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Ashe Lambe
Western Washington University

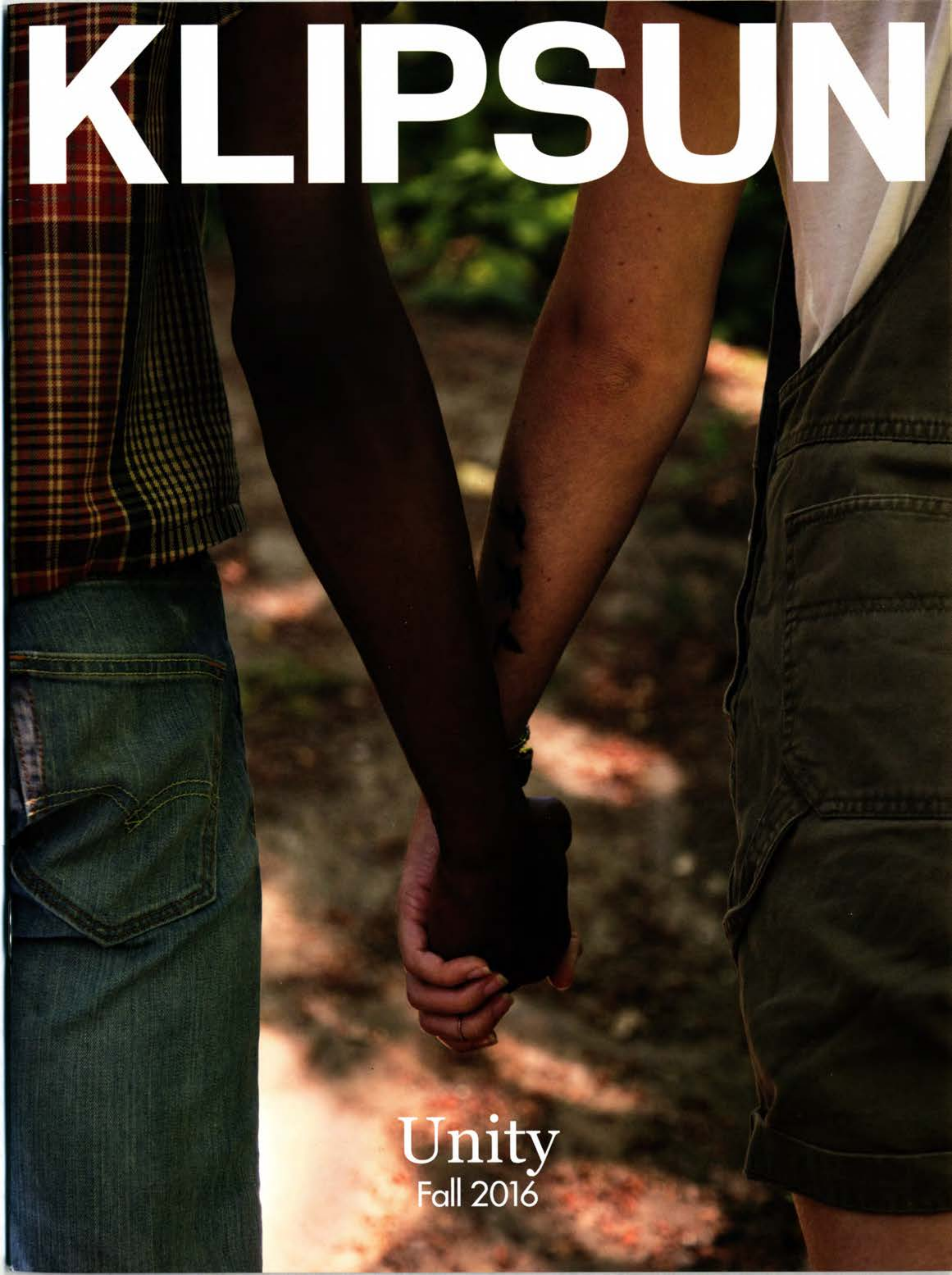
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KLIPSUN

Unity
Fall 2016

Editor's note



Picture, if you will, a child with matted hair and a sunken lower jaw. Clutched in that child's hands is a notebook, tattered and filled with sweeping drawings of dragons and the scrawlings of a dreamer.

If you asked that child to write about the real world, a scoff would have followed.

"Why would I write about that? It's boring!"

As a 10-year-old, I was convinced of this mentality. I had tried writing about myself and I had tried writing about others. Nothing ever stuck. It's hard to write about others without taking the time to walk in their shoes, and I lacked the wisdom to recognize that.

The day our campus shut down due to racial threats will forever be emblazoned in our minds. While it was neither the first time nor the last time our campus will feel divided, this moment will always stand out. Everything in the months that followed seemed to always be tied back to that day. For every pointed finger, for every whisper, it always seemed to stem from November 24, 2015.

Unity is a tricky thing. It's not about just running within our own circles, never to disturb the status quo. Unity is about stepping across the lines and reaching out. As journalists, we can do just that. We have the opportunity to step across dividing lines and reach out to those whom we've never spoken to before. It is our obligation, after all, to give a voice to the voiceless.

On a campus fraught with divisions and scars from recent trauma, we cannot afford to stand opposite of one another and wag our fingers. Instead, we must come together and learn the stories of those we appear to have nothing in common with.

It was my goal, as editor-in-chief, to encourage my writers to step out into the world and walk hand in hand with those they had never spoken to before. It is my hope that you, dear reader, will be able to walk in those same shoes.

**"You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view
...until you climb into his skin and walk around in it."**

To Kill a Mockingbird

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ashe Lambe". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Ashe Lambe
Editor-in-Chief

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For the love of Jazz

STORY BY: **REBEKAH WAY**
PHOTOS BY: **DAISEY JAMES**

"Name all of the instruments you can hear," instructed the music teacher at my elementary school. A trill of a clarinet began and flurried into one of the most timeless melodies that blasts classical music with jazz: George Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue."

The melody begins delicately, but then the brass section enters with a crash, and the piece takes off. With several mood changes and intense piano solos, the composition never lost my attention.

Hoping to play music this fiery, I learned clarinet in fifth grade and joined band. I continued into middle school and decided to pick up alto saxophone after watching the jazz band perform a few times.

I learned the blues scale and the one jazz song in our exercise book in hopes of successfully auditioning for jazz band near the end of seventh grade. It was there that I met the people I'd be playing music with for the next six years.

Our first task was to learn “Take the ‘A’ Train” by Duke Ellington, the first of many Ellington compositions we’d play. After hours of sectionals, the saxophones returned to rehearsal, nailed that unison line and sounded like one huge saxophone.

We would ride ferries together to compete in festivals, wake up at 5 a.m. to make it to the 6:20 a.m. rehearsals and play pranks on each other during our annual trip to Vashon Island for jazz retreat.

Ask any instructor how to play jazz and they’ll say that in order to play jazz, you need to listen to jazz. I have no idea what the first jazz song I heard was. My parents listened to 98.9 FM when it was Seattle’s smooth jazz station nearly every night, and, soon enough, I was listening to this station night and day.

The more I listened, the more I started talking with other people about this music. According to a study in “Psychological Science,” music is the most common conversation topic among people interested in becoming friends. It wasn’t long before we all gushed about the trademark “sheets of sound” playing style of John Coltrane, the masterful arrangements and political statements of Charles Mingus and the genius of Ellington’s compositions. We argued about which song had the better solo from Miles Davis – “So What” or “Freddie Freeloader.” All of my friends have witnessed me go on a 10-minute rave about a jazz musician or album at least once.

This phenomenon is known as homophily, meaning “love of the same.”

“There is this intrinsic need to affiliate and associate with people who are like-minded,” says Joseph Trimble, a professor of psychology at Western. “It boils down to choice of partners, lovers, spouses and clubs.”

There is this intrinsic need to affiliate and associate with people who are like-minded. It boils down to choice of partners, lovers, spouses and clubs.

—Joseph Trimble, Western Psychology Professor

Music taste can also reflect your personality. According to a 2007 study in “Psychology of Music,” people who prefer complex genres like jazz and classical music tend to be more open to experiences when compared to someone who likes pop or country music. So maybe one reason I seek out people who like jazz is because we could have similar personalities.

But by the end of high school, I wondered how or if I could find similar friendships at Western. I didn’t want to major in music, but I couldn’t leave jazz behind.

I auditioned for Western’s jazz program by playing Miles Davis’ “All Blues,” one of my favorite songs from the album “Kind of Blue.” To my disbelief, I made it into the Western Jazz Orchestra, known as the top big band in the program.

It was difficult for me to move past the mixture of admiration and fear I felt toward the other band members who were well into their music education or performance majors. It took a few weeks, but soon the ice broke and I befriended the lead trumpet player, Nick Wees.

He’s played in many different ensembles and seen how communication and connections between musicians is crucial in smaller groups. Without that connection, musicians may feel less comfortable taking risks while playing.

“In a small group setting, it’s more about free expression,” Nick says. “The conversations between musicians verbally, and musically, can go a lot more places.”

For Nick, music is the key shared interest he looks for when getting to know someone. A lot of the connections he’s made in music have come from being around the same group in classes and rehearsals in school.



Opposite: Jazz musicians often play from “The Real Book,” books full of jazz standards.

That way they can pick up and play with anybody with minimal rehearsals.

Right: Rebekah Way plays piano as a child. Photo courtesy of Rebekah Way.

Next page: A student trumpeter plays a tune from “The Real Book.”

“There have definitely been a few people in my life who I initially tried to approach because I really liked their playing,” Nick says.

Because I wasn’t a music major, I found it difficult to completely fit into this group outside of the times I had a “Real Book” in hand or my saxophone hanging on my neck.

Seeking the camaraderie I experienced as an editor at my high school’s newspaper, I signed up for The Planet, one of Western’s student publications, and learned about podcasting. I fell in love with this storytelling medium and struck up a conversation with the editor Ryan Evans, who taught the podcasting workshops, to learn more about radio.

