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Editor's Note

When the staff of The Burr began planning this magazine's content, we kept one goal in mind. We wanted to create a visual, enlightening publication that captures life at Kent State during the fall semester of 1993.

We kept asking ourselves: What are students doing? What are they talking about?

The answers to these questions are found throughout the pages of this magazine.

If you're like us, you're hoping that you'll land the perfect job after graduation. In this issue, we caught up with six Kent State graduates and discovered that finding the job of your dreams is possible, but it isn't always easy.

For some, their success is far above their expectations. The Burr went to the set of "The Bertice Berry Show" in Chicago to follow the KSU graduate whom TV critics are deeming "the next Oprah."

However, there's more to college than getting a degree. It's also an opportunity to be exposed to new ways of thinking. Our cover story looks at psychics and the ideals they embrace. We also examine the Aikido Club and its members' adoption of non-violence.

In this issue, we talked frankly with KSU homosexual athletes about the struggles they face.

On the lighter side, we provide a real-life look into a night as a residence security aide. We also examine the staying power of local alternative band Verrucose, which continues to send crowds moshing despite setbacks.

And with all the activities of college, who has time to get enough sleep? This issue explores the effects of cutting back on sleep.

We hope you enjoy The Burr.

— Cheryl Powell

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Photo by Disa Asgeirsdottir

THE BURR Staff • Fall 1993

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Fields of Dreams
Kent State graduates find road to success doesn’t always lead directly to areas they studied

by Julie Ralston

To a little girl whose greatest ambition was to paint the Sistine Chapel, a blank piece of white paper was “better than vanilla ice cream.”

“I could see images on paper before I even began to draw,” says Rhonda Mitchell, a 1992 graduate of Kent State. “It’s a strange phenomena.”

Mitchell began preparing for her present career as a studio portrait artist with oil painting lessons in third grade. Mesmerized by the color of people’s skin and the light shining off their hair, Mitchell recalls vivid memories: a tomboy diligently painting in her quiet bedroom, her father’s loving advice to be true to herself, guiding her to self-fulfillment and success.

“I love to paint,” Mitchell says. “I had to do what I had to do.”

But as Mitchell and five other graduates of Kent State have found, landing a job in one’s chosen field doesn’t come by dreaming alone nor is it guaranteed by a college degree. Instead, a college degree is only the first step down a very crooked, unpaved path to success. And even the person with the highest grade point average stumbles somewhere along the way.

“Kent students are finding jobs, just not as fast,” says David Baumgartner, director of Kent State’s Career Planning and Placement Center.

Baumgartner believes that any student’s success depends on his or her area of study. Today’s fields with high employment rates are “occupational specific,” such as computer science, accounting and special education.

When Mitchell began her career at Kent State, she was an art major. A self-described free spirit, she alternated between going to school and working for 10 years.

In the 1980s, she took a job illustrating a poetry magazine.

Rhonda Mitchell, a 1992 graduate of Kent State University, stands...
next to a portrait she painted of her father, whom she credits for much of her success as an artist.
But the publication lost money, and Mitchell soon found herself unemployed. She returned to school only to leave for California a few months later with an urge to find herself. After 1 1/2 years, Mitchell moved to Cleveland, where she waitressed and lived with a fellow painter.

"Graduates must be flexible and willing to travel and relocate."

"I had been content to be a waitress, but she was painting," Mitchell says. "It sort of made me jealous."

Not long after, she returned to Kent, where she began working for a framing company and eventually returned to school determined to earn a degree. Two days before graduation, Mitchell signed a contract to illustrate a series of children's books. "It was one of those 'who-you-know' things," Mitchell admits.

Although Mitchell says she realizes she'll never make a lot of money painting and illustrating, she already feels she's successful.

"I'm poor as hell, but I'm happy," she says. "My job is my own, and I work for me. Things have never been dull in my life."

Graduating with a bachelor's degree in elementary education in 1991, Ladd Gangidino thought he had it made. He had a 3.4 grade point average and had been involved in various extracurricular activities. He never thought that two years later he'd be a bouncer at a local bar.

"There are too many teachers in this area," he says. "When I went into this major it was projected that teachers would be needed, but I know other people who graduated two or three years ago who are still (substitute teaching)."

After graduating, Gangidino was offered a job by Community Base Correctional Facility. He worked as a GED instructor and an employment specialist at several correctional facilities including Glenwood Jail and Power Street, a prison for women in Akron. He says he accepted the job because he thought it would be a good stepping stone to becoming a teacher.

Gangidino worked alone, helping 30 to 40 clients a week get their GEDs and find housing or a job. Many of his clients were still addicted to drugs, some were prostitutes, and most, he says, "had the reading ability of a fourth-grader. Many didn't even know their multiplication tables or how to divide. It was impossible to be efficient."

Gangidino left after about one year because of the stress and frustration of the job. And despite the references offered by CBCF, he was still unable to find a permanent teaching position. For now, Gangidino is bouncing at the Robin Hood Inn and substitute teaching at local schools.

"I'll stay here for about three more months and see if anything opens up," he says. "It's doubtful though. I'll probably move to Arizona. I wish I could stay (in Kent), but I don't want to be in poverty the rest of my life."

Dan McCombs, interim director of the Kent Alumni Association, says he believes Gangidino's willingness to follow the job market fosters a potential for success.

"Graduates must be flexible and willing to travel and relocate," McCombs says. "It takes patience, perseverance and a thick skin."

No one could know more about patience than Mike Sorboro. After receiving a bachelor's degree in physical education with a concentration in physical fitness, and interning at the Akron Medical Center for six months, Sorboro says he thought he had the necessary qualifications to get a job at a hospital. He is now self-employed in the firewood business.

"I'm stuck in a rut," he says. "No hospitals are hiring. There's actually a waiting list to be a janitor at the Veteran's Hospital in Cleveland."

Sorboro says he did a lot of the "typical graduate stuff" while looking for a job. But because he was "very particular about where he was hired," he chose not to work through the university's Career Planning and Placement Center. Instead, he sent out resumes and made many phone calls on his own. "I tried like hell right when I got out of school, but then I got pissed and quit looking," he says.

Sorboro believes he could get a job in a fitness center for $5 to $6 an hour. But he says he would just as soon split wood.
As content as he is to stay home hunting, fishing and cutting wood, Sorboro says he eventually does want to land a job in the medical field.

"Sure, it is frustrating, but it hasn’t messed me up, turned me into some psychotic, weirdo thing," he says.

"Even though I’ll hunt and fish until the day I die, I don’t want to cut trees forever. But if there are jobs out there, you’ve got to know somebody."

McCombs believes the economy has a tremendous influence on students finding it more difficult to land jobs.

"A lot of corporations are downsizing, (leaving) many company people with fantastic educations and backgrounds without a market for their concerns," McCombs says.

He says it is imperative that students look at their college degree simply as an opportunity for employment – not as guaranteed employment in its indicated major. He is also certain that by taking risks, students will eventually find success.

"In this economy you must be creative," McCombs says. "The job market changes so rapidly. You can’t be over prepared for what’s out there. Sometimes we are only hindered by our own imaginations."

In the case of Denise Mraz, this advice rings true. A 1988 graduate of Kent State with a bachelor’s degree in interior design, Mraz had one goal throughout her college career: to design transportation interiors, such as the inside of aircraft. Her ability to be "the Queen of Flexibility," as she jokingly calls herself, has been imperative to her success.

Her career began as a sophomore, interning at the Schneller Corp. in Kent. She started as a gofer, continually gaining more responsibilities until she assumed her boss’s position during her senior year. She was working 30 to 40 hours a week and taking 18 to 19 credit hours at Kent State. However, what seemed to be the ideal situation for early success turned sour when she was fired because of disagreements with management.

"The corporate management, at the time, was all male and not appreciative of woman decision-making," Mraz says.

Her early experience had a major influence on her dream to start her own business. While still at Schneller Corp., she established Express Interiors Corp. She set up the company as a side business for future endeavors.

In 1991 she designed her own children’s product, the Fun Dor Toy. Patented in March, the toy is a fantasy entrance way to fit over a child’s bedroom door frame. Mraz licensed the rights to produce the toy to a company in Chicago. She recently received her first royalty check for $6,000.

But Mraz’s ultimate ambition is not to be a toy maker. It is to get involved in a small business and help it grow into a larger organization. In August 1992 she was hired as an account executive for Downing Enterprises in Copley.

"My training at Kent allowed me to prepare for a broad spectrum of careers," she says.

Mike Sorboro, who graduated from Kent State with a physical education degree, is currently self-employed as a wood-cutter because of cuts in hospital jobs.
As Mraz demonstrates, the ability to obtain employment does not always come from good grades alone. Actual, hands-on experience through internships is appealing to potential employers.

According to The Employers' Survey, a study conducted by the Career Planning and Placement Center in 1992, 68 percent of employers surveyed cited internships as the most valuable aspect of a graduate's resume. In addition, courses specific to the area of interest and computer skills were among the most looked for qualifications. Twenty-five percent felt a high grade point average was mandatory, and 32 percent felt extracurricular activities were necessary.

Deborah Oris, a 1992 graduate with bachelor's degrees in marketing and management and a master's degree in public administration, says she also

Matt Leeser, after graduating from Kent State University in 1992, found a job as a flight instructor at Commercial Aviation. Cory Devereaux

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believe employers are interested in more than just education.

"People want to see long-term work experience and how it relates to the job," Oris says. "(You have to) justify how your work experience adds value to the position you’re interviewing for. They want to see how it benefits them."

