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volume 2 • issue 3



the
**GREEN
OBSERVER**

YOUR ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLICATION ON CAMPUS

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

KEYSTONE XL
GREEN YOUR SPRING CLEANING
HOW TO START A GARDEN
PERSPECTIVES ON SUSTAINABILITY
PREVIEW OF EARTH WEEK 2012
& MUCH MORE!

read green • live green

THE GREEN OBSERVER

greenobservermagazine.com

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR emily cross

Greetings Green Observer readers! We are so excited to publish our third issue of the year! These beauties are a labor of love, and we are thrilled to share them with you.

Thank you for taking a few moments with us to recognize the work of the environmental community on campus and in Champaign-Urbana. With every edition we publish, I am in awe at the level of engagement and activism among all of our community members. Although we still have a great deal of work to do, we are proud to be in your company.

If you have any questions or suggestions, or want to become a part of our team, don't hesitate to e-mail us at go@greenobservermagazine.com. The Green Observer is our student voice on environmental issues, so we encourage everyone to speak up!

I hope that after learning about all the amazing ways to make an impact on campus, you are inspired to take action. Be sure to look out for our Earth Week issue, and please recycle this copy!

Best,
Emily



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on our radar...

FEB 29th: Fisk & Crawford coal plants retire in Chicago, the 100th coal plant retirement since Jan. 2010

MARCH 12-14th, all day: Campus Eco-Feminism Summit

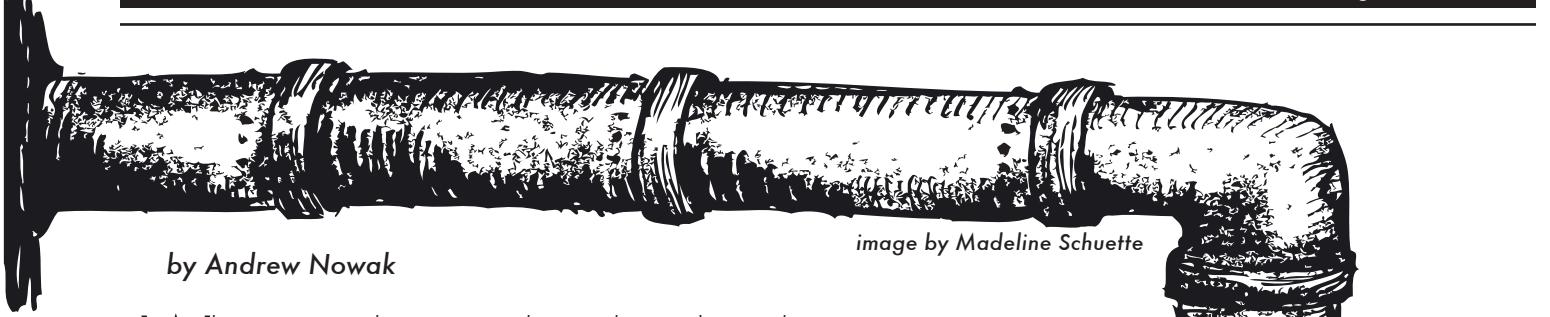
MARCH 20th: Municipal referendum to buy renewable energy in the City of Champaign

MARCH 29th: Environmental Lobby day in Springfield, Illinois. Topics covered: fracking & citizen enforcement

MARCH 31st, 8:30 PM: Turn off your lights for an hour for international Earth Hour event

Be on the lookout for a possible fee or ban on plastic bags in the City of Champaign!

FOR MORE INFORMATION E-MAIL US AT:
GO@GREENOBSERVERMAGAZINE.COM



by Andrew Nowak

When an issue becomes as big in the media as the Keystone XL pipeline has become, it is hard to distinguish biased facts from the truth. After looking into the recent developments surrounding the pipeline, it has become clear that neither side is giving us the complete truth.

Dr. David Ruzic teaches about the Keystone XL pipeline in his "Introduction to Energy Sources" class here on campus.

"People without knowledge about it can turn it into a political issue because they don't realize we have an enormous amount of pipelines already," Ruzic said. "Clearly it is wrapped up in politics." He says he believes that this shouldn't be an issue and he includes it in his class because "it is in the news and because I think there is misinformation."

The Keystone XL pipeline is a 1,661-mile, 36-inch crude oil pipeline that would be the latest installment to the Keystone pipeline system. The four-stage project, of which the Keystone XL comprises the third and fourth stages, is already half-complete and in operation.

