

Free condom month promotes sexual health



Brenna McDermott

During March, the Women's Resource Center has tried to prevent the spread of life-altering diseases by distributing free goodies. You guessed it: It's free condom month!

What could be more effective in helping prevent sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy than handing out free condoms to poor college kids? You may say "abstinence!" but I say differently. Some might think using condoms to prevent pregnancy or to prevent the spread of possibly life-threatening diseases is wrong because

they were taught that abstinence is right and anything else is wrong. Condoms are not evil. Condoms save lives.

Humans have been doing things that are bad for us for thousands of years. We smoke cigarettes and get lung cancer, we share sodas and get mono, and we eat too much and don't exercise and get diabetes. Thankfully there have been scientists and researchers smart enough to find ways to stop us from smoking, help take care of diabetes, vaccinate polio or the flu and maybe someday find ways to cure cancer. We don't have a way to prevent all of these things, but we do have a very reliable way to protect ourselves from the sexually transmitted infections and HIV that might result from having sex: condoms.

If we found a way to prevent humans from getting cancer, wouldn't we use it? So why is it that we have a

solution to preventing these horrible STIs and some of us don't use it? Condoms, when used properly, will almost always prevent the spread of HIV and STIs and might reduce the chance of receiving HPV, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Although using a condom isn't 100% effective, Planned Parenthood reports that 2 out of 100 women whose partners use condoms will become pregnant if they always use condoms correctly. The Centers for Disease Control reports that studies have demonstrated that latex condoms provide an essentially impermeable barrier to particles the size of HIV and STD pathogens.

Yes, it would be great if people didn't have to worry about using condoms because they abstained from sex until they had one spouse who they stayed happily married to forever.

But the world doesn't always work like that. People sometimes have more than one sexual partner. Sure, there are some who will remain sexually pure, but what about the rest of humanity? Not everyone does the right thing all the time. In America, abstinence is a subject that has been beaten to death. Does that mean that we are a society of virgins? No. So obviously the abstinence stance isn't enough.

It frustrates me when the use of condoms is not always supported in places like Africa, where HIV is an epidemic. About 67 percent of people living with HIV come from Sub-Saharan Africa, and 75 percent of all AIDS related deaths occur in Sub-Saharan Africa, according to The United Nations Program Against HIV/AIDS. Why wouldn't we use every resource we have to stop this epidemic? Why is taking a preventative vaccine for

mono okay, but using a condom to prevent an HIV infection isn't? Sex is supposed to be saved for marriage, but it isn't. Why must we continue to deny that? So if teaching abstinence alone isn't preventing sex, we must at least practice and promote safe sex.

Sex happens, and refusing to acknowledge that sex happens before marriage and that people often have more than one sexual partner will only lead to more widespread disease and death. Being safe is what will keep us all healthy, not pretending sex doesn't happen. So stop by the WRC, and pick up a few condoms, and remember that safe sex is key. No glove, no love.

Brenna McDermott is a sophomore communication major from St. Louis, Mo.



Tru Rants

Index readers get to sound off about what's on their mind. Keep it under 40 words and no personal attacks or profanity, please!



"I wish the University wouldn't bolt down the tables in its offices. Sometimes I would actually like to rearrange my workspace."



"The search engine on Truman's Web site is ridiculous. I can never find what I'm looking for."

Got a rant? E-mail us at trurants@gmail.com

Masculinity needs redefinition



Tyler Retherford

It was a little jarring to see the word "men" on a women's and gender studies poster, much less to see that it is the topic of the women's and gender studies conference taking place today through Saturday. Obviously gender studies should incorporate studying both genders, but stereotypically that's just not the way it tends to work out. It made me think about just how little masculinity is discussed. It's not something that comes up in conversations with my friends, and as evidenced by the name of the "women's and gender studies" minor offered at the University, it's not something widely discussed at an academic level either. An emphasis on masculinity might be less relevant to pressing social change and reversing discrimination, but for taking a critical look at the way our society constructs gender roles and typical behaviors, masculinity certainly is worth talking about.