Oris’ success stems from her business sense in marketing herself to employers.

She began working for Kent as an admissions counselor when she was a graduate student. In addition, she was an intern at the state of Ohio Health Department in Columbus, a position which she says taught her information directly related to her present job as director of admissions at Heartland of Mentor nursing home.

“Through my years at Kent, I had a lot of work experience, and much of what I learned there pertains to my job here,” she says. “Then it was dealing with Kent students, advising them on how Kent could meet their needs. Now it’s seeing how our health care can meet the needs of the elderly.”

Though her future seems fairly stable, Oris says that even after graduating with a master’s degree, she struggled for nearly three months before finding a job. Throughout her search, she kept her options open.

“I started networking early, calling anyone who pertained to the health care industry, marketing, advertising. I made growing contacts and sent out many applications,” Oris says.

For Kent State graduate Matt Leeser, there was only one way to look for job prospects — up.

“I remember I was about 14, watching a TV show on fighter pilots. Right after that I went out to the Strongsville Airport and watched all the planes coming and going. A guy at the airport liked my enthusiasm and hired me as line crew. I knew what I wanted to do as soon as I came (to Kent State)," he says.

Graduating in 1992, Leeser has been a flight instructor at both the Kent State University Airport and Commercial Aviation since his senior year. He says he was very focused throughout school. He also says the flight program at Kent State was extremely beneficial.

“The staff was real supportive about getting me through the program,” he recalls. “I wouldn’t have gotten a better education anywhere else. It’s a very competitive industry, and there are a lot of pilots just like me out there.”

Leeser feels that his internship with Commercial Aviation helped him to “get his feet wet in flight instructing.” He intends to stay with the company, compiling the flight hours required to achieve his ultimate dream of piloting for a commercial airline.

Commercial airlines require 1,200 hours of flight time.

With about half of the necessary hours completed, Leeser says he’s remaining optimistic.

“It only prolongs my goals a little.”•
John Nelson and Andy Cross of campus security patrol the halls of Tri-Towers. A major part of security is preventing problems.
The Yellow Jackets

Residence security aides face the dark side of dorm life

by Michael Kilroy

It all starts a few minutes before 8 p.m. when Kent State residence security aides, the Yellow Jackets, buzz into briefing wearing their yellow coats with “security” written in bold, black letters across the back. They come to the small room in Korb Hall, once a dorm room that has been renovated to be security’s new nest, and mingle before the briefing begins.

They gather around a board where their schedules for the week are displayed and look for their identification numbers. They are not known by name, but by the numbers they are assigned: 453, 461, 451, 471 and so on. They look, their fingers following the chart to find their numbers and assignment times. Some grimace, some rejoice. Some attempt to switch times with others, and some go off to get a drink of water from the hallway fountain before taking their seats in front of a green chalk board.

This is the typical beginning of a sometimes atypical night for residence security employees. They face everything from people scaling buildings to unruly and drunken students. But with them, they often bring an aura of authority to a situation—a feeling that they are in charge.

However, for some residence security aides, the Yellow Jackets are all buzz and no sting. Residence security isn’t all that powerful a force.

Dave Paulchel, who has worked for security for three years, experienced the serious side of the job when he was assigned to Lake Hall. He refers to Lake Hall as “one of the worst places to be on campus” last year.

Several residents of Lake Hall would leave “acid bombs” for Paulchel. The bombs were made with a candy bar wrapper soaked in Drano and water and sealed tightly in an empty container. They release carbon dioxide and shoot sulfuric acid when lighted. He says residents would leave them in places he knew were meant for him.

“They almost got me one time,” he says. “But they were doing that. It was a guys’ floor. They would spit on the walls, piss on the floor and spread shit on paper and spread it all over the walls.”

Paulchel says that on another occasion, they put two layers of cardboard in all the light fixtures and under their doors and duct-taped the hydraulic arms of the exits so the doors wouldn’t open. When he entered the hall that night, he says, “there wasn’t a shred of light. It was completely dark.”

He turned on his flashlight to find 15 residents, standing in a line, scurry into their rooms.

“They’re like a bunch of cockroaches,” he says. “They told me later that they did that so they could see their Christmas lights better.”

He called the night supervisor and the resident director. That matter was now out of his and residence security’s hands. Security’s power over discipline is limited.

Paulchel says these two incidents show just how little
authority residence security has. He says he sometimes feels like a lion without teeth or a yellow jacket without a stinger.

"You feel like that sometimes," he says. "You feel like you've finally got them. You finally caught them doing something. RDs sometimes do things that we don't understand. Sure, you feel very helpless. You catch them, you follow procedure, but nothing ends up happening. But our job is to enforce policies — not laws — and see to it that as much as possible there is a safe, calm, academic environment. I think we do that."

Security draws its power much like a possum shows its teeth or a snake hisses when approached by danger. It draws its power through its visibility and its image. It's not fear but foreboding. The mere sight of an aide wearing a bright yellow jacket with "SECURITY" written on the back displays authority.

"That's why we wear the bright yellow jackets," night supervisor Steve Mescan says. "It spreads the word, 'Don't screw around.'

"We catch them and they think they are in trouble and they go back to their friends and say, 'Yeah, I got busted by security last night,' and it gets passed around by word of mouth. But they never were really in trouble. It promotes a positive image for security."

Although residence security aides face their share of trouble around campus, not everything they encounter is serious. Many times, aides run into people whose actions seem ridiculous.

Linda Dantuono, who has worked as a security aide for two years, says she once was called out on a noise complaint in Humphrey Hall. When she got to the scene, she found a girl who had fallen asleep on the toilet and was snoring very loudly.

On another occasion, she was called for a noise complaint and says she found a "drunk guy playing Metallica on the piano in the lounge. He was good, too."

Paulchel also has seen his share of humor on the job.

He says one of his funniest experi-
ences happened when he was working in Small Group. When he went to investigate a noise complaint, he found a woman, naked, barking on all fours like a dog.

"Sure, you feel very helpless. You catch them, you follow procedure, but nothing ends up happening."

"When you see something like that, you just sort of look, and you’re paralyzed. You just don’t know what to do," he says.

Dantuono and Paulchel are two of about 75 students who work for residence security. Most work 20 hours a week in shifts of four or eight hours.

To become a member of residence security, one must go through three intensive interviews.

Larry Emling, director of residence security, says the only major requirement is a 2.2 grade point average and enrollment in more than six credit hours.

He says for every three that apply for the job, only one is hired.

The first step is an interview with two to four security aides and either Emling or Area Coordinator Kimberly Macon. The second interview is with just Emling or Macon, and the third interview is a field interview where the candidate goes out with an aide for about an hour.

This third interview is the most important. "It gives them an opportunity to see if this is really what they want," Emling says. "It gives them the chance to see the job up front and see if they will enjoy it."

Once accepted, their job is simple: they are to patrol the residence halls and the surrounding areas. However, they are not police.

"We tell students who apply for the job that if they are looking for excitement, they probably won’t get it working for security," Emling says.

The nights may not always be exciting, but they are often entertaining...

9:17 p.m. Koonce Hall. On patrol, Paulchel watches a resident stumble out of his room and into the bathroom. He waits for him to come back out. Paulchel approaches him when he does.

"How much have you had to drink?"

"I don’t know," the resident replies as he stumbles, barely able to stand. His eyes are bloodshot and his pupils are dilated. He leans against the wall to keep himself from falling. "I don’t plan on having anymore to drink tonight."

The words barely come past his lips. He gropes for the door and finally grabs hold of the knob.

"Go lie down," Paulchel says.

"Good idea." The resident enters his room, and Paulchel tells his roommate to make sure he doesn’t drink anymore.

"He’s indulged in a little too much joviality," Paulchel says as he continues his patrol.

Residence security’s major duty is to patrol the halls for noise, alcohol and visitation violations. These policies are listed in the Hallways guide, which can be found on every dorm room dresser the first day of the school year.

Several members of residence security agree that the new visitation policy, which allows 24-hour visitation in upperclassman dorms and limited 24-hour visitation in underclassmen dorms, is yet another policy chipping away at the power of security aides. Because of the new policy, Paulchel believes that some violations won’t be caught.

"(Before) you would hear a guy’s voice in a girl’s room and you could approach it and knock," Paulchel says. "You could find a lot of other violations that way, like beer. Now, you don’t have cause to approach."

Jim Redich, who has worked for campus security for 1 1/2 years, says that he too believes the new visitation policy may hamper security’s efforts to enforce policies. "I think it sucks. There is no way now to tell the difference. Visitation is now too easy to get away with."

Dantuono likes the new visitation policy. But she also sees potential for trouble. "It’s going to be interesting. I think there may be an increase in rapes and fights and stuff, but I like it because visitation was a thing that has always given security a bad name. I don’t feel like we would be losing out on anything."

They all agree that visitation violations tend to be the most common as well as the most interesting of the vio-

Security aides Scott Conklin and Lisa Evans check their walkie talkies and IDs before going out for a long night of patrolling the KSU campus.
lations they encounter ...

12:23 a.m. Altman Hall. Security aides Rani Hassel and Redich are called for a visitation violation from an RSA in Altman Hall. When they get there, they find that there is an alcohol violation. Visitors to the room are being uncooperative.

“What’s your name, sir?” Redich asks.

“I want to know what’s going to happen to me if I come out there,” a man yells from inside the room.

“Do you go to school here?”

