

Andy Weir, author of *The Martian*, speaks to SLUH community



Weir answered questions about his novel, *The Martian*, via video conference on Monday night.

PHOTO | GAURAV NIGAM

BY JOSEPH REZNIKOV
CORE STAFF

Mars, potatoes, Matt Damon, and Aquaman. Andy Weir, author of the 2015 summer reading book *The Martian* video-conferenced with around 150 students, siblings, friends, and faculty on Monday night to answer questions about these topics as well as many others about the best-selling novel and Golden Globe winning movie.

The night began with an hour of pizza and *The Martian* trivia from followed by

a video conference with Weir 7:00-8:00 p.m.

During the trivia, attendees could submit potential questions for Weir to a website, slido.com. Students voted on the questions using phones or iPads, and Weir was asked the top-ranked questions. Then, for the last ten minutes of the night, the microphone was passed throughout the crowd so that students could ask Weir their own questions.

"After listening to him, I think careers in STEM are much more interesting because there's so much you

can do," said freshman Paul Gillam. "It's not just working behind a computer, you can actually write books and do other things like that. It's more accessible than I realized."

The event was organized through a collaboration between Weir, the science department, and senior Ethan McIntyre. McIntyre, who was part of the initial process of deciding on the all-school summer reading book, has exchanged emails with Weir for the past three months to find a date for Weir to speak with the SLUH community.

McIntyre took lead on the project because of his love for the novel and his love for English and science.

"Ethan suggested the book at one of our meetings and he had a really high level of interest in it," said science teacher Kathy Chott. "He insisted on contacting Andy Weir and I thought 'This is great. A student is helping to work on the summer reading program, and that's what it should be like.' It was a community effort rather than saying 'okay everyone, this is what you're going to read.'"

"I'm really into both English and science, and he found a way to cross them when there's not a lot of overlap," said McIntyre. "I look up to him, so it was fun to get to talk to him."

Although SLUH has a history of hosting all-school assemblies with the author of the summer reading book, the process was changed this year. Partly because Weir is afraid of airplanes, and partially because the Science Department was looking to try something new, they decided to instead host a video conference with Weir.

"We wanted it to be a fun thing for people that wanted to be there; we didn't want to force people to come," said McIntyre.

The event had resoundingly positive feedback largely because of four things: the relaxed atmosphere, the night being optional rather than mandatory, the night be-

ing open to the whole SLUH community, and, of course, the free pizza.

"People would get excited when he said things and you could feel it," said McIntyre. "If there were just a bunch of us sitting in rows in the Commons, that would not have happened as much. Letting people decide if they wanted to do it or not was the best way to get an excited group."

Whether SLUH will continue this trend of discussing the summer reading book with an optional event rather than a required event is unclear. While the video conference worked well for this year, the situation will need to be reevaluated each year.

"It depends how much the whole community needs to hear the message. This year it was the right choice to have a video conference, but it depends," said Chott.

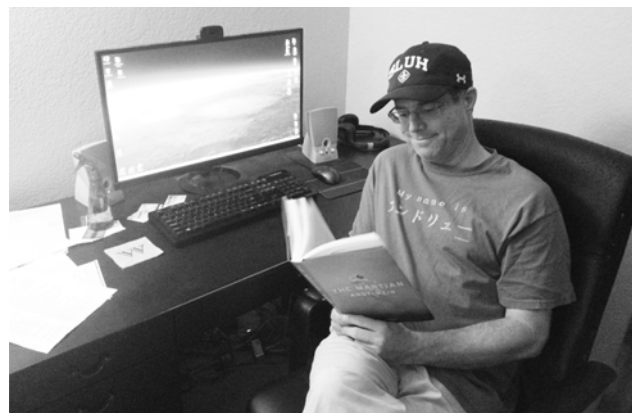


PHOTO | COURTESY OF MR. ANDY WEIR

Weir with a copy of *The Martian* for SLUH's "Look who got caught reading *The Martian*" event earlier this year.

Anderson assists in production of environmental science textbook, *Healing Earth*

BY ANDREW PLUFF
STAFF

Over the course of the last several years, science teacher Bill Anderson has pitched a helping hand into the production of an environmental science textbook that he is piloting this year.

