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Perseverance.

This word means something different to everyone. For me it means dedication. For others it means determination. But no matter what the meaning of this word is for you it still has the same context: as long as you have perseverance you will continue on in any course of action despite obstacles.

This "course of action" we all achieve is made up of our goals. Everyone has a goal. Some set goals that can be easily achieved. Others set goals that go above and beyond their capabilities. But most set goals somewhere in between the two extremes to help push themselves.

Whether you achieve the goals you set for yourself or not, as long as you have determination and dedication you will persevere and achieve what is right for you.

Perseverance is a theme that runs throughout this issue. So, sit down with Greg and take a look at the dedication graffiti artists have in trying to make graffiti a legitimate art form. Read how much determination it takes to start a business from scratch with Jeff. And finally, read about how perseverance will take you above and beyond the goals you set for yourself with Nicole.

All these stories plus more give the word perseverance its true meaning: Goals can and will be achieved as long as you have determination and dedication.

Thanks for reading,

Brittney Leirdahl
Editor in Chief
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KLIPSUN THANKS BILL HOWATSON, HEATHER STEELE, CRAIG WOOD AND THE REST OF THE STAFF AT WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY'S PRINTING, GRAPHIC, WEB & COPYRIGHT SERVICES.
Scooters buzz through Bellingham's streets to safely bring home partygoers and bar hoppers. Jessica Araujo illustrates a night in the life of a Sober Rover. Photos courtesy of Sober Rovers. Design by Jenny Leak.

Last call before closing time as the clock ticks closer to midnight at The Callaloo Caribbean Kitchen in downtown Bellingham. The woman sitting at the bar pounds back what is left of her whiskey drink and stumbles outside into the frigid night air.

The faint buzzing noise of a scooter engine diverts the woman's attention down North State Street. In the distance, a man sporting a helmet and goggles rides closer to the bar. His jacket is wrapped in reflective tape, casting a luminous glow around him as it reflects the glint of the street lights.

The buzzing noise soon turns into a sound reminiscent of a chainsaw, as the glowing figure comes into focus. The rider's teeth chatter and his face is frozen, but that does not stop him from completing his job. On this particular night his job is to get a drunk woman home safely.

He is bringing salvation to those who are too tipsy to drive home. His name is Bradley Harvey and he is a driver for Sober Rovers.

"I get personal enjoyment out of making sure people get home safely after a night of drinking — even while riding a scooter against 35-mph winds in a rain storm."

— Bradley Harvey

Sober Rovers is the creation of Western Washington University alumnus J.R. Johnson. He started the business with his wife Xan Johnson in 2005 and has been assisting inebriated residents of Bellingham ever since. The goal of his business is to prevent people from getting DUIs, or worse, getting into an accident after a night of drinking.

"The fare is a little less than a two-way cab ride plus you don't have to get your car in the morning," says Sober Rovers driver Boris Schleinkofer. "It costs less than a cab and a lot less than a DUI."

Johnson's business is part of a national trend in innovative taxi services that aim to prevent drunk driving, while at the same time giving people the option to have their cars driven home with them.

A similar business called Island Designated Drivers in Nantucket, Mass., uses scooters to pick up people too drunk to drive. In Fargo, N.D., a business called Sober Guy has a similar idea, but operates using two designated drivers — one of them drives a fold-up scooter and the other follows in a company truck.

"It's such a fresh concept to people," Johnson says. "People really love it when their car is pulled into the driveway and they don't have to worry about retrieving it the next day."

Johnson says the idea for the business began after he received a DUI in 2000.

"I had to defend myself, and while I was on the University of Washington campus doing research, I discovered that all these different people got DUIs including judges and senators," Johnson says. "I wanted to find out why this was such a common problem."

According to the Washington State Patrol 2006 Annual Report, 20,810 DUIs were given in Washington and the number of collisions involving impaired drivers has increased since 2005.

Johnson realized people have the misconception that being drunk means having blurred vision and a lost sense of balance. In actuality, having a blood-alcohol level of .08 roughly equals two drinks, depending on a person's size, and is the legal limit in Washington, he says.

"I can juggle plates at .08," Johnson says. "If you don't feel wasted then you don't think you are too drunk to drive when in reality you are."

People also dislike leaving their cars at a random parking lot or bar for the night, Johnson says. People are often willing to risk driving home after a few drinks if it means they can find their car in the driveway the next morning.

Catering to the "Drunk Market" Johnson's conception of Sober Rovers began in 2001, but getting the business started took some time.
"I have a bachelor of arts in theater, and as a theater major I avoided every business class possible," Johnson says. "I had to run out to the library and spend a good two years researching how to start my own business."

The first Sober Rovers scooter rolled out four years later in 2005.

On any given night Sober Rovers gets between zero and 10 calls, Johnson says. In this business, Johnson and his team do not have the luxury of having a predictable work week.

"You naturally think weekends are going to be the busiest, but then one week we will have an absolutely dead Saturday and then the phone will be ringing off the hook," Johnson says. "Our work schedule is set around the randomness of inebriation and is designed for the needs of the 'drunk market.'"

Johnson's relatively young business is still a work-in-progress. Many of its guidelines and policies stem from different experiences each night.

One night Sober Rovers got a call for a woman to be picked up from a party, Johnson says. When the driver got there, he did not expect to find that the woman had a young child with her.

"She was so wasted that she did not know how to get to her house," Johnson says. "She began swearing at and hitting my driver."

The driver's safety was being compromised and he knew he could no longer assist this woman, Johnson says. The main concern was that she was going to try to drive herself and her child home.

The driver pulled into an empty parking lot and called a cab and the police to inform them of the situation.

"From this incident, we made it a policy that we first need to get the destination of the fare before we drive them," Johnson says. "We also created the guidelines for drivers' safety after that night."

The majority of the people drivers encounter are happy and appreciative of their services, Johnson says.

Schleinkofer says he has helped more than 100 people in the past year and the majority of them have been friendly. He has become friends with a few of his regular customers.

On rare occasions, Sober Rovers has had customers who Johnson labels as "out-of-controlers, laughers or hands-on-ers."

Drivers for Sober Rovers are sometimes offered "gifts" for their services, Johnson says.

"I have drivers get asked if they could 'tuck in' their fares at the end of the night," Johnson says. "We've even had drivers being offered to come in and smoke a bowl or drink some beers, but the operative word here is 'sober.' People tend to forget that."

Sober Rovers can also tend to be customers' alternative to talking to a therapist.

"One call I took was with this gal who was bawling and just talked my ear off about her boyfriend and all the drama at home," Johnson says. "I guess I'm not only your driver, but I'm your psychologist too."

Listening to people's problems and giving them advice wears a driver out, Johnson says.

"I am glad to be a part of the team that is community oriented," says Randal Gabel, a mechanic for Sober Rovers. "The work is really pro bono because what we're doing is keeping people safe."

Sober Rovers has become sort of a mystery around town. Some people catch glimpses of the drivers as they whiz by on their scooters, but no one knows who they are, Johnson says.

To patrons though, the drivers are guardian angels on wheels coming to protect them from the last pitcher of beer or the one-too-many shots, Johnson says. People hear the sound of the scooters and know that help is on the way.

Future of Sober Rovers

Bellingham is the best place to own a small business, Johnson says. He is confident his business will continue to grow, and says the community has been supportive of Sober Rovers.

