhe. The Seed House boarders will be involved with the Community Garden, the Belfast Toy Library, and will host events and dialogues throughout the year. The Seed House, which has space for up to nine dwellers, will begin this Mayterm.



Sleeth's Disconnect: A Serious Look at Creation Care at Houghton

Houghton's Creation Care Scholar Dr. J. Matthew Sleeth has become somewhat of a Houghton celebrity, but some students wonder why.

by Mark Satta

Houghton students meet few topics with such unanimous disdain as the formal relationship that has existed for this academic year between Houghton College and environmentalist and author of *Serve God, Save the Planet*, Dr. Matthew Sleeth.

While the administration has expressed the goals of Dr. Sleeth's position on campus this year to include creating more awareness of environmental issues among the Houghton College community, helping to implement creative solutions to make our campus become more green and serving a promotional function for Houghton by virtue of the fact that he is a public speaker and writer who targets an audience that Houghton is looking to reach, the student population seems to have been more struck by his general absence on campus despite having been given an office, his lack of preparation for classes and forums in which he has been asked to lead, his questionable usage of scripture passages to bolster his own ideas and his aloof, even condescending interactions with students.

As much as I have disliked the few times when Dr. Sleeth has been on campus, I think that for students who are accustomed to the dedication and deep care for students that is exhibited by so many faculty and staff members the lack of recognition and practical non-existence of Dr. Sleeth as a figure on campus already makes him a less

respected authority.

There is something very jarring about a man whose message is about showing love to humanity through caring for the creation who flies into campus every now and then to perhaps stop by his unused office which has been heated for months and bumble his way through several presentations where he avoids answering many student questions that seem to pull him too far from the preset agenda propagated in his book.

This year's first-year students were able to engage with Dr. Sleeth both as an author and a speaker as a result of the decision to have Dr. Sleeth's book *Serve God, Save the Planet* as part of the FYI curriculum and to have him as the speaker in a class-wide FYI question and answer session.

The ability of the freshman class to think critically was clearly displayed in the small group sessions where many students openly expressed frustrations with weak logic, bad theology and poorly supported claims made in Dr. Sleeth's book, and their ability to ask critical questions was clearly exhibited during the question and answer session with Dr. Sleeth; although by dodging questions and providing responses not really indicative of the questions asked, Dr. Sleeth did very little to ensure anybody that he was

capable of responding to the critical questions of students.

As one present during the FYI question and answer session I was dissatisfied in what I observed, but my frustration would only continue to grow in my subsequent interactions with Dr. Sleeth.

As part of the Simplicity Initiative's Consumer Fast which took place during the months of November and December, a "consumerfasttable" was established during several lunch periods as a means for providing more personal discussion and accountability regarding the difficulties of fighting consumerism in our society. Being a strong supporter of scaling back our lifestyles, Dr. Sleeth seemed like a good choice to lead a lunch discussion. I was disappointed to discover Dr. Sleeth had come to the lunch more or less completely unaware of the goals of the Simplicity Initiative and frustration mounted as he consistently redirected the topic of consumerism to environmentalism (which while being related issues are indeed two separate topics).

But most shocking of all was Dr. Sleeth's statement in response to the question of what is a good portion of income to give away, that he has found in order to be taken seriously that he needs to overcharge people, but his point in making this statement

seemed to be that it was ok, because he gave that income away to charity. Now, I do not think Dr. Sleeth was intentionally creating a connection between this statement and his relationship to Houghton College, but it would seem that the parallel is pretty hard to ignore, and I do not think it is acceptable to "overcharge" for the sake of marketing yourself as an individual to be taken serious, nor do I feel it is his place to become the decision maker of what are worthy charities for the money of the non-profit organization of Houghton to go to.

My most recent interaction with Dr. Sleeth came in a class setting several weeks ago. It was paradigmatic of the failure of Dr. Sleeth to connect with students. As Sleeth gave his dry session peppered with remarks and expressions of irritation directed towards the students and patronizing questions like "Does anyone know what diabetes is?" and "Who takes drugs?" (with the desired response he was looking for being the word people), he was unable to illicit any response from students. The clamp-jawed behavior of the students seemed a logical reaction to a man who has shown a low level of respect and understanding for Houghton students, and I fear that if this is his attitude toward us when he is in our presence, any chance that he is positively representing Houghton in his work off campus seems very slim.

Mark is a senior Business major

For students who are accustomed to dedication and deep care, the practical non-existence of Dr. Sleeth makes him a less respected authority.

Disgusted?
Delighted?
Just confused?

We want you to be part of the conversation.

Letters to the editor (signed) should be 350 words or fewer and be submitted by Tuesday at 7 p.m. to star@houghton.edu.

The HOUGHTON STAR is dedicated to the free exchange of ideas, and encourages community members to participate in the discussion. Ideas expressed in these pages reflect solely the opinion of the writer. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit any contributions for reasons of length or decorum.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editors,

I have a good friend at home who spends five days per week interpreting for Spanish speaking parents at the Children's hospital. When I last saw her she had just finished a particularly "good" day. Her "good" days are defined by what she does *not* do. On that day she did not have to tell any mother that her child was still born, or that her baby was severely deformed. On that day, she did not have to tell any parents that their child would not be coming home, or that their other children might also need to be hospitalized. And on that day she did not have to frantically interpret between medical staff and parents when seconds could make a life or death difference.

