

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 18 Iss 47 2010-11-26

Gotta Have It!

Shop 'til you drop

Artist's Touch

Creativity matters

Africa Reborn

Developing self-reliance

*Plus: The Mindful Bard, Cruiscin Lan,
Click of the Wrist, and much more . . .*



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We love to hear from you! Send your questions and
comments to voice@voicemagazine.org, and please
indicate if we may publish your letter.



EDITORIAL

Christina M. Frey

Shop 'Til You Drop



The scene: a parking lot. The time: this morning, before dawn. Although most of us were still snuggled into our comfortable beds in our warm houses, tens of thousands of people across the United States were sitting out on the concrete, huddled against one another and wrapped in quilts and blankets to keep warm in those chilliest night hours before the sun rises.

Homeless? Poverty-stricken? Hardly. They were waiting for the stores to open at 5 a.m. so they could score a fabulous deal on the very latest model of LCD TV.

After all, today was Black Friday, the day after US Thanksgiving and *the* premier shopping day in the States—comparable to Canada’s Boxing Day, and then some. It’s a chance to save big-time on your Christmas shopping (or personal shopping). And lately, it’s become a holiday in its own right.

Because stores open in the wee hours of Friday morning, many shoppers—eager to be first in line—arrive the night before and set up camp; and last week, a Florida family made the national news by starting its camp-out outside Best Buy a full week before Black Friday.

Then, when the store’s doors open, the herds rush in. And I mean the herds, because for many, it’s almost a desperate undertaking. Stores are trashed; good manners and common courtesy are trampled. So, by the way, are people; last year, employees and shoppers were injured by the stampeding masses. One employee died. Died, so that people could save a few hundred bucks.

It’s like a jungle, and we’re animals fighting over a prize. The year I went Black Friday shopping, I was embarrassed to be a member of the human race. I haven’t been back since; for my own safety and sanity, I’ve reserved my deal-hunting for online shopping.

But is that much better? Because it’s not Black Friday itself that’s the problem. It’s that we don’t just *desire* to score that über-deal, we somehow *need* it.

Look at the pattern. It started with Black Friday, but now the hype begins far earlier: it’s now “Black Friday Week,” with special sales from Monday to Monday, both at stores and online. For example, online giant Amazon.com has been posting a slew of secret limited-time, limited-quantity, deals all week, causing hapless customers—including me—to log on several times a day in the hopes of finding something that will make our lives complete.

We’ve all heard the advertising catchphrase “A deal so good you just can’t pass it up.” Just a slogan? Maybe not.

The problem is that it’s getting harder and harder for us to pass up that chance to “afford” the latest and newest model of the It-Thing—whether it’s the new smart phone, the “in” toy, or the coolest tool.

True, we all like to save a few bucks on our Christmas shopping. But it’s a lot deeper than that. “Gotta have it!” one advertisement breathes. And unfortunately, we “gotta.”

The old “we’re all too materialistic this time of year” saw doesn’t really cut it anymore. We don’t need another editorial or ghost story to tell us that we’ve lost our focus and our sense of what matters. We already know it. What we don’t know is *why*.

So maybe we need a new approach. This season, when the ads pop up and we zero in on our prey, let’s remember that unlike the animals we’re mimicking, we can think. Let’s ask ourselves why we feel we need that new gaming console or stand mixer so badly.

Without a hint of sarcasm, let’s ponder what will happen if we don’t own the latest, coolest, and best. Will it affect us internally? Are we trying to prove something to others—or to ourselves? Are we using things to buttress our own flagging self-esteem? Are we escaping from personal problems—things in our immediate surroundings (family issues, stalled careers, financial difficulties) or deeply-buried hurts?

During the holiday season, we focus on giving. This year, let’s also give ourselves a gift: the gift of understanding. Discover *why* materialism is so necessary. Examine the hidden problems, hurts, and pain in our lives and relationships. Work through things. Consider counselling. Talk. Explore. Love.