It seems masculinity in popu-

lar culture is defined more by an avoidance of typically feminine behavior than by any actual definition of masculine behavior. The few stereotypical masculine behaviors such as hunting, working on cars and fighting aren't actually that popular among the majority of guys. However, participation in feminine activities such as watching "Gossip Girl," shopping or talking openly about feelings is much more likely to earn negative reactions.

Popular media is starting to subvert this structuring of masculinity. One example is the growing "bromance" film genre. The recent movie "I Love You, Man" and a plethora of Judd Apatow films feature male characters who share their feelings about one another in a typically un-masculine way. In the television world, characters like J.D. from "Scrubs" act in stereotypically feminine ways, like carrying around a unicorn diary in one episode. It certainly isn't the norm, and usually these characters are supposed to draw laughs rather than make a statement about the way we look at masculinity, but it is a step toward

guys being more accepting of male participation in typically feminine activities. Even the new James Bond movies portray the ultimate "guy" as a little more emotional and less of a womanizer. Weakening arbitrary gender divides in popular culture is eventually going to cause a restructuring of the way we define masculinity.

Unfortunately, gender studies tends to fall within the feminine realm of interests, meaning that working to develop a healthier definition of masculinity is, by its very nature, un-masculine. Guys need to make it OK to talk about what it means to be a guy, and participating in the conference is a good start. Any discussion of the role of gender in our society can't be truly accurate or productive without looking at multiple perspectives. Even more importantly, having a better discussion of what it is to be a guy is a vital step in building a healthier view of men with differing lifestyle choices. It's great to see the women's and gender studies conference sponsored by the Women's Resource Center willing to branch out to tackle this issue and draw more guys into the gender debate by developing more inclusive notions of masculinity and making the discussion of gender more accessible to a wider audience.

Tyler Retherford is a sophomore anthropology major from Springfield, Mo.

For guys, talking about "Gossip Girl" or openly expressing your feelings will earn negative reactions.

By getting involved with more than your pocketbook, you get to experience your good deed firsthand.

Big Event gives student chance to make a difference



Molly Skyles

Raking leaves for an elderly neighbor, volunteering at a soup kitchen or playing with abandoned pets at an animal shelter — community service isn't hard. It might even be fun.

When I went away to school, I thought my community service days were over. I assumed Kirksville wasn't the community of Truman students, so it wasn't going to be my community. I couldn't have been more wrong. For nine months out of the year, Kirksville is home to Truman students. We should be giving back to the community. I was excited to learn that there were ways to get involved and serve the local Kirksville community here at Truman. One of these was the Big Event sponsored by the SERVE Center, which took place last Saturday. This event allowed students to assist local residents and businesses in doing various tasks such as raking leaves, washing windows or painting. The Big Event is just one of the many examples of ways to serve at Truman.

Serving the community is important. So important, in fact, that President Obama endorses as much community service as possible. In a Dec. 5, 2007 speech in Mt. Vernon, Iowa, Obama discussed some of his ideas for integrating service into the everyday lives of citizens. Some of these include doubling the size of the Peace Corps, expanding the capacity of nonprofit organizations, integrating service-learning into schools and universities and providing more service opportunities to working Americans and retirees.

I've been harping on how everyone should volunteer and do community service, but why is it so important? There are sick people in the world who

need comfort. There are children in the world who need guidance. There are people in the world who need food and shelter. Now, you could argue that it is not our responsibility to solve all the world's problems and help all those in need. But I beg to differ. Who else is going to help those who cannot help themselves? The government? Maybe, but its to-do list already is endless. Granted, we cannot fix everything, but a little bit can go a long way.

Why aren't more people willing to pitch in and volunteer for a worthy cause? People often have the mentality that someone else will pick up the slack. Just like when you are in a house full of people and the phone rings, everyone always assumes someone else will answer it. As far as community service goes, there can never be too many volunteers. It would be practically impossible for everyone in need to be helped completely. But, the more people who are willing to help, the more gets accomplished.