“I don’t drink. I don’t do drugs. No one talked to me. I was just lying in bed wondering what was going on,” the man says as he approaches the door and enters the hallway. Hassel explains to him the “joint responsibility” policy that says any violation by a member of a room will result in punishment for all occupants of the room.

12:39 a.m. Blue slips are handed out and the visitors are escorted out of the building. The situation is resolved.

Certain nights and the time of year dictate just how busy — or bored — residence security aides will be while they are on duty.

Because many students go home on the weekend, Thursday is a popular night to socialize with friends and the busiest night for residence security, Emling says. But that trend may change because of the new visitation policy that allows weekend guests in underclassmen halls.

Mescan says that even certain hours of the night can determine how many problems an aide encounters.

“It’s almost like clockwork,” Mescan says. “There are two waves of people who come home from the bars. The first wave is people coming home to beat the crowd at about 2 a.m. The second wave comes along at about 3:30 a.m.”

Mescan says a security aide never knows what to expect in the wee hours of the morning...

2:56 a.m. Leebrick Hall. Paulchel gets a noise complaint that a woman is pounding on a door in that hall. He confronts her and she throws her arms up and follows her out.

Later it is discovered that the woman’s boyfriend called the noise complaint on her.

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2:56 a.m. Leebrick Hall. Paulchel gets a noise complaint that a woman is pounding on a door in that hall. He confronts her and finally gets her to come down to the lobby with him.

“My boyfriend is up there fucking some bitch,” she says.

“What’s your name?”

“I’m not telling you who I am.”

“Why don’t you tell me who you are. It will make it easier on you. Just tell me who you are, and you can leave. Otherwise, I’ll have to call the police and you’ll have to wait for them to come down here and you will have to tell them your name anyway.”

She ignores him and tries to leave. Paulchel stops her. He is joined by a fellow security aide, who also asks her for her name.

“Jill Abbott,” she says.

“No you’re not. That’s a soap opera character,” he says. “You can do this the hard way or the easy way.”

“Fine. I’ll wait in the lobby for the police,” she says as she walks toward the lounge.

“Fine. Super. I can go sit down and get a little rest,” Paulchel says in frustration as he throws his arms up and follows her out to the lounge.

Soon, the police come and question her. Later it is discovered that the woman’s boyfriend called the noise complaint on her.
3:20 a.m. The woman is free to leave.

Residence security's relationship to campus police is that of liaison, Mescan says. "We have a real good working relationship with the police department," he says. "The thing about it is they don't discourage us. We look at ourselves as the right-hand men of the police department. We separate the cheerleaders from the actors. Especially in fights like those we had the beginning of last spring semester. We blocked off and kept people from getting too close."

Overall, Mescan says residence security's mere presence and frequent interaction with students in the dorms is a key to the program's overall success.

"We talk a lot about the idiots we deal with," Mescan says. "But there are a lot of good people out there. Some college kids do some pretty stupid things. But we're just out here to protect them. We just want to protect them, that's all."

Matt Meyers and Andy Cross of residence security knock on a student's door after receiving a loud music complaint.

Cory Devereaux

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THE BURR 13
Students cutting back on sleep often don't realize the risks

by Michael Pistella

The student's arms are sprawled on his desk, his hands hanging over the edge. His face is buried in the crevasse created between his arms and the veneer desk top. The only movement comes from his chest as he breathes. He finally wakes to the sound of notebooks slamming shut and people streaming out of the classroom.

This is a familiar scene on most college campuses. Many students think that the only danger of sleeping through a lecture is drowning in a pool of drool on the desk. But according to researchers and psychologists, sleep deprivation can negatively affect bodies and minds.

"Lack of sleep doesn't make a person less intelligent," says Mark Ryland, a neurologist and supervisor of the sleep laboratory at Robinson Memorial Hospital in Ravenna. "The underlying reason why sleep deprivation affects the intellectual functions is that the level of alertness and consciousness is reduced under (sleep deprivation)."

The result, Ryland says, is people are less able to synthesize information presented to them when they are sleep deprived. Learning, therefore, is affected.

Sleep studies done with people who have intentionally deprived themselves of sleep have shown that they go through periods called micro-sleeps. During these micro-sleeps, people are awake and seem fully alert, but their brain waves are functioning as they would during sleep.

Because they take away from the ability to concentrate, these micro-sleeps can also affect learning, says Carla Geier, a sleep researcher and coordinator at the Sleep Disorder Center at Akron General Medical Center.

"Most students probably have had this occur to them," Geier says. "You might be in class and you’ll miss something, maybe the most important part of the lecture, but you won’t even realize it. You just feel like (the professor) was just babbling."

This "zoning out" is experienced by many students, especially during class, and can last up to 15 or 20 minutes.

"In terms of short-term dangers, micro-sleeps can be dangerous because you think you’re alert and ready, but you’re not," Geier says. "It’s just like not remembering when you actually fall asleep. When a micro-sleep occurs, you don’t realize that it’s happening.

"The long-term effect of micro-sleeps is that they are hazardous to your learning. Your brain is too busy going through the sleep process."

Geier also says sleep-deprived individuals simply make more errors than their well-rested counterparts.

Amy Backos, a senior psychology major, says she often falls asleep during her classes. She continually feels tired during the day after sleeping an average of six
hours every night.

"I feel less attractive, less mentally prepared, less witty and my eyes get dark, especially when I get only three or four hours," Backos says.

"I feel less attractive, less mentally prepared, less witty and my eyes get dark, especially when I get only three or four hours (of sleep)"

She admits that she would probably feel better if she got eight hours a night. But she says she has too many things to do.

"The things I have to do are just too important," Backos says. "My dream is to not have to sleep at all. That's a recent fantasy of mine. You'd get so much more done."

Christopher Busch, a senior psychology major, says more sleep is virtually impossible for him.

"I sleep about four to five hours a night on average, but then sometimes I sleep only one or two," says Busch.

"My schedule is weird and I have a lot of school work and hours at work. I don't have time to sleep right."

To be considered sleeping right, Ryland says most sleep experts agree the average person should sleep eight to 10 hours a night.

"People can get by on less, and many do, but they can function better with eight to 10 hours," he says.

Geier says that some sleep studies have shown that college students actually need at least 10 hours of sleep to function best, even more than children need.

"It's more because of the mental processes college students have to go through," Geier says.

Eric Balderston, a senior anthropology major, agrees that it is difficult to get enough sleep during the semester. He says he stays up until at least 2 a.m. and doesn't start classes until 10 a.m. With an 18-hour course load and a 10-hour work week, Balderston says it's difficult to find time to sleep.

"I try to go to bed by midnight, but it always falls through," he says. "I'll
sit there and find something I have to do. I’ll think, ‘Wow, I’ve got all these things to do.’ I try to do them earlier, but I’ll put it off and start late in the evening. I’ll think I can get done by 12, but sure enough I’ll look at the clock and it will be 2:30 a.m.”

Staying up late because of studying is a consistent reason many students have difficulties falling asleep, says Al Grzegorek, associate director of University Psychological Services.

“Anxiety and tension very frequently lead to sleep disruptions,” Grzegorek says. “If you’re tense and anxious when you are lying in bed, and you’re one of these people who’s always going over in your head what happened during the day, what you have to do tomorrow or making lists in your head, that anxiety and tension will cause you to have difficulties getting into a sleep pattern.”

The difficulty may also lead to the delayed onset of sleep.

These sleep disruptions can last weeks or months.

But Grzegorek warns against taking sleep medications to help, especially for more than one night and without consulting a physician or psychologist. Sleep medications create a chemical sleep rather than a natural sleep.

“Sleep medications modify some of the most important parts of the sleep cycle,” Grzegorek says. “They’ll modify the dream state (REM sleep) and the heaviest phase of sleep, delta sleep.”

The last two stages of sleep, which include delta sleep, are the most important. It is in these stages that the body and mind are at their most restful. Without these stages, sleep is less beneficial.

There are also drawbacks to chemicals that help a person stay awake.

“Caffeine is a nasty drug, not good for you at all,” Geier says. “Physicians liken it to nicotine. It’s very addictive and it’s easy to build up a tolerance. It’s especially nasty to withdraw from.”

Many people may not realize the harm in caffeine because it’s available over-the-counter or in a can of supercharged cola. But frequent use of caff-

Dear Students,

December is a natural time to take stock of the year about to end and to look to the year that is just around the corner. At Kent, the past year -- particularly this Fall Semester -- has been marked by a number of initiatives that make you, the students, a priority.

A major focus of recent months has been a renewed commitment to student success. It’s a concept that is implicit in all we do, yet we know we can all do a better job of coordinating programs and offices that serve students to help them operate with maximum effectiveness.

With a concerted effort to improve both our coordination and communication, Kent students will know we’re intensifying our part in helping them do their best to achieve success -- all the way through graduation, and well beyond.

The University recognizes that the goal of helping everyone “make it” to graduation means we have a great deal of work to do in the area of retention. How do we accomplish this? By improving academic advising; by ensuring that students who need help get it as early as possible; by keeping lines of communication between students and faculty and students and the administration wide open; by keeping in mind that students are individuals with individual needs; and by building a campus environment in which there is room for and respect for all people and all viewpoints.

Our goals won’t be realized overnight, but by making student success a University-wide priority, we set the stage for many positive outcomes.

In a few days, at winter Commencement, it will be my great pleasure to greet many of you who have already succeeded in completing a degree. I wish you the best of luck in all your future endeavors.

And good luck to all of you during finals week!