"When we started out we were afraid that the loud scooter engine would upset people and that we would be run out of town," Johnson says. "But the sound of our scooters has become more of a celebrated sound than an annoyance."

Johnson says he is currently working on a new system Sober Rovers is offering. The system is called Sober Rovers Miles. It's a prepaid card for future Sober Rovers rides, Johnson says.

Johnson designed the card for parents who want to have some security in knowing their children are going to get home safely. He has already received a few orders for the card.

"I am glad to be a part of the team that is community oriented," says Randal Gabel, a mechanic for Sober Rovers. "The work is really pro bono because what we're doing is keeping people safe."

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Johnson posed putting his scooter in the trunk of a car. This is what a Sober Rovers driver will do when picking up a fare.
Sober Rover Policies

Cost:
$2 pick up fee/$4 per mile

Currency:
Cash, check or Sober Rovers Miles card

Insurance:
Carried by the driver and one of the first things Sober Rovers will ask of a customer.

Cost of DUI in Washington state

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Estimated Costs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attorney Fees</td>
<td>$500 to more than $1,500 for jury trial or appeal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fines &amp; Court Fees</td>
<td>$685 to $8,125</td>
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<tr>
<td>Civil Suits</td>
<td>Unlimited</td>
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<td>Electronic Home Monitoring</td>
<td>$150 to $2,250</td>
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<tr>
<td>License Reissue Fee</td>
<td>$150</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ignition Interlock</td>
<td>$730 to $2,800</td>
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<td>Treatment</td>
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<td>Insurance</td>
<td>Possibly double</td>
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<tr>
<td>Towing Charges</td>
<td>$50 to $150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Cost</td>
<td>$3,465 to more than $24,825</td>
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http://www.maddwashington.org/dui_cost.htm
Passing down Railroad Avenue some evening, one may hear the gentle twang of a lap steel guitar courtesy of occasional street performer Pete Kaynar. Kaynar is tall, lean and full of motion. Brimming with energy and urged by a lifetime of music, Kaynar's feet instinctively tap to the rhythm of the music he plays. Unlike other musicians, however, Kaynar's foot tapping elicits more than just the soft patter of rubber soles on concrete. With each tap comes the steady beat of a bass drum, the snap of a snare drum and the occasional crash of hi-hat cymbals.

This drum-kit sound is not the product of an inner beat in an active imagination, but of creative ingenuity. Kaynar makes use of his invention he calls foot drums to play the drums while he strums the guitar. The percussion instruments are concealed in a conspicuous wooden box that is approximately two feet wide, making the foot drums look like a piece of luggage at first glance.

The pedals on top give the user full access to the snare drum, bass drum, hi-hat cymbals and a tambourine, most of which can be found on a complete drum kit. Aided by his foot drums, Kaynar, 33, has made a place for himself in the music world, transforming from a single guitarist into a one-man band.

Though the foot drums look difficult to play, Kaynar says playing is as easy as tapping a foot to the beat of the music, something he says is innate in everyone. Since designing them, Kaynar says he has become addicted to using the foot drums in his street performances.

"It's kind of my crutch," Kaynar says. "Without it, I'm just an average guitar player, but you start doing this and people are like, 'Whoa man that's pretty insane. That must be real hard,' and you're like, 'Well, I'm just tapping my foot.'"

Kaynar says the design of the foot drums came after a great deal of experimentation with making other instruments. He has made everything from a cigar-box guitar to a battery-powered amplifier. Handcrafted instruments litter his home, giving off the musky smell of wood. Kaynar says it was the work of blues legend John Lee Hooker that inspired the foot drums.

"There's an album where he just taps his feet," Kaynar says. "He probably has some of those old, hard-sole shoes that you hear walking down a hallway, and so he's able to do some pretty cool stuff."

Kaynar says he wanted to give Hooker's foot tapping more of a full drum-kit sound, thus, the idea of the foot drums was born. Soon, Kaynar became the subject of extra attention during his street performances as complete
Kaynar writes down measurements while hand building a foot drum in his woodshop.

Kaynar writes down measurements while hand building a foot drum in his woodshop.

strangers went out of their way to compliment him on the invention.

Some passers-by even encouraged the idea of mass production and selling the foot drums to other musicians. Kaynar says he wasn't sure of the idea of starting a business, figuring he already had foot drums for himself and didn't care whether others had the instrument. The constant encouragement made the idea more plausible in Kaynar's mind. He says there was no reason he shouldn't at least try.

Childhood friend Colin Leadbetter met with Kaynar in Bellingham when Kaynar was just starting to produce the foot drums, though he was still not fully committed to the business. Since the idea had been in Kaynar's head nonstop for quite some time, Leadbetter said he could do little to help with the design. Instead, he focused on encouraging Kaynar to stick with the business, which was keeping him in his woodshop for longer hours and becoming more expensive with each new model.

"This idea he has is like an animal inside of him," Leadbetter says. "It needs to be let loose or it's just going to make a mess and get sick."

After he perfected the design of the foot drums following four years of work and three prototypes, Kaynar says he was ready to begin the long process of starting a business with the full support of his family and fiancée Kate Sterken. Despite receiving overwhelming support, Kaynar says he still has no idea where his business is headed.

The foot drums have become a job for Kaynar that involves business practices he says he had no prior experience in. From phoning wood suppliers in Taiwan to managing expenses, Kaynar has delved into a world far removed from his current career as a teacher.

Kaynar, who works as a family coordinator for the Early College Program at Ferndale High School, says teaching is his main gig, but it doesn’t pay as much as he’d like. Sterken says the two of them are realistic about the foot drums not becoming a full-time career, but she believes the foot drums have an chance of success.

"Musicians are people that are willing to pay a lot for their instruments," Sterken says. "It’s a hobby that already costs a lot of money."

Kaynar is selling the foot drums from his Web site. He says he is thinking of selling them for $700, as they have an estimated production cost of $300 to $400.

He believes marketing the instrument will be simple, as the uniqueness of the foot drums will automatically make them attractive to potential customers. In the lead up to their release, Kaynar says he attempted to keep quiet about how the foot drums work, so that people couldn’t copy his idea.

"A lot of people are whispering in my ear like, ‘You don’t show anybody this stuff. This is golden,’” Kaynar says. "I get excited and then I’m like, ‘What am I talking about? This is just probably low-level work where you work hard and make a little money.”

Until his business gets underway, Kaynar says he’s still enjoying his time playing on the streets. With the foot drums, he has the exclusive experience of playing the old-school blues guitar he loves, while the gentle drumbeat keeps time.

When Kaynar played trumpet in his high-school band, he tapped his foot to keep time. Today he does the same thing, only when he taps his foot now, the sounds of a drummer accompany him. Even if the foot drums don’t sell, he still has that sound.

— Jeff Richards
Photos by Kathryn Bachen
Design by Jenny Leak

Kaynar demonstrates one of his foot drums. He has received foot drum orders from all over the world.
Mist scatters over the fields of Bow, Wash., and evaporates in the rays of morning sun as Bob Shapiro dons a burgundy fleece jacket and crosses his land toward a brown barn. Fumbling with a string on the barn's rickety door, Shapiro unties a knot and pushes the door open, sending warm, straw-scented air behind him, where three of his customers stand waiting. A smile spreads through Shapiro's salt-and-pepper beard and brightens his eyes at the sight of his herd.

