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Bellingham after the impact

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Kristie Aukofer looks beyond the end of the needle to discover the cause of five heroin-related deaths in Bellingham this summer.

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THE RIPPLE EFFECT

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Editor's Note

During a late night in the Klipsun office, a woman named Jackie came in to sweep the floors — to clean up our mess.

"Are you with Klipsun or are you with The Western Front?" she asked me.

"Klipsun," I said, surprised she even asked.

Jackie told me she loved to read Klipsun. She enjoyed the perspective the articles provided and sent it to her family. She told me, broom in hand, how she especially liked one article published in June.

Klipsun magazine changes with each editor and each writer each quarter. And I had little to do with the issue Jackie spoke of. In our current issue, I hope Jackie will find topics worthy to send to her family. We certainly tried to write about topics that affect us as well as our readers.

Nearly three months have passed since Sept. 11 and images of falling buildings are still fresh in our minds. In this issue, we investigated the concrete ways the attacks on New York and Washington, D.C. have touched Bellingham. Books will be written about the Sept. 11 Ripple Effects, but our four articles are the blood and sweat of four writers who sought to understand what has happened to our country and its citizens following the attacks.

Four other articles concern not the attacks but issues that persist in our lives. In Highs and Lows, one writer investigates the deaths of five Bellingham residents from extremely potent heroin and one writer shares her personal struggle with Seasonal Affective Disorder. In After Hours, writers investigate two Bellingham pastimes: underwater hockey and club nightlife.

In her humble assessment, Jackie set the standard for our magazine. She labors long into the night, yet she finds time to pick up an issue of Klipsun, thumb through and allow the articles to affect her. She is our reader. This issue is for Jackie and for all of our readers. Thank you.

Feel free to email us at klipsun@hotmail.com or call us at 650-3737 with feedback.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Collins, editor-in-chief

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Karlee Rochon, a senior, donated blood for the first time at 19. Her father, a regular donor, inspired her to donate. She hopes this story will teach people how important donating blood is, and inspire them to do so.

Jeff Lechtanski is a senior public relations major looking forward to graduating spring quarter. He is glad to see that even in turbulent times, airports and air travel continue to help make our world smaller and more tolerant.

Brittany Sadler, a senior public relations major, shares the story of her struggle with Seasonal Affective Disorder in an attempt to shed some light on this misunderstood illness. She believes SAD is much more common in the Puget Sound than is acknowledged and should not be ignored.

Angie Bring felt encouraged that the Peace Corps continues to promote peace in a world so saturated with war. The senior public relations major hopes her story restores the hope of world peace in others as it did for her.

Bobbie Egan, a journalism major, talks with local Muslims about how the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks have changed their lives. Since the attacks, many Muslims have taken on the role of defenders of their faith. By writing this story, she hopes to dispel the myth that Islam is a violent religion.

Jeff Lechtanski, a communications major, believes partying is a part of college and encourages students to enjoy life while they're still young. He hopes to illustrate the lifestyle some choose and stresses students to "be young, have fun, be wild, but be safe."
Last summer, a string of heroin-related deaths provoked questions about Bellingham's drug problem. **Kristie Aukofer** gains perspective from a former heroin addict about Bellingham's experience with black tar heroin. Photo illustrations by Stephanie Kosonen.

Heroin claimed five lives in Bellingham in August and left many other addicts with bad habits to kick. Whatcom County is the latest home to the potent drug called "black tar" heroin, produced only in Mexico.

"It (heroin) looks like street sealer tar that is dark brown or black in color," Bellingham Police Lt. Dae Jamison said. Black tar gets its name from the gooey, tar-like appearance, he said.

"This potent batch was a mixture of heroin and cocaine called a speedball," Jamison said. "This type of heroin is mixed with water, heated on a spoon until it dissolves and put into a syringe to inject."

An estimated 2 million people use heroin in the United States, and Whatcom County has anywhere from 300 to 600 users, Jamison said.

Two of the men who died from overdoses were transient types from Oregon, not permanent residents, he said. Needle marks covered one of the victims' bodies, showing that he was a habitual user. This man was found after the initial wave of deaths under a local bridge.

Jamison said although these people weren't victims of a crime, like murder, their names are protected due to the situation's sensitivity.

Sylvia Woodbury, a substance abuse counselor at St. Joseph Hospital Center for Rehabilitation, said even habitual heroin addicts could get in over their heads. She knew one man who died and said he wasn't a first-time user, but hadn't used heroin in some time. She said his tolerance could have been low, making his latest exposure to heroin even more dangerous.

"This batch was strong, pure heroin and people weren't used to it," Woodbury said. Pure heroin rarely is sold on the street and mostly is seen as a prescription to treat pain.

Heroin is typically cut, or mixed, with various items like sugar, starch or powdered milk. Woodbury said a typical purity level for heroin could range from 20 percent to 80 percent, with the national average being 35 percent.

The batch of pure heroin that settled in Bellingham affected users so quickly that one man was found dead with a needle still stuck in his arm.

"While only five died, a number of other overdoses took place during this time," Jamison said, adding that at least 13 other people were treated in the emergency room for overdoses.

"We heard of at least 10 others who were treated at home in ice baths and brought out of the high 19 hours later," Jamison said.

He said while heroin isn't the most popular drug in Whatcom
County, "it hooks people really hard, really fast."

"We were afraid that this thing could get big and if we didn’t stop it fast, there was no telling how many more might die," Jamison said.

Bellingham police officers arrested six people with connections to the case, but none were convicted. Two were arrested for selling heroin and four others were arrested for possession with intent to deliver. Still, Jamison said, the arrests would take only a small amount of the heroin off the streets.

"We were hoping that if we arrested the right people, the supply would run out," he said.

After the second death, police put signs up all over Bellingham warning users to stay away from this batch of black tar. They posted these signs in neighborhoods and on downtown bulletin boards and street posts, hoping to reach as many people as they could.

James Marx, 46, a substance abuse counselor at Lake Whatcom Residential and Treatment Center, said the police’s warning posters created a dilemma.

"What happens is users get wind that there is a strong batch going around and people are dying," Marx said. "Strangely enough, they flock to it for one of two reasons: Either they think it’s strong and they want a sample, or they want to test it themselves and see if they can handle it."

Heroin addiction isn’t easy to handle. The Lake Whatcom Residential and Treatment Center is a mental health facility that treats people with substance abuse addictions.

Marx said the overdoses may have surprised community members, but he has been watching this trend trickle down from Vancouver, British Columbia for years.

Marx, himself a recovering heroin addict, said he has gone head-to-head with Bellingham officials for years, trying to change the system.

When someone is arrested and taken to jail for drug use, they go home after serving their time. Users who overdose leave the hospital without any mandatory long-term treatment, he added.

"Drug abuse is a big problem in Bellingham," Marx said. "It’s not that people can’t see it, it’s that nobody knows where to start changing things."

Marx said the problem is that some of the people who create the rehabilitation programs in Bellingham have never been addicts and don’t know what it feels like to go through withdrawal. He suggests that patients should give more input on their needs.

"Programs are supposed to be personalized to fit the individual’s needs," Marx said. "Instead, they get a textbook treatment that diagnoses all of the patients in the same manner."

He said patients need to be able to learn addiction coping skills so when they leave the centers, they can fight the urges to use again.

"I relapsed twice," Marx said. "The first time was two and a half months after my first trip to jail."

His second relapse occurred after graduating from college when he had been clean for eight and a half years.

He said people relapse for a number of reasons.

"Once you use for a while, everything changes," Marx said. "Being clean is like going to a foreign country where everything is different."

Feelings of guilt and shame, he explained, could lure an addict back into using.

"Addicts need to do some kind of ongoing treatment during their recovery," Marx said. "People usually remember the good instead of the bad, making that craving impossible to overcome."

Marx also stressed that addicts need someone to rely on for emotional support.

He bonded with the judge who put him in jail for the first time in 1981 for a misdemeanor charge.

"He saw something in me that no one else did," Marx said.

As he served his two-week jail sentence, Marx was allowed to do work release in the judge’s office. When his sentence was up, he returned home and relapsed a short time later.

"I started stealing from my mom and she called him (the judge) instead of the cops," Marx said. "He put me back in treatment and told me in a fatherly way how disappointed he was in me."

Marx eventually made it through treatment and said he remained and finished treatment because of the bond he and the judge formed.

"We’re still in touch today," he said. "He even married my wife and I several years ago."

Marx said his relationship with the judge illustrates the importance of the patient-counselor ratio. He suggested that people make better choices if they are emotionally involved with those who can help them develop their own ability to resist relapsing. When counselors are assigned too many patients, he said, they aren’t able to give each person the care he or she needs.

