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Dear Readers

On Nov. 4, as the Klipsun staff worked diligently to publish this issue, our attentions were diverted. We witnessed history unfold as Americans voted in their first African-American president.

Despite our personal opinions or the boxes we marked on our ballots, the Klipsun newsroom watched as many parts of the country were seized by an uprising of emotion, passion and action. More than ever before, young Americans, our generation, made their voices heard. We rocked the vote!

For America, I believe this election was like coming up for fresh air.

During the past eight years our patriotism has been tested. Many of us gave up. Convinced that one man, one woman, one voice could not make a difference. Apathy consumed us. But the American spirit is not easily defeated. In this issue, we see local people who have shrugged-off despair and have dedicated their time to activist efforts, educating the public and encouraging community service.

Along the bottom of these pages you will see a list of some Western groups and clubs. These students are united by the causes that inspire them to action. We encourage you, our readers, to find your true passion and take a stand for whatever you may believe in.

Sincerely,

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FINDING YOUR VOICE

Story by Kera Wanielista
Photos by Paul Moore

The right to vote was not among Courtney Steffy's family values growing up. But after coming to Western, her passion for politics helped at least 300 Western students get registered to vote before the historic 2008 presidential election.

The news of Barack Obama's victory on the evening of Nov. 4, 2008 unleashed a series of unprecedented displays of celebration in Bellingham. Hundreds marched through the streets, parading from downtown to Western's Red Square, running, crying tears of joy, cheering, drumming and hugging.

The sparkle of fireworks lit up the sky as students waved American flags and people danced in the streets. Crowds erupted into chants of "Yes we can! Yes we did!" Finally, after two long years of campaigns, the votes were tallied. For some, the results restored their belief in the power of voting.

Growing up, politics wasn't a big topic at Courtney Steffy's house. As far as she knew, her parents didn't vote, and didn't want to.

"Politics is just politics," her parents would say.

It wasn't her parents who sparked her interest in politics, Steffy says, but her high school government teacher, Mrs. Hall.

Hall informed the students about voting. She explained how easy and important voting is, gave them statistics on how many Americans do and don't vote, and included how that affects the overall election.

"I'd never really heard anything like that because my parents were so apathetic," Steffy says. "So I guess that was an eye-opening experience."

Taking Hall's political lessons to heart, Steffy carried her interest to Western. She got excited about her candidate of choice for the 2008 presidential election, after educating herself on the choices, and to show her support became the president of the Obama Vikings club on campus.

Sitting in a plush arm-chair in her south campus apartment, the blue-eyed brunette radiates enthusiasm as she talks about the effort her group put forth to get people registered to vote, a process that she says was mostly easy, with a few exceptions.

"The funniest part was when my roommate and I were out trying to register voters and we asked this girl, 'Hey, are you registered to vote?' and she goes 'nope!' and she started walking away fast," says Steffy. "So we were like, 'Do you want to get registered?' and she was like 'nope!' and she ran away. She was super excited about not being registered."

Steffy brought her contagious passion to her new residence. One of the first things she did when she moved in to her apartment was to paint a sign on her window: "Are you registered to vote?"

According to a recent poll conducted by Newsweek, President George W. Bush's approval rating has dropped to 23 percent. Bush's highest approval rating was in October 2001, when 88 percent of Americans felt he was doing a good job. The numbers have steadily decreased since then as many Americans have become dissatisfied with their government over the last eight years. People were ready for a change. So entered Barack Obama ("The Change We Need") and John McCain ("Country First:"

"Young people are the ones fighting these wars and young people are going to be the ones that have to deal with this economic crisis."

Western Democrats
Serves as the official chapter of the Democratic Party at Western.

Veterans Outreach
Provides Veterans with information on jobs, benefits, etc.
Reform, Prosperity, Peace, who both ran on platforms of change.

Higher education is one of the issues both candidates promised to change. Obama's plan is to pay $4,000 worth of tuition to each student who will in exchange perform 100 community service hours. Community college would be almost free for avid volunteers.

McCain wanted to reform the financial aid system, consolidating programs and making it easier for students to apply for aid, while lowering taxes for families sending their children to college.

At the state level, Washington voters literally held lives in their hands. Initiative 1000, the Death with Dignity Act, allowed voters to decide whether terminally ill patients could administer themselves fatal drugs.

Members of the Obama Vikings spent between the first week of school and the first week of October tabling at the Info Fair and on Vendors Row, registering students to vote. Steffy says more than 1,000 students were registered by different groups on campus, at least 300 of those by the Obama Vikings.

Associated Students President Erik Lowe says more students are getting involved because they know they can make a difference.

"I think students are realizing how much power a vote really has," Lowe says.

The economic crisis and the wars in the Middle East are two issues Lowe says really stood out to young people who wanted to vote for the candidate they thought would resolve these issues more responsibly.

"Young people are the ones fighting these wars and young people are going to be the ones who have to deal with this economic crisis," Lowe says.

For Steffy, the war in Iraq is one of the more important issues in this election. When her sister, Brandi, joined the U.S. Army Reserve a year and a half ago, none of her family expected she would actually be deployed. But with Brandi's departure to Iraq in October, her well-being is currently at the forefront of Steffy's concerns.

"The Iraq war still seemed so distant," Steffy says. "I wanted us out of the Iraq war, but for no real reason until my sister was in, then I started looking into it and I started realizing how scared I was that she was going to do it."

On the opposite side of campus from Steffy, Mathes Hall residents also attempted to get people involved in this year's election. Seven fourth-floor rooms participated in the hanging of a make-shift McCain banner; six sporting a letter from his name and the seventh his picture.

"Having the word 'McCain' up was intended to get people thinking," Jeff Smith, fourth-floor president, says. "It was intended to help people to be worldly and think from more than one perspective; to improve the political atmosphere, not to change people's minds."

"All they hoped to do was get students questioning the political atmosphere, not to change people's minds."
cont. Finding your voice . . .

well-being of campus students.”

Although the participants were predominantly Obama supporters, Smith says the floor was concerned there was an anti-republican sentiment on campus. They weren’t interested in swaying people’s votes; they just wanted people to remember that there were two candidates for the election.

