

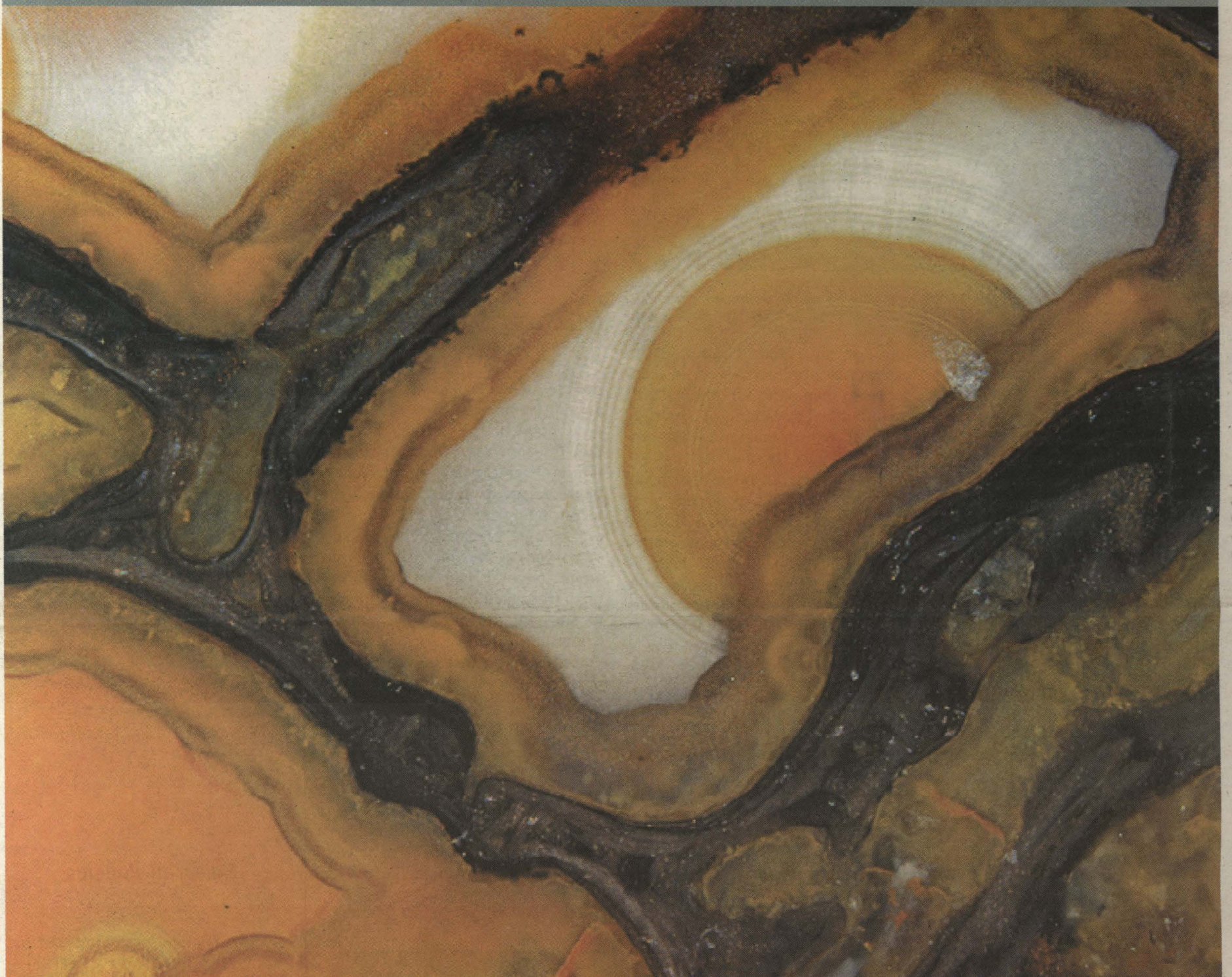
the pointer

University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point

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ONLINE: CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

Check out The Pointer Online to get multi-media coverage of some stories. Look for the logo next to the story and log on to pointeronline.uwsp.edu

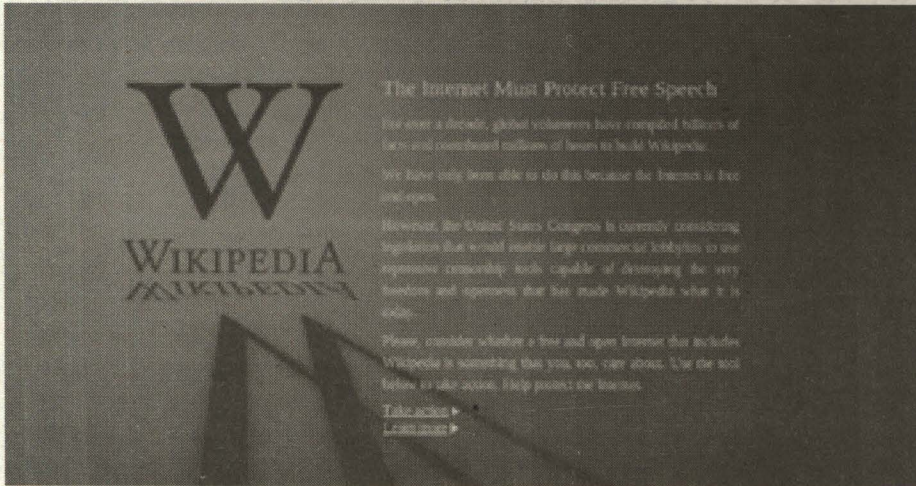
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News

SOPA Elicits Massive Response from Internet companies, consumers



Courtesy of Wikipedia
Wikipedia's homepage Wednesday, warning users that the web site would be blacked out for 24 hours.

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If you happened to be on the Internet on Jan. 18 you no doubt noticed that many of your favorite sites were out of commission. As you're also probably aware of, this was no mistake. Well-known Internet sites like Wikipedia, Reddit and StumbleUpon were 'blacked out' on this day in protest of the controversial Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA) and its Senate counterpart, the PROTECT IP Act (PIPA).

SOPA, which has received the most attention, is a House bill that was proposed by Rep. Lamar Smith (R-TX) on Oct. 26. The bill includes three major tenets: (1) Expanding the authority of law enforcement to fight online trafficking in copyrighted intellectual material and counterfeit goods, (2) barring advertising networks and payment facilities such as PayPal from doing business with infringing companies as well as prohibiting search engines from linking

to those sites and requiring internet service providers (ISPs) to block access to them, and (3) criminalizing unauthorized streaming of copyright material, with a maximum five-year prison sentence for offenders.

On January 18 Google, which had its logo 'blacked out,' collected over 7 million signatures against SOPA and PIPA. There were also boycotts of some of the companies who supported the legislation as well as a rally in New York City. Reddit co-founder Alexis Ohanian claimed that combating SOPA and PIPA is "a fight to save democracy." New York Tech Meet Up Chairman Andrew Rasiej helped coordinate the rally in New York and spoke to the dangers of the two bills.

"What we're seeing here is a classic example of our 20th century politics clashing with the realities of a 21st century connected humanity and a global economy," Rasiej said.

Before the blackout, SOPA and PIPA garnered bipartisan support, with Democratic Sen. Harry Reid of Nevada being one of the most

prominent sponsors. After the massive online backlash to the bills, however, many congressmen and senators dropped their support, leading Rep. Smith to pull SOPA from the House. He did not pull the bill without a strong word of warning for a bill similar to SOPA to be necessary in the future.

"The problem of online piracy is too big to ignore. American intellectual property industries provide 19 million high-paying jobs and account for more than 60 percent of U.S. exports," Smith said. "The theft of America's intellectual property costs the U.S. economy more than \$100 billion annually and results in the loss of thousands of American jobs. Congress cannot stand by and do nothing while American innovators and job creators are under attack."

Opponents of the bills say that they threaten free speech and innovation by enabling law enforcement to block access to entire domains due to infringing material that is posted on a single blog or webpage. Also of concern is the fact that the bills would bypass "safe harbor" protections from liability presently granted to sites by the Digital Millennium Copyright Act. Libraries have also voiced concern that they could face prosecution under the bills.

The U.S. government was able to shut down a 'rogue website' last week even without the authority of SOPA. The founder of the illegal downloading website Megaupload was indicted along with seven executives in New Zealand. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce reported that 'rogue websites' such as Megaupload get over 53 billion visits per year.

Recall Organizers Turn In 1 Million Signatures to Recall Walker

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Organizers working to recall Governor Scott Walker turned in over one million signatures last Tuesday, nearly twice as many than they needed, and almost guaranteeing an election sometime later this year.

The state's non-partisan Government Accountability Board, the body that is tasked with overseeing election and campaign finance laws, is now tasked with reviewing the petitions and certifying that the groups indeed have met the requirements to recall Walker.

