Blue, Gold, and Green: Sustainability at Pitt

Dropped Calls: Pitt’s CSSD to Roll Out Cell-Phone Recycling Program

The University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute (UPCI) will present the “Jeffrey Shogan Memorial Symposium on Anticancer Therapies May 5

The response was quick and enthusiastic. Between April 22 and June 5, the boxes intercepted more than 400 phones, an untold number of them likely destined for the trash. Once the effort ended, several people contacted CSSD to ask about ditching their old phones. The ubiquity of cellular phones and the pace at which the technology advances result in billions of old phones being discarded, said Eric Beckman, codirector of Pitt’s Mascaro Center for Sustainable Innovation and a professor of chemical and petroleum engineering in Pitt’s Swanson School of Engineering. People grab a new phone every 18 months on average, and more than one billion phones were sold in 2010, he said.


“Implications of Breast Cancer and Heterogeneity,” Harriett A. Casey, professor of medicine, University of North Carolina School of Medicine.

“Dawn of Effective Specific Therapy for Melanoma: Growing Options for Personalized Molecular, Immunological, and Cytotoxic Therapy,” John M. Kirkwood, professor of medicine, dermatology, and translational science, Pitt School of Medicine.

“Personalized Therapy for Advanced Non-Small Cell Lung Cancer,” Roy S. Herbst, Yale University School of Medicine.

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reduce the need for wired infrastructure, they help pack a host of plastics and potentially toxic metals into a device that is inherently disposable, he said. Once in the ground, many of the phone’s components break down and enter the environment.

The plastic and metals packed into one 15-year-old phone aren’t a lot of are phone,” he said. “But by selling a billion cell phones, we basically distribute 6 million pounds of lead, cadmium, chromium, and tantalum around the globe in a device that is essentially designed to last a few years and then be thrown away. Any effort to recycle them is inherently good.”

The CSSD campaign is one of many initiatives at Pitt that help students and faculty rid themselves of the many scraps from our technological lives.

On another front, Pitt’s Facilities Management has stationed tubs in 11 campus locations (see box) since September 2010. So far, the tall, slender depositories have collected 1,300 pounds of batteries, which are collected by Scott Electric for recycling, said Laura Zullo, senior manager of energy initiatives for Facilities. Also, Facilities collects batteries and electronics by request, Zullo said. Facilities recycled 7.5 tons of batteries and 129 tons of electronics in fiscal year 2010 (July 2009-June 2010).

In addition, Pitt’s Surplus Property office recycles and reuses “e-waste,” the discarded computers, printers, printer cartridges, and related equipment that would otherwise languish in a spare room or a teacher’s desk. Equipment is picked up by appointment.

The excess techno-junk that people relate to a drawer or some other hideaway makes CSSD organizational communications manager Orr Goehringer, who is working with Witt on the recycling campaign, confident the permanent phone-recycling campaign can catch on. Before CSSD’s trial program, he had thought phones with no function beyond playthings for his toddler daughter.

“I didn’t want those phones to end up in a landfill, but I had no idea of how to dispose of them safely or conveniently,” he said. “There are plenty of people hanging on to old phones because they don’t know how to get rid of them. We want to give them this option.”

‘Big ideas’ Get a Boost and a New Name From the Randall Family

Randall strongly believes that Pitt’s and its students are important assets to the local business community. He also believes that encouraging students’ business pursuits can ultimately be of benefit to the region by encouraging young talented entrepreneurs to establish roots in the greater Pittsburgh metropolitan area.

“Hopefully,” he said, “the Big Idea Competition will attract venture capitalists and other investors who will help keep our young people here, help keep our region vibrant.”

Randall is pleased with the rapid growth of the competition and the steady improvement in the quality of the student entrepreneurs’ ideas and their articulation of those ideas. The competition has attracted significantly greater numbers of entries each year—since 89 in 2009, its first year, to 148 in 2010, to 199 entries this year. The Randall new gift will increase the number of prizes and the dollar amounts awarded in the future.