Smith says he heard some people laugh, question, even scoff at the sign. He was worried people were taking it too seriously. All they hoped to do was get students questioning the political atmosphere, not to change people’s minds. As a result, Smith says he saw more Obama gear around.

“Which is a very good thing,” Smith says. “For people to be proud of their own thoughts and choices is definitely a good thing.”

Lack of support for McCain is something other students, like Jeff Williams had also noticed. Williams walks around campus with a button on his backpack. On the button is a caricature of Obama with a circle around it and a line through it.

Regardless of whether students were McCain supporters like him, or Obama supporters, like much of the rest of campus, Williams says young people need to vote.

“That’s what frustrates me a little bit is people out there who aren’t registered. I want as many people to vote as possible,” Williams says.

Williams uses the 2000 presidential election and the previous governor’s race to illustrate the importance of voting. He says in the last race Gore won the popular election by only 500 votes. Gregoire won by only 129.

“I probably know 129 people who didn’t vote,” Williams says. “That’s crazy. Out of the entire state it came down to that.”

To help students with the voting process, from registration to information, Western has established a campaign called Western Votes. Conceived in 2006, President Lowe says the campaign has dramatically increased during the past two years. The goal is to inform more people, especially incoming freshman, about the elections and to increase voter turnout.

“We were hoping to [make] voting more cool on campus,” Lowe says. “Because Western traditionally had had really low voter turnout numbers, just like pretty much every college in America.”

Lowe says the tradition of low young voter turnout stems back from both parties not encouraging young people to vote and voting not being very popular.

“Part of it is a stigma of being un-cool and nerdy,” Lowe says.

In the ’90s, Lowe says voting became more popular when MTV and “Rock the Vote” got involved and reached out to young people to make them realize their vote mattered just as much as anybody else’s.

There are currently 115,314 registered voters in the county, says Whatcom County Auditor Shirley Forslof. Twelve percent are between the ages of 18 to 24. Forslof says this is the largest number of voters Whatcom County has had. In the general election, 100,911 young, registered voters actually voted.

“Everyone knows so well that [voting] is our right that they just think it happens automatically,” Steffy says.

Steffy says any participation is good participation when it comes to the election. Whether it is her pro-Obama sister in the Reserves, or her 10-year-old brother’s passionate anti-Obama sentiments at dinner, Steffy’s passion has spread contagiously among her family, and she’s excited to see it spread elsewhere too.

This year’s voter participation paid off enormously for Obama supporters. Young people turned out in droves to make their voices heard.

“I’ve put so much work into [this election], it doesn’t feel like it’s over yet,” Steffy says. “It still feels like I have to fight for it. And then I think about it and it’s like, ‘We did it!’”
Stacks of film reel tins balance on a bookcase in the corner of an 82-year-old entryway. Rows of books share the shelves with an antique tripod and a dusty film clapperboard. Down the hallway, the small Herald Building office opens into a spacious conference room, where Glen Berry, 34, sits. He peers out a large window, his cobalt-green eyes following the four-story drop down to North State and Chestnut Street. Berry leans back relaxed, comfortable in his navy button-up shirt and loose-fitting dark denim. He credits his calmness to disliking the taste of coffee, atypical for someone in his line of work.

Berry is an independent filmmaker, film instructor and creator of Film Underground, a popular independent filmmaking Web site. He is also founder of the Northwest Film School, the first and only video production program in Washington.

The Northwest Film School offers a one-year certificate program in video production with concentrations in fiction and non-fiction filmmaking. Students take up to six in-depth filmmaking classes and a workshop in either scriptwriting or location sound. Course material ranges from cinematography and directing to video production management and editing.

Before the school, Bellingham’s film scene was incomplete. Filmmakers had several venues and festivals to showcase their films, but no formal education programs.

“Support an art, you need a festival, a school, production companies and advertisement,” Berry says. “First you seek out education, the rest follows.”

In September 2004, Berry opened the film school giving independent filmmakers a place to pursue and explore their creativity, while gaining professional experience and training in the industry, he says.

“The purpose of the school is to allow the voices of this community to be heard and express the values of this culture,” Berry says.

As the film school entered its third year in fall 2007, Western proposed a partnership to Berry. Western was bombarded with e-mails from film-hungry students starving...
“They say a picture is worth a thousand words. In film, you have 24 pictures per second.”

for a program, Berry says. At the time, Western only offered a few bare-bone film electives and classes on broadcasting. Berry jumped at the opportunity.

Since partnering, Berry has saved costs and gained major support for the film school, he says. He gladly downgraded from a 600-square-foot loft to an efficient 100-square-foot classroom in Western’s Communication Facility. Students create their films outside of class, so Berry only needs enough space for basic lectures and class activities.

Interest in the film school increased with the help of advertisements and support from Western and Fairhaven College. Beginning with only eight students, enrollment shot up to as many as 40 students in one year.

In establishing an educational film program, Berry hoped to create a solid foundation for Bellingham’s film scene and industry.

“There’s a talent drain in the state,” Berry says. “Either [filmmakers] stay and have no outlet for their talent, or they go somewhere else and never come back.”

Berry’s faith in independent filmmaking has not always been so strong. Throughout high school and college, Berry’s surplus of artistic curiosity and creativity turned to frustration because he had no outlet to express himself.

In 1994, as a sophomore at Western, Berry was torn between practicality and passion; between pursuing a degree in English at Western or becoming a Montana State University filmmaker.

Montana State was the only college in the Northwest at the time to offer a four-year video production degree. The next best program was broadcast journalism at Washington State University, and Berry was no journalist.

Camera in hand he took a leap, leaving Washington behind for the Big Sky State. Berry calls it his “watershed moment” — a decision to give up the humdrum 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. life to follow his true passion.

His gamble paid off and Berry graduated from Montana State two years later with a Bachelor of Arts degree in media and theatre arts and film and video production.

For Berry, however, the relief of graduation did not last. He found himself divided yet again between what he should do and what he dreamed of doing—going Hollywood or going independent.

He rolls his eyes on the topic of Hollywood. Pronounced sarcastically, the word Los Angeles sits in his mouth like a sour grape.

