

Students eulogize smoke

Students protest smoking on campus with funeral

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Students dressed in bright colors and marched to "As the Saints Go Marching In" last Saturday.

They sang and danced as the procession made its way from Barnett Hall toward the Student Union Building. These students might have appeared to be part of light-hearted festivities, but in reality, they were celebrating a death. The parade was for the death of tobacco and the beginning of the students' social movement against smoking on Truman's campus.

As a part of communication

professor Barry Poyner's special topic class Social Movements, students attempted to create their own social movement to promote a smoke-free campus by celebrating the death of smoking with a traditional New Orleans-style, jazz funeral.

Poyner said he thinks the importance of social movements often is over-looked, so he volunteered to teach a special topic class about social movements. Poyner said younger people often are accused of not being activists,

and that this is often especially true at Truman.

"Some people kind of fault younger people today because they would say they're not activists, that they don't get into causes and in some ways, that's true for many of our Truman students," Poyner said. He said many Truman students respect authority instead of questioning it.

Starting with the seven students in his class, Poyner tried to encourage students to fight for a cause and create their own social movements.

The project tried to include other people on campus in the movement while making ties to what they learned in their class.

"We wanted to stimulate a social movement that would attract people to the cause," Poyner said. "The other thing was to examine what kind of rhetoric

could you use to get the crowd excited for the event. And they were able to use a number of slogans and rhetorical devices to get the participants active there."

Poyner got the idea to "bury" smoking from a smoking cessation class he helps facilitate. One of the class's participants created a tombstone for tobacco's symbolic death — a result of a person giving up the habit.

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Barry Poyner
communication professor



Submitted photo
Students carry coffin holding tobacco while marching to the Student Union Building as a part of an experimental social movement put on by the Social Movements class.

Poyner. "And I went to Louisiana State University and was a bit familiar with some of the jazz tradition in Louisiana, so I felt the jazz funeral might be fun as well."

Senior Xander Winkel is one of the students in Poyner's class who participated in the jazz funeral. Winkel said dancing and singing as part of the procession was his favorite part of the event.

While he said he was excited about the parade, he is not as enthusiastic about the

idea of a complete smoking ban on campus.

"I like the idea that there should be limits," Winkel said. The big thing that we were pushing is having a smoking space in between buildings. You walk outside one of the dorms, especially in cold weather, and you have people smoking right there."

Freshman Briana Bonner attended the funeral after Poyner urged her Public Speaking class to attend. Bonner said that although she received extra credit for

coming, she would have participated regardless.

The event contained personal meaning for her, she said.

"We all gave a little word about how tobacco has affected our life," Bonner said. "For example, my friend, she smokes and I really want her to stop. Everybody had different affects."

For Bonner, tobacco is a topic that is important to society, but is not adequately addressed.

"People say 'Oh, you

smoke — that's bad for your health,' but that's about it, so to see a movement happening I think this a good start," Bonner said.

The funeral of tobacco hasn't killed smoking on campus yet. The Board of Governors official policy for campus, which goes into effect beginning August 2011, allows smoking on campus as long as it is 25 feet away from buildings. While their celebration of death might be premature, their cause is alive and fighting.

DRAG seeks to support students

Students intend to form new organization to support LGBTQ students

CHARUNDI PANAGODA
Staff Reporter

When sophomore Natalie Green was in high school, her friend was bullied every day because she was openly lesbian. People insulted her and vandalized her car and parents threw her out of the house. After witnessing her friend's predicament, Green realized the importance of helping lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer students coming out to families.

Green met with psychology professor Sherri Palmer with an idea for a student organization that helps friends, families and LGBTQ students cope with coming out. Palmer has had years of experience helping students come out and for six years, she

was the local contact for the national organization, Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. Palmer understood the importance of such an issue because most students come out to parents who are shocked, angry or hurt. Palmer introduced Green to senior Erica Hoth, who had a similar idea.

Palmer and Hoth initially wanted to start a PFLAG chapter on campus. Palmer saw red flags with bylaws and procedures associated with the national organization that would have gotten in the way. Instead, they decided to start the Diversity Reconnection Ally Group — a sup-

port group dedicated to helping LGBTQ students, their families and allies.

DRAG aims to create a "safe place" where people are comfortable enough to open up and be themselves, Hoth said. DRAG's three main goals are to support, educate and advocate while promoting diversity and equality in the community.

"You can come in if you need someone to talk to or if you need resources," Green said. "We are kind of like a shoulder and an ear for them. We are going to provide education. I think sometimes it helps you to get through something if you understand it."

DRAG is undergoing the pre-

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Natalie Green
sophomore

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