"Using heroin is a way of life," Marx said. "Addicts associate with other
addicts and their only concern is where to get the next hit."

He said drug deals take place anywhere from inside local hotels to out on Railroad Avenue in downtown Bellingham. He said for addicts, keeping a steady job can be tough and to get money for heroin, some users "boost" items from stores and return the stolen goods for cash.

Heroin, made from opium poppies grown mainly in Mexico, Turkey and Afghanistan, has existed for years. It was first formed in 1874 through experiments with morphine. In 1898, Bayer Pharmaceutical Corp. helped popularize the drug by marketing it as a cough remedy.

Marx said availability is one of heroin's appeals. "Heroin is definitely cheaper than it was before and just as easy to get," Marx said. "Even with all the negative aspects of heroin, such as the withdrawal and the way it physically affects the body, people are still drawn to it."

"Rotten teeth, hair loss and itchy skin are only some of heroin's physical downsfalls, Marx said."

Heroin mimics the way the body naturally produces endorphins and provides a false sense of happiness, he said. "It's that feeling you get when you have a new boyfriend or girlfriend," Marx said. "Every time you see that person, you get that excited feeling in your stomach. Given the option, who in their right mind wouldn't want to feel that way? To not have a care in the world."

But everything good comes with something bad — meaning withdrawal, Marx said.

Marx describes the withdrawal sensation as "total insanity." He said the body cramps and all the nerves scream for one more hit. But the majority of vomiting, cramps and depression eventually lessen after four "horrible" days.

"The worst enemy for an addict is their own brain," Marx said.

Withdrawal also includes sleeplessness, wherein all the addict can do is lie there and think about how diseased his or her body feels. "It (heroin) takes away pain by blocking the receptors to the brain," Woodbury said. "As the drug withdraws from the brain, the body reacts." Endorphins also regulate respiration, nausea, vomiting, pain modulation, hormonal regulation and itching, Woodbury said.

"The vomiting and nausea are part of the withdrawal that comes immediately after the drug wears off," Woodbury said.

She listed small pupils, slower breathing and loss of consciousness as signs of an overdose.

She said withdrawal could be worst for those with a high tolerance.

"As addicts continue to use, the need for a larger dose develops," Woodbury said.

The people who overdosed in August might have built high tolerances, but taking their "normal" doses of this higher-potency heroin proved fatal, she said.

Various treatments, such as detoxification, counseling and methadone maintenance, are available for addicts. Marx said high-blood pressure medicines also are being used in treatment to subdue withdrawals.

"Ambium is a drug that acts like a sedative and knocks addicts out for eight hours so they can get over those first painful hours," Marx said. "This drug is addictive but offers no high."

Methadone is a substitute for heroin that prevents withdrawals and cravings without the "high" that heroin produces, Woodbury said. Methadone breaks the cycle of dependence on illegal drugs like heroin.

Despite America's "War on Drugs" campaign, heroin is readily available in all major metropolitan areas. Most of the heroin the Drug Enforcement Agency seizes now comes from Colombia and Mexico.

According to U.S. Customs authorities, nearly all heroin, like black tar, is produced in Mexico, and is destined for distribution in the United States. In the past, smugglers only tried to get small amounts of the drug across the border. Today, heroin is being smuggled in larger amounts to fill the demand. U.S. Customs authorities also report that traffickers not only conceal the drug in public and private transportation vehicles, but also carry it on their bodies — internally or externally.

The U.S. government now is giving drug use more attention. Most states, including Washington, have passed a needle deregulation law, which legalizes the sale and possession of hypodermic needles to people 18 and older without a prescription. The hope is that this would cut the number of HIV/AIDS and hepatitis cases. Whatcom County currently has a program like this that began in August 1999.

Marx stressed that this summer's heroin deaths were not isolated incidents.

"The five people who died and the others who escaped death opened the community's eyes to Bellingham's drug problem. Marx said he hopes someday the system will change to provide aid to those who need help to break their drug addictions. Until then, he hopes those who escaped death this summer will hit their "rock bottom" and break their personal cycles of abuse.

Since August, things in the emergency room have been quieter. No further deaths due to black tar heroin have been reported. Marx said he doesn't think the drug is gone, but is just a little less available.

"Now it's harder to get because people are paranoid and cautious," Marx said, citing tighter border and airplane security since the Sept. 11 hijackings in New York and Washington, D.C.

For more about security at the Bellingham International Airport, turn to page 12.
Although most people understand the lethargy that comes with Northwest overcast skies, Brittany Sadler explores the more serious Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) in her personal quest. Photos by Stephanie Kosonen.
As the crisp autumn air flushes cheeks and noses everywhere, most people happily pull out their scarves and mittens, embracing the shift from summer to fall. For them, these are jolly seasons of pumpkin pie and snow angels.

For me, however, descending leaves coincide with descending spirits, as the impulse to shrink away into hibernation persists. The fall and winter mark seasons of depression.

I was diagnosed with Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) during my freshman year in college, but I remember recognizing a depressive pattern as early as the seventh grade. Every fall, once the days grew shorter, colder and darker, I would isolate myself from others, slipping into a depression that left me angry and alone. It was as if a curtain covered my eyes, darkening my world. The happiness and vigor that filled me during the spring and summer faded, leaving me feeling disheartened. Although patterns were cyclical and identifiable, I couldn't find a way to pull myself out of depression. I felt helpless.

It is estimated that one in every 20 people experiences this feeling of helplessness as they wrestle with SAD, a seasonally recurring clinical depression. Even more people experience this depression to a lesser degree — often without realizing they are affected.

Most people normally eat and sleep more than usual in the fall and winter, according to Outside In, a SAD research group in the United Kingdom.

But some people experience stronger symptoms, such as decreased creativity, avoidance of social situations, increased appetite for carbohydrates, weight gain and chronic exhaustion despite an increased amount of sleep. These symptoms are diagnosed as "winter blues," a lesser form of SAD.

Dr. Emily Gibson of Western's Student Health Center diagnoses cases of depression on campus. She said students typically come in during fall not understanding why they feel so badly.

"Students usually come in claiming fatigue, which for a student can be devastating," Gibson said. She estimated 10 to 20 percent of the population in the Northwest suffers from winter blues.

People like me, who are diagnosed with SAD, experience symptoms severe enough to impair everyday functioning. Gibson said the number of people with SAD is far smaller than those with winter blues, although there is no way to calculate exact numbers.

SAD's symptoms may resemble those of major clinical depression, Gibson said. They include symptoms of winter blues, in addition to helplessness, guilt, lack of motivation and difficulty concentrating, thinking and making decisions. Normal tasks often become frustrating and difficult.

Frustration became my biggest obstacle. It once took me nearly three hours to read the first 10 pages of a 20-page chapter. Due to my inability to concentrate, I still had no idea what the chapter was about. Realizing I had wasted three hours and still had to read and understand the entire chapter not only frustrated me, but also enraged me. In that state of mind, trying to study was impossible. While workloads often piled up, increasing my stress level, my mind became numb, unable to think.

Those angry feelings were common, often triggered by irritability.
and exhaustion. They intensified to extremes, and I had no obvious outlet or specific source to blame. Sadness escalated to anguish, annoyance to intolerance and anger to rage. Occasionally I vented my frustration through slamming doors, crying or snapping at a sibling or a roommate. Seemingly trivial problems easily spiraled out of control into larger fiascoes, as the ability to deal with problems rationally eluded me.

Consequently, my relationships suffered. No one wants to be around someone who freaks out all the time. My family and friends had to tip-toe around me to avoid being caught in one of my unpredictable tantrums.

My little sister became all too familiar with how intolerant I could be. While living with my parents, we shared a room, often making her the nearest target of my aggression. At one point, I was so irritable and overwhelmed with schoolwork, I yelled at her for “breathing too hard,” which distracted me from my studies. In fact, she wasn’t making any noise. Still she became my excuse for being unable to concentrate. As I yelled, she looked bewildered. After all, she had been trying to accommodate my need for quiet.

While people found it difficult to appease me, it also was hard for me to be around others. I developed an involuntary resentment for those who could make it through each day without struggling to be happy. Because I felt alienated from these people, I detached myself from them and refused to divulge my thoughts or feelings. This behavior only confused my family and friends more as they tried to be supportive. Seeing how my moods affected my loved ones only made me feel worse about myself. So the miserable cycle continued.

Exhaustion was another difficulty. I struggled to keep my eyes open through most of my classes, regardless of how much I had slept. Last year, my attendance in geology class dwindled because of this. Every morning, I woke up, began to get ready for class and found myself weighing my options: To sleep in class or to sleep in my bed. Knowing I would end up asleep in any case, my bed seemed a much more suitable place to spend the hour. Needless to say, my geology grade suffered heavily.