What better way to get in the holiday spirit?



IN CONVERSATION WITH . . .

Wanda Waterman St. Louis

Africa Genesis Foundation, Part I

The Africa Genesis Foundation (AGF) was born in the Labour Ward of Lwala Hospital in Northern Uganda in 1991 and was registered as a not-for-profit corporation in 1994 by American feminist theologian Dr. Colleen. The foundation is a joint American-African organization that fosters health improvements for underprivileged peoples in rural parts of Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. Recently, Hosea Ayienga Masiga, Executive Secretary of AGF’s Regional Board of Directors, took the time to answer some questions from Wanda Waterman St. Louis.



The Mission

AGF focuses on human development from a health perspective—especially of women, because women give birth to a nation. Economic, financial, and technological developments are secondary goals.

The underlying rationale is that economic, financial, or technological developments are passing elements. [W]hen people are developed, they in turn can initiate [these] developments. With these developments comes social justice and peace.

About Dr. Colleen

Dr. Colleen . . . a feminist theologian . . ., is the founder, president, and CEO of the Africa Genesis Foundation.

Dr. Colleen almost single-handedly raises financial resources for the foundation. She is meticulous and diligent, and this has kept AGF in the good books of all the authorities; she always sees a facet that I and other AGF officers may ignore.

What We Do

AGF focuses on development of the human person. At AGF we believe that when humanity is well-developed, other elements of development will follow. Thus, self-reliance is an important tenet of AGF's Program Service undertakings, especially listening to the voice of the people. In simple imagery, we give a bicycle ride with the intention of giving the bicycle, but if one does not know how to ride, we help them learn.

For our Health Promotion and Disease Prevention programs for malnourished people, AGF bought initial foodstuffs, then provided seeds and fertilizers for a village in Western Kenya. But the people planted, harvested, and sold, and with the profits they provided for their own nutrition the next year.

For a family with no shelter, AGF built a house and put the breadwinner back on a TB regime so that he could take care of his family. For another family, AGF started a maize and fish business. For a widow with six children, AGF bought initial food, then baby chicks, three goats, a cow, and a tract of land. The widow successfully provided milk, protein, and crops for her sick, starving children.

AGF has sent students to tertiary institutions for development studies [and] midwifery, and [facilitated] a pre-medical degree for a young man who aims to be a physician. Investment in human education of students will bring an uplifting return to their local communities, their countries, and the world at large.

Fundraising

AGF sells artifacts from Kenya and Tanzania: in particular, batiks, hand-carved wooden African animals, sisal purses, beaded necklaces and bracelets, katenge, and the like. We have a special occasion *Taste-of-Africa*, where we prepare African foods such as matoke, mbuzi, ugali, sukuma wiki, and simsim chicken, and auction the aforementioned art and craft work. In the near future, we plan to sell advertising space on the AGF website and [offer] other online services such [as] Kiswahili lessons, local



travel insights, and individual guided tours.

All these products are sold for the benefit of AGF Program Services. Our current initiative involves marketing children's art and literary work for the benefit of a school with orphan girls, some of whom have HIV/AIDS. We plan also to finish the clinic near Lira in Northern Uganda which was begun by our local director there, who, with his two sons, unfortunately, succumbed to AIDS.

To be continued next week . . .

CLICK OF THE WRIST: Make Mine Cake

Need a reason to celebrate? Friday, November 26 is the loosely-designated National Cake Day, and this week's links examine the popular dessert from all angles. Hungry yet? Grab your own favourite flavour of cake, and start clicking.

Not Your Ordinary Cake

Move over, boring birthday cakes. These masterpieces from a Russian cake decorator are less dessert and more art; as one commenter noted, they're essentially "edible sculptures." From a big blue sneaker to a briefcase of cash, these creations really, er, take the cake.