"Any volunteers?" Shapiro calls out to the animals inside. Behind him, Western Washington University senior Elizabeth Edleman grins cautiously and steps inside, gazing around at the equally wide-eyed pack of brown-and-white llamas. It's her first time coming in contact with a llama, but she doesn't seem afraid as the 12 llamas inside stomp around on their forked toes. Some of the llamas' heads reach well over five feet, their ears poking inches above Edleman's head.

"They just look so funny," Edleman exclaims, laughing at the llamas' big-toothed underbites.

In minutes, bridled llamas accompany each hiker as Shapiro leads the group out of the barn, excitedly telling everyone they will soon learn how to saddle a llama.

Shapiro and his furry pack make up the Deli Llama, a guided-hiking business Shapiro started in 1984. Since then, Shapiro and his llamas have taken customers on hikes around Washington state in areas including Olympic National Park, North Cascades National Park and the Northeastern Cascade Pasayten Wilderness. On the trips, Shapiro acts as a cook and guide while the llamas carry necessary camping gear.

Though llamas aren't the only pack animals used for cross-country treks, they have the longest history of such use, dating back to the Incan civilization. Other pack animals such as horses, mules and donkeys tend to be more popular in the United States. Shapiro says he only knew of one other llama-packing group in the United States before he started his business.

Most Deli Llama customers are elderly hikers who can no longer carry heavy packs for multiday hikes or families with young children, Shapiro says. Whether veteran hikers or young families, Shapiro says his clients are excited they can continue doing the outdoor activities they love.

One of Shapiro's returning couples, for example, took a trip last summer to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary in the Olympic Mountains. Traveling with the Deli Llama meant the couple could be outdoors and still bring the linens and fine crystal they wanted to use on their romantic getaway — without having to carry it.

Shapiro and his wife Mariann Shapiro are also thankful for the time they can spend outdoors thanks to the Deli Llama. Mariann, a practicing mental-health counselor, says the hikes help her feel healthier and rejuvenated and give her the opportunity to meet a variety of people.

"Even if we go to the same place, it's not always the same weather and it's never the same group," Bob Shapiro says. "We learn a lot from those people."

Mariann nods, and she smiles as her eyes meet with Shapiro's.

"It's miraculous out there," Mariann says.

The Deli Llama started as a joke, Shapiro explains...
while he leads the llamas into a trailer. In the early '70s Shapiro worked as a community and political organizer in Seattle. After a few drinks at a victory party with his peers, Shapiro struck upon the idea.

"People asked me, 'What's the next fight, Bob?' and I said, 'I'm tired, I don't want to fight anymore,'" he chuckles. "So they asked me what I was going to do, and I said, 'I'm just going to get a pack of llamas!' And I'd never even seen a llama before!"

It was years until Shapiro bought his first llama, but in those years he started to believe working with llamas was something he was destined to do. In a Redmond, Wash. Denny's, Shapiro had almost given up on his dream and was preparing to interview for a job across the street. In a booth behind him, he heard men in conversation. Suddenly, something caught Shapiro's attention. He sat up and peered around the seat to see the speakers. One of the men complained that he never had time to spend with his llamas. In minutes, Shapiro made plans to buy the man's llamas and called his interviewer to tell him that he had received a better business offer.

Shapiro says it was this type of chance — or fate — that led him to his first customer, a minister he met on an airplane who booked the Deli Llama's first two trips for his youth group. This same fate led him to meet an important client — Mariann — on a day hike in 1989.

"It's karma," Shapiro says. "You don't know anything about anything and then the universe bends to reveal everything you ever needed."

Stroking the thick, matted coat of a llama while hanging green cases of food on its tack, Shapiro is now familiar with the creatures. He can saddle and bridle a llama in minutes, administer medicine to llamas and identify the ever-changing pecking order in his pack.

"They taught me how to be a llama packer," Shapiro says, motioning to the animals. "My first llama, Lorenzo, we battled a lot — just because I didn't have a clue."

Though two of the packs the llamas carry on today's hike are empty because it is a short hike with few people, the creatures can carry up to 75 pounds. Shapiro has owned and trained most of his llamas since they were young, so he knows each animal's comfort zone for weight. On average trips Shapiro packs 200 to 250 pounds of food, plus camping gear and each client's 20 pounds of personal items.

The weight from the two containers carrying today's food seems a small task for the llama as it walks up the first half of the trip in the Chuckanut hills ahead of the rest of the pack. Though it steps daintily over broken branches in its path, bending knobby knees and stretching pointed toes, the llama's muscular thighs make it a sturdy animal, able to walk miles of rough terrain for more than six or seven days.

Shapiro and Mariann's jobs during the trip tend to be a little more relaxed than the llamas'. "The Shapiros do most of their work before and after a trip — planning, cooking, packing, unpacking and cleaning up afterward," Mariann says. While on the trip Mariann and Shapiro can relax with the other hikers and enjoy the wilderness.

"All the work is in the preparation," Mariann says. "When you meet the people at the trailhead, that's the vacation. I mean, I have to wash dishes usually, but big deal."

Today Shapiro walks from customer to customer in the small hiking group, discussing school, work and family with each as a friend.

"My philosophy is that nature is therapeutic in itself," Shapiro says. "I mean look," he continues, motioning to the gold-and-crimson canopy of the Chuckanut hills. "Look at these animals. It's hard to get wrapped up in your own problems with them around."

During this last hike before winter, Shapiro's philosophy seems to be working. Talk and laughter float down the trail as Rebecca Heiser and Edleman try to coax their llamas into eating from their hands and David Hedrick walks beside Shapiro discussing hiking trails.

At the top of today's climb, Shapiro leads the group to a cliff at a bend in the trail. Each hiker poses in the grassy clearing to get a picture taken with his or her llama against the backdrop of Bellingham Bay. Tisk-tisking away offers of help, Shapiro gets to work on the "Deli" part of Deli Llama as he sets up lunch on a bright blue tablecloth.

Cupping a bowl of Shapiro's curry salad, Heiser kicks her legs toward the bay and, after a few minutes of watching the San Juan Islands in front of her, she turns to eye the llamas. Tied to trees surrounding the area, the llamas also chew away at their lunches, rapping at the surrounding trees and ferns.

Even on long trips, Shapiro says he doesn't pack more than small treats or minerals for the llamas — most space is reserved for human food.

"I don't need to feed them because for the llamas it's like a smorgasbord," Shapiro says as he laughs and waves his hands to the llamas, whose mouths are full of greenery.

The hike down the trail is quicker, those with four legs anxious to get back to the barn, and the two-legged hikers happily taking a faster speed. A few bystanders stop off the path, eyes wide as the herd of hikers and Shapiro's furry companions saunter by.

Back at the barn, the llamas stretch out their necks and reach for the oats offered by Heiser, Edleman and Hedrick. The three laugh as velvety noses rub their hands. The llamas leave no speck of oats uneaten.

— Sarah Mason
Photos by Sarah Mason
Design by Jamie Callaham
A man in his late 30s stares at the wimpy pile of poker chips in front of him. His choppy brown hair is tucked under a black baseball cap. His well-trimmed, Roman-style beard and mustache frame his pursed lips as he glances at his cards. The only contrast to his shadowed face are the blue, yellow and white flowered poker shirt his wife got for him and a thumbtack-sized gold loop in his ear. Being the short stack at the table, Steven Garfinkle decides to go all in with only an ace of clubs in his hand. He is betting on the ace to pull rank for him.