Due to this constant irritability and exhaustion, I finally went to my family doctor during my freshman year, wearily seeking a way to regain control. She diagnosed me with SAD after asking questions about symptoms in previous years and giving me a depression assessment questionnaire.

Gibson said she usually assesses SAD by asking patients if similar instances have occurred in the past, and then conducting a complete physical exam with lab work to rule out any other health problems.

To be diagnosed with SAD, a person must have experienced recurring symptoms for at least two years, with a full remission in the spring, according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.

I waited through the entire winter for the remission in spring. When the sun reappeared on a regular basis, it feels as if a burden weighing me down all winter has been lifted. This allows me to return to being my happy, energetic self.

For years, I could not comprehend the cause of my fall and winter depression. I assumed it was a character flaw or a personal weakness. It wasn’t until my sophomore year in college that one of my family doctors explained to me SAD is caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain, not by a subconscious choice I was making.

“It’s not something you have control over,” she said. “You wouldn’t tell a diabetic to ‘buck up and make more insulin,’ would you? It’s the same type of thing.”

Gibson said the brain’s chemical changes remain undetermined, although different studies have yielded some possible causes.

According to Northern County Psychiatric Associates (NCPA) in Maryland, the most common theory behind SAD’s cause is that the lack of natural light in fall and winter seasons leads the brain to produce an abundance of melatonin, a sleep-regulating hormone. Melatonin, usually produced during the night, makes the brain drowsy. Daybreak causes production to cease. During dark and cloudy days, melatonin production does not cease properly, leaving an abundance of the chemical to affect the brain.

A related theory suggests the brain’s nerve centers, which control daily rhythms and moods, are stimulated by the amount of light entering the eyes. Dark seasons may lead to an imbalance and disturb this daily rhythm, thereby affecting moods.

The main technique used to treat SAD is light therapy, Gibson said. She ordered the first SAD light for Western in 1998.

“I bought the SAD light because of the sheer number of people being seen that were struggling with the depression and couldn’t afford to buy a light themselves,” Gibson said.

She said each winter, about 40 people on campus use the SAD light available in the SHAIC. A second SAD light recently was added to the new Wellness Outreach Center in the Viking Union.

“Therapy light boxes are a non-invasive way to help people with their moods,” said Catharine Vader, RNC, of the SHAIC.

Light therapy wasn’t a feasible solution for me. My busy schedule didn’t allow me any free time that coincided with the SHAIC’s open hours, so I could only use the SAD light a few times per quarter. Gibson said using the light infrequently is like using anti-depressants infrequently; once a month or even once a week is not going to help.

“The SAD light should be used five days a week at least, to be effective,” Gibson said. “It’s a regular commitment.”

Vader also said if people don’t have time to sit in front of a light box daily, taking a walk outside, even in overcast weather, could be an adequate substitute.
Gibson estimated about 50 percent of affected people significantly improved their conditions with a daily 30-minute session in front of a light box, which gives off light intended to simulate natural daylight.

An effective light box, Gibson said, will exude the full spectrum of 10,000 lux of light (lux being a measurement of light taken in by the eye), whereas indoor light averages between 250 and 500 lux. Outdoor light is generally 80,000 lux or higher on a clear summer day.

Side effects of using a light box include headaches, eyestrain and insomnia, if people use the light box in the evening.

SAD light prices range from $150 to $300 and are rarely covered by insurance. I am looking into purchasing one in time for next fall.

For now, I’m taking Prozac, which is another common treatment for SAD. Prozac keeps me out of depression during the fall and winter, but it doesn’t increase my ability to concentrate or my energy level. It doesn’t ‘fix’ me, but it does help to make the situation bearable.

Gibson said stimulating anti-depressants, such as Prozac and Wellbutrine, can help more than half the people who use them for SAD. She said she prescribes the medicine for a minimum of six months. Medication is usually started in the fall, continued through the winter and tapered off in the spring once the person’s mood stabilizes. Gibson also suggested simultaneous use of anti-depressants and light therapy, if possible.

Taking medicine, although it significantly improves the depression, has conflicted with my pride on a number of occasions. It is hard to admit to needing pills to stabilize my moods. Everyone expects me to be able to control my emotions, which, for people with depression, is impractical.

Someone close to me once convinced me to get off the medicine and try to cope with the depression on my own. Once off the medicine, I dropped deep into depression and gained weight. Feelings of weakness and a nonexistent self-esteem soon followed. In my mind, I had failed; I could not stay happy on my own. After struggling for months and feeling defeated, I resumed taking the medication.

The negative perception of anti-depressants manifests within me — to an extent. Embarrassment persists as I continually feel the need to explain myself and the reason for my medication. Taking Prozac isn’t something I like to do, but it is necessary at this point in my life. I have learned to accept that.

This year, exercising regularly and making time for fun activities have improved my mood slightly. Some days are harder than others, but I strive to maintain a positive outlook.

Although the odds of finding happiness during this time of the year are against me, I continue to seek ways to enjoy the season’s pumpkin pies and snow angels.

Jaime Jasper, 22, suffers from the winter blues. She grew up in the Pacific Northwest and lived in Bellingham from 1999 until last July to be near her sister, who attends Western.

Norman Rosenthal, author of Winter Blues, estimates the disorder, a lesser form of SAD, affects about 15 percent of the adult U.S. population. Symptoms often include exhaustion, an increased need for sleep, an increased appetite for carbohydrates and decreased creativity.

In July, Jasper decided to move to Arizona to live with her grandparents, largely due to her weariness of Western Washington weather.

“I just couldn’t handle the weather anymore,” she said. “It’s so dark and sad around here in the fall. I feel like I should be mourning something.”

Over the last few years, Jasper noticed that her moods and behaviors began to change each fall.

“I just feel like sleeping all day,” she said. “I also eat more food, which makes me gain weight, which then makes me feel even worse. It’s just depressing.”

However, she said her mood changes had not negatively impacted any of her relationships or caused difficulties in her daily functioning.

Many researchers believe the number of people suffering from SAD and the winter blues has a direct relation to their distances from the equator. People are more likely to experience symptoms the farther they are from the equator.

Dr. Emily Gibson of Western’s Student Health Center said many people she sees for SAD are “implants” from other states. She said some students who transfer to Western from southern states like California don’t realize they are prone to SAD until they are exposed to dismal Western Washington weather.

Gibson said in her 13 years at Western, she has seen half a dozen students leave for southern states, such as California, Arizona and Florida, where more light exposure and longer days don’t affect moods so negatively.

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One September morning, the world changed.

In a matter of hours, the United States, a country supposedly supported by unbreakable pillars of money and weaponry, broke down.

Many people watched the events unfold on television. Others listened with disbelief to news broadcasts consuming the radio and two U.S. cities watched "indestructible" buildings fall. The events of Sept. 11, 2001 changed the entire nation. A new feeling of vulnerability has replaced the once steady feeling of security.

Even in Bellingham, Wash., thousands of miles away from Ground Zero, the attacks have affected the community. Some people display American flags, while others cry for peace in other lands.

No matter how Americans respond, one thing is certain:
We will always remember that day.

* * *

The Klipsun staff recognizes the impact this event had on communities everywhere and with hopes of encouraging dialogue, we present the following four stories devoted to the after-effects.
At 6:50 a.m. on Sept. 11, for the first time ever, all air travel across the country was grounded.

At the Bellingham International Airport (BIA), flight 2197 had departed for Seattle at 5:20, and others were preparing to leave.

“The TV was on,” Bellingham resident Holle Chervenock said, pointing at the television mounted on the terminal’s ceiling.

Chervenock, who works at Halibut Henry’s Northwest Gifts and Café in the airport, recalled that quite a few people were in the lines at the counter, and suddenly everyone stopped talking.

“First we just thought, ‘That can’t happen. There must have been something wrong with the plane,’” she said, recalling her reaction after the first plane crashed into the World Trade Center towers. “But then, about a half-hour later, we saw the other plane.”

Bonnie Chaney, National Car Rental clerk at BIA, remembered seeing news of the attacks on television at her Birch Bay home and wondering if she should even go to work.

“It takes 20 minutes to get here and I was in tears the whole way,” said Chaney, a grandmother of two. “I wanted to sit at home and watch TV to see what was going on.”

When she arrived, customers and employees were gathered around the televisions.

“They didn’t know what to do, or whether any more flights were going to be coming in,” Chaney said, shrugging her shoulders. “I was just watching TV; everything else was kind of a blur.”

After about two hours, airport personnel posted a sign letting passengers know that all flights were canceled, Chervenock said.

