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The Alestle

Alton - East St. Louis - Edwardsville

Meet me in
1904
See Lifestyles



Wednesday, July 11, 2007

www.thealestle.com

Vol. 59, No. 67

State budget jam influences SIUE

by Megan McClure
Alestle Editor in Chief

Now six weeks past its original deadline, the Illinois state legislature continues to battle through budget talks. In the meantime, state agencies – including SIUE – wait with baited breath to find out their fates.

“He (Gov. Rod Blagojevich) hasn’t been able to reconcile the difference on how to pay for it with the legislature,” Assistant Vice Chancellor for Planning and Budgeting Rich Walker said.

The budget is determined in a four-step process. First, the university’s allocation request for the 2008 fiscal year was filed last fall to be included in the Illinois Board of Higher Education recommended budget. Using information from the IBHE and other state agencies, the governor prepared a budget to present to the state legislature.

“For about four months, we’ve had the

recommended budget for the governor,” Budget Director Bill Winter said, noting that Blagojevich’s budget was released March 7.

At this point, Winter explained, the legislature has the option to pass the proposed budget “as-is” or for a lesser amount. Since budget talks extended past the start of the fiscal year – July 1 – the legislature passed a temporary budget to keep state agencies functioning.

“That is basically enough to get us through the month of July,” Winter said.

The university’s operating budget, which is among the items being discussed in Springfield, covers budget elements such as administration and faculty salaries, as well as utilities. The amount allotted to SIUE in the temporary budget, or \$5.3 million for July, is roughly one-twelfth of the university’s annual budget.

“It’s not to the penny,” Winter said.

The university’s operating budget comes from two sources: state allocations and tuition revenue.

With the month one-third complete and no end in immediate sight, Winter says the university has a plan in case the temporary budget expires before decisions are made. First, another temporary budget could be approved. If not, reserves from the university’s income fund could be used until a budget is finalized.

“We have enough money in that to go for several months,” Winter said.

Included in the governor’s recommended budget is a 1.9 percent increase in SIUE’s state appropriations, adding up to slightly more than \$1.1 million. If approved, the additional money will be used for items approved by the University Planning and Budget Council, including salary increases and hiring new faculty, as well as cost increases, including utilities.

“If the amount the legislature approves is lower ... at that point, we would have to re-evaluate our budget,”

BUDGET/pg.3



by Maggie Willis
Alestle News Reporter

During his career in culinary arts. First Cook Heinz Dziurawicz has cooked meals for dignitaries and students alike.

First Cook Heinz Dziurawicz uses culinary expertise at SIUE

Hundreds of students eat at the Center Court in the Morris University Center every day, grabbing a bite between classes or visiting with friends over lunch.

Truckloads of food from SIUE go out to approximately 900 children in Head Start programs around the area.

What those children and students probably don’t know is that the food they eat was likely prepared by the same man who has prepared food for the president of Poland, the chancellor of SIUE and a high-ranking official of China, among others – First Cook Heinz Dziurawicz.

Dziurawicz has been cooking at SIUE for almost six years and was one of the first cooks hired out of the system at SIUE.

“They were looking for someone with experience,” Dziurawicz said.

After working as the head cook at the Moonlight restaurant in Alton for 22 years, as well as working as the store manager at Steak N Shake for several years, Dziurawicz has experience to spare.

“I’ve been interested in cooking since I was very young,” Dziurawicz said.

Dziurawicz’s mother, a native of Yugoslavia, cooked a lot of European food when he was younger.

“I didn’t realize that the way my mom cooked, that was kind of a gourmet thing,” Dziurawicz said. “If I had known I would be cooking when I grew up, I would have paid more attention to what she was cooking.”

Second Cook Norman Muller has worked with Dziurawicz for the past five to six years, and described him as friendly, joking and outgoing.

“Heinz knows a whole lot about cooking things from scratch,” Muller said. “If we’re ever in a bind, he’s very ingenious

HEINZ/pg.2

Minimum wage hike may mean student fee increase

by Holly Meyer
Alestle Managing Editor

How the minimum wage increase will affect SIUE is still uncertain, but there is potential for student fee increases to offset the cost.