Nine other players sit at the table, a mix of professional and nonprofessional poker players, including an older man from Africa who literally woke up from a nap at the table 15 minutes earlier. Garfinkle shows his ace and three of spades, hoping the older man is bluffing, but a pair of queens is tossed on the table. That’s it. It took a two-minute hand for the tournament to be over. Garfinkle walks away with $476,926 in his pocket.

Garfinkle, a Western Washington University history professor, placed 10th at the no-limit Texas Hold’em World Series of Poker Main Event in Las Vegas in July. The tournament started with 6,358 players, all paying a $10,000 buy-in. The annual Main Event had an extremely rigorous schedule for the players, starting every day at noon and going until 3 or 4 a.m., Garfinkle says.

Texas Hold’em, a version of the original five-card draw, is a card game in which each player is dealt two cards face down that he or she can look at. The first bets are made and then three community cards are dealt face up in the middle of the table. More bets are made and then two more community cards are dealt face up on the table, Garfinkle says. The player who can make the best five-card hand wins, unless the players bluff, but that’s a whole different story.

“The entire experience is exhilarating,” Garfinkle says. Even though Garfinkle has had huge success in the poker world, he is a Western professor with a passion for ancient history. Garfinkle says there is a tremendous amount of pleasure in presenting history to students and having them respond to it in positive ways.

“People asked me after the tournament, ‘Well what are you going to do now?’” Garfinkle says. “It never occurred to me that that was a question because I was always going to come back here in September and teach.”
Garfinkle stacks poker chips. He continues to play poker at least once a month to keep up his skills.

Western history professor Leonard Helfgott was on the committee that brought Garfinkle to Western. “Of all the candidates, he stood out,” Helfgott says. “He was my No.1 choice all along.”

Helfgott says Garfinkle is a marvelous professor who is exceedingly popular among students. Garfinkle’s classes are the first to fill up in the department and normally have a waiting list. Helfgott says Garfinkle is knowledgeable about what he teaches and relates the material to students in an exciting way.

Garfinkle and Helfgott have been playing poker together for the last couple of years. When Garfinkle went to the tournament, Helfgott and his other poker buddies watched every hand Garfinkle played and felt he did better than anyone could have ever expected.

“We were glued to the computer for four days,” Helfgott says. “It was like we were doing it ourselves. It was so exciting.”

Garfinkle says he plays poker once or twice a week in the summer to keep up his skills, but during the school year he only plays when he has breaks from teaching. He says the great thing about poker is anyone can play.

“The exciting thing about poker is that you can step onto the same playing field as a world champion and nobody thinks you are out of place,” Garfinkle says. “Whereas if I got up to bat against one of the Mariners’ pitchers I would look pretty foolish.”

Garfinkle started playing poker while he was growing up. His grandfather, dad and uncles would sit around and play cards together.

“I wasn’t a card shark in the crib or anything,” Garfinkle says with a smile.

Garfinkle’s wife Victoria Garfinkle was shocked when she found out her husband had won almost half a million dollars. She says he plays between once a week and once a month, but now that their twins Jakob and Rebecca are 9 years old, they have started playing poker as a family.

“We play with jelly beans as chips,” Victoria says. “They get very handled and sticky; it’s not good after awhile.”

Victoria says her husband has always been responsible with money and had thought about taking a shot at the tournament for a year. Garfinkle used winnings from old tournaments to pay for half of the $10,000 buy-in, so he only put in $5,000 of his own money, which in the end he made back.

“My wife keeps telling me I have a rewarding job and I have a rewarding summer job,” Garfinkle says.

The Garfinkles plan to hold onto most of the winnings for their children’s college education, which makes them feel more at ease about their future, Garfinkle says. Some of the money will also go to getting their roof replaced.

The couple gave the rest of the winnings to various charities. Garfinkle gave 1 percent of his winnings to the Put a Bad Beat on Cancer Fund, which is part of the Prevent Cancer Foundation.

“This is important to me and my wife,” Garfinkle says. “because my mother is a cancer survivor and my father passed away due to lung cancer.”

Helfgott says Garfinkle is a well-known figure in Las Vegas now. He is treated like a king and, being the man that he is, is especially gracious and willing to talk to anyone. He signs autographs and tips well, and because of this people are really eager to please him.

“He’s really made a splash for himself there,” Helfgott says.

Garfinkle says he will continue to play poker for fun, but doesn’t plan on making a career out of it. He says he is happiest in the classroom teaching and researching ancient history.

— Sara Edmonds
Photos by Kathryn Batchen
Design by Jamie Callaham
It's noon on a sunny Bellingham afternoon in 2000. Twenty-year-old future Western Washington University student Shawn Cass is clad in a dirty white T-shirt with an image of a spray-paint can in the middle of it, baggy blue jeans and white Fila sneakers. He grabs true blue, semi-flat black, semi-glossy white, emerald green and popsicle orange Krylon brand spray-paint cans and throws them in his backpack. 

As he paints under "Ruckas," his tag name, Cass refuses to tag personal property or the front of businesses. The artistic misfit wants to find a spot to paint where he won't get caught, so he chooses an underpass next to the Georgia Pacific Plant, behind Jalapenos Mexican Family Restaurant.

Unaware the underpass has a 24-hour surveillance camera, Cass chooses the white spray-paint can and begins to paint. While his friend paints farther down the tunnel, the strong odor of aerosol fills the air as the face of a deranged Krusty-the-Clown character takes shape. Cass knows what he's doing is illegal, but that's part of the thrill.

He fills in the clown's hair with true blue when he hears the crackling dialogue of a walkie-talkie. Cass is caught with a spray-paint can in hand, ticketed $150 for "malicious mischief" and given one year of unsupervised probation. Now labeled a graffiti artist by the police, Cass decides not to risk any further run-ins with the law and pursues a way to express himself legally.

Bellingham Police Lt. Flo Simon says local graffiti has declined in the past few years. Perhaps graffiti artists moved away, stopped painting or, like Cass, pursued legal outlets for their expression.
Urban Contemporary

After Cass stopped painting illegally, he says fantasy artist Amy Brown, who is known for painting fairies, inspired his first canvas painting. "I was talking to some random lady who owns the Community Thrift Store and told her about my canvas," Cass says. "I showed it to her and she liked it so much she wanted to trade me clothes for the canvas. That was the start to me being like, ‘Oh I can do this on canvas and people actually value it and will pay me or trade me for it.”

By definition, and in the eyes of many traditional graffiti artists, an art piece isn’t labeled “graffiti” when it is legally produced. When the styles and influences in a piece are rooted in street art, it’s considered “urban contemporary.”

Before transferring from Whatcom Community College, the college gave Cass his first commissioned art piece in its student lounge, which helped pay for his first quarter at Western. Through networking and the help of friends, he has also been permitted to create art in the tunnel of Larrabee State Park, the bathrooms in Pizza Pipeline, the interior and exterior of the Passion Fly clothing store off State Street and various other nonbusiness legal locations.

