OrangeBand Addresses Conflict

By Emily Benner
Staff Writer

JMU student Kai Degner was having an ordinary day until his friend approached him with some bad news. The marines had called his friend out of reserves, and he would join the forces in Kuwait immediately. Until then, Kai had not even thought about the war. Eventually their focus branched out to other areas of conflict. The next week, later the OrangeBand initiative was in full swing.

OrangeBand is a group of JMU students who initiate conversation about local, national, and international conflicts. They have created a way for students and faculty to stop debating and talk together, without saying a word: by wearing an orange band. When controversy arises, the group provides orange bands and patches for people to wear on campus as a way of welcoming others to strike up positive conversation or ask a question about the conflict at hand.

The group selected the color orange for several reasons. Unlike many colors, orange does not symbolize a certain sentiment or cause. Some OrangeBanders choose to make a statement by writing opinions or questions on their bands, but the band itself is neutral-colored and therefore represents a willingness to discuss rather than defend a certain viewpoint. Orange attracts attention at a distance, and the thousands of orange spots floating from campus to classmate to classmate to confront the conflict. Over 2,000 people took up the OrangeBand initiative on the JMU campus last semester. Now they are asking EMU to join them.

Each semester, OrangeBand focuses on one international, one national, and one local topic for discussion. This semester’s international topic is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, specifically what role the U.S. should play.

They also hope to explore the religious issues surrounding the conflict, U.S. policy, and what this means for the Middle East. On a national level, OrangeBanders are asking about U.S. healthcare and whether we should adopt a universal healthcare system. They will question the role of HMOs and insurance companies, whether same-sex partners should receive healthcare benefits from their spouse’s employer, and whether the price of drugs should be lowered.

Locally, they are concerned with the lack of diversity in the JMU community. OrangeBand will open up conversation in two to four forums on each subject, in which speakers and panels will present opposing views. OrangeBand has invited any interested EMU students or faculty to attend their open forums or planning meetings. Forums will take place Nov. 3-14, and weekly meetings are held Fridays at 12:30 p.m. in the lower section of JMU’s Festival Dining Center. (They have alternate meeting times for those who cannot attend on Friday.) If one has interest in joining OrangeBand’s forums or becoming a member, he or she may visit the website: www.orangeband.org or email staff@orangeband.org.

Godspell: Colorful Gospel

By Jeremy B. Yoder
Co-editor-in-chief

In the songbook of history, the decade of the '70s is one of those annoying tunes that even an entire Wagner’s Greatest Hits album can’t drive from your mind. The musical Godspell is one of the rare cases in which this is a good thing.

EMU’s fall mainstage production is a light-hearted “CliffsNotes” version of the Gospel According to Matthew, dressed in clashing colors and set to catchy music. It’s well cast, with strong solid singers, and soloists know their material well. Godspell illustrates a straightforward, community-centered theology. Most of the play is Jesus and his disciples hanging out together, talking shop, scripture in the same way most EMU students discuss the field hockey team’s latest successes. Sometimes Jesus does the teaching; sometimes his disciples reflect it back to him in light-hearted performances of familiar parables.

Effort has also been made to make the play more relevant to current events. In Rachel Swartzendruber’s performance of the song “Turn Back, Oh Man,” which touches on everything from consumerism to global warming to the war in Iraq, Jesus’ ministry from his baptism to his betrayal makes up the vast majority of the plot; the play skips the nativity, includes only an abbreviated crucifixion scene, and hints at the resurrection without actually depicting it. It’s reminiscent of Thomas Jefferson’s edited gospel, which included all of Christ’s teachings and none of his miracles.

Set design and costuming work together to give the production an abstract, timeless feeling. The set is extremely simple, consisting only of a few boxes, a raised platform, and a green-carpeted ramp running from the stage to the aisle. Actors, however, are elaborately and colorfully costumed and provided with a wide variety of props for use in singing, dancing, and acting out parables, or watching each other’s monologues with barely contained excitement.

Degner’s Jesus is friendly and wise, with a sly sense of humor. The cast members, Ben Wilkins and David Rohrer, take on the roles of John the Baptist and Judas, respectively. The rest are an ensemble of disciples, mostly interchangeable except for a few stand-out teachers, such as Rodney Umble’s country bumpkin of a Good Samaritan, who offers his wine to his beast of burden after applying it to the fallen traveler’s wounds.

OrangeBand Committees

Education:
Finds credible sources of information (i.e. media, personal accounts).

Advertising:
Spreads the word, decides on color schemes, text font, website layout.

Technology:
Maintains website, suggests new technology for OrangeBand.

Outreach:
Media relations, introduces OrangeBand to the community.

Event Planning:
Logistics.

Quick Action:
Distributes orange bands, plans immediate response to conflict.

Steering:
Gives support and advice to committees, runs staff meetings.

Faculty:
Provides guidance and expertise (EMU faculty welcome).

Vision:
Long-term planning.

Advocates:
Represent their assigned group (EMU, for example).

Relief Sale Results

Maple donuts sold: 16,000
“Penny Power” profits: $13,100
Total profits: $226,000
Highest quilt bid: $4,600
Highest non-quilt bid: grandfather clock for $4,400

Bidders: 543 from 19 states

Source: MCC

What's Up in the 'Burg?

Thursday, October 9
- Open Mic Night at the Little Grill Collective
- Keeping Up with the Joneses, 8 p.m. JMU Mainstage Performance; Latimer-Shaeffer Theatre
- Bat-Boy: The Musical, 8 p.m., JMU Experimental Theatre

Friday, October 10
- Keeping Up with the Joneses, 8 p.m. JMU Mainstage Performance; Latimer-Shaeffer Theatre
- Latino Night at La Hacienda Restaurant, 10 p.m. – 2 a.m.
- Bat-Boy: The Musical, 8 p.m., JMU Experimental Theatre

Saturday, October 11
- Harrisonburg Farmer’s Market, 7 a.m. – 1 p.m., Water Street Parking Deck
- Shenandoah Farmer’s Market Woodstock, Virginia. 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. Located in the Shenandoah County Office Building parking lot.

Tuesday, October 14
- Acoustic Folk at Dave’s Taverna, 8 p.m.

Wednesday, October 15
- Harrisonburg Farmer’s Market, 7 a.m. – 1 p.m., Water Street Parking Deck