“Graduating, there was this immediate exodus to L.A.,” Berry
All my friends just loaded up the moving van and headed out.

At the time, Berry understood that the big film meccas such as Los Angeles and New York offered opportunity. Launching a career in these established cities provides filmmakers with connections, advertisement and exposure. Opportunities that are hard to achieve as an independent filmmaker, Berry says.

Gritting his teeth, Berry set aside his desires and moved out to Los Angeles.

“The cultural values are different in L.A. You gain a certain level of respect if you make money. It doesn’t matter how good [the film] is,” Berry says. “[In the Northwest] people don’t give you respect for money. It’s about the quality.”

While in California, Berry says he found himself moving further away from his goals as an artist and filmmaker. Uninspiring commercial projects and socializing commanded all of his focus. Lack of creative direction at work and unmotivated peers at home distracted Berry from developing personal projects. He became afraid his spark for artistic filmmaking might die out.

“Working on commercial projects will skew your perspective and corrupt your vision for movie making,” Berry says.

As a true independent filmmaker, he had no choice but to leave the City of Angels behind. Seeking a fresh start, Berry returned to Bellingham in 2003.

With a new freedom, Berry set off to create a film school colored with creativity and grounded in local roots. His first step was to meticulously hire staff. All instructors are working professionals, who can offer students internships and job opportunities in Bellingham.

Dal Neitzel, a 40-year veteran of documentary filmmaking, teaches the non-fiction class. Neitzel guides his students in writing, directing, producing and creating their non-fiction films. Other staff members range from production studio owners to professionals with multiple degrees in film, screenwriting and television production.

Diversity pours into the film school’s student population. The school caters to students of all ages, genders, occupations, interests and skill levels. Current students range from college-age to those in their mid and upper 50s. Neitzel’s class of four includes a mom, an ex-Microsoft employee and a young man from the South.

Matt Page, 22, a student of the film school, is taking both the fiction and non-fiction introduction classes, in hopes of ultimately pursuing digital design production.

Moving to Bellingham from Arizona, Page had no professional film training or experience. Two weeks after beginning classes, Page and his team of three are in the midst of planning their first short film.

“The best way to get experience is from the people who have experience,” Page says.

To Berry, the Northwest Film School is more than just a school that teaches people how to compile a bunch of pretty moving pictures together. The school is about preserving the very core of storytelling in American culture by creating strong, independent filmmakers. Berry says.

Berry is aiming to expand the Northwest Film School from a one-year certificate program to a full four-year major. Extending the program would allow students to develop their talents more fully and better prepare them for life in the film world, Berry says.

“They say a picture is worth a thousand words. In film, you have 24 pictures per second,” Berry says.

Berry’s dreamy gaze returns to the quiet downtown intersection, the afternoon fall sun speckled across his face. Until the reel of demands for education in video production and film comes to an end, Berry will continue to roll, fighting for film in Bellingham. ■

Women in the Woods
Bringing women outdoors while supporting environmental concern.

Latino Student Union
Promoting unity, education, heritage and culture about the Latino community.
Won't You Be my Neighbor?

Story by Brady Henderson  Photos by Eric Schmitz

Western For Life
Promotes a culture of life and defends the rights of the most vulnerable in our society. Against abortion.

WashPIRG
A campus outreach program that addresses issues of public interest and works with various groups on campus.
Sitting on a wooden bench on the front porch of his Grant Street home, Ken Barkley pensively looks up and down the block on which he has lived for 36 years.

He eyes his lawn, which is neatly trimmed and lined with flowerpots, evidence of the hours he spends tending it. Barkley’s looks nothing like other yards in the area, which are unkempt and littered with trash.

He scans the line of cars parked in front of his house. The street is often so packed when he arrives home he has to park on a different block.

Barkley, 58, has shared the York neighborhood with Western students for more than half his life, but he says problems with parking, litter and noise sometimes threaten his sense of community.

"Quite a few of the students have parking in the back but they prefer to park on the street. That annoys me," Barkley says in a calm but uneasy voice. "Being here 36 years, you think you'd be able to park in front of your house or at least on your own block."

Barkley says he is kept awake by noise from parties and frequently sees beer cans scattered throughout the neighborhood, sometimes on his property.

"I take a lot of pride in my yard," he says. "It's discouraging when there's only a certain amount of houses on the block that are like that."

Lara Welker, coordinator of Western's Campus Community Coalition (CCC), says Barkley's concerns are common, as parking, litter and noise are the three most divisive issues between Western students and their neighbors.

"Parking, litter and noise are the three most divisive issues facing Western students and their neighbors."

Neighbors Engaging with Students (NEST), a program recently implemented by the CCC, is addressing these problems. With the underlying belief that better communication is the first step in avoiding conflicts, NEST is trying to bridge the gap between Western students and Bellingham residents, Welker says.

The original NEST program, which was funded by a grant from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism until 2004, focused on reducing alcohol misuse by Western students. When the grant ended in August and Western picked up the funding, encouraging CCC to broaden NEST's objective to improve relationships between students and residents. Welker says these relationships are often nonexistent because neither party attempts an introduction, which results in standoffish attitudes.

"I can't tell you how many times non-students have said how much of a difference it makes to have the new people moving in introduce themselves," Welker says. "It does seem to really make a difference in terms of getting the relationship set off on the right foot."

The CCC holds quarterly meetings called the Let's Talk Forum, where law enforcement officials, students and residents meet to voice their concerns and discuss ways to prevent conflicts. Welker says students often leave these meetings with the realization that they are part of a community.

CCC members also distribute thousands of informational fliers to residents in the York, Sehome and Happy Valley neighborhoods. These fliers include tips on how to avoid conflicts associated with noise, litter and parking. The best way to prevent these problems, Welker says, is for students and neighbors to get to know each other.

Neighbors who don't know the students living next door are more likely to call the police if a party becomes out of hand, Welker says. The CCC fliers remind students that a noise disturbance citation can result in a $1,000 fine and/or 90 days in jail. From September to December of 2007, Bellingham Police responded to 289 noise complaints in York, Sehome and Happy Valley.