A common misconception with community service is that to truly help people, you have to buy your way in. Yeah, you could give money to a needy organization or buy books for a struggling school, but community service does not require a big wallet. Simply giving money helps people, but by getting involved and physically assisting people you get to experience the effect of your good deed firsthand. Seeing the gratitude in someone's eyes for helping rebuild his or her home after a bad storm or even from shoveling snow is so much more rewarding than just sending a check ever could be.

Now that I've said my piece, I encourage others to realize the importance of community service. So clear one Saturday afternoon and pick up trash in a park or volunteer to help an elderly woman clean her home. It is never too late to help people.

Molly Skyles is a freshman communication major from St. Louis, Mo.

Porn debate offers little value



Andrew Kindiger

Tomorrow, adult film actor Ron Jeremy and Pastor Craig Gross will revisit the age-old debate between the passions of the flesh and moral virtue.

I can only hope that the women's and gender studies conference will receive better attendance than "The Porn Debate." Not to say that our guests Gross and Jeremy will not provide compelling arguments to support where they stand on the issue of pornography, but it seems like such a forum would be better suited for a chat room rather than an institution of higher learning.

I also hope that college students, especially at Truman, would understand that pornography is nothing more than a delusional fantasy marketed to those with no actual conception of the realities of sex. If a pizza delivery guy takes his pants off when he enters your home, a reasonable reaction would not be to ask for extra

sausage but to call the police. Don't get me wrong, I'm all for making sex less taboo, but I think there is a better way to do it than glorifying a male organ that already receives too much attention in our society.

And I think we've all heard enough about what the religious right has to say about sex. If you're a Christian you're not supposed to have any sort of pre-marital sex, much less experiment with acrobatics that would make Cirque Du Soleil envious. And if you're Catholic you just have to keep a rosary handy.

I was entertained at the notion of pitting a man that makes his living off of adult-themed movies against a man of God. I was sure Ron Jeremy Googled Pastor Gross to get more information on his

opponent, and I was curious to see what Gross uncovered if he decided to do any online research about Jeremy. I think one of the only things these two actually have in common is that at one point or another their immediate audiences will be on their knees.

This is not the first time these guys have met. They've been traveling around on a bus and hosting their

debate at a variety of venues. Both guys have had plenty of time to frame their arguments into less of a discussion and more of a show. This isn't an academic activity, or really even a socially conscious one. It's a carnival.

In light of the women's and gender studies conference let's keep in mind that there are more important things to worry about than what one man has to say about what another man does with his genitals. Our nation is engaged in two seemingly endless wars, China makes a killing off of steel while ignoring human rights violations, and too many families and young children have to live in a society without proper health care. Really, should we be too terribly concerned with what anybody can mass-produce with a video camera?

Mr. Jeremy and Pastor Gross, I have to apologize but I really don't care about your "Great Debate." I appreciate that you both are taking the time to visit Kirksville, but if God were going to be in the audience, I think that particular higher power would have some very interesting things to say about the occupations that both of these men draw a profit from, especially since the debate is more of a gimmick than one of Jeremy's movies.

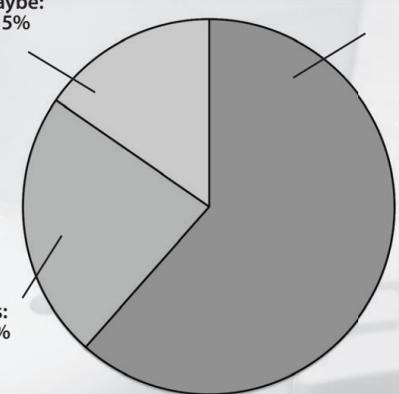
Andrew Kindiger is a sophomore English major from Liberty, Mo.

WEB POLL

Are you going to attend the Student Research Conference?

Maybe:
15%

No:
62%



Yes:
23%

This week's question:

Are you going to vote in the local election?

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