

EWB - IIT hosts lecture by Bruce Baikie

By Simon Brauer
TECHNEWS WRITER

On Wednesday, February 17, Engineers Without Borders hosted a guest lecture by Bruce Baikie, an entrepreneur who designs technology to be used in developing nations. During his presentation, Baikie related to the audience what he, as an engineer, faced in a field dependent on the social sciences as much as the technical background he was exposed to through his start-up, Green Wifi.

He began with a diagram outlining the economic makeup of the world. A simple triangle perfectly displayed the economic difference between the wealthy, the developed few (the top of the pyramid) and the great mass of impoverished people at the bottom living in undeveloped nations—60% of the world's population live on less than a dollar a day. These disadvantaged groups are the ones that have seen a sharp decline in their already limited clean-water supply and whatever technologies that do reach them are unsuitable or unmain-

tainable in such environments.

This is where Baikie revealed his first insight for developing technology in such areas: "technology is global; invention is local." The underlying physics of transistors and circuit boards holds true wherever you are. However, the problems that each community face requires their own special implementation that takes into consideration the physical and social restrictions present. You cannot simply drop power-hungry, temperature-dependent hardware into an area that has little power and a warm climate.

Aiding nations also does not mean those outside of that country will not benefit. As the materialism and demand for the "new" continues to thrive in the West, our old technology begins to pile up in landfills. Our "throw-away culture" produces a lot of unused material, which can actually be repurposed for other projects around the world. This redesigning and catering for the strict demands of other countries produces advances in our own products; for example, low-powered laptops produced by the One Laptop Per Child program

(OLPC) spawned a whole line of processors and a new, incredibly popular form-factor, the netbook.

Developing technology for countries with limited resources is certainly an exercise in both engineering and cultural understanding. When new ideas are introduced to solve unique problems, they can teach a nation obsessed with the faster, smaller, and more cutting-edge to appreciate what they have and use it more efficiently.

Engineers Without Borders has been developing its own solutions to old problems present in the developing world. For example, through the past several years, EWB has worked with Haiti Outreach in bettering the lives of the people of Haiti through projects catered to the demands presented by a country damaged by colonialism, abuse, and natural disasters. If you would like to learn more about EWB or get involved with its projects, you check out their website at <http://mypages.iit.edu/~haiti/home.html> and contact them at ewb_group@iit.edu for meeting times and more information about project workshops.



Photo courtesy Simon Brauer

IIT meme goes viral

By Ryan Kamphuis
CAMPUS EDITOR



Over the last decade, the internet has grown from a tool for communication and sharing between people to a full-on part of life. The internet plays such an integral part of the average person's life to the point where it has formed its own culture and etiquette. It's almost as if the internet is its own virtual country, filled with different peoples, customs, and cultures. However, it doesn't take much time on the internet to see what the pillar of its culture is: memes.

Pretty much anyone who has been on the internet has been exposed to a few memes. Maybe they've seen Lolcats, that one dog that goes "WHARRGARBL," socially awkward penguin, or courage wolf. But now, IIT has a meme all to its self.

Known as Tech School Hawk, the meme was created by a few residents of the third floor of MSV's North Hall. Within 12 hours of the meme's creation, its Facebook page already had over 5,000 views and it had its own entry on MemeGenerator.net. Tech School Hawk became a way for IIT students to humorously talk about why they love their school, or anonymously vent on things about IIT that tick them off. The meme even went off campus – many people from other schools in the Chicagoland area contributed to the meme.

When it came to inspiration, there really wasn't any. "We were bored one night, so we decided to create a meme for the heck of it," said Daniel LaGessee, a First-year Mechanical Engineering major and one of the co-creators of Tech School Hawk. "It didn't take more than a few hours to make and put online."

But that simple act set off the firestorm that made Tech School Hawk go viral. "We created it, but the internet took it over," said Sean Fuhrer, a First-year Aerospace Engineering major and another one of the co-creators of Tech School Hawk. "We created the first 20 or so Tech School Hawks, but there are now over 200 of them on Meme Generator that we didn't make," said Michael Stevens, a First-year Aerospace Engineering Student and one of the co-creators of Tech School Hawk. "We didn't even put Tech School Hawk up on Meme Generator," added LaGessee.

As for the future of Tech School Hawk, its creators don't know what to expect. "Now we mainly work on moderating the Facebook page to make sure nothing too offensive is posted. We also make sure to point out the ones that other people created that we think are awesome," said LaGessee. There is also talk of possibly creating apps for everything from Android to Windows Phone so that people will be able to look at and create new Tech School Hawks in the future.

