

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 21 Issue 06 2013-02-08

Overwhelmed

Journey derailed

Samsara

Life is spectacular

A Good Thing

A visit with Oprah

*Plus:
Antboy
In Conversation
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.



BUMPS ON THE ROAD, PART I

Maxie van Roye



What's a student to do when a crisis arises?

Things were going well; out-of-my-mind busy, but well. The house wasn't particularly clean, but full-time work and part-time school, coupled with family and volunteer commitments, meant that something had to slide. Work was moving along, and for the first time ever I'd become really excited about my studies. I'd narrowed my focus, selected more challenging courses, and added another class to my course load. I was ready. I could handle it.

And then.

Then came the crisis.

My son, who has special needs and whose emotional and behavioural issues had always caused tension at home, at school, and on the playground, was abruptly dismissed from his school. They were unwilling to accommodate his needs; he was disruptive; and to be honest, he wasn't learning anything. It was time to begin the process of creating an individualized education plan with a new school, one that hopefully would accept him, embrace him, and want to help him. In the meantime, on top of work, school, and the emotional exhaustion that accompanies raising a child with special needs, I would need to homeschool him until we could find a permanent school placement for him.

Wrecks

As you move along on your educational journey, chances are you'll run into some obstacles. When it's something small—a nasty bout of the flu that derails your schedule, or a big work project that eats into your study time—it can be incredibly frustrating to navigate around it. But sometimes these “bumps on the road” are more like full-on wrecks: windshield smashed, bumper twisted, maybe even flames flickering out from under the hood. When it's a question of something serious, like divorce, death in the family, financial crisis, or an issue with a child, it's hard enough to figure out how to deal with the problem itself, let alone things like work, education, and other commitments.

In a time of crisis, studying from home has its advantages. It does allow for a more flexible schedule; it does mean a certain freedom to shift priorities and lifestyle. But it also means that figuring out where everything stands is a bit more confusing.

In this series of articles, we'll take a look at some coping strategies that may help you navigate your way through the crisis and safely to the other side.

Don't Prioritize, Organize

When we meet with an obstacle, we're traditionally urged to redefine our goals, at least temporarily; in other words, to prioritize, to decide what's important and what's not.

Often the perception is that the crisis takes precedence over everything else. And in a way, it does; I *have to* teach my child right now. I *must* come up with the paperwork to get him the help he needs. He *requires* weekly therapy and at-home intervention. But so often the emphasis on prioritization is taken to mean that everything else should go by the wayside.

That's dangerous thinking. "Prioritize" doesn't necessarily mean letting go of your dreams and commitments in favour of that nebulous notion of "more important." Nor does it mean pretending that your pre-existing commitments don't matter. In fact, doing so can drastically increase your stress levels, not to mention prolong the emotional and physical damage to yourself, since you'll have to deal with catching up with the mess later, after the more immediate problems are resolved or stabilized.

So often the expectation is that in a time of crisis, nothing else is important. But that kind of attitude can damage us physically and emotionally and can prolong any crisis situation. Instead of prioritizing in the traditional sense, try organizing.

Instead of trying to prioritize, organize. Start out by writing a list of everything going on in your life: the big stuff, like work, school, and of course anything referring to the crisis, but also smaller commitments (cleaning the bathrooms, doing the banking, grocery shopping) and regular practices and habits (weekly yoga class, calling your mom, curling up with a novel). Make it a major brainstorming session. Enlist your partner, friends, and kids: what do I need to do? What do I like to do? Whether it's important or not, write it down.

But now what? What if everything is important? Don't the dishes have to get done eventually? What about those clients? Who's going to take care of my kids while I get caught up in my history class? And how do I explain all this to the people to whom I have commitments?

Once you've got that list in place, you can move forward with the next step in organizing. In next week's article, we'll take a look at a better way of prioritizing and discuss why you can and should ask for help—and where you should be looking.