“Most of the people were just hanging out, to see if they could get a flight — or if they wanted to,” she said.
On the morning of the attacks, John Sibold, the Port of Bellingham's director of aviation and marinas, received a telephone call from the Federal Aviation Administration telling him to expect a fax that was for his attention only. All airports nationwide were set to level-four security, the highest level. Employees stayed at work to provide information and to reroute people since all flights were grounded.

"Level-four security means we have a 300-foot setback to limit exposure to explosive devices," Sibold said. "No vehicles are to be left uninspected within 300 feet of the building."

He said the 1990 Operation Desert Storm was the last time airports have been at level-four.

In November, two months after the attacks, airports remained at level-four security.

"There is no indication that will change anytime soon," Sibold said.

Every year, more than 250,000 travelers pass through BIA, which has more than 20 scheduled flights per day to Seattle. Flights also ferry passengers to the San Juan Islands, Nevada and California.

"Bellingham has cause to be concerned, being so close to Canada," said Sandi Bruton, a Bellingham resident and traveler. "But I'm not going to change my life because of this."

Bruton had been planning a trip to Minnesota to visit her father and other relatives. Although she began planning the trip in August, she made her reservations after the terrorist attacks.

"You have to show your ID a lot," Bruton said. "If it is in plastic, you have to pull it out. They don't want any reflection or glare."

But the biggest change she noticed was how airport personnel made direct eye contact when she answered the standard questions about her baggage. Metal detector lines also were longer, she noted.

A look at the parking lot provides BIA's first visible difference since the attacks. The area closest to the terminal is blocked off by construction barricades. More concrete barricades reduce the three-lane road in front of the terminal to one lane.

The 16 parking spaces normally reserved for National Car Rental returns have been reduced to eight. Although travelers not able to fly to Bellingham canceled many reservations, people in need of rental cars to leave the city quickly brought business, Chaney said.

"On Wednesday (Sept. 12), there were no planes (flying), but we came in," she said. "We were here because people were scrambling to get (rental) cars."

In the days following the attacks, the number of cars returned to Bellingham increased dramatically.

"At one time, we had over 100 cars in here," Chaney said. "One came in from Florida, because they couldn't get back by plane."

The next visible change to BIA is inside the terminal. The long lines at the baggage counter are not new, but the men and women dressed in camouflage fatigues are.

Per presidential request and gubernatorial directive, more than 200 soldiers of the Washington State National Guard have been dispatched to one of 10 airports across the state. Their assignment is to provide an armed and highly visible military presence at airport security checkpoints, according to the Washington State Department Public Affairs Office.

At BIA, one or two guardsmen are posted at the metal detectors beside the regular airport employees. The guards-

"YOU'RE NOT ALLOWED TOENAIL CLIPPERS. I EVEN HEARD SOMEONE SAY NO TWEEZERS. WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH TWEEZERS?"

BONNIE CHANEY NATIONAL CAR RENTAL CLERK
men wear black berets, camouflage shirts and pants, combat boots and handguns supported by green-cloth belts.

"This is the new reality," said Carolyn Casey, the Port of Bellingham's communications manager. "We have been told to prepare for them to stay until March, but they could go away tomorrow or they could double in number."

En route to his post, one guardsman walked through the metal detector to relieve another. This movement set off the detector, causing the meter of lights to flash from green to yellow to red. The detector beeped and an airport employee quickly glanced up to check on the reason for the alarm. The machine is so sensitive that even with no one walking through, the first few lights flicker sporadically.

Passengers and their carry-on bags are sent through the detector and inspected individually. Only ticketed passengers with photo identification are allowed to proceed to the gates.

One afternoon, virtually every passenger caused the walk-through metal detector to beep. Each was asked to stand with arms outstretched for inspection with the hand-held metal detector. One person's large jacket zipper set off the handheld unit, warranting even further inspection by hand. Inspection with the hand-held detector took from 30 seconds to two minutes for each person. It took nearly an hour to check in all 20 passengers of flight 2099, the 1:35 p.m. flight to Seattle on Sunday, Oct. 21.

As each person was inspected, so was his or her carry-on bag. BIA personnel reached into every bag, looking for restricted material.

Signs posted in the airport list the items not allowed through security checkpoints. These include knives, cork screws, baseball bats, pool cues, ski poles and cutting instruments of any kind, including box cutters, ice picks, metal scissors and metal nail files. "You're not allowed toenail clippers," Chaney said, with raised eyebrows and an exasperated tone. "I even heard someone say no tweezers. What are you going to do with tweezers?"

A flashlight in one backpack received special attention. When tested, the flashlight did not appear to work, so it was opened and inspected. Its owner did not notice at first, as she herself was being inspected. She glanced at her bag as the guardsman unscrewed the top of the flashlight. With raised eyebrows and an embarrassed smile, she offered to leave the flashlight behind. The guardsman placed the flashlight off to the side as the backpack was closed and returned to the passenger.

Another bag contained a small, flat, gift-wrapped present. Its owner chuckled when she was told to unwrap it. Once security officials discovered it was only a small book, the owner quickly re-wrapped the gift. She shrugged and smiled at the next person in line. "Most people have been a lot more patient and friendly," Chaney said, observing the process from her counter. "Some have attitudes, but those people always had attitudes and will always have attitudes. I just know I've seen a change."

Chaney, whose counter is directly in front of the arrival gate, also noted an increase in conversation among travelers. "I see a lot more of people saying goodbye to each other or wishing each other well," she said. "I think people are realizing that you never know what the next hour may bring. But the terrorists didn't accomplish what they wanted to. They wanted to split the nation and shut us down. But they really brought us together."

With changed airport procedures and the potential for added travel anxieties, it would seem travelers' tensions would increase. The opposite, however, seems to be true.

Bellingham resident Gino Larrosa was preparing to board a flight out of BIA. He came a few days early to see what changes to expect and to find out how many bags he could bring and discovered passengers are allowed one carry-on bag and one checked bag.

"I was hoping for two checked bags," he said, shrugging his shoulders. In the spirit of most travelers in this time of adjustment, he added, "but I'll make do."
Promoting world peace has been the Peace Corps' mission for 40 years. **Angie Bring** talks to former volunteers about the uncertainty of the Peace Corps' Central Asian programs since the Sept. 11 attacks. Photos courtesy Frank Procella, a volunteer in Afghanistan, 1970-73 and Amara Zee, a volunteer in Uzbekistan, 2000-01.
A
maria Zee’s stomach had acclimated to the cottonseed oil that dripped to her elbows as her plov-filled hands fed the traditional Uzbek dish of rice, carrots and mutton into her mouth. After 13 months working as a Peace Corps volunteer in Uzbekistan, Zee’s system had adapted to the foreign diet. She also had learned to speak Uzbek and to survive on the $35 a month the Peace Corps paid her to teach English.

Zee, 25, left for her Peace Corps service in September 2000, two years after she graduated with a studio art degree from Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Ore.

She said creating a better American image and the idea of a deep cultural experience attracted her to the Peace Corps.

“I made it through the first year, which is the most difficult,” Zee said. “By that time, you’ve made friendships, started projects — and it all came to a screeching halt.”

Zee’s Peace Corps experience in Uzbekistan was supposed to last an additional 14 months, but in October, that plan was cut short. Instead, she was given two days to pack and say goodbye to her new friends before boarding a plane back to America.

In response to the Sept. 11 attacks and the war in nearby Afghanistan, the Peace Corps suspended the 8-year-old Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan programs. Despite the suspensions, the Peace Corps continues its mission of world peace and maintains that the 7,300 volunteers still serving in 72 countries are safe.

Zee said she never witnessed or heard of a specific event that provoked the Peace Corps to suspend its Central Asian programs. She said the Uzbeks were friendly toward Americans.

“For two days (after Sept. 11) it was business as usual,” Zee said. “Then we were told we had to leave. They (the Peace Corps) were just being very safe.”

Despite the few countries whose programs were canceled because of their proximity to Afghanistan, the Peace Corps continues to conduct business as usual, said Emma Spenner, 28, a Western Peace Corps representative and environmental studies and geography professor.

“The mission of our organization hasn’t changed and we’re still going for it,” Spenner said.

Since the Peace Corps was founded on March 1, 1961, more than 162,000 volunteers have traveled to 135 lesser-developed countries to promote world peace. The volunteers’ mission is to educate people about the environment, health, business, agriculture and education, in addition to establishing positive relationships between Americans and the host country nationals.

Jim Aguirre, public affairs specialist for the Peace Corps regional office in Seattle, said interest in the Peace Corps has increased since Sept. 11.

“In terms of recruiting, it seems more people have been calling and exploring the Peace Corps,” Aguirre said. “Some callers say Sept. 11 motivated them to call, wanting to do whatever they can to help.”

