Pi Throw’s delicious tradition

In February, it’s common to send sweets to your loved ones. March is not so different on the University of Alberta campus.

Organized by the Engineering Students’ Society, the 2011 Pi Week honoured the fourteenth day of the third month (yes, 3.14) with the Pi Throw, an annual fundraiser for Habitat for Humanity.

Staff and students all over campus ponied up ten dollars each in order to mark their favourite faculty members, fellow students and friends for a whipped-cream pie to the face. More than 75 people were pied, with more than 100 pies purchased.

Some unsuspecting victims accepted their fate. Others responded quickly and, for a further donation, redirected their pies elsewhere. Warring factions sent volleys back and forth across classrooms and between campuses – though, despite their best efforts, this still generally concluded with the destruction of several platefuls of whipped topping.

Redirections bring in about half of the funds raised. In one case, ten pies were set to be delivered, but deflections raised more than $400 in that class alone.

Many participants endured or deflected a single pie, while others received multiple nominations each. One professor weathered the storm of eight separate pies, all sponsored by adoring graduate students.

Several fresh and delicious take-home pie options were also available through Pi Week organizers for an appropriate π-related sum.

Student engineering groups across Canada pay tribute to Pi Week with similar events, raising money for their charity of choice. This year’s Pi Week raised $1939.30, which brings the total to more than $7000 raised since the U of A ESS Pi Throw began in 2002.

“Habitat for Humanity is a well-respected charity,” noted ESS Pi Throw Coordinator Chris Schneck. “The ESS’ other charity events (i.e. Headshave, Movember) are focused on cancer research and awareness, so Habitat takes a different focus by giving back to the less fortunate.”

Habitat For Humanity and the low-income families it supports will surely find this fundraiser’s results even more fulfilling.
Five years ago, Fraser Mah hadn’t decided on his major until he attended an Open House hosted by the Faculty of Engineering. He had yet to make up his mind about his degree: engineering, or philosophy?

While perusing the booths at the event, he stopped for a moment to speak with the Engineers Without Borders (EWB) chapter. The passion and commitment from the group resonated with him, and the degree choice became much clearer.

Now in his fifth year in the co-op route of Environmental Engineering, Fraser Mah is preparing to travel to Africa as part of the EWB’s Junior Fellowship program – a four-month volunteer placement in rural Malawi. He now needs to bring his suitcase, his University of Alberta education, his curiosity and problem-solving abilities to the small communities which dot the Malawian landscape.

Young engineers on these fellowships are pushed to be creative and socially-minded while implementing practices they’ve learned in post-secondary study. The strength in such programs lies in mentoring local colleagues, learning to relate to stakeholders to isolate the problems, and to work with them to develop sustainable solutions.

To support the locals, Fraser and the EWB organization will develop means of monitoring the location and condition of water wells, look for links between the well data and health statistics for the area, and to facilitate and improve leadership and quality resource management in the local communities.

Mah is cautious but confident about his upcoming projects. “What does an engineering student have to offer? You can’t just go and expect you know things. I need to be pragmatic and humble about what I don’t know, to remember to ask questions; to determine what I know, to question how and why I know it.”

An active member since his first year, Mah spent the 2010-11 school year as president of the University of Alberta EWB chapter, supporting dozens of active members and the fundraising, member learning and outreach programs which are integral to the EWB organization. “It’s fun seeing how things go and cogs click,” said Mah, “but it also helped me understand where I excel and where I sometimes falter.”

Mah and his fellow traveller, electrical engineering student Tanya Herbert, were chosen in October. Since then, along with his studies and EWB training, he has been educating himself about aid industry approaches which have or have not worked.

“Sometimes the system doesn’t facilitate [the districts] working as best they can,” says Mah. “There is a need within the system to build better systemic leadership and relations with non-governmental organizations.”

He also worries about the narrow scope which some students and organizations take. “We are all compassionate, caring and want to do good; the problem is when differences in ‘good’ don’t overlap.”

Helping build capacity for water and sanitation services in a Malawian district is a world away from life as a student in western Canada. Fraser Mah, however, will find a role for himself and finally find out first-hand what a student can bring in such a unique environment.

“Philosophy and engineering maybe shouldn’t be so different”, said Mah. “Engineers are creating things that are so fundamental to life; we seem to need a better understanding of them and how they find their place.”

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**Engineers Without Borders Canada** is a strong organization with extremely committed student and professional members, with the goal of improving development outcomes in poverty-stricken rural areas of Africa. Their projects strive to improve incomes from humble farms, increase access to clean water, and to improve critical infrastructure and services whenever possible. EWB Canada celebrated Global Engineering Month with the $50000 grand prize after being voted as Canada’s favourite charity in the Wind Mobile Charity Challenge.
On March 22, some of the best and brightest minds in Alberta came together to celebrate their achievements. At the reception held at the Myer Horowitz Theater, several students and faculty from the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering were honoured for their academic excellence, creativity and perseverance. The event, attended by provincial and University dignitaries including Alberta Premier Ed Stelmach, honoured the innovative work being done by U of A students and staff.