Sincerely,

Carol A. Cartwright
President
feine can result in anxiety, depression, severe headaches and lethargy after just a few days without it. Heavy, long-term use can also cause irritation and problems in the stomach and even cardiac abnormalities, Geier says.

Chemicals like caffeine that help you stay awake will also disrupt sleep patterns, says Dr. Patrick Janovick, interim chief of staff at the Kent State University Health Center.

"With a lot of people we see, especially at finals week when they are trying to pull all-nighters and to stay up by artificial means like caffeine and NoDoz, when they do get to sleep, they aren't getting quality sleep," Janovick says. "They don't make it into the deepest part of sleep, and they are starting the next day in debt."

losing sleep within the deep stages of sleep leads to other problems psychologically, Grzegorek says. A person may have difficulty focusing or maintaining an adequate attention span and short-term memory. He or she may feel touchy or irritable and be unable to cope or adapt to situations and feelings of depression.

Ryland says the loss of the last two stages of sleep may contribute to a tendency to get sick.

"There seem to be certain aspects of the immune systems that kick in in the last two deep stages of sleep," Ryland says. "If the stages do not occur or do not last as long or as often as they should, a person will be less healthy than (he or she) could be."

Busch says he definitely feels less healthy during semesters riddled with sleep deprivation.

"I get sick every other week," he says. "Then I'm forced to sleep a lot and I feel better. But then I start to not sleep a lot again and get sick again. It gets to be a cycle."

Balderston says he tries to make up sleep on the weekends. "I'll go to bed about 2:30 a.m. and sleep until noon," he says. "I'll eat something and then usually take a nap from 1 p.m. to about 3 or 4 p.m."

But many sleep researchers say it's impossible to make up lost sleep.

"You have to have a better sleep
"hygiene pattern," Ryland says. "The only way to solve sleep debt is (to break) that pattern of sleep loss."

Geier agrees that a healthy sleep pattern best solves sleep debt, but she says a person can and has to make up the lost sleep sometime.

Grzegorek says students' irregular sleep schedule and common habit of sleeping through the afternoon on weekends disrupts their sleep patterns. It's actually best for people to go to sleep around the same time every night and wake up around the same time every morning.

"It's important for people, regardless of what schedule they go on, to follow a steady sleep schedule," Grzegorek says.

However, actually getting enough sleep is difficult, even for people who realize lack of sleep can be harmful.

As someone who knows a great deal about sleep and its importance, Geier says she still understands students' tendency to deprive themselves of enough sleep.

Despite her position at the Sleep Disorder Center, Geier admits to depriving herself of sleep. She works at the center full time while working on a master's degree in business administration. She says she often stays up late into the night.

"I will eat fruit and drink water with lemons to help me stay up," she says. "I eat and drink what makes me feel refreshed so I can feel as good as I can while I stay up. And I don't study for more than a half-hour without taking a five-minute break. That helps to keep my concentration going."

Grzegorek says he also understands that college students will repeatedly deprive themselves of sleep. "School is a sleep deprivation problem itself," he says. "School presents a lot of opportunities for some real sleep problems, and you really have to pay attention to that as an issue.

"It is a major problem on any college campus and you're really hurting yourself. It's almost as if you put $10 in the bank each week and withdraw $11. Eventually, you will use up whatever reserve you had at that rate."
For New Age believers, the psychic phenomenon means more than just gems and traveling gypsies

by Angela Gent

The scene is a forest. There are people all around, chanting. There is a huge fire with flames leaping up — and in the middle of the flames is a black man, burning.

Marcy, a Kent State theater major, has been haunted by this recurring nightmare for years. She went to psychoanalysts, who told her what they thought the dream meant. But the dream came back.

After years of going to psychics for fun, Marcy decided to go to a psychic for help.

The psychic led Marcy through a past life regression session, in which Marcy relived a past life — the dream. It was the life of a Southern white male Ku Klux Klan member. Marcy asked not to be identified by her real name for fear that people will believe the values of her past life experience to be her own values.

Past life regressions are just one facet of self-exploration that is drawing people to psychics. This movement, known as the New Age Movement, is gaining followers across the country and in the city of Kent.

The New Age Movement is considered by some to be a way of life in which people look within themselves for answers. It is a collage of various religions, including Hinduism and Christianity, and is interlocked with Native American, Egyptian and other cultures. New Age thought encourages spiritual growth and the search for a higher consciousness.

Sociology professor Jerry Lewis says people always have been interested in predictions of the future. He believes recent interest has been fueled by the explosion of television infomercials and 900 numbers for psychics.

"There has been an increase in interest in New Age (nationally), but readings go all the way back to Biblical times," Lewis says. "We're always looking for ways to know the future."

Local events have reflected that interest. Many people in Kent are being drawn to psychic fairs and tarot card readings to hear their futures, to find out how to heal themselves spiritually, mentally and physically, or just for entertainment.

The Rev. Colleen DeVincentis, certified in the Church of Inner Wisdom, is one Kent resident who believes that the time is right for everyone to take psychics seriously.

"A lot more people are being drawn," says DeVicentis, whose certification allows her to perform weddings and other ceremonies legally in the state.

"A lot more people are more psychically open than what they were before. It's a lot of what has been prophesied through all different realms, be it in Native American or the Bible. It's a coming of the New Age, a new level of awareness and consciousness."

One of the ways New Age is expanding into the mainstream is through psychic fairs. Throughout the day, psychics give readings, which differ in variety with each reader. Several presentations are given by psychics about anything from how to read tarot cards, runes (small, clay tablets with symbols representing ideas related to the subconscious) and past lives to chakras (areas in the body where energy is concentrated), balancing energy and healing massages.

The fairs often help psychics and patrons share information and network, but they are also popular events for making a profit.

Vendors set up tables displaying wares of the metaphysical. Varying decks of tarot cards, each different in design, size, color and illustration, lay alongside books about meditation, spirits, crystals and astrology. Necklaces with sterling silver dolphins clutching crystals and half-moons on a string hang on wooden sticks above the tables. Native American dream catchers, incense holders and protein drink mixes are lined up on the tables. And after shopping, patrons can get a massage.

Lori Overholt, a spiritual psychic adviser and healer, has been conducting readings at Brady's Cafe every Tuesday night for more than a year. She has also noticed the rising interest in psychic phenomena and agrees there is a reason for it. She says psychic fairs are appearing everywhere.

"Last year was a year of opening up all over the world," Overholt says. "It was universal. And this year people are carrying over what they were open to last year."
Colleen DeVincentis, a spiritual healer, teaches a class that meets at the Kent Unitarian Universalist Church every Thursday night.
People are going to these psychic fairs and tarot card readers for many reasons. Some go just for fun. Others go to test the reader’s knowledge. Yet others go to the fairs out of curiosity to see what all of the mystery is about.

Michelle Boardman, a Kent resident, has friends who sometimes do readings but says it’s only for entertainment.

“If I’m having a bad day or I’m bummed out, it kind of picks me up,” Boardman says. “It’s fun when people tell you things that are going on in your life and they don’t even know about it. It’s like a game, but there’s that chance something might happen.”

But many local people don’t consider it a game. They go to psychic fairs to seek out tarot card readers and spiritual consultants, to discover insight and healing. These people take a deep interest in it and begin to learn the art themselves.

Bob Decker, a recent Kent State graduate, found an interest in psychic powers when he discovered stone runes at a county fair.

“I bought them not knowing what they were,” Decker says. “Then I bought a book on tarot cards. For some reason, it really interested me.

“I’ve never been an extremely religious person, but I’m a very spiritual person. This is something I never found in the church. This is just one way to explore that and see what’s out there.”

Decker believes a lack of fulfillment in conventional religions is just one thing that is fueling the fire behind the increased interest in New Age thought.

Psychics say they have many means of gaining insight. Besides tarot cards, psychics use crystals, gems, pendulums, runes and birth dates. Others have lesser known methods.

Jacqueline Deegan, a Kent psychic adviser and consultant, uses what she has deemed “psychometric graphology.” This is what she considers a cross between psychometry, a means of reading another person’s energies by holding an object belonging to them, and graphology, which is handwriting analysis. Deegan says by studying how a person crosses a “t,” makes a loop or closes the top of a letter, she can tell different things about his or her personality and future. For instance, Deegan says by the size of a person’s “e” she can tell whether he or she will be having financial problems.

Like Deegan, in addition to doing readings and consulting, many psychics give lectures or offer classes on topics from tarot card reading and runes to healing and meditation techniques.

Psychics teach classes to help men and women get in touch with themselves. This is also the way some psychics earn their income.

“A lot of my classes are teaching people how to get in touch with the divine spark within, how to work with it, what’s there for that person,” DeVincentis says. “A lot of what I do in the class is just teaching people how to get in touch with that inner part that they’re always trying to get to survive, to fight for and hang onto, but half the time they’re afraid to look at and see what’s there.”

Overholt teaches classes on tarot
card reading, color therapy (a process of affecting a person's mood with color), crystals, numerology (determining a person's destiny by using his or her birth name and date), chakras and energy.

Kent State students take these classes. De Vincentis says traditional college-age students are open to new ideas.

"As far as the growth in things around here, I have found amazement just working with the younger (people) and their awareness," DeVincentis says. "They're consciously aware, and all they need is some guidance and some direction to help them understand."

By going through her past life regression, Marcy says she was forced to deal with her feelings. She was faced with something she now thinks that happened in a past life, something the psychic says was holding her back in this life.

During her past life regression, Marcy says she not only witnessed the burning of a black man, she watched as the men around her torched his house and then raped his wife.