Because he doesn't know most of the students living near him, Barkley says he doesn't feel safe knocking on their doors if a party becomes too loud.

"I really don't want to confront anybody," he says. "They might not be in the mood to be confronted."

Welker says students aren't always to blame for the conflicts they may have with their neighbors.

"Mowing the lawn early in the morning, screaming kids, barking dogs – may be more the long-term community members' [fault]," Welker says. "I hear pretty frequently that students don't feel necessarily welcome in the neighborhoods."

Western senior and York resident Rhys van Bemmel has avoided these problems by establishing a relationship with his neighbors. When a middle-aged woman moved into the house next door, van Bemmel and his roommates introduced themselves. Ever since, the two residences have coexisted without incident.

"We've had a good relationship with her," van Bemmel says. "She loans us tools and stuff when we need [them]. One of my roommates has actually done work for her on her house. She's really cool."

Van Bemmel recognizes the potential for conflict in neighborhoods with a mixture of college students and long-term residents. Because one of his roommates plays the drums, they urge their neighbors to call them – and not the police – if music ever becomes too loud.

Welker says friendly relationships like that between van Bemmel and his neighbor are essential in maintaining a feeling of community, something Barkley feels is diminishing.

"People really don't care about everybody else that lives around here," he says. "They've got a place to stay for six months or a year and then they're gone and they don't really worry about it."

He gives a deep sigh and looks up and down his street. For 36 years this neighborhood has been his home, but sometimes it doesn't feel like it.

---

**Student Homeless Outreach Team**
To transform the WWU student body into one community full of people who reach out, change reality and take responsibility for their work.

**WWU People for Choice**
Informing women of their options and fighting for their freedom of choice.

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Fall 2008 11
■ KUGS
Provides WWU with a program of diverse music and information relevant to students.

■ YES! + Club
People who join should be interested in service, smiling, inner peace, kindness, human values, etc.
It’s the first bone chilling night of the school year in the Sehome neighborhood. Friendship City, Bellingham’s only official house venue, waits with the front door propped open. Frost is glinting on the lawn and a couple of teenage concert-goers shuffle up the front steps, clutching each other for warmth.

Friendship City residents, Western alumna Jenn Hartman and Western seniors Sam Parker, Jessica Tracey and Chris Mak, are scattered throughout the house amongst friends and musicians.

Parker approaches the entryway and tapes a hand-written announcement to the door.

The rules are simple. No drugs, no booze, no jerks — precautions meant to give Friendship City the longevity other house venues in Bellingham have lacked.

Loving Thunder, a progressive big beat band from Seattle, is plugging in equipment.

Twenty-something music-heads are congealing into noisy, chattering groups in the front room, which contains a hodge-podge of furniture, a record player and posters from bands you won’t hear on a top 40 radio station.

Members of No-Fi Soul Rebellion and Mountain High are chatting with the clusters of people, mostly local students and community members who are waiting for the show to start.

Hartman leans toward Parker during the sound checks. The show needs to end at 9 p.m., she reminds Parker. He agrees. Noise complaints could attract cops to their house show, which is attention the roommates must avoid.

Bellingham's noise ordinance allows police responding to a noise complaint to issue a $250 infraction to each person found to be disturbing the peace and public repose. That could mean up to $1,000 in infractions for the residents of Friendship City if neighbors complained. The ordinance is even tougher on re-offenders, specifying that repeat offenses are punishable by imprisonment and up to $500 in fines as part...
of a misdemeanor citation.

Western senior and former house venue resident Kuba Bednarek says most people don’t put on house shows anymore because they don’t want to risk upsetting their neighbors and being fined.

Bednarek’s house, previously an all-ages venue called the Echoplex, welcomed many styles of music, such as folk and noise, after it became a house venue in July 2007, but police started showing up regularly after two neighbors made complaints. Echoplex was forced to stop putting on shows in August after city police contacted the landlord, who told Bednarek and his roommates to discontinue their house shows or move out.

The residents of Friendship City understand the obstacles, Hartman says, but remain committed to their goal: providing an all-ages house venue dedicated to community building through music activism.

Friendship City blossomed from one of Hartman’s daydreams and inspired her to find roommates who would support her vision. While other local music lovers were updating their MySpace pages, Hartman was planning a punk house that would deliver an electrifying, grass roots shock to Bellingham’s music and arts culture.

Four months after her epiphany, Hartman’s spirit of activism is breathing life into the local, all-ages scene that community members are describing as wrung-out and feeble.

Anjali Kusler, Western senior and member of Loa Records, an Associated Students organization working to bring free, all-ages music to campus, says Bellingham’s music venues have suffered partly because of noise complaints.

“House venues are almost obsolete and all-ages music is suffering tremendously with really only one all-ages venue, WhAAM,” Kusler says.

WhAAM (Whatcom All-Ages Arts and Music), established by Western students as an ally for Bellingham’s underage scene in 2006, hosts all-ages shows at the Old Foundry on Maple Street. The Old Foundry and Western are the only public venues in Bellingham offering all-ages shows, leaving the enormous Western freshman class with few places to soak up live music.

Western’s 2008 freshman class is the largest yet, with about 2,700 enrolled students, most of whom are under 21. The majority of WWU sophomores are underage too and Bellingham is also home to around 3,500 high school students, which means Whatcom County has about 9,200 underage students.

Despite hunger for all-ages shows, community members say there are few public all-ages venues and even fewer all-age house venues because of residential complaints pertaining to the city’s noise ordinance.

“House shows, once a staple of the Bellingham all-ages music scene, rarely happen anymore, as the noise fines are so expensive,” Kusler says.

Lieutenant Steve Felmley says police have received 362 noise complaints within the last year, with about 90 of those complaints resulting in infractions and citations. He says officers typically give a warning on their first visit as part of an unspoken policy, but after that, are able to fine each responsible party in accordance with the noise ordinance.

Kusler says Friendship City is the only house venue in Bellingham able to maintain stability in spite of the ordinance.

Friendship City residents met with neighbors and passed out flyers when they moved in, explaining their intentions to play live music while still remaining a positive force in the neighborhood. The flyers also assured neighbors they would not be playing drums after 9:00 p.m. on weeknights and 10:30 p.m. on weekends.