Included with the one million signatures turned in last Tuesday were an estimated 845,000 signatures seeking a recall election of Lieutenant Governor Rebecca Kleefisch as well as four Republican State Senators, including Senate President Scott Fitzgerald.

The GAB normally has 31 days to certify the recall petitions but have requested at least 60 days to review the petitions due to the large number of signatures received. If the GAB receives the extension they are seeking to certify the results, officials are estimating that an election would not take place until at least June.

They estimate they need about 50 workers to review the petitions, but are having trouble filling the petitions because the requirements disqualify many who apply. Anyone who has contributed to a partisan state candidate, or has signed a recall petition is disqualified from reviewing the recall petitions.

Barring any further legal challenges, there will be an election six weeks from the day the GAB certifies the petitions. That election will almost certainly be a primary as there are currently multiple Democratic Party

candidates vying to replace Walker. The general election will take place four weeks later.

State Senator Tim Cullen, from Janesville, announced his candidacy before the petitions were turned in. Former Dane County Executive Kathleen Falk announced last week she also plans on running in the recall election. Falk ran for governor in 2002 but lost to Governor Jim Doyle during the primary.

Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett, who lost to Walker in 2010, is another possibility to run. Barrett says he is currently focused on his mayoral reelection campaign, which is being held on April 3.

Other potential candidates rumored to be considering a run include State Senator's John Erpenbach and Peter Barca, as well as former Rep. Dave Obey, who retired from Congress in 2010.

THE POINTER

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Letters to the editor and all other material submitted to *The Pointer* becomes the property of *The Pointer*.

Continued on page 4

[full circle thinking]

North American Main Veins

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North American fossil fuels are certainly in a pickle as energy and fossil fuel companies fight tooth and nail to earn an unfathomable amount of pennies from their extraction and sale. At market prices, Alberta, Canada's 173 billion recoverable barrels of tar sands are worth roughly 1,570 trillion pennies.

Keystone XL

The Keystone XL pipeline is an export pipeline transporting Canadian crude oil into diesel fuel and other products for export to Latin America and Europe. Despite claims, the Keystone XL pipeline will not directly affect America's dependency on fossil fuels. The pipeline will span across a major agricultural region, the Missouri and Niobrara rivers, Ogallala aquifer, and many sensitive wildlife habitats. A spill in any of these areas could be likened to the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, but in America's breadbasket, the results would be disastrous.

Ogallala Aquifer

One of the world's largest aquifers, the Ogallala Aquifer is 174,000 square miles and spans parts of eight states. The aquifer underlies 27 percent of the United States' irrigated agricultural land and supplies 30 percent of agricultural irrigation water. Of those people living on top of the aquifer, 82 percent get their drinking water from the aquifer. A fairly shallow aquifer, the water surface ranges from 100 to 400 feet below the surface and could easily be contaminated by a spill.

Canadian Business

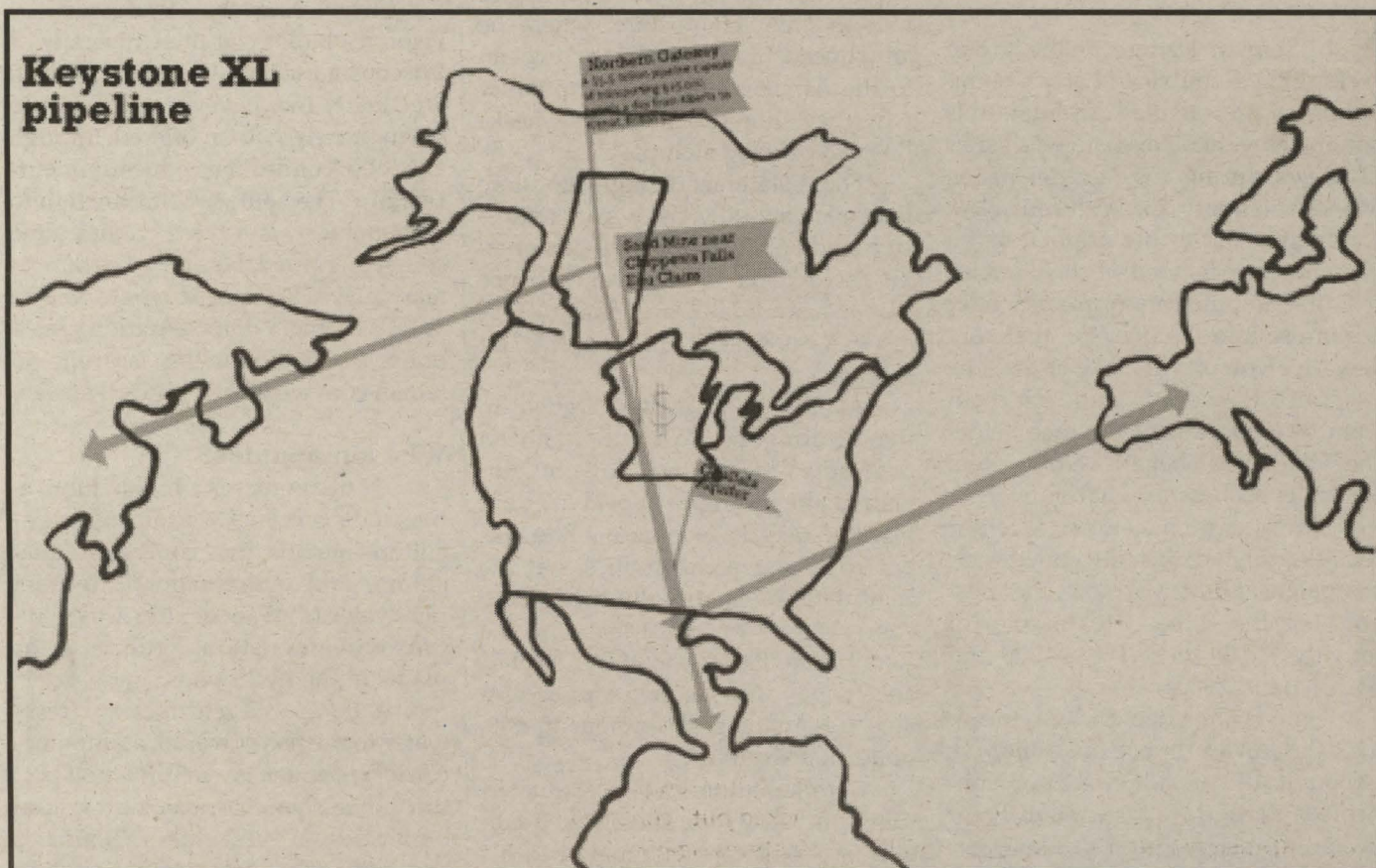
Canadian crude currently refined in the Midwest will be diverted to refineries along the Gulf coast, effectively increasing fuel costs for Americans by a projected 20 cents per gallon in the Midwest. This will increase Canadian oil companies' annual revenue in 2013 by \$2-3.9 billion—money leaving the U.S. economy.

Tarsands

TransCanada job projections claim 2,500-4,200 jobs will be created, the majority being construction personnel to build a pipeline for two years. A report by Cornell University Global Labor Institute entitled "Pipe dreams? Jobs gained, Jobs lost by the construction of Keystone XL," concluded that employment potential from Keystone XL is little to none and that the decision should be based on other factors.

Extraction Processes

More than two trillion barrels of



Infograph by Samantha Feld

An Infograph of the proposed Keystone XL Pipeline

the world's oil is in tar sand form, with the largest deposits in Canada and Venezuela. Eastern Utah has the largest continental U.S. deposit of roughly 12-19 billion barrels.

Tar sands are a mixture of clay, sand, bitumen, and water mined and processed for the bitumen, which can be converted into a synthetic crude oil. There are two main methods of tar sand mining. One method is called open pit mining, where giant tar sand moving trucks can carry 320 tons of tar sands per load from the giant hole (mine) to the extraction facility. The other common method is steam extraction where steam is pumped down into tar sand deposits, heating the tar sand to where it can be easily pumped to the surface.

Amazingly, extraction and refinement of bitumen is more greenhouse gas intensive than conventional oil! "One hundred and seventy-six cubic meters of natural gas are required to liquefy, extract, and purify each cubic meter of bitumen produced," says Eddy Isaacs, director of the Alberta Energy Research Institute. Approximately two tons of tar sands make one barrel of oil. Once out of the ground, the bitumen must be removed from the clay, sand and water. This is accomplished through several processes including extraction and separation systems. Since

bitumen is so thick it must be diluted to be transportable through pipelines.

The extraction process uses hot water to separate bitumen from sand, clay, water and minerals. "Hot H2O is added to the sand and the resulting slum is piped to the extraction plant where it is agitated. The combination of hot water and agitation releases bitumen from the oil sand, and causes tiny air bubbles to attach to the bitumen droplets that float to the top of the separation vessel, where the bitumen can be skimmed off. Further processing removes residual water and solids. The bitumen is then transported and eventually upgraded to synthetic crude oil," according to the Oil Shale and Tar Sands Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement.