VOICE HOLIDAY

It's that time of year, the time when millions flee the winter blahs for sunnier climates, snowy adventures, or a week spent curled up in front of a cozy fireplace.

Here at *The Voice* we'll be taking a brief break, too, while we refocus, recharge, and get ready for the next step for *The Voice Magazine*.

The Voice will be on hiatus from February 25-March 3, so there will be no issue on March 1. We'll be back to our regular publishing schedule with the March 8 issue. Meanwhile, keep sending in your comments, letters, and submissions. We always love hearing from our readers!

IN CONVERSATION

Wanda Waterman



Photo: Daniel Dufour.

Patricia Deslauriers, Part II

Patricia Deslauriers is the Quebecois jazz contrabassist spearheading the Patricia Deslauriers Trio, whose recording debut is a reverent tribute to the songs of beloved Quebec songster Richard Desjardins (read the [Voice review here](#)). Recently she took the time to answer Wanda Waterman's questions about her mentors, her new album, and her upcoming career plans. (See the first part of this interview [here](#).)

Beacons of Knowledge

Patricia's passion for music was nurtured by some very effective teaching. She attributes her current virtuosity to her school music teacher, Alain Gravel, and later, to drummer Richard Provençal, who ran the music program at the University of Montreal. Other key influences were Jacques Beaudoin, a double bass player at the Montreal Symphony Orchestra and a teacher at the University of Montreal. She also credits Normand Brathwaite with having given her "the chance to be a musician and musical director for TV."

But the highest honour goes to her husband, Guy St-Onge, her multi-instrumentalist musical collaborator and, in her words, "the best musician, composer, arranger, conductor, and human being!"

In spite of boasting a stellar roster of collaborative efforts with important figures of the jazz world in famous venues, Patricia insists that the most amazing jazz musicians she's ever worked with are the two other members of her trio, Paul Brochu and Guy St-Onge: "they're amazing, personally and musically; they could have had bigger careers in the United States and be known all over the world. They're well-known for sure, just not as well-known as they'd be if they were in LA or NY. But they chose to stay here. Lucky us!"

Why the Songs of Richard Desjardins?

Patricia says, "I saw Michel Donato and Karen Young record their album in a live show 23 years ago; they performed 'Lucky Lucky' by Richard Desjardins, and I fell in love with his music and lyrics. Ever since then I've wanted to play his music the way I was hearing it . . . so for me it was normal to do my first album with his music."

Richard Desjardins's environmental activism is well-known, especially in the province of Quebec, where he's done much to help protect the boreal forest and to bring awareness to the claims of First Nations peoples. Does Patricia share his views?

“Totally! It’s vital that we change our priority as a society; our planet and our environment should take first place, for us and for the coming generations.”

Feeding the Artistic Soul

Her busy schedule sometimes precludes the consumption of edifying art, but she makes time: “I don’t have time to read and watch movies as often as I’d like, but I love *L’art du bonheur* by the Dalai Lama. For the movies, I liked *The Dead Poets Society*, *Dancing in the Dark*, *La vie est belle*, and *Café de Flore*.”

Horizons

What’s next for Patricia Deslauriers? “For the short term, I’m finishing a television season at the end of February, then I’m going on tour in Russia with Notre Dame de Paris, Le Concert, with a symphony orchestra. Then I’ll be acting as musical director of *Cabaret*, directed by Denise Filiatrault.”

She’s also hoping to find time for “growing as a person and a musician and trying to find a balance between that and my family life; I have three children that I love so much (three, six, and nine years old)! Also continuing to express myself with the music!”

DID YOU KNOW?

W3Schools



Back in the day, it was all about learning the “three Rs.” Now, with the explosion of information technology into our everyday lives, many of us are more concerned with keeping up with the three Ws: specifically, the www, the worldwide web.

It’s becoming more and more common for employers even in fields unrelated to information technology to expect prospective employees to show a basic familiarity with HTML, the web, and maybe even CSS or Java. And even if you’re working your dream job already, staying current with the technology will help you keep ahead of the game—or at least not feel quite so lost in the sea of tech terms.