Even though SIUE is a state university, not all services on campus are funded by state appropriations, SIUE budget director Bill Winter said.

Certain departments on campus are not state-funded, including the Morris University Center, Campus Recreation, Student Fitness Center and University Housing. These departments rely on student fees and their profits to stay open, Winter said.

The minimum wage rate went up from \$6.50 per hour to \$7.50 per hour on July 1. The legislation, Senate Bill 1268, passed and signed by the governor ensures a \$.25 increase annually until 2010; the minimum wage rate will be \$8.25 per hour.

The increase in the minimum wage could require an increase in student fees, but it is too early to tell.

“We think we will be okay,” James McDermott, Morris University Center accountant, said. “Raising prices is the last resort.”

McDermott said the MUC is waiting on a new contract from U.S. Food Services that will allow products to be purchased at a cheaper rate.

“What we’re trying to do is

MINIMUM WAGE/pg.3

Police Reports

7-3

Police responded to Woodland Hall Circle regarding plants being dug up and stolen.

7-4

Police issued Bianca Elliott-Barnes for driving without a valid driver's license on South University Drive.

7-5

Police took a call that approximately 60 pounds of aluminum may have been stolen from the East St. Louis Higher Education Center Building B.

Carl Mitchell posted \$700 cash on a warrant for failure to appear and contempt of court for the operation of an uninsured motor vehicle and no valid registration.

7-7

Police took a report of a two-vehicle accident at the Cougar Village recreation area. No injuries or road blockage was reported.

Police issued Talia Reed a citation for the operation of an uninsured motor vehicle on South University Drive.

7-8

Police issued Kaci Weirich a citation for disobeying a posted stop sign at Lot 10.

Police issued Edward Green a citation for the operation of an uninsured motor vehicle on New Poag Road.

7-9

Police issued Andrew Logsdon a citation for speeding on East University Drive.



photo by Steve Berry/Alestle

Preparing meals, Heinz Dziurawicz works in the basement of the Morris University Center. Dziurawicz says he enjoys working with his fellow employees at Center Court.

HEINZ from pg. 1

about coming up with things on the fly."

Dziurawicz is sort of a jack-of-all-trades in dining services, helping out pretty much wherever he can: catering, the bakery, the Head Start programs and Center Court.

But his favorite is still his regular job, the night shift in the Center Court.

"They give me quite a bit of freedom to do things the way I like and the way I know they will work," Dziurawicz said. "I especially like working with the student workers.

The night shift is like one big, happy family."

Once, Dziurawicz helped prepare the catering for an Arts and Issues event featuring Lech Walesa, a Polish politician and former trade union and human rights activist.

After he was done preparing the food, Dziurawicz went to listen to Walesa speak.

"I thought it was really interesting, since my dad is from Poland," Dziurawicz said. "I think that was my high point, listening to him."

Another high point for Dziurawicz was when he cooked for an official of China.

"It was on a military base and it was very high security," Dziurawicz said.

He has also cooked for a dinner party for the president of Poland, for the Lincoln Academy Governor's Ball and for the catering for Howard Dean, a famous American politician and former presidential contender.

Maggie Willis can be reached at alestlenews@gmail.com or 650-3527.



E-mail system crashes

Alestle News Staff Report

E-mail inboxes throughout the SIUE WebMail system were shut down following a system failure around 3 p.m. Monday.

"We still, at this point, do not know what caused the outage," Manager of Office of Information Technology Customer Support Center Brian Lotz said.

OIT compiles back-up tapes

of the WebMail system each night. Lotz said OIT staff members used those tapes to rebuild each of the system's 23,116 e-mail accounts.

Service was restored Tuesday afternoon.

Lotz said OIT personnel will work to determine what caused the outage.

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Chemicals set off alarm

Alestle News Staff Report

The Edwardsville Fire Department responded to a gas smell just before 1 p.m. Monday in the Science Building.

The smell turned out to be a non-hazardous mixing of chemicals coming from a lab, according to Greg Conroy, University Director of Marketing

and Communications.

The building was evacuated and put on lock down until the source of the smell was found.

Conroy said the all clear was given around 1:45 p.m. and people were let back into the building.

Alestle News can be reached at alestlenews@gmail.com or 650-3527.