Environmentalists particularly oppose any pipeline that further develops the Canadian tar sands, which are mined for their oil, and are notorious for emitting more greenhouse gases than other sources of crude oil.

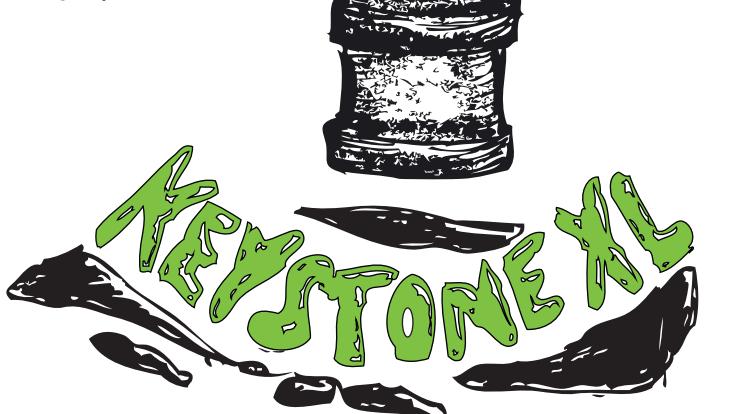
Stage one carries oil from the tar sands in Alberta to refineries and tank farms in Nebraska and Illinois, and has been in service since June 2010. Stage two goes from Nebraska to the major oil distribution hub in, to Cushing, OK, and has been in service since February 2011.

Stages three and four are currently under regulatory review. Stage three would take oil from Cushing, OK, down to refineries in Texas, relieving a supply excess in the Midwest that has held down gas prices. Stage four would create another line from Alberta to Nebraska, doubling import capacity of tar sands oil.

What is left out of the coverage is the fact that the Keystone pipeline system already has 2,151-miles of active pipeline, that carry over 500 thousand barrels of oil every day, from the tar sands into the Midwest, part of a national network of 175,000 miles of onshore and offshore Hazardous Liquid pipelines.

President Obama rejected TransCanada's proposal for the Keystone XL pipeline on Jan. 18. Republicans in Congress had set a Feb. 21 deadline for Obama's decision by

image by Madeline Schuette



attaching the pipeline to the two-month payroll tax cut extension. President Obama rejected it on the basis that there was not enough time for appropriate environmental reviews of the pipeline project.

On Feb. 27, TransCanada announced that they would pursue stage three of the pipeline separate from stage four. This would allow the process for that segment of pipeline to move faster since it wouldn't need State Department approval for crossing a border.

"The President welcomes today's news that TransCanada plans to build a pipeline to bring crude oil from Cushing, Oklahoma, to the Gulf of Mexico," said a statement from White House press secretary Jay Carney.

TransCanada also announced it would pursue phase four in the near future, working with the State of Nebraska to avert building in environmentally sensitive regions.

Environmental activist Bill McKibben, who led some of the pipeline protests that were held outside the White House last year, opposed this latest proposal as well.

In his article "Beyond Keystone" on Huffington Post's website, McKibben acknowledges that although it is important for environmentalists to take action against individual projects, the best for the future would be to change the state of the current energy resource status quo.

"We've got—as soon as possible—to stop fighting bad things one by one," McKibben wrote. "We don't have enough fingers to plug every hole in the dike; we need to change the basic underlying economics, by charging the fossil fuel industry for the damage carbon does in the atmosphere instead of just letting them continue to use the atmosphere as an open sewer for free."

earth week 2012 preview

by Annie Logisz

Get out your red—or better yet—green pens and mark your calendars, because April 22, 2012 is the 42nd annual Earth Day!

Earth Day was founded in 1970 when Gaylord Nelson, a Wisconsin Senator, recognized the need for a change in the way humans were treating the environment and abusing its resources. It came about at a time when little if anything was being done to negate the effects of industrial wastes spewing into nearby streams, lakes and landscapes and wreaking havoc on mother earth.

On this first Earth Day an estimated

20 million people in the United States attended various rallies and festivities in cities and on college campuses around the country in support of this innovative day.

Even the University of Illinois had participants! The immense outpouring of support was a success not only in solidifying Earth Day for the next forty one years, but it was also great player in the institution of many environmental laws, including the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts, the Endangered Species Act, and the Environmental Protection Act, among others.

In keeping with tradition, the U of I will kick off its Earth Day celebration starting April 16th with various activities that will bring out the inner environmentalist in everyone. These activities will continue throughout the week up until the 22nd, and include activities such as environmental movies on the quad, a green career fair, and an RSO fair where you can learn about all of the environmental clubs and organizations on campus.

