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Monitor Newsletter June 28, 2004

Bowling Green State University

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**Gene Poor receives entrepreneurship award
VCT professor is creative force in business, classroom**

His students know he's a winner, as do his peers in the animatronics business. Now Gene Poor has received recognition from the local business community for his remarkable vision and success in a field that he helped create. Poor was among the winners of the "Entrepreneur of the Year Award" for northwest Ohio presented earlier this month by Ernst and Young, a Big Four accounting firm.

The owner of LifeFormations, an animatronics studio in Bowling Green, Poor also began the visual communications department at the University in 1972. Both have since experienced tremendous growth and achievements.

"It's an honor to win this award," Poor said. "I was happy to win it because I wanted all the people who bought into my dream to have a piece of this, especially the seven or eight people I consider to be the core of the company."

About a third of LifeFormations' employees are BGSU graduates who have completed technology internships with the company, Poor said. This summer, three Bowling Green students are interning there.

Being involved in the industry "enriches what takes place in the classroom," the entrepreneur/professor said. "You're not just teaching it, you're doing it. You know the problems and you're going from theorizing to applying what you know."

Mike Blasko, a LifeFormations employee who received his bachelor of science degree in VCT in 2002 from BGSU and is now pursuing his master's degree in technology education, said, "It's very important to have Gene's experience and industry ties to bridge that gap between the classroom and what's happening in the industry. It's great to be able to come here and see how what you're doing in the classroom applies in the real world."

Blasko met Poor as an undergraduate, and the two discovered they shared an interest in collecting neon signs. He began to work part time at LifeFormations and eventually completed two co-ops with the company before being hired full time as an electronics specialist. In the meantime, he said, he was able to "tag along" on installations and focused his involvement on the electronics end of the business.

A recent visit to the company found Blasko putting the finishing touches on a life-size figure of legendary Louisiana Governor Huey Long. The most advanced animatronic figure LifeFormations has created, its sophisticated and complex computer program will allow the figure full range of natural motion, to be accompanied by an audio track of the politician speaking. The bronze-finish figure will reside in Baton Rouge when completed.

"Gene is very inspired and very motivated. It's always an interesting experience working with him," Blasko said of his boss and mentor.

In presenting the entrepreneurship awards, Larry Davenport, a partner in the accounting firm, said the winners had to be both smart and strong to survive. "They trekked through the jungle of opportunity and found their way to success," he said at the Valentine Theatre in Toledo on June 7.

Poor fits that description well. He has managed to not only maintain his company but to continue expanding its reach at a time when other similar ventures have been forced to shut their doors.

The once-thriving industry was reduced by about half following Sept. 11, 2001, as businesses were mired in uncertainty about the future of tourism and the demand for their

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product. LifeFormations is now one of only four animatronics studios in existence, Poor said. "Even a fun company has to make payroll," he noted.

Blasko said that from an educational perspective, "seeing the interaction with suppliers, vendors, contractors and clients gives that real world connection."

The company, which makes both static and animated figures for museums, theme parks, retail operations and even restaurants, has grown from its original five employees to about 35 today. Its current projects include creating 50 characters for the Lincoln Library in Illinois and others for an African-American museum in Detroit; producing the characters for a "dark ride" about the biblical Solomon for a religious theme park in Israel; working on the new animated representative for the soft drink 7-Up, and making animated figures of Jekyll and Hyde for a new, themed restaurant in New York City.

A visit to the business in Bowling Green can be unnerving, with startlingly lifelike characters ranged around every nook and corner, in various states of completion. In one workshop, employees build the large frames of the characters, from humans to horses, while in another area, a group of three women painstakingly apply individual hairs to the heads of other characters, surrounded by a motley crew of full-size Yukon miners, Chinese gong-players, fur trappers, pygmy warriors, Eskimo hunters and Indians. Nearby, another employee was at work on a head of former Cincinnati Reds and Detroit Tigers manager Sparky Anderson.

It can take about 30 hours to complete a full "poked-hair" head, said Julie Simon, a BGSU graduate now employed at LifeFormations who was working on a head of former Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser recently. She, like other employees has also served as a model for characters' limbs when needed. "Those are my arms on Mary Todd Lincoln," she pointed out.

The hyper-realistic look is a trademark of LifeFormations and reflects the commitment to quality that has helped make the business so successful.

Poor says he is always looking for fresh avenues for the company. He has recently begun selling the lifelike figures through select galleries.

He obviously loves his work. "It's a wonderful experience to bring things to life," he said, describing animatronics as "truly a marriage of art and technology." A technologist at Kent State University before coming to BGSU in 1970, he said animatronics is the perfect field for him, combining work with wood, metal, electronics, hydraulics and many other elements to create animation from static characters. Over the years, he has animated everything from cars to kitchen items.

