Free Your Mind: Down With MTV

By Jon Schell
Contributing Writer

I can’t help but become dis- gusted with what I see and read in our society today. We have channels on TV devoted entirely to tracking the every move of celebrities in Hollywood. It is impossible to jump channels without hearing about recent break-ups and the thousands of dollars being spent on lavish parties, or new dubs for a $50,000 Hummer. Newspapers are littered with headlines about a high school kid who will become a multi-millionaire in a few months for wearing a certain brand of shoe. Sure, he could do a quadruple pump, super toma- hawk 360° power jam even if I had him in a full nelson, but I don’t really care to read or hear about it.

To further add to my dis- gust, my remote often stops at channel 34, which on local cable is MTV. It’s often criticized for contributing to the pervasive shallowness and materialistic nature of our society. I am con- vinced that this is the case. Consider the show, “My Life.” Detailing the everyday lives of teenagers, a recent episode focused on cosmetic surgery: two women got a nose job and a liposuction, and a man got calf implants.

Hold on: calf implants? He was dead serious, but I couldn’t stop laughing. He said that he had the perfect body, minus a great set of gastrocnemius mus- cles. He couldn’t walk for sever- al weeks after the surgery, as a result of the silicon bags in his legs. But he now has the perfect body, and the confidence to wear shorts. And most importantly, he much it hurt and how ugly they were, but how their improved profiles would be worth the trou- ble. The women realized how ridiculous they seemed by appearing on the show: in the next week’s episode, after seeing themselves on TV, they said they didn’t want to come across as being that shallow. Thanks for the clarification, girls. “Shallow” never even crossed my mind. The words superficial, petty, transparent, and ridiculous seem appropriate.

So the point? Materialism breeds the superficial. We are a superficial society because we have the wealth to waste on enhancing surgeries. We don’t need to worry about where our food and water are coming from, and we seem to care more about Hummers and hoops than the people in our country that can’t afford to take their toddler to the doctor for a check-up.

Our country has so many opportunities to use our prosper- ity for common good, but dis- tractions along the way cause us to lose sight of the goal as MTV and other influential media sources keep spreading the self- ish ideals of capitalism. We need to stop the problem at the source—we need to stop putting so much stock in how a TV show tells us to think.

Contrary to popular con- ceptions, MTV is not bliss, especially when it comes to putting people on TV. It’s often criticized for being that shallow. Thanks for the clarification, girls. “Shallow” never even crossed my mind.

If EMU or JMU puts on an event, the television community may take notice. If EMU and JMU collab- orate on an event, the community may take notice. Let’s come together, student to student, and work for the better- ment of our community, not a petty rivalry. After all, ignorance is not bliss, especially when it turns into stereotyping and miss- ing the chance to collaborate with other people for the common good.

Ignorance: the Stalemate of Action

By Rachel Swartzendruber
Layout Editor

Let’s set the record straight. Friday the day I set foot on the EMU campus, I have sensed feel- ings of animosity between James M a d i s o n U n i v e r s i t y (JMU) and EMU. I do under- stand that there are two universities in the same town tends to cause a rivalry, but most such rivalries are formed over athletics, and EMU does not play JMU in any sports.

Paraphrasing from some- thing Rick Castaneda, Community Learning Coordinator for the Lilly Grant Project once told me, EMU does a wonderful job of reaching cross-culturally in the overseas programs, but sometimes lacks in their work here in Harrisonburg. Don’t get me wrong—we do try, but I think we would be able to succeed more if we cooperated with JMU.

So now, I am going to pro- pose a new, radical idea that may actually jar some people out of their everyday, mundane routine. No, I’m not talking about combi- ning schools and merging into one big university. I’m proposing cooperation between EMU and JMU.

First–Kristy’s Christmas. This JMU-sponsored program is a service project that provides a chance for underprivileged chil- dren to have a special Christmas. It is named after a student from Virginia Tech who had dedicated her life to community service. Her mother developed the program after she was killed in a car accident.

Since the creation of its extension at JMU, 20 children gather annually to eat breakfast, shop and play. Each child is joined by a JMU student, taken to K-Mart, allotted $100 for neces- sary items, such as winter clothes or a coat, and given $10 for a gift for whomever they choose. After their purchases are made, the children are taken back to JMU where they enjoy pizza, juice, cookies, and a visit from Santa. Each child is allowed to sit on Santa’s lap and then is given a present, pre-wrapped by the JMU students. This project is actual- ly scheduled for this next week-end, unless it is once more delayed by snow.

Second–Acting Out. Acting Out is unique in that it is also a class offered by the JMU Social Work Department. Acting Out is a program that invites area teenagers to meet once a week to work on improvisational techniques. The participants work with staff (JMU students) through improvisational games, role plays and small group discussions to examine what is happening in their lives. The teen stories are combined into a series of skits, which are eventually publicly performed at Court Square Theater.

And two programs are just two of many projects on which students could choose to collabo- rate. Smaller programs may include an AIDS walk, such as the one being put on by a JMU sorority on April 5th. All of the proceeds go directly to the Valley AIDS Network.

As my friend Morgan once said, “EMU students don’t hate JMU students, and JMU students don’t hate EMU students. For some reason, that comes as a big surprise.”

Foot In Mouth

“"You have to learn how to BS if you’re really going to make it.”

Jerry Holopainen, Beginning Electronic Media Production

Have a comment? Send it in an email along with the professor’s name and class.