Whether you head to an event or not, be sure to go outside and some fresh air on the 22nd and give a great big thank you to Mother Earth!

EARTH WEEK EVENTS:

- BIKE TUNE-UP
- ICAP FORUM
- GREEN BUILDING SEMINAR
- CYCLINGSAVVY COURSE
- ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS PANEL
- MOVIE ON THE QUAD
- BIKER BLENDER!
- GREEN BUSINESS EXPO
- BENEFIT CONCERT
- AND A GIANT PAPER MACHE GLOBE!



image by Felissa Amanda Tugade

students for environmental concerns

by Tamara Liu

Students for Environmental Concerns hit the ground running from the very start of this semester. Meetings resumed the first week of classes, and everyone got right down to business by setting some goals for the current projects this semester: Weatherization, Beyond Coal, Composting, Native Planting, and Earth Week Planning.

On Saturday, January 28th, SECS members united with other groups once again at the annual Y Prom. The night can be summed up in a few words: great food (enough to feed an army), great music (including hits by the *NSYNC and other nostalgia-inspiring groups), and great times (obviously).

The Beyond Coal Campaign has been especially busy this semester, continuing the hard work that the Sierra Club representatives inspired last semester. The project held a meeting and maintained communication with Michael Bass, the Deputy Comptroller. The group is focusing on holding the campus accountable for its commitment to end coal dependence, as well as making the University a transparent



SECS and Red Bison team up on a workday. Photo by John Marlin.

and responsible investor.

SECS has helped push the plastic bag fee proposal that is currently in progress. Angela Adams, the Champaign Recycling Coordinator, has been working on this proposal for the City Council. During a meeting held to discuss the different aspects of the proposal with Angela as a guest speaker, members debated whether a ban or a fee is preferable, and whether paper bags should be included. Stay tuned for future developments with this proposal.

We were honored in February to host Eric Snodgrass, Professor of Atmospheric Science. Professor Snodgrass led a talk on the fundamentals of climate change, and why it should remain an important issue for all of us.

The Native Planting group has been hard at work, working with Red Bison (above) to work on starter plants at the greenhouse and having other planting workdays.

It's always important to have some fun after all the hard work put into projects and workdays! After the Y group fair at the beginning of the semester, a bunch of SECS members headed over to the ice rink for some "chill time." And in the beginning of February, members trekked out to Savoy for a fun day at Skateland. Though the theme of the SECS social life seems to be skating thus far, expect a large variety of opportunities to hang with the SECS crew in the coming weeks.

Get excited for a trip out to St. Louis coming up, and make sure you head over to our meetings every Wednesday at 6:30 at the YMCA!

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student sustainable farm update

by Zack Grant

The Sustainable Student Farm (SSF) is back and here for the long haul! Thanks to a joint venture between the Student Sustainability Committee (SSC), the Department of Crop Sciences, and Dining Services we now have secured funding for an additional three years! Also thanks needs to be given to YOU, the students! This is YOUR farm! This is YOUR project!

This renewed partnership gives the SSF more time to develop its production practices and educational/outreach potential. By the end of this next three years we hope to be closer than ever to being a self-sustaining (economically and resource-wise) project that engages the university and community at large in small scale/regional food production. We hope to get students even more intimately involved with this project over the next three years. There are plans to develop a course and curriculum associated with the farm, continue collaborations as a client with many courses on campus, provide even more produce to the dining halls, and maybe even go to two days a week with the farm stand on the quad this summer!

We want YOU to be involved in any way possible. There are opportunities in day-to-day field and high tunnel work, help with our website/media, construction projects, working the farm stand this summer, harvesting fresh produce (even taking some home with you), and many other potential intersections between YOUR ideas and YOUR farm!

We are now planting in our high tunnels (year-round passive solar greenhouses), beginning transplant production, and nearing outdoor fieldwork if our mild winter keeps up and the fields dry out a little. Please visit our website (thefarm.illinois.edu) for more information. Here, you can sign up for volunteering opportunities, learn more about volunteering in our volunteer manual, and see pictures/videos of what we are all about. You can also e-mail us directly in our contact section if you have further questions.

Thanks again for all your ongoing support in making the SSF a progressive, cutting edge student farm project in one of the best agricultural regions in the world. We can make a difference!

-FARMER ZACK



sustainable student farm
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

perspectives on sustainability

A University functions as the forefront of intellectual inquiry and analysis about critical issues facing humanity, especially in understanding our place in nature. Tackling these topics on campus is the Scholarship of Sustainability Series, a public ten-week series of presentations and discussions regarding big-picture and foundational issues of sustainability.