Just Like the Pros

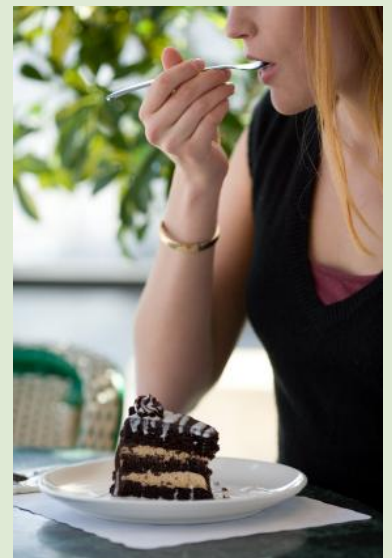
How do the professional cake decorators do it? Years of practice and mastery of techniques, of course. But don't be discouraged, because even complete newbies can turn out some professional-looking work. Buddy from TLC's TV show *Cake Boss* provides video tutorials that will guide you through a few cake decorating techniques that will amp up the cool factor of your own cakes and cupcakes.

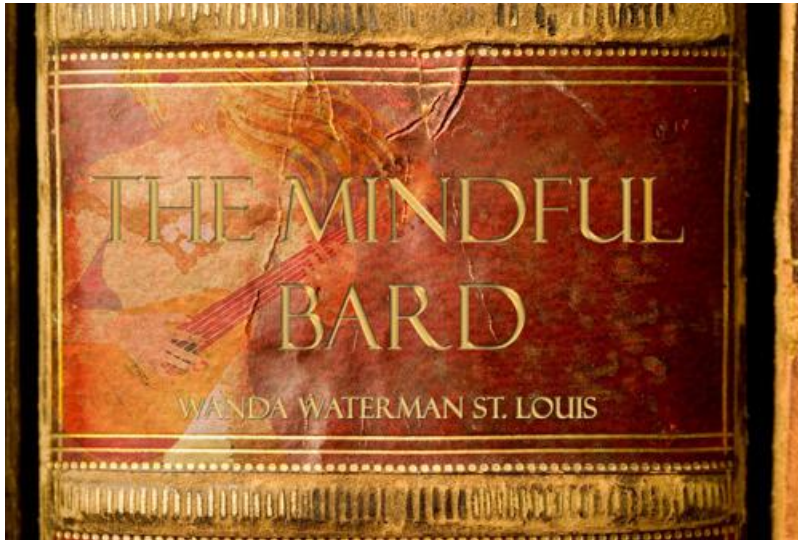
Off to the Wedding

From Mardi Gras king cake to Christmas fruitcake and everything in between, there's a unique cake for every cultural occasion. One of the cakes with the strangest history, though, must be the wedding cake. Surprised? The *Smithsonian Magazine's* food blog describes some of the strange—and downright inedible—historical origins of the wedding treat.

God of Cake

What happens when a gloriously delicious cake is temptingly dangled just out of the reach of a very resourceful four-year-old? This hysterically funny, autobiographical blog post from Hyperbole and a Half will have you holding your sides.





Books, Music, and Film to Wake Up Your Muse and Help You Change the World

Book: Yishai Sarid, *Limassol* (Trans. Barbara Harshaw).

Publisher: Europa Editions, 2010.

"I asked Haim if he had any idea of how to get Yotam off drugs. 'You won't like what I tell you.' His red eyes groped for mine, he squinted slightly. 'You know what my answer is.'

'Opium for the masses,' I said.

'Exactly. The only drug mankind has found to ease its oppression. Faith in the Creator of the World. When he has the courage to shout to heaven and ask for pity and forgiveness, then he'll be cured . . .'"