The conversation quickly shifted to music, since he also worked as the curator of the jazz, funk, soul, blues and other specialty genres in the library of Western’s radio station, KUGS-FM. When he mentioned Charles Mingus, my ears perked up immediately. Frankly, I couldn’t believe this guy even knew who Mingus was. This was the first time I had met someone who liked jazz, but didn’t play it.

We began exchanging music in the form of YouTube links and long lists of recommended artists. Ryan was into the late era of jazz, where fusion and free jazz reign supreme. I had no prior interest in or knowledge of this sub-genre, but soon I was

advocating for the screaming saxophones, cosmic references and collective free improvisation of what many call “weird jazz.”

Although this seemed entirely novel to me, it was the social identity theory in action. According to a 2009 study in the “Journal of Adolescence,” individuals in music-based friendships may gain social identity and build self-esteem or feelings of belonging through taking on similar music preferences to that of their friends.

It’s that communal sense of being understood and being accepted that reinforces one’s struggle with identity, their status in life and their sense of belongingness. All human beings have this strong desire to belong.

—Joseph Trimble, Western Psychology Professor

“It’s that communal sense of being understood and being accepted that reinforces one’s struggle with identity, their status in life and their sense of belongingness,” Joseph says. “All human beings have this strong desire to belong.”

Unfortunately, I met both Nick and Ryan in their last couple of quarters at Western. I wasn’t sure these friendships would last. Even though Nick now attends California State University, we still Skype every now and then to jam over the blues. I continue to exchange music with Ryan in the form of Spotify playlists as he teaches English abroad.

Friends tend to feed off one another, sharing bits of personality traits back and forth, according to Joseph.

“There’s this bond that’s established and it’s extraordinarily deep and strong,” he says. “It goes way beyond the 46 percent that’s driven by the DNA.” 🎷



Making It Up As We Go

STORY BY: **MARINA PRICE**

PHOTOS BY: **CHRISTINA BECKER**

More than a hundred people watch Jane Mitchell open her mouth to speak. She knows they're there, but she can't see them behind the brightness of the stage lights. Before she can make a sound, the music begins, a slow, plodding number.

Her eyes dart involuntarily, first to the man at the piano, then to somewhere in the distance above the audience's heads. She has three seconds to think of what to sing.

Mitchell is a mainstage improviser at the Upfront Theatre, and for her, this is just another weekend in July. This evening she plays a disgruntled "Jacuzzis for Nerds" store employee, planning to sabotage a computer store across the street by stealing their cables.

"I really get high off the discovery of it, just figuring out where it's going," she says. "We're figuring it out together because we know that we can."

Mitchell has been on the mainstage team at the Upfront for two years. Her performance is energetic and full of charisma, even when she lowers her voice and hunches her shoulders to impersonate cranky, growly old men. She says she's drawn to improv for the adventure of it, the rush of not knowing where the

next scene will take the show. Being on stage with the Upfront team is an environment in which she feels safe to take risks.

"You're not worrying that they're not going to say anything back to you," she says. "It's that collaboration, it gets me pumped. I definitely have a boner for collaboration."

Mitchell's team is made up of 25 improvisers, all of whom have been vetted through a long-term audition process. To make the team, they must first be accepted into a preliminary group, called the satellite team, before they're ever considered for the mainstage ensemble. It can take anywhere between one to eight months.

Kris Erickson, the Upfront's artistic and education director, runs the groups and performs with the teams as often as he can. Erickson is great at imitating stereotypical musical characters, like the cranky, pompous mayor who won't allow anyone in the town to have a good time, or the shady figure on a street corner selling goods (this time, computer cords) out of his long overcoat. His characters give the performances a hilarious kind of familiarity.

Some jokes are so fast they seem almost like telepathy.

**We're figuring it out
together because
we know that we can.**

—Jane Mitchell, Upfront Improviser

When the group is about to break into the third round of a chorus about the Jacuzzi store being a “Nerd Paradise,” the group stops singing and lets Kevin Hoogerwerf step forward to roll an imaginary “nerd pair-of-dice,” a reference to the game Dungeons and Dragons. A lot of audience members have a hard time keeping it together.

The team is quick to develop any plot line a member introduces. It’s something that Jacob Foerg, another member, likes about the group.

“The people at the Upfront are really supportive, you know they’ll be there for you,” he says. “Before we go on stage, we go up to each other and just say, ‘Hey, I’ve got your back.’ It’s a nice little reminder. It’s like, ‘Whatever you do, I won’t leave you high and dry.’”

Improv is a unique art form. It relies on laughter from the audience to dictate what jokes to keep running, what kind of humor is working for a show and where the plot goes. It’s a constant, continuous feedback loop, and the course of a show all depends if the audience is into it or not.

“It’s one of the few things that works really well for people to be so different. You get all these different styles, but we’re all here trying to make this thing look really good,” he says.

The stage members aren’t up there singing alone either. Evan Ingalls provides piano accompaniment for some of the Upfront’s shows. A piano composer for 15 years, Ingalls has provided piano accompaniment for Western’s Dead Parrots Society’s musical shows, too. His role in the performances is just as crucial as any of the members on stage.

“I’m improvising too, it’s just I’m doing it through my fingers, and they’re doing it through their voices. We really play off each other,” he says. He rehearses with the team to make sure they understand traditional song structures, and to make sure he knows when to start playing.

“If they’re getting to a point in a scene and think a song needs to start, they might give me a kind of cue like, ‘Let me tell you about that,’ then I need to figure out how fast, what key, if it’s major or minor, what style, things like that,” he says.

The collective thought that goes into creating a plot, introducing characters, singing songs, keeping time and making the audience laugh are what that the Upfront improv team strives to be better at every show. It is the key element that brings a performance from good to great.

For Kevin Hoogerwerf, who joined the mainstage team in March, improv is just another art form; a means of self-expression. As a musician, a stage actor and a videographer, Hoogerwerf likes improv because it allows him to create completely outside of himself. He describes the joy he gets from improv as unlike any other feeling.

**There’s this weird feeling,
I guess I would call it groupmind, where
you jump on the stage and
you just know what to do.
You know how to connect
with your scene partners.
It just feels so good, so effortless.**

—Kevin Hoogerwerf, Upfront Improviser

“There’s this weird feeling, I guess I would call it groupmind, where you jump on the stage and you just know what to do. You know how to connect with your scene partners. It just feels so good, so effortless,” he says. “It’s what we strive for, to be on the same page.”

After one musical rehearsal in July, Foerg and Hoogerwerf walked up the hill to sit on the patio at Goat Mountain Pizza. Both were called up to the mainstage

team at the same time, and will be roommates come August.

Foerg does stage theatre, as well as composes folk music outside of his improv work. Hoogerwerf does video editing, runs a podcast called The Process with satellite team member John Lee, and writes acoustic music as well. Both are Western grads, and they support each other in their separate art forms, pitching in to help whenever they can.

Foerg summed up what it is about improv that appeals to him.

“It’s really nice to play pretend with a group of people who know how to play pretend really, really well. And then you get good enough at playing pretend that people want to come pay money to watch,” he says. “That’s never stopped being fun for me.”

The final number of the “Nerd Paradise” show ends with the whole team on stage, singing together. The Jacuzzi and computer stores have come to a truce. The team ends the song, holds hands, and finally, takes a bow. 🍷

Previous page: The walls of The Upfront Theatre’s green room are covered in doodles and signatures by the various performers who have graced its stage.

Across top: Megan Galley (left) and Peter Day (right) improvise together.

Across middle left: Jacob Foerg (left) and Yonk Reinemer (right) act out a scene about deserts, Harry Potter and mermaids at The Upfront Theatre.

Across middle right: When they aren’t performing, stage members watch the scenes and cheer each other on.

Across bottom: Before the show, performers warm up together by playing games and goofing around.



On the Road Again

How family relocation altered the lives of three women

Alison Wood likes grape-flavored things. She likes grape-flavored candy and grape-flavored juice. She prefers grape-flavored medicine. She even had purple streaks in her hair for a while. So when she moved from Renton, Washington to London, England to find no grape-flavored foods on the shelves, she was shocked. "It was the most ridiculous thing, there are no grape-flavored things! I was really, truly missing it," she says. Her aunt and uncle ended up mailing her a care package from the United States filled with every grape-flavored candy they could find.

Alison, a recent Western grad, moved to London for her senior year of high school. Her mother accepted a teaching job in the summer of 2011 at the American Community School in Hillingdon, a neighborhood just north of London. It's a private school, but Wood was able to attend for free. She was excited about the move. "I wanted to be that kid with the awesome accent," she laughs. "I was like, 'This is going to be great!'"

According to the United States Bureau of Labor, 13 million American kids move every year, whether that be across the street or across the globe. Those kids are thrust into new social environments where they need to learn to make new friends.

whether that be across the street or across the globe. Those kids are thrust into new social environments where they need to learn to make new friends.

For some kids, like Alison, making friends comes easy. Alison is bubbly and cheerful, quick to hug new friends and introduce herself to strangers.

For others, like recent Pacific Lutheran University graduate Carina Waite, it was a little harder. By the time she started the ninth grade, she had already moved schools 11 times, having lived in Washington, Kentucky, California, Alaska and Kansas. A self-described introvert, Carina was born on what is now Joint Base Lewis-McChord to an Army family, and had a hard time making friends due to moving so often. "It took a couple weeks to really get the school dynamic and figure out who I was probably going to be spending most of my time with," she says. "I think my social skills suffered. I moved too often to really make good friendships. I was pretty nervous and shy."

Carina is not alone. According to research published by the American Psychological Association, children who are relocated frequently are more likely to have less substantial social relationships, even as adults.



13 million
American kids move every year.



Children who are relocated frequently are more likely to have less substantial social relationships, even as adults.

Source: United States Bureau of Labor, American Psychological Association



*The only way you'll grow is if
you go out of your comfort zone.*

—Cori Schleich

Fortunately, after her dad retired from the army, Carina and her family moved to Orting, Washington, where she was able to finally meet people and make connections when she tried out for the volleyball team at her high school. She eventually moved to the management side of the team. “That’s how I met all my friends — we were on the same team. Then all throughout high school we were in band together, we went to Disneyland together, we were in the same classes and did the same activities,” she says. “That’s really how we bonded.”