BUDGET

from pg. 1

Winter said.

As a state-run institution, SIUE is waiting along with every other public university and state agency in Illinois.

"They're all in the same situation," Winter said.

Although the university depends heavily upon the money in question, Winter said the school and its programs are not in jeopardy.

"There's no crisis or anything like that," he said, "but we don't know what kind of funding we're going to get."

Though many financial issues remain unresolved, Winter said the proposed Science Building construction project is not tied with the operating budget. A \$3 million grant, announced by Blagojevich on Nov. 29, 2005, is designated for construction of a new science building and renovation of the current facility.

"The Science Building has been high on the priority list, but there hasn't been a capital budget," Winter said, explaining

that the operating budget is "the most pressing matter at hand."

The capital budget, which includes the construction portion of the Science Building proposal, also rests with the legislature. However, the university has already received funding for the design phase of the project.

"Not having a capital budget yet has not slowed down the progress on Science Building designs," Walker said.

The capital budget, which the state borrows money to fund, also includes other SIUE items.

"We have other things requested in the capital budget," Walker said, "but we would be thrilled to get the Science Building."

As talks continue, state agencies and citizens alike continue to wait for a resolution.

"I'm hopeful we'll have a final budget approved by the state in the not-too-distant future," Winter said.

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MINIMUM WAGE

from pg. 1

purchase products smarter and cheaper," McDermott said.

McDermott said the budget projection for the MUC from now until 2010 will only require a one percent student fee increase annually.

"That's less than the inflation rate," McDermott said.

The projection includes the annual \$.25 minimum wage increase until 2010, according to McDermott.

McDermott said he expects that with the 500 more students living on campus with the opening of Evergreen residence hall that the MUC will be able to offset the additional cost.

The minimum wage increase

could also have an affect for the student fees that support Campus Recreation and Student Fitness Center.

The facility is supported by student fees and profits generated from membership, Director of Campus Recreation Mick Osterander said.

There are no plans to cut back on the services or jobs offered to students as a result of the increase, according to Osterander.

"We are going to find a way to absorb it into the budget," Osterander said.

Holly Meyer can be reached at alestlenews@gmail.com or 650-3527.

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The editors, staff and publishers of the Alestle believe in the free exchange of ideas, concerns and opinions and will publish as many letters as possible.

Letters may be turned in at the Alestle office located in the Morris University Center, Room 2022 or via e-mail at alestle@gmail.com.

All hard copy letters should be typed and double-spaced. Letters should be no longer than 500 words.

Please include phone number, signature, class rank and major.

We reserve the right to edit letters for grammar and content. However, care will be taken to ensure that the letter's message is not lost or altered.

Letters to the editor will not be printed anonymously except under extreme circumstances.

We reserve the right to reject letters.

About the Alestle:

One copy of the Alestle is no charge. Additional copies cost 25 cents.