Students can attend the series on their own, or sign up for one of the classes built around the Series: ESE 311 (Environmental Issues Today), ESE 497A (Special Topics in ESE), RLST 270 (Religion, Ethics, Environment), LAW 792JJ (Current Legal Problems), and OLLI: The Human Place In Nature.

Students attend the series as part of the course, on Thursdays

KYLE VAN DEN BOSCH:

Under the ominous smoke stacks of the coal-burning Abbott power plant, in a rundown lecture hall on the campus of the University of Illinois, a gathering of students, faculty, and community members are bellying up and digging into the most pressing problem facing humanity. The lectures' head chef, Prof. Freyfogle, is serving up heaping portions of reality at this all you can eat Vegas-style buffet called the Scholarship of Sustainability. Every Thursday he is overloading our plates with a different main course; from the heavy inquiry of why we misuse nature, to the enigma of what is sustainability. All of the questions raised in this lecture series are further garnished with urgency by recent scientific reports calling for immediate action to avoid tragedy. But just like the legions of Americans that line up at all-you-can-eat feed lots, filling their bellies with subpar fare, I've been leaving knowing I ate, but void of any satisfaction.

It's not the lecture material, or that the subject matter is somehow lacking the proper seasoning; it's something more substantial. And when I leave the lecture hall and wait to catch the bus, I see the source of my dissatisfaction. Mocking my efforts and imposing its dominance over me, it stands tall in the western sky, proudly belching its climate-changing gases, and reminding me of the size and scope of the problem. Reminding me too, that the very place where answers are supposed to come from, these hallowed halls of academia, which hold a collection of the best and brightest, is also dominated by the system. We need those in charge to show great courage and embrace something other than the status quo. We need those in charge to be leaders and make change. We need to find a new way to live on the Earth.

from 4-6 PM in 100 Noyes, supported by an additional classroom component, depending on the course.

The Green Observer asked students enrolled in Religion, Ethics and Environment to share their perspectives about what sustainability is, what the most striking issues are, and any other impressions they have after engagement in the Series.

Full submissions are available on our blog, at greenobservermagazine.blogspot.com. You can also check out more information about the Series at sustainability.illinois.edu/Scholarship1.html.

We are excited to share with you excerpts from the students' reflections:

ERIN MARKOVICH:

Sustainability is not a to-do list, or a well-thought out plan, or even a goal to be reached. It's only an idea, but an important one at that. Just saying it won't change anything but that does not mean it is not an essential statement. The word sustainability opens up a world of possibilities in terms of making changes globally, but not directly. It is true that some have been under the impression that saying the word means they are already working towards a better future. In truth, the word should mean that there is an understanding of our damaging lifestyles, and more specific plans should be arranged as soon as possible to ensure a better future. Don't stress about what sustainability really means, and start making changes in your lifestyle.

KATRINA UNDERWOOD:

In order to reach a relationship with nature that is not overly demanding we are going to need to ask ourselves essential questions like what does it mean to live a good life, what would a truly healthy relationship with nature look like, is my campus community living sustainably and how is my community not only affecting my local environment but the global environment as well? So, I would encourage you to challenge yourselves, while you are sitting around, sipping coffee at the Union, eating breakfast with your roommates, or taking a hike through Allerton to discuss and think about these questions with your friends, family, professors, neighbors, and all who live in your biotic community.

JAMIE ZOURAS:

Before attending the Scholarship of Sustainability Series, I assumed the idea of sustainability to be self-explanatory. However, after attending sessions of the Series at which Eric Freyfogle and other scholars presented their views, I discovered the idea of sustainability is much more complicated than what I initially believed. "I want to help educate others about what humans are doing to our planet. I want to inspire people to feel passionate for the natural systems on this earth. And I want to be a part of a society where people want to join the efforts in restoring our earth." This is how I now respond when asked why I am a Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences major.

TREVOR HARRIS:

Imagine that you return to the University of Illinois 50 years from now to see all the beautiful places that you remember from undergrad. You plan on going to the main quad and seeing students lying on nice green grass surrounded by tall trees with squirrels freely living all around. But when you arrive nothing is the same. The quad has become nothing but dirt as the sun has dried the grass to the core. The trees have been cut down, and the terrible odor of pollution fills the air instead of the sound of birds. This terrible nightmare may seem unrealistic but if we do not change our lifestyles toward becoming a more sustainable society for both humans and other life forms on earth it will become a global reality.

