

Take it away, Punxsutawney Phil

CHRISTINA HOLDER
Associate Editor

PUNXSUTAWNEY, Pa.--

Amid falling snow and a crowd of over 20,000 people, Punxsutawney Phil, the nation's official weather forecaster, was pulled from his heated burrow at 7:25 a.m. on Feb. 2, 2001 to give his prediction.

When he ruled that 6 more weeks of winter weather were on the way, visitors were already scrambling to the shuttle buses that had brought them to see him.

Groundhog Day came upon the town of Punxsutawney and neighboring community Gobbler's Knob with a chill. With the temperature not rising above 26 degrees F, Phil was more likely wishing he was back in the warm confines of the town library where he lives every day except Feb. 2.

Each year he climbs into his white stretch limosine, and his devoted fans follow him in making the annual trek to Gobbler's Knob, an open field tucked into a forest only ten minutes from Punxsutawney.

Often not widely publicized, Groundhog Day is taken seriously in Pennsylvania country. The town even has its own official radio station that provides commentary on the events of the day. Groundhog Day is, by the way, a national holiday.

Every year thousands of people flock to the town from across the country.

The main street in Punxsutawney is dotted with groundhog souvenir shops, restaurants and bars that stay open all night to accommodate the surge of visitors.

Beginning at 3 a.m., visitors can catch a shuttle--a yellow bus borrowed from the school system--to Gobbler's Knob, where the official Groundhog Day festival is set-up.

Donna and Greg Broomall of Pittsburgh stand together on

the open field at Gobbler's Knob at 4:35 a.m. In front of them is large stage overrun with dancing college students and a performer who eerily resembles Elvis. Polka music blares from the speakers set up around the stage. A hot chocolate and doughnut cart is still within their eye's view.

They came to Gobbler's Knob because they always wondered what Groundhog Day would be like in the official weather capital of the United States.

Yet it was not but soon after they stepped off the bus that they realized they could have gotten to Gobbler's Knob at 6 a.m. and seen about the same thing.

From 3 a.m. until 7:30 a.m. when Phil's ceremony takes place, the field at Gobbler's Knob is overrun with people dancing, talking, scrambling to the bonfire to warm their toes and taking in the music and fireworks.

Bill Cooper, president of the Inner Circle, a non-profit organization that formed to "perpetuate and protect the honor of the groundhog" sifts through the crowd, answering questions about Phil.

He vows Phil is one-hundred and fifteen years old who gets his youthful looks from drinking a special groundhog potion every seven years.

Nevertheless, Cooper raps on Phil's burrow door every year around 7:30 a.m., and Phil tells him the forecast. Cooper, is of course, the only person who can speak Phil's language.

Surely, Groundhog Day at the Knob is more ceremony than reality, but for every visitor from the Broomalls to the local kids who begin filing in just before 7 a.m., it's a step into a charming yet surreal world that one can only understand and believe in here. And if one cannot trust Phil, then there is always dancing to good Polka.

Grad studies director has high hopes for school

LINDSEY MCADAMS
Staff Writer

The John E. Weems Graduate School, though small, grows in size with each year.

To continue that trend, Meredith has hired a new director of graduate studies. Last Thursday, Feb. 1, marked Deborah Horvitz's first day as director of graduate studies.

Horvitz said that as director, she wants to "continue to grow and strengthen the four graduate programs and look at other areas where it would make sense to start a graduate program." She will be responsible for overseeing the administration of graduate programs

The school presently offers three Master's Degree programs and one internship. These programs are the Master's in Business Administration (MBA), Master's in Education (M. Ed), and Master's in Music (M. Mus.). The school also offers a Dietetic Internship, contingent on the student having completed a program in dietetics approved by the American Dietary Association.

Horvitz came to Meredith from Duke University, where she was the director of human relations, communications and planning. Before that position, she was the director of the

that she was "impressed with the caliber of the students and their level of engagement." That experience gave her a chance to see what Meredith is all about. When she saw the ad for the position at the Graduate school, she knew Meredith was the place for her.

Horvitz noted that Meredith's community seems "happy to embrace change and is looking for better ways to do things. This is unusual for any organization." She noted that her biggest challenge as director of graduate studies will be to keep the graduate programs growing at a competitive rate.

Horvitz said, "Meredith is a wonderful place, and I'm very fortunate to be here."

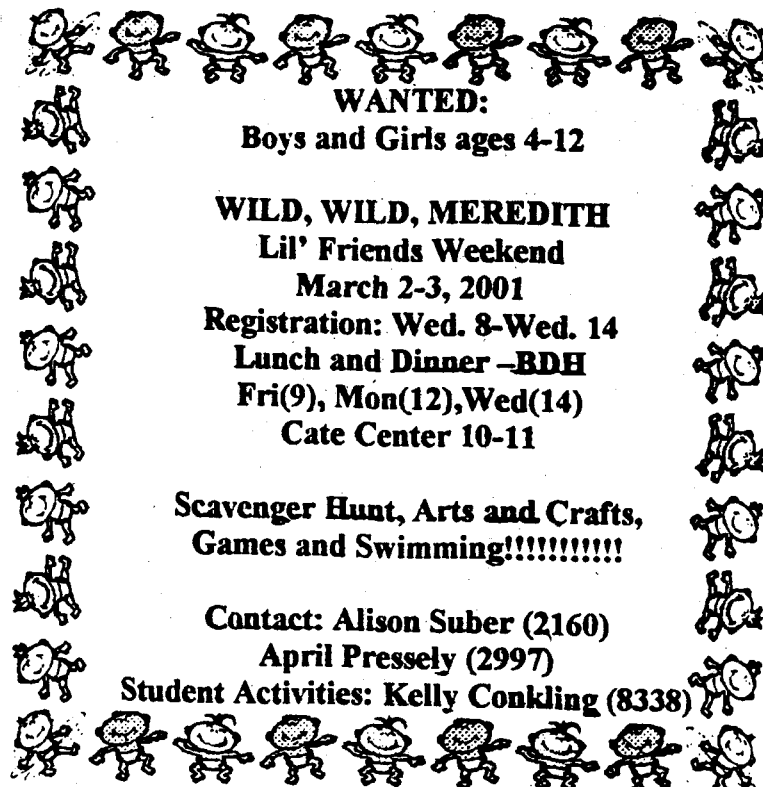
"I'm very fortunate to be here."

**--Deborah Horvitz,
director of
graduate studies**

executive Master's Degree in Business Administration program for five years at Duke.

She attended Boston University in Boston, Massachusetts as an undergraduate. She received her degree in Early Elementary Education and Special Education from Wellesley.

Though she's worked for the past several years at Duke, this isn't the first time Horvitz has been to Meredith. A few years ago a professor invited her to speak to a class, and she recalls



WANTED:
Boys and Girls ages 4-12

**WILD, WILD, MEREDITH
Lil' Friends Weekend
March 2-3, 2001
Registration: Wed. 8-Wed. 14
Lunch and Dinner -BDH
Fri(9), Mon(12),Wed(14)
Cate Center 10-11**

**Scavenger Hunt, Arts and Crafts,
Games and Swimming!!!!!!**

**Contact: Alison Suber (2160)
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