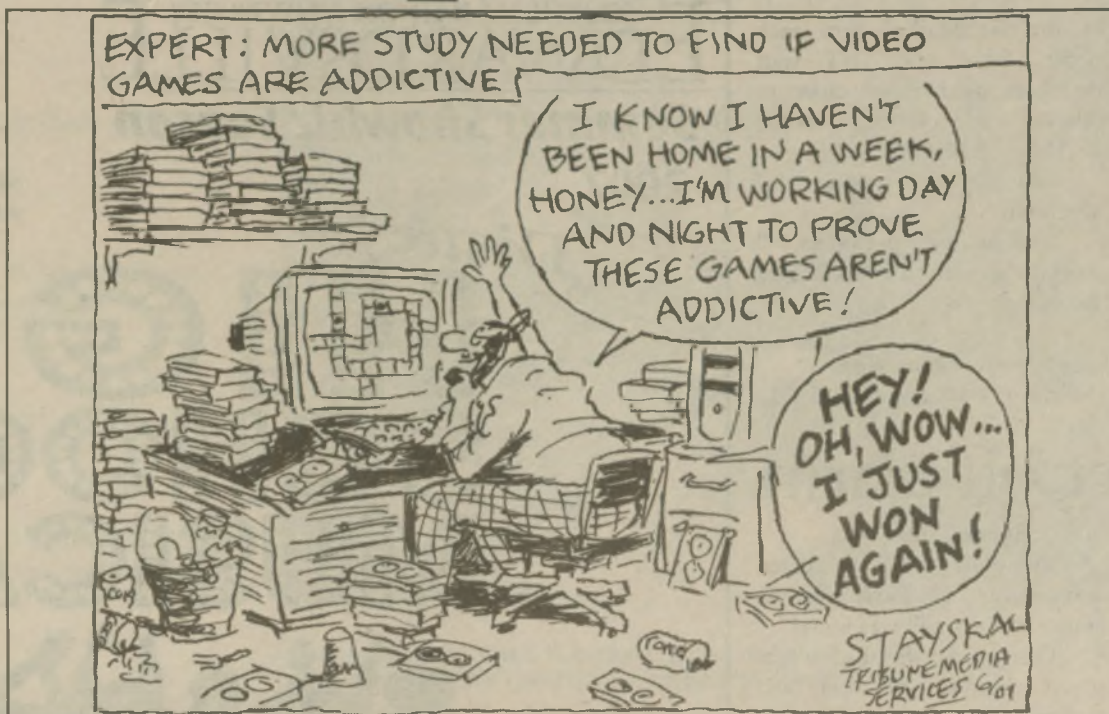
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The Alestle is seeking guest columnists and cartoonists to help contribute to the newspaper

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Who is really the "Sicko" when it comes to health?

You like waiting in long lines? Well, neither do I, but give many in this country what they want with socialized medicine and that may just be what we are all in store for. Just when you thought waiting 30 minutes in a doctor's office was bad enough, try tacking on a couple of years. Socialized medicine is providing the entire country with healthcare, which is controlled by the government. Everyone in the United States receiving "free" healthcare sounds like an amazing plan that could benefit many, but hold on just a second.

The topic of socialized medicine has been a hot topic for some time, but controversial filmmaker Michael Moore and his "documentary," titled "Sicko," have recently fueled it. Moore

insists that socialized medicine is the way to go and is highly successful in other countries such as France, Great Britain, Canada and yes, even Cuba. It tough to truly think Moore even believes his own rhetoric, when at a recent press conference he was questioned to if he would consider moving to Cuba for the excellent health care system. Moore became intensely uncomfortable with the questioning, made small laughs for a few seconds, then responded with an off-topic joke. He knows that the American healthcare system is far sufficient to Cuba, no matter what he tried to depict with his American-hating garbage.

Moore makes soom good points with his attack on our health care system that is able to reject those they feel unfit for their services, which leaves many people out in the cold who desperately need medicines, treatments, etc. Yet, people use things more when they are free, and when it comes to health care

you can expect substantial overuse of the system. Our government is already greatly in debt. Let's say our population spends \$300 billion dollars in healthcare that will be put on our government's backs; who is going to pay for that?

In addition, how do you prioritize who gets treatments first and who waits? There are past reports in Canada that some people waited so long on a waiting list to get into their doctor that they died before they were able to get in to receive proper treatment. Who will decide if someone in need of heart surgery gets priority over someone with lung cancer?

Moore also highlights how much cheaper drug prices are in foreign countries such as in Cuba than in the United States, which is much more affordable to those in need. He leaves out the part though that drug prices are much cheaper in foreign countries because they are riding the coattails of the enormous profits made in the U.S. market. If we

switched to socialized medicine, drug companies would almost surely just increase those prices greatly in the foreign countries where they are currently much cheaper rather than taking huge cuts in their profit. All hell would probably break loose with our friends across the seas if our government were second-handedly increasing their health costs.

While our health care system is far from being near perfect, doing what Michael Moore wants and switching to socialized medicine would leave us far worse off. The U.S. does not have the benefit of changing its program around and riding the markets of other foreign countries to keep our costs down. Instead of burning our system to the ground, lets try to revamp and remodel some of the current problems in a much more sensible manner.

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Improve the status of at-risk black males

Check most statistics comparing blacks and whites in America, and you'll find too many black boys and men lagging. While the number of black men earning college degrees has quadrupled since the 1960s, the number growing up in disadvantaged circumstances has also grown.