EME EKONG:

It is the responsibility of our leaders to ensure the sustainability of our environment for future generations. They must start by enacting national laws that respond to challenges of climate change i.e. building zoning codes, protecting wetlands, forests, and curbing deforestation by banning cultivation in forests. They must deal with deforestation by outlawing it, and encouraging modern forms of agriculture and modern forms of energy. The governments must create an environment where crooks and tricksters will not have opportunities to trick the public into agreeing to modalities that lead to inadequate sustainability. If these measures are put in place, we will be the better for it in the future.



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GIY: green it yourself

GREEN YOUR SPRING CLEANING

As college students, many of us browse the shelves in search of the cheapest products. When it comes to cleaning supplies, this usually means conventional products by trusted brands such as Clorox, Tide, Tilex, Lysol, and so on. However, many of these cleaning solutions wreak havoc on the environment once they go down the drain.

The toxic chemicals commonly found in cleaning products also pose a threat to our health. A smart consumer should be mindful of the ingredients in the products they purchase. Companies often use chemicals that are petroleum-based, a non-renewable resource, which increases our dependence on imported oil. Conventional brands also utilize chemicals known as "hormone disruptors," which have the ability to disrupt your body's endocrine system by either mimicking or blocking the actions of hormones. Many of these toxic chemicals become a problem once they are inhaled. Respiratory problems, central nervous system depression, and links to cancer are just a few of the side effects.

In addition to the potential health risks, the chemicals used in these products pose a threat to the environment. Once they're washed down the drain, these chemicals find their way into bodies of water and soil, harming and depleting wildlife, ruining soil, polluting the air, and entering the food chain... which may eventually end up on your dinner plate.

Luckily, there are alternatives to these dangerous products. Search for plant-based, recycled or recyclable packaging, and non-toxic cleaning solutions. Several brands you may want to try include Seventh Generation, Method, Mrs. Meyers, 365 Everyday Value, and ecoSTORE. If you are daring enough to



image by Madeline Schuette

concoct your own eco-friendly cleaning potions, search the internet for ideas or check out our ingredient glossary below! By following these simple suggestions, you can have your home looking spotless in no time! You may even avoid the ridiculous "cleaning charges" billed at the end of the year by your landlord!

GUIDE TO HOMEMADE, NON-TOXIC CLEANING SOLUTIONS:

BAKING SODA - cleans, deodorizes, softens water, scours

LEMON - one of the strongest food-acids, effective against most household bacteria

WHITE VINEGAR - cuts grease, removes mildew, odors, some stains and wax build-up

BORAX - (sodium borate) cleans, deodorizes, disinfects, softens water, cleans painted walls and floors

CORNSTARCH - can be used to clean windows, polish furniture, shampoo carpets and rugs



GARDEN-IT-YOURSELF: a college student's guide to gardening

by Matt Rundquist

Growing your own food isn't nearly as hard as you may think! Follow this how-to and you'll be producing your own veggies, fruits, and herbs in no time.

1. CHOOSE A SITE

It may seem that the college lifestyle isn't conducive to putting down roots (pun absolutely intended), but it's much easier to fit gardening into our lifestyle than many realize. Your garden can be anywhere: your front yard on campus (clear it with your landlord!), your friend's house, or a local community garden. Apartment-dwellers with a sunny window can enjoy growing herbs, and tomatoes do just fine in a pot on a balcony.

Other Factors you should look into:

Sunlight: Most garden plants do best in full sun.

Drainage: Easy to fix poor drainage by mounding soil and compost into raised beds

Soil quality: Look for plenty of earth worms and that beautiful dark Illinois topsoil when digging in your garden as a sign of good soil health. There are many do-it-yourself tests to determine soil texture, nutrients, and drainage, or contact your local extension office to get your soil tested.

2. PLAN IT

What are you going to grow? Go as crazy or simple as you want: potatoes, peppers, tomatoes, beets, cabbage, tomatillos, kohlrabi, chard: all of these and more are fairly easy to grow in Illinois soils and are worth a shot! Look for there specifications online or just trust the seed packet- gardening isn't a science!

How will you grow it? Will you need trellises or cages? Soil amendments?

When? I start with a planting calendar, and build in when I plan to weed, harvest, etc.

Where? A garden map is useful here. Don't forget to include paths!

3. PREP IT

You will probably have to kill the existing vegetation, which you can do by turning it under with a spade and killing any weeds with a hoe.

Organic matter in the form of compost or composted manure can be a huge asset, and more is better. Asking for advice is a great way to get to know the folks at your local

organic gardening store!