The W3Schools tutorials, freely available online, offer users the opportunity to learn the basics of web development or brush up on their skills. Similar to Code Year, though less formal, W3Schools still structures its material and lessons in a logical way, allowing users to start out gently and move on to more difficult skills later. Those who want to go beyond the basics can use the W3Schools materials to obtain their certification in a particular coding language.

Even if you’re not specifically interested in taking a tutorial at this time, you’ll want to bookmark the site for its handy reference pages, forums, and more.

ANTBOY IN "EDUCATING THE MASSES"

Wanda Waterman

**ANTBOY IN:
EDUCATING THE MASSES**

FORGIVE MY
IMPERTINENCE, BUT
WHY DOES A LEFTY
RABBIT NAMED
"HAPPY DREAMS"
WANT TO BE A
SUPERHERO?



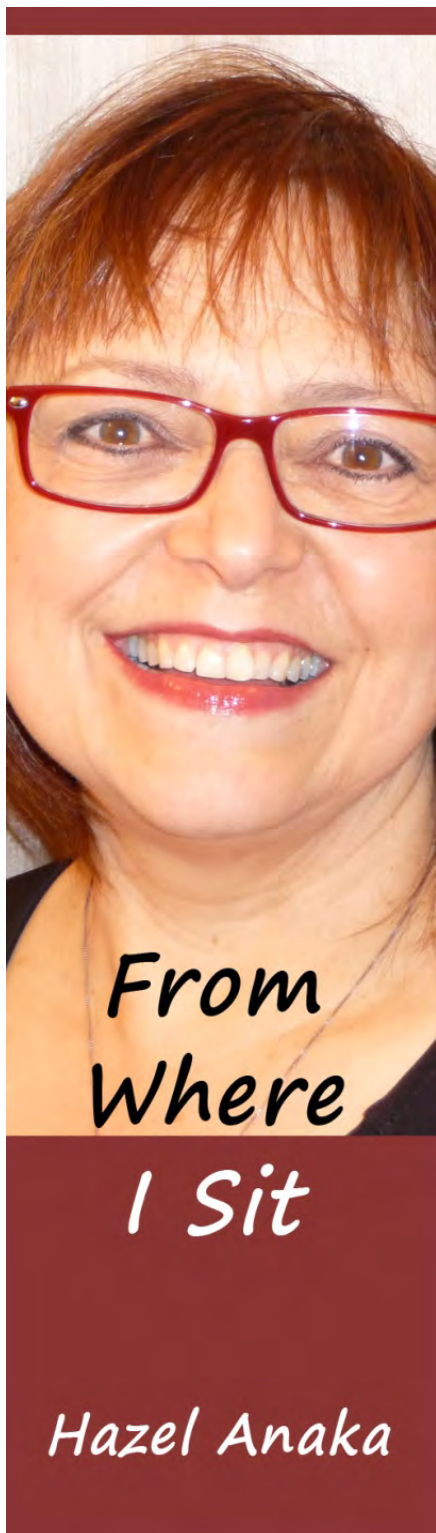
I'M USING SUPERHERO
STATUS TO MAKE
SOCIAL ACTIVISM
MORE PALATABLE TO
THE MASSES.

SOOOOO NOW ALL YOU HAVE TO
DO IS CONVINCE THE MASSES
THAT THE REAL CRIMINALS ARE
THE PEOPLE WHO ARE
SUPPOSED TO BE TAKING CARE
OF THEM.



EXACTLY! IT'S CAKE!
WHY HASN'T ANYONE
THOUGHT OF IT
BEFORE?