That latter group has led to a crisis among young black males that threatens the entire nation, according to the National Urban League's State of Black America 2007 report.

According to the report, black men are more than twice as

likely to be unemployed as white men. In the workforce, black males on average earn only about 75 percent of what their white male counterparts make. Blacks are nearly seven times more likely to go to jail, and their average sentences tend to be 10 months longer.

In addition, black males between the ages of 15 and 34 are nine times more likely to be killed by firearms.

To address these problems, the national civil rights group suggests greater emphasis on approaches we have long supported. Among them are expanded opportunities for early childhood education (especially for preschoolers from disadvantaged backgrounds),

more experimentation with all-male schools, longer school days and mentoring, and additional second-chance programs for high school dropouts and ex-offenders. Federal summer jobs programs should be restored to pre-2000 levels.

The Minneapolis Urban League sponsors several efforts to help young men reach their positive, constructive potential. Its juvenile advocacy program refers teens to counselors and mentors after a first brush with the juvenile justice system. The idea is to make that first contact with the system the last. The League's Mending the Nest effort works with community groups to help keep young blacks in school and involved in other positive

activities. Its goal is to cut the number of black prison inmates by 50 percent.

The Minneapolis Urban League also serves about 240 K-12 children in its contract alternative school. In an arrangement with public schools the organization takes students who are struggling in traditional schools and offers smaller classes and more personalized instruction.

To help at-risk black boys and men reach their full productive potential, such efforts merit much more support.

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From
the
Wire

Meet me in 1904

The 1000 Miles Off Broadway theater group makes a rendition of a famous musical set in St. Louis

by Maggie Willis

Alestle News Reporter

A classic Julie Garland musical, which will whisk audience members back to the excitement of the 1904 World's Fair, is being revisited by area performers.

At 7 p.m. Thursday through Saturday, the musical "Meet Me in St. Louis" will be performed in the Edwardsville LeClaire Christian Church Auditorium. A matinee will take place at 2 p.m. on Sunday.

Performed by the community theater group 1000 Miles Off Broadway, the "Meet Me in St. Louis" production is based on the 1944 musical starring Judy Garland.

The story focuses on the Smiths, a middle-class family with four daughters and a son living in St. Louis, a year before the 1904 World's Fair.

Sarah Hawkins plays Esther, the second eldest daughter originally played by Judy Garland, who is infatuated with John Truitt, the boy next door played by 17-year-old Ronnie Weaver.

Rose, the eldest daughter, played by Abbye Lakin, also has a beau – the millionaire Warren Shetfield, played by Brandyn Rust.



Steve Berry/Alestle

Meet Me in St. Louis cast members on the set Monday. From left, Shea Maples, Abbye Lakin, Ronnie Weaver, and Brandyn Rust.

However, the family soon finds out that Mr. Smith has earned a position at a law firm in New York and they will all move right after Christmas.

The family is devastated. Katie, the family maid played by the president of 1000 Miles Off Broadway, Pam Masching, will lose her job. Rose and Esther will have to leave their romantic interests behind, while Mrs. Smith will have her home uprooted. Not only that, but they will also miss the World's Fair, which the family has been looking forward to for months.

Hawkins said that while she wasn't expecting to get to play the role of Esther, she was glad to get the part.

"Ester is a little ahead of her time," Hawkins said. "She's from a time period where she's supposed to be conservative, but she's really vivacious and goes after the things that she wants."

For instance, in one scene, Ester tells her sister Rose that she thinks she will let John Turnitt kiss her, to which Rose replies in horror that women shouldn't let men kiss them until they are engaged.

Hawkins said her favorite scene to act out is when Rose and Ester first see John Turnitt in his yard.

"We're trying to have a conversation loud enough

for him to hear," Hawkins said, but the boy next door is oblivious to the attention.

Hawkins also said she enjoys the scene where she beats John up.

Weaver said his favorite scene is the World's Fair.

"It just looks awesome," Weaver said. "The artist did a really good job painting the scenery, and the lighting is awesome."