Other soil amendments such as nutrient fertilizers will help your plants (though chances are you'll be just fine without them). Work the soil with a spade down two spades deep to loosen the rooting space, or build up mounds of loose soil to improve drainage.

4. BUY YOUR SEEDS

You'll get your best varieties online and through seed catalogs such as seed savers exchange, Seeds of Change, or Johnny's Seed Company. The easiest choice is to buy pre-started transplants from a garden store or farmers market, though these will cost more and you'll have less variety to choose from.

5. START GROWING YOUR PLANTS

Many plants do best by simply dropping seeds in rows, patting them down firmly, watering, and letting them be. Tomatoes, peppers, chard, some green onions, and other plants are best started indoors and transplanted outside when conditions are favorable. This can be accomplished using a sunny window, but best results come from building your own indoor growing bed. Try repurposing a beer pong table with two saw horses, two 2*4*8s, and four 2*4*2s, cheap shop lights, and a bunch of old textbooks.

Most gardeners in Illinois will transplant tomatoes and other frost-hating garden plants sometime in May. Some garden plants can survive a frost, while others cannot, so be sure to read the seed packet.

6. RELAX!

Gardening is easy and fun, you can put in as much time and effort as you have or want.

You're not alone! Here's some great resources for first-time gardeners:

<http://urbanext.illinois.edu/soiltest> to see where you can get soil nutrients tested

Some simple home soil tests: <http://organicgardening.about.com/od/soil/a/easysoiltests.htm>

Urbana Park District Meadowbrook organic community garden: http://www.urbanaparks.org/documents/dbe734914e1a663c4c2567a90b27bfc9/2011_Gaden_Manual.pdf

Illinois brewery review

by Eric Green

The list of Illinois breweries isn't long, and of the 32 unique breweries listed on Wikipedia, Champaign is home to two. Of the Illinois breweries, there are few that I'm excited to try, whether it's based on sampling of their distributed beers or by lack of reputation. But when I had a chance to visit Flossmoor Station a few weeks back, I was stoked (and I don't use that term lightly). Flossmoor's Railhopper IPA (is a great IPA, and certainly the best that I've had from an Illinois brewery. So what other hidden treats could I find at the brewery?

The journey took about 2 hours from Champaign to

BUDDY HOLLY BARLEYWINE: ZEPHYR GOLDEN:

I'm not usually a fan of sickeningly sweet high-alcohol style, but this is surprisingly bitter, with a mild sweet aftertaste that has none of the burn going down.

PANAMA LIMITED RED: IRONHORSE STOUT:

If you like American macros, stick with this light beer. It uses rice, but has a more complex flavor than Miller Lite.

BELGIAN ABBEY ALE:

One of the best red's I've ever had. This soft-bodied aromatic red is light and bubbly, refreshing and not lacking any flavor.

Some characteristics of a barrel aged stout, but dry with a heavy dark malt flavor. This abbey stays away from being a dubbel, tripel and even a quad. The complex blend of sweetness transforms into an unpleasant harshness that fades quickly.

local food for the soul

by Suhail Barot

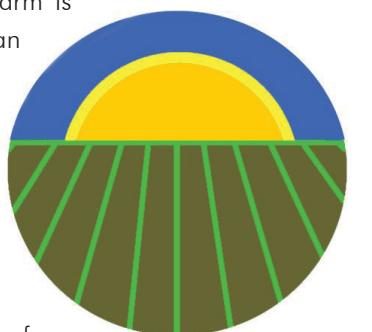
An exciting new entrant into the local food scene in C-U is the Sola Gratia Farm. The farm is the first example of Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) located with C-U. CSAs are an alternative method of food production and distribution that directly connect people with those that grow their food and embrace the seasonal and local character of real food.

Food from a CSA farm is distributed the same day it is harvested, and made available to those that buy shares in the farm's output. The farm will grow 46 different varieties of fruits and vegetables, including squashes, onions, melons, peppers, tomatoes, salad greens and eggplant. Shares are available at \$300 for a half share or \$500 for a fall share, and are still available.

Set up as a partnership between Faith in Place and St. Matthews Lutheran Church, Sola Gratia farm will also work for social justice. To address the issue of food deserts, 10% of everything grown at the farm will be donated to the Eastern Illinois Food Bank.

Brian Sauder, the local Faith in Place Coordinator, is thrilled by the community support and hopes that this will be a model that can be replicated at other congregations. "If you buy a share, not only do you get produce for 26 weeks," Brian added, "but you know you are supporting getting more fresh produce in local food pantries as well."

