

Campus thefts continue over break

Residents express safety concerns; Public Safety assures dorms are safe

By SARAH KYLE staff reporter **BLAKE MATHEWS** news editor KIM KOKERNOT assistant news editor

The beginning of the spring semester at Harding University brought mixed feelings to students. Some wished for a few more weeks at home, while others were excited to be reunited with friends and roommates.

For junior Katie Slatton and her suitemates, the spring semester brought feelings of insecurity and rage when they returned to discover a dorm room in shambles. The shock of the incident left the girls feeling anything but safe.

"We were all having breakdowns; we couldn't sleep," Slatton said.

She and her suitemates had become the latest victims of a theft wave, one that has swept across campus this year and robbed some students of possessions and their sense of security.

According to Public Safety, a

normal school year will see approximately 30 cases of burglary reported. But Slatton's case was just one of roughly 20 burglaries reported last semester alone.

"It's not unusual to have a small number of thefts [during Christmas Break],"Chief of Public Safety Craig Russell said.

With the campus largely vacant and the residence halls quiet, the break has been especially attractive to burglars. This past break, Slatton's suite, which she shares with juniors Meagan Celsor, Ashley Durgin and Kinsey Alexander, was one of five in Searcy Hall that were broken into.

"I walked in, and I looked in there, and all of our drawers were open ... and I looked back through in the living room and the TV was gone," Celsor said.

About \$1,000 of the girls' property, including class rings and a wallet, was missing from the room when Celsor returned to Harding on Jan. 11. As each girl arrived and took stock of the situation, Slatton said they began "freaking out."

Burglars also struck apart from Searcy Hall during their holiday shopping spree. Senior Tony Randolph and his two suitemates lost an estimated \$7,000 to thieves who broke into their West Apartments suite. Hardest hit were Matt McCormick, co-founder of Denited Clothing Company, and senior Chris Hamilton, who lost \$6,500 of property between them. McCormick's laptop, from which he ran his business, was among the stolen items.

The rash of break-ins came after a semester that saw thousands of dollars of property stolen from residence halls. Russell offered no explanation for the spike in thefts but pointed out some recurring patterns. Reports of stolen property were more common among the men's dorms, and burglars likely gained entry "fairly consistently" through unlocked windows on the first floor.

Once inside, Russell said the burglars likely went from hallway to hallway, checking for unlocked doors, but that they will never truly know what happened.

"Somehow, some of the doors got opened," Russell said. "We're not sure how that happened."

He said possible explanations could include a door left ajar, faulty locks or that the thieves may have picked the locks. Russell discounted theories of a "master key"being found and used because of the forceful entry on the first floor and the small number of rooms broken into.

"If there was a master key, why would they have gone through the window? Why only four doors? You know, there's more reasonable explanations for what happened," he said.

Slatton said the situation in general makes her feel insecure, despite explanations for what may have happened.

"If they can just get in, they can come in through a window, get all the way up to the second floor, go into the rooms and no alarm is going off at all, then anyone can, at any time of day or night," Slatton said.

Sophomore Kat Adams shared similar concerns, even after

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Ice storm cometh



photo by BETH HALL | AP

A sign on Woolsey Avenue indicates the road is closed because of ice and fallen tree branches following wintry weather on Wednesday in Fayetteville, Ark.

Comm majors visit Hollywood through new class

student reporter

Sixteen communication students and faculty spent a week in Hollywood visiting with several top film directors, producers and actors learning about the film and communications industries, completing the trip with three credit hours. After Harding alum and successful screenwriter Joe Aaron suggested the idea to start the "Study in Communication" class, he and the Dean of Communications, Dr. Mike James, made it a reality Jan. 3-10. The brand new Harding University in Hollywood program gave students the opportunity to meet leading professionals in the fields of their majors. The purpose of the course was to provide students with hands-on experience in the industries they will one day be a part of. Communication students were offered the course at the beginning of the fall semester, and anyone interested and willing to pay for the credit hours and airfare from their

By KYLIE AKINS hometowns to Hollywood could enroll. With experience in screenwriting, producing and acting, Aaron played a very important role in making this class possible. As a former co-producer of the popular'90s cartoon "Doug

