

TechNews

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9th Annual Pumpkin Launch catapults campus into autumn

Kori Bowns

BUSINESS MANAGER

October brings a lot of things to the life of a college student. Leaves start changing colors, weather starts getting colder, and the days start getting longer as the reprieve of winter break slowly inches nearer. But Illinois Tech students have more to look forward to than receiving midterm grades and drinking pumpkin spice lattes—October also brings Pumpkin Launch to the IIT community.

Last Saturday, 12 machines were lined up along the baselines of Ed Glancy Field for the 9th annual Illinois Tech Pumpkin Launch, hosted by IIT's Biomedical Engineering Society. Pumpkin Launch is a tradition at Illinois Tech where teams of students across a variety of disciplines compete to build machines that throw pumpkins across our baseball field. Prizes are awarded for teams that throw pumpkins the furthest, with the most accuracy, and for a team voted "crowd favorite"—a new award for this year's competition.

Over 100 students worked toward launchers for this year's competition, which is a part of IIT's annual family weekend. This Pumpkin Launch was one of the biggest turn-outs for the event yet.

Many IIT students, staff, alumni, and other spectators come out to watch the event, but some looked forward to the blunders as much as they did the impressive feats of engineering. Some launchers unfortunately broke before being able to complete all of

their launches, and others occasionally fired a pumpkin backwards or straight up into the air.

After three rounds of launches, the prize winners were announced. The first place winner for the distance competition was team Long Shot, with a winning distance of 361 feet. Long Shot was comprised of two mechanical engineering students who built a floating arm trebuchet that was 18 feet tall. The second place winner was team Keep on Chunkin' with 205 feet; third place went to team NSBE (National Society of Black Engineers) with a distance of 172 feet.

The accuracy awards were determined by comparing a launcher team's predicted distance to their actual distance. The first place winner for this category was Mach 1, a team that had constructed a centripetal launcher and was comprised of students from the Illinois Tech Robotics team, with an accuracy of over 99 percent. Second place went to Keep on Chunkin' with an accuracy of 97 percent, and third place went to Long Shot with an accuracy of 95 percent.

The Crowd Favorite award went home with Dirty Winches, another team comprised of Illinois Tech Robotics students, several of whom dressed up as pirates to add a theme to their onager launcher.

Many students who participate in Pumpkin Launch value the rapport that they build with their teammates through completing the often-difficult task of building a launcher.

