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USD Makes Headlines in May

May was a banner month for USD, as the university made headlines on two fronts. USD was one of 10 institutions nationwide selected by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration for participation in a cooperative research and education program; and the School of Business Administration announced the establishment of the John Ahlers Center for International Business in the 1994-95 academic year.

The NASA/University Joint Venture (JOVE) program is designed to build research capabilities at U.S. institutions of higher education which have had little or no involvement in the nation's space program. The focus of USD-NASA research efforts will be on earth science, specifically marine geochemistry and global climate change. Total monetary support from NASA will be about $110,000 spread over three years.

The Ahlers Center is being endowed with a $5 million gift from the estate of John and Carolyn Ahlers, the largest gift in USD's history. The mission of the center is to enhance the region's international business education.

The Ahlers Center will include an international executives in residence program and an international internship program which will place students in businesses worldwide.

For more information on the Ahlers Center, call Greg Gazda, professor in the School of Business Administration, at ext. 4864. For more information on the JOVE program, call Anne Sturz or Sarah Gray, assistant professors of marine and environmental studies, at ext. 4241.
By Jacqueline Genovese

When a car engine fell on his hand 14 years ago, John Highkin didn’t know the injury he sustained would change his life.

The former bluegrass performer was forced to take time off while his hand healed, and he took that time to re-evaluate the direction of his life.

“I realized then that I didn’t want to be 40 years old and playing music in a bar,” says Highkin, who is a part-time English lecturer at USD. “So I decided to go to college, something I had been fighting all of my life.”

After earning a bachelor’s degree in English literature at UCLA, Highkin went on to Cambridge, where he earned a master’s degree and continued his study of the famous German playwright, Bertolt Brecht. It was at Cambridge, and later in Berlin at the theater Brecht founded, that Highkin discovered a passion for telling stories using means other than words. “I became interested in physicality and finding a theatrical form that was less language-based,” he explains.

With stints first as a directing intern and then as an assistant director at the Old Globe Theatre and the Seattle Repertory Theatre, Highkin’s career path seemed to be headed in the direction of regional theater. But then the circus came to town.

“I saw Cirque du Soleil in 1987,” he remembers. “So many circuses have a cheap second- or third-hand Las Vegas aesthetic, but Cirque du Soleil wasn’t like that. It brought the concept of family back into the circus.”

That discovery inspired Highkin to create a circus that would bring neighbors together. “In today’s fragmented society, there’s a need for active neighborhood events that get people out in the streets dancing and celebrating,” he says. “The appeal of a circus is universal. No language is needed to appreciate it.”

In 1990, Highkin took his idea to the City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture. There he found an enthusiastic supporter in Cindy Zimmerman, who advised him throughout the grant-seeking process. Highkin received a $15,000 grant from the council and, in 1991, the Fern Street Circus was born.

The first circus took place in Highkin’s neighborhood park, Grape Street park. A short time later, another memorable event took place there. “Cindy and I ended up getting married in the park,” Highkin says with a sheepish grin.

“Pretty amazing isn’t it? I got married because of this!”

Fern Street Circus has become an annual event, and includes performers as diverse as an 11-year-old contortionist and members of the acrobatic Canestrelli circus family. In addition, Zimmerman offers parade-making classes at neighborhood community centers, and the circus has been hired to perform at several events, including a party in Rancho Santa Fe and the AutoZone corporate convention at the San Diego Convention Center.

“We’re the only circus company listed in the Yellow Pages,” Highkin explains. “Events like AutoZone help fund the neighborhood work we do. To me, that’s a nice way of getting indirect corporate support for a meaningful community project.”

Highkin and members of Fern Street Circus performed at USD on April 20 in conjunction with the Linda Vista Multicultural Fair. Their “Doo Dah Parade” included Highkin on stilts, clowns in full costume and children from the Linda Vista community as well as USD’s Manchester Family Child Development Center.

Members of the circus also performed at the Senior Class Spring Finale, and have (Continued on page four)
1. Where is your department located?
We’re located behind Camino Hall, on the north perimeter road, next to public safety and the environmental studies lab.

2. What are the functions of your department?
Our mission is to provide a clean and comfortable environment that is conducive to USD’s educational goals. We strive to accomplish this through three divisions: custodial services, which is responsible for maintaining and servicing the instructional areas; housekeeping services, which is responsible for maintaining and servicing the residence halls; and special services, which handles non-routine services such as moving and delivery services, non-university center special event set-ups, relief support to custodial or housekeeping operations and maintenance of the three university swimming pools. We also coordinate and implement pest control and recycling services.

3. What is the biggest challenge your department faces?
In light of the recession and current budget constraints, trying to run a six-to seven-day per week operation within what is essentially a five-day per week operating budget is probably our No. 1 challenge each year. Equally difficult is trying to schedule work between the daily myriad of events and activities sponsored by the university.

4. How has your department changed over the past 10 years?
Over the years we have sought to keep up with the changing needs of the university through reorganization, additional staff and improved methods. With the focus on world ecology, we also have taken steps to promote conservation among our staff and will continue to promote this to the USD community.

5. What is one thing you would like the campus community to know about your department and its functions?
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New Hires, Promotions

In the past several months, many new faces have joined the USD community. Welcome to the following new employees: Reina Aparicio-Calero, public interest law center; Robert Arsenault, building maintenance; Lisa Bach, financial aid; Kathleen Bachman, controller's office; Loreen Carlson, counseling center; Sean Cavanaugh, physical plant; Dixie Diaz, development; David Edgar, printing/duplicating; Margaret Farrell, institutional research; Susan Gaydos, financial aid; Charles Gill, physical plant; Annalisa Gordon, academic computing; Michael Haskins, public relations; Mary Kowit, media center; Kathleen Knell, Institute for Christian Ministries; Windy McElligott, paralegal program; William McLeod, building maintenance; Catherine Nafey, athletics administration; Robert Nafey Jr., building maintenance; Celia Nisenbaum, banquets/catering; Celia Nisbaum, banquets/catering; Noelle Norton, political science; Peter Nuñez, graduate tax program; Sally Ruffman, Copley Library; Eric Sanchez, building maintenance; Brendan Starkey, fine arts; Carmelita Swearingen, main dining room; Jack Tarantino, mail center; Ann Marie Torres, undergraduate admissions; Robin Walker, printing/duplicating, and Joan Wolf, tennis camp.

In addition, congratulations to the following employees who recently received promotions or reclassifications: Mario Casillas, custodial services; Natalie Grandi, dining services; Lila Gutierrez, dining services; Jeffrey Hardick, building maintenance; Felix Leyva, general services; Maria Luis, housekeeping services; Daniel Ogus, main dining, and Noel Vazquez, custodial services.

Circus

(Continued from page two)
worked with USD students as part of the Linda Vista Kids project.

The Fourth Annual Fern Street Circus will be Aug. 13 at Grape Street Park.

Tickets are $5 for adults, $1 for children. There is no admission charge for individuals who participate in the circus parade. For more information, call Highkin at ext. 2537 or 235-9756.

Pomp and Circumstance.
April 26 was commencement day at the Manchester Family Child Development Center. The 28 graduates included (from left to right) Chelsea Ingram, Adelaine Abrams, Jacque Cory (teacher) and Kelli Hagan.