In the regression, Marcy says she joined the men that raped the woman. Stranger yet, she says she doesn't know why. The man in her regression did not want to be part of the violence.

Throughout the regression, which took place at a psychic fair, Marcy says she was aware of others in the room yet was unable to stop herself from how she was reacting.

"It was like all of a sudden I wasn't around," Marcy says. "I was a witness to everything. All of the tears I didn't want to come out, came out. I was laughing at one point. I was crying when he was crying. I was shaking when he was shaking. I was completely out of control."

Marcy emerged from the room an hour after she had entered — emotionless.

Some people leave the reading room smiling. Others leave in tears. Sheila Weil, a senior graphic design major, left the psychic fair in anger.

Weil says the psychic gave her a tarot card reading that she didn't want to hear, even though she knew it was right. "She basically told me what I already knew, but I didn't want to accept it," Weil says.

Joanne Levy, a senior liberal arts major and friend of Weil, was not pleased with a reading she received.

"She didn't seem very clairvoyant," Levy says about the psychic. "When I walked out of there, I was like, 'What a hoax.'"

Whether or not people feel they receive a good reading depends on several factors. One is the person's attitude about the reading. Another factor is the connection between the psychic and the subject.

The kind of information psychics give their subjects varies with the reader. Some readers won't tell people bad news. But Deegan and Overholt both believe it is better to tell someone bad news so they can prepare for it, rather than have them just expecting the good.

Deegan compares it to a trip. She says it is great to know a trip to Cleveland will be smooth and trouble-free, but it is even better to know about any construction and traffic jams along the way.

Overholt agrees: "As readers, we have the responsibility to tell people (negative) things. That doesn't mean I say, 'Oh, you're going to die in a horrible car accident,' or 'You're going to get a horrible disease,' but there is a responsibility to tell people things."

Some people desperately seek readings despite negative interpretations. And they are willing to pay a high price.

While prices for readings vary with the psychic, some may be as high as $150 per reading. Local psychics generally have lower costs for college students. A 15-minute reading at a psychic fair usually costs about $15.

Despite the popularity of the growing New Age Movement, many people still do not believe in psychic phenomena. For instance, some people do not accept the concept of astral projection.
Before there was the New Age Movement, before there was Christianity, there was paganism. The beliefs of pagans today combine influences from other traditions and call for followers to worship nature.

Sir Kevyn GreyOwl Shadowdrake, a Kent State student who prefers to use his pagan name rather than his real name, says paganism is more cultural and more of a religion than New Age. He says New Age is something that can be added to one's existing religion.

"The Pagan Movement is primarily nature-based. It's very ecological," says Shadowdrake, a first-degree priest of the Wicca religion. "(Pagans) honor nature around us because we can see aspects of nature in ourselves as well."

This inherent respect for nature is reflected in pagan celebrations. Some of the pagan holidays center around the cycles of the moon, such as the full or new moon. Other holidays center around the seasons.

Samhain (pronounced sow-an) is perhaps the best known pagan holiday. It is the Pagan New Year, or what most people call Halloween. Samhain is celebrated to signify the coming season of introspection — winter. It also serves as a memorial to the deceased.

Although many people may envision witches casting spells when they think of pagans, students here who follow its doctrines say this simply is not the case.

Will Giorgini, a Kent State student who was brought up as a Roman Catholic, says when he first became interested in paganism, he was surprised to learn that other religious celebrations are reflective of pagan holidays.

Shadowdrake has joined with other Kent State students and Kent residents to form the Pagan Awareness Coalition of Kent, a group devoted to dispelling myths and misconceptions about pagans.

A popular misconception about pagans is that they are strange, evil people who put curses on others or sacrifice people or animals in the name of Satan. Shadowdrake says this stereotype simply is inaccurate.

"Ninety percent of pagans are good and right. They're good-natured people who aren't out to hurt anybody," Shadowdrake says. "Because of the drive in Christianity to drive out all religions, (paganism) has been associated with satanic activity. One of the deities of paganism is the Horned God, or God of the Hunt."

Witchcraft sometimes plays a large part in pagan celebrations. But contrary to most views, witchcraft is not intended for malicious purposes, Shadowdrake says.

There is also no animal sacrifice involved in pagan rituals.

"Flesh sacrifice is extremely taboo," Shadowdrake says. "No animals are cut. No people are cut."

— Angela Gent
a state in which a person's consciousness is said to be projected away from the body and into different planes of existence. During this state, some psychics say a person can commit an act with the physical body while his or her mind is astral projecting.

Many people don't believe in or accept psychic phenomena because they see it as something evil. William Morris, a freshman journalism major, says he does not consider himself an extremely religious person, but because of his religious beliefs, he says psychic powers should not be explored.

"It says in the Bible very clearly that God forbade his people or anyone who followed him from practicing divination or sorcery," Morris says.

Ken Carver, a campus minister with Chi Alpha, supports Morris' statements. He says that dealing with psychic powers is evil, regardless of one's intent.

"When you open yourself up to the source of these kinds of things, there is an invitation of the demonic, even if (a person's) motive is good," Carver says. "Anything that gets a person seeking fulfillment, assurance or identity outside of the creator God who made them, anything that leads them away from that, is on the other side."

Doug Davis, a psychic consultant in Cleveland, says that the negative religious attitude toward psychic phenomena is usually a result of the fear induced by conventional religion combined with influences in society.

"People are very threatened by (psychic powers)," Davis says. "They don't understand. We're all taught not to go with our hearts but to analyze everything. Using logic gives people security, and people will not let go of old belief systems."

In addition to the conflicts of religious interests, psychics believe they are still being stereotyped as eccentric or "suffering from delusions."

Overholt says when one young man came to her house for a reading he said, "Boy, you don't look anything like I pictured you."

Overholt responded with a laugh, "What? You expected me to be wearing a turban and looking into a crystal ball?"

Despite skeptics, many people have found peace and contentment in New Age thought. Some, in fact, have adopted it as a doctrine for living their lives.

The philosophies behind it are ideals psychics hope will become a way of life for everyone.

"There's a lot of letting go (of conventional religions) going on and a lot of lessons now," Davis says. "There is a purging of negative energy. This is a great time."

"Every single philosophy or religion is being challenged now. People are being challenged. It's happening all over the world. Everyone will eventually come to a point where they will let go of those old belief systems."**

Lori Overholt, a spiritual psychic adviser and healer, performs a reading at Brady's Cafe.
Perched atop a Cadillac, KSU graduate Bertice Berry waves to the homecoming crowd along Main Street. With her are long-time friend and
Talking Up a Storm

Kent State's own Bertice Berry sweeps into national syndication with her new TV talk show

by Darlene Jeter

Bertice Berry, host of a new issue-oriented national talk show, stands backstage at a TelePrompTer in a Chicago studio reading aloud the words in preparation for a show titled "Misdiagnosis ruined my life."

Dressed in a dark gray palazzo pants suit, she balances her right foot on the two-inch heel of her black shoe. Her voice quiets and soon reaches a screeching halt as she turns and runs out of the studio in tears.

The audience doesn't know that Berry was just overtaken by the thought of a doctor misdiagnosing patients who are scheduled to appear on her show. When the audience members see her later, after the last reading of the TelePrompTer, she is smiling. She is the comedian. But the emotional tears are part of the compassionate demeanor of Berry, the sociologist.

The Kent State alumna, who served as the grand marshal of this year's Kent State Homecoming parade, combines the roles of scholar and comedian as she launches a successful venture into national syndication. In fact, her show premiered in September in 93 percent of the United States viewing households. But despite the notoriety, the talk show host continues striving to connect with common people.

As part of an affirmation ritual before each show, Berry stands in a circle holding hands with the show's guests and reaffirms her role of bringing insight to issues. She also thanks the guests for coming on the show.

Before the affirmation begins for one show, which deals with people saving their relatives' lives by giving blood or an organ, she cracks a joke.

"I feel like an organ donor every time my family asks me for money," she says, making everyone in the room chuckle.

As she holds hands with her guests, she becomes serious as she lowers her head as if to pray.
But her solemnity is broken as she steps on the set.

 Welcomed by a hyped crowd, Berry flashes a penetrating smile that grabs everybody’s attention. Soon they begin to smile, too.

 “Hi, how y’all doing?” she says as the purple and pink lights flicker on the purple set. She walks to the opposite side of the studio and introduces herself.

 The clapping drowns out her voice. “How y’all doing?” she asks again.

 The pounding of hands slowly quiets as she begins to brief the crowd on the content of the show.

 She rushes to get in place for the tapping. “Ooh, nice shoes,” says Berry as she points to a woman’s shoes in the second row. She continues toward the steps where she stands during her show.

 “Five, four, three, two, and we’re on,” says Dan Ford, the stage manager. The words on the TelePrompTer slowly begin to roll across the screen. “Welcome to ‘The Bertice Berry Show,’” she says. “Today our show deals with...” she stutters. Laughter ripples in the audience.

 “I hate it when I mess up,” Berry says as she falls to her knees on the panel stage. The audience seems to appreciate her frankness. “She’s cool,” one audience member observes.

 During breaks, the studio seems to convert into a stage for Berry’s stand-up routines.

 “Do I have lipstick on my teeth?” Berry asks the stage manager as she shows her teeth. “Because you know people won’t tell you.” Laughter fills the room.

 The panel guests start giving summaries of their stories.