Western ranks 24th nationally on the list of colleges and universities with students currently serving as Peace Corps volunteers. Currently, 42 Western alumni are serving as Peace Corps volunteers.

Fred Sheffield, who graduated from Western’s journalism department in 1999, works as a Peace Corps’ volunteer in agriculture in Katie Mundi, a village in southern Senegal. He has been there about one and a half years. Sheffield e-mailed his parents after Sept. 11 in regards to the attacks.

Sheffield wrote he heard about the attacks as he listened to the evening BBC broadcast on Sept. 11 while taking his bath bucket out behind his hut.

“Every evening I listen to the BBC coverage of the world news, usually more out of a need to hear English than a need to hear world news,” Sheffield wrote. “But that Tuesday I listened with disbelief to the coverage that you all had been watching throughout your morning.

“As more news came in, I started relaying the story to villagers as best I could. They have never seen a skyscraper (all I could describe it as in Mandinka was a very, very tall hut) and the symbolism of the buildings involved was lost on them, but they were shocked at the number of deaths that were involved.

“Senegal is over 90 percent Muslim, including my village, but by no means were people rejoicing in the streets over this attack on the west. Quite the opposite. People have been coming by the Kolda regional house offering condolences and sharing in our shock that this has really happened. Peace Corps Dakar, our headquarters, did not pull us out of our villages and usually they are very cautious with their policies. In short, I feel just as safe as I do all the time here.”

Aguirre said monitoring the volunteers’ safety always has been the organization’s priority.
“Safety and security is the first concern of the Peace Corps for their volunteers,” Aguirre said. “It always has been and it always will be. There isn’t a great deal more the Peace Corps can do in terms of monitoring safety.”

The Peace Corps canceled its program in Afghanistan in 1973 due to safety concerns after the country’s king, Zahir Shah, was overthrown on July 17 of that year.

Bellingham resident Frank Procella, 57, served as a Peace Corps volunteer there from 1970 to 1973.

He was sent to Afghanistan to educate farmers on animal husbandry and artificial insemination. The goal, he said, was to increase the animals’ low conception rate and to help breed larger bulls for plowing. About 80 percent of Afghan people work as farmers, he said. Since they didn’t have tractors, they relied on bulls and donkeys to plow the fields and carry straw.

Procella laughed as he described a “crazy” man on foot shooting at him while he was horseback riding through the desert after work one day. Procella rode away unharmed and 30 years later seemed unimpressed by the encounter. It is the only violent encounter he remembers having with the Afghan people, who always were armed with at least a knife and often with a rifle, he said.

Procella said he had to soak his vegetables in iodine, as did the rest of the Afghans, in order to avoid disease spread by the open sewer system. He said he still wonders how the women, who washed their laundry in canals of brown water, got the clothes “as white as you’d see in a Tide commercial.”

He said the Afghans were rugged, tough and very hardy, but he was well received in the country.

Although Procella has visited and worked in more than 30 countries, he said Afghanistan was his favorite because of the people’s hospitality.

Now working as an artificial insemination technician, Procella said he would make the same decision to join the Peace Corps today as he did in 1970.

“I might even do it again,” he said.

Zee said she thinks a greater need for the Peace Corps exists during this time of war.

“THERE IS PROBABLY MORE OF A NEED NOW TO SHOW THERE IS MORE TO AMERICA THAN JUST BOMBS.”

AMARA ZEE

PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER

Spencer said one of the Peace Corps’ main pillars is to promote a bond between the host country civilians and Americans. “It makes the world smaller,” she said.

She said she felt a tremendous sense of community and really was accepted in Malawi, a southwest African country, while she lived there from 1995 to 1997.

Volunteers’ acceptance into the country is common since the countries have to request the Peace Corps’ service, Spenser said. “Malawi was really pro-American,” she said. “The Peace Corps had been there a long time, which established a positive relationship between the Corps and the host-country nationals.”

Spencer said the depths of friendships she made were the most rewarding aspects of her experience.

“To be able to share laughter and tears with people from such a different part of the world — to bridge that gap and be able to share emotions with them, was incredible,” she said.

Spencer said if people are interested in the Peace Corps, they should first talk to her. If they are serious about joining, they should complete the 12-page application that requires two essays and three recommendations. Applicants also must complete a health exam and a series of interviews before they may be accepted.

She cautioned that people have to know for themselves whether or not they want to commit to working and living in another country.

“It is not our job to talk people into the Peace Corps,” she said.

“I encourage people who seem interested to think about it and apply, but if they are hesitant, we don’t cheerlead them into it.”

Spencer said several assets are important, but she stressed certain characteristics.

“Flexibility, a sense of humor, culturally sensitive, the ability to step back and assess situations, open minded, service-minded, are all important,” Spenser said.

An undergraduate degree is necessary, but no specific degree is mandatory, she said.

After one is accepted, the Peace Corps places the volunteer in a country that has a need for his or her particular skill.

Procella remembered receiving his placement phone call in 1970 during his final year at Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo, Calif. The Peace Corps called to ask if he would go to Afghanistan where there was a need for an animal husbandry specialist. Procella recalled saying yes and rushing to the nearby library to locate Afghanistan on the map after he hung up the phone. He had committed himself to volunteer and live in a foreign country for two years without knowing where in the world it was, he said.

In September of 1970, after Procella received his bachelor’s degree in animal science, he left for Afghanistan to begin the
three-month cultural, language and job-specific training. Procella said his training took place in a typical Afghan house that centered around a courtyard. Through the training, Procella learned to speak Pushtu, Afghanistan's national language, which he said had a lot of irregular verbs that were hard to learn.

"I spoke mostly in the present tense," he said, adding that this was sufficient enough for him to communicate with the Afghans.

Spenner left for Malawi in September of 1995, four months after finishing her undergraduate degree in international studies and environmental policy at Colby College in Maine.

She learned northern Malawi's local dialect as part of her training. She said she was fluent in the Indo-European language, Chitimbuka, by the end of her two years of service. The rest of her training concentrated on cultural skills and education specific to her job, she said.

After her training, Spenner worked as an environmental educator.

"I trained people to be conservative-minded," Spenner said. "I trained them to be effective leaders so they could pass the skills and education on to others in the community."

Volunteers receive an allowance based on the local economy. "It wasn't a lot," Procella said.

The allowance forces volunteers to live as locals.

"You couldn't buy things like orange juice," Zee said. "It was a tight budget."

In addition to the allowance, volunteers receive vacation funds, and at the end of their service they receive a cost-of-living stipend. The stipend reflects an accumulation of $225 for each month of service.

Zee said volunteers got two days of vacation each month, which she and fellow volunteers spent visiting other Peace Corps sites.

Zee visited Kyrgyzstan for one of her vacations. She found the difference between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan interesting.

"I learned how different two Central Asian countries could be," she said. "In Kyrgyzstan, they seemed friendlier and less traditional. They had a more open economy and more tourists."

When Procella wasn't breeding animals and educating farmers, he enjoyed typical Afghan pastimes. He often rode horseback in the desert and even went to the stadium to watch the championship game of Bushkashi, a popular Afghan sport.

His photos from the game show a circular field surrounded by stands that were approximately 20 rows deep. Procella said the two teams of men on horses battled each other to pick up a dead, sand-stuffed goat and carry it into the goal, which was a circle at the end of the field.

Regarding Afghanistan's present condition, Procella said, "From the looks of everything, it has gone way backward" since the Peace Corps' presence there.

From what he has seen on television, he said, "it looks like most buildings there have been destroyed."

The few buildings that existed, that is. Procella's slides of Afghanistan in the 1970s, which he presented to Western's Environmental Studies 402 class Oct. 18, show a land of rugged, cliff-sided mountains, desolate desert, few gravel roads, valleys of wheat, melon, cucumber and barley fields and ancient ruins that date back to the third century.

Procella expressed his surprise that the recent U.S. air strikes on Afghanistan lasted as long as they did.

"I thought they'd run out of targets on the first day," he said.

Zee said she was sad when she left Uzbekistan because she couldn't complete her two years of service after the bombing started in October.

Her classroom in Uzbekistan is empty and her students no longer have a teacher. The health programs that taught AIDS prevention and awareness no longer exist.

"It's already a poor economy, but it will definitely suffer more from this," Zee said.

Despite her sadness and worry for the country's future, however, Zee doesn't miss the food smothered in cottonseed oil.