Yishai Sarid, *Limassol*

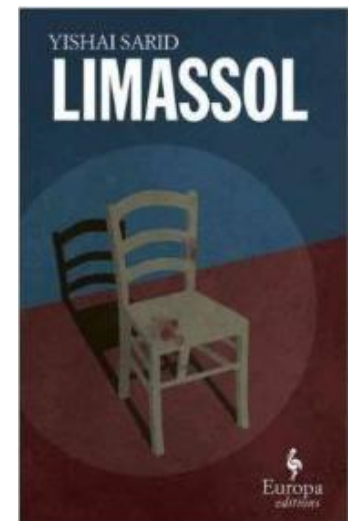
The Israeli secret service has put a lot of sweat into an endeavour to off a Palestinian terrorist leader. Limassol is the tourist mecca in Cyprus where the murder is to take place. Our protagonist is an Israeli interrogator, gifted, to understate it, with the ability to extract information in a timely fashion. He's been assigned to set up the assassination and so must befriend Daphna, a beautiful Jewish novelist, and her friend Hani, the ailing Palestinian poet who happens to be the father of the terrorist.

Our agent had originally entered his field in an attempt to shore up a peace that he once embraced with starry eyes but which he no longer believes possible under the present system. He's beginning to empathize with the interrogation subjects he brutalizes. As an obvious effect of work-related emotional trauma, he appears to be compulsively distancing himself from the wife and son he can't bear to lose. The nature of his work and his present level of burnout are pulling apart his family and making his presence a liability in the interrogation cellars.

In the process of contriving a friendship with Daphna and Hani, he grows to love them both—and they come to love him. Alone with the Arab Hani, the agent asks him the same question Massa asks Uncle Tom in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: "Why don't you hate us?" Hani's answer is that it's his love for one Jew, Daphna, that keeps him from hating Israel.

Our agent comes to see himself as a pawn (and ultimately a scapegoat) in a system that he now views as a moral vacuum.

Where Israel has secularism, wealth, ammunition, and the support of mighty nations, Palestine has poverty, religious devotion, and close family relationships. Sarid hints at how Israel's wealth and power have damaged the very people it was intended to buttress in the face of their foes; Daphna's brilliant and gifted



fatherless son Yotam, for example, has succumbed to the spell of luxury and is now a petulant junkie. Even our morally superior hero involuntarily covets the rich drug lord's gold bracelet, an amulet symbolically summing up a glorious lifestyle built on exploitation, murderous violence, and an eat-drink-for-tomorrow-we-die outlook.

As he witnesses the loving nature of father-son relationships among the Palestinians and as he spends precious rare moments with his own young son, our agent recognizes Israel's Achilles heel: in spite of being at a disadvantage militarily, the Palestinians are destined to overcome simply because theirs is a culture which recognizes and nurtures fatherhood.

But at the moment it's fatherhood that's being exploited and targeted, and the beloved Palestinian son, the angel of justice, who must be wiped out.

Limassol manifests six of The Mindful Bard's criteria for books well worth reading: 1) it is authentic, original, and delightful; 2) it poses and admirably responds to questions which have a direct bearing on my view of existence; 3) it stimulates my mind 4) it harmoniously unites art with social action, saving me from both seclusion in an ivory tower and slavery to someone else's political agenda; 5) it provides respite from a sick and cruel world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful artistic endeavour; and 6) it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering.



DID YOU KNOW? Holiday Exam Procedures

If your course contract ends on December 31, 2010, you'll want to note Athabasca University's special holiday procedures for requesting and writing final exams.