Back at the show, Mountain High is in the middle of their set. Hartman is standing near the front gently swaying to the music.

She says music activism is close to
her heart and the all-ages camaraderie Friendship City fosters is part of what Tracey calls "the new sincerity" — bringing change and positive vibes to the local scene.

"We all feel very strongly about the importance of music, specifically, all-ages music, and nurturing community," Hartman says. "My favorite all-ages venues are the ones that have people from a variety of age groups."

In addition to the city's two underage venues, the Old Foundry and Western, Bellingham has fewer than 10 public, underage venues consistently putting on shows, including the Wild Buffalo, Boundary Bay Brewery and Bistro, Rumors Cabaret, the Rogue Hero and the Green Frog Acoustic Tavern.

Bellingham Downtown Alliance for Music and Nightlife (B'DAMN) Co-Coordinator Richard Hartnell says a chain of downtown venue closures started when Stuart's Coffeehouse, the largest coffeehouse venue in the state and a premier location for local, all-ages music, closed its doors in 2005 after the owner sold the building.

"People felt like that was a nail in the door of the coffin," Hartnell says.

Since 2005, Bellingham's music and arts culture has mourned the loss of other hot-spot venues such as the 3B Tavern, Chiribin's, the Factory, the Nightlight and Lobster Manor, a former house venue on Ellis Street.

The closures also inspired local coffeehouses like Fantasia Espresso to open their doors to all-ages music, Hartnell says. As of July 1, however, Fantasia Espresso closed for good, delivering another blow to Bellingham's music community.

A slew of music enthusiasts, unable to handle the disappointment, have become apathetic in the face of the set-backs, says 25-year-old Cat Sieh, co-founder of Make.Shift Project, a local organization providing support to broke musicians.

"I got really sick of people I respected, my friends, co-workers or people at shows, making legitimate complaints about the scene and doing nothing," Sieh says, explaining why she wanted to start Make.Shift.

Make.Shift co-founder and Western senior Meg Coulter remembers trying to put on an all-ages show at the organization's headquarters, The Shed, last year. Police arrived when the bands were setting up and stopped the show before it began. The residents were not fined, but got a taste of the obstacles facing live music in Bellingham.

The obstacles aren't holding back Friendship City.

Mountain High is winding down and the audience is in a trance. Hands are in pockets and heads are nodding in harmony—up and down, hair flip, up and down.

One fan is kneeling on the floor, his sweaty, butter yellow shirt pulled over his eyes and face and his fists pumping the ground and rattling the wood floorboards.

The last song ends and the eccentric concert-goer, Jordan Rain, better known as local musician Yogoman, stops for a moment and pulls the shirt off his head.

Twenty minutes later, No-Fi Soul Rebellion goes on.

Outside, a cop drives past Friendship City, unnoticed by everyone inside. The officer peers up at the gray and blue house with the little, welcoming front porch. He eventually drives off.

Hartman's dream remains unscathed and Friendship City's career has not been complicated, for now—their rules and planning for reducing noise and chaos, sparing Bellingham's only house venue from sudden death. ■
Only a few years ago, a popular downtown music and nightlife scene was beginning to put Bellingham on the map as a hotbed for underground music.

However, the late-night noise and inherent clamor that follows any rambunctious crowd was beginning to grind on city residents, particularly in the Central Business District.

A series of closures and noise violations began in early 2005, including Stuart's Coffee House, 3B Tavern, Chiribins, Nightlight Lounge, La Pinata and the State Street Depot. But, The Green Frog Acoustic Tavern's noise violation ticket and arrest of its owner in May of 2007, after he refused to turn down the music, was the breaking point for many people.

During a heavily caffeinated, frustrated vent at the Horseshoe Café, local DJ Richard Hartnell and local musician Kat Bula took the first steps toward creating a volunteer group of concerned music and nightlife organizations known as B’DAMN, or Bellingham Downtown Alliance for Music and Nightlife.

B’DAMN identified a lack of communication between Bellingham's nightlife community, authorities, and downtown residents, coupled with outdated laws as a main source of problems.

The downtown businesses closed for a variety of reasons, Hartnell emphasizes, but Bellingham's noise ordinance has no specific standards and the resulting subjective enforcement puts pressure on these businesses.

"From the very beginning we’ve been trying to tackle the noise ordinance, which frankly is barbaric," Hartnell says.

Crime Prevention Specialist Mark Young, a 20-year Bellingham Police Department veteran says officers first advise owners to turn down the music before issuing noise violations.

"We give more warnings than citations, but repeat offenders do get cited," Young says. "It’s up to the officer’s discretion for the second violation, which is typically the procedure but not always the case."

B’DAMN held a public meeting in the spring of 2008 to address the noise ordinance.

The public meeting produced a proposal that contains a specific definition of noise that can be measured in decibel levels, establishing the downtown area from residential areas as a center for louder, later noise, Hartnell says.

Councilman Terry Bornemann says City analysts are currently reviewing and revising the proposal before voting, hopefully before the end of the year.

Aside from work on the noise ordinance, B’DAMN is involved with the Hospitality Resource Alliance, a community discussion forum hosted by Western’s Campus Community Coalition, to educate nightlife participants.

B’DAMN has also produced community pamphlets and brochures dealing with proper bar etiquette, including ‘50 Things Your Bartender Wished You Knew,’ and ‘I’m Not Your Bro – How to Get on Your Bartender’s Good Side.’

“We want to find out what the rules are and get information out in ways that don’t feel preachy," Bula says.

Bula views B’DAMN as part of an ongoing conversation between music organizations and the city authorities.

“Our new big project is figuring out a way to throw a legal house show and make sure people understand how to have a valid event,” Bula says.
As a child, Erin Wisler was in and out of hospitals. She had a rare case of childhood onset lupus, a disease that caused her antibodies to attack her immune system and damage her major organs. Her doctor once said she would not live past her thirties nor have the ability to bear children. But six months out of high school, Wisler became pregnant and later gave birth to her son, Alex.

Disabled and unable to work, Wisler raised her son with no father. She tried to stretch dollars and groceries, but at the end of month she was always short. She often ate broth or skipped meals in order to save food for Alex.