Fracking

A sand mine near Chippewa Falls and Eau Claire, Wisconsin, will cater to mining companies' increasing demand for sand that has the right characteristics for hydraulic fracturing, aka "fracking." The sand is used to keep existing cracks open for easier natural gas extraction. Last summer began with 16 active sand mines and is now at 34 with another 25 sand mines in development.

In President Obama's Jan. 24 State of the Union address, it was

announced that 600,000 new jobs in hydraulic fracturing would be created. "We have a supply of natural gas that can last America nearly one hundred years, and my administration will take every possible action to safely develop this energy," said President Barack Obama. Fracking has recently been blamed for earthquakes in Northeastern British Columbia. Investigations are underway.

Northern Gateway

What if America does not allow the Keystone XL pipeline? TransCanada has arranged to service another market. The Northern Gateway is a \$5.5 billion pipeline capable of transporting 525,000 barrels a day from Alberta to Kitimat, British Columbia. This pipeline boasts similar environmental concerns as the Keystone XL pipeline, except this pipeline leads to a West Coast port where it will be distributed to Asian markets.

American Connection

January: President Obama, in response to a 60-day decision deadline set by Republicans, rejected an application to build the 2,147 mile (1,700 miles in U.S.), 36 inch in diameter, Keystone XL pipeline. "The rushed and arbitrary deadline insisted on by Congressional Republicans prevented a full assessment of the pipeline's impact, especially the health and safety of the American people, as well as our environment," President Obama said. TransCanada plans to reapply with a new route hoping to be operational by 2014.

"More than two trillion barrels of the world's oil is in tar sand form, with the largest deposits in Canada and Venezuela."

news

Republican Primaries: Still Happening

MICHAEL WILSON
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ANALYSIS

In Tampa, leaders of the group seeking the Republican Party's nomination as presidential candidate this coming November exchanged a series of blows during the last debate on Monday, January 23. With four clear candidates, out of the original seven contenders registered at their outset, the first Republican primaries offer a glimpse into the decision that conservative voters will make elsewhere.

Tim Pawlenty and Herman Cain dropped out of the race before the primaries began. Now, Rep. Michelle Bachmann, Utah Governor Jon Huntsman, and Texas Governor Rick Perry have officially ended their campaigns. Huntsman took the most votes of the three, with a total of roughly 44,000 to Perry's 17,000 and Bachmann's 7,000.

Pennsylvania Rep. Rick Santorum took the Iowa primary on January 3, although this result was not confirmed until days after the Party declared Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney the winner by five votes. Romney was the decisive winner in New Hampshire seven days later, with 39.3 percent of the votes, and Representative Ron Paul ended in second, with 22.9 percent.

To some surprise, Newt Gingrich's favorability rose by a wide margin in recent polls and won the South Carolina primary on January 21, taking 40.4 percent in a state where Romney, Santorum and Paul received 27.8, 17 and 13 percent, respectively.

Debates held recently have shown the extent to which Republican contenders will 'one-up' one another on their harsh rhetoric. These typically deal with who would do best at keeping Iran from producing a nuclear bomb, preventing homosexuals from marrying, downsizing government, lowering taxes, restricting undocumented immigrants from accessing student loans, and maintaining the embargo on Cuba.

Audiences at debates have fomented the increasingly harsh prescriptions candidates offer to grapple foreign and domestic policy issues. Through booing, clapping, standing ovations and occasional interjections from their audiences, the Republican contenders have taken their rhetoric to unmeasured degrees of pungency.

These escalations might turn against the GOP. In Iowa, for instance, Santorum argued that he did not

"want to make black people's lives better by giving them somebody else's money." Gingrich then one-upped him in New Hampshire, where he announced his intention to "explain to the African-American community why they should demand paychecks [instead of] food stamps."

These statements might do more than elicit a louder cheer from regressive audiences; racist and demonizing rhetoric may be taken as evidence that the candidates are inapt to represent a multiracial nation in the 21st century.

As Joseph Lowndes argued in the Huffington Post, "Republican contenders realize they have little to gain in attempting to appeal to either black or racially moderate white voters." The statement implies that the candidates must appeal to the 'paleo-conservative' or racist base of the Republican Party; therefore, intolerance is not only justified and acceptable, it is an integral component of its political discourse.

Commentators have estimated that Romney, whose rhetoric is qualified as "moderate" compared to his counterparts, and who has drawn the most support from Wall Street, will be the eventual challenger to President Obama in November.

However, the debate in Florida—the battleground of the upcoming January 31 primary—demonstrated that Romney is not taking his nomination for granted. His aggressive tone and demeanor reached a campaign high. Within his first speaking turn, he called Gingrich a Washington insider and "influence peddler" who had developed a profitable relationship with Freddie Mac, the infamous mortgage trader.

Romney's narrative reminded voters that Gingrich "resigned in disgrace" from his position as Speaker of the House when "members of his own congressional team ... voted to replace him" in the mid-1990s.

With composure, Gingrich said Romney's attacks were "desperate" and "untruthful." He responded that he had resigned out of "responsibility" towards his party. Paul, who was a member of the House of Representatives at the time, refuted this statement, saying that Gingrich "didn't have the votes, that's what the problem was."

The primary in Maine will follow on February 1, and then 21 states will hold theirs on February 5, "Super Tuesday."

A recent poll conducted by Public Policy Polling shows Barrett outpolling both Cullen and Falk in a head-to-head matchup, as well as winning a four-way contest when Obey was included.

Walker has wasted little time in preparing to defend his actions in an election, and has been running TV ads for the previous two months. The Wall Street Journal reported Walker is

New Aquaponics Course offered at UWSP

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Chris Hartleb, Professor of Fisheries Biology at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point and Nelson and Pade, Inc. have joined forces to create a new course offered through UWSP's continuing education curriculum. The course, "Introduction to Aquaponics," is a three credit online course with a laboratory portion to take place in late May at Nelson and Pade, Inc.'s demonstration greenhouse. The following is from an e-mail conversation with Dr. Hartleb.

Why aquaponics?

"Aquaponics is a highly innovative, efficient and sustainable agriculture method that combines aquaculture and hydroponics. Nutrient rich water from aquaculture, fish culture, provides natural fertilizer to the plants in the hydroponics system. In return, the plants return clean, freshwater to the fish. Overall, aquaponics conserves water, is a natural food production system, involves no harmful herbicides or pesticides, eliminates any soil-borne diseases that may be carried by vegetables, and is compact, thereby, maximizing space while increasing food production."

How did the course come about?

"UWSP-Northern Aquaculture Demonstration Facility had been co-hosting one-day workshops on aquaponics with Nelson & Pade, Inc. Rebecca Nelson and John Pade have always strongly supported aquaponics education so they suggested that UWSP and Nelson & Pade, Inc. partner on offering college-level aquaponics courses. After a few months of discussion and preparation, we jointly developed the undergraduate/graduate course in aquaponics that is being offered for the first time this semester (Biology 498: Introduction to Aquaponics). This private/public partnership and the resulting UW-Stevens Point aquaponics course is a new stage in the development of the aquaponics industry and in providing comprehensive training in aquaponics at the university level. As the aquaponics industry grows, one of the big issues being faced is a lack of trained and educated individuals to fill jobs as aquaponic greenhouse managers and workers. The launch of this course, which we believe is the

first of its kind in the nation, has the potential to grow into a knowledge-based economic engine to help the aquaponics industry. The course has online lectures that begin March 1, with hands-on labs that occur May 21-23 at the Nelson & Pade, Inc. greenhouses."

Who is Nelson & Pade, Inc?

"Based in Montello, WI, Nelson and Pade, Inc. supplies aquaponic systems and controlled environment agriculture technology to meet the need for the sustainable production of nutritious, safe food. Their mission is to lead the industry by providing quality systems, supplies, training and technical support. Their goal is food security for all nations, through aquaponics and controlled environment agriculture. They have over 20 years' experience in aquaponics and controlled environment agriculture. They have earned industry-wide respect for their leadership, research and knowledge, for designing and building functional and highly productive aquaponic systems; for publishing the world's first and primary magazine on aquaponics for the past 14 years; for writing books and school curriculums on aquaponics, for offering comprehensive training to prospective and new growers and for consulting on aquaponic projects around the world."

What is in the future for aquaponics?

"The aquaponics industry will develop rapidly for both salt and fresh water fish and crops to meet tomorrow's demand for food world-wide. Aquaponics will become increasingly important in a world where climate change challenges make traditional food production technologies in soil either uneconomical or difficult to implement. Overall, aquaponics maximizes food productivity where resources are or become limited—such as water conservation. Aquaponics produces crops that are safe, organic and can be grown close to markets (i.e. consumers) which avoids transportation and food safety issues. The partnership with Nelson and Pade, Inc. is an example of UW-Stevens Point's involvement in the 'community,' helping local businesses and emerging private companies and community-based organizations achieve their entrepreneurial goals."