"I've always been involved in working with business and industry," he said. While teaching at BGSU in the 1970s, he also worked with a display company in Toledo. "I convinced them to let me make the products come alive and tell the story," he said. "Anything you could want to sell, we would bring to life." He founded LifeFormations in 1981 as a division of that company and later bought it from them and moved it to Bowling Green.

In addition to his teaching and running the company, Poor has written two books, *The Illusion of Life: Lifelike Robotics*, published in 1991 by Creative Learning Systems, and *Animatronics: A Designer's Resource Guide*, co-authored with Rodney Heiligmann, VCTE, and published in 2003 by Ian Hunter Publishers.

BGSU cooks stir up tempting new recipes

As children, we're told not to play with our food, but for dining services staff at BGSU, summer is the time to do just that. It's as a result of "playing" that many of the University's new menu items are created, said Sandy Jess, general manager in Kresicher.



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"We've done summer test kitchen for many years with a group of lead cooks, who are really good cooks," she said. "It's an incredibly fun experience. We try things out, play with it, taste it, see how we find it. Sometimes we have something where you know it's got potential, but it needs a lot more to make it work."

Nancy Joseph, associate director of dining services, said the focus of summer test kitchen reflects the upcoming direction dining services will take in the fall. "With each freshman class comes a new challenge," she said. "Their palate is so much more sophisticated than it was 20 years ago. The students are very demanding and they really keep us on our toes."

To keep up with changing trends, dining services staff read trade magazines, pore over cookbooks, talk with vendors and discuss ideas gleaned through their own experiences. They observe what's coming out on the coasts, because that is where most food trends tend to begin, Joseph said, although it can take a couple of years for new ideas to be accepted in the Midwest.

"Timing is critical," she said. They've learned that if BGSU introduces an unfamiliar food concept, it will often be rejected by students until they've seen it in retail food outlets.

University food providers have seen a significant shift over the years in the way students eat, Joseph said, away from traditional home-cooked meals toward foods found in the retail market.

"Their world is different. Many come from homes in which the moms have always worked and they haven't grown up with a family dinner every night. Some have never seen meatloaf. They're used to chicken in every way, shape or form, and they have no problem seeing smoothies or deli sandwiches as a meal."

As a result of student demand, vegan options have been added, including soups such as black bean, and white bean and black olive, both developed in summer test kitchen, said Joseph.

Some things never change, however. "I think they'd be happy to see mashed potatoes on at every meal," said Barbara Erisman, associate director of dining services. In surveys, students consistently rate them one of their favorite foods.

Considerations such as cost and availability of ingredients, appropriate equipment and number of cooks needed help determine what can be produced. Once an idea is settled on, the kitchen scientists go to work. First, the recipe is put into the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) format to comply with food safety standards. Then it is expanded numerically to produce a large batch.

This is where the expertise of the longtime cooks comes in, Jess said. Because a recipe is doubled or quadrupled does not automatically mean every ingredient follows suit. The cooks try it different ways until they get the right taste. "Some of our cooks can taste an item and just know what it needs. Institutional cooking is different from restaurant cooking," she observed. "You have to make it taste homemade even though you're cooking in large quantities."

They also test for "real yield" and see whether it can be reliably reproduced, just as a science experiment must produce the same results each time to be considered valid.

"The goal is to have your recipes written in such a way that any cook, whether experienced or not, can make it work every time," Jess said, adding that the University's lasagna recipe "will work every time you make it," for example.

"What we do is very similar to what they do in the big test kitchens like at 'Good Housekeeping,'" Jess said. "We'll try a recipe 40-50 times to get it just right."

The cooks share memories of successes. Of the nearly 40 homemade soups produced by dining services, many developed by staff, the Cheeseburger Soup created by then-director



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of food operations Jane Schimpf in 1995 was one of the most challenging. Components of the meat "can break down a white sauce if you don't do it just right," Jess said. "We spent an entire summer working on it and now that's a beautiful soup."

Cheeseburger Soup in fact went on to win the 1996 Golden Ladle Recipe Contest sponsored by the Campbell Soup Co. and now is BGSU's second best-selling soup, after chicken noodle.

Other soups developed by staff members include shrimp bisque, created by lead cook Jeff Hilbert, and butternut bisque by Chef Sonja Kehr, both served in the Bowling Greenery. Also, Chessira's minestrone, developed by the late Jessie Unkart, a former general manager, remains popular.

Macaroni salad based on Jess's mother's recipe "sells a boatload every time we put it on," she said. And after a summer of fiddling with it, the cream cheese frosting on the carrot cake finally yielded the desired result.

But there have also been and some notable failures. Some experiments never made it out of the test kitchen, despite the cooks' best efforts, according to Jess. "We refer to those years as 'the summer of taco subs' or 'the summer of key lime pie,'" she said, remembering the countless, fruitless adjustments made to try to make those recipes work.