"Cottonseed oil isn't good for you," she said. "We aren't allowed to cook with it in America, and in Uzbekistan, they cook everything in it. They eat with their hands, and if the cottonseed oil drips down to your elbows when you're eating plov, it's considered a good dish."
defending the FAITH

Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world but remains a mystery to many. 
Bobbie Egan discusses the religion with local Muslims in an effort to shed some light on their faith. Photos by Brendan Shriane and Stephanie Kosonen.
Jamat, the weekly congregational prayer, began 10 minutes late as hundreds of Muslims passed through a guarded security checkpoint before entering the Masjidul Jami mosque one Friday evening in Richmond, British Columbia. The mosque sits subtly behind the Blundell Road overpass, 30 minutes from the Peace Arch border. Atop the mosque's green-domed roof, ornamental gold peaks set the building apart from the neighboring suburban homes.

Imam Zijad Delic, 35, wore a long black robe and a kaffiyeh, or head cloth. A pious Muslim since birth, Delic is no stranger to war and suffering. Delic is from Kakanj, just north of Sarajevo in central Bosnia and Herzegovina. During the Balkan War, Serbians forced him and millions of Muslims to leave their country. He fled to Croatia, where he served as head priest along the southern coast of the Adriatic Sea until December 1995, when he moved his family to Richmond, B.C.

Since the Sept. 11 hijackings in New York and Washington, D.C., the mosque’s leader, Delic has become a defender of his faith, meeting endlessly with reporters from Canada and the United States to explain Islam’s complexities. He can’t recall the number of reporters he’s spoken to, or the number of panels he’s participated on, since the attacks.

Ask local Arab Muslims how their lives have changed since Sept. 11, and they might say they haven’t been threatened or intimidated. However, Muslims in Bellingham have had to adjust to the constant scrutiny of their religious beliefs, often defending their Islamic beliefs to strangers. Delic said Muslims from the mosque have come to him, apologizing for their religion, as if they were to blame or could have prevented the attacks.

“I ask them, ‘What have you done wrong?’” he said. “We are good citizens. The only Muslim you hear about is (Osama) bin Laden. He does not represent Islam. If he is found guilty of the terrorist attacks, he is guilty, but not all of Islam. Never be afraid of a Muslim, because he is afraid of a lot.”

Since the Sept. 11 attacks, the number of hate crimes against Arab-Americans and Muslims across the country has surged. Tensions between Arab-Americans and other Americans may be higher than ever, as evidenced by name-calling and hate-related deaths. Since Sept. 11, the Council on American-Islamic Relations has received more than 500 harassment complaints — ranging from threats to arson to physical abuse. In Lynnwood, a mosque was vandalized and in Spokane, Muslims stopped attending prayer services at the city’s Islamic center. In Arizona, a Sikh Indian gas station owner was killed and in Irving, Texas, six shots were fired into an Islamic center’s windows.

The United States census provides limited information about the number of Arabs living in America and local figures are unknown. However, the Islamic Society of Whatcom County estimates between 10 and 20 Muslim families reside in Whatcom County. Yet that number could be larger, given that many Bellingham Muslims travel across the border to the larger Richmond mosque.

Delic said several Muslims from United States border cities like Blaine and Bellingham attend the Richmond mosque. More than 1,300 Muslims, just a fraction of the estimated 650,000 Canadian Muslims, attend jamat on Fridays.

With more than 1.2 billion followers worldwide, Islam is the world’s second largest religion after Christianity. While most of its followers live in Asia and Africa, the Council on American-Islamic Relations estimates Islam as America’s fastest-growing religion, with about 7 million followers. Most Arab-Americans’ origins range from Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Yemen, Iraq and Palestine.

Despite the growing number of Muslims within the United States, Islam remains a mysterious and complex religion to many. News reports about Islamic fundamentalists declaring a jihad or holy war on the United States only adds to the public’s confusion.

Osama bin Laden, the accused terrorist linked to the Sept. 11 attacks, invoked the word jihad to supposedly mean holy war. But his uttering of the word does not make it so in the minds of Islamic scholars.

“There are two terms used for war in the Qur’an,” Delic said. “Jihad is not one of them. Jihad means striving, or to struggle, in defense of evil. Jihad is not a violent concept. To me, jihad (means) to be good to my community and the global village.”

Although Delic believes the terrorists should be held responsible for the attacks, he said his faith in Islam does not allow him to support the United States’ bombing of Afghanistan and the probable deaths of innocent people.

On Oct. 7, nearly a month after the attacks, United States forces launched their first military strikes against Afghanistan’s Taliban regime for harboring bin Laden. Before the air strikes began, hundreds of thousands of Afghans fled to refugee camps in Pakistan and Iran, placing heavy burdens on the governments to foster and protect innocent refugees. The Pakistani government, like many Arab countries, has agreed to provide airspace to the United States, thereby
WHAT IS ISLAM? Islam is not a new religion. There are an estimated 7 million Muslims in the United States. Islam teaches the same tenets that God revealed to all prophets throughout Judeo-Christian history. Islam is both a religion and a complete way of life. Muslims follow a religion of peace, mercy and forgiveness that are not associated with acts of violence against the innocent.

halting air travel within the country.

For local Arab-American Nadeem Israr’s parents and siblings still living in his hometown of Lahore, Pakistan, everyday life has come to a halt since the military strikes.

“Right now (in Pakistan), all the businesses and schools in border provinces are closed because of people rioting,” Israr said. “This is a huge deal. In the (United States), we have unemployment insurance as a safety net if we can’t work. In Pakistan, if you don’t work you don’t have money to buy food. There is no safety net.”

It has been 13 years since Israr moved from Pakistan to Moscow, Idaho, where he earned a bachelor of science degree in management information systems at the University of Idaho. During that time, he’s become a United States citizen and has seen his small local printing business grow.

Newspaper clippings tacked carefully to a bulletin board behind a copy machine tell triumphant stories of an immigrant business owner who learned a new language and culture. Israr is living the American dream.

Although he says people in Whatcom County have been kind and compassionate, the Sept. 11 attacks still have put him behind a microphone defending Islam.

Two months after the attacks, Israr’s desk is littered with lime green and vibrant orange brochures discussing Islam. He rolls his eyes, trying to recall how many times he’s spoken on panels. He estimates it will be 12 by the end of the week.

When asked why he bothers to speak out, Israr explains in a soft-spoken tone that he wants people to understand Islam is a peaceful religion. He speaks out because Islam is misunderstood.

“(It) is just part of the struggle to do good,” he said. “It is my jihad.”

Arab-American Bilal Hashmi is a sociology professor teaching at Western this year. (Above left) Erin Corday started the Bellingham Arab-American support group, Side-By-Side. (Right) The Masjidul Jami mosque is a prayer center in Richmond, British Columbia.
WHAT ARE THE “FIVE PILLARS” OF ISLAM?

1. **The Declaration of Faith.** A Muslim is one who professes *sha-hada*, or the affirmation of faith. A person repeats a simple testimony that affirms Islam’s absolute monotheism, and accepts Mohammed as a human being and as the messenger of God. “There is no deity but God, and Mohammed is the messenger of God.”

2. **Prayer.** *Salat*, or prayer, should be performed five times a day by a Muslim, in addition to a congregational prayer which usually takes place in a *masjid*, or mosque. Since there is no clergy or priesthood in Islam, any Muslim may lead the prayers. *Salat* is an external gesture of bowing to God, which helps Muslims cultivate their internal posture.

3. **Zakat.** The essence of *Zakat*, or tithing, is to minimize extreme material inequalities and class differences, thus minimizing the possibility of conflict within the community. *Zakat* is one of the mechanisms for Muslims to promote egalitarianism and social justice.

4. **Fasting.** Once each year, healthy adult Muslims fast during the month of Ramadan, which follows the lunar cycle. Ramadan began on Nov. 17 this year. Muslims are required to abstain from food, drink and sex from dawn until dusk. The primary emphasis of fasting is spiritual self-discipline and reflection.

5. **Pilgrimage.** *Hajj*, or pilgrimage to the holy places, is the fifth pillar of Islam. It is required of all physically and financially able Muslims to perform a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their lifetimes.

The preceding information was provided by Western visiting professor Dr. Bilal Hashmi of the Sociology Department. For more information on Islam, check out the Center for American-Islamic Relations at www.cair-net.org.
The season of giving is here again and money is tight. Karlee Rochon tells how some people in Bellingham are giving priceless presents without spending a penny. Photos by Stephanie Kosonen.

As Vale Hartley passed by, the neon blue and red "open" sign drew her in. She hadn’t planned on donating that afternoon, but she knew she was eligible again and the office was accepting walk-ins. She completed the paperwork, had her interview, donated, and within a half-hour was sitting at the square gray refreshment table, eating a banana nut Baker’s Breakfast Cookie and sipping hot cocoa.

Hartley, 46, a stay-at-home mom, has been donating blood for 26 years. When she was 20, her father, a regular donor, took her to donate her first pint. Since then, she has donated about eight gallons of blood. Donating blood is special to Hartley, for more than the fact that it helps to save others’ lives.