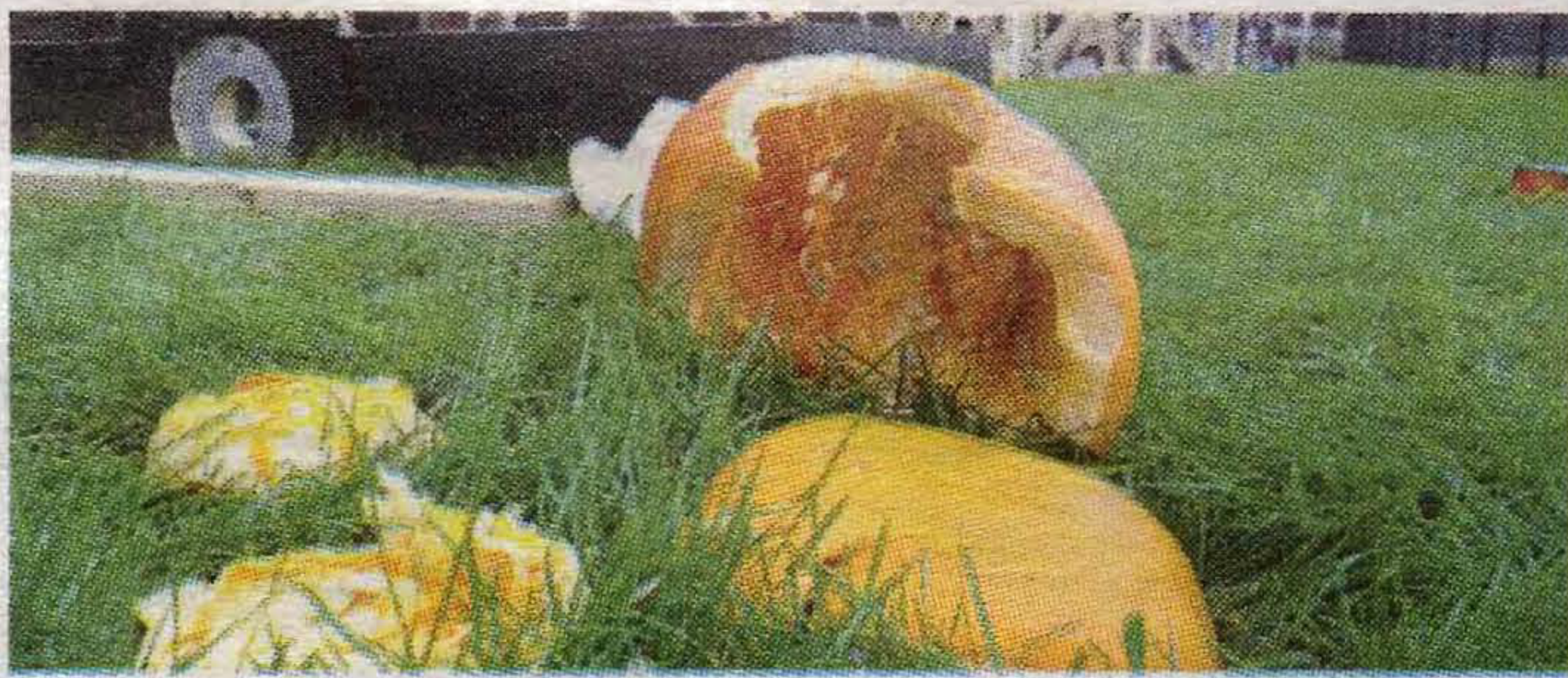
"As much as I know my team might

not win, we're all here together having a great time bonding and getting to know each other," said Emilie Woog, third year electrical engineering major and captain of the Dirty Winches team. "This is my third year competing, and my first time leading a team. After this experience, I know I'll continue competing and working with my fellow students."

Rafael Soto, President of IIT's Society of Physics Students, the organization that took home several of last year's prizes, loves the impressive machines that students are capable of building. "The best part of the Pumpkin Launch is the sheer awe when arriving to the field and witnessing the different launchers that everyone has made. You can tell that every team put sweat and thought into their machines," Soto said. He also urges that younger students get involved on Pumpkin Launch teams in future years, "this is a phenomenal way to put your schoolwork and skills into practice, in a fun way."

In addition to the pumpkin carnage, the site of Pumpkin Launch had a few other activities going on with something for everyone. Mini-pumpkin decorating was hosted by Union Board, and pumpkin carving was hosted by the Residence Hall Association at the conclusion of launches.

Soto encourages the entirety of the IIT community to come out to watch Pumpkin Launch in coming years, "there's nothing quite like watching wooden contraptions swing pumpkins through the air while you enjoy free food!"



Photos by Kori Bowns

Free Speech @IIT sparks discussion

Utsav Gandhi
CAMPUS EDITOR

With the increasingly mobile and accessible tools available for communication in the 21st century, university campuses face a whole gamut of issues with respect to the expression of opinion and exchange of personal views or information.

More relevant to the IIT campus and online community, various Facebook pages such as the "Illinois Institute of Technology: Admitted Undergraduate" page and the increasingly popular "Confessions of IIT Students," have wide ranging discussions on topics ranging from the government shut-down, to residence hall policies, to abortion rights, to how Breaking Bad ended. In such a scenario, it becomes necessary to discuss what exactly the role of free speech is and what exactly the fine line between free speech and offensive language is.

In response to student reactions to the news of the visit of the Westboro Baptist Church (as reported in TechNews), and as part of GLAM IIT's Pride Week, an open student forum discussing the topic of freedom of speech online, on campus, in the U.S., and around the world was organized in the MTCC Auditorium on Tuesday, October 8. Students, staff, and faculty were given the chance to have an open conversation about freedom of speech. Topics intended to be covered were the use of slurs, anti-LGBTQIA rhetoric, freedom of religion vs. speech, cat-calling, online presences, the IIT honor code and within the international sphere.

The panel was comprised of distinguished academics and university administration very well versed in the topic of free speech as it manifests itself on college campuses. Starting off was Associate Professor of Sociology and Director of Legal Studies at Northwestern University, Dr. Laura Beth Nielsen. Nielsen is an expert in the areas of sexual harassment in the workplace and beyond. According to her online Northwestern University biography, she is well-versed in "employment civil rights of all sorts including pregnancy, pay, race, sex, national origin, and a scholar of the legal profession." Nielsen is also a Research Professor with the American Bar Association.

Alongside her was Steven J. Heyman, Professor of Law at IIT's Chicago-Kent College of Law. Professor Heyman is a 1984 graduate of Harvard Law School, where he was a Supreme Court editor of the Harvard Law Review. He teaches torts, criminal law, legislation, constitutional law, and the First Amendment. Professor Heyman is a leading First Amendment scholar who has written extensively about freedom of speech and other aspects of constitutional law, according to his Chicago-Kent faculty profile.

Finally, accompanying the two, was our very own Erin MacDonald, Director of Student Conduct. Over her time at IIT, MacDonald has worked at multiple positions in Student Affairs and dealt with many conduct cases involving students, some of them stemming from miscommunication and misunderstandings in understanding or conveying opinions the right way.

After initial presentations by Heyman and Nielsen concerning the broad ideal (continued on Page 2)