Student participates in community encouragement through acting

"Performing Arts Center on the Square will nurture artists, technicians, administrators, volunteers and audience members by providing opportunities for them to study and enjoy the art of theater. It will have a significant impact on the level of arts participation in the community by undertaking a wide range of artistic endeavors." The words above are the mission statement from www. centeronthesquare.org, the Web site for Center on the Square, a dinner theater in downtown Searcy. Many people take part in the theater's productions, both townspeople and students from Harding. One such student is Ben Scharff. Scharff is a fifth-year senior and theater major who has been involved with Center on the Square for more than a year. Scharff is currently cast as Froggy in the show "The Foreigner," which is about a very shy person who, because he never talks, is mistaken for a foreigner who doesn't speak English.





and current screenwriter, his past and current connections in Hollywood enriched the students' visit by providing private meetings with top producers, directors and actors.

Those enrolled in the Study of Communication class were able to meet with Hollywood professionals behind and in front of the camera. Senior Matt Tate spoke about meeting director Tom Shadyac. Known as the director of many popular movies such as "Bruce Almighty", "Evan Almighty", "The Nutty Professor", "Patch Adams", "Ace Ventura: Pet Detective" and "Liar, Liar", Shadyac is also celebrated for including a Christian message in many of his movies. Tate said he was impressed by Shadyac's personable and easygoing personality.

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Scharff said this show has a special meaning for him.

"It holds a dear place in my heart because it is the last show in which I will be involved at Center on the Square before I graduate,"



photo by TAYLOR DURHAM | the Bison

Center on the Square, located in downtown Searcy behind City Hall, is in its 10th season. This season will consist of the most popular performances from the dinner theater's history.

Scharff said.

"The Foreigner" cast also contains a former Harding student, Josh Strickland who plays a very dull-witted boy from Georgia named Ellard.

Although Scharff is quite busy getting ready for that show, other activities with Center on the Square are happening. One event is the dinner theater's 10th anniversary.

"Lana Hallmark, the executive director at the theater, decided to base this season on a poll of all

the regular audience members/ contributors containing a list of shows produced in the last 10 years," Scharff said. "They voted on their favorites, and Lana has tried to collect all the original cast members to reprise their roles this season. However, not all were able to, so she's had some new actors playing some roles."

Since becoming involved with Center on the Square, Scharff has joined in six other shows, including one he and his wife, Morgan, directed

Center on the Square has been a huge opportunity for Scharff, as well as others in the community. It allows different people to come together, share a common interest and use their talents. Scharff said it allowed him to become a different character with each new show.

"I love acting because it allows me to explore the world through a number of points of view,"Scharff said."I enjoy becoming and studying a character. The experience is sometimes fun, sometimes draining but always powerful."

Happy New Year

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A student demonstrates paper cutting during the Chinese New Year Festival held Jan. 24. The Chinese calendar is based on lunar cycles rather than solar.

By CAROLINE DAMRON student reporter

Theater curriculum

changes alter plans

Degree evaluations, graduate school applications, mission trips, moving overseas: most college students are planning for life after graduation. Many have planned down to the class, down to the hour, what they are supposed to take every semester so they can hopefully graduate on time; but what if somehow the meticulous planning was thwarted?

Recently, Harding's Theater department has made some much needed course changes. However, there were a few theater majors who realized there would be trouble when they heard about the changes - many wondered if they would be able to graduate on time.

"[The faculty] told me ... they knew that some people would get caught in [the course changes]," Kenny Dolinger, a junior theater

major from California, said. "[They said they] were going [to do] as much as they could to help the few of us caught in this change."

Dolinger said he doesn't know exactly what is going to be done to help, but he has confidence that he will graduate on time.

"The big changes involve ComT306, Contemporary World Drama, and ComT303, Play Production," theater professor Britton Lynn said. "In the old rotation, these two courses were offered in the same semester."

Both of these courses are "academically intensive," and because they were offered and usually taken in the same semester, they put a lot of pressure on the students.

"This course load really affected our students' ability to perform well in these courses as well as their other course work," Lynn said.

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