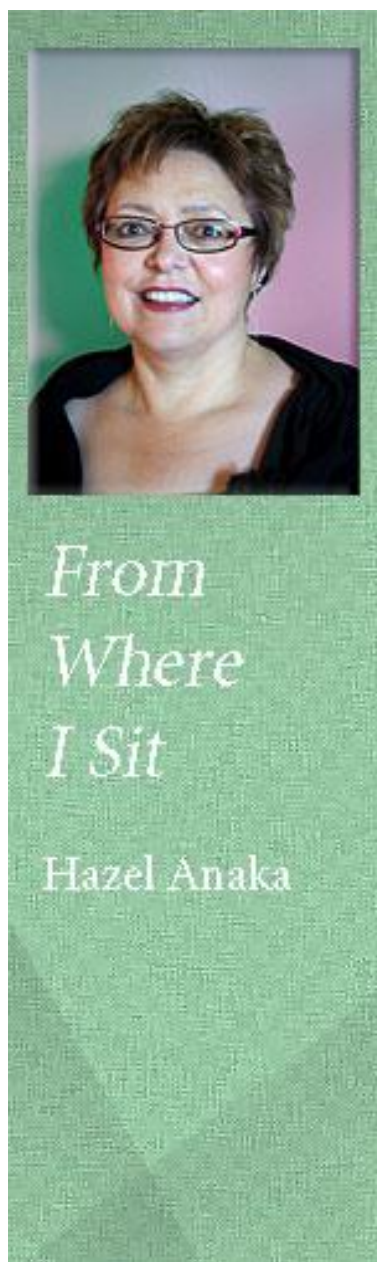
Because the University will be closed for the holidays at 4:30 pm MST on Thursday, December 23, 2010 (it will reopen 8:30 am MST on Tuesday, January 4, 2011), it has created specific provisions to ensure adequate time

for exams to arrive and be completed. Students may be eligible for additional time in which to write their exams.

If you are not writing your exam at the Athabasca, Edmonton, or Calgary campuses and you request it by December 12, 2010, you will be "allowed additional time for exam completion without being charged the Late Examination Request fee." Exams must be written by January 15, 2011.

If you request your exam after December 12, 2010, but before the course contract end date of December 31, 2010, you must pay a Late Exam Request Fee (\$100). The fee must accompany the request. These exams must be written by January 31, 2011.

For further information, including special provisions for those writing at AU's Athabasca, Calgary, or Edmonton campuses, see the full regulations or call the Information Centre at 1.800.788.9041.



Rejuvenate Your Spirit

Last Saturday, I shovelled my way to my art studio and cranked up the thermostat from 10 degrees Celsius to about 17. Next, I carried a two-gallon pail of warm water to use in two different plastic containers: the first to be filled with clear, clean water for moistening tools of the artist's trade, and the second that soon turned murky as I cleaned brushes, sponges, palette knives, and more.

Then I spent some time clearing up some clutter on my drafting table and assembling within reach an assortment of Golden and Schmincke acrylic paints. I was wearing what I call my "farm clothes"—those already-stained, ill-fitting, ratty-looking jeans and tops that I wouldn't be caught dead in otherwise. I donned a pair of hair colouring kit gloves to protect my gel nails and skin. Because, you see, at least in my case, the creative process is a decidedly messy process. The old green rug on this former portable classroom floor is beyond redemption, and I like it like that.

I really hadn't been back to the studio to paint since my shoulder surgery in November 2006. Recovery took a full year, and by then other things seemed more important than painting. The last thing I painted about a year ago was a canvas for Hilary's condo. So why now?

When Greg and Carrie got married eight years ago, I painted a two-by-six-foot canvas for their new house. While they were still happy with it, I felt my skill level and taste had evolved and I wanted to redo it. So many months ago, I rather unceremoniously removed it from their living room wall and took it home. With their plans to host Christmas, I now had a deadline.

My intention was to re-gesso it to restore it to literal blank canvas status. Which means that if I ever become famous after I'm dead and scholars and art historians pore over my works, a gifted restorer could in fact uncover the original painting. Books would be written, documentaries made . . . or

maybe not.

At any rate, I re-gessoed to cover the original painting and set to work on creating something different. And it felt good. Good to be back playing with colours. Good to lose track of time. Good to see if I could take it from the "Oh God, this looks like crap" state to something I'd be proud to hang on my own wall. And while I'm pleased with the result and hope they will be too, it's really not wise painting (or doing anything else) only once every year or so. One gets rusty. One makes mistakes and ends up reworking the project. One loses confidence.

