

Resident writes and voices ads

Former student works behind the scenes on many KTVO ads for the heartland

Naomi Davis
Staff Reporter

Many people won't recognize Jeff Becker by his face, though they've been listening to him for years.

Becker is a writer, videographer and editor for KTVO in Kirksville. He is perhaps better known, however, for his job as "the voice in the commercials."

"Nobody recognizes my voice in public," Becker said. "I have a totally different voice on-air. You deepen your voice and simply exaggerate."

Becker said he has been announcing in 85 to 90 percent of KTVO-produced commercials around the heartland for the past eight years.

"It's like a little bit of Hollywood," he said, referring to his younger years, where he said he originally heard his calling. "I was the announcer for the high school band, and people would tell me I should do it for a living."

For two years, Becker attended Northeast Missouri State University, where he said he studied business, photography and graphic arts. He later graduated from Sterling College in Kansas City, Kan. Prior to working at KTVO, Becker worked in administration at a residential care facility, but he said the stress left him looking back to his true passion.

"I had done this in my younger days," he said. "I had hobbyed with

Super 8 film and thought it was fun. I knew it was something I would enjoy."

While working at KTVO, Becker said he has written, voiced and produced many commercials in Kirksville, as well as in neighboring cities and states. His repertoire includes ads for car dealerships, downtown businesses, lumberyards, banks, movie theaters and others.

Jonathan Walker, owner of Walker Mobile Homes in Kirksville, said he has been producing commercials with Becker for years.

"He knows the types of ads that I like," Walker said. "When he produces an ad for me, I know we're on the same page."

Becker said he tries to make every commercial unique and original to achieve different advertisement goals.

"I try to change things around so that they don't all look and sound alike," Becker said. "For instance, for a funeral home, I use a slower pace, a voice of compassion. With car dealerships, they want you fast and hard — get people frenzied."

Senior Jill Kasparie met Becker while interning at the YMCA during the summer.

"He doesn't talk at all like he does on the commercials," Kasparie said. "He's actually very soft-spoken."

Kasparie, who also works on the production crew at KTVO, said she worked with Becker to create new commercials for the YMCA.

"We put two commercials together," Kasparie said. "He was a lot of fun to work with and always put things to-



Courtney Robbins/Index
Kirksville resident Jeff Becker works on his latest project in the editing suite at the KTVO studios in Kirksville.

gether and got the job done."

Making a career as the voice of a salesman for so many businesses, Becker said he considers his voice to be one of influence.

"I think about how people are used to my voice and hearing it," Becker said. "And it does have influence because they've been hearing me sell stuff for eight years. I like to think there's credibility there."

Becker said his duties range from writing the script and shooting the commercial to voicing, producing and editing. The commercial is then put on a VHS tape, sent back to the client for approval and finally aired. Becker said one such commercial, a humorous ad for an insurance company, earned the station first place in commercial announcement by the Missouri Broadcasters Association.

Becker said some commercials are produced on the "Green Wall," which is used at the station for the weather re-

ports. Most, however, are filmed at the actual business site.

"We usually go on location to film," Becker said. "When you go places, people enjoy it — it's fun. I try to keep people from being afraid. I say, 'This is what I do, and we're going to make a good commercial.'"

Not all his experiences have been equally pleasant, Becker said. On one such project with a pork company, the commercial was filmed on location, where he had to spend the entire day around hogs.

"It was probably one of the least fun shoots I've done," he said.

Becker said he plans to continue in his position until retirement, which is good news for business owners, who said they have been pleased with his work.

"He's great with graphics and special effects," Walker said of Becker's work. "And when you have a good thing, you don't fix it if it's not broke."

Commercials Jeff Becker has created

- Moberly Area Community College
- Bentz GM Macon
- Alliant Bank
- Truman State University Lyceum Series
- Hy-Vee Grands for Brands
- Walker Mobile Homes
- Swiss Village Homes

Students make dinner dates to discuss books for credit

Meg Joyce
Staff Reporter

Although one couldn't pay students enough to repeat many Truman courses, Dinner and a Book is getting students excited about reading again.

Dinner and a Book classes, sponsored by the Residential College Program, meet for discussion of a book over dinner.