Moving is very much a reality for American children. More and more resources are becoming available on how to ease the transitions and make sure that moving helps children develop more, rather than hinder it. Not all children react the same way when the prospect of moving is presented to them. For example, in 2011, Alison’s mother was the runner-up winner of a Fulbright scholarship to study at Dublin University, but lost out in the final round. Both were crestfallen — they were looking forward to going abroad. This led Alison to encourage her mother to pursue a teaching job overseas anyway, which she did. Alison made a distinct effort to move abroad. She was excited to meet new people from new places.

But for Western alumna Cori Schleich, this was not the case.

“I was super upset and threw a mega tantrum,” she says. Cori was 11 years old when she found out her family was moving to Athens, Greece. “I believe I might have thrown a shoe or two at my parents,” she laughs.

Cori grew up in Wasilla, Alaska. If you asked her what she wanted to be when she grew up 16 years ago, she would have told you she wanted to open up a bed and breakfast, to show the world how great her small town was. Her parents broke the news to her and her sister that they would be moving to Athens one night in January, after they had come home from an International Job Fair.

“To this day, I still apologize to my parents for how awful I was during the time I was there,” she says. Now that she’s older, she says that the experience was one of the best things that has happened to her. “Being forced to meet new people and see new places and try new things and just really be uncomfortable has taught me to look for more experiences like that. The only way you’ll grow is if you go out of your comfort zone.”



BANKING ON FOOD

STORY BY: **REBEKAH WAY**
PHOTOS BY: **DAISEY JAMES**

Balancing two cartons of eggs in his arm, a volunteer approaches a family and asks if they'd like eggs this week. He smiles, carefully places them into the cardboard box and returns to the fridge to grab two more cartons.

The Bellingham Food Bank resembles a small corner market. Bins of fresh produce stand in the middle of the room, surrounded by shelves of baked goods, bins of bulk grains and beans, and refrigerators full of dairy and frozen protein. The new facility was completed in 2008.

"When we survey people, they say they want what most of us buy when we go to the grocery store, which is more perishable food than nonperishable food," says Mike Cohen, executive director of the Bellingham Food Bank.

Realizing the high demand for fresh produce, the food bank began purchasing wholesale produce from a dozen local farms, including Cedarville, Cloud Mountain and Terra Verde farms. These

partnerships will supply the food bank with nearly 100,000 pounds of local produce this year and ensure that visitors leave with over \$100 worth of food each time they visit.

Fifty-five percent of the people who use food assistance programs across the nation identified fresh fruits and vegetables as one of the most desired foods they are unable to access, according to Hunger in America's report on charitable food distribution in the United States.

The Bellingham Food Bank developed a new system to avoid running out of food too quickly. When a visitor enters, they show a piece of mail with a Bellingham address and receive a colored card denoting the quantity of food they can take from each area. Drew Butler, operations manager for the Bellingham Food Bank,

timed the average visit for a visitor and found this method is about 20 minutes faster than the old method.

"We want people to be able to go about their day and not have [visiting the food bank] be a whole event," Butler says.

Volunteers and staff are behind every aspect of the food bank's programs. It staffs nine people and 150 to 200 volunteers, who sort donated food and prepare the main floor for distribution to ensure it runs smoothly.

"They really are the spirit of our food bank, and keep staff motivated and focused," Cohen says. "They give us good feedback on what we're doing well, and not well, from the food end, since a lot of them are customers as well as volunteers."

We want people to be able to go about their day and not have visiting the food bank be a whole event.

—Drew Butler,
Bellingham Food Bank Operations Manager

Above: Onions and many other fruits and vegetables can be found in boxes around the serving floor of the food bank.
Left top: The food bank, in its new location, is a large, open space designed to serve the needs of the community.
Left bottom: Apples can be found at the food bank.

When Wenty Hill moved to Bellingham 10 years ago, she felt that something was missing. She heard about the Bellingham Food Bank from her friend and signed up to volunteer that week and has been there for two years now.

Hill's favorite part about working the distribution floor is her interactions with clients, especially when she is able to assist them.

"For the first year, I had a lot of trouble sleeping the night before [a shift] because I was so darn excited," she says.

She describes the food bank staff as very close and courteous, often checking in with people and offering support wherever it is needed.

To Hill, of all the nonprofits she could work with in Bellingham she feels the food bank makes the biggest difference.

"The fact that that service is there to make sure people are taken care of is critical to the community of Bellingham," she says.

Most interactions with the food bank are through food drives, where people can donate nonperishables. Cohen wanted to challenge this image by establishing new programs to introduce the community to the new food bank by showing them the food bank loves produce and can't get enough of it.

"It allowed us to really talk to the community and do some education around some stereotypes that were no longer true about who's going to the food bank and what does a food bank want and need,"

Cohen says.

People with home gardens can donate their extra vegetables to the food bank through the Victory Gardens program, a project that has been maturing for the last seven years to create a direct link between the food bank and community.



It's allowed us to really talk to the community and do some education around some stereotypes that were no longer true about who's going to the food bank and what a food bank want and need.


—Mike Cohen,
Bellingham Food Bank Executive Director

"It feels like this is the way the average person can give back – by giving a part of their growth and part of their harvest to help the homeless and help people who are hungry and could use support," Hill says.

According to Hunger in America's report, the demand for food assistance was at a historical high during the most

recent assessment from 2012 to 2013. Rates of unemployment, poverty and food insecurity have remained high since the Great Recession of 2008, according to the report. Agencies assisted by the nonprofit organization Feeding America had 46.5 million visits in 2013, an increase of about 26 percent since 2010.

"Now we're seeing more and more folks that need that support," Cohen says. "More of our customers than ever before have at least one person in the house that's working, often a full-time job, but it's just not enough to cover the costs of living here in Bellingham."

Approximately 20 percent of the residents of Bellingham will visit the food bank at least once, Cohen says. The Bellingham Food Bank experienced an increase in the number of visitors seeking food assistance after the recession as well. Eight years later, those numbers have yet to fall. 





MORE THAN MAN'S BEST FRIEND

STORY BY: **SARAH MIKKELBORG**

PHOTOS BY: **DAISEY JAMES**

A big stocky black lab, with fur still wet from playing in a nearby stream, flops into the grass and kicks his legs in anticipation of a belly rub. As his owner obliges him, they both grin. At moments like these, the only thing to set Maverick apart from other pets is the red medical tag on his collar.

Other times, his vest makes his role clearer.

Maverick is a service dog, trained by Brigadoon Service Dogs in Bellingham to help veterans who live with post-traumatic stress disorder.

Enter David Heathers, a former Marine whose service history includes two combat tours in Iraq.

After his time in the military, he was diagnosed with PTSD – experiencing anxiety, paranoia, sleep loss and more.

“I’d been struggling for quite a while,” he says.

“I had a pretty bad spell with drinking and just a bunch of other stuff. I was completely anti-social,

It took a little while for me and Maverick to click but once we did, it became an instant bond.

—David Heathers, former Marine

just didn’t want to be around people at all. It ruined relationships, friendships,” he says. “Then Maverick came into my life. And I would say within a few months, I really started to notice changes. My family and friends definitely noticed changes in me.”

Heathers first contacted Brigadoon after his mother learned about the nonprofit from local news coverage and encouraged him to reach out. He did, and though he says he didn’t expect much to come of it, founder and program director Denise Costanten called him within several weeks to start conversations about himself and what he might be looking for.

Heathers and the Brigadoon staff began working

more closely when he moved from the Seattle area to Whatcom County. They instructed him in how to handle a service dog and Costanten acted as a matchmaker, introducing him to a small string of dogs and watching to see how they clicked.

After about a month, Maverick was the next candidate.

"It took a little while for me and Maverick to click but once we did, it became an instant bond," Heathers says. "He and I still are just the best of friends."

One of the first nights Maverick stayed with Heathers, he shot awake from a nightmare — a common aspect of PTSD that can limit people, like Heathers, to only a few hours of sleep a night, sometimes for months on end.

"Maverick was sleeping at the foot of my bed. He jumped up, came over and put his head on my chest, and I laid back down," Heathers remembers. "That morning, Maverick was still just lying there. He was awake, too. Sitting there, looking right at me, letting me know: 'I'm here for you, so don't worry about it. That was the moment I realized he was going to be my dog.'"

Maverick's main role takes place in social situations, as a soothing presence and to help reduce the attention placed on Heathers. Paranoia from PTSD can make him feel that people are staring at him, he explains, and Maverick tends to draw away all that discomforting attention.

He also creates a comfortable space for Heathers by standing as a "post" behind him in lines or crowded areas, preventing people from getting too close while unseen.

That behavior, along with "watch my back," where the dog

stands at the owners' side and faces behind them, are two of the most commonly used by veterans with PTSD dogs, Costanten explains.

"For a long time, I was a shut-in. Only left [home] when I really needed to," Heathers says. "Having him there with me all the time just helps me."

Heathers credits Maverick with helping him be able to socialize again and return to college. He recently graduated from a veterinary assistant certificate program.

Going back to the school environment and its tight quarters was hectic, he recalls, but Maverick would stay at his feet, pressed up against him. As time passed and Heathers grew more relaxed, Maverick started napping during classes.

"I remember one time we were taking a test — a final for math — and all of a sudden you just hear this snoring. You see the teacher get up and she's walking the aisles, trying to figure out who's sleeping and she noticed, 'Oh, it's just Maverick.'"

Maverick embodies the calm nature sought after in service dogs.

"Maverick is just about the most laid back dog I've ever seen. Really nothing bothers him very much and he's very quiet," Heathers says.

He recounts that in the nearly four years they have been together, he has only heard Maverick bark about six times — each occasion alerting Heathers to a danger he couldn't see.

That calm, unshakable nature, along with a willingness to work and his attentiveness to Heathers are the traits that make him a successful service dog.