WRITTEN BY WANDA WATERMAN



A Good Thing

As the LRT train filled with countless groups of women, the anticipation was palpable. We had all plunked down some major coin and had no concrete idea of what we were going to get for our money. Like millions before us, we were making a leap of faith and in the process stroking off a big bucket list item: *See Oprah live.*

Only a person awakening from a 25-year coma could be forgiven for not understanding the woman's unique contribution to modern life. Whether you love her or hate her, there is no disputing the reach of her influence. She has reshaped talk television, inspired readers, made herself vulnerable by sharing her own story, and inspired millions with her can-do message of hope.

I won't attempt to tell her story in this small space; most of it is widely known. I will tell you what I felt and observed.

Like all of us, Oprah is a complex character who defies definition. She demonstrates both humility and a fierce sense of pride. She is a cup of potential in the ocean of life, and powerless without her God. Later she spoke of her incredible love for herself; something most of us could do well to emulate.

She was both funnier and skinnier than I expected. She also looked older than her air-brushed presence in her magazine. She spoke about her weight and her Lance Armstrong interview. She name-dropped. She moved comfortably back and forth across the stage in red stilettos and spoke without notes for an hour or more. A PowerPoint presentation with photos and words of wisdom helped drive her message home. Teleprompters and a timer kept her on topic and on time.

She moaned about our weather, but from what I've seen, Chicago has more extremes. She miscalculated when Obama's inauguration was and ended up being in Edmonton instead of Washington, which delighted the crowd.

Oprah is very much a pro—and no one's fool. Mentioning the name of the city she was in was a sure crowd pleaser. Referencing her struggling OWN television network and showing a photomontage of many of the shows felt calculated and self-serving. During the sit-down interview part, George Stroumboulopoulos seemed like little more than stage dressing. He had barely finished throwing her a question when she was off and running. She did tell him that one of the questions was good and the kind she would have asked.

Oprah is an orator and an intellect. She's able to make us believe we can do better: *Look for the thread that has woven its way through your life, because your purpose is there. Don't say yes when you mean no. Watch how you finish the sentence "I am . . ." because it will manifest. Gratitude for what we have leads to more. We are blessed. Believe people when they show you who they are.*

Two hours with Oprah was a good thing, from where I sit.

Hazel Anaka's first novel is *Lucky Dog*. Visit her [website](#) for more information or follow her on Twitter @anakawrites.

CLICK OF THE WRIST

Chocophile

It's nearly Valentine's Day, the most loved and hated holiday of the year. If you've got a sweetheart, chances are you'll be getting or giving a box of chocolates. If you'll be by yourself this year—well, there's no better companion for a lonely V-Day than a good friend and a box of chocolates! While you munch, click through these links for some chocolate trivia.

Fruit of the Tree

Ever wondered what the famous cacao tree looks like? Check out this page for photos of the oddly shaped pods and an excellent description of how cacao trees are grown.

Birth of Chocolate

Whom do we have to thank for the gloriousness of chocolate? According to the *Daily Mail*, the Aztecs bear that honour—but over 3,000 years ago, they treated chocolate as “as a celebratory beer-like beverage and status symbol.”