The textbook, *Healing Earth*, is free on www.healingearth.ijep.net and has been written and edited by Jesuit teachers and scholars over the past years. The book goes into detail about the science behind some of the problems facing our world and takes a look at the morals and spirituality behind these problems as well.

Anderson has started testing the textbook in his classes.

"The textbook is great," said Anderson. "It does all the good science but also gets at the ethics and spirituality,

it takes a much more holistic approach to this topic."

Dr. Schuck is an associate Professor of Theology at Loyola-University Chicago and has been leading the production effort since 2011.

"It discusses today's ecological challenges from not only a scientific perspective, but also from the perspective of environmental ethics, spirituality, and environmental action," said Schuck. "It is the only environmental science textbook that does this."

When classes began using the book, it was still in production and was being constantly edited as they used it.

Anderson is using the book as the main text this year and is supplementing it with the book he has used in past years. In the future, he would like to use this as the only text, along with journals and other

small readings.

The book is a collaboration between different educators and scholars from all over the world. The contributors totaled 92 people from 13 countries.

"It's nice because it's not just the Catholic/Christian perspective," said Anderson. "It brings in views from people all over the world and shows how they look at problems differently."

The book, having been written and edited by people from all over the globe, gives perspectives not found in other textbooks, on issues that face many types of people; people in different situations might look at the same problem in vastly different ways.

The book was written as an extension of an earlier document produced by the Jesuits called *Healing a Broken World*.

The new textbook is a response towards some of the environmental issues explained in *Healing a Broken World* and is aimed at high school and college students as a call to action.

The production of the book began in 2011 when the International Jesuit Ecology Project was founded and tasked with creating a free textbook for upper level students that centered around helping the environment and the natural world we live in as a whole.

Just two weeks after the official launch on Jan. 29, 495 teachers and helpers were already involved, from 39 different countries around the world.

Anderson got involved in the production of the book several years ago through an online journal called *Eco-Jesuit*, which expressed an interest in people who wanted to proofread chapters of the book in its earliest stages.

"I was really impressed by the idea of the textbook," said Anderson. "So I figured it would be worthwhile looking into it and it's just sort of grown from there."

Anderson's main role has been proofreading but he also was involved in a meeting held at SLUH last year to show students and faculty what the book was about. The meeting was led by Dr. Michael Schuck.

Chess falls to Belleville

BY LIAM CONNOLLY
REPORTER

The St. Louis U. High chess team suffered a 16.5-13.5 loss to Belleville West yesterday in its third to last meet of the regular season.

Freshman Paul Gillam played board two, sophomore Connor Worley played board five, and seniors Sergio Goodwin, Miles Quigless, and Michael Brennan played boards one, three and four, respectively.

Although Worley won board five, Gillam won board two, and Brennan played to a draw on board four, it was not enough for the team to win outright against Belleville.

Junior Will Kelly, a normal board one or two player for the team, wasn't able to play since he couldn't make the start of the match.

"The fact that I could not be here makes me very emotional," Kelly said.

According to Kelly, Gillam capitalized on a fork, which is when a player puts a piece in position to attack two pieces without any way for his opponent to take it. This led to the team's most valuable win of the meet.

"Paul had a pretty aggressive attack going, which definitely cost him his defense," said Kelly. "It was a nail biter for a bit but the other guy didn't have a very strong attack so it was kind of like Paul had a slight edge the whole time. He was playing very well—anything he did, I

would have done."

Brennan held his opponent back with just a draw, typically an infrequent occurrence at chess meets.

"My opponent had me on the ropes for a long time and is probably overall the better chess player," said Brennan. "The game was nasty, brutish, and long. It was a hard-fought draw on both sides."

Despite the loss, coach Don Steingrubby was pleased as usual with the team's overall performance.

"It was another close match, you know. We've had a lot of them recently," said Steingrubby. "The younger guys have had a strong showing and we've been playing some strong players."

The team was looking to win its last two games of the regular season in order to make it to the playoffs, but the loss against Belleville West dashed those hopes. They will be playing Belleville East Wednesday, and hope to finish off the season with a win.



PHOTO | BRENDAN VOIGT

Senior Michael Brennan in his match on Wednesday.



The home screen of the textbook.