"We're asking these dogs to not be dogs," Costanten says, explaining that a good service dog will always behave and focus on their handler, not be excitable and distracted as a pet might.

But Maverick's not just a working animal, either.

"When he has his vest on, he knows he's working," Heathers says. "When I take his vest off, he's like a regular dog. I try to let him be a regular dog as much as possible."

That is the Maverick that rolls in the grass on a warm day, reveling in Heathers' affectionate scratches and rubs. Even when he appears to be a normal pet, the particular relationship the pair shares ensures that Maverick is always watching out for Heathers.

And, Heathers adds, the fact that he visits a public park to play with his dog on warm day when others are bound to be out is, in itself, a sign that Maverick is doing his job.



Across: Despite not feeling an immediate bond, David Heathers and Maverick are now inseparable.
Left: Maverick enjoys a long belly rub after a fun afternoon of play.
Next page: Happiness can be seen on Maverick's face as he and Heathers play.

ABOUT BRIGADOON

Brigadoon Service Dogs is a nonprofit organization in Bellingham that trains and provides dogs for adults and children with a range of physical, developmental and behavioral disabilities. The name Brigadoon, founder Denise Costanten explains, is borrowed from her first international show dog — whose son became the first service dog to graduate the school — and from a fictional Scottish village that appears once every hundred years and where a couple falls in love.

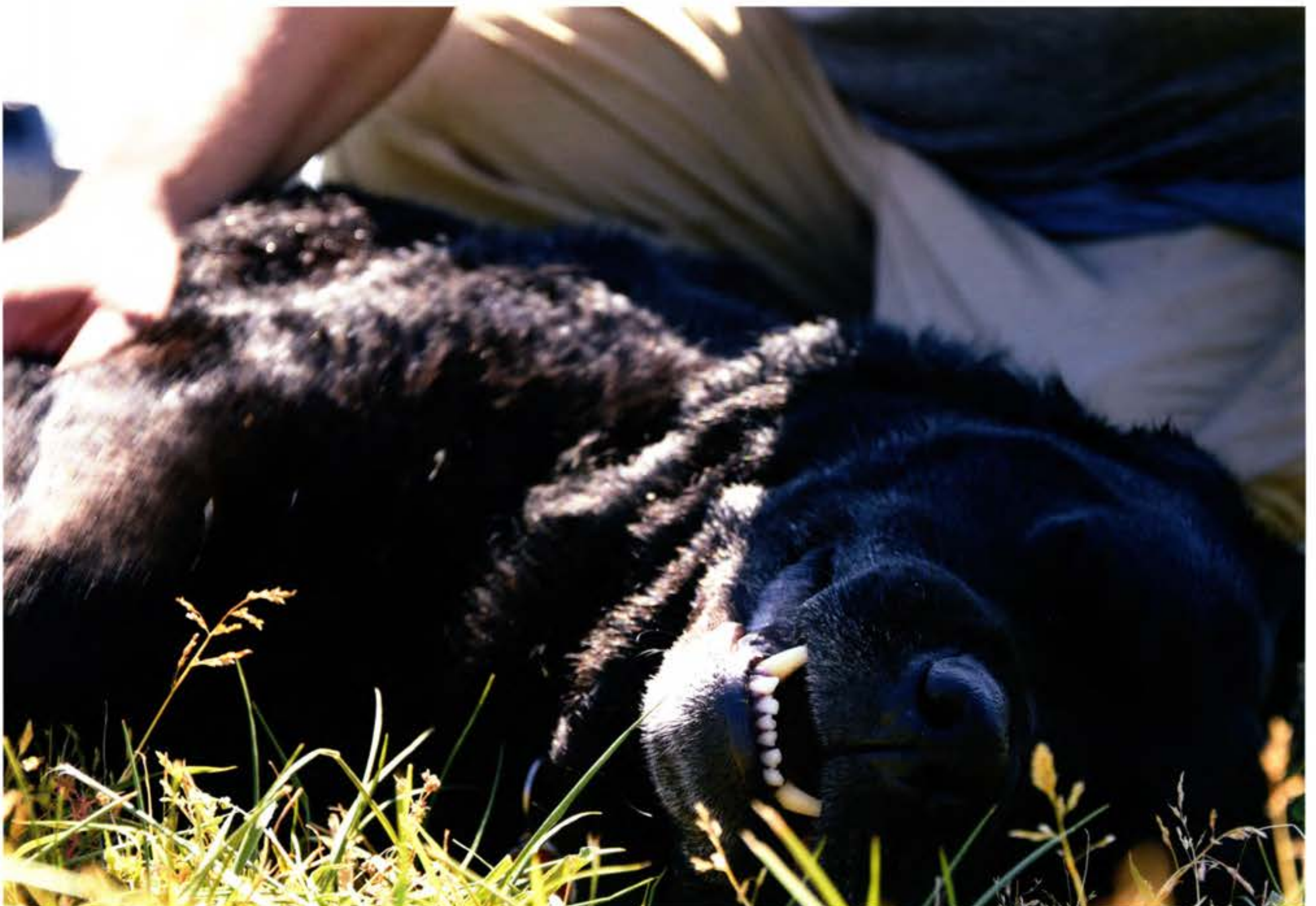
“We provide magic to people with disabilities by giving them a service dog that is well trained, which changes their lives — gives them independence and enhances their life,” Costanten says. As of mid-2016, Brigadoon has provided 65 dogs. “That’s a lot of people that got their independence back, and some families,” she says, with a satisfied laugh.

All the dogs learn basic skills, like retrieving items a person might drop or have difficulty reaching, as well as skills specific to a condition. For example, Brigadoon has trained dogs to assist owners with hearing impairments, alert diabetes

patients when their blood sugar drops, and help brace people who have difficulty with balance or walking.

In one case, the staff trained a dog to find a girl with autism, who had a tendency to wander away from her family. “Ever since she got that dog, she’s never left the dog’s side,” Costanten smiled. “And now the whole family goes wherever they want to go. They’ve gone skiing, they go to Mariners games, sailing, on picnics. Anywhere they want to go, they go because of the dog.”

Aside from training for a wide variety of conditions, Costanten says Brigadoon also stands apart in the variety of dogs it trains, including small and hypoallergenic breeds. The dogs taken into the program must be willing to work, like people and get along with other animals. Some are bred to be service dogs, while others come from a variety of sources including shelters and people who donate puppies from large or unexpected litters. Raising a puppy and putting it through the program takes about two years and costs \$40,000, Costanten estimates. Dogs are provided at no cost to veterans and reduced cost to other clients. ☒



Domesticated



STORY BY: **TYLER BEAIRSTO**
PHOTOS BY: **DAISEY JAMES**

“Our first date? Well in November of our Freshman year, we went to a party together – like I asked her to come with m—”

“No way!” his girlfriend interjected, “that was definitely just a hookup.”

The couple burst into a simultaneous giggle, and Zoe wrapped one arm around the waist of her now long-term boyfriend Ashwin.

Being in a relationship has its many pros and cons, and many students learn to build their own list, prioritizing their lives usually based on personal experiences or social norms. Nowadays, it is becoming counter-culture to pursue long-term relationships while studying at college – and the idea of marriage seems to be the last on most students’ priority lists.

Western is no different. The vast majority of students remain unmarried as they work towards the academic and career goals many had made in their youth. However, some Western students choose a more domesticated lifestyle, opting to pursue either marriage or more serious, long-term relationships. Some students even choose both – opening up their marriages to polyamory.





After being together for 12 years, Western student Aaron Kirschenmann and his partner Christopher Reeves married three years ago.

"I guess the best part about my life is this constant support. I get to come home to stability and my husband – it's pretty nice," he says with a smile.

Aaron wouldn't be considered a traditional student, in the sense that he didn't come to Western to finish his undergraduate education until age 34.

"Being married while going to school has just made everything easier. Working towards your undergrad degree is hard enough without a support system and now I have a permanent one – what else could I want?" Aaron claims.

The Pew Research Center reported that in 2014, only 50 percent of adults over the age of 18 in the United States were married – a 24 percent drop from 1960. Not only are fewer people choosing to legally marry, but the average age for marriage has gone up drastically in the past few years as well – with the average age for women now being 27 and 29 for men.

In September 2015, just over a year and a half into their

Being married while going to school has just made everything easier. Working towards your undergrad degree is hard enough without a support system and now I have a permanent one - what else could I want?

—Aaron Kirschenmann, married student

relationship, Ashwin and his girlfriend Zoe moved into a one-bedroom apartment together. After meeting in the Fairhaven dorms their freshman year, the two became friends and after almost 6 months, decided to pursue an exclusive relationship. Although they are choosing to devote so much time together and even share such living space, neither Ashwin nor Zoe would even consider marriage at this point.

Many students casually date while going to school, taking advantage of the ease of meeting people through nuanced dating apps like Grindr and Tinder; however, marriage for undergraduate students still hasn't caught on.

"I don't want marriage to just be the next logical step," Ashwin says, explaining how he does not want to just get married because he feels obligated. "If we still are together and it's the right time, and we have enough money, then who knows." He let his words fall out of his mouth, a heavy sigh taking over and his voice trailing off.

After having been together for 12 years, marriage being a logical step was enough for Aaron and Chris.

Ashwin and Zoe both, too, want to be married at some point, but choose to not put too much pressure on their relationship with such a serious commitment such as marriage.

"I don't really think it will make a difference for us right now," Zoe says – her voice wavering slightly.

"Both our parents married young and now both are divorced so we were left in this role where we think maybe it's best if we wait," Zoe explains. "I actually know people our age who have already been married and divorced; and I just don't think I am ready for that yet."

As she spoke, her eyes fell and head turned – it was the only time she stopped looking at her significant other. The happy couple became two young, independent kids afraid of the consequences of divorce and not ready to move on.

Aaron is also a child of divorce, although it affected him in very different ways. "Yes it was hard – especially hard, but I guess I don't see myself as the same person my parents were or are," Aaron says. "I was afraid, a little, but not enough to make a difference."