Ann Dugan (A&S ’82, KGSB ’85), founder and executive director of IEE, is very grateful for all the Randalls have done for IEE and the competition, which Dugan teaches students to meet the challenges of a dynamic business world.

“Equipping students with the practical knowledge and experience to meet those challenges is part of what we must accomplish as educators,” she says. Dugan feels that commitments from businessperson like Bob Randall are a great way to support that mission.

This year’s competition took place on March 30. Students who competed for cash prizes in several categories, presented their business ideas to a panel of judges who were also the event’s local business sponsors.

Michael Lehman, IEE’s director of student entrepreneurship, says the program has become more than a competition. Since having come on board in 2009, he says he has helped shape the Big Idea event into an educational process through which students flesh out their ideas over a two-month period.

In the beginning of the process, the students must write their three questions that address problems they’ve identified, measure the quality of their proposed solutions, and assess the skills of their entrepreneurial team. They then use workshops to help them develop a business abstract, and, finally, they develop a two-and-a-half minute “elevator pitch” to succinctly explain their business idea.

Among this year’s winners is Justin Marces, a student of finance, who says he is pleased that the competition has helped him make connections to grow his business. He also says the cash awards allow a student to change focus and spend more time on the big picture.

Micael Toll, a mechanical engineering student and three-time Big Idea winner, agrees with Randall that this year’s new gift is a great way to keep young entrepreneurs in Pittsburgh by attracting attention from the venture capitalists who can support their business ventures.

“Students can realize, ‘Pittsburgh’s a place where I can continue my business,’” Toll says.

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• Parran Hall (ground-floor lobby)
• Posvar Hall (first-floor-elevator lobby)
• William Pitt Union (Forbes Avenue entrance)
• Sutherland Hall (main entrance)
• Scaife Hall's Conference Room 1106 on May 6.

Cell Phone, Battery Drop-Off Locations in Oakland

- Batteries: Sutherland Hall (main entrance)
- Lithium/ sulfur (main lobby)
- Shadyside Hall (main lobby)
- William Pitt Union (Forbes Avenue entrance)
- Cathedral of Learning (ground floor near vending machines)
- Benedum Hall (main lobby)
- Lawrence Hall (main entrance)
- Foster Hall (first-floor-elevator lobby)
- Trees Hall (main lobby)
- Forbes Hall (ground floor near vending machines)
- Parmon Hall (ground floor lobby)

Helpful links
- CSSD: www.cssd.pitt.edu
- Facilities: www.facmgmt.pitt.edu
- Surplus Property: www.surplus.pitt.edu

Pitt Employee Health Benefits Open Enrollment Starts April 20

Pitt faculty and staff members who wish to make changes to their health, vision, or dental benefits can do so during the annual Open Enrollment period, which this year runs from April 20 through May 11. This is the only period that the Internal Revenue Service permits benefits changes to be made. Otherwise, changes are permitted only if there is a qualified life event such as birth of a child, marriage, divorce, or loss of a spouse’s coverage.

Pitt employees who do not wish to change their current benefits selections do not need to take any action. Benefits selections will remain the same for the new plan year if an employee does not make any changes. However, if changes are desired, employees must complete them via an online enrollment form by May 11. A confirmation statement will be mailed to employees at the end of the Open Enrollment period.

This week the University expects to mail information packets with details of Pitt’s benefits plans, including vision and dental plan options and long-term care and life insurance choices. Employees who do not receive their packets should contact the Benefits Department at 412-624-8160.

The Benefits Department will conduct an Open Enrollment Fair each day during the Open Enrollment period. The fairs provide an opportunity to meet directly with representatives from each carrier and insurance carriers. For the Oakland campus in Pittsburgh, two fairs will be held in the University Club’s Ballroom A—from noon to 2:30 p.m. April 25 and from noon to 3 p.m. April 26. A third fair will be held in Scaife Hall’s Conference Room 1105ABC from noon to 2:30 p.m. May 5.

