

# Forensics team travels nationwide

**Award-winning group makes debate fun with taffy, trees, taxidermy**

BY STEPHANIE HALL  
Staff Reporter

A group of Truman students scramble out of a van in Oregon, climbing down rocks to the beach dressed in business suits. Their coach stands on top of the cliff yelling down to them, "I'm not paying your dry-cleaning bill."

This scene is reminiscent of one of the many trips the Forensics team takes every year. They travel all over the county, regularly hitting states like Wyoming, Illinois, Nebraska, Colorado, Florida, Tennessee and California.

Kevin Minch, associate professor of communication and director of forensics, is the team's coach, economist and driver. He also judges speech competitions nearly every weekend.

"People think I'm joking when I say my hourly schedule is in excess of 100 hours a week on the job," Minch said.

Before Minch, the school's Forensics team only traveled a regional circuit, said Kris Stroup,

assistant coach for the Forensics team and Minch's former student. Careful allocation of funds and planning has created opportunities for nationwide debates.

"In our rise to national prominence, we diversified to a national schedule that allows us to see the people who will get us the reputation to win nationals," Minch said. "That process was very much a process of clawing our way out of the hole."

**"Two years ago when we went to Oregon for nationals, we went to the beach, climbed the rocks, got taffy and went whale searching"**

**Chris Girouard**  
Junior

These tournaments take the debate team across America — usually in a 15-person van driven by the coaches.

"On the way back from St. Louis, we rocked out to as many Journey songs as we could find on people's iPods and stopped at four gas stations to find a Slurpee machine," Stroup said.

Most of the time, the team leaves Thursdays and gets back Sundays for in-state tournaments, but for longer trips, the students leave Wednesdays and return Monday mornings. Once they arrive at the tournaments, the grueling schedules begin.

Tournaments like nationals can last as long as five days. This can be especially grueling for the teams who compete



Christopher Girouard standing with part of Truman's Debate Team seen here running through practice rounds in Barnett Hall. The team has traveled road trip-style to national tournaments in places including California and Tennessee.

all the way to the end. In some competitions, if students debate in all the rounds, they will have debated about 24 hours by the end of the tournament, Minch said.

"The combination of long hours, little sleep and late-night fast food really wears down the immune system," Stroup said. "We are sick more than a normal person."

Sophomore Mark Buchheit has been debating for six years, including two years at Truman. As a student, he misses many days of school for these cross-country excursions, he said.

"Teachers are usually pretty good about working with [us]," Buchheit said. "I try to tell them a week or two in advance when [I'm] going to be gone."

Traveling to distant places

isn't always as picturesque as it might seem. Buchheit said he has been to California three times in two years. One tournament was in San Diego, which he enjoyed, but the team also traveled north to Stockton, he said.

"There were palm trees, but it was cold and rainy both times," Buchheit said.

Despite the stress of debate, the company and trips counteract some of the more harrowing conditions. Junior Chris Girouard has been debating for six and a half years. He said he has seen much of the country because of debate and enjoys the trips because of the fun times.

"Two years ago when we went to Oregon for nationals, we went to the beach, climbed the rocks, got taffy and went whale

searching," Girouard said.

The debate team becomes close through these excursions, and they learn about each other's quirks, Girouard said. For instance, one guy likes to play the machines with the claws and stuffed animals so they always have to wait a couple minutes for him, Girouard said.

Each of the coaches seems to have favorite memories of his own, whether it is pulling over at a rest stop with a six-foot tall stuffed bear or stopping to see a five-legged cow, Stroup said.

"When we went to Denver, our flight got in early so the kids wanted to see Casa Bonita because everyone remembered the 'Southpark' episode where Cartman wanted to go to Casa Bonita," Minch said.

Minch said he literally has pulled over the van to ask the students, "Do I need to turn this van around?" He said he also had to pull over because he was laughing too hard to drive properly.

One of the other benefits of traveling is exposure to different teams and judging, Minch said. It causes students to think more about adaptation. It is also a great source of networking for the students, he said.

"We actually have students who, when looking for letters of recommendation for scholarships and grad school, are not only asking us, they are asking coaches from other schools who have seen and judged them so many times that they know them that well," Minch said.



Freshman Spencer Clark and Sophomore Mike McCarthy, seen here with their arsenal of fishing gear, hope to eventually get into competitive fishing tournaments with the Truman State University Fishing Club.

# Fishing squad catches 20 student anglers for new club

HARRY BURSON  
Staff Reporter

Freshman Spencer Clark wants to keep today's fishermen hooked and reel in a new generation of anglers.

Clark is the vice president of the Truman State University Fishing Club, which he co-founded in October 2007 to promote the sport of fishing on campus and in the community.

He and Sophomore Mike McCarthy advertised the club with posters, an information table and word of mouth. The organization currently has 20 members but actively is seeking interested students regardless of skill level.

"It took off pretty quickly," Clark said. "And we are always looking for new members. That's one of our biggest things."

The club meets once a month and plans weekend fishing trips in the warmer months. During meetings, members plan upcoming events and either Clark or McCarthy gives a short seminar on fishing technique.

"We try to teach our members something they don't already know or bring up some current issues in fishing," Clark said. "Usually we'll conclude with a movie or some short clips of fishing or something like that. It's real laid-back."

Clark hopes to get the group involved in competitive fishing tournaments.

"Most of the tournaments start

in March and we're looking at really fishing in a couple of those every month," he said. "And in the summer, we're throwing around different ideas like going national and fishing against other colleges."

The club depends on sponsors to help pay for various expenses including boats, bait, travel and equipment. Naked Bait Company and Falcon Rods are current sponsors.

McCarthy said these companies provide equipment and money in exchange for the club promoting their products.

"You promote their stuff just by wearing a little emblem on your shirt," McCarthy said. "At these tournaments, there can be a range from 15 to 200 boats or something like that. That's a lot of people you can show your product off to."

The group also plans to host its own tournament to compete against regional teams.

"There's a couple of other college clubs in Missouri," Clark said. "... We're thinking about trying to throw a Missouri showdown tournament sort of thing between the colleges."

Clark said he hopes his organization will inspire other schools to form their own fishing clubs. He also hopes to encourage interest in the Kirksville community.

Associate Professor of Biology Jon Gering said this goal is what made him interested in becoming the group's faculty adviser.

"They're promoting the sport of angling," said Gering. "They want to

fish in college tournaments. They also want to do workshops and clinics for the college kids, for disabled kids in the community. So there are a lot of worthwhile activities that [they] are going to be doing."

He said he recently rediscovered his interest in the sport after taking his son fishing. He said northeast Missouri is a perfect area to enjoy the sport.

"This region, northeast Missouri, is sort of a nirvana for fishing," Gering said. "Between Thousand Hills State Park, Forest Lake, Hazel Creek Lake, Long Branch Lake near Macon and Thomas Hill Reservoir down southwest of Macon we have all the major game fish species. ... It's a wonderful place to be a fisherman. It's a wonderful place to have a fishing club."

As president of the fishing club, McCarthy said he is excited for the organization's future.

"I definitely see us competing on the bass-angling college level," he said. "I also see it growing from more than it is now. I also see us coming up with more events that are towards people who are not as experienced. I think that would help us get more people involved."

McCarthy said he thinks fishing is a worthwhile activity for people of any age.

"It's important as a relaxing tool to get away from school and relieve some stress and try something different," he said. "I've been fishing since I was two. My dad got me into it, and I was hooked ever since."

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