As the two sat across from each at the table, laughing and reminiscing, they seemed prepared to take on the world together. The two laughed together as they recalled especially important relationship milestones, reminiscing about how they first met, their first date, how nervous they both were. Both Ashwin and Zoe grew empathetically quiet in the same moments. Marriage is daunting to Ashwin and Zoe at this point. Neither are ready or willing to get married after experiencing the unsuccessful marriages of their own parents because of the fear of what could happen to them.

Recent Western graduate, Becky, however, found a different way to balance a young marriage with the daunting fear of growing up and growing apart.

"When we were married, my husband and I were each other's first everything – we didn't have the chance to explore dating while in college or just in general. So about three years ago, we decided to explore being open and then polyamory came shortly after that," Becky says, describing how she found herself with both a husband and a boyfriend at 31 years old. She had also discovered, shortly after marriage, that she was bisexual, so opening up their relationship helped her explore that aspect of her identity, as well.

Despite being polyamorous, Becky still finds that being married makes some social aspects of college easier. "I don't have to think about younger people liking me; I don't have to worry about going out to party. There are not a lot of the same peer pressures that other students have."

Both Becky and Aaron agree, however, that being married and in school at a more traditional age would have complicated things much more.

Becky and her husband were both attending a Mormon institution, sharing the faith, when they married. She says that many of her peers were getting

married as well, making it easy to fit the mold, which is not the case here at Western.

"Western is geared towards those 18- to-24-year-old unmarried students and that's just not me," says Becky as her voice drops and laughter fades. Fitting in can be hard enough but as a married, nontraditional student, bridging that gap between a healthy marriage and healthy college social life proves even more difficult. "Feeling connected to the university is probably the hardest thing."

Aaron is reminded of one of the biggest benefits being a nontraditional, married student has to offer for him – his husband Chris works full time. With his husband working, it takes the financial burden of paying for tuition and living expenses while juggling the stress of schoolwork off of Aaron and allows for him to focus almost all of his energy into his studies.

Although marriage and college don't usually fall hand-in-hand, some Western students find themselves balancing a school life with the life of a more domesticated adult. As pursuing a long-term oriented relationship provides its many challenges, these students focus on the positives and find that their marriages and long-term relationships really benefit their undergraduate studies. ■

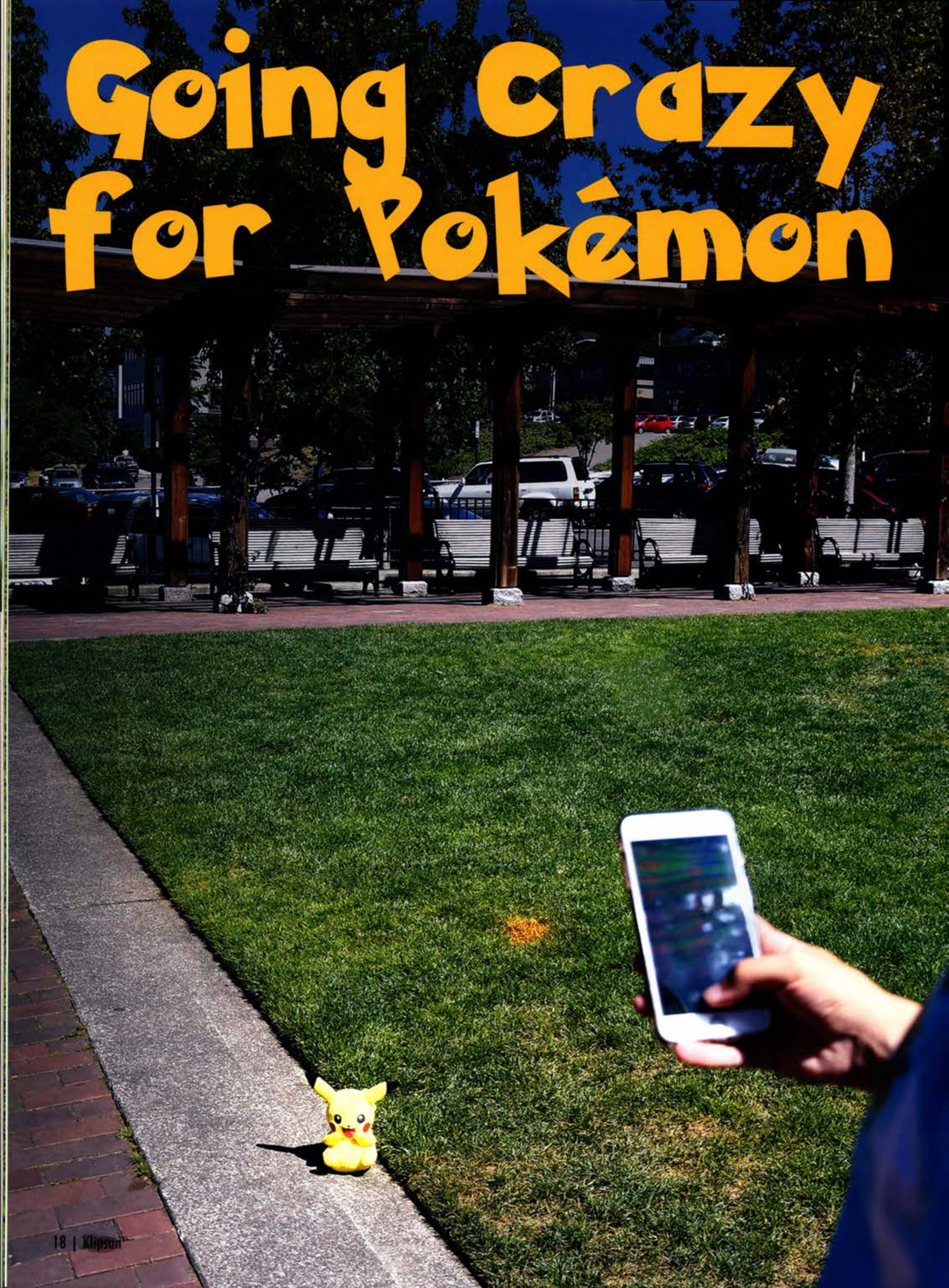
I don't have to think about younger people liking me; I don't have to worry about going out to party. There are not a lot of the same peer pressures that other students have.

—Becky, married student



Previous page top: An eager man proposes to his hesitant girlfriend in this photo illustration.
Previous page bottom: While most Western students are single, some opt to get engaged and even married before or while attending school.
Left: Becky kisses her new husband during her reception. Photo courtesy of Becky.
Right: Illustration by Natalie Wilhelm.

Going Crazy for Pokémon





Bringing people together one Pokeball at a time

STORY BY: **KIERAN BOYLE**

PHOTOS BY: **DAISEY JAMES AND CHRISTINA BECKER**

Boulevard Park bustles with activity on a brisk summer night, people walking up and down the boardwalk, murmuring to their friends as they stare at the device between their hands, the soft glow of the phones reflecting on their faces with the intermittent flicking and swiping of the touch screen.

"Golduck over here!" a loud voice pierced through the previously quiet park..

The aimless walking of park-goers quickly turned to sprinting. A horde of people had amassed together outside of the Woods Coffee with emotions aplenty. Screams of "Got it!" and "Damn, it got away!" quickly filled the growing crowd. As the expletives died down, the people remain, sharing their stories of glory in "Pokemon Go".

While the creatures may be fake, the sense of exploration and community is more than real for a lot of players.

"Pokemon Go" has ushered in an era of catching the digital monsters to new and old fans alike. The smartphone app became the top grossing app in just a mere five hours after launching and has been downloaded over 100 million times. "Pokemon Go" is a game that uses your GPS location to represent your trainer. From there you have to go outside and catch Pokemon as they appear on the map as you near them. The game overlays the Pokemon on your phone's camera to represent it in the real world.

"Pokemon Go" uses the GPS function of a given mobile device. Using that information, an avatar created by the user is represented on a map. Also present on the map are local landmarks such as trailheads and sculptures, which take the form of PokeStops. PokeStops dispense items that are essential to the game, as well as serving as a gathering spot for other trainers. Unlike its predecessors, the core functions of the game are more geared toward player interaction.

A player may activate a lure on any PokeStop to attract Pokemon to that area. Players that go near the PokeStop can reap the benefits of the lure. Not only do they attract Pokemon, they attract people. Players will sit around the lure and converse with the other players as they catch Pokemon. For some players the game has brought them new friends and a sense of community.

Left: A "Pokemon Go" player "catches" the beloved Pikachu in "real life," in this photo illustration.



After a long day of delivering pizzas, Michael Chodykin heads straight to Boulevard Park. Equipped with three spare phone batteries he begins his circuit up and down the park. Some of the people he passes by recognize him; going to Boulevard Park and playing has become a daily ritual for him.

"People were making jokes that I was becoming a local celebrity. I don't know if I would say that necessarily," Michael says with a chuckle, "I get recognized by people I don't know every day, whether it be four in the morning or four in the afternoon."

Michael considers himself to be a hardcore gamer and has been playing games competitively since he was a kid, "Pokemon Go" is no exception. He spends multiple hours a day catching Pokemon and gaining experience points to level up his character. Through hours and hours of work he is now a level 28 player and has no intention of slowing down. A community has formed around the higher-level players and has led to unexpected friendships.

I have seen a ton of people who say they have social anxiety or depression, or are more introverted. But they're out making friends and that's really incredible for a lot of people to get that healing element from a video game.

—Michael Chodykin, "Pokemon Go" player

"I've made a lot of friends. My friend Isaac worked next door to me for two years and he is probably one of my closest friends in Bellingham now. We didn't know each other until we started playing," Michael says.

Michael does more than just play the game. He has become an integral part of the "Pokemon Go" community in Bellingham. He has organized groups on Facebook to meet up and walk around local hot spots. During one of the first groups he organized, he already had 40 people following him around and conversing while catching Pokemon.

"The event is less important than the social community. The community is what has bonded the people and that is what has made me want to continue to play," Michael says.