Long-term care presentations will be held from noon to 1 p.m. in the University Club’s Gold Room on April 25 and April 26. A fourth presentation will be held in Scaife Hall’s Conference Room 1106 on May 6.
Paul Thies: Dive, A Retrospective, Carnegie Museum of Art, through May 1

Concerts
Benefit Concert for Earthquake/ Tsunami Relief for Japan, featuring Joe Negri and other noted jazz musicians, 2-4 p.m. April 23, Bellefield Hall Auditorium, suggested $5 student donation and $10 general public donation, Pitt Asian Studies Center, Department of Music, Japan American Society of Pennsylvania, Brother's Brother Foundation, 412-648-7763.

Wynonna Judd With Marvin and the PSO, featuring Grammy Award-winning singer Judd, 7:30 p.m. April 28, Heinz Hall, 600 Penn Ave., Downtown, suggested $5 student donation and $10 general public donation, PPG Arts Connect, Heinz Hall, 412-623-4751, open to Pitt and UPMC faculty, staff, and students, registration required at http://tix. gpuem.com/register/index.html.

Opera/Theater/Dance

Mamma Mia!


Dialogues of the Carmelites by Francis Poulenc, story of 16 Carmelite nuns who defended their faith and were executed during France's 19th century Reign of Terror, 8 p.m. April 30 and May 3, 6, and 8, Benedum Center, 800 Liberty Avenue, Downtown, Pittsburgh Opera, 412-456-6666, www.pittsburghopera.org, PITT ARTS Cheap Seats, 412-624-4498, www.pittarts.pitt.edu.

The Amish Project, written by and starring Jessica Duncan, based on the 2006-shooting at an Amish schoolhouse in Lancaster, Pa., through May 5, City Theatre, 1300 Bingham St., South Side, 412-431-2489, www.citytheatrecompany.org.


Pitt PhD Dissertation Defenses
Boryane Dobreva, School of Arts and Sciences' Department of Genetics, 3 p.m. April 18, “Subjectivity Regained? German-Language Writing From Eastern Europe and the Balkans Through an East-West Gaze,” 5400 Posvar Hall.

Happenings
April 18-28, “In Search of a Better World,” Harvard University, 4 p.m. April 28, Class of 1967 Professor of Philosophy and of the History of Science, Harvard University, 5400 Posvar Hall.

“Subjects of Environmental and Occupational Medicine’s Clinical and Translational Science Training Program, Pitt School of Medicine, 11 a.m. April 27, William M. Cooper Pavilion, Hillman Cancer Center, 412-623-4751, open to Pitt and UPMC faculty, staff, and students, registration required at 898-8479. TIES Informational Luncheon for Researchers and Research Assistants, talk on Text Information Extraction System (TIES) with Rebecca Crowley, director, Department of Biomedical Informatics Graduate Training Program, Pitt School of Medicine, 11 a.m. April 27, William M. Rama Rao Damerla, Graduate School of Public Health’s Department of Epidemiology, “Cholesterol Metabolism in the Brain and Dementia,” noon April 21, 5th-floor conference room, Bellefield Professional Building, 130 N. Bellefield St., Oakland.

Daniel Wennberg, School of Arts and Sciences' Department of English, 9 a.m. April 22, “The Invention of England: Games and Identity in Medieval Romance,” 527 Cathedral of Learning.

Alejandro Chu, School of Arts and Sciences' Department of Anthropology, noon April 22, “Household Organization at Bandurria, a Late Prehispanic Templo Center on the Peruvian Coast,” 3106 Posvar Hall.

Kathleen Blakes, School of Arts and Sciences' Department of Architecture, 9:30 a.m. April 26, “Sex Determination From the Subadult Pelvis: A Morphometric Analysis of the Ilium, Pubis, and Ischium,” 3106 Posvar Hall.