Language skills are no longer a luxury, they are a necessity. And they aren't just a necessity for people who wish to travel, or for large metropolitan areas, they are a necessity everywhere, and for everyone. So you can imagine my great surprise at the dismantling of the language department here at Houghton. I am especially confused

by the firing of Dr. Nan Hussey. Dr. Hussey teaches two foreign languages, Spanish and German. She has devoted seven years of her life to Houghton and is deeply loved by current and past students. You see, Dr. Hussey has a unique ability. She has done what many desire, but few accomplish. She instills in her students a love of learning and a passion to excel. I personally chose to attend Houghton because of Professors like Dr. Hussey. I can't imagine what would possess any school to part with such a treasure. I invite the administration and Board to reconsider their decision, for the sake of the babies, and the parents, and the students and the school.

-Megan Toombs, Class of 2012

Dear Editors,

I wish to express my thanks for Micah Warf's recent editorial concerning the parallels between the complicity of both the Nazi and American publics in their respective 'Final Solutions.' I have often been struck by the America's moral arrogance in our assumption that we have moved beyond the seemingly alien ideologies of Nazi Germany, and similar oppressive regimes. On

a recent Houghton College trip to Israel, our student group visited a holocaust museum in Jerusalem. I remember being struck by the danger of over-confidently considering the holocaust as an oddity or anomaly in human history, no matter how foreign and clearly malicious the Nazi intentions are in retrospect. Assuming that we are incapable of the same sin is an unforgivable dishonor. Oppression and murder rarely appear with loud declarations. On the contrary, evil action usually arrives subtly.

Consider another historical parallel. It has been asserted that when the prophet Isaiah was writing, factions of the people of Israel had accepted idol worship that included the murder of newborn babies in their rituals, and while few were actively involved, the people at large were complicit. God declares in Isaiah 1:15 that the blood of the oppressed still covered the hands of all. Is the blood of 3,700 unborn children daily added to our hands?

I am reminded of the words of George Orwell, in his sobering essay entitled, 'Politics and the English Language'. Orwell is writing about the degeneration of political language into vague emotionally-



charged terms, designed to fool us by creating a political language that "is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable." Perhaps we should especially keep this in holding accountable our newly elected president, who is infamously remembered as having argued vehemently against a bill that would recognize babies surviving abortions as "persons" because it would admit "that they are persons," and implicitly render abortions illegal.

Just repeat after me, "They're not persons, they're not persons, they're not persons."

So much for "never again."

-Kyle Johnson, class 2012

Dear Editors,

I was shocked to read Micah Warf's Commentary, comparing abortion in the United States with the systematic destruction of millions of people.

The shock I experienced is not because I believe abortion is morally right - as an affluent, educated, white male, I would never claim to know whether abortion is ever "right" - my shock, however, was due to the fact that I don't believe Mr. Warf fully understands the Holocaust. The Holocaust was not simply the murder of 6 million Jews, it was the industrialized slaughter of millions of Jews, Soviet POWs, ethnic Poles, Romani (gypsies), disabled individuals, Freemasons, homosexuals and Jehovah's Witnesses, not to mention those people who suffered but did not die.

The Holocaust was directed at specific groups of people, in order to advance a specific agenda. Abortion, on the other hand, is not forced on any individual, it is not targeted at a certain section of the population, and it does not advance any agenda; so I fail to see the parallel Mr. Warf draws.

In fact, abortion is never even encouraged for any person, except for maybe in Judaism where it is a sin for the mother to not get an abortion if the mother's life is in danger; I think that these Jews, as well as the state of Israel (where abortion is legal), would find this parallel extremely offensive.

We can all agree that it would be a good thing if the number of abortions in the US decreased, and we can all work towards this goal. Additionally we should also recognize that the number of abortions performed in the US has been decreasing for almost 20 years, reaching its lowest point in over 30 years. Furthermore, we must acknowledge that no matter what restrictions are placed on abortion, they will still occur, and these illegal abortions are incredibly unsafe and likely to kill both the child and the mother.

Finally, we must always remember that abortion is never an easy choice, sometimes the best choice, and is always a woman's choice.

- Josh Nolen, Class of 2009

From the Editors' Desk...

Can "Pro-Choice" Preserve the Life of the Church?

A call for less hyperbolic hysteria, and a more thoroughly Christian approach to the abortion issue.

by Katarina Kieffer

It's difficult to talk meaningfully about abortion, but Micah's op-ed last week, which cast pro-choice arguments as equivalent to Nazi propaganda, has stirred my rather conflicted sensibilities into action. He claimed that he didn't want to make an argument about right or wrong, just draw comparisons: of course, these comparisons were hardly value-neutral, so the end result was a fervent call for pro-lifers to take action to stop what he essentially termed a second Holocaust.