So if you have some creative endeavour that's been mothballed because of time, health, or changing priorities, I humbly suggest you rediscover what drew you to it in the first place. Get back to your writing, needlepoint, painting, sculpture, dance, or whatever, and enjoy. I know it will lift the daily drudgery and rejuvenate your spirit, from where I sit.

CHRONICLES OF CRUISCIN LAN

Wanda Waterman St. Louis



GREEN LIGHT

News, Tips, and Tricks for a Healthy Planet

Shop Smart



The Christmas shopping season's started, and the store aisles are teeming with gifts nestled into plastic packaging. Plastic packaging that will, unfortunately, be headed for landfills come December 26.

During the holidays, some waste is going to be inevitable. But this year, when we give gifts, let's also think about bestowing a gift upon the future—and reduce the amount of plastic garbage we generate.

For example, gift cards, event tickets, certificates to massage therapists or other services—all have low environmental impact, but make fantastic Christmas gifts for family, friends, teachers, and the like. Homemade goodies and a bottle of wine is another winning choice.

For the more open-minded recipients on your Christmas lists (including kids!), [eBay](#), [Craigslist](#), and [Freecycle](#) offer ways to score nearly-new items without having to buy off the store shelves. Let creativity be your guide, and start shopping!

INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: No Place to Go

As the holidays near, we're often reminded to think of those who lack the comfort and security of a home to call their own. But according to a new study, there's another vulnerable but often-forgotten group: those whose housing conditions are unsafe or unhealthy.

As the CBC [reports](#), a new study notes that those who live "in extremely poor housing conditions face the same health risks as those who are homeless."

The study, helmed by researchers at Toronto's St. Michael's Hospital, called the situation a "[h]idden [e]mergency" and stated that about 400,000 people "are estimated to be vulnerably housed."

The study focused on the vulnerably housed "at the extreme end of the spectrum . . . including those living in rooming houses, single-room occupancy hotels and illegal basement apartments." It revealed that the vulnerably housed shared similar characteristics with

homeless people; for example, more than 50 per cent of both groups are suffering from mental health problems. In addition, "[m]ore than a third have been assaulted in the past year."

As Dr. Stephen Hwang, lead researcher in the study, told reporters, "Before now . . . decision-makers have often thought of . . . the homeless and the vulnerably housed . . . as two distinct populations." He added, "This study paints a different picture."

Around the World: When I See a Dinosaur Fly

Winged dinosaurs: we all remember the concept from our childhoods, and there's ample evidence from the fossil record to suggest their existence long ago. Yet although we always pictured them in flight, scientists have frequently theorized that some of the winged dinosaurs were in fact unable to fly due to their huge size and their resulting inability to launch themselves quickly into the air. A new theory, however, sets out to prove that these so-called flightless dinosaurs were in fact able to fly well.

As the CBC [reports](#), British and American researchers have suggested that pterosaurs, previously thought flightless, could in fact go airborne. Although the pterosaurs' weight would have made it impossible for the dinosaurs to "launch themselves into the air with their legs," the adaptable reptiles allegedly used their arms instead.

According to the study, the pterosaurs "took off by vaulting themselves into the air with their arms." This would have given them a boost powerful enough to launch them to the height and speed necessary to sustain flight.

And once airborne, there were no difficulties. As researcher and Chatham University biologist Michael Habib told reporters, "All the indications are they're very good at flying."

AUSU UPDATE



Convocation 2010

AUSU wishes to congratulate this year's graduates, whether attending Convocation in person or by distance. We wish you the best of luck in your future pursuits. You are an inspiration to all AU students!

AUSU Executive Election

AUSU has recently held its internal election for the Executive. We wish to congratulate Barbara Rielly (President), Bethany Tynes (Vice President External and Student Affairs) and Sarah Kertcher (Vice President Finance and Administration) on their election and thank those that ran for their willingness to serve.

