

Encouraging openness

Human Library encouraged discussion of cultures and lifestyles

BY KASIE GARCIA
Staff Reporter

The newest type of book on Truman State's campus can respond and interact with its reader.

The Human Library, which occurred April 5 in the Student Union Building, is a concept that began in Denmark. The event includes people acting as "books" and readers with the purpose of starting conversations and encouraging understanding about different religions, cultures and people, according to the Human Library website. The event was organized and introduced to Truman's campus by senior Sophia Allen.

The Human Library begins with different people acting as "books" about topics covering different religions, cultures or lifestyles, Allen said. At the Truman Human Library, the human books included knowledge about Mormonism, Atheism, Chinese culture and Queerness, among other topics, she said. The person acting as each "book" is experienced with

the topic. At the Human Library, the participants are called readers and are able to have conversations and ask questions about the different "books."

Allen said she planned the event as part of a requirement for being a leadership scholar. Allen said what sparked her interest was the quote, "Seek first to understand and then to be understood," from the book "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People," by Steven R. Covey. Allen said she thinks there are many misconceptions about different cultures and religions that come from a lack of understanding.

"Sometimes we see people as a culture or stereotype and stop seeing them as actual people," Allen said.

She said the Human Library is intended to offer the environment for people to ask questions. Allen said she thinks some might be afraid of offending other people if they ask questions about religion or culture and the Human Library can help people freely say what they think and ask questions without being judged. The Human Library helped break down the walls between those groups and encouraged people to listen to other cul-



Kasie Garcia/Index

Students gathered April 5 in the Student Union Building to act as "books" and readers as a part of the Human Library. The event's purpose was to start conversations and encourage understanding between people of different religions, cultures and viewpoints.

tures and religions, Allen said.

Sophomore Miranda McMahon, who was the "book" about the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints, or Mormonism, said she learned a lot from talking to the "book" about Judaism and the "book" about Mennonites. McMahon said she felt the Human Library was a good event to "knock down barriers between people" and to help facilitate conversations.

"It will only benefit you as a person if you are more tolerable of other backgrounds," McMahon said.

Freshman Xiaoying He, one of the "books" about Chinese culture, said she gained knowledge from other "books" at the Library. One misconception she heard before coming to the U.S. was it was bad to talk about sexual orientation, religion and politics. She said she enjoyed seeing how open people were to talking about those things.

While the views and backgrounds of each "book" and "reader" differed before participating in the Human Library, Allen thought

a shared result when leaving the event was newfound respect, she said. She said she thinks the event was a success and was glad people came and talked to each other and asked questions. While the event has passed, Allen said she hopes people will continue to have conversations and to ask questions about different cultures and religions.

There are no concrete plans to have the Human Library during the future, but Allen said she hopes someone will choose to host the event again.

Art history major adds professional track

BY ANNA SELLE
Staff Reporter

For Truman State students who are interested in art history but don't want to add two semesters developing a thesis and a capstone project to their to do list, a new track for the major is being developed.

The art history major program recently has been split into two separate tracks — a thesis track and a PRAXIS track, art history professor Sara Orel said. The thesis track will function similarly to how the major has functioned during the 20 years since it was first offered at Truman, while the PRAXIS track will function more like a professional track, Orel said.

The PRAXIS track will include a 140-hour internship to be completed the summer following a student's junior year, accompanied with a class to assess the internship process and to assist students with the process of obtaining further in-

ternships, building résumés and turning those internship experiences into future careers. The change also will allow for more course requirement flexibility for both tracks, Orel said.

"Research is a major component for both tracks," Orel said. "It's just a different kind of research."

The major difference is the PRAXIS track will not require the two-semester senior thesis and recognizes that a lot of students that have been interested in art history as a potential major aren't interested in graduate research in art history, Orel said. She said that's really what the major was designed to facilitate. Orel said during the 20 years since the major was approved, the students have been more creative with where they want to go, and they know better what they want to do with it.

The PRAXIS track will help prepare students with the guidance of the art history

professors, the career center and alumni of the program, to be placed in internships and higher employment within various fields related to art history, including art administration, museum education or the legality of cultural heritage and ownership of art pieces, Orel said.

"I didn't have any interest in art history in high school, but I took a class with [art history professor Julia] DeLancey freshman year and really liked it," sophomore Chelsea Wagschal said. "I decided to be a minor, but I talked to Orel and decided I was really interested in museum work and education in general. I would like to do the research track, but I don't have time."

The flexibility allowed by the PRAXIS track will provide the opportunity to pursue a career in archival work, and will provide the ability to return to graduate school to pursue a master's degree or Ph.D. in art history, Wagschal said.

While the changes to the structure of

the program have opened accessibility to a broader range of students interested in differing aspects of art history, some students, like sophomore Duncan Holahan, want to continue pursuing their bachelor's degree in art history along the thesis track.

"I feel like right now the program is more structured for what I would want to do with art history," Holahan said. "A possible end goal for me is working in a museum as a curator and this is designed for me to go down that path to go to graduate school and start working on thesis papers and getting a really good footing in that area."

Holahan said he welcomed the lessening of required course hours that allowed him more flexibility, as he felt drawn to obtain a degree in art history.

"I was fueled by my passion for the subject, but I was also fueled by the professors' passion as well, and how much they care about it and really enjoy teaching the subject," Holahan said.

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