 As the stage manager holds a 30-second card, Berry wraps the show up. “Peace,” is the last word to flow from her lips. This isn’t a nifty advertising gimmick for Berry. Her desire for peace goes back to her days as a graduate and doctoral student at Kent State from 1982 to 1988. She was known for intervening between fighting couples in downtown Kent.

 In fact, Berry wears dreads, a hairstyle that symbolizes an appreciation of African heritage. When she first got the contract to do a talk show, she was asked to wear a more conservative hair style.

 Her response: “I will go bald first.”

 Connie Butler, a secretary in the departments of sociology and anthropology and Berry’s good friend, says she isn’t surprised at her friend’s success. She remembers Berry ending her stand-up routines by singing the song “Reach out and touch somebody’s hand.”

 “It seemed like when she talked to you, she cared about what you had to say,” Butler says. The flip side of her outgoing personality is determination.

 “She has what it takes to go,” Butler says. “Whatever Bertice wanted, she was going to get it.”

 Determination also served as the driving force behind her success as a Kent State student. Because of not being advised properly, she says she scheduled for 18 hours her first semester as a graduate student. A full load at the graduate level is nine hours. Nevertheless, she finished her master’s courses in one year and maintained a 4.0 grade point average.
As a scholar, Berry brings an understanding of sociological problems to her talk show.

"The way we’re going at it is not to do a show on race relations or do a show on gender relations," Berry says. "We are including in all the shows those aspects of whatever it is we’re talking about. Because these problems are ongoing problems, you can’t say that you addressed it in one show."

Berry, unlike a lot of people who associate peace and tranquility with money, finds comfort in having power over her talk show as co-executive producer with less pay.

Berry, whose contract is with Twentieth Television, was offered a $500,000 signing bonus by King World, a production company that outbid seven other companies. Her salary would have been determined later.

Berry declined.

"People from Twentieth couldn’t believe it," Berry says. "They got scared because they realized that there was not a lot they could dangle in front of me to make me do what they thought they could get me to do.

"It (the money) didn’t mean anything. Having control and the last say means a whole lot more, and the money will come," she says as her hand motions become rapid and a brass Africa on her right pinky finger becomes apparent.

Berry grew up poor in Wilmington, Del., but a desire for money hasn’t played a pivotal role in her career. Rather, her family remains central in her life.

With the hustle of changing to a new career, Berry says her life was hectic and she often sought refuge in prayer. She found stability after receiving custody of her ill sister’s three children.

"The day before I got custody of the children, I was praying for humility and stability. Here they are in disguise," she says about the boys, ages 2 and 8, and the girl, 8 months. She doesn’t mention their names for privacy and safety reasons.

Although Berry says it’s inevitable that she is compared to other talk show hosts, particularly Oprah Winfrey, she says the fame hasn’t gone to her head.

"I haven’t changed. The people around me have, except for (my) immediate surroundings," she says.

Lou Gattozzi, director of operation of Channel 8, is part of a growing number of people who think Berry can relate to common people. Berry’s hour-long show airs locally on Channel 8 at 9 a.m. and 1 a.m. weekdays.

"She has the right kind of personality to do this type of show," Gattozzi says. "She’s very outgoing, intelligent and she uses her ability to relate to people."

With fame comes attention. People are praising her looks and her skills. Still, the national TV talk show host doesn’t understand all the attention she’s been receiving lately.

"I have never ever been thought of as beautiful," Berry says. "I’ve been thought of as nice or funny or smart. But then I'm getting these weird letters, and people come up and say how beautiful, physically beautiful (I am).

"I don’t want to be a sex symbol, I want to be a peace symbol, big and round. No pressure."
Playing the Game

Homosexual athletes struggle to tackle stereotypes surrounding sports

by Stephanie Storm

Chad is a typical Kent State student.
He spends four hours a day in classes and at least two hours studying. He is involved in various extracurricular activities and has worked hard to develop an impressive resume.

Chad is a typical varsity athlete.
He has participated in sports since he was in eighth grade. He spends four hours a day at practice, and he is a key member of his team.

Chad is gay.
And although all of the components that make up Chad’s life seem typical, the fact that he is an “out” gay athlete makes for a very atypical, complicated lifestyle.

“When I say I’m out, it means it doesn’t matter to me who knows I’m gay,” Chad says after a long pause. “Either people are going to accept me for who I am or they’re not. As far as athletes go, however, they’re naturally apprehensive. Of all the people who are not accepting of gay people, stereotypically, athletes are on top of the list.”

The experience of being a gay athlete is a metaphor for the more general experience of being gay in a straight world. It’s being an outsider on the inside, being a stranger in one’s own world. It’s remaining true to one’s self only in private and almost everywhere else pretending to be someone else.

Although Chad, a senior, says he is comfortable with his sexuality and considers himself to be out-of-the-closet, he asks that his real name be withheld. Chad says he has done so for his teammates and coaches, to avoid distracting from the team’s goal of winning the Mid-American Conference championship this season.

“It may not be fair to my gay self to not be able to use my name, but I’m so comfortable with myself that I can live with it either way,” Chad says. “I don’t always have to be on a soapbox, pounding my fist saying, ‘Take me for who I am.’ I know how to conform to the situation, and not all situations allow you to be open.”

Chad is not alone. Alyssa Lamb, president of the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Union-Kent, estimates that there is at least one gay or lesbian athlete on almost every team on campus. But because of the homophobic fears that surround the sporting world, Lamb says the athletes feel they must remain closeted or give up their sport.

“It’s not that it’s any harder to be both gay and an athlete as opposed to say, being gay and a writer, but athletes just tend to have more to lose if they come out,” Lamb explains. “Of course your teammates can’t physically kick you off the team, but they can make it so miserable you want to leave.”

Lamb says there are five varsity athletes who attend LGBU meetings on a regular basis and even more at the non-varsity level.

“There probably isn’t any sport on campus at the varsity or non-varsity level that isn’t represented by at least one gay or lesbian,” Lamb says. “I would also guess there are even more women than men. Lesbians tend to permeate athletics.”

Angela is one of those athletes. As a lesbian and a member of two intramural clubs, she
says she knows all too well the scenario of pretending to be straight.

“When I was (ages) 13 through 15, I was going out with men and trying to like them,” Angela recalls. “I had sex with them, and I tried to enjoy it. I really did try to like them, but it just wasn’t there.”

Like Chad, Angela felt uncomfortable using her real name. She believes she has too much to lose because she’s a freshman.

“If I were a senior, perhaps I would use my name,” Angela says slowly. “But right now I’m new and just trying to work my way up the totem pole on the team.

“Ideally, I would like to tell them I’m a lesbian. But there’s also the issue about what they’ll think of me, and what they’ll do to hassle me. Right now they are really accepting of me, and as far as I know, they think it’s great that I’m on the team. I wouldn’t want to ruin that, and I’m afraid of how the team would react or what they would do if they found out.”

Angela’s fear is based on the misconception that homosexuals are somehow different. Yet any difference in athletic ability between heterosexual and homosexuals is nonexistent. Both hit a tennis ball, a golf ball and a baseball in the same fashion. Both throw a football the same way, run track and field the same way and make a free throw the same way. But because athletics is traditionally perceived as a masculine pursuit, many gay and lesbian athletes are harassed and punished for a part of them that is irrelevant to their athletic endeavors. Oftentimes, their sexuality becomes a stigma.

“There’s nothing about my sport that should have anything to do with whether I’m gay or straight,” Chad says. “My relationships, sex life and extracurricular activities are all something I do off the field.”

But early in his collegiate career, Chad was forced to keep the truth about his sexuality hidden from his teammates.

Continual jokes about gays and the gay lifestyle and then finally a physical confrontation led to Chad’s coming out
“I couldn’t pick up the paper and read about gays. There just were no gay role models for me, let alone any gays in sports”
— Bruce Hayes

to his teammates. Afterward, Chad says he felt a sense of relief in revealing his true self.

“In my perfect world, every athlete would tell their teammates,” Chad says. “You’re supposed to have this unbreakable bond with your teammates, and that’s difficult to have if you start off by telling lies about who you are.”

Although Chad says the current situation on his team is comfortable, he doesn’t hesitate to explain his teammates’ acceptance of his sexuality.

“It is a good thing I am as good in my sport as I am before they found out,” Chad says. “Otherwise, I’m not so sure I’d have the respect I do now. There are other gay men on my team, but none of them are out. I guess I’m the token one.”

Even in situations like Chad’s, where his teammates are aware of his sexuality, tensions on the team can reach costly levels. Many straight athletes don’t want a “faggot,” “sissy” or “pansy” — words many coaches use to berate players not performing well enough — on the team.

Beth Rushing, an assistant professor of sociology at Kent State, often talks with homosexual athletes while working in her primary field of study, gay and lesbian issues. Rushing says it’s unfortunate that homophobic labels cause others to overlook a homosexual’s athletic ability.

“Sports is always talking about the ideas of masculinity,” Rushing says. “Because we don’t normally associate gays with being masculine, it’s hard for many to understand and accept them in sports.”

Rushing taught a sexuality class at another university where several students were lesbian tennis players. She says the class had frequent discussions about the stereotype that all female athletes are lesbians.

“These women really struggled against the stereotype, even the ones who were lesbians,” Rushing recalls. “I remember two women who were tennis partners and played doubles together. The straight one hated the other one and was very hostile to her. It was sad because as a team, they played great together.”

But the most heated debate about homosexuals in sports almost always is over the showers.

“The issue causes many athletes to remain closeted,” Lamb says. “If they come out, they have to worry about the locker room situation, about someone saying, ‘What are you looking at? Don’t come near me you faggot!’”