There are many flaws in this analogy, not the least of which is that the value judgment depends entirely on a scientific judgment about when life begins; and in the realm of zygotes and embryos, the answer is much less clear (for many) than when dealing with men, women, and children, who are clearly alive and possess personhood. He was right to point out and criticize the euphemistic style of language used on both sides, but strayed into that territory himself, using inflammatory name-calling in the piece. To echo Micah, I don't want to fight about right and wrong but I will try to stick to that a little more closely than he did. Instead, I'd like to ask: What ought to be the role of religion in society? Or, to recast it in Micah's terms, what would it look like if pro-lifers took up the call to end this so-called "second holocaust?"

To answer that question, let me bring up yet another hot-button evangelical issue: the separation of church and state. This concept is not explicitly in the constitution, but it is implied by the first amendment, and it is important to remember why it was put there in the first place. A helpful view goes something like this: the founders, having had experience with a state church, recognized that vibrant, volunteer societies (like churches) perform the function of fostering a moral society much better than any government can. This is because volunteer societies have informal rules and conventions governing behavior, enforced through personal

interactions instead of institutional mandates: the police can't be inside your house to punish you for all of the insidious wrongs you commit, but your mother can.

To illustrate with a Houghton example: at this point, the drinking policy prohibits drinking off-campus, even over breaks. There is (by necessity) little enforcement of this policy, we instead rely on students' consciences. So, if we were to look at this policy as a sort of law, it wouldn't be a very good one; those under the law can break it pretty easily without consequence.

In the most basic sense, when the government makes laws, they take universal hold and have to be enforced. In other words, if the government prohibits something—like abortion, alcohol, slavery, etc.—there must be some way of backing up that prohibition, or the law is meaningless. That requires resources—a lot of them—and a general consensus among citizens that this law is a good law and ought to be obeyed. It also doesn't allow a lot of leeway for law-breakers based on situational grounds: if you allow too many people to "get off the hook" with a good excuse, the law is once again meaningless.

If, however, these are personal values that are being taught to children by their parents, enforced by a vibrant religious community, thoughtfully discussed and developed in societal interactions and community, then they will be informally enforced through the mechanism of public shame, accountability, and confrontation. Christians claim to be counter-cultural in this way, relying on community rather than the government to enforce moral issues. But I fear that they have become one side of a cultural war: how easily we forget that the power of the church lies in the fact that is not political and that it models with love a lifestyle that is not enforced, but chosen. Yes, we have laws against murder, but the most effective way to stop murders isn't to prosecute the murderers after the fact, but to raise people who aren't going to murder in the first place.

The great political irony is that

many pro-lifers are Republicans, and claim to be against "big government." They don't want the government telling anyone how to use their money, but they want the government to intervene on certain "moral" issues. In other words, they don't want to be forced to give "hand-outs" to poor people: they want the choice to do it freely. If helping the poor isn't a moral issue, I don't know what is: I'm pretty sure that Jesus had a lot to say about those who failed to reach out to those in need. Perhaps the Republicans are right: again and again we have seen through the course of human history that morality is best left to religion, not the government. But that argument seems to hang their own complaints: what is the best way to deal with these issues? Is it to push the government to do something about it, or is it to revive the faith that we seem to have lost in the power of the church?

So Micah is right, the church has reached a point where it has to ask itself what it really believes, and what the consequences of those beliefs are. Those who have taken the initiative to provide options like crisis pregnancy centers and support groups are truly admirable, and haven't forgotten that the message of the gospel is love and redemption; instead of condemning, they've provided an alternative.

Some final questions: do we want the government to have to enforce an anti-abortion law? What if it were legislated that, as so many bumper stickers and billboards proclaim, abortion was murder? Are we so ready to condemn all of those women who would inevitably have abortions anyway, caught, as they would inevitably be, in situations, whether personal, economic, or cultural that makes it the best, albeit not a "good" option? In the end, the question Christians who are pro-life must ask themselves is who they trust more on issues of morality: the church, or the state?

Katarina is a senior Political Science major and serves as Editor-in-Chief.

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artist: OF THE WEEK

SUSIE SKILLMAN

Notes from the artist:

I've never considered myself a photographer but simply someone who enjoys taking pictures. During the fall of my sophomore year, I began to converse with Professor Huth about photography. Although I had dabbled in photography here and there, I had never even considered doing anything with it. I remember literally shaking in my boots when Huth sent me out with a school camera on a mission to go take at least 50 good pictures. This was just the launching pad for my love of photography.

Just recently, I decided to stop hiding my photos and entered a handful into the Student Juried Exhibition. I was encouraged that all of my photos made it into the show, and even more so that I received an honorable mention for "Faucet Study."

I love photographing details and I especially enjoy capturing the little things in God's beautiful creation. What catches my eye are the things that are so easily passed over but deserve just as much attention as bigger things.

Through working with Huth over the years, I have learned so much. I hope to incorporate photography in a future job and look forward to continuing this adventure of learning and being stretched over the years.

Susie is a junior Communication major with minors in Art and Psychology.



Faucet Study, photograph



Dulce, photograph