Recall Signatures/ State Funds

Continued from page 2

spending about \$700,000 a week on advertisements.

Walker has also taken advantage of state law that allows those targeted by a recall committee to raise unlimited funds until the GAB certifies an election.

According to campaign finance documents filed by Walker, he has raised \$12 million during 2011, the most by a candidate for governor in

Wisconsin history. Walker received \$1 million in one week alone this month, coming from four individual out-of-state donors.

The GAB estimates that it is going to cost an estimated \$650,000 to process all the petitions that were submitted, and that an election would cost around \$9 million.

Sports

Women's Hockey Splits Weekend Series With St. Scholastica

ANDY HESSE

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The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point women's hockey team shut out St. Scholastica Friday, but fell to them the following night. Junior forward Brooke Hanson led the way for the host Pointers contributing to both scores in the 2-0 win on Friday as well as the first score of Saturday's 3-2 loss.

"On Saturday we got a two goal lead and felt complacent, we let up for about ten minutes and that killed us," Hanson said. "We need to string together 60 minutes to be successful."

Hanson scored the first goal of the game on Friday early in the second period unassisted. Hanson then assisted the next goal scored by sophomore forward Allie Tanzer in the third period. The goal brought Tanzer to double digit points on the season, joining three other players in that category including Hanson.

The Pointers committed five penalties totaling ten minutes, but St. Scholastica was unable to take advantage, missing all five shots on goal during that period. The Pointers also failed to take advantage of St. Scholastica's penalties with three power play shots during the six minutes of penalties committed by the Saints.

"We have been pushing ourselves and each other harder in practice to become consistent during the game," Hanson said. Freshman goalie Janna Beilke-Skoug recorded 17 saves and her seventh win of the season.

On Saturday, Hanson scored with just over seven minutes remaining in the first period off an assist by senior

defender Ariel Novak. In the second period, Novak and freshman defender Nicole Shaub assisted senior forward Erin Marvin.

The two assists for Novak accounted for two of the senior captain's four points on the season. The next three goals came in favor of the Saints, the first less than five minutes after the Marvin goal. Sophomore defender Frankie Bergman set up sophomore forward Michelle Fischer for the 2-1 score in favor of Point.

The tying goal came late in the second period when sophomore forward Jordy Klimek scored unassisted. The winning goal came when freshman defender Kaitlin Johnston scored off of an assist by freshman defender Alex Blair.

Beilke-Skoug recorded 25 saves in the loss but did not allow a short-handed goal in the series.

With Friday's win, the Pointers took a one game lead over St. Scholastica but the Saints would even the record at 8-3-1 with Saturday's win creating a three way tie for third place in the Northern Collegiate Hockey Association.

"We need to win the rest of our conference games, so when it comes to seeding for playoffs we have a good chance to host," Hanson said. "We fell short of hosting by one or two points the last couple of seasons."

The Pointers have a good chance to get ahead in the rankings this weekend when they face off against the University of Wisconsin-Superior, whom the Saints and Pointers are tied with in the conference. The puck drops at 7:00 p.m. at Superior.



Photo by Jack McLaughlin

Michelle Lunnenborg passes the puck across the ice.

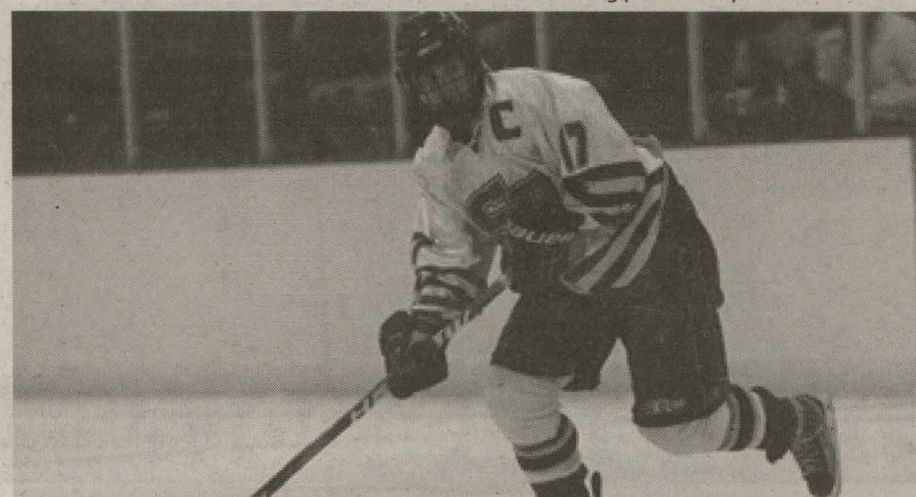


Photo by Jack McLaughlin

During the game against St. Scholastica, Ariel Novak looks for an open player.

River Falls Edges Point In Overtime

ANDY HESSE

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The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point fell in overtime to the University of Wisconsin-River Falls 82-75 on Saturday. The Alumni Day loss was the Pointers second in conference.

The Pointers got off to a quick start but shortly after it was the Falcons that began a run midway through the first half. Then, Point grabbed a hold of the momentum and got a lead that the Falcons would reduce to just three at 28-25.

The second half was evenly matched throughout as neither team got out to a very large lead. The game was tied at 68 with under a minute remaining with the Pointers holding

the ball, however a turnover led to the Falcons getting an opportunity at a buzzer beater which fell short, leading to overtime.

Thirteen of the overtime's 21 combined points came from free throws, ten by River Falls. The Falcons never trailed in overtime and only missed three free throws.

Falcon senior forward Shane Manor scored five of his game high 26 points in overtime, converting five of six free throws. Senior center Wade Gueren added 13 and senior guard Brian Kimble scored 12.

Junior guard Tyler Tillema led the Pointers with 22. Sophomore forward Trevor Hass and senior guard Dan Tillema added 12 and 11, respectively.

The Pointers shot just over 38 percent from the field in the first half

but improved to 48 percent on 12 of 25 in the second. Point also improved from behind the arc, shooting 3 of 11 in the first half and 3 of 8 in the second.

River Falls improved their field goal shooting in the second half as well, soaring from under 40 percent to over 60 percent.

River Falls dominated the Pointers in the paint, scoring 40 points compared to UWSP's 28. The Falcons also received some help off the bench with 22 points, while Point only had 13.

The Falcons took advantage of the free throw category as well, visiting the stripe 11 more times than Point and converting just as many.

Point went into the game ranked 11 by d3hoops.com and are now tied with River Falls in the Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference with a 7-2 record. Next on the schedule for Point is WIAC leading University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. Tipoff is at 7:00 p.m. in Whitewater.

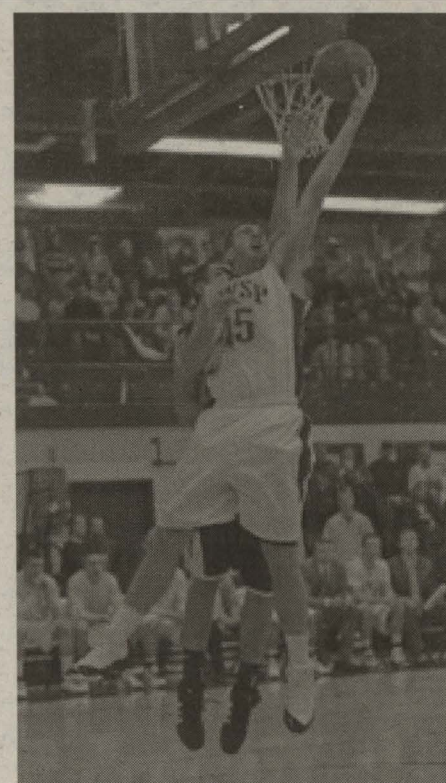


Photo by Jack McLaughlin

Pointer Center Jordan Brezinski goes under the hoop for a lay-up.

sports

Time to Shine for Weeks?

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Brewers second baseman Rickie Weeks may find himself in an interesting situation when the 2012 season opens on April 6.

With the departure of first baseman Prince Fielder and the possible 50-game suspension of left fielder Ryan Braun, an offensive drop-off is inevitable. Braun and Fielder accounted for 28 percent of Milwaukee's runs last season and hit 71 of their 185 homeruns.

With the core of the team effectively disrupted, an opportunity arises for someone else to literally step up to the plate.

Last season Weeks was hindered by an ankle injury that sidelined him at a crucial point in the season, disrupting what had been a successful run. With Weeks' ankle now healed the Brewers will need his bat to be as hot as ever.

Weeks was fourth on the team in batting average, .269, and homeruns, 20, numbers that would have certainly been higher if not for his injury.

As one of the longest tenured Brewers, the organization will also look to Weeks as a leader in the clubhouse as they move into the post-Fielder era.

The lineup shift also affords right fielder Corey Hart the opportunity to become the player he has shown flashes of being. After his all-star year two seasons ago, Hart reverted back to his inconsistent production at the plate. Though his 26 homeruns and .285 average ranked third on the

team, he also led Milwaukee with 114 strikeouts, often in scoring situations.