One day, Wisler's neighbor, who went weekly to the food bank, suggested that she go there too. Wisler says she did not know the program existed and was surprised by the congeniality and genuine concern of the staff and volunteers.

“They never judged me or questioned how I ended up there,” says the now 40-year-old Wisler.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, food prices have increased 5 to 6 percent this year and are expected to increase another 4 to 5 percent in 2009. With increasing food prices and higher costs of living, Wisler was among the thousands of low-income families who do not have food security and resort to seeking help from local food banks. This year, the Bellingham Food Bank's 130 volunteers and four paid staff members have distributed more than 180,000 pounds of food per month to more
than 7,500 monthly visitors, says Mike Cohen, executive director of the Bellingham Food Bank.

After recovering from lupus in 2006, Wisler wanted to show her gratitude to the organization that helped her get back on her feet so, she started volunteering.

"What better way to get back into the world than giving back to the ones that helped you?" Wisler says. "I think there is an inherent need to give back and pay forward—to do something for someone else."

On a typical distribution day at the Bellingham Food Bank, 17 volunteers are in the backroom sorting the donated food and supplies into the different food pyramid categories and everyday essentials such as toilet paper and diapers.

Wearing a white apron tied over her black long-sleeved thermal, Wisler brushes her golden blonde hair out of her face and continues to quickly scrutinize each fruit and vegetable before placing them in their respective boxes. Her 5-foot-11-inch frame moves quickly, but with grace.

A sense of camaraderie and support is apparent as the volunteers prepare for another day of distribution. Wisler describes the group as a big, extended family who supports each other in crucial times and celebrates individual achievements.

"It's a place to belong," Wisler says.

The original Bellingham Food Bank, built in 1929, is an "Alternative to Hunger" project that services hungry, low-income families and is part of the Whatcom Anti-Hunger Coalition.

Although the food bank does not check the income of families, a survey was conducted last year that found the average income of food bank clients to be less than $1,000 per month, Cohen says.

Wisler says nearly 60 percent of food bank users skip or cut meals at least once a week to ration food supply because they have to pay for more important expenses such as rent, utilities, and medical care. Eighty percent of clients often work more than one job just to survive, but still can't make ends meet. The other 20 percent are non-working, which includes people on social security or welfare, or people who have a disability, she
The majority of the supplies the food bank distributes to its clients come from major grocery stores in Bellingham such as Haggen, Fred Meyer, Trader Joe's, Cost Cutter and the Community Food Co-op. The food bank also receives fresh produce from the Friendship Community Garden, a 10,000-square-foot garden located in Ferndale, and the Food Bank Garden, located off Guide Meridian.

As a volunteer, Wisler sees the food and supplies received by the food bank on a first-hand basis. She says the amount of supplies varies from day to day.

"Sometimes we get a lot, and we get so excited!" She says. "Other times, we don't get enough, and we need to ration it out to make sure that everyone gets what they need."

There have been arguments over food, but no big fights, Wisler says. Once in a blue moon, an inebriated person comes in and smells strongly of alcohol and that person is asked to leave because the safety of clients is a priority, she says.

"I have been hit on, too," Wisler says. "I'm like 'Thank you for the compliment, but we need to keep the line moving. See you next week.' You shouldn't use the food bank as a dating network."

After volunteering at the food bank for the last two years, Wisler says she was able to see and experience its expansion and growth.

Earlier this year, the old food bank's 5,000-square-foot building was torn down, rebuilt and expanded to 9,500-square-feet because the old food bank building did not accommodate the increasing number of clients and had limited space for food storage, Cohen says.

The new building is LEED-certified (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design), meaning it integrates energy and water-efficient designs and resource-efficient construction methods to promote standards of sustainability. The building materials are made from certain types of wood, steel and paint, Cohen says. The lights in the main space are solar powered and turn off automatically if there is no motion, and the refrigeration system uses less energy, he says.

"The old food bank was falling down around us, literally," Wisler says. "We really needed a new building."

At 3 p.m., the food bank is supposed to close, but a line of people still snakes out the door. After helping the last of the clients, Wisler stacks canned beans and peaches against a wall, other volunteers sort perishable food in the refrigerator and freezer rooms located in the back, a combination of water and bleach is sprayed to sanitize the six steel tables in the main area, rugs are shaken and the red floor is mopped and swept—by 5 p.m. the volunteers are ready to leave and the food bank closes for another day.

They [Food Bank volunteers] never judged me or questioned how I ended up there."

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**Food Bank Demographics**

Each soup can represents 10 percent of Bellingham Food Bank clientele.

- **35% Children age 3-18**
- **50% Adults**
- **15% Seniors**

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- **Peace Corps**
  - A group which sends volunteers overseas to aid in humanitarian efforts.

- **Arab Student Union**
  - Spreading awareness of Arab culture on WWU's campus.
In the bottom floor of an unassuming house on Forest Street, lights are dimmed and a crowd mingles around a four-man band playing a lively fusion of reggae and jazz. The walls are covered in original decor, watercolor paintings, charcoal sketches and pencil drawings. Musical instruments of all kinds are strewn about the floor. As time passes, members of the crowd pick up instruments of their own, mostly drums, and begin to play. In short time the drums take control, speeding the music up into a quick, progressive beat that won’t cease for hours. Soon, almost everyone in the room is either playing an instrument or dancing.

Over the years this weekly event known as “Sushi Night” has formed a community that centers around this old house on Forest Street, resident Ray Arani says. Members of this community, or “Sushi Tribe” as she calls it, have turned much of the house into a community resource, meant not just for their circle but the local community at large. Between the permanent residents, constant visitors, lodging travelers and friends sleeping over, the house is crowded day and night, resident Cullen Becket says.

Among the crowd are students and locals, gray-haired elders and young men with dreadlocks, friends and strangers, a dog and a toddler. One resident, Zachary Robertson, says he walks around naked to maintain Sushi Night’s clothes-optional atmosphere. Anywhere from dozens to more than 100 people come to Sushi Night every week to play music, form drum circles, dance, socialize and express themselves, says Ray Arani, who has participated in Sushi Night for four of its five years of existence. She insists the event is no kegger—there is usually no alcohol.

