Putting Faith Into Words

By Gente Hoer Contributing Writer

It’s been a few years since EMU has heard another round of the C. Henry Smith Peace Oratorical. In fact, most students and some faculty were not aware of this competition until the speakers made their debut last Friday.

According to Nancy Heisey, Bible and Religious Department chair, EMU has participated in the event previously but this is the first time in her four years here that it has been.

Last fall, all students received a letter in campus mail inviting them to participate in the contest, and this past Friday four students presented their orations to the three judges and a handful of other interested listeners. The three judges, Jane Docherty, associate professor of conflict studies, Barbara Graber, theater professor, and Jay Landle, English professor, were all asked and they were happy to have their expertise and perspectives into judging the event. The contestants were judged according to topic, content, delivery, introduction, conclusion, creativity, and originality. Based on support from the C. Henry Smith Trust, MCC is able to offer prize money for each school that wishes to participate.

This year’s contestants, Senior Hannah Clymer, Senior Nate Hofler, Sophomore Zachary Kurtz, and Sophomore Peter Sensing, each presented unique ideas about applicable peace.

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Lunney’s case, it settled in the base of his brain. Lunney was admitted to the hospital Friday night.

Because this is a viral sickness, there is no drug to directly attack the pathogen responsible. Doctors are just trying to keep Lunney as comfortable as possible, which means that he is not allowed to have the TV, radio, or any lights on, and of course pain killers must be given.

But friends are always welcome, when Lunney is awake enough to see them. “The volleyball team has been awesome,5 he said with a smile. “I feel blessed that I have the friends that I do.”

Lunney’s mother has also declared she won’t head home to Wisconsin until Lunney is well on his way to a full recovery.

How long will that take? Lunney says he has no idea: “I’m just trying to keep me much.” Patients can usually have recovery in five to 14 days. This form of mono doesn’t involve any bacteria on the culture, so it’s not contagious.

During her speech, Clymer said, “I’m passionate about a peace that doesn’t get a lot of air time,” and went on to describe the peace that comes from speaking honestly to those with whom we live and interact.

First place winner Zachary Kurtz summed up one main theme of his speech, “If we would be really serious about preventing war and helping the human race as a whole, then we’d at least be trying to keep our income taxes away from the military machine.” Runners up Peter Sensing and Hannah Clamon will also be receiving prize money. Wednesday morning chapel included shortened versions of the winners’ speeches, so that the greater student body was able to join with them in the content of the contest. The students believed the biggest impact was about peace.

A cassette tape with Kurtz’s speech as well as the written form will be submitted to a bi-national contest, in which he will have the opportunity to win more prize money, as well as the opportunity to receive a scholarship towards attending a peace-related conference or seminar.

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The contest was first started in 1974 to honor C. Henry Smith, a Mennonite teacher, writer, and historian. Besides a teaching career that began in 1903 at Goshen College and lasted until 1948, including both Bluffton and Bethel colleges, Mr. Smith was the first Mennonite in North America to earn a Ph. D. and remain in the Mennonite church. He was also a key figure in planning the Mennonite encyclopedia, as well as publishing five major works over a span of 35 years.

Heisey noted that extra efforts will be made in upcoming years to make the greater campus aware of the time and location of the competition, so that the students will be able to share their ideas with a broader audience.

The C. Henry Smith Peace Oratorical Contest is organized by Mennonite Central Committee and takes place all over Mennonite and Brethren in Christ college campuses in the U.S. and Canada. The contest consists of presenting a speech of longer than 1500 words “on the general theme of the application of the Christian peace position to contemporary concerns,” according to the official contest guidelines.

Wednesday, and will involve the collection of essential health and sanitation supplies for distribution to Iraqi victims of the war. Donations of soap, shampoo, laundry detergent, toothpaste and toothbrushes, new bath towels, Band-Aids, and sanitary pads are to be deposited at a collection table in the Campus Center.

A special “Response to War” program, organized in part by the group which coordinated EMU’s response to Sept. 11 and held after last Friday’s chapel included statements from students, faculty, and EMU’s president. Lapp read a prepared statement, saying, “Our hope is not in military might or victory. Our hope is that our lives will glorify this great God.”

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