Lost among the Prince/Braun talk is the fact that the Brewers signed a solid player in Aramis Ramirez. No one can replace the output or the presence of Fielder. In his time in the organization Fielder became one of the most beloved and productive players in Brewer history.

However, Ramirez should prove to be an upgrade from Casey McGehee following the down year McGehee suffered last season which led to his trade to Pittsburgh. Last season with the Cubs, Ramirez hit .305 through 149 games, recording 26 homeruns and 93 RBIs, which would have been third on the Brewers.

Life without Fielder is something Brewers fans have not experienced in a number of years. And with the possibility of not having Braun through the first 50 games the emotions of Brewers fans will be as strained as ever.

The good news is Nyjer Morgan is still a Brewer. Call him by whatever name you like, the man is entertaining. Not since the Ole Gunslinger walked Lambeau Field have Wisconsinites had an athlete to watch who seemed as if they played with total enjoyment.

Morgan brought a spark to the Brewers on and off the field last season and became a fan favorite almost immediately. As tortured as we may be in the beginning of this season, at least we can watch Morgan work his hands and just tickle it for another season.



Photo Courtesy of danny-wild.com

With the departure of Prince Fielder, other Brewers players such as Rickie Weeks will have to step up their offensive production.

[Winter Recap]

Women's basketball traveled to San Diego for the Surf 'N Slam Tournament where they fell to host Point Loma Nazarene University, 66-74, but rebounded the next day with a decisive 62-43 win against Wellesley College of Massachusetts. Saturday the team honored the 1987 and 2002 National Championship Teams with a 71-59 win over UW-River Falls.



Photo by Jack McLaughlin

UWSP Women's basketball plays in San Diego's Surf 'N Slam Tournament.

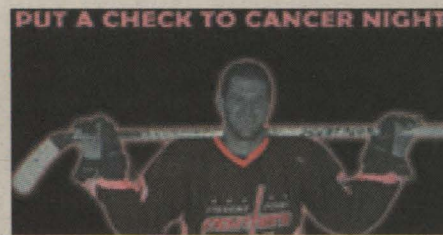


Photo courtesy of athletics.uwsp.edu

UWSP Men's hockey skates against cancer.

Men's hockey amassed a 3-2-1 record during the winter break, highlighted by a 6-2 victory over Adrian College of Michigan. They skate against the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire Friday, then return home to face UW-River Falls for Put a Check to Cancer Night on Saturday.

The Point swim and dive team hosted the Get to the Point Invite last weekend. The men's team took first with 1271.5 points and the women finished third with 765.5 points. Junior Joe Clapp finished first in the 100-yard backstroke, 100-yard butterfly, and the 50-yard freestyle. The men tallied 10 first place finishes. Junior Andrea Wagner took first in both the 100-yard and 50-yard freestyle. The Pointers travel to UW-La Crosse Saturday for a Noon meet.



Photo courtesy of athletics.uwsp.edu

Junior Joe Clapp and Junior Andrea Wagner.

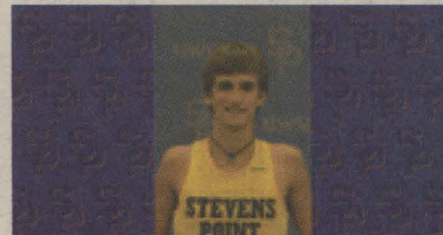


Photo courtesy of athletics.uwsp.edu

Junior Logan Seipel

The men's team took third out of four teams Saturday at the UWSP Indoor Tri. The women's team accumulated 126 points to secure a second place finish. Senior Kelly Haen and junior Logan Seipel swept the one mile run with times of 5:04.81 and 4:22.48, respectively. Track and Field travels to Carthage College Friday for the Thad Metzger Invite.

Pointlife

Showcasing and Supporting Student Art

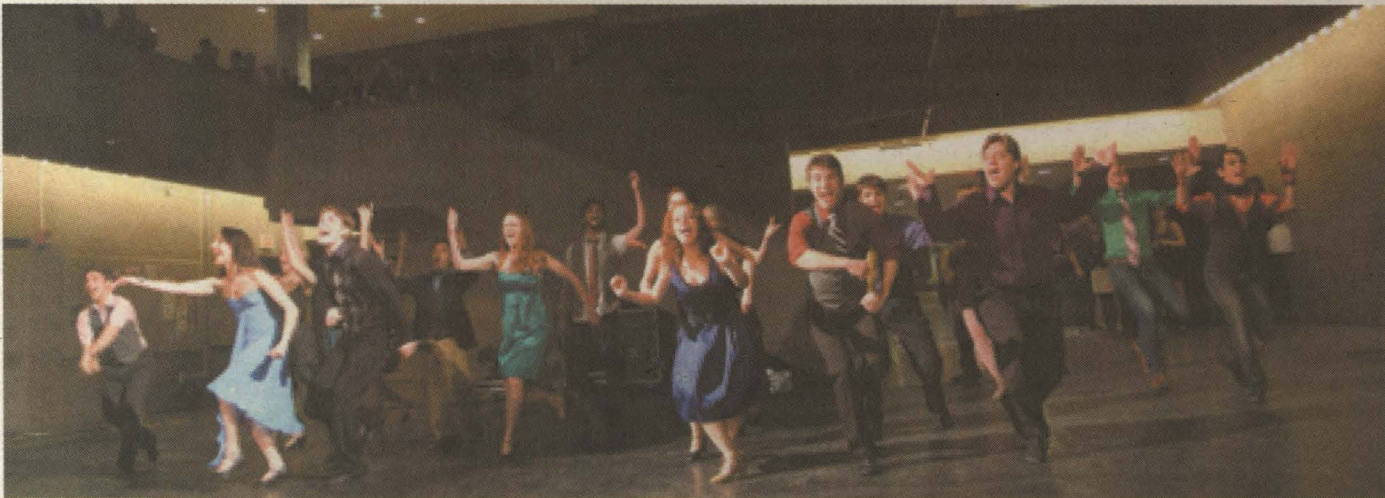


Photo by Zorro Photo
Theatre students performing at Arts Bash 2011.

KAITLYN LUCKOW
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The Noel Fine Arts Center filled with glitz, glamour, fashion, food, and art can only mean one thing: it's Arts Bash. The NFAC has been hosting Arts Bash as a fundraiser event for nine years in order to raise money for the Arts Bash Scholarship Endowment Fund. The event on Feb. 4 will feature student dance and theatre performances, a wearable sculpture fashion show, arts sale with pieces donated by community artists and student artists, and food and drinks from 21 different restaurants.

"It's a little bit of everything: dance, theatre, culinary arts, wearable art," said Bobbie Erwin, the marketing specialist for the College of Fine Arts & Communication and main organizer of the event. "Everything's arts all in one night."

Junior Arts major Kaleena

Hastings will be showcasing her art for the first time at this year's Arts Bash. Hastings was inspired last year when she was a model in the wearable art fashion show.

"I felt like I should start putting my art out there so people notice it," Hastings said. Hastings has spent the last two months working on a photo for the event as well as a dress made entirely out of paper.

The wearable art show this year is unique from what it's been in years past. Instead of just having it open to art and design students, theatre and dance students are also participating in the show.

"The juxtaposition of the two is going to be really interesting," Erwin said. "It's going to be like Project Runway gone wild."

Sarah Mark, a freshman Art major, is also participating in Arts Bash for the first time. The piece that

Mark is presenting is entitled "Starry Nights." It is composed of three woods cubes that are stacked in different orders to show three of Vincent Van Gogh's pieces.

"Van Gogh has captured my imagination ever since I was little, so to have the opportunity to experiment with his work was very exciting," Mark said.

Arts Bash gives students the opportunity to present their art to the public in a formal setting and allows them to gather a public opinion on their pieces.

"I'm excited to see the reaction from the people and how they take my art...I hope they like it," Hastings said.

Last year, Arts Bash raised \$30,000 for the endowment and scholarship fund with more than 700 attendees.

"At the end of the day it's going to be excellent to have scholarships to



Photo by Samantha Feld
A wearable art piece by Karolina Romanowska is featured at Arts Bash 2011. Art students create wearable art pieces for a fashion show at Arts Bash.

give to students. It makes it all worth it," Erwin said. "We're making a difference in students' lives."

Arts Bash 2012 will be held at the Noel Fine Arts Center on February 4th from 7:00 to 10:30 p.m. Tickets can be purchased online at www.arts-bash.com in advance or be purchased at the door. Student and faculty tickets are \$20 in advance. General public tickets are \$50 in advance and \$60 at the door.

UWSP Photographer Wins Nikon Award

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A photomicrograph of agatized dinosaur bone cells, by University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point photographer Doug Moore was a winning entry in the 2011 Nikon Small World International Photography Competition.