The awards presented at this event are sponsored by many respected Canadian organizations. The recognition is not only for a high standard of academic excellence, but also recognizes creativity, resourcefulness and those who are becoming leaders in their community and in their area of study. Attendees were treated to a display of the talents of the West African Drumming Ensemble, the Augustana Choir, and various artists from the Department of Art and Design.

As University President Samarasekera said, “if ideas and talent are today’s currency, then the University of Alberta is very rich indeed.” Congratulations to our outstanding students and faculty!

**Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships**
Lisa Brown  Steven Oosterhof

**Izaak Walton Killam Memorial Scholarship**
Hassan Moghimi

**NSERC Postgraduate Scholarship**
Jennifer Nafziger

**Dissertation Fellowship**
Nasreen Jahan

Yasser Ebrahimy Khorramabady

**Alberta Ingenuity Graduate Student Scholarships (MSc, PhD)**
Lisa Brown  Alexander Holden  Hassan Moghimi  Zhiya Sheng
Mehdi Dastfan  Zahidul Islam  Ahmed Moustafa  Christianne Street
Mohamed El Daly  Matthew Long  Steven Oosterhof

**Alexander Graham Bell Canada Student Scholarships (NSERC) (MSc, PhD)**
Alexander Holden  Janelle Morley  Sarah Jubinville  Christianne Street

**NSERC Undergraduate Student Research Awards**
Alexandra Couillard  Jamie Hynes  Danika Medinski  Marc Ta-ala
Nickolaus Gilmour  Bryan Marriner  David Murphy  Timothy Vankamp
Tao Guo  Vincent McFarlane  Michael Ross  Na Yin
CSCE Awards Night

On March 22, the Canadian Society for Civil Engineering (CSCE) recognized contest winners and scholarship recipients at an event honoring the excellence of young engineers.

**CSCE Poster Competition**

**People’s Choice Award:** Mimanat Soleimanifar

*Robust Positioning Architecture using Wireless Sensor Networks for Construction Asset Localizations*

**First Place:** Amir Hossein Azimi

**Numerical Simulation of Sand and Slurry Jets**

**Second Place:** Mohamed Elsanabary

*Investigation of Precipitation Patterns Variability over the Ethiopian Highland*

**Third Place:** Nancy Gutierrez

*Dissolved Oxygen Prediction in the Athabasca River*

**Larry Gerard Technical Paper Contest**

**First Place:** David Selke, Jennifer Hiebert

**Second Place:** Nicholas Landry, Stefan Engleder

**Third Place:** Vincent Huang, Lisa Wilcox

**Graduate Student Scholarship**

Alireza Habibzadeh

**Undergraduate Bursary**

Sinclair Slusariuc

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**Important Upcoming Dates**

- **April 13**: Last day of winter term classes
- **April 15 to 30**: Winter term final exams
- **April 22 & 25**: University closed (Easter)
- **May 9**: Spring term begins

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Students should apply for graduation in Bear Tracks well before the convocation deadline.

Applications for graduation are subject to review and approval by the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research. Submitting the application to convocate does not guarantee convocation.

The deadline for thesis submission is 4 PM on April 15, whether students are submitting electronically or by hard copy; theses received electronically after 4 PM will be considered submitted in the next submission period. Students who plan to submit their theses electronically should register with DSpace (the digital repository) well in advance of the date they plan to submit, as there may be a twenty-four hour delay between registration and being granted permission to submit.

MEng students must submit a CD version of their final reports to the graduate advisors’ office by April 30.

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Make the switch – and win

As of Monday, March 21, the University of Alberta began making the transition from AICT’s central servers to the new uAlberta Gmail environment. This moves you to a 7GB email account – while keeping your @ualberta email address – and improves mobile capabilities but also provides access to the rest of the uAlberta Google Apps suite of collaboration and communication tools. The applications include Google Calendar, Google Docs (word processing, presentations, spreadsheets, forms), Google Talk (instant messaging) and Google Sites (for creating simple websites). The University of Alberta’s agreement with Google indicates that Google will have no access to our data and there will be no advertising associated.

Make the move at www.ualberta.ca/google/switch before April 29, 2011 and enter to win an iPad2, a 42” plasma TV, an HTC Android phone and other prizes.

IMAGINING the UNIVERSITY
with Dr. Ronald Barnett

APRIL 11 & 12, 2011

In this year of the new academic plan for the university, the Centre for Teaching and Learning is pleased to host our upcoming symposium, “Imagining the University”. Dr. Ronald Barnett from the University of London will be joining us to discuss what it means to be a university in two sessions:

Session 1: Imagining The University
April 11, 2:00 PM to 3:30 PM
2-1 University Hall (Council Chambers)

Session 2: Graduate Student Attributes
April 12, 8:30 AM to 10:00 AM
3-15 University Hall

If you are interested in attending these sessions, kindly RSVP by April 6, 2011 at ctl@ualberta.ca. For more information visit: www.ctl.ualberta.ca.