As a community, they create a network of support that allows them to pursue goals they may not be able to achieve otherwise, Becket says. “We’re people who can’t really live in the world that has been created for us,” Becket says. “This is a way for people to escape and create a world of their own.”

Before Becket moved into this house, he had an unusual ambition. Disappointed with the selection of comics at the Bellingham Public Library, Becket decided to start a library that focused on comics. Becket felt that without a resource like a public library, being a comic enthusiast is too expensive for most people.

At the time of his inspiration, Becket was living between his car, friends’ couches, improvised shelters in the Sehome Arboretum and a Fairhaven stack lounge. Becket managed to run the library for a few months out of his friends’ house on Indian Street, with a dubiously small collection of books, but had to shut it down when his friends decided he had to move on. About nine months ago, Becket latched onto the Sushi Night community, and moved into the top-floor apartment in the Forest Street house, reopening his library there.

The “Bellingham Alternative Library,” as it is advertised on hand painted signs outside...
the house, now contains a collection of more than 2000 comics, books, CDs, DVDs and textbooks. The library is constantly expanding, with Becket buying new books with donations from patrons. Nearly every day a crowd of visitors comes to mingle, read and check out books, Becket says.

Becket has no room of his own and only pays rent for the space his bookshelves take up, allowing him to focus on running the library every day from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m. Becket says it would be too difficult to keep his library open without the house and the support of those in it.

As Sushi Night is underway downstairs, David Zhang, sporting a pointed goatee and black-rimmed glasses, strolls into the room and wastes no time in picking up a guitar to play alongside his band mate Becket. Zhang is a Western alumnus and one of the original members of the Sushi Tribe.

Growing up on Mercer Island Zhang, observed what he says he thinks were values that placed accumulation of wealth over community.

"Everyone around me was miserable even though they were more wealthy than most people," Zhang says.

One summer, Zhang attended a "Rainbow Gathering," an annual, weeklong event that takes place on U.S. National Forest land in which tens of thousands of visitors try to support each other with food, water and sanitation without the use of money. After returning, Zhang was inspired to host community meals and the tradition of Sushi Night grew from that. Zhang sees the house, the community and the ritual of Sushi Night as an opportunity for the group to create a culture of their own.

"There's not a lot of opportunity to have this kind of experience that's not mediated by TV or corporations," Zhang says. "It gives a real connection to real people."

Zhang and others have converted the house's backyard, which used to be overrun with briars and broken glass, into a fledgling vegetable garden. The garden is fertilized with compost made from the house's organic waste. Zhang says the vegetable garden is not quite ready to completely sustain the household so, the house community also has another vegetable garden out in unincorporated Whatcom County land.

"We're people who can't really live in the world that has been created for us."

- STAND (A Student Anti-Genocide Coalition)
  Educating others on the ongoing genocide in Darfur, raising and advocating relief funds for political action.

- Western Animal Rights Network
  Educating the public about animal rights issues.
Sushi Night attendees socialize before festivities begin.

United Students Against Sweatshops, Student Labor Action Project
Supports the rights of workers on our campuses and in our communities.

Lifestyle Advisors Program
A group of campus programs that range from veteran outreach to drug awareness.
At the Sushi House, there's a big emphasis on sharing, be it tools, bicycles, rides or food. The key to sharing their resources effectively is communication and living closely together, Zhang says. While residents can use as much as people ordinarily do in other houses, they ultimately consume and waste less.

Every Sushi Night, part of the group is off to the side rolling sushi to be shared. They mainly use unconventional ingredients, such as blackberry, cantaloupe, peppers, cabbage, mango and bananas.

"The idea is that everyone brings a drum or a vegetable," Becket says. "Sometimes it turns out really funky but we just make it work."

At the end of a sushi night, usually around midnight, the music stops and the whole group convenes. Residents and guests lock arms and join in chanting "om." People stop to take breaths at different times, joining in at different pitches and volumes, creating a symphony of voices that lasts for several minutes. The chant ends at an undetermined time, during which their voices climax in volume and pitch and suddenly stop.

Sushi is served.

Robertson, the blond, bearded and often naked resident of the Sushi House, says he lives here to move away from the concepts of suburbanism, materialism, the "American Dream" and clothes. The Sushi House is in some ways the antithesis of the ideal nuclear family living in a two-story suburban house complete with a white picket fence, but it wasn't always this way.

Becket doesn't know a lot of specifics about the house's history except that it was built around the turn of the century and originally had wealthy owners. The first floor, where they play music and host Sushi Night tonight, used to be servants' quarters. The middle and top floors were where the master of the house and his children resided, respectively. While the house now has very different people living in it now, Becket says he feels like the house welcomes them all the same.

"I feel that inanimate objects can tell you if you're wanted," Becket says. "And I feel like the house wants us."

"I think the house is the vibrational equivalent to our own desires," Robertson says.

"I don't know what that means," Becket says. "But yeah."
Walking into the Viking Union Market, a thick smell of frying grease overpowers everything else. Hungry patrons shuffle through, making selections from a variety of lunch items. But, burgers, fries, pizza, sandwiches, fruits and beverages are not a welcome sight to everyone, especially Western sophomore Brendan Lind.

Lind, student coordinator for Students for Sustainable Food, says he initially envisioned Western as a leader in sustainability and environmental responsibility, but the menu options on campus don’t support the sustainable lifestyle he has chosen.

As a Western freshman, Lind joined Students for Sustainable Food after learning about the organization at the campus information fair. Talking with other students, Lind heard many concerns about the lack of organic, local, healthy food available to students on campus. The idea of a food co-op bounced around their discussions for a while, until Lind decided to pursue it.

Lind envisions a student-run on-campus co-op as being a place to listen to music, display art and promote academia, a relaxed environment where patrons can study and socialize with friends. He wants to incorporate the ideas of any interested students and groups on campus to create a welcoming environment for the Western community.

“We want a place where students’ energy, creativity and passions run every aspect of the business,” Lind says. “We want to go beyond our differences and become a melting pot that brings Western students together to form the kind of community we can all be proud of.”