Michael had never felt like he identified with a community in Bellingham. He has tentative ties with the music community but the bond has its limitations. Now that he is seeing all these "Pokemon Go" players in the park, however, he's working on forming his own community.

Celia Major, another “Pokemon Go” player, discovered a different way to find community.

Celia started playing when her friend was visiting and together they downloaded the app and wandered around Seattle. They eventually ended up at Cal Anderson Park in Capitol Hill with hundreds of other players running around capturing Pokemon.

Celia says, “I started going more often, then I became a regular and then I joined a facebook group for Cal Anderson players.”

Since she does not drive, she has been branching out to new parts of the area and even makes Bellevue a regular location to catch Pokemon. Going forward she

It's got me moving a lot more than usual. When I am at the mall, instead of sitting in the food court, I am walking around to every store to see if there are Pokemon.

—Kelli Daller, “Pokemon Go” player

has begun attending organized events and has begun meeting new people.

“This game is literally making me go to another city!” Celia exclaims.

Even laid back and casual players are finding the game to be changing their life in a small way.

“It has gotten me moving a lot more than usual,” Western student Kelli Daller says. “When I am at the mall instead of sitting in the food court, I am walking around to every store to see if there are Pokemon.”

Local businesses aren’t immune from the “Pokemon Go” phenomenon. Some businesses and restaurants are PokeStops, which has been a huge draw for crowds. Places like the Horseshoe Cafe will even offer a discount to players who activate a lure on their PokeStop.

Entrepreneurs have found a market and taken it upon themselves to profit off of “Pokemon Go.” Drivers post their ad online and offer to drive people around town to catch Pokemon, phone chargers included.

As time has passed, however, the population of Pokemon players has decreased dramatically. A lot less people are wandering aimlessly in parks staring at their phones. Both Michael and Celia are confident that the community will never truly disappear.

“I have seen a ton of people who say they have social anxiety or depression, or are more introverted. But they’re out making friends and that’s really incredible for a lot of people to get that healing element from a video game,” Michael says. “I think that is the most important reason, and I think that’s what will make it last if they can keep that community surrounding it.”

“Pokemon Go” is still in its early stages filled with server errors and glitches, but the community remains consistent throughout. It is bringing together people and getting them active. Whether it is nostalgia, love of the outdoors or the human connection, a lot of people won’t stop till they catch ‘em all. 📌

Left: A “Pokemon Go” player holds a Pokeball, a device used to catch and store Pokemon in the games.
Top right: Screenshot of the map for “Pokemon Go.” The map uses the players location and shows where PokeStops, gyms and Pokemon are.

Middle right: Screenshot of a local Pokestop. Items such as revives, potions and Pokeballs can be found at stops like this.

Bottom right: When the augmented reality (AR) is turned on, virtual Pokemon appear to be in real life locations.





The Heart of a Champion

How a group of strangers compete for a championship and find friends along the way.

STORY BY: **LYNSEY AMUNDSON**

PHOTOS BY: **DAISEY JAMES**

Ashley Homer's eyes squint at the sudden glare of the sun as she wakes up from her usual pre-game nap. The only sound she can comprehend is the roaring of the bus engine that she's riding on. She puts on headphones, choosing her favorite Nelly song, "The Heart of Champion." Her mind is clear and her body relaxes as the presence of her teammates comforts her.

Those women, like most successful sports teams, consider their teammates family.

The sound of laughter fills the air as the women, dancing and chatting with each other, step off the bus. Walking on to the field, Ashley's calm gives way to butterflies and nerves. She puts on her left glove, tightens the strap, and then does the same with the right.

Stepping off the goal line, she takes a deep breath in and says a prayer. The whistle shrieks.

It's game time.

"I know that when I look to the girl next to me she'll have my back no matter what. I know she'll go to battle for me and that's a special feeling. You can't say that about many people," Ashley says.

Ashley has been playing sports for 15 years, from basketball to volleyball to softball. But it's soccer that has captivated her heart.

I know that when I look to the girl next to me
she'll have my back no matter what.
I know she'll go to battle for me
and that's a special feeling.

—Ashley Homer, Western Women's Soccer Team Goalkeeper

"Whether you're angry, excited, anxious, stressed, energetic, sad... Soccer is an outlet for it all," Ashley says. "I joined the team from my school in New York, and the team instantly welcomed me."

This past year the Western women's soccer team made it to the Final Four of the NCAA Division II national championship. That success is based on the cohesiveness of their team. This means each woman knows the role they play on the team, will always put the team before her individual needs and will do anything in their power to make the team better.

"In order for a team to be successful, you need teammates willing to put in extra work outside of practice, willing to help out a teammate when they need it and willing to sacrifice their time to make the team better," Homer says. To be successful, a team puts hours of work in both on and off the field, working on skills they need to perfect.

Shayna Adelstein, a Western softball player, says that bonding is what makes or breaks a team.

Above: Members of Western Women's Soccer team celebrate after a goal is scored to put the team up 3-1 in the Division II Quarterfinal match.

"It is not something that a team just has. It takes hours, and plenty of work for a team to become one. The individual skills of each player won't matter if your team can't work together."

When a team is able to create that bond, it transfers directly on the field. Where one player falls, another player will step up. Not every team can come together and unite as one, and play for something bigger than themselves. However, it is something that every team works to achieve.

"Being selfless, having your teammate's back, confronting your teammate when you have a problem with them, being reliable and never assuming something or judging your teammate are great starting qualities to a successful team," Shayna says.

Sports have taught Ashley how to time manage her life and push herself. It taught her how to be social. It has given her 28 sisters.

According to the Western Athletics page, about 300 students competed in the 15 varsity sports offered at Western during the 2015-2016 school year. Only about 6 percent of athletes from high school make it to play in NCAA, making these 300 athletes part of an elite group.

"It takes a dedicated person to become a student athlete in college," Shayna says. "You have to be able to manage three hour practices every day, 6 a.m. weightlifting twice a week, a full schedule of school, homework, team bonding, community outreach and balancing your social and family life."

At the end of the day, their time with the team will come to

Honestly, I probably won't remember every save I made in my career or every big game our team won, but I will remember the times I spent with my teammates laughing and making memories off the soccer field.

—Ashley Homer, Western Women's Soccer Team Goalkeeper



an end. It doesn't mean that their time as a family will, however.

"Honestly, I probably won't remember every save I made in my career or every big game our team won, but I will remember the times I spent with my teammates laughing and making memories off the soccer field," Ashley says.

Stepping back on the bus, after a 1-0 win over Central Washington University, every player is beaming. They begin reminiscing over the game-winning goal by Gabriela Pelogi, who had a short break away before driving the ball into the back of the net. As they head back to Bellingham satisfaction, pride and exhaustion are the results of a hard fought win. But, for Ashley, this feeling only lasts for a moment. Her thoughts begin to shift towards the future, as she begins to visualize the successes they'll need to execute in order to win their next match. ☒

Right: Anna DeWeirdt passes the ball to a teammate to assist in a shot on goal.

Below: Gabriela Pelogi celebrates after the team wins to move onto the NCAA Division II semifinals.





STORY BY: **LYNSEY AMUNDSON**
ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY: **DAISEY JAMES**
PHOTOS BY: **DAISEY JAMES**

Fueling Friendships





Like a Family

The roaring car engines fill the field with the intoxicating smell of gasoline. The classics, the specialties, the customs, the moderns, the rares; from pink to turquoise and from red to black, are all lined in perfect rows. Cheerful faces and friendly voices of people begin introducing each other, before they get lost in conversation through the world of cars.

“Car people are a different group, a different breed,” Terry DePasquale, President of the Whatcom County Cruiser Association and member of the Elites, the car club in Whatcom County, says. “Everybody knows everybody, and it is like a big family. We get together and chit-chat for hours.”

**Car people are a different group,
a different breed. Everybody knows everybody,
and it is like a big family.**

—Terry DePasquale, President of the Whatcom County Cruisers Association

The Firecracker Rod Run car show in Ferndale was put on by the Whatcom Cruiser Association in July. The club started up 31 years ago by a group of people who shared their love for cars.

What began as a three-day show has since been cut to a one-day show, with pre-registration, camping and a chili feed the night before. The Cruisers now put on three shows a year. Typically 60-90 cars drive in for the show, but Terry recalls having 190 cars show up once.

“Everyone has respect for their cars. Some have even put anywhere from \$20,000 to over \$100,000 into their cars,” Brent Hoelzle, president of the Elites. Many of the cars need constant attention in order to be show ready.

Clayton George, a member of the Elites for 25 years now, says his love for cars blossomed when he bought his first car, a 1934 Ford, at the age of 13. Although his mom wouldn’t let him take the car out of the garage until he was 16, he burned through gallons of gas revving the engine in the garage.

Today, Clayton owns 18 cars, including 12 mustangs and two police cars. “I only buy cars that are exceptional,” he says. He keeps his collection of cars in a garage downtown, where he tends to them like it is his job.

Due to this extensive car collection Clayton was asked to join the club by his friends who were already in the club, and has been a part of the shows ever since.

The Elites are a great social club, Clayton says. “I’ve made lots of friends that slowly have become like family. So, you’ve got a nice, large family with all your friends, like you’re going to a birthday party,” he adds with a smile. “It’s a nice, big celebration, and it happens every weekend.”

They get together every weekend for different car shows, events, or even to just have lunch. “We all know each other. We’ll go to Ferndale and sit down in a restaurant and see someone we know from the club.”

Not only do the clubs provide a social environment, they also provide helping hands when needed. “If someone needs car help, they’re there for you. It’s all about the betterment of the club,” Clayton says.

The club, now with around 70 members, has meetings on every other Monday at the Bellingham Elks Club and different fundraising events outside of the meetings.

Left: A glimpse inside a 1964-1/2 Ford Mustang, the first model of the mighty Mustang that is seen on the road today.

Right top: A group of car show attendees scope out a Dodge engine.

Right bottom: The old and the new come together as a first generation Chevrolet Camaro SS sits alongside a sixth generation.