"I'm glad that Truman offers this course," junior Shannon Grantham said. "I'm doing it again this semester."

Marty Eisenberg, dean of RCP recognizes the popularity of the program on campus. Eisenberg said he brought the idea to Truman after attending his 20th college reunion and hearing the idea from the dean of students.

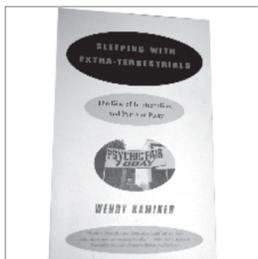
"We were having a discussion about the intellectual climate on campuses," Eisenberg said.

He said he thought the idea sounded very interesting, so he adapted it for Truman. The first classes were offered in spring 2003.

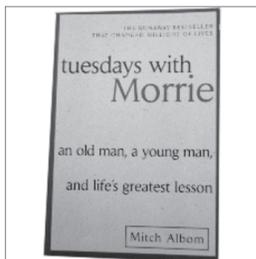
Eisenberg works with the faculty members teaching the classes to choose the books to be read.

The selections range in subject, but the most important quality is not necessarily popularity. Eisenberg said what he looks for in the books chosen for the program is not whether a book is liked or disliked, but rather what kind of discussion it generates.

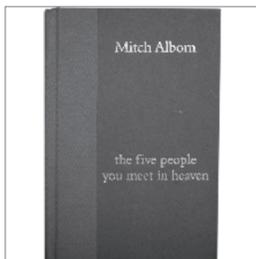
One of the other important aspects of the program is the



"Sleeping with Extra-Terrestrials" by Wendy Kaminer



"Tuesdays with Morrie" by Mitch Albom



"The Five People You Meet in Heaven" by Mitch Albom

opportunity for variety.

"People are not bound by disciplines, which many find incredibly liberating," Eisenberg said.

Eisenberg said priority is given to students who live on campus because most of the groups meet in the dining halls.

Eisenberg said last fall a collection of essays was discussed and President Barbara Dixon came in as a guest to discuss.

The classes are kept small purposefully, with an ideal number of 12 to 15 people and a cap of 16, Eisenberg said. The intimate setting ensures that every student can actively participate in the discussion.

Grantham said she really liked the size of her Dinner and a Book class last spring because she got a chance to meet new people in a small setting. Grantham said she very much liked the book her class read.

"I benefited so much more from

discussing that book," she said.

Eisenberg said he thinks the food aspect of the Dinner and a Book program helps to break the ice because everyone begins talking casually.

Eisenberg said the main goal of the program is to create a structure for meaningful interaction between faculty and students.

Each class is worth one credit and is taken pass/fail. The classes meet for two hours once a week for eight weeks. Additionally, most classes require some sort of assignment. For example, Eisenberg said he has his group write a paper either reviewing the book or suggesting a future book for the program.

Eisenberg said the class was assigned one credit so the participants have some incentive to do the reading and be prepared for discussion. However, people who sign up for the class tend to be students who like to read, Eisenberg said.

Junior Amanda Hoylman signed up for the course and said she is excited because she likes to read, but it is difficult to fit it in because there is so much other reading to do. She said she likes that the class includes discussion with peers who have read the same book.

"At home, when you read a book, you want to talk about it, but nobody has read it," Hoylman said.

The courses meet at different times and days, and the first discussion offered this fall begins Sept. 22, with the others beginning the following week. This semester, there are six different courses including "Sleeping with Extra-Terrestrials: The Rise of Irrationalism and Perils of Piety" by Wendy Kaminer, "The Poisonwood Bible" by Barbara Kingsolver and "America (the Book): a Citizen's Guide to Democracy Inaction" by Jon Stewart.



Photo illustration by Lisette Metz Grulke/Index
Junior Shannon Grantham is enrolled in a fall 2005 section of the Dinner and a Book class.

Because of the success of the Dinner and a Book program, the RCP launched a similar program last spring titled Film, Food and Discussion, which meets once a week to watch movies and discuss.

"Students really want to be there, and the emphasis isn't so

much on grades, but on the pursuit of the truth, which is really at the heart of any educational experience," Eisenberg said.

For the complete book list and information about joining classes, visit rcp.truman.edu/dinner_book/.

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