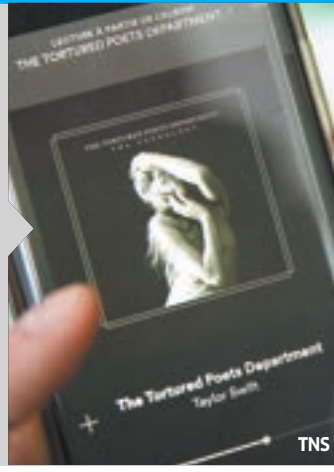


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Students honor Earth Day with urban cleanups

KAI BRITO
 Copy Editor

To celebrate Earth Day, several Madison College student groups made major efforts to pickup trash in local environments all around the City of Madison. Business Professionals of America (BPA), La Raza and Veterans Club all coordinated individual events to for urban cleanups. Additionally, Volunteer Center and STEM Academy collaborated to clean up areas around the Madison College campuses.

For their first environmental cleanup, the BPA club joined an outside group effort to clean the Starkweather Neighborhood, which was hosted by Sustain Dane with support from local business Ian's Pizza.

BPA club leaders emphasized that trash washes into lakes, rivers, and other waterways, which would harm the local wildlife and the planet, so people must learn how to recycle properly. La Raza group leaders held similar sentiments, coordinating their Earth Day event at another urban greenspace, Warner Park.

La Raza Treasurer Cole Klapheke said that last year the group several pounds of trash in the waterways of Warner Park, including plastics, scrap metals, loose wiring, fishing line and he even personally found an entire tent buried under the dirt on the park grounds.

"I think Earth Day is a great day to bring awareness to environmental pollution... it's the most convenient and allowed us to have the excuse to do it, but I truly think we need to have more days where we clean up all the trash everywhere," Klapheke emphasized.

Overall, he said that La Raza has understood that students are seeking community connections, and so they will build that campus presence through community assistance and taking direct action through events like Hispanic Heritage Month, Dia Internacional de la Mujer

» SEE **CLEANUPS** PAGE 4



KELLY FENG / CLARION

President Joe Biden speaks from Redsten Gymnasium at the Madison College Truax Campus on April 8. It was the first time a sitting president has visited Madison College.

President visits campus

Biden is the first sitting president to stop here

KELLY FENG
 Editor in Chief

Less than seven months before the 2024 election, President Joe Biden visited Madison College last month to promote his new federal student loan relief plan.

He delivered remarks at the Truax campus, inside the H. Douglas Redsten Gymnasium, and spoke about the new loan forgiveness plan and its highlights.

The president spoke to a packed audience, including dignitaries Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers, Madison Mayor Satya Rhodes-

Conway and Congressman Mark Pocan, representing the second district.

Madison College president Dr. Jack Daniels, Executive Vice President of Student Affairs Dr. Tim Casper, and state and local tribe leaders were also present. Dr. Jack Daniels did not underestimate the impact of President Biden's visit.

Daniels said that preparing to host the president required a great deal of coordination in a short time. He took pride in his staff coming together to make the visit happen, with some working until the early morning hours. He also noted the other agencies, particularly the president's advance team.

"There were so many things to coordinate — everything from the

secret service to the advance team to MPD to the sheriffs — it was just huge," said Daniels.

Former UW-Madison students and life partners Ashley Storck and Sam Leary introduced President Biden. They shared that the president's SAVE plan is helping them with their \$75,000 student loan debt.

Biden, who was welcomed with thunderous applause, told the audience that while a college degree still is a ticket to the middle class, that ticket is becoming much too expensive.

The president said the ability of middle-class Americans to afford an education has become burdensome.

"Too many people feel the strain

» SEE **BIDEN** PAGE 4



CLARION STAFF PHOTO

Madison College student Flore Nikiema dreams of bringing electricity to everyone in her home nation of Burkina Faso.

Madison College student shines a light on a world of possibilities

KELLY FENG
 Editor in Chief

Flore Nikiema doesn't remember the first time she dreamed of bringing electricity to her country, but she knows it has been on her mind since childhood.

Growing up in Burkina Faso, Africa, she found it strange and unfathomable that some people had access to electricity and necessities while others did not. There was no electricity when she visited her grandmother, who lived in a village.

"There is no electricity. It's not like they have little electricity — there is absolutely none. The night is dark. Everything is dark," Nikiema said.

In addition to affecting households, the absence of electricity affects critical industries

like health care, sometimes cutting a life short.

It is a fact that Nikiema knows all too well.

In 2021, her aunt was ill, and although she was in a hospital, it didn't have enough power for her aunt's ventilator, resulting in her death.

These are just a few experiences that prompted Nikiema, a 20-year-old Madison College student, to spend much of her day pondering her country's dilemma. In Burkina Faso, only 19% of households have access to electricity, while the remaining 81% are deprived of this basic necessity.