While the locker room can be a source of hostility, some gays secretly enjoy it.

“It’s wonderful,” Chad says. “But it takes a lot of concentration. I have to keep reminding myself what I’m there for, that it’s a non-sexual atmosphere.”

However, Angela believes the locker room is no different than any other room, and she is irritated when others suggest that it is.

“When I’m in a sports setting or a locker room, I don’t think about being attracted to other people around me,” Angela says. “I think about sports. My purpose is to play, then get dressed and go. That’s all.”

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As the stories of athletes like Chad and Angela show, the experiences of gay men and lesbians in sports can be quite different. Women athletes are often expected to be lesbians while male athletes are very seldom expected to be gay.

"It is a good thing I am as good in my sport as I am before they found out. Otherwise, I'm not so sure I'd have the respect I do now. There are other gay men on my team, but none of them are out. I guess I'm the token one."

For Angela, the world of athletics is a place where she can abandon the hostilities accompanying her lesbian lifestyle. In fact, Angela says her family has been the main source of hostility regarding her sexuality.

"My being a lesbian has never really been an issue in terms of sports," says Angela, who was a member of the soccer, swim, diving and track teams in high school. "I came out in my junior year in high school so probably about three-fourths of the people at my school knew. But when I came out to my mom, she thought it was something I should be ashamed of and that I should keep quiet about things and pretend to be straight."

The experiences of Chad and Angela are not isolated, not across college campuses and definitely not across the country. Former Olympic swimmer Bruce Hayes, who won a gold medal at the 1984 Summer Olympics, is one of thousands of gay athletes trying to change the image and atmosphere surrounding homosexuals in sports.

Hayes hopes to do so by participating in Gay Games IV, an international Olympic-style sporting and cultural event open to all athletes. More than 15,000 participants are expected to take part in the event, which is scheduled to take place in June.

Hayes, who is participating in the Games for the second time, won seven gold medals in 1990 during Gay Games III.
“I think of the Gay Games as having changed my life,” says Hayes, who is now a public relations executive. “In 1990, I was just getting back into swimming. I had gotten out because it was so scary to think of being an ‘out’ gay man. Then with the Gay Games there was an event that actually melded the two. For the first time, I faced what it would be like to come out publicly. And you know what? The world didn’t come to an end.”

Hayes recalls growing up in Texas, somewhat aware of the fact that his sexual preferences were different.

“I couldn’t pick up the paper and read about gays,” Hayes says. “There just were no gay role models for me, let alone any gays in sports. If I knew then that there was a whole community of people having a sporting event like the Gay Games, it would have meant the world to me.

“Gays and lesbians have always been excluded from the sports arena or we were forced to be invisible. The Gay Games is crushing that barrier. It is an institution that not only knows we exist but acknowledges our existence and our importance.”

Chris Fowler, director of public information for Gay Games IV, hopes the games will be instrumental in crushing the stereotypes of homosexual athletes.

“In starting the Gay Games, Tom Wadell (the founder of Gay Games) hoped to get beyond the stereotypes not only of homophobia but also those of sexuality, that men are masculine and women are weak,” Fowler explains.

Chad says he would love to participate in an activity like the Gay Games. But it frustrates him that homosexuals must invent alternate sporting events to avoid feeling discriminated against in the world of sports.

He hopes these negative attitudes toward homosexuals in sports will change someday.

“Gay athletes are just like everyone else,” Chad says. “We are represented not only in sports all over this campus but in the professional ranks as well. People just don’t know about it.”

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Headin' for the Highway

by Dustee Anderson

David Hawley doesn’t make weekend plans like many Kent State students. He likes to keep his schedule open in case his friends decide to go hiking or skiing or camping or in case some of his buddies want to go on a road trip to their friend’s cabin in upstate New York.

“I have a backpack that is kept constantly packed,” says Hawley, a sophomore anthropology major. “I keep it down in the living room. It probably drives my roommates crazy, but you never know when someone might call.”

What’s a road trip? You won’t find it in the dictionary. You’ll only find it in a car, speeding down the highway toward the state line with little more than your toothbrush. Road trips are a college tradition. They seem to be specifically designed to catch the freedom and free spirit of students. And for some, keeping the tradition alive is just part of the college scene.

Truckin’ to Virginia

Lisa Kelly, a senior criminal justice major, and Deanna Viola, a senior psychology major, are sitting in the Ratt on a Saturday evening, eating a late dinner. They are discussing their options for the night and not finding anything exciting to do. “I wonder what Paul’s doing right now,” Viola says, referring to a friend in Virginia.

Kelly gives Viola ‘The Look.’ It says, “Let’s go find out what Paul is doing.” They head for the door, leaving their barely eaten food behind. After a short phone call to Paul, they are on their way. They run back to their dorm and grab money, tapes and car keys. It is about 8 p.m. when they turn out of the parking lot in Viola’s black Pontiac Sunbird.

“Fly, Sunbird, fly,” Viola says.

The two women head down State Route 43, screaming to AC/DC before switching to Bad Company and then The Grateful Dead. They can’t believe they’re on their way to Virginia.

After driving for six hours, they reach Paul’s apartment. It’s 2 a.m. on the dot, and they are ready to party.

They stay in town for about eight hours and then decide at 10 a.m. that it’s time to go home. They cut the drive home down to 5 1/2 hours by picking up the pace.

“We had the speedometer pinned,” Kelly says. “I have no idea how fast I was
flying through those mountain turns.”

They arrive home about 5:30 p.m. Both have to get ready for work in a few short hours. Their 20-hour trip is over.

"The thing about road trips is that they are probably one of the dumbest things you can do," Kelly says. "First of all, you go and spend money you don't have. And you don't tell anyone that you're going. You could be in a wreck and no one would know where you were. You do a lot of stupid things. But it's fun as hell."

At the mercy of the radio

Tracy Williams, a junior political science major, often can be seen speeding down the highway while her roommate sleeps in the passenger seat. The radio usually blares and she usually has half a pack of gum in her mouth. And no matter what the weather, the window is always rolled down.

"The problem with road trips is finding a car dependable enough to drive," Williams says. "Other than that, it's just a nice break from classes."

Williams goes on several road trips a year. Often the cars she and her friends take don't have a tape deck.

"You're at the mercy of the area radio stations," she says. "And the only thing you can get in Pennsylvania is bluegrass country."

Williams remembers one weekend trip to Toronto. She and some friends were looking for a well-known mall there.

"We stopped at a gas station and asked how many miles it would be to the mall, and they looked at us really strange," she says. "We were dead giveaways for tourists then because we forgot they use kilometers."

Midnight run to Chicago

When Christie Johnson got home from a residence hall floor meeting on a Monday night, her friends said, "Pack your bags, we're going to Massachusetts."

Johnson, a senior leisure studies major, says her friends were feeling philosophical and wanted to read Thoreau in a canoe on Walden Pond.
But she convinced them that it would be cold in Massachusetts in mid-April. After some debate, they left for Chicago instead. It was midnight.

They packed a change of clothes, some money and a pillow. They stopped at Apple’s and bought some food for the trip.

“We stopped at a Smart Mart on our way out of Kent to buy a map,” Johnson says. “There was a little Indian guy behind the counter who didn’t have a map, but said, ‘Well, you just get on 80 and drive, drive, drive.’”

They stopped at the Ohio-Indiana border to look at the stars.

“We were pulled over on the side of the road next to a cornfield, checking out the stars at 4 a.m.,” she says. “I’m always talking about how much better you can see the stars in the country, so they decided to stop and see.”

They got to Chicago about 6:15 a.m. and found a place to park. It cost $10 or $11 to park for a whole day.

“We almost didn’t have enough money to get back home,” Johnson says. “There were tolls about every mile on the parkway into Chicago, plus all the tolls on the turnpike.”

Johnson and her friends spent the morning wandering around the city, talking to people. They talked to a doorman who got out a phone book and looked up addresses for them. Another man selling papers gave them directions to get all over town.

“I felt bad about skipping all my classes. But I guess if you’re going to skip, you might as well do it big”

“We were amazed at how friendly everyone was,” Johnson says. “We were just walking up to people and talking to them.”

Johnson and her friends were in Chicago for about six hours before heading for home. They got back to Kent about 6:30 p.m. Tuesday.

Beyond the Sunday drive

Scott A. Reid, a part-time sociology instructor at Kent State, has been taking road trips since he was an under-graduate here.

Because he’s traveled so much, he says he believes, “If you’re not going west of the Mississippi, you’re not on a road trip. You’re out for a Sunday afternoon drive.”

“[But there have been times we just throw a road atlas in the air and go to whichever state the page opens to]”

Reid and a few of his friends have been traveling together for years. They all have a map of the world with color-coded pins that represent how many times they’ve been to a city.

“It would probably take less time to say where I haven’t been than where I have,” Reid says. “I’ve been to every major city in the United States.”

Reid says boredom frequently is his motivation for packing his bags and heading out on a road trip.

“One time my friend and I were floating around on inner tubes in Lake Erie. All of a sudden we decided to go to Atlantic City. So we swam into shore, took showers and headed off to New Jersey.”

Reid and his friends never plan a trip before they leave. They just go where the moment takes them, usually sleeping in the car or camping out along the way.

“Our theme song is ‘Prisoner of the Highway’ by Ronnie Milsap,” Reid says. “It’s the first thing we listen to when we start driving.”

How does the man who has camped at Yosemite National Park and climbed Mount St. Helen decide where to go?