When they do work in test kitchen, the next step is to try them in the dining halls during the summer before launching them in the fall.

Other items have their first appearance in one of the many theme dinners put on by the dining halls and prove so popular that they become part of the regular menu. Egg drop soup and matzo ball soup, for instance, are very well-liked. "We never get rid of any recipes because so many times the cycle comes back around," Jess said. An example is flan, the creamy Spanish custard that the University first made in the 1970s. It is now served for Hispanic theme dinners and was eagerly received at the recent Latino Issues Conference.

This summer, the test kitchen is not in operation while the staff focuses on implementing a new, computerized menu-management system called CBORD. This will streamline the inventory and ordering of food supplies, will project usage and even eventually yield nutritional information on all foods served, Joseph said. Nearly 4,000 recipes will be entered into the system, and a separate system for catering will ultimately be included. Melissa Greiner Harris is spearheading the implementation of the new program.

Meanwhile, the staff awaits the day when they will get back to test kitchen and play. "I look forward to that because I miss it," Jess said.

Buckeye Boys State elects to stay at BGSU

American Legion Buckeye Boys State will be held at BGSU for at least another five years. A new contract agreement, signed June 23, means the program will be held annually in Bowling Green through 2009.

"It's a great honor for Bowling Green to host this marvelous organization and to have the opportunity to help shape future leaders," said Linda Newman, BGSU assistant vice president for student affairs and director of residence life and dining services. "The Boys State staff is wonderful to work with."

Buckeye Boys State, the largest American Legion government program of its kind for youths, has been held at BGSU each year since 1978. Some 1,300 high school students from throughout Ohio gain hands-on experience in organizing political parties and operating a democratic form of government at the local, county and state levels during the nine-day summer program.



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A number of factors led to the American Legion's decision to stay at Bowling Green, according to Buckeye Boys State Director Gerald White. In addition to residence hall facilities and Anderson Arena, he cited the connections the program now has and the positive attitude of BGSU employees and local residents in supporting the program each year.

"It's the attitude of the University and the way the workers on campus work," White said. "The way they support us helps make the program a success. There's also the support of the city of Bowling Green, the county officials, the school board, the Sheriff's Office, the Chamber of Commerce and others in town," he continued. "We'd be hard pressed to find another place in the state where that kind of relationship can be developed."

Local leaders are happy with the continuing relationship, too.

"The parents come to Bowling Green, fill the hotels, eat in the restaurants and shop in our shops. It's a win-win situation for the University and Bowling Green," noted Wendy Stram, coordinator of the Bowling Green Convention and Visitors Bureau. "We are pleased to have them here for another five years."

New process helps employees report suspected waste, financial misconduct

University employees who suspect that fraud, waste or abuse of University resources is occurring now have a procedure to follow to report their suspicions.

The board of trustees in May approved a course of action for disclosure of these forms of wrongdoing. Created by the board's Audit Committee in collaboration with Internal Auditor Bahram Hatefi, the process also covers allegations of theft, embezzlement and other forms of financial misconduct.

"Anybody should feel comfortable, if they feel something's not going right, that there is a mechanism to report that, either anonymously or by name," said former trustee Valerie Newell at the Financial Affairs Committee meeting.

"Not only should they feel comfortable," Hatefi added, "but it is their *duty* to report it if they see something happening."

He and the staff in Internal Auditing and Advisory Services will "treat all allegations as sensitive and will reveal the information only on a 'need to know' basis," as stated in the policy. All allegations will be taken seriously, Hatefi said, and, where indicated, he will launch a preliminary investigation to determine whether the claim has merit and can be substantiated.

The move reflects renewed nationwide efforts toward enhanced financial reporting and accountability and improved governance.

Employees are encouraged to report any suspicious activities in person, by telephone, fax or email to the Office of Internal Auditing and Advisory Services, 911 Administration Building. Call 2-9970; fax 2-0235, or email bhatefi@bgnnet.bgsu.edu.

To view a description of the complete procedure, visit <http://www.bgsu.edu/offices/audit/reportfraud.htm>.

IN BRIEF

Open forum scheduled for BG@100

The next BG@100 open forum has been scheduled for 9 a.m. July 22 in 314 Bowen-

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Thompson Student Union. The forum is an opportunity for University employees and students to learn more about the BG@100 project to implement PeopleSoft administrative systems and to ask questions of project team members.

Monitor takes one-week holiday

Because of the shortened week following the Independence Day holiday observance on July 5, Monitor will not be published July 12. However, the job postings will be updated July 6.

CALENDAR**Monday, June 28**

Summer Movie Series, "Bruce Almighty,"
9 p.m., Union Theater. Sponsored by the
Office of Campus Involvement.