The competition began in 1974 to, according to Nikon, "Recognize and applaud the efforts of those involved with photography through the microscope." The competition has become the top forum for showing the beauty and complexity of life captured under the microscope. It showcases photomicrographers from all over the world, and from a wide range of scientific disciplines.

A former field biologist and naturalist, Moore has been a keen collector of rocks, as well as agates and dinosaur bones, for over 50 years. After taking a few courses in light microscopy and microscopy techniques at UWSP, Moore became more involved with microscopes and began photographing agates. Moore explained that the knowledge of lighting is what

separates the amateurs from the professional microscope photographers.

Moore is not new to the microscope photography world, as he entered an image of algae in 1993 and received an honorable mention award. Moore didn't spend too much time looking at the competition, but was surprised at his recognition. Most entries were of living materials, and Moore's image stood out because, as he states, along with the photograph having strong patterns and color, "it was a different subject matter than most."

Using a stereomicroscope, Moore photographed the 150-million-year-old unpolished slab of dinosaur bone, which was from Utah's Morrison Formation.

Moore's photograph was recognized out of 17,000 entries from 68 countries and is featured in the Nikon Small World 2012 Calendar. Moore encourages students to enter photo competitions.

"If you have the photos, why not?" Moore said.



Photo by Doug Moore
University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point photographer Doug Moore's photograph of agatized dinosaur bone cells.

[a vague attempt at something delicious.]



In Pursuit of Perfectly Cooked Pasta

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If you've ever watched an Italian themed cooking show, you've probably heard the words "al dente" in regards to cooking pasta. The etymology of al dente comes from the Italian phrase "to the tooth," which refers to the firmness of the pasta and the necessity to chew through the cooked pasta. Basically, al dente refers to a point where pasta is not hard, but yet isn't completely cooked through.

Traditionally, the first step of perfect pasta would be to prepare the noodles fresh from flour, eggs, and salt. Combined, kneaded, divided, flattened, cut, and then dried, noodles are far from labor intensive. Unless you are a true connoisseur, pasta that is readily available in grocery stores is perfectly suitable for consumption without the hassle.

But al dente, if you haven't guessed, is extremely subjective. What's perfectly cooked for you might not be perfectly cooked for anyone else. The best way to test the pasta is to take a bite; a timer will never be as accurate as a quick chomp.

Then there is the sauce. From what I know from Italian-Americans I have met, the sauce has to be handed down from generation to genera-

tion as a closely guarded secret. The perfect sauce is made from gently squeezed tomatoes, garlic carefully minced, and olive oil pressed from the happiest little olives in Italy and set to gently simmer for no less than twelve hours.

Italian romanticism of food isn't unusual. However, a bit of sautéed onions and garlic with some crushed tomatoes and a myriad of dried herbs cooked for 15 minutes or so can imitate ancient family recipes quite nicely.

But for the perfect pasta dish, it's the combination between noodles and sauce. Always put your pasta in the pan where your sauce is cooking, adding a little bit of the starchy water from the pot in which you cooked your noodles. Cooking the pasta in the sauce allows for the sauce to coat and cook into the pasta rather than just sitting on top of the noodles. If the sauce seems to dry, add some more pasta water; if it's too soupy, let it cook down a little.

As always, the perfect pasta is perfectly personal. The cooking process allows you the chance to taste and change the dish so you can change the food to what you like; pasta is no different. Be involved and don't rely on timers, in matters of love and pasta, only the heart and taste buds will know!

SIMPLE RED SAUCE

INGREDIENTS:
1 28oz. can of crushed tomatoes (with no added seasoning)
1/4c olive oil
4 garlic cloves, minced
1 medium sized onion, diced
1 1/2 Tbsp. crushed red pepper flakes
1/2 tsp. sea salt
1 tsp. dried oregano
1 tsp. dried basil
A few turns on a pepper grinder

• Start with a large pot on medium heat, add the olive oil and wait till it starts to shimmer.

• Add onions, garlic, salt, pepper, and red pepper flakes, let sauté till it becomes fragrant. Add the can of crushed tomatoes and the dried herbs.

• Let simmer for 10 minutes then serve on top of your perfect, al dente pasta.

RECIPE



Photo by Kaitlyn Luckow
Cooking pasta 'al dente' is often dependent on personal preference.

So Much to See, So Little Time



Photo Courtesy of Mike Tolstedt
Students hike in tropical rainforests in Costa Rica.

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While some students slept in late, worked, spent time with loved ones, or watched TV over break, others were camping in the mountains and watching the New Year's Eve fireworks in Sydney, Australia. These adventures overseas were a part of the winterim programs at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. These three week experiences are a unique and convenient way to see a new country, gain some credits, while not being as time consuming as a semester trip would be.

Communication & Social Change in Australia

The first trip to Australia as a winterim course took place on Dec. 27 to Jan. 19. Students arrived just in time to watch the New Years Eve fireworks in Sydney, Australia, with roughly 2 million other people. Typically, this trip is only offered as a semester program. However, the winterim offered a feasible option for some students. Those that went on this trip learned about the communication and social change in Australia and how it differs from the United States.

"Most people think that Australia

is just an English speaking country so it's not a big deal; however, this experience is so valuable. There are so many significant culture and social differences," said Matt Tolstedt, the leader of this winterim experience. The 19 students that went on this trip visited sites, went on field trips, and listened to guest speakers all surrounding these topics.

There was also a four-day weekend built into the trip. Students were able to explore around Australia and immerse themselves in the culture. Some explored the Great Barrier Reef and The Outback while others remained in Sydney and went sky-diving.

As the leader of this trip, Tolstedt was able to see firsthand how it impacted students.

"I will forever remember the smiles of these students. Everyday I would wake up and see them smile from the morning until night. That's not something you get to see everyday in a lecture hall; unless you crack a joke and get a few smirks."

Tropical Ecology in Costa Rica

Every study abroad program that is organized by the Natural Resources Department targets a different aspect of natural resources. The trip to Costa Rica that took place on Dec. 26 to Jan. 14 was centered on its human dimensions, soils, waters, and tropical ecol-

ogy. Students saw about half of the country, including a cloud forest. The unique sight is made up of humid air that's condensed on leaves.

"It is such a great opportunity for students because they are able to see one of the most diverse countries in the world. It makes up about 13 percent of the world's diversity. Students traveled from the dry, hot, tropical forest to the freezing high mountains. So as you can imagine, it was difficult for the students to pack," said Mark Demchik, the leader of the trip.

As a Spanish major, Jenika Marion was hoping to immerse herself in the language and see the country; however, she got much more than that.

"I learned so much information; not only about natural resources, but also about Central American culture. They really have a commitment, dedication, and belief to live sustainably," Marion said. "It was amazing and encouraging to see how much they worked with the environment and land rather than just working on it."

From zip lining and whitewater rafting to seeing sea turtles lay their eggs on Naranjo Beach New Year's night, the students got a wide range of experiences on their trip.

"Hiking is a huge part of this experience. In one day we had hiked 8.5 miles down and back in the dry forest. It's extremely hot, especially with the 1,500 ft. elevation change," Demchik said.

Girl With A Dragon Tattoo: A Review

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I'd be hard-pressed to think of a better director than David Fincher for bringing the grim "The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo" to the silver screen. Fincher's previous endeavors into society's dark underbelly include "Seven" and "Zodiac." With Dragon Tattoo, Fincher blends the taut drama of "Zodiac" and the gruesome terror of "Seven", creating a stark, nightmarish reality.

The story tells the tale of a disgraced journalist, Mikael Blomkvist (Daniel Craig), investigating the disappearance of a girl who went missing forty years ago.

Blomkvist is aided in his search by Lisbeth Salander (Rooney Mara.) Lisbeth is a highly skilled computer hacker and a severely damaged individual.

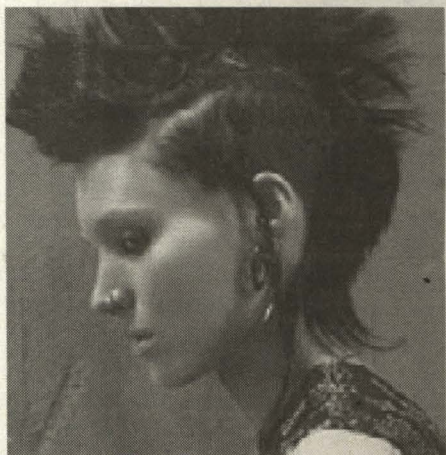


Photo Courtesy of bizarro.fm
Rooney Mara as Lisbeth Salander.

I will be blunt: There is an absolutely brutal rape scene that involves Lisbeth. It's a cringe-inducing, eye-averting sequence that stretches its five minutes unbearably long. It also caused at least a few seats to be emptied in the theatre.

What stuck with me, however, was the unwavering dedication that Mara exhibited in that scene and throughout the film. This is her film. She is Lisbeth, and what a multi-layered character she is. She's a total badass, yet completely vulnerable. There are moments when Lisbeth appears to have been born weathered by abuse and hardened by neglect, and others when she seems like a child who happens to have tattoos and piercings. Lisbeth tries hard to be ugly, yet exudes incredible sexuality. She's a complete paradox and wholly engrossing.