Debbie Bensadon, School of Arts and Sciences' Department of Hispanic Languages and Literatures, 1:30 p.m. April 26, “‘Monologues’ Continued and Created Traditions (More than) a Century Later,” 1528 Cathedral of Learning.

Jennifer McDowell, School of Arts and Sciences' Department of Anthropology, noon April 26, “Embodied Stories: Feeding the Body in Africa,” 3106 Posvar Hall.

Kun-Wei Liu, School of Medicine’s Cellular and Molecular Pathology Graduate Program, 5 p.m. April 26, “Plaquette-Derived Growth Factor Receptor Alpha Signaling in Gliomas: SHPling the PSF Pathway to Oncogenesis,” Nunnick Conference Room, Hillman Cancer Center.

Ilya Goldman, School of Arts and Sciences' Department of Environmental and Occupational Medicine’s Clinical and Translational Science Training Program, 11 a.m. April 29, “A Focus on Content: The Use of Rubrics in Peer Review to Guide Students and Instructors,” Glaser Auditorium, Learning Research and Development Center.
Pitt Undergrads Triumph in National Green Idea Competition Hosted by German Embassy

By Morgan Kelly

Pitt undergraduate researchers emerged triumphant in a nationwide green ideas competition hosted by the German Embassy in Washington, D.C., finishing first in two of the contest’s three categories. The winning students receive a free trip to Berlin.

The Pitt students competed against young researchers from 17 other American universities who submitted videos addressing issues related to energy and the environment for the 2010 Our Choices Matter contests. The contests were sponsored by the Transatlantic Climate Bridge Initiative, a program designed to foster German-U.S. cooperation on environmental and energy concerns. Students at the participating universities first competed against peer teams within their own respective schools; the Pitt symposium was hosted by the University’s Center for Energy and Office of the Provost. The school-level winners then went on to compete nationwide in three categories: Green Shot, Change Your Neighborhood, and Green Energy Alternatives Debate.

Pitt Swanson School of Engineering students Ansel Barchowsky (electrical and computer engineering), Chris Lippert (mechanical engineering and materials science), and Adam Sparacino (electrical and computer engineering) won first prize in the Green Shot competition for their video examining the current development of a more efficient and user-friendly “smart” electric power grid. Recognized for its breadth, the team’s project covered the more practical and efficient steps being taken to improve the electric grid, as well as gaps in the existing technology and standards. The group was mentored by Gregory Reed, a Pitt professor of electrical and computer engineering and director of the Swanson School’s Power and Energy Initiative.

In the Change Your Neighborhood category, Pitt chemical and petroleum engineering student Chris Rovensky took first place for presenting his project to decontaminate and reclaim brownfields and other marginal land by planting biofuel crops. The crops would at once improve soil conditions, fill vacant urban lots, and provide alternatives to fossil fuel. The project is being led by Rovensky’s faculty mentors Amy Landis and Jason Monnell, professors of civil and environmental engineering in the Swanson School.

A group of Pitt students mentored by Pitt chemistry professor Joseph Grabowski received honorable mention in the Green Energy Alternatives Debate category for surveying alternative energy sources available to the modern consumer.

The video submissions from all three Pitt teams are available on the German Embassy Web site at http://bit.ly/fVWo0j.

Deputy Consul General Oliver Schnakenberg of the Consulate General of Germany in New York visited the University March 14 to present awards to Pitt’s two winning teams in the German Embassy’s green ideas competition. From left, George Klinzing, Pitt vice provost for research; Chris Rovensky, Pitt chemical and petroleum engineering student; David Murdoch, the honorary German Consul in Pittsburgh; Adam Sparacino, Pitt electrical and computer engineering student; Gregory Reed, a Pitt professor of electrical and computer engineering and director of Pitt’s Power and Energy Initiative; and Deputy Consul General of Germany in New York.