“In my family, it’s a way to honor special people on special occasions,” Hartley said.

When her father died of cancer seven years ago, he asked her to continue donating in his memory. When her brother died, she gave blood the day before his funeral.

Hartley is one of the 5 percent of Americans who donate blood. According to the Puget Sound Blood Center (PSBC) Web site, nearly 1,000 donors are needed each day to meet the demands for blood in the Northwest. About 32,000 pints of blood are used each day in the United States.

The PSBC has a steady flow of donors, said Bob Brokke, the Bellingham center’s supervisor. The PSBC averages between 800 and 900 donors in a day throughout the Northwest. In addition, 13 mobile centers visit schools, universities and businesses, which may have as many as 200 to 250 donors in a day.

In order to be donate, a person must be healthy, be at least 16 years old, weigh at least 110 pounds, have a healthy iron level, and not have donated blood within the last 56 days.

For years, Western has provided a healthy supply of donors...
for the PSBC blood drive. The drives occur three times each year, during fall, winter and spring quarters, blood drive coordinator Catharine Vader said.

"Western has a reputation for having great blood drives," Vader said. "In the last 10 years, we've been getting between 325 and 425 pints per blood drive."

That's the equivalent of 3,000 five-gallon buckets in the last decade.

"It's a wonderful way to do community service for the whole area," she said. "It shows Western's commitment to the community."

Western sophomore Jon Davies waited in line behind 15 other students to donate blood on Nov. 1, the last day of Western's fall blood drive. This was his fourth time donating at Western. He first donated when he was 17.

"A close friend's mother was diagnosed with leukemia," Davies said. "I couldn't participate in a bone marrow drive because I was too young. Giving blood was the alternative."

He said he continues to donate because he thinks of all the people it will help.

The process begins with a poke where the needle is inserted into a vein in the donor's arm. The blood runs from a two-foot-long tube connected to the needle, through a scale and into a collection bag. As the tube rests against the arm, the donor can feel the blood's warmth on the skin. Every three to five seconds, the donor squeezes a squishy toy or roll of bandages that he or she is given to hold. The squeezing keeps the blood flowing.

In seven to 10 minutes, the pint-size bag is full and the scale clamps down on the tube, cutting off the blood flow. The PSBC worker fills test tubes with blood, which will be sent to the lab for testing, and removes the needle from the donor's arm. A piece of gauze is placed over the small hole where the needle used to be. Finally, the donor chooses between a Band-Aid and a colorful wrap to hold the gauze in place.

Although the process is neither pleasant nor painless, most donors focus on the benefits of giving blood rather than the inconvenience.

"(Donating blood) is something that is important to do and it's an easy way to contribute to the welfare of Americans," Davies said. "I think about the people who need it, especially with what's going on in New York."

There was a rush of people wanting to donate after Sept. 11. Brokke said. "Everyone right now has almost a surplus of blood," he said. "We're having people that come in, leave a name and number to make an appointment to come in at a later date. We are hoping they become regular donors."

Hartley is happy to donate whenever she gets the chance.

"I feel great when I donate because I know that my blood doesn't go to just one person," she said.

A person's blood is seldom used as a whole, Brokke said. Instead, it is split into three components.

Each component lasts for a different amount of time; he explained. Red cells, which carry oxygen throughout the body, last for up to 42 days. Plasma, the blood's liquid, may be frozen for up to a year. Platelets, which help clot the blood to repair bruises, cuts and other injuries, are kept at room temperature and must be used within five days.

The blood doesn't normally remain unused for very long, however.

"The blood we draw today, by this time next week, will be used up," Brokke said.

Before the blood can be separated into its components and prepared for transfusion, regional center employees pick it up and bring it to Renton's testing center.

There, the blood is typed and tested for hepatitis, HIV/AIDS and venereal diseases.

The testing process is the last form of defense to screen out these different diseases. But the safety process begins at the donation center, where each donor fills out a questionnaire. The questionnaire is designed to identify those who are at high risk for contracting diseases such as hepatitis and HIV/AIDS.

Certain areas of the world are prone to different diseases, so people who have traveled in these areas cannot donate.

"There is an area in Africa where a new strain of HIV exists that there is no test for," Brokke said. "A question now exists on the survey to screen out people who have traveled there."

Another area of concern is the United Kingdom, where mad cow disease is a problem, he said.

"The human form of mad cow disease is eliminating some of the regular donor base," he said. Current regulations restrict people who have spent six months in the United Kingdom from donating.

Although many factors may restrict the number of eligible people, Hartley said, donating is still important.

"People that are eligible and can donate, meaning those that can handle needles, should," she said.

Davies said he likes the way donating makes him feel.

"I always get an elated feeling after I've donated," he said. "I don't know if it's from having less blood or if it's the feeling of donating. Either way, I feel good."

Because donating is a volunteer activity, centers that use blood for transfusion don't pay the donors.

"It's another way of protecting the blood supply," Brokke said. "We don't want to give someone an incentive to lie on the questionnaire."

If a person is being paid to give blood, they may be more likely to lie. Therefore, a high-risk person may be allowed to donate, he said.

So although donors won't receive money, they won't walk away empty handed, either.

"We do give out free cookies and juice," Brokke said.
The game may have been born on frozen Canadian ponds, but Carly Barrett finds out that fins work just as well as skates when she dives in with Western's underwater hockey team. Photos by Jennifer Collins.

With one swift flick of the wrist, the bright pink puck slides along the pool's tiled floor toward one gleaming goal at the end of the pool. In a silent world Beneath six feet of water, the players swim toward the puck, tangling into a web of frantic arms, desperately fighting for control of the small piece of metal. The underwater combat has lasted more than a minute, and the burning exhaustion inside each player's lungs makes focusing on the game difficult. Finally, the puck hits the metal goal. The loud clang signals that a goal has been scored and all the players return to the surface. Their rest is short, however, as practice has only started.

Bellingham's underwater hockey team consists of both Western students and community members. It is recognized as an official Associated Student club at Western and is the only team in Bellingham,
competing against other teams in Vancouver, British Columbia and Seattle.

Underwater hockey is played throughout the world, in Australia, South Africa, New Zealand and Western Europe. Though the sport is said to be less contact-oriented than ice hockey, players on Bellingham’s team say underwater hockey is still a very aggressive game.

“During one competition, I actually had a front tooth knocked out,” says James Luce, who plays for Bellingham’s team and also has participated on the U.S. men’s national team. “Those kinds of accidents are really rare — usually people tend to just get scraped up on their arms and legs. I had heard stories of players getting teeth knocked out before, but never wholeheartedly believed it until it happened to me.”

Luce’s teammate Alex Woodbury, an anthropology and psychology major at Western, also says the game has a rough side.

“This sport is all about contact,” Woodbury says. “Most of the people on the team are all about six feet tall, and when you add flippers and full arms stretched out, you have 10-foot-long bodies moving through the water.”

Once an opponent got to the puck before Woodbury during a face-off in practice. The player accidentally hit the puck into Woodbury’s eyebrow, leaving a still-visible scar.

Woodbury says one way for beginners to ease into the game is to have swimming and snorkeling experience.

Team member Vern Latta, 41, adds that being in a healthy physical condition helps players succeed in the sport and also makes the game more enjoyable.

“Being in good shape really allows a person to participate in the game at a more intense level,” Latta says. “In this game, most of the time is spent underwater, what we call ‘bottom time,’ the total time one spends during a given play on the pool floor. So it helps to have that lung capacity that is needed to stay down there and keep up with your opponent.”

To become good players, people must teach their bodies to perform quickly and smoothly with little air; Luce says. Learning to conserve energy, instead of constantly retreating to the surface for air, is what makes the difference in crucial plays, when one needs to be quick and aggressive. During such a moment, a player can’t waste time being at the surface, he says.

Woodbury says that for him, one of the game’s most frustrating elements is not having the lung capacity to hold large amounts of air that more experienced players like Luce and Latta have acquired over time.

“It’s a really annoying situation when I’m trying to steal the puck away from James or any other experienced player and I have to give up the battle because my lungs are burning for air,” Woodbury says. “By the time I dive back down, James is gone with the puck somewhere else and still has not returned to the surface.”

More experienced players can hold their breath for more than 30 seconds, he says, which is extremely difficult when the body is under high physical demand for longer than an hour.

Luce says tryouts for the U.S. men’s national team involved high-endurance swimming drills that tested players’ recovery time, meaning how quickly they could catch their breath and start another play, maintaining the same amount of energy and aggression throughout the entire game.

Mary Cassar, a member of Bellingham’s team, played on the 1996 women’s national team in Durban, South Africa. She too remembers her tryouts being exhausting.