"They don't have basic access to technology — they don't have normal life conditions. We cannot talk about different technologies if we don't even have basic access to electricity or commod-

» SEE **LIGHT** PAGE 4

Otara hopes to break into the film industry in Kenya

LEAH WEAR
Copy Editor

Frankline Otara felt drawn to watching others act in shows, and after learning that his mother couldn't fulfill her passion for acting, he decided to step into the spotlight for her.

"(Acting) could not work out (for her) since she had no resources, so I decided to make her dream come true," Otara wrote in an email.

Otara, who also goes by Cranky Usher, is currently in school, pursuing a diploma in Broadcasting in Journalism and Mass Media at Rift Valley Institute of Business Studies in Nakuru Town, Kenya. He is from Kisii, Kenya, but moved to Nakuru for school, while most of his family still lives in the countryside.

In a Zoom call, he appeared with bright pink walls behind him, dressed in a dark button-up shirt and light blue blazer. When later asked why the walls were that color, he laughed and said

"the owner of the houses is the one who painted them pink and I just rented a room some months ago." He said he pays \$33.98 USD monthly for the rent, which may seem cheap to those in the United States where rents can easily be \$1500/month or more, but it's difficult for him to afford since he isn't able to have a job while in school.

"Here you have to go to school, finish school, then look for work," he says, "you can't work when you are in school, you can't, it's very difficult" and feels "so broke" sometimes. He feels he needs to "trust the system" though and is hopeful he'll be able to find a job once he graduates, ideally as a reporter, actor or camera operator for a media house in Kenya. Otara also likes being behind the camera and helps with the recording during school events.

When acting Otara enjoys being the main character. In his last role he "played a boyfriend who was caught cheating" for a film by Joseph Oyugi and sent a clip.

The scene begins with tense music. Otara and another actor sit across from each other at a café table. The betrayed girlfriend shows Otara's character a phone with incriminating text messages on the screen. "I have the evidence," she says in the clip. As Otara's character looks at the phone he takes a breath and says, "I'm sorry." The ex-girlfriend character becomes angrier and says heatedly, "After everything... my best friend!" She gets up from her chair as Otara pleads with her saying it was "just a mistake" and to give him a second chance. She takes her glass of orange juice and splashes it in his face before walking away.

When asked about the scene Otara says that even though he knew he was just acting he still felt "embarrassed" with the orange juice scene, and that it's something to get used to since it's his career.

While Otara says the movie industry in Kenya has "a lot of fun and freedom," he says it's also difficult to get into the

industry unless you have connections. Many people "do it for fun" rather than professionally, he says, so it's tricky to try to make a career out of it.

Besides looking up to local actors in Kenya, someone Otara feels is his "mentor" in movie production is the character Thomas Shelby, played by Cillian Murphy, in *Peaky Blinders*. CharaTour gives the assessment of Thomas Shelby as "stoic, calculating, and ambitious." While it may be difficult to make it as an actor in Kenya, it's something Otara feels passionately for and says he loves.

For his future, living in America is not out of the question, though he says he's happy to be Kenyan. He laughed as he referred to the people of the "superpower" country as having "superpowers" themselves, then said more seriously, "I love America."

Otara says his mother smiles when they talk about his acting and says he's "doing really great." One day he'd like to see himself on Netflix or in movies and says, "That's the dream."

BIDEN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

and stress, wondering if they're going to get married, have their first child, start a family,"

Biden said that even if families can get by, they still have crushing debt.

"It's not just a drag on them. It's a drag on our local economy if you can't afford to buy a home, start that small business or chase that career you've been dreaming about for a long time," Biden said.

Biden outlined the new Student Debt Relief Program and highlighted the specific loan forgiveness areas.

The new plan includes specific categories of borrowers, such as public service employees facing financial hardship and those who have been making payments for decades but whose debt has accrued more interest than the amount they initially borrowed. Under this program, such individuals would have their debts canceled.

Biden exited the stage, leaving the audience enthralled, either because of his new loan forgiveness plans or the once-in-a-lifetime experience of seeing and listening to a president in person.

"It was great. It was fantastic. We

had the opportunity to host the president of the United States. For this institution, as I've been told, it's the first time. The folks that came together — they did tremendous work," said Daniels.

Kai Brito, President-Elect of the Student Senate, said he appreciated the speech overall but wished Biden had emphasized the "technical" college aspect more.

While Biden did mention chip manufacturing and the technology degrees offered at Madison College, Brito would have liked him to have delivered more information about programs such as manufacturing, production and the automotive industry.

"I like that he made it about technical colleges, so it's like education overall. He did a little bit of emphasis on technical colleges. I just wish he had a little bit more."

Brito said he would have liked to have heard about the pathway from a technical college to a four-year degree.

Storck and Leary, who made introductory remarks, were grateful they had the chance to speak.

"Being first-generation college students, it was an amazing opportunity to be able to share our story that I feel a lot of Wisconsinites share," said Storck.

LIGHT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ities to have a normal life," she said.

This 81% to 19% disparity in her backyard was minor compared to the widening chasm between Burkina Faso and the more successful first-world countries, as Nikiema could see from the television.