There are many opportunities to volunteer, especially as the farm works on building a greenhouse and tunnels to extend production. If you are interested in participating, go to solagratiafarm.org for more information.



Alternative Spring Break: GO SOMEWHERE. DO SOMETHING.

by Linda Qiu

People often say that college is the best time to travel. At PU of I, ASB is one of the best ways to do it. Alternative Spring Break is a program of the YMCA that is focused on educating people about issues concerning social activism and environmental awareness. ASB hosts seasonal trips all over the United States throughout the year, including the summer and winter. Trips are usually between 4 to 9 days long, with projects ranging from topics like HIV/AIDS to child education to sustainable agriculture. ASB's goal is to send people into the real world and allow them to gain firsthand experience. Students not only get a chance to make a difference in others' lives, they also make friends of a lifetime.

When Dan Guico, one of ASB's oldest members was asked what his most unique experience was, he mentioned

ASB's staple trip- the National Coalition for the Homeless in Washington DC. The first two days of the trip are spent actually being homeless, living on the streets alone forced to find shelter and food with no assistance. Afterwards, the volunteers help out at local homeless shelters. This year, Dan is leading a trip of his own in Memphis called "Grow Memphis", where volunteers will be helping residents start up local organic farms so that they can begin to grow their own organic produce.

This spring season, ASB is sending over 150 people on 11 trips around the US. If you'd like to get involved with ASB, check out their website at illinoiasb.org. There you can find information and applications for future trips and also see some great photos of previous projects.

Sign up and start changing the world today!

TRIP SNAPSHOT: SOUTHERN APPALACHIAN WILDERNESS STEWARDS

by Chye Hong Liew

A week in the wilderness without cell phone services and internet. 45 minutes drive on meandering roads in the mountains everyday. On average 3 miles hike per day. Lunch and restroom in the woods.

These were the parts and parcel in the week we volunteered in Wilderness with Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards (SAWS) in Tellico Plains, TN. To people who weren't on the trip, these experiences may seem a little intimidating; but to us, the volunteers from Alternative Spring Break group, these exclusive experiences made the trip incredibly memorable.

More than being memorable, our volunteer experience as trail maintenance crew added another perspective to our understanding on Wilderness and nature. A hike is enjoyable because of the beauty of nature. Yet this beauty is

easily disturbed; a small action may have tremendous effects on the natural environment. We learned from this incident the importance of practicing "leave no trace" policy; the things we bring into the wilderness are the things we carry with us as we leave.

the trails we widened, the sense of satisfaction that bubbled in us was beyond words.

Yes, this was a week back to nature. A week back to peace and fun in its purest form. A week with SAWS in the Wilderness.



The ASB SAWS group after completing trail maintenance.

opinions

HAPPY PLANET, HAPPY YOU

The most recent Happy Planet Index (HPI) survey conducted by the New Economics Foundation, the United States ranked 114th out of 143 countries surveyed.

A country's ranking on this index is determined by three factors: life satisfaction, life expectancy, and ecological footprint. So if the United States is 114th, who made the top of the list? Costa Rica.

Costa Ricans are reported to have the highest level of life satisfaction on the planet, have a higher life expectancy than the US, and live sustainably enough that they only need one planet to maintain their lifestyle. In fact, Latin American countries make up 9 out of the top 10 contenders in the HPI.

It's no surprise that the US is low rating for ecological footprint, however our reported self-satisfaction didn't hit near the top of the list either. We are outranked by many smaller and less wealthy countries. The only thing we really had going for us was high life expectancy.

I learned last semester in Environmental Sustainability that happiness in the US hit a plateau in the 1950's. What could be the reason for this? While we have more technology and luxuries, we are also working harder than ever. We work and work so that we can attempt keep up with the latest products, only to then get introduced to yet another new product. These things give us a temporary high, but they don't make us satisfied. All of this consumption, this desire to have the newest, the biggest and the best, makes for one unsustainable and unsatisfying lifestyle.

Most Costa Ricans live less extravagantly than we do. However, maybe they have their priorities straight. If they can live comfortably with less, and be even happier than us, then they are doing something right. Yes, they have a warmer climate, and are surrounded by beautiful natural areas seemingly out of Jurassic Park, but it has to be more than just their environment that contributes to their happiness; it's their whole lifestyle. I think that the countries that ranked higher on life satisfaction than us live a simpler lifestyle, and spend

WHILE WE HAVE MORE TECHNOLOGY AND LUXURIES, WE ARE ALSO WORKING HARDER THAN EVER.

more free time with family and friends as opposed to spending extra time at the office to become more wealthy, only to plop down on the couch at the end of the day exhausted and unable to do anything except be idle in front of the television.