Internal elections are being held to determine committee membership and we expect that all will be in place shortly. Our new Council is taking its bearings and has already begun to set the direction for this term.

Student Issues

AUSU recently completed a compilation of reported student issues covering a two year period; all issues were recorded in such a way as to ensure that student information remains protected and private. This effort confirmed what we long suspected; that tutor problems were the single biggest issue faced by our students (56 of 120 complaints).

Outdated course materials and errors in texts continue to be reported as well as were exam issues, slowness of the transfer process, and the scantiness of information in School of Business FAQs. Over that two year period there was a decrease in the number of complaints about student financing, exam request problems, difficulty registering in more than six courses, and materials shortages for courses. Kudos to AU for improving in those areas. Now if we could only get the Tutors' Union to the table . . .

New 2010 AUSU Handbook/Planners – Arrived!

Finally! People have already started receiving the new planners in the mail, and we're currently shipping them out as fast as the orders come in. Full of useful information about AUSU, writing styles, course grading, great finds online for your studies that you may not have known about, as well as having places to write down your phone numbers, keep track of your assignments, and, oh yeah, a year's worth of calendar to plan out your schedule too. We'll give one free to each AUSU member just for the asking.

Remember, though, we only print a limited number of these each year, so when they're gone, they're gone.

Let 'em Know who Represents for You!

AUSU logo mugs, hoodies, USB keys, and much more are all available for sale from our office. Also, used locks can be purchased at half price! Check out our merchandise catalog on our front page. You should

check out our hoodies in particular—made in Canada and 100% bamboo, we're offering them for just barely over our cost, and they're both durable and comfortable.

And if you have new little ones in your family, or know somebody who does, check out our baby onesies. Made by American Apparel, these onesies are high quality and let folks know your kids are growing up to great things as a "Future Graduate of Athabasca U"

AUSU Scheduling Meeting with Tutors' Union – Not really an Update

Some things resist change. We're still waiting for a response from the Tutor's Union as to when we might be able to meet with them to discuss ways that AUSU and the Tutor's Union can work together to ensure that students are getting the contact they need. Unfortunately, they haven't yet replied, so we're stepping up our campaign to get in touch with them. If you want to help, the next time you're talking to your tutor, ask them if they know when the Tutor's Union will meet with AUSU so that the groups can work together on common issues.

Our statistics we've been collecting from the forums and your calls show that issues with tutors - specifically the amount of time taken for marking assignments and exams are your number one concern. Help us help you.

SmartDraw Program Renewal

Some of you who took advantage of our program to provide SmartDraw software to members have been getting notifications that your software license will soon be expiring. Fortunately, AUSU will be continuing this program, so if you haven't already, go to the AUSU home page to download the newest version.

SmartDraw allows you to create a wide range of graphics for your assignments and submit them electronically in a Word file. You can also place your graphics in Excel or PowerPoint files, or export them as TIF, GIF, or JPEG files to make a web graphic or even a logo. Just a few of the graphics you can make include Venn diagrams, genetics charts, graphs, organizational and flow charts, and Gantt charts.







For any course that requires charts that cannot be easily created in Word or Excel, this should be a real time saver and make it easier to submit all portions of an assignment by email.

Remember, though, that you should always check with your tutor to find out if there is a specific format he or she prefers. Your tutor does not have to have SmartDraw to view these graphics, however. Installations under this program are good for one year. The package includes both the Standard and Health Care editions of SmartDraw.

AUSU
Representing AU
Undergrads

Student Gear

2009 merchandise

Clothing
Technology
Fun Items
Home Decor

Fostering the Student Community
AUSU and Voice gear is intended to support your studies and help you feel like part of the AU student community. Suggestions for new items are welcome. Contact our office with any questions.

CLASSIFIEDS

Classifieds are free for AU students! Contact voice@voicemagazine.org for more information.

THE VOICE

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