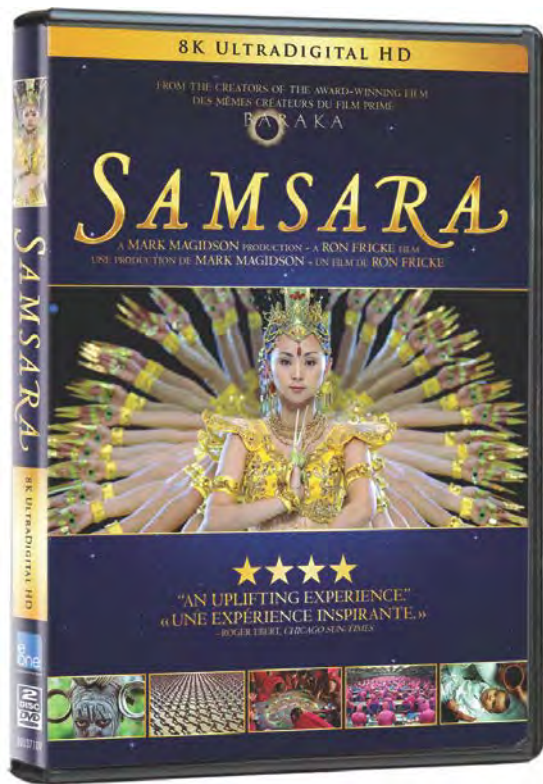
Bean to Bar

We know the basics of chocolate, but how exactly does it make the transformation from bean to bar? The Hershey company offers a series of videos that show the chocolate making process in action—and if you're ever near a Hershey factory, you might be able to see it in person!



THE MINDFUL BARD

Wanda Waterman



Courtesy of eOne Films.

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

Film: Samsara

Director: Ron Fricke

Genre: Documentary

"The world is so empty if one thinks only of mountains, rivers and cities; but to know someone here and there who thinks and feels with us, and though distant, is close to us in spirit—this makes the earth for us an inhabited garden."

Goethe

The Silent Verbosity of Visual Splendour

Sometimes words just make things too fast, easy, and cheap. If the Big Mac has taught us anything, it's that fast, easy, and cheap can not only taste bad, it can rob you—and the planet—of health and well-being.

Samsara, like the Fricke and Magidson films that preceded it (*Chronos* and *Baraka*), is anything but fast, cheap, or easy. In a time when many filmmakers (like Wim Wenders) have jumped on the digital cinematography wave and others (like Christopher Nolan) are guarding the bastion of film cinematography with swords raised, Fricke and Magidson have come up with an interesting compromise.

It's a method as effective as it is arduous; you may have used it yourself if you've ever sought to digitize those black-and-white photos of you, Pa, and Sis leaning against the wood-panelled station wagon. The filmmakers shot the scenes on 70 mm film, then scanned each frame at the highest resolution possible for 4K digital projection.

Such a gargantuan art project ranks with the ceiling of the Sistine for long-term commitment to excellence at any cost. Part of you exclaims, *Wow, these must be truly great artists!* While another part asks, *But does technical excellence and innovation make for good art?*

Well, not always, but in this case the answer is a ringing yes.

Another engaging aspect of this work is the way in which the filmmakers have chosen and framed some of the most mesmerizing spectacles—both beautiful and ghastly—on this planet, and then pieced them together to form a story. It's not a formal story with a plot and a protagonist, but a story nonetheless because of the sense of conflict it generates.

The story comes more in a series of waves than in one grand crescendo and decrescendo (is it possible to call a film modal?) and as such is better comparable to Ravi Shankar's ragas than to Beethoven's symphonies.

Fricke and Magidson have used the language of juxtaposition to make profound statements about life in this world while leaving interpretation open. Everyone, regardless of ideology or affiliation, will find a powerful message here, but the words each will use to explain this message will be widely disparate.

"Everyone, regardless of ideology or affiliation, will find a powerful message here, but the words each will use to explain this message will be widely disparate."

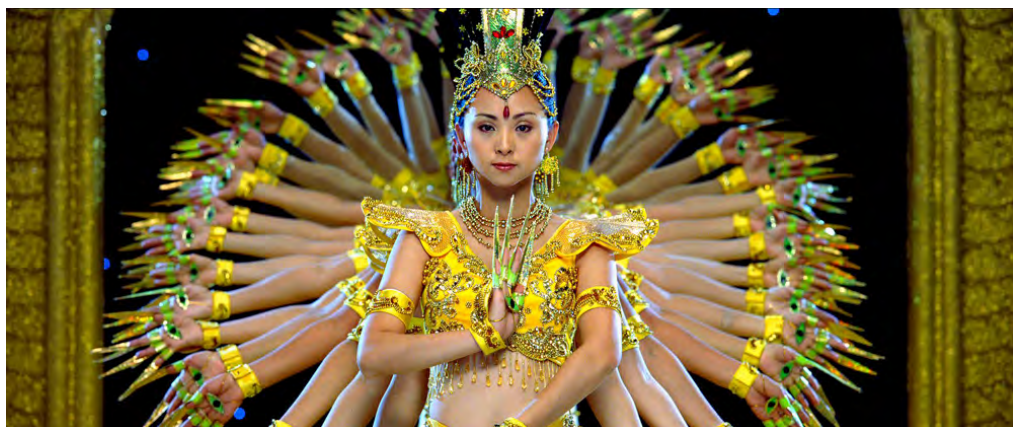
Then there's the purely aesthetic element. As Francis Bacon said, "There is no excellent beauty that hath not some strangeness in the proportion." Again and again, scenes are chosen and presented for this element of strangeness that bores into your visual cortex. Be careful—it could change not only the way you think and feel but also how you subsequently experience visual stimuli.

