

"Norm is also a teacher. He may be a staff member, but at the same time when he is working with students in the studio, for example, setting up the lights, he is explaining what he is doing and how he is doing it." — Mark Smith, Professor of Communication

All Eyes On: Norman White

Truman's chief electrical engineer helps students and teachers with campus equipment

BY CASSANDRA MCCARTY
Features Editor

At 5:30 p.m. every Tuesday, News36 begins their weekly broadcast — but what the audience does not see is the man behind the scenes. Norman White is chief electrical engineer on campus, and he spends his days making sure the studio lights are in the correct position, the cameras can roll and the headsets are working.

White said he started his engineering career in 1985 when he moved from Columbia, Mo. to Dallas, Texas, to work for the company Rockwell. He said he worked there as a systems verification technician, but after five years he moved back to Columbia and began working as a robotics technician.

White became interested in broadcasting engineering when he accepted a position as master controller at the television station KOMU.

"And I worked there for nine years, almost 10 years, then I went to Georgia [for my wife's job]," White said. "I was online and met my wife online and fell in love and got married in 2001. And I went down to Georgia and worked at WJSP TV and radio, and they had these huge, clunky old transmitters, and it's 60,000 watts of power per tube, and we had three tubes. So we're talking about an ungodly amount of power and voltage."

White said he started as an assistant chief engineer, but when he found out his parents were sick he decided to take an electrical engineer position at Truman to be closer to them. Now, he said he sees his wife only one week per month because she works in Georgia. White spends his days at Truman making sure the transmitters are working properly and helping professors and students use the broadcasting equipment.

"From day to day, I go to the transmitter site and make sure my babies are well, and I make sure the STL, the student transmitter link, make sure its piping the stream that it's supposed to, the information stream over to our receiver and getting to our transmitter," White said. "Each day I check and make sure the importer and the exporter and our transmitter

are working properly, first thing I do. Then I come through and wait for the avalanche to fall."

The avalanche White is referring to is the various things that can and usually do go wrong with the broadcasting equipment, such as the headsets being broken and the News36 staff needing to run back and forth through the rooms to communicate with one another.

"It's electronics, and I oversee and facilitate, and I fix things," White said. "It's like that singer, Kenny Wayne Shepherd — 'Everything is broken' — it's like that song. And generally there are two or three things that will crop up per day that just don't work anymore in Barnett Hall."

Senior Jared Young said he works with White on News 36 to put the lights in the correct position for each production, but if there is a problem with a cable, camera or microphone, Young said White has the ability to fix it.

"Norm is the type that if he was running that equipment and it broke, he would know how to fix it," Young said. "And if he couldn't fix it he would get the parts to fix it. As Bill Cosby put it about Fat Albert, 'He is the kid in the neighborhood who can take apart a refrigerator and put it back together again.'"

Young said he wouldn't be surprised if White had a hammock strung between the transmitters on campus because Barnett Hall is like a second home for him.

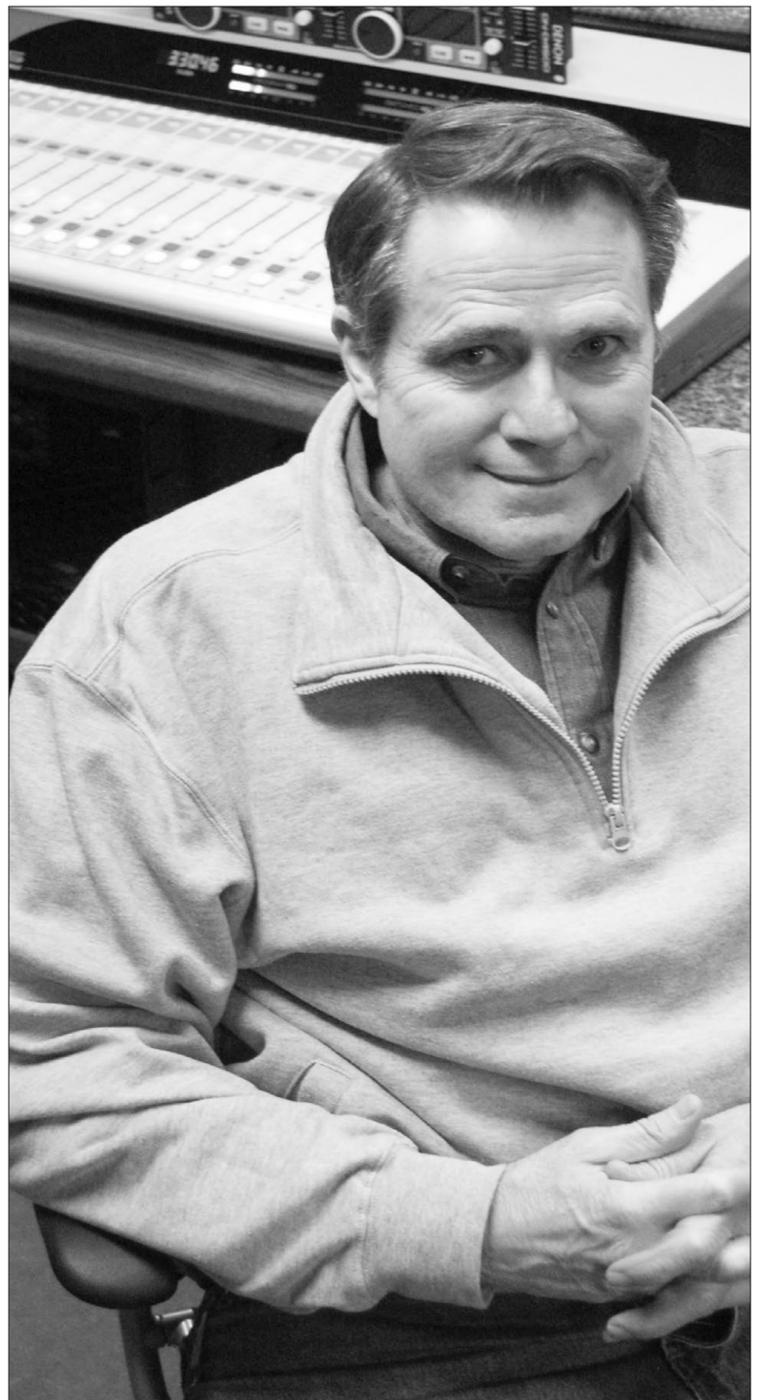
"I will see Norm up in the C-store getting stuff to eat or walking through the halls, and he always recognizes you, always says 'hello,'" Young said. "And that's not for me, he will do it for anybody. You will catch him shooting the bull with professors or just having fun."