His latest piece is featured at Classics, a sneaker store off Bakerview Highway, on a 12-by 16-foot wall. He says he used approximately 25 spray-paint cans to complete the project, which took nearly 15 hours. Cass’ art is also featured in an art show starting in December 2007 at Casa Que Pasa alongside pieces created by Western senior Marcus Klotzer, 30, that features more than 20 pieces of art.

While many graffiti artists choose to exhibit their art illegally in the street, many people don’t see graffiti as an art form. Like Cass, other artists seek legal outlets such as painting on canvas, a commissioned or permitted wall or other legal areas.

However, it can be difficult for artists to survive on profits solely from their work. Because of this, artists face crucial questions. How do artists know the public will accept and appreciate their artwork? Even if someone likes the art, will anyone pay for it? Where can artists display their art for people to view it?

Aaron Brick, 26, sells his graffiti-style artwork and has been featured in store galleries and art shows. He says he first sought support from establishments that embrace street culture, such as record stores and boutiques. While earning some money from his art sales, Brick supports himself by working full time at Avalanche Ranch in Bellingham. He says both legal and illegal artists want their artwork to be viewed by the public, which is why some artists choose the street to display their work.

"Not everyone has the privilege to be in galleries, be in shows or have anything on display," Brick says. "For the most part, [graffiti] is a really inexpensive way to show your art to the public."

Gallery Graffiti

Many galleries, including the Western Gallery, don’t consider graffiti-style art legitimate and refuse to display it. The student-run Viking Union Gallery did host a spray-paint show titled “Spray Paint” Nov. 28 through Dec. 14, 2007 that showcased 20 pieces contributed by 11 artists, including pieces by Cass and Brick.
“Our goal is to highlight graffiti as a legitimate art form,” VU Gallery coordinator Heidi Norgaard says.

While none of the artwork featured is illegal, assistant VU Gallery Coordinator Abby Wilson adds that the art is inspired by illegal artwork.

“I’ve always been really interested in art forms that aren’t considered legitimate by the sort of ‘high arts,’” Wilson says. “I’m not interested in stuffy white guy art. I’m not interested in hanging closets on a frame in our gallery. I’m interested in bringing our campus and the community incredible, interesting, thought-provoking, moving pieces of art.”

Norgaard says the only other gallery in the state that displays urban-contemporary art is the Boulevard Gallery in Seattle.

Graffiti-Inspired Styles

Western senior Yale Wolf, 24, wears rectangular-brimmed glasses that are coated in spray-paint dust. He is covered in white, blue, red and orange paint from his black puffy jacket down to his dark blue jeans and worn-out brown shoes.

Wolf says he isn’t concerned whether people consider graffiti an art form because it’s impossible to argue what is and isn’t considered art. Instead, he focuses on improving community spaces by complementing the public environment through various styles of graffiti.

“When people think of graffiti they think just spray paint,” Wolf says. “I’m more of a scientist of the street and an architect of the sidewalk. I create anything that can be applied as alternative techniques for art in the urban environment.”

Wolf and partner Erik Burke, 29, started a company called Theink Tank. Their mission statement is simple: “Theink Tank is a site-specific mural and design firm that focuses on improving and beautifying the public space.” Wolf, an industrial design major, and Burke have enhanced public spaces since 2005.

“I’m focusing on how the piece relates to the environment,” Wolf says. “I want the piece to fit in with its surroundings and relate to its space.”

Wolf, who was the art director responsible for the graffiti show in front of Old Main at the 2005 High Street Festival, says he incorporated the traditional Northwest American Indian into a contemporary style for the piece he displayed at the show. He breaks down the traditional graffiti letter form into more abstract imagery.

“I’m influenced by how other cultures have mutated the graffiti culture from the traditional roots of the New York letter forms,” Wolf says. “I’m most interested in Brazilian Pixação (pee-shah-sow) and Scandinavian metro bombing [painting].”

The Theink Tank duo has volunteered and created commissioned art in Washington, Nevada, New York, Brazil, Estonia and Sweden. In Nevada, they painted a 2,200-square-foot alleyway in three days.

Stencils

Another style of graffiti, known as stencils, has emerged. To create stencils, artists cut out easily reproducible images from cardboard and different kinds of paper. The design cutout is then transferred to a surface using spray paint or a type of roll-on paint.

Brick says he has been interested in art since middle school, but has created stencils on vinyl since August
2005. He was inspired by a group called the Vinyl Killers from Portland, Ore. that paints anti-establishment and political stencils on vinyl records.

Brick says he liked the concept, so, while working at Everyday Music in downtown Bellingham, he obtained blank records and decided to try it himself. The first stencil he created on vinyl showed an American Indian shooting a star, an image similar to the picture on a Tootsie Roll Pop wrapper.

“It just fascinated me,” Brick says of vinyl stenciling. “I have no idea what I’m going to do with the stencil after I cut it out. I usually don’t have things planned out. If I know I like an image then I’ll work with it from there. I’m really spontaneous so I just kind of do whatever I feel like doing right at the time.”

Like Cass, Brick has illegally painted before, but says he would rather avoid dealing with law-enforcement officials.

“I just have too much to lose right now,” he says. “Every [illegal] stencil in Bellingham is somehow synonymous with me. When a new [illegal] stencil is put up, people come to me and I’m just like, ‘No it wasn’t me.'”

Brick is self-taught and has learned many techniques by experimenting with existing pictures. He says he adjusts an image on Adobe Photoshop, prints the image on paper, cuts it out with an Exacto knife and uses spray paint to display the image on whatever canvas he chooses.

**Store Galleries**

Ivan Barrow, 31, is one of Bellingham’s business owners who embraces graffiti-style art and recognizes graffiti as a legitimate art form. His store Locust, which has been in business since April 2007, offers unique street fashion, graffiti-style artwork, books and other items.

“If you want to be a serious artist, at some point you got to figure out how to make it pay,” Barrow says. “It’s kind of a natural progression of things. They can become prolific or successful with their career and still go out on the street, but generally they get to a point where they don’t want to look over their shoulder.”

Barrow says he wants to help artists transition from the street to the gallery by showcasing urban contemporary art.

“Graffiti is going to continue, and it’s almost better that people don’t consider it an art because then it wouldn’t be graffiti.”

—— Yale Wolf

Nine businesses, including Left Right Left, Everyday Music, Jake’s Barber Shop and Paris Texas, agreed to showcase his artwork. Brick’s largest display at Casa Que Pasé showcased approximately 70 paintings and stencils last summer and sold nearly 30.

After sending his artwork to various places outside of Bellingham, Brick was accepted to contribute his vinyl stencils to the same show as his idols, the Vinyl Killers, at The Goodfoot in Portland from Oct. 25 to Nov. 25, 2007.

“It went from seeing those records [from the Vinyl Killers] on the walls of a store to inspire me to do stencils, to me having my records on the same wall next to theirs,” Bricks says while cracking a smile. “I’m pretty stoked about it.”

It was his first major show outside Bellingham.

Brick says one day he hopes to turn his part-time passion into a full-time profession. Cass never returned to that dirty, littered underpass to paint again. He still misses the rush of painting illegally, but realized graffiti has more potential as a legitimate art form.

Wolf and Erik Burke of The Ink Tank use rocks to carve an image into a plain plaster-and-cement wall in Estonia. Since Estonia has a minimal supply of spray paint, the two chose to use available materials to express their art.
Bellingham resident George Dyson had a biography written about him by the age of 25. Nicole Lanphear talks to Dyson about his varying interests, which range from kayak design, to the history of computing, to spaceship consulting. Photos by Kathryn Bachen. Design by Jenny Leak.