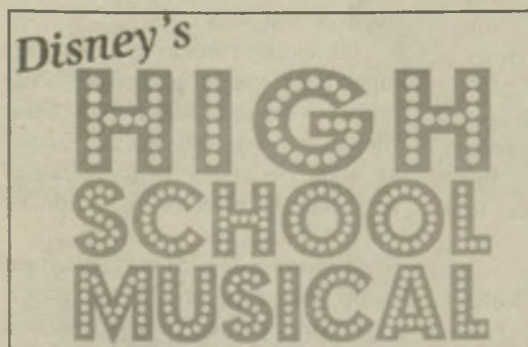
Dana Kelting, the director of the production, said the show is a chance for the actors to boost their self-esteem, make new friends and try something new.

"There's a whole bunch of people from all over the community who get to be on stage," Kelting said. "It's a very family-oriented show."

Tickets can be purchased in advance at Once Upon a Toy, The Garden Kingdom and The Bank of Edwardsville's main location on Vandalia Street or at the door for \$7 for adults and \$5 for children and seniors.

For more information about the 1000 Miles Off Broadway production of "Meet Me in St. Louis," call Masching at (618) 655-1422 or go to www.1000milesoffbroadway.com. Matthew Schroyer can be reached at alestlelifestyles@gmail.com or 650-3531.

ENTERTAINMENT CALENDAR



THURSDAY 7.12

While on summer vacation, Troy, a quintessential high school jock runs into Gabriella, the brainy type, cross paths, and sparks begin to fly. They part ways only to meet again once the school year starts, as Gabriella moves to East High, Troy's stomping ground. Ignoring the advice of friends, they spread their wings to impress each other and try out for the high school musical. The Summer Showbiz program takes on Disney's High School Musical, with the first run from Thursday to Sunday. The musical returns for a second run July 19-22. Tickets are \$15, with student and senior citizen tickets for \$12. For tickets and information, call the Fine Arts box office at (618) 650-2774.

FRIDAY 7.13

Paraskavedekatriaphobia is a fancy word for a fear of Friday the 13, that rare numerical happenstance that evokes thoughts of slasher films and unfortunate demises. That considered, what better day to enjoy a murder mystery? Clayton Community Theater hosts its rendition of Agatha Christie's "The Hollow." The plot involves the amorous Dr. Cristow and his three lovers (his wife, a mistress, and an ex-mistress), all of whom want Cristow for themselves. One proclaims if she can't have him, no one can, and within five minutes, Cristow is pushing up daisies. Inspector Colquhoun and sergeant Penny step in to solve the crime, a difficult task when everyone has a motive and most the opportunity to off Cristow. A \$15 ticket gets you in the door and to the bottom of the mystery. "The Hollow" performs 8 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays, and 2 p.m. Sunday from July 13 through July 29 at the Clayton Community Theater at 6501 Clayton Road in Clayton, Mo. For tickets and more information, call (314) 721-9228.



VHS or Beta will bring their eclectic sound to St. Louis next week at Blueberry Hill.

MONDAY 7.16

In the mid '70s and early '80s, the video tape formats VHS and Beta duked it out in a fierce format war that would prove VHS as the victor. The band VHS or Beta didn't come into being until 1997, but they encapsulate the essence of dance and funk music that defined the era. VHS or Beta is an outfit from Louisville, Ken., that's been getting audiences to dance with an infectious blend of funk, dance, even French funk (ala "Daft Punk") with overtones of punk. They bring it all 9 p.m. Monday to Blueberry Hill at 6504 Delmar in St. Louis. Tickets are \$10 at all MetroTix outlets. Only 21 and up admitted. For tickets and information, call (314) 534-1111.

Cougars sign with independent teams

By Tony Patrico
Alestle Sports Editor

With the 2006-07 Cougar baseball season ending in early post-season play, the graduating seniors had many choices to make. Would they go into the work force and try and find a well paying job, or perhaps, would they go and try and make it to the big leagues. Two SIUE alum chose the latter.

Ryan Czyz, who was an everyday outfielder for the Cougars, recently signed with the River City Rascals of the Frontier League. The Rascals play their games at T.R. Hughes Ballpark in O'Fallon, Mo. While in his junior year with the Cougars, Czyz held a season batting average of .347. In his final year of play, he held a slugging percentage of .463.