Fincher always gets a lot from his actors, but never more so than here. Mara's performance is indelible, making this film work. Fincher makes a movie that is brimming with graphic sexual violence; I wonder how I was able to stand it. I remember Lisbeth. I could take it, because her character was tough enough to overcome it. Now that's a great performance.

Nationally Accredited University Childcare Center Receives 5 Stars

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Children are all around campus, and whether you have found yourself walking amongst them in a single-file line or have seen them playing tag on the playground next to the Dreyfus University Center, you may have wondered why they are here. These children belong to the recently top-rated child care service, the Helen R. Godfrey University Child Learning and Care Center (HRG-UCLCC) at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point.

The UCLCC, located in the lower level of Delzell Hall, is one of the six programs, among the 374 rated, that has recently received a five-star rating from the YoungStar program of Wisconsin. The program was created through the Department of Children and Families to improve the quality of child care for Wisconsin children.

"The five star rating is a great testament to the commitment the center has on children receiving a quality early education. Birth to age 5 is the largest time frame in a person's life in terms of development and we strive to give these children the best start we can," said Becky Helf, the director of the UCLCC.

Along with the rating, the UCLCC has also recently received national re-accreditation by the National Academy of Early Childhood programs, which is a division of the National Association of the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) in Washington, DC. The UCLCC is currently the only center in the area that is accredited by the NAEYC.

The NAEYC is an organization that focuses on educational and developmental services for all young children. The organization serves and acts on behalf of the children's needs and well-being along with promoting high-quality education.

"The UCLCC stands out from other centers in the sense of family and the warm feeling you get when visiting the center, along with many other things," Helf said.

Kally Samuelson, a senior Early Childhood Education major, has been a teacher's aide at UCLCC for three years.

"I am very happy that UCLCC has been re-accredited. We work hard to meet and hopefully exceed the standards that the NAEYC sets," Samuelson said.

The UCLCC provides child care for pre-school age children. The child care center allows the children to play, learn, and grow emotionally, socially, physically, and cognitively. The enrolled children are members of the Stevens Point community, as well as the children of the UWSP faculty, students, and alumni.

Hayley Wiesman, a UWSP sophomore, began working in the UCLCC this year to gain work experience with children as she aspires to pursue a career in social work.



Photo by Samantha Feld

With spray bottles filled with colored water, children paint the snow.



Photo by Samantha Feld

Children play The Helen R. Godfrey University Child Care Center. The center has earned the highest possible rating in a statewide YoungStar program.

"I think it's cool that the university has the center for students with children so that they can still get a college education even though they have young kids," Wiesman said.

The lead staff at the UCLCC consists of all degreed teachers with skills and knowledge in child development, but many UWSP students come in to volunteer, do observations for classes, and work.

"Working here provides a great opportunity for me to work with children. It is wonderful that we can learn and grow alongside each other,"

Samuelson said. "Just spending time with them can brighten up my day."

"It's always fun talking with the kids and watching them work things out by themselves and seeing them grow, but the most rewarding part is just being able to see the kids so many times a week, and making a connection with them," Weisman said. "Just knowing that the kids like having me there and see me as someone they can go to is very rewarding."

pointlife

[comic of the week]

Mr. Lovenstein

by Justin Westover



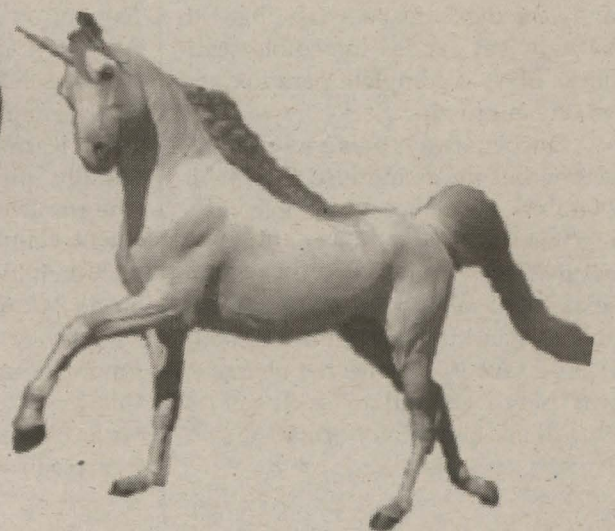
www.mrlovenstein.com

[photo of the week]



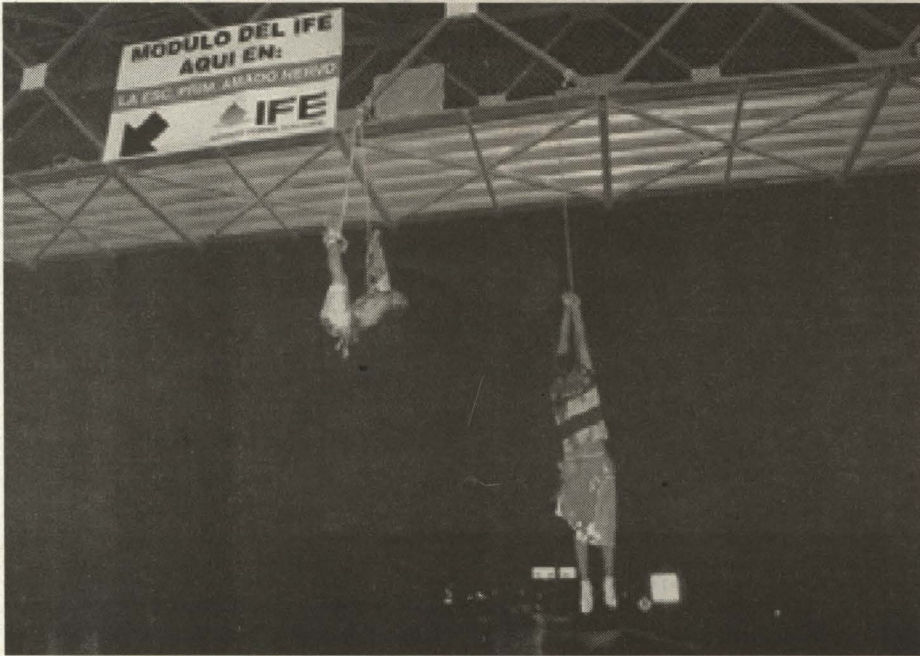
Photo by Michael Wilson
Peppers: Akha Hill Tribe Village, Thailand

Do you have...
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(We'll publish them!)



Opinion

Why the Mexican elections matter



Cartels paint a gruesome visual metaphor near a polling booth last September in Mexico. Photo Courtesy of halsreport.com

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Most of us in the U.S. have spent our patience for electoral politics on the escalating gaffes by the Republican Party presidential contenders who, in their own ways, have demonstrated to the public how unsuitable they are to run the country. However, our southern neighbors have a much more decisive election at hand.

Due to the political malleability of its legal system and the centralized power of its executive office, Mexico has a long history of bloodshed during presidential elections—candidates are assassinated, entire indigenous and peasant communities are invaded, tortured and sexually abused by the military, votes (and voters) disappear, political protest movements and worker organizations are brutally crushed by police and military troops, and political extortion and subordination, judicial repression of opposition parties and other forms of violence are expected and prevalent.

Mexico's presidential and 14 gubernatorial elections this coming July could mark an escalation of violence or a turning point for one of the U.S.'s largest trading partners. Exacerbating the current electoral period's propensity to result in bloodshed is the \$30 billion business of international drug trade, which passes through hands of Wall Street investors and bankers, U.S. arms manufacturers, and government officials at every level before \$23 billion reach the pockets of Mexican cartels annually.

As a result of U.S. drug interdiction programs in the Andean region and later in Colombia, which slowly broke the influence of South and Central American cartels, Mexican producers filled the vacuum created by the ongoing and untreated U.S. consumer demand for narcotics. Mexico produces the majority of the

marijuana and methamphetamine, and between 70 and 90 percent of the cocaine that enters the country. A Mexican government report estimated that the country's economy would contract by 63 percent, and the U.S. economy would contract 19 to 22 percent, if drug trades were entirely curtailed.

Polls show Mexicans currently favor Enrique Peña Nieto, the candidate of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), which ruled the country with monopoly capitalism for 71 years until 2000. Last December, when invited to speak at the International Book Fair—in order to promote a book he claims to have written—Peña Nieto was unable to answer an audience question about which three books had influenced him most.

After minutes of hesitation, Peña Nieto said he had read "parts of" the Bible. He then proceeded to mistake book titles and authors—including Mexico's greatest literary figure, Carlos Fuentes—before helplessly apologizing, stating: "I have read a number of books ... I have a hard time recalling the titles." This slip, which caused Carlos Fuentes to publicly state that Peña is a "very ignorant man," is not his first. In a 2009 interview, he could not remember the cause of his wife's death two years earlier.