Few people can list kayak designer, computing historian, international speaker and spaceship consultant on their résumé. George Dyson, 54, has accomplished all of this and much more.

Growing up under the shadow of his famous physicist and mathematician parents, Dyson has made his own waves. He was the world's greatest kayak designer, the subject of a biography at age 25 and an authority on computing history.

Dyson's workshop of choice is a white stucco building with blue trim that is unobtrusively tucked at the end of a row of antique shops on Holly Street. There aren't any signs on the building other than the numbers “435” over the door. Inside the hollow building lie shelves cluttered with a mountain of papers, folders, book posters and miniature kayak models. The desk, littered with more papers and a black MacBook, faces a window with a clear view of the sunset over Bellingham Bay.

A Bellingham resident for 18 years, Dyson lives a life of variety and paradox. His endeavors have covered every edge of the spectrum, from living in a treehouse, to writing about spaceships, to working on actual rockets.

Innovation in All Forms

Tall, lean and dark-haired, Dyson grew up in Princeton, N.J. in a neighborhood of geniuses. One of his neighbors was the man responsible for the Manhattan Project. Dyson's father, Freeman Dyson, is a world-renowned physicist who still travels the world and lectures to other scientists and colleges.

"Both my parents were mathematicians, so the expectation was I would do things with my mind," Dyson says.

Instead, he chose to work with his hands.

Bored with the schools and his life in New Jersey, Dyson dropped out of high school and moved to British Columbia at age 17.

He found a job working on a boat and grew to enjoy Canadian society, eventually obtaining Canadian citizenship. While settling into his new home, he also started designing kayaks, which led to his interest in the history of kayak building.

"I built my first kayak when I was 12 and never stopped," Dyson says. "I built all these kayaks and became interested enough in history to do the research, which was odd because history was the one subject I hated most in school."

His research, which eventually turned into a book, focused on Russian history in Alaska and how the Russians adopted the boat-building practice of the native Aleuts. Dyson's designs follow Aleut style.

"I really had something I was interested in and wanted to find out more about these Russians in Alaska," Dyson says. "Luckily, history is one of the few things that can be done by amateurs. It is hard to be an amateur physicist."

Publishers rejected the manuscript more than a dozen times, Dyson says, because, as a new author, finding a publisher was difficult. Alaska Northwest Books published "Baidarka: The Kayak," in 1986, when Dyson was 33.

At the time, Dyson lived in a treehouse 95 feet up a Douglas fir tree, which he built at 19 so he could have
The frame of one of Dyson's kayaks is displayed in his spacious shop. Dyson once sold completed boats and frame kits.

If I went on with my life living in a tree building kayaks, it would have been very boring," Dyson says. He says the history of kayaking is parallel to the history of computing. While people think these are relatively new inventions, the histories go back thousands of years.

So, as he began on his new venture, moving from kayaks to computing history, Dyson moved to Bellingham in 1989 and settled down with his wife and daughter. He purchased an old tavern on Holly Street to use as the kayak workshop for his business, Dyson, Baidarka and Company, which sells do-it-yourself kits to build kayaks, and as a sanctuary to work on his books.

Cast as an anti-technology and anti-science radical who lived in a treehouse while building and researching kayaks, Dyson rebelled against that image and began researching a book on the history of computing. He moved out of the treehouse.

That is a very weird thing when you are 25, to have a biography on you," Dyson says.

Western Washington University accommodated Dyson by making him a faculty member to allow him to use the library, which was essential for writing his second book, "Darwin Among the Machines: The Evolution in Global Intelligence" came out around the same time the Internet emerged in 1998 and explained what led to the creation of the Internet.

The book received strong reviews from the computer industry and opened even more doors for Dyson.

Research Opening Doors

After completing his second book, Dyson knew what his next project would be. His father had worked on Project Orion, a highly secretive space project in the 1950s before NASA existed. The project's goal was to build a spaceship the size of a large hotel to carry 50 to 100 people on a four-year voyage that would include a stop on Mars.

In order to resurrect one of history's forgotten stories, Dyson interviewed the people who worked on the project, who were then in their 80s and spread out in 14 countries. Dyson also had to acquire several government documents and get them unclassified. In 300 hours of interviews, Dyson learned about the golden years of physics, the time after World War II when ex-bomb-builders put their energy into space travel.

Dyson says "Project Orion"
might have been more successful, but it came out at the wrong time. Most of the book is about small nuclear bombs needed to make the shuttle work, and it was released a few months after Sept. 11, 2001, so the book was not well noted.

He is also peripherally involved with a project building rockets in Seattle. He used to travel weekly to Seattle, but is now less involved.

His book "Darwin Among the Machines" also led to invitations to computer-industry conferences around the world, which he attended as a speaker.

Dyson says his next book will focus on computing history and the digital universe.

"We live in a completely digital world, and we don't have a good idea of how it started," Dyson says.

He has unburied documents from the people who built the first computer, which Dyson says was like finding the Dead Sea Scrolls. He plans to look at the past of computing and apply it to where technology is headed.

Making Waves

Outside of his work, Dyson is involved with several groups to discuss Bellingham’s waterfront plans and hopes to preserve its integrity. He is on both the Bellingham Bay Foundation Board and the Downtown Renaissance Network Board.

"He is one of the most preeminent computer historians and he attends every county and city council meeting about the renovation of downtown," Evans says. "It shows his commitment to an idea and his commitment to be a good citizen."

Tom Gotchy, a Bellingham resident since 1973, first contacted Dyson in British Columbia to buy one of his kayaks to build. When Dyson moved to Bellingham, Gotchy contacted him again and they have been friends ever since.

"One of the things that impressed me is how normal he is considering his extraordinary background," Gotchy says. "His nanny was Albert Einstein’s personal secretary."

Still, Gotchy says Dyson is able to relate to a variety of people.

"He tries really hard to look at each situation with fresh eyes," Gotchy says. "He looks at things critically and from an unbiased perspective. That probably comes from his mom and dad and their scientific viewpoint."

Dyson’s mother now lives in Bellingham, while his father still resides in Princeton. Freeman Dyson was a distinguished lecturer at Western a few years ago, and the father and son have given talks together.

Still, Dyson says he feels the pressure of his parents’ accomplishments upon him.

"I took a lot of risks in life, and I don’t think they realized how many risks I took," Dyson says.

Dyson says his parents were supportive of his decision to drop out of high school.

"They both knew that if I had tried to go into physics I would have been terribly out shadowed," Dyson says. "It is like being a child of movie stars or rockstars. There is a very high risk of failing: even if you are smart in science, you have to have the right idea at the right time, and there is some element of luck. So it worked out fine to go out on my own."

Dyson has made waves in his own right in kayak design.

"For a time, I was certainly the world’s greatest kayak designer," Dyson says. "Whatever books I write will always be in a way out shadowed by my father. But that is OK. Basically, he’s great and I’m OK with being good."

Space, computing, kayaking: Dyson’s activities appear diverse, but he believes kayaks are as much of a technology as computers.

Evans believes we all have a lot to learn from Dyson.