There are simple everyday choices we can make in order to make our lifestyles a little simpler, and in turn reduce our ecological footprint. At the end of the day, these minor changes may even make you a little bit happier.

the student sustainability committee



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by Katie Durkin

THE INTERSECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS & THE ENVIRONMENT

by Ashley Markazi

We need to save the Earth. We can do this by altering our actions to have fewer disturbing environmental impacts on the Earth. Sustaining a healthy environment inevitably leads to an improved quality of human life.

Friends of the Earth International, the world's largest environmental network, defines environmental justice as "access to the unspoiled natural resources that enable survival, including land, shelter, food, water and air." Because protecting the environment includes protecting the lives of individuals, I believe that environmental rights are human rights. These rights are described specifically in the 30 articles of the Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted in the United Nations General Assembly in 1948.

Historically, despite the close relationship between environmental degradation and human suffering, human rights advocates and environmental activists have gone their separate ways, with neither addressing the human impacts of environmental abuse. As a result, victims of environmental harm remain unprotected by the laws and mechanisms established by governments known as "fracking." Fracking is the fracturing of shale rock by pumping chemical-laden pressurized liquids into the ground, to produce natural gas. A 2004 report from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) stated that fracking posed minimal harm to drinking water. However, soon after the report was published, speculation came out

about water contamination cases being excluded from the report, possibly due to industry and political influence. In 2009, hydraulic fracturing fluid, described by the manufacturers as a "potential carcinogen", contaminated water wells in Dimock, Pennsylvania. More than a dozen families were left with unsafe drinking water. Fracking is just one case of how inadequate environmental regulations can hurt vulnerable communities.

NO PERSON SHOULD BE DEPRIVED OF THEIR HOMES, HEALTH AND OVERALL WELL-BEING, AS THESE ARE UNIVERSALLY-RECOGNIZED HUMAN RIGHTS.

disinherited people around the world", and that "urban pollution is concentrated in areas where the most impoverished live". More recently, the UN Human Rights Council has also begun to pass resolutions relating to the linkages between human rights and climate change.

A national example of the need for environmental regulations is with hydraulic fracturing, more commonly known as "fracking." Fracking is the fracturing of shale rock by pumping chemical-laden pressurized liquids into the ground, to produce natural gas. A 2004 report from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) stated that fracking posed minimal harm to drinking water. However, soon after the report was published, speculation came out

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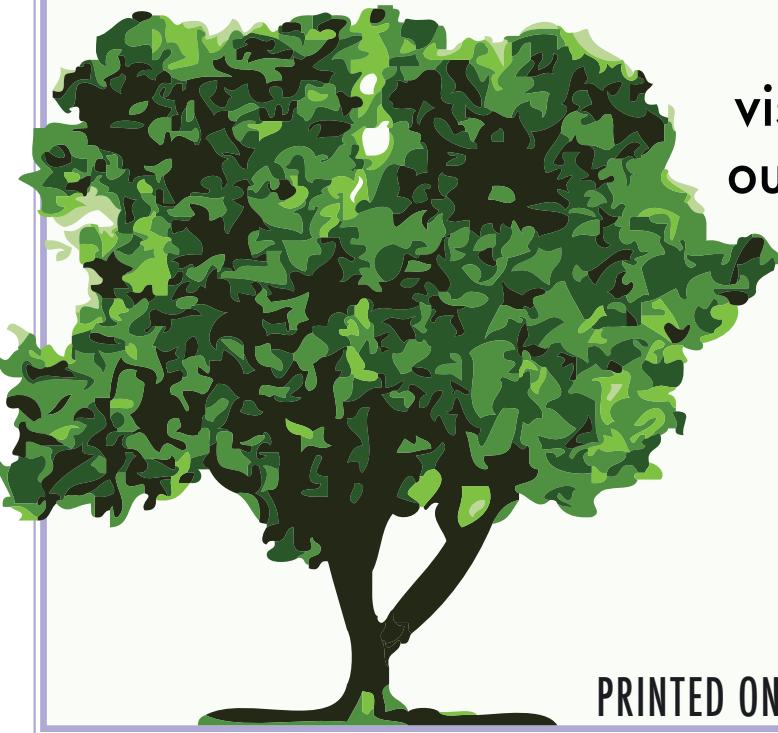
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