Associate Professor of Communication Mark Smith teaches broadcast classes and said White helps set up off-line production for his students. Smith said White handles the maintenance and repairs for all of the equipment used, but more importantly, White provides students an opportunity to learn.

"Norm is also a teacher," Smith said. "He may be a staff member, but at the same time when he is working with students in the studio, for example, setting up the lighting, he is explaining what he is doing and how he is doing it. So Norm is a teacher, just as many other staffers on this campus are toward the students."

"It's electronics, and I oversee and facilitate, and I fix things. It's like that singer, Kenny Wayne Shepherd — 'Everything is broken' — it's like that song."

Norman White
Chief Electrical Engineer



Krista Goodman/Index
Norman White can frequently be found in Barnett Hall assisting News 36 with equipment issues. White is the chief electrical engineer on campus.

Film festival explores social problems

BY ANNE REBAR
Staff Reporter

Total darkness is interrupted by the glimmer of tiny stars when a sliver of blue light begins to form the outlines of a circle onscreen. As planet Earth begins to coalesce, the word "home" appears, and a voice begs, "Listen to me."

Thus began "Home," a 2009 documentary directed by Yann Arthus-Bertrand, and the first selection in the Social Awareness Film Festival, which kicked off with its screening Jan. 20.

Kate Seaton, a member of Students for Social Change, is heading the film festival at 6 p.m. every Wednesday in Magruder 1000 for the next five weeks. Different social issues will be highlighted in hopes of raising the community's awareness, Seaton said. Topics will include the economy, immigration, prostitution, gender issues, crime and poverty.

The environment received the spotlight this week. Arthus-Bertrand's "Home" shows the beauty and diversity of life on Earth and explains how people are contributing to the current environmental crisis.

Seaton said the first step in planning for the festival was choosing what topics to cover and finding movies that fit those topics.

"We don't have any funding or anything, so we were mostly looking for movies that don't have rights or contacting different organizations to see if they would be willing to waive the rights or give us a reduced rate," Seaton said.

Because many of the films were independent, Seaton said the students for social change had to go straight to the filmmakers to obtain rights to show the films. California Newsreel, a company that specializes in social justice films and made a couple of the films, gave discounted rates to the group. Funds for the student group are low, so most of the cost of the film festival will be paid out-of-pocket by members.

"Our club is pretty small, so the amount of things we can do on campus is kind of limited because we don't have a large amount of resources, but this is one thing we can do," Seaton said.

"There is not a lot of conversation about social problems on Truman's campus just because we live in a small town, and it's not really something we have to face on a daily basis. So we just wanted to get conversation flowing and get people thinking about issues that maybe they don't necessarily think of or maybe aren't even aware of."

Despite costing the Students for Social Change between \$200 and \$300 to put on, the film festival is free for Truman students and members of the Kirksville community.

"We would like to have more community members come," Seaton said. "Hopefully that's something we can work on next year, is more community involvement. We were

thinking about moving it off-campus, but that will involve a lot more work, so we will have to see."

Kathrine Olsen Flaate is president of Students for Social Change. She said the organization was very small when she started last semester, but the group has been working on increasing its numbers and becoming more active.

"We have a monthly peace demonstration on campus the third Thursday of every month by the Kirk Memorial Building," Olsen Flaate said. "It's a peaceful assembly for non-violence. It's not political. It's only to promote peace and understanding and solidarity for non-violence."

She said group members wanted to do something bigger on campus, and they thought movies are a great way to make people consider issues.

Senior Corinne Nagel attended the film festival the first night and said she really enjoyed herself.

"I think a film festival like this is a great idea for Truman's campus," Nagel said. "Not only does it provide something fun and free for people to do, it's also great that people can become better informed about important issues we face."

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Corinne Nagel
Senior

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