"He has very compelling things to tell us about the future of computer intelligence and artificial intelligence," Evans says.

For now, Dyson will continue researching and writing his latest book, but he says he hopes to keep his kayak shop up and running and continue to design and build experimental kayaks. Perhaps his next book or his next job will be somewhere between spaceships and kayaks. 

Since its purchase 19 years ago, Dyson’s Holly Street shop has been his workshop, his office and his home.
Draped on a hanger, the olive-green leather trench coat stands out against its black, gray and navy neighbors on the sales rack. Large olive-hued plastic buttons and a chunky waist belt add extra flare to the eye-catching, A-line trench. Perhaps the grandest detail of all is a thick stretch of salt-and-pepper fur running along the top of the coat extending down to the first button.

"It's fabulous, it's trendy, it's fun and, thanks to my restoration, who would ever know that it's 40 years old?" exclaims Lynn Loewen, owner of the vintage boutique Nostalgia.

Located in Fairhaven's Young Building on 11th Street, the boutique is filled with vintage and vintage-inspired clothing from the 1920s to 1970s. Loewen, a 52-year-old mother, wife and self-described 'vintage fanatic,' acquired the boutique's vintage pieces by spending eight months scouring flea markets, estate sales and thrift stores across Oregon and Washington.

Before moving to Bellingham from Vancouver, Wash., three months ago, Loewen worked as a buying manager for Nordstrom and taught piano lessons. She opened Nostalgia Oct. 20 and says business has been steady. She credits the store's success to Fairhaven's growth spurt and local women ready for new fashion trends.

"If we can get women out of athletic tracksuits and into something more fashionable, such as vintage, we've accomplished something," Loewen says laughing.

After adjusting the belt on the '60s olive trench, Loewen wanders through the store, her platinum hair bouncing in rhythm with the clicking of her black leather boots on the tile floor. Twirling a string of pearls from the '50s around her finger, Loewen describes the appeal of vintage clothing.

"Vintage is the best of the past represented through clothing," she explains. "When a woman is wearing vintage, she can feel connected to a moment in history. While she did not live during the '30s, she can experience the Hollywood glamour and 'Great Gatsby' ideals of that era through an outfit."

To ensure her customers receive the best history has to offer, Loewen says clothing restoration is her top priority. Restoration includes, among other things, installing new soles on boots and shoes, relining jackets, dresses and skirts, and replacing lost buttons.

"Lynn takes special pride in the clothing she sells."
A styled
mannequin
outside of
Nostalgia
welcomes
customers.

says Rose Brockmeyer, a Fairhaven student and part-time
sales associate at Nostalgia. “Customers can be confident
that the vintage they buy from our store is well restored.”

Along with high-quality restoration, Nostalgia offers
high-end vintage, which Loewen acquires through hired
buyers and her own personal searches. Vintage Kate
Spade, Diane von Furstenberg, Chanel, Gucci and other
designers fill the racks scattered throughout the Art Deco,
70s-inspired boutique.

“My favorite thing about this store is the designer
vintage it carries,” Nostalgia customer Courtney Wolpers
says. “I haven’t found anywhere else in Bellingham that
carries this type of vintage, or any vintage at all for that
matter.”

Even with expensive designer clothing on display,
Loewen says most of her customers expect the boutique
to be a thrift store.

“I spend a lot of time educating people on the
difference between vintage clothing and thrift-store
wears,” Loewen says. “Vintage is fashion with a past —
the living-doll look of the ’50s, the flower-power fashion
of the ’70s. While thrift stores do sell some vintage, they
also sell 5-year-old hand-me-down items. These items
have no historical value.”

Loewen says she thrives on helping customers
discover their favorite fashion eras. As for herself, Loewen
likes to dabble in all fashion decades.

“My favorite era depends on the day,” she says.

“Sometimes I’m all about ’50s pencil skirts and other days
I’m decked out in ’20s jewelry. I do, however, have a soft
spot for ’60s coats.”

Whatever the decade, customers can find and
purchase any look without spending hours searching or
emptying their wallets, Loewen says.

“We write the era of each piece on its price tag to
make finding a certain look easier, and we also do our
best to make sure the price on that tag is reasonable,”
she says.

The prices vary depending on the age and type of
item. Dresses cost anywhere from $30 to $100, shoes
range from $20 to $70, accessories vary from $10 to $25,
and skirts and blouses sell for approximately $18 to $30.

Searching the dress rack, Loewen pulls a pearly flapper
dress off the rack.

“Look at this,” she says. “It is one of my favorite
pieces. Finds like this are what makes shopping vintage
exciting. Someone wore this dress 80 years ago. Think
about that! So much history in just one dress.”

Back on the rack the dress glimmers in all its 1920s
glory. Next to its ’40s, ’50s and ’60s neighbors, it waits to
be discovered by some woman and inspire her to spend an
evening or two dressed in the ’20s era head to toe.

— Shannon Deveny
Photos by Jake Vorono
Design by Jamie Callaham
A button-up shirt can do a lot to help with looking like you know what you're doing while drinking wine.

Mention the idea of intoxication to college drinkers and, sadly, the first thought that pops into his or her head is how can I get drunk the fastest, for the least amount of money.

Offer the idea of drinking wine, and the results are even more depressing. Thoughts fly through the aisles of local grocery stores and rest on the shelves filled with giant boxes and jugs of wine. Bulk wines such as Carlo Rossi and Franzia are enough to make even a run-of-the-mill wine lover cringe.

Navigating the depths of a college binge drinkers' thoughts of discount 30-pack prices, boxed wine and $1 shots, however, will reveal a truth unbeknownst to most, that most one day wish to be able to drink shamelessly next to adults.

It is high time to put down that tall can of Busch, walk away with your head held high and fill your empty drinking hand with the sleek, slender curvature of a wine glass.

Wine is a daunting beverage to approach. The thoughts of million-dollar vineyards, snooty Frenchmen, posh Italians and pricey labels are likely to alienate newbies from entering the wine world. However, these fears are unwarranted.

It is simple to begin as a complete rookie in the wine game and in a short matter of time discover your taste for wine, what you like to eat with wine, how to improve your wine knowledge and where it can all take you.

Discovering Your Taste

For most people, discovering whether they prefer red or white wine is the first and easiest task at hand. Red and white wines are the two simplest categories wines can
be broken down into. In reality, a larger number of wine varieties exist. The hundreds of different wine types that exist are based on where the grapes are grown, what type of grape was used and what other types of grapes it was blended with.

If you end up preferring an Australian or American wine more than one from a traditional wine-producing country such as France or Italy, that does not make your preference incorrect. Many wine producers ride the fact that they are from a traditional wine-producing country and put out bad products with a fancy name; the country of origin means little to the quality of the wine.

Marco Cinotti, head professor of wine and cooking courses at Lorenzo Di Medici University in Florence, Italy, says the name on the bottle means nothing if the drinker doesn't enjoy it. He says it doesn't matter if you choose the most expensive bottle of wine or if you eat French fries with wine as long as that wine makes your day better.

To know what you like you have to know what is out there. The best way to do this is to venture to your nearest wine bar or tasting room. At places like this you can try more than just one variety of wine at a time and, hopefully, for less cash than buying entire bottles while sparing your liver.