Tuesday, June 29

Summer Movie Series, "Bruce Almighty,"
9 p.m., Union Theater. Sponsored by the
Office of Campus Involvement.

Wednesday, June 30

Summer Movie Series, "Bruce Almighty,"
9 p.m., Union Theater. Sponsored by the
Office of Campus Involvement.

Thursday, July 1

Summer Movie Series, "Bruce Almighty,"
9 p.m., Union Theater. Sponsored by the
Office of Campus Involvement.
Administrative Staff Council, 1.30-3.30
p.m., Pallister Conference Room,
Jerome Library.

Monday, July 5

Independence Day observed. Classes
canceled, offices closed.

Tuesday, July 6

Faculty Senate, 2:30 p.m., McFall
Assembly Room.
Summer Movie Series, "A Mighty Wind,"
9 p.m., Union Theater. Sponsored by the
Office of Campus Involvement.

Wednesday, July 7

Summer Movie Series, "A Mighty Wind,"
9 p.m., Union Theater. Sponsored by the
Office of Campus Involvement.

Thursday, July 8

Summer Movie Series, "A Mighty Wind,"
9 p.m., Union Theater. Sponsored by the
Office of Campus Involvement.

Monday, July 12

Summer Movie Series, "Legally Blonde,"
9 p.m., Union Theater. Sponsored by the
Office of Campus Involvement.

Continuing Events**June 29-July 3**

Musical Theater, "Oklahoma!," 8 p.m.
nightly, Huron Playhouse, McCormick
School, Huron. Tickets are \$10 for stu-
dents and seniors, \$11 for other adults,
and \$7 for children under 12. For reserva-
tions, call the box office at 419-433-4744
from 9 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday-Saturday.

July 12-Aug. 13

Art Exhibit, drawings and paintings by
Kevin Casto, Little Gallery, BGSU
Firelands. Gallery hours are 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
Monday-Friday.

JOB POSTINGS**FACULTY**

There were no postings this week.

Contact the Office of Human Resources at

419-372-8421 for information regarding
classified and administrative positions.
Position vacancy announcements may be
viewed by visiting the HR Web site at
www.bgsu.edu/offices/ohr.

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Employees wishing to apply for these positions must sign a "Request for Transfer" form and attach an updated resume or data sheet. This information must be turned in to Human Resources by the job deadline.

CLASSIFIED

View job descriptions at:
http://www.bgsu.edu/offices/ohr/employment/BGSU_only/

The deadline to employees to apply for the following positions is 1 p.m. Friday, July 2.
Administrative Assistant 1 (C-43-Ve)—Marketing. Pay grade 8. Full-time position.

Sales Manager 1 (C-40-Ve)—University Bookstore. Pay grade 6. Full-time position.

Secretary 1 (C-37-Re)—Campus Involvement. Pay grade 6 (\$12.87 per hour). Full-time, 12-month position.

Secretary 1 (C-42-Ve)—Romance Languages. Pay grade 6. Full-time position.

The following positions are being advertised on and off campus. The deadline to apply is 1 p.m. Friday, July 9.

Library Associate 1 (C-34-Re and C-35 Re)—University Libraries (two positions). Pay grade 8 (\$14.20 per hour). Full-time, 12-month positions.

Library Associate 2 (C-36-Re)—University Libraries. Pay grade 9 (\$14.96 per hour). Full-time, 12-month position.

Secretary 1 (C-38-Ve)—Career Center. Pay grade 6. Full-time position.

ADMINISTRATIVE

View job descriptions at:
http://www.bgsu.edu/offices/ohr/employment/adm_staff/

Applications Developer (V-053)—BG@100 Project. Administrative grade 14. Review of applications will begin July 2 and continue until the position is filled.

Information Manager for Graduate Education and Research (V-060)—Graduate College. Administrative grade 16. Deadline: July 2.

Admissions Counselor or Admissions Counselor Trainee (V-051)—Office of Admissions. Administrative grade 12 or 11. Deadline: July 9.

Writing Specialist (V-061)—Academic Enhancement. Administrative grade 12. Deadline: July 9.

Academic Advising Coordinator (04-059NF)—BGSU Firelands Student Services. Administrative grade 13. Deadline: July 16.

Data Hub and Resource Center Manager (R-068)—Design and Construction (apply design, construction, AutoCAD and architectural skills). Administrative grade 13. Deadline: July 16.

Technology Support Specialist (V-065)—Information Technology Services (two positions). Administrative grade 13. Deadline: July 16.

Residence Hall Director (V-018)—Office of Residence Life (three positions). Administrative grade 13. Review of applications will continue until all positions are filled.

OBITUARY

Nellie Fausnaugh, 80, died June 20 in Bowling Green. A facilities services staff member from 1978-99, she was housekeeping manager in the University Guest House.