A New Direction


People both young and old who find passion for cars are important to keep the club and shows running. "As president, I'd like to see the club grow a little bigger and get some new members, especially younger ones. Most of our fellows are 50 or older," Terry says.

According to the March 2014 issue of *Car and Driver*, roughly 5 million collector cars are owned by people around the U.S. Fifty-eight percent of these cars are owned by those born between 1946 through 1964, with the median age being 56 years. With collector cars being popular among the older generation, they are hoping that the millennials will continue to care about cars. According to *Car and Driver*, since the collector-car market is surging right now, the cars are cheaper than they have ever been before.

"Nowadays, kids don't go in for the older cars like we did. They're growing up in a whole new culture," Terry says. "In our day we built our cars from scratch. Now they buy them and plug them into a computer if they want to change this or that. I'm just scared the love for collector cars will go away and never come back."

The shows are huge events open to the public, where the Elites and Cruisers, try and recruit more people who might be interested in joining. They work together to grow the community of car lovers, as many of the people involved are members of both clubs.

"We take pride in what we have. Everyone is always open to listening to different people on what they do to their cars, so they can take all that information and are constantly learning," Terry says. "If you have a problem and can't figure it out, most likely someone else has had the same problem and they will always give you ideas on how to fix it. You can trust them to never lead you down the wrong path."

The time spent working, the passion, and the dedication to classic cars brings together a unique community of car people. A group of people that will always be there to help, to give back to the community and share a little friendly competition on whose car is better. And as the sun begins to set, the chatter diminishing, the parking lot starts to empty, but one thing that stays constant is the sound of roaring engines that can be heard for miles. 



If you have a problem and can't figure it out, most likely someone else has had the same problem and they will always give you ideas on how to fix it. You can trust them to never lead you down the wrong path.

—Clayton George, Elites Car Club member



A dove with an olive branch soared above the Bellingham pride parade, carried by the Whatcom League for Peace and Justice.

Grieving with Pride

“We should not be asking ourselves to choose between celebration and grief.”

My phone erupted with alerts, illuminating the screen against the darkness in which I slept. As I rolled over to check the urgency of dings and buzzes, I was blinded by the harsh light of the device. My eyes began to adjust, and my breath left my body. An anxious panic took over as I read the headlines and news notifications of the mass shooting in Orlando.

The month of June should be about Pride and the resilience that comes with it within the LGBTQ community. From radical congregations to elaborate parades, June is when people come together to celebrate the LGBTQ community and queer identities. But how can we stand united and resilient against such a travesty? How can I remain lighthearted in my celebrations when queer people like myself are being shot down for nothing more than their identity?

Confused and conflicted, I decided to still attend the Bellingham Pride celebration. As the drag queens lip-synced their favorite pop divas' gay anthems, the colors of the rainbow sang their own song of pride, dancing in the center of Depot Market Square.

Among the smiles and laughter stood two female-presenting people – wearing shirts that read ‘Black Lives Matter’ and ‘Orlando, We Love You’ in vibrant color. The two stood, intertwined in a grief-stricken embrace, silently weeping and unable to stay strong for the festivities.

In this moment, I understood.

With the juxtaposition of blissful pride and debilitating grief, we should not be asking ourselves to choose between celebration and grief.

“We must use this adversity to propel us forward,” my queer roommate reminds me.

We have now heard all of the grotesque details of the massacre – we have seen the photos of the victims and footage of desperate family members searching for their loved ones. This shooting was a direct and violent attack on the LGBTQ community, and that should not be forgotten or go unnoticed.

We must also acknowledge the pain felt in the Latinx community, as they were directly targeted in this attack. Targeting the gay club Pulse on its “Latin Night” reflects yet another attack on queer people of color, who are often the victims of hate crimes in the United States. According to the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs' 2015 Annual Report, “Transgender and gender nonconforming people of color made up the majority of homicides [within these marginalized communities]. People of color and undocumented survivors were more likely to experience physically violent forms of hate violence.”

In a world that is becoming increasingly scary for marginalized and queer identities, this attack is not singular – it is not an outlier. The coalition also reported in their 2015 Annual Report, “The year 2015 was

once again a deadly year for LGBTQ and HIV-affected communities. There were 24 reported hate violence homicides of LGBTQ people, a 20 percent increase from the 20 reported anti-LGBTQ homicides in 2014.”

With such an increase in violent attacks targeting queer and HIV-affected people, many find themselves lost – unsatisfied with the current situation.

“The queer community continues to face inequities within society that must be resolved,” my roommate says. “I honestly don't know what to do but something needs to happen – we need change.”

As our community attempts to rebuild after such a heartbreaking loss – from preparing for Pride events to just feeling safe in public spaces – I have a new perspective on Pride. We can use this moment, however terrible it may be, as a catalyst to unify the queer people and embrace those interested in supporting and helping us fight the injustices the queer community continues to face.


It is important that I channel my fear and sadness into something to help the community. I will yell louder at protests, dance harder at Pride parades and stand in solidarity with my queer friends and family. Tonight, when I lay down to sleep, I can't help but wonder if the peace will be interrupted again with news of tragedy, but I know when standing together as a whole, our community can overcome these adversities and work towards breaking down these inequities. 



Photo courtesy of the Queer Youth Project

Solace

The Queer Youth Project acts as a safe meeting place for LGBTQ youth of Whatcom County

STORY BY: **REBEKAH WAY**

INFOGRAPHIC BY: **NATALIE WILHELM**

Racks, bins and shelves of clothing with a sign welcoming people to take what they needed line the perimeter of the waiting area. A large paper hanging behind the front desk says, "This Pride Month, who is your queer hero?" Among the many names written by members in colored marker around the question were David Bowie, Prince, Laverne Cox and even Marvel anti-hero Deadpool, whose name is underlined twice.

Two years ago, Riannon Bardsley, executive director at the non-profit organization Northwest Youth Services, saw the opportunity to turn a support group that met regularly into a larger program. With the help of the Pride Foundation and local donors, this program became the Queer Youth Project. Its mission is to support and advocate for homeless and at-risk LGBTQ youth ranging from 13 to 24 years old in Whatcom County.

April Hinkle-Johnson, a staff member from Northwest Youth Services, coordinates and oversees the many services of the youth project.

If any of the other service areas – which include housing, street outreach or vocational readiness programs – need advice on how to support and work with LGBTQ youth, they meet with Hinkle-Johnson.

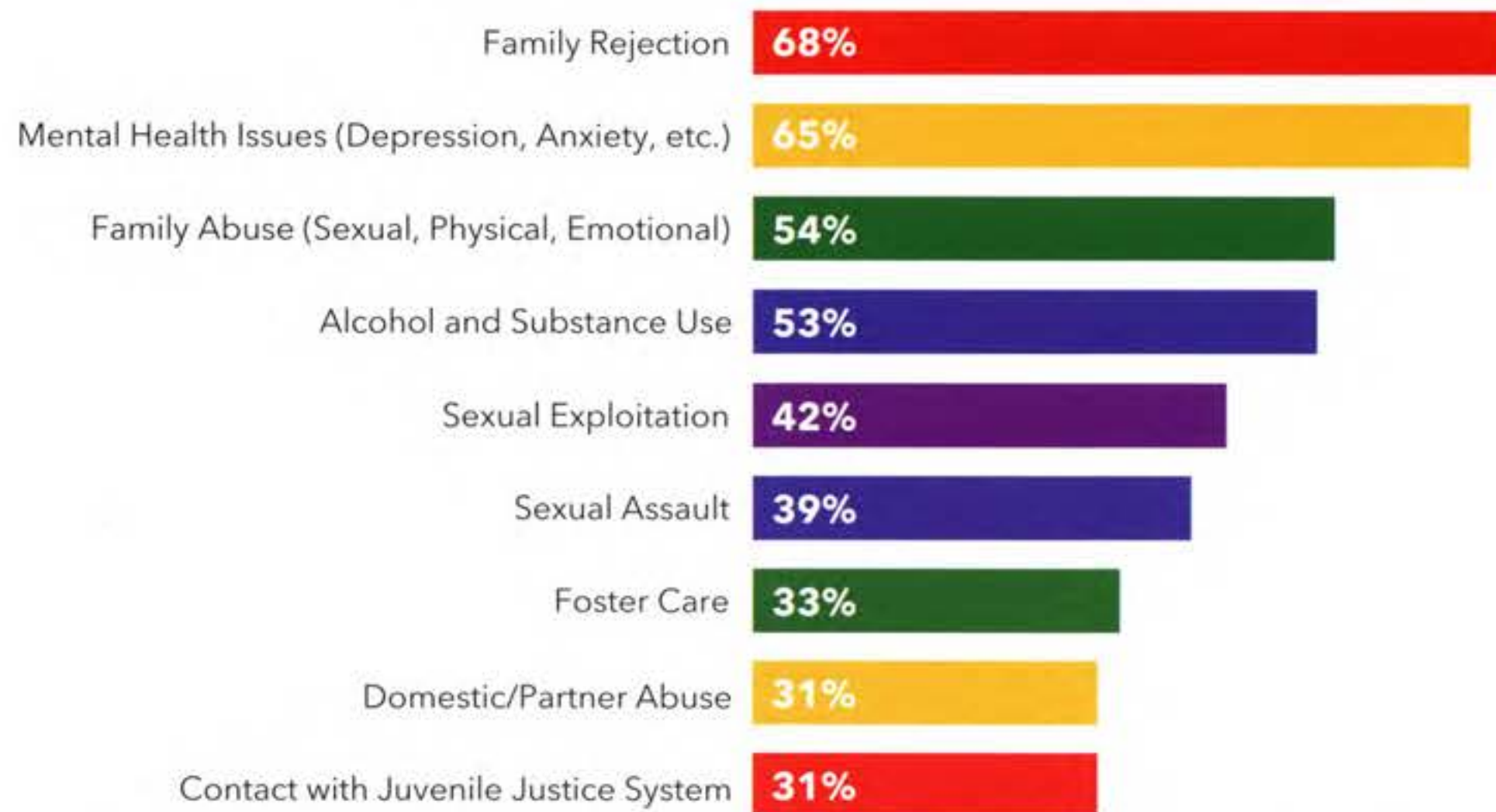
"I've trained over 450 people at this point in everything from police departments to churches, to groups at the college, to people who work at other service provider agencies like Northwest Youth Services, Brigid Collins and [Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services]," she says.