Quick on the bases, Czyz also stole bases successfully 13 of 16 times. While batting .308 his final year at SIUE, Czyz was voted to the Great Lakes Valley Conference honorable mention team. In the classroom, Czyz was also a member of the All-Conference Academic Team. Czyz graduated from SIUE with a

degree in Elementary Education.

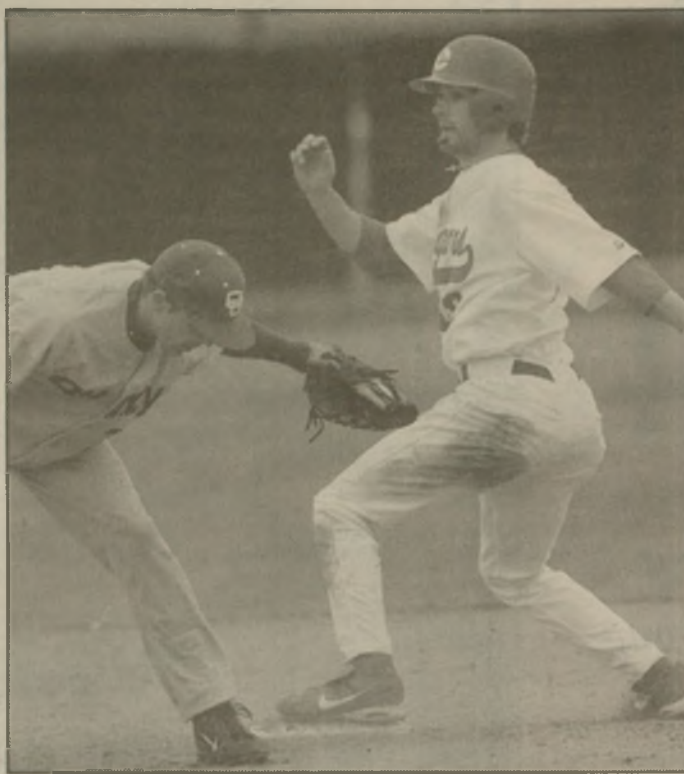
In his first season with the Rascals, Czyz is batting .255 with one homerun. He currently holds a .340 slugging percentage while only committing two errors in the outfield. The Rascals' current record is 18-28.

Also on the move is former SIUE pitcher James Hertel. Hertel recently signed with the Gateway Grizzlies, who also compete in the Frontier League. The Grizzlies play their games at GCS Ballpark in Sauget, Ill.

In his final year with SIUE, Hertel pitched to a 6-2 record along with a 2.42 ERA. During a game against University of Missouri-Rolla, he pitched a complete-game shutout that earned him GLVC Pitcher of the Week honors.

Hertel threw 54 strikeouts in 78 innings pitched. During his junior year, he struck out 27 batters in just 38.1 innings pitched. Hertel graduated from SIUE with a bachelor's degree in geography.

In Hertel's debut season with the Grizzlies, he's posted a 4-1 record while holding a 0.90 era. In addition to Hertel's 4-1



Courtesy SIUE Sports Information

Ryan Czyz hustles into second during a game for the Cougars in 2007. Czyz currently played for the River City Rascals.

record, he also has earned a save. Hertel has recorded 22 strikeouts while only walking six batters. The Grizzlies currently lead the Western Division of the Frontier League with a record of 36-10.

The two former Cougars have a chance to face each other late in August of this season.

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TONY'S TIME OUT

NBA: Slam Dunk with Viewers?

To say that I follow the NBA extensively would be as truthful as me saying that my beard makes me look twenty years younger. However, there are certain aspects about the league and the game that I can appreciate.

For example, nothing has been talked about more in the sports world these past couple of months than last week's NBA draft. Will former University of Texas star Kevin Durant go first? Where is former University of Ohio phenom Greg Oden expected to be playing next year? Is the surprise of this year's draft going to be that Yi Jianlian from China will be the next Yao Ming, only faster? The conversations and debates have lasted all the way from the end of March.

Even though I am more partial to the game on the collegiate level, where the players play for their school and not for money (which could be argued considering they are playing to get noticed

by NBA scouts as well), the game at the NBA level has grown on me in the past few seasons.