How long Tech School Hawk lasts as a phenomenon on IIT's campus is unknown, and what will come after it is unknown as well. But it will be enjoyed while it is here, as evidenced by the hundreds who got involved on Facebook. The creators of Tech School Hawk made it because they thought it would be fun. They had no idea that it would get this kind of response, but thanks to the internet, it did.

Think before you drink

By Madhushree Ghosh
STAFF WRITER

"Alcohol on campus doesn't have to be a deadly game," said Rick Barnes in Drink Think, the first alcohol program that doesn't tell you not to drink. Organized by the Delta Tau Delta fraternity, this program was held on Feb 20 in the MTCC auditorium. A funny, interactive presenter, Mr. Barnes showed students a realistic, practical look at the existence and consumption of alcohol on campus.

As a young budding adult, when one steps into college, a sudden exposure to the outside world, a change in lifestyle, or an "uprootedness" from the comfort zones often become hard to handle. To top it all off, there is dramatic peer pressure, so much so that people who choose not to drink are not allowed to stand by their decision. In this scenario, unlike typical alcohol speakers who come to campus and say, "if you drink, stop!," Barnes pointed out to us how drinking responsibly can make all the difference. Through an intelligent discussion, he put forth questions like "why did you choose to go to college?" that rang a bell in students' consciences. He presented some common reasons why students drink alcohol. Craving for a sense of belonging or something exciting to talk about were some of them.

Barnes pointed out how one can single-handedly change their alcohol consumption in college by changing how one talks about one's parties or what one considers to be exciting. When students cite reasons like having no structured events between 10 p.m. to 3 a.m. behind drinking, Barnes said, a little more sleep or a little more study could turn out to be the best bet for students. Alcohol is often looked upon as a facilitator for sexual encounters. Drunkards often think that the more they drink, the better looking they and the people around them become. Alcohol is often used for male bonding. Here Rick's piece of advice was to learn from women how to develop relationships without alcohol.

Students often argue that it is their right to drink. At this stage, there are two simplified rules that one needs to follow around this right. The first being that the age of twenty one should be the time to exercise one's rights of alcohol consumption and the second being not getting drunk from the consumption of alcohol. It is never a problem till one drinks too much and loses control. Often students drink out of boredom. Rick pointed out that college stands for something more than that. If one is bored, one is not quite mature to be in college yet.

In the second stage of the discussion, Rick brought in front of us, the grim consequences of alcohol consumption. Alcohol causes

slurred speech, numbness of brain cells, rise in blood sugar level, rise in skin temperature (which is often mistaken as a means to survive the chilly winter, when in reality it doesn't work that way at all), people becoming erratic, reaction time and coordination slowing down, etc.

Rick showed to us how alcohol understands us. It knows when one has already consumed enough. It communicates with one and things would actually never go wrong if one listens to it. Phase one of alcohol consumption allows one to drink. Phase two warns one to slow down. Phase three forces one to throw up. Phase four knocks one out and the indomitable last phase brings death. An educated understanding of the levels of consumption can thus make all the difference.

A piece of trivia that opened people's eyes was the definition of high-risk drinking (also known as binge drinking). For men, high risk drinking is five drinks in one sitting and for women (due to a different system) it is four drinks in one sitting. For people who think themselves capable of gulping down more drinks in a single sitting, it is advisable to have a trusted friend take pictures of them after every drink and later watch how markedly stupid they start looking and behaving at beer number six onwards.

There are, again, some myths regarding drinking among college students. They often think that nothing drastic could ever happen to them or their friends because of drinking, when they fail to realize that just one student's uncontrolled drinking is enough to bring down the reputation of the entire college. Another prevalent myth is the belief that when people pass out, they are to be put to bed and allowed to sleep it off, when that is actually extremely fatal. Medical attention should be given to such people, so that much of the alcohol can be taken out of their system and the rest be allowed to metabolize. In such a state, help should always be sought rather than keeping quiet for the sake of reputation, for it is the life that needs to be saved. Other problems with alcohol, as pointed out by Rick, are drunken driving, DUI, sexually transmitted diseases, acquaintance rape, depression and eventual death.

If you, or someone you know, have a drinking problem, it is recommended that you get help immediately. Alcoholics Anonymous, AL-ANON, Alcohol & Drug Ed Office, and the Counseling Center are a few places that you can visit. To sum up the event, Rick's last words of advice were, "If you drink, drink responsibly." Coming back to the question of "why did you choose to go to college?," he asked us to reflect upon and realize the numerous opportunities that this phenomenal school has given to us. As responsible young adults, we cannot screw it up with alcohol.