

LSSU releases amazing 37th annual list of banished words

December 31st, 2011

SAULT STE. MARIE, Mich. – Lake Superior State University released its 37th annual List of Words Banished from the Queen's English for Misuse, Overuse and General Uselessness a day early this year, on Dec. 30. It's an amazing list that is bound to generate some blowback.

"Worn-out words and phrases are the new normal this year, but with some shared sacrifice, we can clean up the language and win the future," said an LSSU representative.

LSSU wordsmiths emerged from their man cave long enough to release the new list, something the school has done since 1976. Typically the list is released on New Year's Eve but publication was moved up a day this year due to the weekend holiday.

"With the addition of this year's nominations, the list of words and phrases banished over the years has become ginormous," compilers of the list say.

Former LSSU Public Relations Director Bill Rabe and friends created "word banishment" in 1975 at a New Year's Eve party and released the first list on New Year's Day. Since then, LSSU has received tens of thousands of nominations for the list, which includes words and phrases from marketing, media, education, politics, technology and more.

AMAZING

Received the most nominations. LSSU was surprised at the number of nominations this year for "amazing" and surprised to find that it hadn't been included on the list in the past. Many nominators mentioned overuse on television when they sent their entries, mentioning "reality" TV, Martha Stewart and Anderson Cooper. It seemed to bother people everywhere, as nominations were sent from around the US and Canada and some from overseas, including Israel, England and Scotland. A Facebook page – "Overuse of the Word Amazing" – threatened to change its title to "Occupy LSSU" if 'amazing' escaped banishment this year...

"It's amazing that you haven't added that word to your list over the years. Totally, absolutely, really amazing. Not quite astounding, but still amazing." Charles Attardi, Astoria, NY

"Although I am extremely happy to no longer hear the word 'awesome' used incorrectly and way too often, it appears to me it is quickly being replaced with 'amazing.' Pay attention and you will no doubt be amazingly surprised to find that I am right." Gregory Scott, Palm Springs, Calif.

"People use 'amazing' for anything that is nice or heartwarming. In other words, for things that are not amazing." Gitel Hesselberg, Haifa, Israel

"Every talk show uses this word at least two times every five minutes. Hair is not 'amazing.' Shoes are not 'amazing.' There are any number of adjectives that are far more descriptive. I saw Martha Stewart use the word 'amazing' six times in the first five minutes of her television show. Help!" Martha Waszak, Lansing, Mich.

"Banish it for blatant overuse and incorrect use...to stop my head from exploding." Paul Crutchfield, Norwich, Norfolk, UK

"The word which once aptly described the process of birth is now used to describe such trivial things as toast, or the color of a shirt." JP, Comox, British Columbia, Canada

"Anderson Cooper used it three times recently in the opening 45 seconds of his program. My teeth grate, my hackles rise and even my dog is getting annoyed at this senseless overuse. I don't even like 'Amazing Grace' anymore. Sarah Howley, Kalamazoo, Michigan

"The word has been overused to describe things only slightly better than mundane. I blame Martha Stewart because to her, EVERYTHING is amazing! It has lost its 'wow factor' and has reached 'epic' proportions of use. It's gone 'viral,' I say! 'I'm just sayin'!' Alyce-Mae Alexander, Maitland, Florida

BABY BUMP – Although nominated by many over the years, this phrase came in as a close second to "amazing" this year.

"This is a phrase we need to finally give birth to, then send on its way." Mary Sturgeon, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

"I'm tired of a pregnancy being reduced to a celebrity accessory. Or worse, when less-than-six-pack abs are suspected of being one." Afton, Portland, Oregon

I am so sick of that phrase! It makes pregnancy sound like some fun and in-style thing to do, not a serious choice made by (at the very least) the woman carrying the child." Susan, Takoma Park, Maryland

"Why can't we just use the old tried-and-true 'pregnant?' I never heard anyone complain about that description." Eric, Poca, West Virginia.

SHARED SACRIFICE

"Usually used by a politician who wants other people to share in the sacrifice so he/she doesn't have to." Scott Urbanowski, Kentwood, Michigan

OCCUPY

"'Occupy Wall Street' grew to become Occupy 'insert name of your city here' all over the country. It should be banished because of the media overuse and now people use it all the time, i.e. 'I guess we will occupy your office and have the meeting there.' 'We are headed to Grandma's house – Occupy Thanksgiving is under way.'" Bill Drewes, Rochester Hills, Michigan

"It has been overused and abused even to promote Black Friday shopping." Grant Barnett, Palmdale, California

"Why couldn't they have used a more palatable kind, like pecan or peach?" Bob Forrest, Tempe, Arizona

BLOWBACK

Sometimes exchanged with "pushback" to mean resistance.

"'Blowback' is used by corporate (types) to mean 'reaction,' when the word 'reaction' would have been more than sufficient. Example: 'If we send out the press release, how should we handle the blowback from the community?'" John, Los Angeles, California

MAN CAVE

"Overused by television home design and home buying shows, has trickled down to sitcoms, commercials, and now has to be endured during interactions with real estate people, neighbors and co-workers. Jim, Flagstaff, Arizona

"It is not just over-used, it is offensive to we males who do not wish to hunker (another awful word, often misused) down in a room filled with stuffed animal heads, an unnecessarily large flat-screen TV and Hooters memorabilia. Not every man wants a recliner the size of a 1941 Packard that has a cooler in each arm and a holster for the remote. So please, assign 'man cave' to the lexicographic scrap heap where it so rightly belongs." David Hollis, Hubbardsville, New York

THE NEW NORMAL

"The phrase is often used to justify bad trends in society and to convince people that they are powerless to slow or to reverse those trends. This serves to reduce participation in the political process and to foster cynicism about the ability of government to improve people's lives. Sometimes the phrase is applied to the

erosion of civil liberties. More often, it is used to describe the sorry state of the U.S. economy. Often hosts on TV news channels use the phrase shortly before introducing some self-help guru who gives glib advice to the unemployed and other people having financial difficulties. Robert Brown, Raleigh, North Carolina

PET PARENT

"Can a human being truly be a parent to a different species? Do pet 'owners' not love their pets as much pet 'parents' do? Are we equating pet ownership with slave holding? This cloyingly correct term is capable of raising my blood sugar. Lynn Ouellette, Buffalo, New York

WIN THE FUTURE

A political phrase worn wherever you look – to the left (President Obama) or the right (Newt Gingrich).

"On its very face, it's an empty, meaningless phrase. It basically says that anyone who opposes anything meant to 'win the future' must want to 'lose the future,' which is highly unlikely. But, hey, you may already be a winner." Jim Eisenmann, Madison, Wisconsin

TRICKERATION

"Why? Why? Why? This one seems to be the flavor du jour for football analysts. What's wrong with 'trick' or 'trickery?' No doubt, next year's model will be 'trickerationism.'" Gene Bering, Seminole, Texas

"A made-up word used by football analysts to describe a trick play. Sounds unintelligent. Perhaps they've had a few too many concussions in the football world to notice." Carrie Hansen, Grayling, Michigan

GINORMOUS

"No need to make a gigantic (idiot) out of yourself trying to find an enormous word for 'big.'" Coulombe, Sanford, Florida

"This combination of gigantic and enormous makes the hair stand up on the back of my neck every time I hear it. Each utterance reminds me of the high school drop-out that first used this offensive word in my presence. Gina Bua, Vancouver, Washington

"This word is just a made-up combination of two words. Either word is sufficient, but the combination just sounds ridiculous. Jason, Andover, Maine