The little dancers who open the film are a stunning example. Their stiff costumes, contrived doll-like movements, and comical facial expressions under heavy makeup seem to introduce the film with a statement about the beauty of life as well as carrying a subtle warning about the ubiquitous presence of the trickster, who mocks the formalities he enacts.

After watching a series of scenes about Western overconsumption (meat animals whose entire lives are "processed" in cold factories, food being sold in supermarkets, and patients preparing for surgery for obesity) and about the sexualization of women and girls (cosmetic surgery, exotic dancers, and sex dolls), we see a geisha walking down a hall, then a close-up of her frozen face, a tear skipping gently down her white, pancaked cheek. There exists a real connection between greed and the objectification of women, and it really can't be stated better than this.

This is soon followed by a scene from a prison in the Philippines, where the women prisoners appreciatively regard a brilliant display of male physicality. Several hundred male prisoners, all dressed in bright peach uniforms, joyfully enact a buoyant dance, glorious, self-affirming, and *fun*. The women look

serene and empowered by the display of strength, grace, and agility.



A scene from SAMSARA. Courtesy of eOne Films.

Baraka received a bit of flack for being too Zen-escapist. If there really was a skew in that direction, *Samsara* makes up for it by including the three Abrahamic religions, showing the beautiful contrapuntal movements of orthodox Jews

at the Wailing Wall, then the spellbinding aerial view of thousands of pilgrims circling the Kaaba in Mecca and then kneeling and prostrating all at once. We see interiors of huge cathedrals with beams of light emitting from their cupolas. Tribute is also paid to the Buddhist traditions, which the filmmakers clearly favour (if not espouse). But there is no proselytizing happening here, in this lovely screen space where all is one.

When I first started watching this film, it was as a kind of background to whatever work I happened to be doing at the time. The music is wonderful and perfectly apt to the film, but I was using the visuals as background too, occasionally looking up to find images that filled me with awe and serenity. I found myself watching it again and again, not only for the peace it brought me but also for the creative stimulation.

Does the surpassing beauty of the world cancel out its hideous ugliness? Who knows? Who cares? Life is spectacular— isn't that enough?



A scene from *SAMSARA*. Courtesy of eOne Films.

Samsara is one of the few films that manifest all 13 of the Mindful Bard's criteria for films well worth seeing: 1) it is authentic, original, and delightful; 2) it poses and admirably responds to questions that 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; 6) it is about attainment of the true self; 7) it inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation; 8) it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; 9) it gives me artistic tools; 10) it makes me want to be a better artist; 11) it gives me tools of kindness, enabling me to respond with compassion and efficacy to the suffering around me; 12) it renews my enthusiasm for positive social action; and 13) it makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomenon, making living a unique opportunity.

Wanda also penned the poems for the artist book They Tell My Tale to Children Now to Help Them to be Good, a collection of meditations on fairy tales, illustrated by artist Susan Malmstrom.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: Royal Blood

The man had been buried beneath a parking lot in Leicester, England, for years—and his origins had stumped archaeologists, though they suspected royal ancestry. Now, thanks to a Canadian carpenter who turned out to be a long-lost relative, the mysterious skeleton has been identified as belonging to none other than King Richard III.