Counselors from the community are also referred to for family reunification services, a preventative youth-led program to address rifts or potential rifts in families.

"The goal is not to make kids live with their families again, or have a great relationship with their family, even though it's called family reunification," Hinkle-Johnson says. "Kids get to define what family means, kids get to define what reunification looks like, and they get to pace it for themselves."

Family rejection based on sexual orientation and gender identity was found to be primary cause for LGBTQ youth becoming homeless or at risk of homelessness, according to a national survey of LGBTQ service providers in 2012. Over half of the respondents reported experiencing abuse in their families. Other contributing factors include aging out of the foster care system and experiencing emotional or financial neglect from their families.

LGBT youth are more likely to have a history of...



Source: L.E. Gates and G.J. Gates (2012) *Serving Our Youth: Findings from a National Survey of Service Providers Working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth who are Homeless or At Risk of Becoming Homeless*

Service providers also reported high instances of mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety, as well as alcohol and substance abuse in the homeless LGBTQ youth they serve.

The Queer Youth Project doesn't require youth to be completely sober and clean before they have access to its services. Instead, it works to meet youth where they're at.

"We are standing next to them and collaborating with them on their goals and being partners to youth," Hinkle-Johnson says. "We're recognizing they are part of our community, and that strengthening their ability to be self-reliant is what strengthens the community."

Above all, Hinkle-Johnson emphasizes the organization as a space where youth can be themselves and act their

age. A group formed within Northwest Youth Services in the last five or six months to host monthly events that are advertised as LGBTQ-friendly, but don't require anyone to out themselves. They've so far hosted a game night, scavenger hunt and an open mic night, which was their most successful event.

"The stage was just constantly occupied, and people had great poems, music, stories and dancing," Hinkle-Johnson says. "It was a really supportive atmosphere, everybody was cheering each other on and [there were] kids who were totally homeless, kids who were completely stably housed and everything in between."

Katie Lohman, street outreach specialist for Northwest Youth Services, works directly with Hinkle-Johnson to put on these monthly events.

"If we're walking around Bellingham and we're having a conversation with a youth about their identity, or maybe their orientation, I might make a referral directly to April's program," Lohman says. "It might even be a phone call with that person, on the street, and calling her directly or setting up a time to come in and meet with her."

Hinkle-Johnson enjoyed the random interactions

that came from the drop-in space in the building. In one morning, she could have taken part in a rap battle, had an intense UNO game with six other people and led a discussion about transgender identities and pronouns all while someone whipped up a batch of waffles.

"It was chaos," she laughed. "But it was really, really fun chaos."

It later became clear the youth services' office space was not able to support regular drop-in hours, but they are working to build a new space next to their downtown location to restart this service.

Although Hinkle-Johnson's passion for her work is evident, she says she hopes her position will one day be obsolete. Whether her coworkers realize it or not, they help the Queer Youth Project immensely by being comfortable with creating dialogues about pronouns and LGBTQ terminology. ❧

There are not really any other positions like this in town, which is even more weird that I happened to come across it. It just feels like it was meant to happen.

—April Hinkle-Johnson, Northwest Youth Services Staff Member



STORY BY: **SARA COMSTOCK**
PHOTOS BY: **DAISEY JAMES**

Above: The exterior of the Ark.

Shoes litter the entryway. dirty tennis shoes, sneakers with skateboard marks, ballet flats, running shoes, flip flops, boots, even heels. A mess to most, this sight is a comfort to Shinwook “Shin” Park. The array of shoes indicates that he is home and surrounded by people for whom he loves and cares.

The Ark is a house that was established near Western in 2013. The house was the brainchild of a group of men who were involved with Bible study. The idea was to ensure that everyone, regardless of who they are, is welcome at the Ark.

The group started out small, then grew to over 20 members in the Bible study. Eventually it broke off into two groups. One of the groups became the Ark. When it was time for the men to move in together, they didn’t actually know each other that well.

The house was empty except for a TV.

That changed when people kept pouring into the house, car after car unloading books, clothes and shoes. Parents and families filled the house setting up bunk beds in different rooms, putting dishes away and chatting as excitement filled the house.

Shin recounts when they first moved into the house on Nevada Street. “I got so excited every time a car would pull up,” he says.

One of the first things the men decided to do was have a weekly Wednesday dinner. One room in the house decides on what is going to be made that night. They gather around the big wooden table and talk about what is going on in their lives at the moment. “We chat about highs and lows, we talk about things we may need for the house, like bills, or events coming up or having dumb arguments like ‘Who is better: Iron Man or Batman?’” Shin says.

Through those dinners, the men were able to get to know each other really quickly, and establish a tight knit bond.

“We have an open door policy. We don’t even answer the door if someone knocks. Just come in,” Shin says with a grin.

The ark itself is significant in most Western faiths. In the story of Noah’s ark, God promised safety from the flood for Noah and his family if they created a vessel to hold two animals of each kind. The ark is an example for Christians as a place of refuge, a place to be safe, a place for a new beginnings.

“We wanted to provide a place where people can just come and hang out. We don’t want anyone to feel pressure to do anything, or feel a certain way,” says Shin.

The Ark has experienced many challenges that come with

**We wanted to provide a place where people
can just come and hang out.**

—Shin Park, one of the original members of the Ark

living with a bunch of different people. Household chores, understanding others need for space, and respecting different opinions, for example.

The biggest challenge came in the spring of 2015, when a member of the Ark, Woody Moore, passed away.

“It was very sudden, very unexpected, and it sucked a lot. But it taught us all the importance of community, and the importance of a strong and solid faith. That when things get bad, it doesn’t disappear, but instead it’s something you rely on and something that you find hope and joy and peace in,” Josh Flemming, another member, says.

During Spring break of 2015, Woody and a few close friends took a road trip through California. When he got back, he wasn’t feeling that well.

“The doctors thought he had walking pneumonia. He was

going to class and was fine, so we thought nothing of it,” Shin recalled.

The men gathered in their living room, wondering what was going on. “I remember one of the paramedics coming downstairs and sitting us down and saying, ‘Hey just to let you know, your friend Woody has died.’ I remember that was the last thing I heard for a while,” Shin says.

Josh recalls it being all surreal and shocking. He remembered hearing the footsteps coming down the stairs to tell everyone what had happened.

“The weight of everything just, this can’t be happening to us right now. This doesn’t happen to us. This happens to other people, but not us,” Josh says he thought.

“When I say we learned the most from Woody passing away, I mean that was amidst the pain, the intense pain, and I have felt a lot of physical pain, or the grief or the suffering or the loss of someone you love so much, is the peace and the joy and the comfort of knowing that he is in Heaven. He is first and foremost a child of God, and that he is back with his heavenly father... As real and as intense as those emotions were, the emotions of peace and joy and comfort in that time were just as impressionable as the pain,” Josh says.

For both men, a reassuring notion came with their faith. A peace of knowing that, even with the pain, and with everything awful that was happening, they knew in their hearts everything was going to be okay.

The most miraculous thing came when the parents of Woody arrived at the house.

“I remember Tom, Woody’s dad, walked in and we were still in the same room crying and I remember he stood in front of us, and the first thing he did was thank us,” Shin says.

Tom stood in front of the group of men and said, “I just want to thank you for being Woody’s roommates. Thank you guys. Whenever he was home, he always talked about how he wanted to be around you guys.”

For Josh and Shin, that moment changed their perspective. “It took me a few days later to realize how they were able to say that. They had absolute faith in knowing that the God we worship and believe in is that real and sovereign. They said all of that to

us, less than three hours after learning that their youngest son had passed away,” Shin says.

The men of the Ark realized the importance of community, and building those relationships. Every spring, a volleyball tournament is held. People are encouraged to bring canned food for the local food bank in order to partake. They also host a dry Halloween party at their house for anyone who wants a place that is safe to hang out, play games and dance.

“We wanted to do events throughout the year. The first event we did was a back to school BBQ, because we hadn’t seen some of our friends over the summer, so it was a good way to get everyone back together,” Shin says.

A study done on 140 colleges found that nearly 20 percent of college students sought counseling for anxiety and stress, according to the Center for Collegiate Mental Health at Penn State. Having a place to release that in a healthy and safe way is a comfort to many students on Western’s campus.

“We wanted to provide a fun and welcoming space for everyone to come hang out, have fun and build relationships,” Josh says.

“I can point to where I was when I moved into the house, and to where I am now and there are vast differences. Each and every guy that I have lived with in that house has made me a better man today,” Josh says.

Josh recalled how living with the men has helped his future career of being a teacher. Josh explained how no one should be discounted, that you can truly learn something from everyone, which is something he hopes to take with him as he teaches his future students.

With many of the members graduating, a new group of men will take on the roles and responsibilities.

“I hope that our legacy is that people would look back and say ‘Hey those guys really challenged and pushed each other and I saw real growth in all of them,’” Josh says.

Shin hopes that in 10, 20 years from now, he will still see shoes piled up in the entryway. Tennis shoes, cleats, high heels, rain boots, snow shoes, each new pair of shoes bringing someone new to a group of people who want nothing more than to let you know you are welcome there. Shoes remind Shin that it will always be home. ■

As real and as intense as those emotions were, the emotions of peace and joy and comfort in that time were just as impressionable as the pain.

—Josh Flemming, friend of Woody Moore



Above: Shoes litter the entry way of the house.

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A photograph of a forest path. The path is made of dirt and gravel, winding through a dense forest. On the left side of the path, there is a circular fire pit made of stacked stones. The trees are tall and slender, with green foliage. Sunlight filters through the leaves, creating dappled light on the path. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and natural.

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MEANING SUNSET