In second place, polls show Josefina Vazquez Mota, from President Calderon's Catholic-conservative Partido Acción Nacional (PAN). She was Felipe Calderon's secretary of public education before joining the lower chamber of the Mexican congress. She faces widespread discontent about the state of everyday violence to which the country has descended in the last six years. In a distant third is the center-left Partido Revolucionario Democrático (PRD), under candidate Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, who was declared "Legitimate President of Mexico" by an assembly of protestors in down-

town Mexico City on November of 2006.

It has been only five years since the 2006 elections, largely regarded as fraudulent. A year before the election, the polls placed then Mexico City Mayor Lopez Obrador ahead of the other two parties, despite months of a corporate-sponsored media campaign that ensured an economic recession and other social maladies if he were to be elected. The rhetoric from the PRD was to pry the nation from the super-rich, while the PAN and PRI parties equated class consciousness with fascism and dictatorship.

The election was originally too close to call, as announced on election night by the electoral commission, the Instituto Federal Electoral (IFE). Both Calderon and Lopez Obrador declared victory.

In the coming days, reports of voter intimidation and vote buying, ballot boxes found in a dump in Netzahualcoyotl and in sewage drains in Mexico City, ballot stuffing and illegal campaigning, surfaced. However, these and other rising issues of electoral fraud were drowned out in the media (dominated by the network conglomerates Televisa and TV Azteca), which, according to an IFE report to the Organization of American States, served as a base for the candidates with the most corporate funding. Five days after election day, IFE declared Calderon the winner.

Lopez Obrador, a long-time protest organizer, failed at attempts to legally dispute the IFE's decision and called for a massive protest in Mexico City when the federal electoral court refused to authorize a full recount. The demonstrations lasted months, during which one to two million of his supporters occupied vital avenues in the largest metropolis in the hemisphere.

In December, days after taking office, President Calderon opened a bloody pathway for U.S. intervention through the Merida Initiative, a \$1.7 billion military security agreement to fight narcotic producers in Mexico and Central America. In the first six months of his presidency, cartels executed an average of eight people each day.

The 'war on drugs' has resulted in the deaths of over 50,000, the disappearance of over 100,000 Mexicans and the displacement of over 700,000 peasants in five years. Mexico's displaced, who ambulate in absolute poverty before either becoming the fodder of war or joining organized crime, cause a major economic strain on the country—i.e., they are a nuisance. Although crime runs at each level of society, with different levels of acceptability at different income levels, in Mexico, police and military forces are responsible or directly tied to the majority of the everyday violations of human rights reported.

The casualties and targets of Mexico's intensifying conflict are, by a grossly disproportionate margin, the poor, peasants, indigenous people, women, migrants and disaffected urban populations. There is little tolerance for a free press, and it has taken the title as the country with the greatest journalists murdered, surpassing countries such as Colombia and Iraq.

Left commentators agree that labor and energy reforms are prescient, and the PRI and PAN candidates have already announced they seek privatization of Pemex, the parastatal oil company. In 2008, escalating issues with Luz y Fuerza, the electrical workers' union, led to the nepotistic privatization of electricity, and the firing of 44,000 workers. The PRI-created national workers' union, which has always excluded peasants from its organization, is also quavering and in need of dismantling.

The national education workers' union, SNTE, notoriously corrupt and drenched in controversy, has a history of manipulating elections. In 2006, its PAN-affiliated president, Elba Gordillo used her position to influence the highest levels of the electoral commission, IFE, causing the replacement of poll workers in 22,000 sites across the country just before that year's election.

The July elections will determine more than the course of the pressing demand for energy, fiscal and labor reforms in Mexico—they will either lead to an increase in the repression of social forces calling for justice and feed the military- and prison-industrial complex, or set a path towards economic redistribution and justice for the poor, who join organized crime largely because they find no prospects in Mexico's current subservient position in the international division of labor. Thus, what is at stake in the coming presidential and gubernatorial elections in Mexico is no-less-than hemispheric security and economic recovery.

Mexico, which is already being referred to as a failed state due to the impunity, violence, and insecurity that characterizes its plutocratic system of governance, is an example of why politics matter most where they seem degraded and futile. In a country whose politics are reduced to the legacy of different forms of competing plutocratic hegemonies, the exceeding reports of violations of human rights against its poor, indigenous, peasant, female, and leftwing populations are too close to home—it is at our peril that we turn a blind eye to them, as we do daily to the tragedies occurring globally.

For those of us whose tax dollars are funding this 'international security' and 'development' charade as well as the demand for exceedingly criminalized substances, it's about time to notice.

Bon Iver: A Reflection of the Wisconsin Lifestyle

MITCH DESANTIS
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ALBUM REVIEW

Wisconsin is a cold tundra-like land, home of beer farts, cow shit, "Happy Days" and, of course, the Green Bay Packers. We also have a pretty good history with cannibal serial killers... but let's not get into that. Other than Chris Farley, Ed Gene, and Gene Wilder, Wisconsin has given life to one of the greatest modern folk musicians, Justin Vernon.

Growing up in Wisconsin, I know how proud we as citizens of this great state can get. Generally most Wisconsinites adore the Packers, mainly because without us there wouldn't be the Packers, we own the team. I personally believe that gave us as Wisconsinites a weird sort of pride. We work hard to market our state in a good light. We're proud of our lifestyles and everything that reflects our way of living. Whether it be The Packers, the politics of Russ Feingold, New Glarus' "Spotted Cow," or Bon Iver, all represent our unique American life and we're proud of all of them.

Enough talk about sports, this is "Pointlife," and this article is really about Justin Vernon, Bon Iver and their reflection of life in Wisconsin- at least how it's perceived by me, a poor college student with the nerdy hobby of writing.

In 2008, Justin released "For Emma, Forever Ago," to the world

and the world took notice. What was interesting was that more people seemed to be into the story behind the album than the actual beautiful sound it created. In short it was break-up story: man gets dumped, man secludes himself in northern Wisconsin cabin, man produces art with inspiration from lost love and the quiet solitude of Wisconsin winter. Face it: if you're not into ice fishing, skiing, or snowmobiling, your Wisconsin winter consists of mainly shoveling driveways and self-reflection. Vernon just gave us a soundtrack, one with a story we all personally have experienced in some form or another.

Wisconsinites are also used to having to transition themselves from winter to spring and, take it from me, the transition can be difficult. Our winters are so long at times it seems like we'll never see green grass again. In the long run we do see the green grass again and when we do, we really appreciate it. I believe a similar transition happened to Justin Vernon between albums. He wasn't the heartbroken folk singer we all knew him as anymore. He picked himself out of the snow and stepped into something bigger, something he had to prepare for. In his release of his new self-titled album, we can hear the very transition: the sound has more positive energy with lyrics that evoke the listener with hope, romance and curiosity.

His music hasn't gone unnoticed by the rest of the nation either;



Photo courtesy of 8tracks.com

Justin Vernon, otherwise known as Bon Iver, shows off his Wisconsin tattoo.

Vernon and the Bon Iver crew have earned four Grammy nominations, two of which are best record and best song for "Holocene."

Admittedly, this isn't an album review; this is more of a long-winded thank you to Vernon. Bon Iver continues to put out great albums that, in my opinion, express our unique Wisconsin lifestyle and, seeing that

both the mayor of Milwaukee and Eau Claire declared two different "Bon Iver Days," I'm not the only one in the state that thinks that.

Bon Iver, good luck at the Grammy Awards, Wisconsin is proud of you.

The 54th Grammys will be held Feb. 12 in Los Angeles.

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The Academy Award Nominations 2012:

BEST PICTURE: "The Artist," "The Descendants," "Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close," "The Help," "Hugo," "Midnight in Paris," "Moneyball," "The Tree of Life," "War Horse"

ACTOR: Demian Bichir, "A Better Life"; George Clooney, "The Descendants"; Jean Dujardin, "The Artist"; Gary Oldman, "Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy"; Brad Pitt, "Moneyball"

ACTRESS: Glenn Close, "Albert Noobs"; Viola Davis, "The Help"; Rooney Mara, "The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo"; Meryl Streep, "The Iron Lady"; Michelle Williams, "My Week With Marilyn"

SUPPORTING ACTOR: Kenneth Branagh, "My Week With Marilyn"; Jonah Hill, "Moneyball"; Nick Nolte, "Warrior"; Christopher Plummer, "Beginners"; Max von Sydow, "Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close"

SUPPORTING ACTRESS: Berenice Bejo, "The Artist"; Jessica Chastain, "The Help"; Melissa McCarthy, "Bridesmaids"; Janet McTeer, "Albert Noobs"; Octavia Spencer, "The Help"

DIRECTING: Michel Hazanavicius, "The Artist"; Alexander Payne, "The Descendants"; Martin Scorsese, "Hugo"; Woody Allen, "Midnight in Paris"; Terence Malick, "The Tree of Life"