As the CBC [reports](#), the London, Ontario-born Michael Ibsen is “stunned that his DNA helped solve a 500-year-old mystery.”

The much-maligned Richard III, who ruled England during the Wars of the Roses, was overthrown by the Tudor King Henry VII. Some historians believe that his poor reputation after death was largely thanks to the influence of the “victorious Tudors” and to William Shakespeare, who “indelibly depicted Richard as a hunchbacked usurper who left a trail of bodies on his way to the throne before dying in battle.”

Ibsen is “a 17th great-grand-nephew of Richard's older sister — Anne of York.” He and Richard share “a rare strain of mitochondrial DNA,” and the DNA evidence confirms historical and archaeological evidence that has built up over the past few centuries.

Richard’s remains will be “interred in the city’s cathedral and a memorial service [will] be held.”

Around the World: Gimme Cookie

A giant cookie has gone missing—and Cookie Monster is holding it ransom. Sound like a *Sesame Street* plot gone horribly awry? The story is true, but whether it’s the blue monster himself or some trickster responsible, the case sounds more fictional than fact.

As NBC News [reports](#), a “famous 44-pound metal cookie” belonging to German cookie manufacturer Bahlsen was stolen from the company’s Hannover factory in late January. The landmark piece had been in place since 1913.

This week the local newspaper received “a ransom note made up of letters cut from newspapers and signed by the ‘Cookie Monster’,” who “demanded that a shipment of cookies be sent . . . to a local children’s hospital.” Otherwise, the note cautioned, the giant cookie would end up in “the trash can of Oscar the Grouch.”

Bahlsen has offered more than \$1,300 US for information leading to the cookie’s recovery, with a company rep telling reporters, “We refuse to be blackmailed.”

AUSU UPDATE

Bethany Tynes



AUSU e-newsletters a success

AUSU has been piloting the use of e-newsletters to contact our student body over the last year. We began by sending these newsletters to students registered on our website, and after a very positive initial response, we are now sending e-newsletters to all students currently enrolled in any AU undergrad course, as well as all students registered on our site who wish to receive email. We're looking forward to keeping in closer touch with our members, and hope in future to be able to send regular monthly e-newsletters to all members (though we'll also respect your right to unsubscribe). If there's something you'd like to see included in our newsletters, please let us know!

Instructional model survey

Last June, AUSU learned that AU planned to move all undergraduate courses to a call centre model (like the one currently used in AU's Faculty of Business) beginning in September. We felt that this was a very major change, and was surprised that the university had not conducted consultation of AU's students or academics. AUSU drafted a survey and sent it to all our members via e-newsletter. Over 2,500 of you took the time to fill out this survey, giving us a wealth of information about what's important to AU's undergrad students. The AUSU Executive is now working to make sure that these important student perspectives are communicated to the university, and we have presented our survey results report to a number of AU community members and committees, including CUPE 3911 (the AU tutors' union) and the Board of Governors (AU's highest governing body).

DegreeWorks now available

We've been waiting for AU to roll out their new DegreeWorks system—and it's finally available to students! If you started an AU program after September 2010, you can now use DegreeWorks to see how your courses fulfill the requirements of your program. DegreeWorks is available online anytime, and can instantly help you see which courses you still need to complete on the way to your credential. Let us know what you think of DegreeWorks, and we'll make sure we let the university know how they're doing meeting student needs.

Get in touch with us

Have comments or questions about AUSU or anything in this column? Feel free to get in touch with AUSU President Bethany at president@ausu.org. You can also e-mail our office at ausu@ausu.org or call 1-800-788-9041 ext. 3413. We'd love to hear from you!

This column is provided by AUSU to facilitate communication with its members. The Voice does not write or edit this section; all content has been exclusively and directly provided by AUSU, and any questions or comments about the material should be directed to ausu@ausu.org.

CLASSIFIEDS

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

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