Washington is the second largest wine-producing state in the country. Finding wine bars and inexpensive places to drink wine is as easy as strolling the streets of downtown Bellingham. Often, local wine producers and restaurants offer inexpensive, if not free, wine tastings as a way to attract bulk buyers for restaurants and rich people. You may not be a rich person or ready for any bulk buying, but hey who has to know? Just take time to enjoy the free wine.

Wining and Dining Yourself

Stage one in becoming a young wine expert is a tedious process and requires consuming numerous varieties of wine. As a way to balance a belly full of booze, you can dabble in food-and-wine pairing.

Wine-and-food pairing breaks down into three generally accepted categories: contrasting flavors of the food and wine, complementary tastes and regionally.

Chef Jeff Smith-Morse of the Du Jour Bistro and The Vines Wine Shop in downtown Bellingham says people tend to get fanatic about food-and-wine pairing. Smith-Morse says to take the basic principles of red wine with heavy red meat dishes and white wine with lighter foods and move forward from there.

"People can tend to get very involved in matching and pairing wine," Smith-Morse says. "If you don't know a lot it's much easier to just start eating the foods you like while drinking the wines you like."

By pairing a wine from a specific area with a traditional dish from the same place you are not only creating a killer meal, you're getting a little culture on the side.

Many wines go through a tedious aging process for months or even years in giant oak barrels stored in cool, dry locations like this one at the Campanola Vineyards.
doesn't make him or her a model.

To thwart the tactics of wine-jargon users, simply state you do not know what these crazy terms mean and pull out your handy-dandy notebook. With notebook in hand, you're displaying your interest in learning and will be able to find guidance to the wines you like and the attributes you are looking for.

Fear not — for as your time experimenting with wine grows, so will your lexicon of wine vocabulary.

**Putting it All Together**

Acting like you know what you're doing, is almost as good as actually knowing what you're doing. After you select your wine of choice, open the bottle — be safe and choose a twist top at first — and make sure to have an actual wine glass, with a thin stem and a large, rounded bowl on top.

Pour just enough into the glass to get a taste less is better. Set the glass onto the table, grasp the base and move it in a swirling motion. This incorporates oxygen into the glass, which strengthens the aroma of the wine.

Next, stick your nose into the glass as far as you can and take a big whiff. Avoid creating nasal-cavity-to-liquid contact — snorting wine is a quick way to destroy a fine evening of wine enjoyment.

Finally, you get to introduce your mouth to the wine, but whatever you do, don't swallow right away. Let the wine swirl around in your mouth, over your palate, and then finally down the hatch. Since you have now accomplished the holy grail of wine tasting you are allowed to pour a full 8-ounce glass and start the exciting part — drinking.

You've done it. You successfully look like you know the Holy Grail of wine tasting.

No longer should college taste buds be doomed to the monotony of watered-down beers, $10 fifths of vodka and boxes of mass-produced, low-quality wines. Make your parents proud and celebrate a culture that has been drinking with class for thousands of years. Pick up a bottle of wine with notebook in hand and start your education now because it's about time Pabst wasn't your drink of choice.

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**Where to buy in Bellingham:**

**Wine & dine**

Du Jour Bistro & The Vines Wine Shop
1319 Cornwall Ave., Suite 102
(360) 714-1161
Best deal — $5 corking fee, full value wine

Temple Bar
306 Champion Street
(360) 676-8660
Best deal — Happy hour $12 wine & cheese

Trader Joe's
2410 James St.
(360) 738-6858
Best deal — Largest selection of wines under $10

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The room smells sterile, like someone doused it in hand sanitizer and coated everything in bleach. The chatter of two overly cheery front-desk attendants breaks the otherwise uncomfortable silence. The color scheme is neutral, most likely chosen to calm its visitors or match the tile floor. In one corner a fish tank is filled with colorful fish that look terrified every time someone taps the tank. In the other corner, a variety of magazines and children’s toys help pass the time. This room looks like any other doctor’s office — except for the binders.

Four large binders rest on top of a wooden coffee table. Pasted inside the binders are hundreds of baby pictures. Baby boys, girls, twins, triplets and even a few quadruplets fill each page with silly smiles and ridiculous outfits. Flipping through the baby gallery, I realize within the next year a baby bearing a strong resemblance to me may be gracing these pages.

I think to myself, ‘I wonder if I would even recognize it...him...her...them. OK, I’m officially creeped out.’

Sitting in this ordinary, and yet extraordinary, doctor’s office known as the Bellingham In Vitro Fertilization and Fertility Care Center, I sigh at my lack of maternal instinct. I comfort myself with the reminder that no such instinct is required here because I am giving my babies, or rather, my potential babies, to someone else.

Bellingham IVF’s specialty is in vitro fertilization, which is the process of extracting, artificially fertilizing and implanting a woman’s eggs to increase her chances of conceiving. In vitro can be done with a woman’s own eggs or she can use eggs donated by another woman, such as myself.

This is my first and last time as a donor. While some women donate several times, I am uncomfortable with the idea of multiple women having my children. I learned about the center through my roommate, who donated her eggs six months previously. She described the experience as gratifying, and this encouraged me to donate. In my mind, enabling someone to have children is the greatest gift I will ever give. The $2,000 offered to donors is also a nice incentive.

To become a donor, I filled out two slightly intimidating packets containing information about everything from my medical history to my favorite color. The center’s donor coordinator meets with women hoping to conceive and uses these packets to match them with a donor. The process is completely anonymous. No names, no photos, no meetings, no nothing. The parents—or parent-to-be may use only these packets to choose a donor.

My packet must have read OK because here I am, waiting to meet with the donor coordinator and Dr. Emmett Branigan to discuss the details of egg donation.

The front-desk attendant calls my name and I stand, prepared to meet the messengers of miracle babies.

‘It’s baby-making time,’ I say comically to myself. Apparently nerves and fertility clinics transform me into an immature 12-year-old boy.

‘Hi there Shannon,’ the coordinator says. ‘It looks like someone chose you.’

‘It must have been because my favorite color is green,’ I joke badly. She laughs sympathetically and begins to discuss the schedule. During a period of three to four months I will have a lab screening for numerous diseases, complete a psychological evaluation, use a hormone nasal spray and ask my roommates to give me five tiny hormone injections because I am scared to do it myself.

While the summary of procedures sounds daunting on paper, it’s really not. I simply take the needed hormones and my body takes care of the rest.

Seriously, but with a smile, Dr. Branigan begins to ask me about my feelings on being a donor.

“You need to understand that this is not an adoption process,” he says. “There are no visitation rights.”

“No visitation rights,” I repeat to myself. A little me will be out there and I will never know him or her.

“I understand,” I say. “This is about starting their family, not mine.”

Three months later, the eggs have been extracted through a minor procedure free of knives and incisions. Besides the four-month-pregnant look I am sporting due to excess fluids, I am fine.

Lifting up my shirt to look at my bloated belly in the mirror, I turn to my mom and say, “Hopefully this is what she will look like in about four or five months.”

I smile at this thought. Even if I decide not to have children, at least I know I gave the opportunity to someone else.

And with that, I imagine the children of the woman I donated a little piece of myself to filling a page in one of the giant binders resting on the wooden coffee table in that ordinary, yet extraordinary, doctor’s office.

— Shannon Deveny

Photo by Kathryn Bachen

Design by Jamie Callaham
Klipsun is a Lummi word meaning “beautiful sunset.”