The idea that her third-world neighbors could work just as hard as first-world countries but lacked resources triggered her, and she knew she needed to take action. She decided to use her patience to impact people and study engineering to focus on electronic devices, finding a way to improve productivity.

With the help of scholarships earned in high school, Nikiema came to Madison with a purpose. After enrolling in the college, she joined the Liberal Arts Transfer Program Pre-Engineering. Early in her college student experience, Nikiema realized she didn't want to wait until graduation to accomplish something. With that in mind, she started researching her honors project.

"I realized that I am doing it for a reason. If I can use my skills to apply my learning right now, I can start working on the purpose of why I'm studying. Why am I doing the things I am doing? So why not start [now]?" she said.

Last year, she demonstrated her Dual Axis Solar Tracker in her Honors Program, a program that pairs high-academic students with instructors on a project of their design.

Nikiema's "Dual Axis Solar Tracker" project focused on optimizing the tilt and angle of solar panels by motorizing them with appropriate electronics and sensors to capture the sun's rays more effectively.

The slight, soft-spoken STEM student lit up the room at last year's honors presentation, captivating the audience with her miniature solar tracking project, and earned third place.

Additionally, Nikiema has won recognition at the annual Student Success Awards and is the Vice President for Fellowship with the college's Phi Theta Kappa Society chapter. Her extracurricular activities don't keep her from working as an ambassador for the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Center.

"She does come from really humble beginnings, and with the adversities that she faced in Burkina Faso, she is working every day to make a changing world," said Angela Yang, co-advisor of the STEM club and Nikiema's supervisor. "She's constantly trying her best to be inclusive, build a community and build partnerships with people who care about the same values as she does," said Yang.

Yang says the STEM Ambassador's passion for returning to Burkina Faso

and providing access and opportunities for electricity is a subject that comes up in many of their conversations.

Barkwende K (Flore) Nikiema was born 20 years ago in Burkina Faso, a landlocked country in western Africa and one of the least developed countries in the world.

The country has 81 recorded African languages, and Nikiema speaks the Mooré language, which is spoken by the Mossi people, who comprise about 52% of its population. French is the official language of the country.

Her mother worked in retail, and her father worked for the government. They were married young, and her mother gave birth to Nikiema, her oldest child when she was 17. She has two younger siblings.

Seeing how hard her parents have worked has inspired her. Despite being young, she said her parents raised their family in the best conditions possible and supported them in school. Her family also had access to electricity, which Nikiema considers lucky despite facing restrictions and challenges.

However, they endured five-hour rolling blackouts, power outages that occur when a power company turns off electricity in selected areas to save energy. The blackouts occurred at night when Nikiema most needed light.

Without light, there wasn't a way to study, so her family used kerosene lamps for lighting.

After spending the first 18 years of her life watching her family and neighbors, near and far, endure hardship but continue, Nikiema has a philosophical outlook on life. She appreciates every moment and optimizes the present.

She believes that people should not delay if they have an idea. It is never too early to take small steps toward a larger goal.

"Go for it. Start doing it," said Nikiema, who believes people often hesitate to create an idea because they don't think it's the right time. "Even if it's 10 minutes a week or 10 minutes a month, at least start it. The more you start it, the more you renew your purpose," she said.

Nikiema will graduate this month with an associate's degree in Liberal Arts Transfer - Pre-engineering. She plans to earn a bachelor's degree in computer engineering and has already been accepted to the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Milwaukee School of Engineering (MSOE).

She knows her determined drive and unwavering purpose may deliver some future roadblocks but remains collected and composed.

"To me, being alive is significant. I always remind myself that I'm born for a specific purpose and should accomplish it," Nikiema said.



PHOTO BY COLE KLAPHEKE

La Raza Unida organized an urban trash cleanup at Warner Park.

CLEANUPS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Trabajadora and May Day.

The Veterans Club leaders and advisors saw an Earth Day cleanup as a means to connect students with a volunteer service opportunity and address a need to keep the campus grounds clean.

AJ Brown, Vice President of Veterans Club, said that his primary goal is give military connected students visibility, so they can see how they could also get involved in campus programming.

"Our goal was really just to pick up as much trash as possible, and to do it together as a group," Brown said. "Really we've been trying to build up the club and get the word out that military connected students are on campus building community."

There are approximately over 500

military affiliated students on campus, and Brown stressed the need for veterans to have a space to engage with each other at Madison College.

For all the clubs leading the events, community was a reoccurring theme to unite their members in volunteer service. And that's ultimately why the Volunteer Center found it necessary to give students the opportunity to get connected with events that protect the environment on Earth Day.

Volunteer Center Special Events Coordinator Nyawer Biel made use of her status as a STEM Academy student to create that collaboration.

"I think volunteering matters because it makes a visible difference around our school, so that people see us and know they can contribute as well," Biel explained.

Editor's Note: Kai Brito is the Interim President of Business Professionals of America and coordinated the Earth Day Urban Cleanup Event.