“I think I probably lost five pounds that weekend,” she says. “I just remember getting straight into the water and swimming constantly.”

Both Luce and Cassar say the competition is fiercer at the national and international levels.

Cassar says many South African high schools have pools especially suited for underwater hockey and kids play in organized leagues.

Both say competing at the international level is more expensive and time-consuming than playing locally.

Bellingham’s team is not subsidized or funded by any organization, so players pay for equipment, plane tickets and any other travel costs.

But to players like Luce, Cassar and Latta, the expenses are nothing compared to the value of the friends they meet along the way.

“There is a definite feeling of camaraderie in the underwater hockey world,” Latta says. “The players from other teams that I met were extremely generous. They always offer you a place to stay, especially if you’re from out of the country.”

But world travel isn’t the only reason people choose to play this sport.

Sports involving swimming offer numerous health benefits, according to a recent American Red Cross study. Swimming uses all the major muscle groups and is an excellent workout for the heart and lungs. The sport offers just as much aerobic activity as running or any other aerobic training, with the addition of resistance training. Swimming puts zero strain on tissues and joints, which is beneficial to injured athletes or people prone to knee or hip problems.

Latta says playing on the team gives him great training for triathlons, which he competes in throughout the year.

“The winter climate here makes it difficult to get out and exercise,” he says. “I think most people would agree with me that swimming back and forth gets really boring, so underwater hockey provides cardio training, yet is much more entertaining.”

Despite the enthusiasm team members offer to anyone interested in the sport, players sometimes encounter people who aren’t thoroughly impressed, Woodbury says.

“People really give you the weirdest look when you say you have an underwater game or a practice to go to,” he says. “I was one of those people and look at me, now I’m hooked. If only those people knew what they’re missing.”
Klipsun reporter James Cassill ventures into the land of pounding music, crowded dance floors and cheap drinks to get the skinny on one of Bellingham's most popular night spots. Photos by Stephanie Kosonen.

The loud ringing of Aaron Dawson's alarm clock jolts the Western senior out of a deep sleep. The alarm is no louder than on any other school morning, but on this dreadful Friday, only hours after he was drinking and dancing at The Royal, that annoying, high pitch in his ear is about the last thing Dawson wants to hear. As he rolls over to smack his snooze button, Dawson realizes he's still wearing his blue Levi's and gray collared shirt that reek of sweat and cigarettes from the night before. Staring up at the ceiling, he thinks to himself, I swear I just went to bed... How am I going to make it to class?

With his mouth as dry as Death Valley in August, he stumbles to the bathroom. After putting his mouth under the faucet for a good 10 seconds, Dawson looks into the mirror with saggy eyes and a foggy head and wonders, Why do I do this to myself?

This description of Dawson's Friday morning may sound all too familiar to Western students who indulge in the "college night" bar scene. "When I wake up the morning after a long night at The Royal, I feel like I got hit by a runaway Mack truck," Dawson says. "Some of those days, I wish that damn truck would have killed me."

As the majority of drinking-age students know, Thursday nights are "college night" at the downtown bars. Bars run persuasive drink specials that many college students can't refuse. The Royal's claim to fame is 50-cent well drinks. College students carry a long-standing tradition of being broke, but everybody can scrape up a few quarters to put toward some booze.

With The World Famous Up & Up still offering $2 pitchers of Busch beer, and The Factory and 3B Tavern both pouring competitive drink specials, the pattern for many Thursday-nighters is to hop from bar to bar, changing the scenery and drink special every hour or so. But some students stay faithful to The Royal.

"I'm always excited for Thursday nights at The Royal," Western senior Lisa Cozart says. "Those cheap drink specials take my mind off of school right away."

The wait in line at The Royal, which opened in 1994, can be as short as five minutes or as long as an hour. To survive the often cold and wet wait outside while still wearing a revealing night club outfit, patrons should check their coats at the door for an extra $2. After waiting in line and paying their $2 cover charge, patrons enter the bar and are greeted by pounding music, mobs reminiscent of a busy day at the New York Stock Exchange, and signs advertising the various drink specials for each day of the week.

As people attempt to swim through this school of sardines, their first priority should be to take advantage of that 50-cent drink special, as it only lasts from 9 to 10 before the price jumps to a dollar. The mammoth bar is equipped with a six-foot-high wall of liquor that stretches 10 feet wide, its bottled choices ranging from the finest scotch to some of the dirtiest tequila north of Mexico. Roughly 200 dim, teardrop-shaped light bulbs dangle individually from the rafters. A 10-foot-long tree root interwoven with white Christmas lights hangs above the bar.

Royal-goers can either go upstairs, where the atmosphere is a little less rambunctious and there's less chance of having a full vodka-cranberry
drink spilled down the front of that new white shirt, or they can put on the shoulder pads and try to bully their way to the front of the bar line. The upstairs crowd appears to be more intent on carrying out a conversation or finishing their pool game, whereas the people downstairs just shout fake hellos as they race toward the packed dance floor.

"It's a good thing I'm tall," Western senior Dave Prather says. "I feel sorry for some of those people who just get trampled and pushed around near the bar. Early in the night it's like a mosh-pit at the bar. Then it shifts to the dance floor after everyone's all liquored up."

The 65-foot-long dance floor is reminiscent of a late-night underground Seattle rave, with a wall of full-length mirrors, black lights flashing, colored lights beaming in all directions and dancers grinding all over each other as if they were Siamese twins attached at the waist. Usually, there are more women on the dance floor than men. Still, there are always at least a few guys having absolutely no luck convincing any women to dance with them.

"There are just too many drunk guys that harass me," Western senior Megan Woodward says. "The dance floor is just too crowded to do the moves that I'm accustomed to."

To some, the herds of people, thumping hip-hop and dirty dancing at The Royal can be overwhelming.

"That place is like a rowdy dance club, not a bar," Western junior Camille Penix says. "I like a place like The Up & Up, where you can at least move freely and carry on a conversation."

The World Famous Up & Up's owner Ian Relay, whose bar opened in 1935, says he hasn't done much to compete with The Royal on Thursday nights.

"Cheap beer and a large room — that's all I got to offer," Relay says, wiping beer foam from his long mustache. "We don't serve hard liquor like they do, but we have our regulars."

Western's population is growing by the quarter and Bellingham's nightlife keeps growing along with it. Royal manager Huy Vu estimates 85 percent of the bar's revenue comes from students. With crowds averaging a total of 600 to 700 people on Thursdays, Vu and his staff have renovated the club to try and remain the leader of the pack.

"We're Bellingham's closest alternative to Las Vegas," Vu says with a joking grin.

He says he and his staff are going for a 1940s pool hall look upstairs. They refurbished all five pool tables within the last year and stained the walls an old-fashioned cherrywood color, with new furniture to match. They also installed new dimming lights, widened the bar and added another well, which enables them to serve drinks even faster. The Royal serves about 1,600 drinks on a busy night.

In some students' cases, however, The Royal and its 1,600 drinks seem to have taken precedence over schoolwork.

"Sometimes I have things to do, but my friends drag me in there," Dawson says. "I tell myself I'm having one drink, but once I enter that front door, it's like a swap meet; you never know what you're going to find."

One concern Western faces is "college night's" effect on students' learning. Communications Professor Karen Stout says her class sizes shrink by about 15 percent on Fridays and in-class participation suffers as well.

"On Fridays, the students are more lethargic and not quite as with it in terms of discussion," Stout says. "It might make the education process tougher, but that night life is part of college."

Knowing their bar is a part of many students' lifestyles, The Royal's management plays an active role in the Western Hospitality Alliance, a society whose primary focus is to make it safer for students to go out and have a good time.

"We come up with solutions to cut down fighting, cat-calling and harassment," Vu says. "It's good to hear the university voice its concerns."

"WE'RE BELLINGHAM'S CLOSEST ALTERNATIVE TO LAS VEGAS."

-HUY VU

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-AARON DAWSON
WESTERN SENIOR

But being a part of such an alliance does not necessarily mean the club is problem free. According to the Washington State Liquor Control Board, 142 students have been arrested on DUI charges outside The Royal since 1998. It's unknown how many citations have been issued to patrons driving home.

Some students say Royal staff members put no limit on the amount of alcohol they serve to a customer on any given night.

"I've stumbled to the bar 10 times in a night with usually only one eye open and had no trouble getting a couple drinks," Western senior Matt Zehnder says. "They're in it to make that almighty dollar."

But once the lights come up and the music stops at about 1:40 a.m., the party's over. After being herded out the door by the staff, Royal-goers have the option of grabbing a hotdog from the sidewalk vendor and walking home, catching a cab, or assisting the guy puking in the alley, who swears he'll never drink again. Whatever people choose, Vu and his staff advise them to be careful and have fun.
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