Watching teams such as the San Antonio Spurs turn into a dynasty has been interesting. I am not a fan of the Spurs, if for no other reason than Tony Parker married to Eva Longoria, but for the simple reason that they make the game look easy.

Alongside Parker, Tim Duncan, Manu Ginobili, Bruce Bowen, and Francisco Elson have created a team that is close to be compared to the MJ-led Chicago Bulls teams of the early '90s. For a team that wins with grace, style, and class, the Spurs have taken three of the last five NBA Championships. So for no other reason to watch, I will simply tune in to see who will be the David that will take down this San Antonio giant.

Something else that had pulled me into the NBA realm was the recent contract issue regarding Billy Donovan and

the Orlando Magic/Florida Gators. It's odd to see such a knowledgeable and basketball-smart man make such a childish and irresponsible decision. Overall, Donovan returns to the Gators and will not see the NBA court for five years. Is his love for Gainesville worth more than the money?

With the nearest NBA teams being as far away as Indiana or Chicago, the local support for the game is at a very low point. Even with the Midwestern team of the Cleveland Cavaliers, the NBA finals received the lowest rating in the past five years. It seems as if even King LeBron couldn't save these playoffs.

But, the NBA is not all shiny lights and fairy tales. If I have to watch ESPN's SportsCenter and see the "Top 10" highlighted by eight mediocre slam-dunks, I am going to lose it. I enjoy a good windmill or between-the-legs, no-look dunk, but every play, just a normal hard dunk a six-foot tenth grader could do is

not impressive to me.

Also, if I would ask you who is probably the all-time best NBA player in the history of the game, almost everyone that reads this would say Michael Jordan. I don't want to argue this fact, he's good, really good, but look deeper into the game. Look deeper into the history of one of the most extensive histories of any professional sport. Make James Naismith proud.

However, with the new fresh crop of young players coming on to the scene, the NBA has only a chance to grow. If you take the now "veteran" stars such as Shaquille O'Neal, Kobe Bryant, Kevin Garnett, Tim Duncan, and Steve Nash, a few years ago these were the rookies that were trying to save the game. Now, it's time they lead and have the new guys follow.

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The 500 Club

By Sam Mellinger
Kansas City Star (MCT)

There was a time long, long ago when 500 home runs meant immortality. Honest. Kids, ask your dad about it.

Only the best got to 500 home runs. Only the ones sure to give speeches in Cooperstown. Heck, Lou Gehrig didn't even hit 500.

But a lot of people have lately. Twenty-one in all, the latest being Frank Thomas last week. Fittingly, it didn't seem to generate nearly as much buzz as Craig Biggio's 3,000th hit, achieved the same night.

"So obviously, hitting 500 home runs didn't have the same impact in 1975 that it had in 1960."

Because it's home runs, and because we are now officially knee-deep into the Steroids Era, the easy thing is to say drugs have ruined the mystic power of 500 home runs.

And it's true that the 500-homer club may be a little tainted by finger-wagging Rafael Palmeiro, can't-talk-about-the-past Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa, who once momentarily forgot his English on Capitol Hill.

But Thomas has never been linked to steroids. And neither have the three other players who may hit No. 500 this season Alex Rodriguez, Jim Thome and Manny Ramirez. If all three reach 500, it will mean 10 new members to the 500-homer club in 12 seasons after just 14 in the first 120 or so years of major-league baseball.

Ken Griffey Jr. is at 585 and counting, so he's got some credibility here.

"I hear a lot about the pitchers and the parks," he says, "but you still have to hit the ball, hit it hard and hit it far."

Thome might end up the unwitting Cooperstown test case of 500 home runs. He will likely retire without any MVP awards to boost his candidacy like Thomas, nor any steroid allegations to taint it like Palmeiro, McGwire and Sosa.

His election will likely ride on the importance voters give 500 home runs. He says it's not for him to decide whether he's a Hall of Famer, but he's not about to apologize for whatever his career home-run total ends up being.

"I know how hard it's been to get to this point," he says. "I know how much work you have to put in _ in good and bad times. People are always going to have their opinions. I think it's something, if you look at the guys who've done it, it's not an easy number to get to."

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SUDOKU

By Michael Mepham

"I'm leaving the circus, Mom and Dad. I'm running away with a CPA firm."

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