Currently, the French multinational corporation Sodexo manages all of Western’s dining services, excluding those on Vendors Row. Sodexo is one of the largest food services and management facilities in the world, servicing schools, hospitals, military mess halls and prisons across the country.

Over the past year, Western’s Dining Services brought more local food to Western’s palate. Lynden’s BelleWood apples, Wasabee’s ready-made sushi, Fair Trade Coffee and the Underground Coffee...
House’s local sandwich ingredients are all steps towards environmental stewardship, Lind says. However, the bulk of Western students’ diets are not composed merely of coffee, sushi and apples.

With the addition of Chic-fil-A, students are questioning the Western administration and taking action to uphold the sustainable values taught in Western classrooms.

Lind says he questions why Western didn’t choose a local company such as Fiamma Burger or Pel’mini, both of which support sustainable practices and are willing to serve the Western community.

“We can be local, sustainable, progressive, and still give people their chicken,” Lind says.

Willy Hart, director of University Residences says they serve 40,000 meals a week through the residential dining program. Every year they try to bring local food to campus, but setting up relationships with local farmers and business owners is not a simple task.

“In late December, January and February not much is growing out of the ground that is local,” Hart says. “We make the best choices we can, balancing sustainability and what we are able to produce.”

Western humanities professor and local farmer Nicole Brown says her farm grows multiple produce items such as turnips, potatoes, peppers, onions and carrots, through November and storable items such as garlic, winter squash and potatoes through winter. These storable items can easily be combined with baked goods to provide wholesome meals. Local foods don’t travel long distances compared to most food that travels about 1,500 to 2,000 miles to the consumer, Brown says.

Hart says the administration wants to help students get what they want within the boundaries of the university’s current dining policies. Hart selected Kurt Willis from University Residences and Ira Simon from University Dining Services to work with Lind and Students for Sustainable Food to decide on menus, food suppliers, hours of operation and designs. Planning will continue over winter, spring and summer quarters with the co-op potentially opening in late fall.

The legal liability related to a farmer-direct on-campus co-op is the main hang up for Kurt Willis, associate director of University Residences.

“The biggest concerns of the university are risk management, liability exposures, insurance claims and health issues that could cause a world of grief,” Willis says.

Western requires all food suppliers to have a $5 million insurance policy, Lind says, but small, sustainable farms can’t afford such high policies.

In the co-op’s business plan, Students for Sustainable Food requested that the insurance requirements be waived for the farmers and suppliers who can’t afford the cost.

“If food is going to be served on this campus, there are certain parameters that are outlined by the university’s food contract that need to be followed,” Hart says.

The requirements are in place to protect the university in the case of a potential lawsuit.

The small farmer does not generate as much profit as corporations such as Sodexo. The goal of sustainable farms is to provide for a community with sustainable, locally grown food, without turning a large profit. In a corporate model, such as Sodexo, increasing profit requires mass production, which decreases the quality of food and quality of life for animals.

A report by London’s City University looked at how companies responded to health targets set in 2004 by the World Health Organization to reduce obesity, heart disease...
and diabetes. The group studied annual reports, accounts and Web sites of the top 10 food manufacturers, food retailers and top five food service companies. Sodexo is listed as not acting adequately to cut excessive salt, fat and sugar which are contributing to a global diet-related health crisis.

Industrial farming also has detrimental effects on the environment. Sodexo utilizes factory farm practices that contribute to a wide range of environmental issues and the inhumane treatment of animals.

Fairhaven Professor John Tuxill explains that factory farms' excessive use of fertilizers and inadequate disposal of animal waste is causing a range of environmental catastrophes.

Lind watches the concepts he learns about, such as sustainable food practices, being implemented at Evergreen State College, but not at Western.

In Evergreen State College's Red Square a mobile trailer dubbed The Flaming Eggplant Café dishes out falafel pitas, salmon burgers, hot tea and an array of soups, grains, meats and salads with a menu that changes with the season.

Before the Flaming Eggplant co-op existed, students for food autonomy gathered in Evergreen's Red Square for potlucks. Eventually, the Student Activity Board added an initiative to the student ballot that called for two dollars for each credit taken by students to go to the creation of The Flaming Eggplant Café.

The initiative was passed by 87 percent of the student body in favor of the proposal. This brought in $122,000 for the Flaming Eggplant Café. It took one year after the influx of money to create the co-op that now brings in an average of $1,100 revenue each day open.

“Bureaucracy and policies were frustrating to get through. Now that it is up and running it's pretty incredible,” said manager and cashier Julianne Panagacos.

Other student-run co-ops on the West Clockwise starting at upper left: Laura Gorrin cooking, Grace Yoakum and Charlotte Nickel at a Students for Sustainable Food potluck, Students for Sustainable Food tabling in Red Square. Courtesy photo of the Evergreen State College's Flaming Eggplant Café. Brendan Lind aloft.

Students for Social Change
An organization that promotes social awareness on a local and global scale.

South Asian Student association
Increasing awareness and educating the University about South Asian culture and heritage.
Coast include University of British Columbia (UBC), Whitman College, University of Oregon, Portland State, University of Santa Barbara and University of California Davis.

Sprouts, UBC’s on-campus co-op, is a great success, says Sprouts president Martin Gunst. They opened in January 2008 as a café and grocery store, and recently started a catering business. They are a 100 percent volunteer and student-run organization. Sprouts’ café serves hot lunches, coffee, snacks and baked goods, and the grocery store sells organic, locally grown produce. Gunst says Sprouts is self-financing and self-sustaining. The store is almost always full and they sell out of their soups and baked goods every day.

Because Sprouts doesn’t pay labor costs, they can afford to provide some of the healthiest and most sustainably produced food on campus at a low price, Gunst says, which reflects the university’s commitment to sustainability.

Lind feels the co-op is an idea that will be appreciated by students, faculty and staff.

“This is something that has been done and succeeded before,” Lind says.

As grants are written, benefit concerts planned, petitions begun and club support sought, excitement grows on Western’s campus to better fulfill Western’s vision of sustainability.
KLIPSUN IS THE LUMMI WORD MEANING “BEAUTIFUL SUNSET”