“Now the big draw is to go somewhere I haven’t been before. But there have been times we just throw a road atlas in the air and go to whichever state the page opens to.”

On his first toss, the atlas opened to Kansas. Reid’s grandfather is buried in Kansas, so the group headed there and placed flowers on his grave. The group then continued on their trek through several other states.

Reid says most people go on road trips because they want to get away.

“It’s an effort to get out of here and see something new, something different. And the question is not why we go, but why others don’t.”

“After you take lots of road trips, you start to see your city as just one more exit off an endless freeway.”

Beyond the Sunday drive

Scott A. Reid, a part-time sociology instructor at Kent State, has been taking road trips since he was an under-
Aikido Club embraces peace while teaching self defense

by Joe Lawlor

The cries of Ichi! Ni! San! Shi! rise above the barely audible patter of feet inside the dojo, the sacred practice room of aikido students.

Sensei calls, "Mokusko!" and immediately there is silence as the students drop down into the seiza-ho, sitting on their feet at attention. The sensei explains and demonstrates the technique, and then the room turns into a frenzy of activity as simulated charges and successful defenses fill the room.

The sensei, or teacher, is Jack Harmon, a fourth-degree blackbelt in aikido and a Portage County Deputy Sheriff. He describes aikido as not only a martial art, but a philosophy that centers on resolving conflicts, whether they are verbal or physical arguments. It’s a defensive art that teaches people how to avoid all kinds of fights.

"Being a true martial artist is not being a rough neck with an 'I'm going to kick your ass' kind of attitude," says Harmon, who has 20 years of martial arts experience. "It's knowing that if push comes to shove, I can defend myself."

"In karate, you meet force with force. But in aikido, instead of blocking, I will take (my opponent's force) and redirect it against himself."

"Martial arts is a way to live your life. I'm not talking sitting in a temple living like a monk. I'm talking about learning how to live with a wife and kids."

During the Aikido Club’s practices, a large Japanese flag obscures most of a giant T on the blue and gold mat. The T is part of KENT, and when the aikido club is not meeting on Tuesday and Thursday nights, the dojo turns back into a wrestling room at Kent State’s gym annex.

Members of the club, now in its second year, learn the philosophy of Ueshiba through a book of his teachings. One of the book’s poems calls those who practice aikido to "extend all your powers to achieve peaceful harmony with the world" and to "destroy the foe that’s hidden in the body."

According to Ueshiba, the spirit, mind and body are one
Marcus Bloomfield and Sarah Hutchinson during a warm-up exercise to practice the art of rolling out of a fall.
entity trying to unify with nature. In aikido, one doesn't fight an opponent, but reconciles with him. In fact, aikido moves do not injure the attacker, but merely render him helpless. And aikido practitioners use the opponent's force instead of their own. The opponent's force is actually redirected. Because most attacks come in a straight line, aikido uses circular motions to disrupt the flow of the attacker.

Rob Janowiak, Harmon's assistant, says he used to be the instigator of fights before he joined the Aikido Club. Now his attitude and life have completely changed.

"My mind is totally aikido," Janowiak says, explaining that aikido's philosophy of self defense made him really look at what kind of a person he was when he joined the club two years ago.

"I was that jerk that wanted to beat everybody up," he says. "There comes a point in your life when you've got to decide what is right, and this is right."

Janowiak remembers his days before aikido.

"I was at this one party and this guy questioned how tough I was," he says. "I beat his ass. Now, I look back and I don't see what the point was in that. What did I win?"

Janowiak says that today, he would walk away from such a situation.

Janowiak, who eventually wants to work for the Federal Bureau of Investigation, says one principle of aikido is not lowering your standards to the person trying to instigate a fight.

"I thought face was honor. But there is a big difference between saving face and losing your honor. By someone challenging you, you don't lose your honor. He can't do anything to take away you honor."

One man who briefly joined the club lost face when he practiced with yellow belt Heather Ley. Her boyfriend, junior Shawn Nichols, recreated the scene.

"He came in with this real macho attitude toward a lot of people," Nichols says. "She threw his butt hard and continuously. The guy never showed up again."

Nichols notices that sensei is nearby, and adds, "All in peace and love and benevolence, of course."

Sometimes other men believe Ley won't be effective. Then she throws them to the ground for the first time.

"He kind of gets up and takes me a little more seriously and from then on we have a good working relationship," she says.

But Ley says aside from spiritual and physical betterment, aikido has practical purposes.

"It's a good self-defense, perfect for a woman my size," she says.

Aikido is the difference between warriors and fighters.

"A fighter fights to fight," Janowiak says. "A warrior knows when to fight and solves his problems without fighting."
Left: Aikido instructor Jack Harmon meditates before the class begins. Students in the class stick to traditional Japanese ways, bowing and using Japanese terms while they learn.

Below: Robert Janowiak and Shawn Nichols warm up by practicing falls before the class starts.

Photos by Bob Christy
VERRUCOSE:
The Underbelly of Kent's
by Krista Franklin

Outside the sun is shining, but it seems that no one in Verrucose knows it. In a basement behind the Mantis, a gallery on North Water Street that doubles as an artistic arena for local performers, music rushes up to meet the sidewalk. It's a sound associated with the young: full of anger, lust, power. It's in the drums — and the guitar, mostly — but once the descent into the basement is complete, the moldy scent of the underground consumes everything. Jason Byers, the front man for the band, moves carefully around the wires running across the floor from instruments to amps. No one looks up. He's just one more shadow in the dimly lit room barely big enough for all of us.

Mark Taylor, the second guitar player, isn't here, and as my eyes adjust to the darkness of the room, I wonder if there would be room for him if he were. Steve Glorioso, the new man chosen for the role of drummer, sits in the corner of the room surrounded by his drum kit. Short-haired and bespectacled, he's the only one whose looks set him apart from the grimy look of the other band members, but his drum skills eliminate any question of his belonging. Sam Mazzola, present guitar man and co-creator of Verrucose, sits at the foot of a staircase, his instrument propped on his thigh, the seriousness of the music in his face. New bassist Greg Lee stands to my left, the licks from his amp making the room vibrate. As Byers climbs the staircase and sits behind Mazzola, the music stops, the hum of the amps filling the spaces where music once was.

“Let's try 'Knob,’” Glorioso says. “That's always a classic.” And almost as soon as his sentence is complete, Mazzola's guitar is the driving force in a musical follow-the-leader that makes the eardrums hum.

This is not the Verrucose of semesters past.

Local band Verrucose has been playing to Kent audiences for three years now. Its music, which has been described as both hardcore and metal, has rocked such bars as JB's and Ozeez, sending crowds into moshing frenzies. An elemental part of an underground music scene that has long been ignored and deemed as illegitimate by the mainstream, the members of Verrucose have shown Kent audiences the strength in staying power through evolution. Taking on lineup and musical changes with the skill of Darwinists, their music is filled with a ferocity and enthusiasm that many think would have been lost somewhere in the changes that they've had to go through. Their songs encompass all the anger, stress and disappointment of the young.

The scene is a familiar one for all of the members of the band, particularly Mazzola, Byers and Taylor, the creators of Verrucose. But prior to the creation of the band, each of them were just three young men forging their way into local hardcore scenes that they would later help bring to Kent.

Mazzola, a Kent State art student, was playing guitar for a Cleveland-based band called Domestic Crisis when Byers met him. A hardcore band that he helped develop with his friends in high school, Domestic Crisis was Mazzola's training ground. The band was on its last leg when the two met. But it was a chance meeting that developed into a friendship, giving them the opportunity they wanted.

Opposite page: The members of Verrucose, left to right, are Steve Glorioso, Mark Taylor, Sam Mazzola, Jason Byers and Greg Lee. Below: Steve Glorioso plays drums at Verrucose's first live performance since undergoing a membership change.

Photos by Brenda Jordan
Jason Byers’ growling vocals give Verrucose a distinctly angry sound. To achieve, Peterson gave the band what they were looking for — a fuller, more powerful sound.

"Brad and I were the two more into the death metal thing, and we took the band in that direction," Peterson says. "One thing the guys were hoping for was that I would be able to do something that's big in death metal, and that's the double bass, which gives it a heavier sound. That's what they were looking for and that's what I did."

Taylor says that along with this fuller sound came a more directed, focused band.

"There was a certain tightness and there was a real definite organization. It was really well-structured," says Taylor, a senior jewelry and metals student. "Keith knew the music. He would listen to something and understand it on the first listen.

"When we started out, I was in a band in Cleveland," Mazzola says. "I was in that band for awhile — since like 11th grade in high school. That's basically where I learned to play guitar. Back then everyone lived in a suburb on the west side and all the kids in the neighborhood, we just started getting into all this punk music and metal and stuff."

Noise was what helped build Verrucose, and when the time came to create the sound that was needed, Mazzola, Byers and Taylor stuck to the formula.

The original lineup, which then consisted of Mazzola, Byers, Taylor, Matt Lindsey on drums and Brad Popovich on bass, was more of a rock 'n' roll band struggling for a metal sound, Byers says.

"The first line-up, when we first started practicing, none of us had ever jammed (together) before so we didn't know what we were gonna do," Byers says, laughing. "We just came together. I'd say the first two songs were rock 'n' roll with some metal parts. It was weird. It was rock 'n' roll, but I was screaming."

As the band members became more familiar with one another, their influences became similar, helping to create a more complete sound. But in the following year, Lindsey went on to other projects and was replaced by the man who helped change the direction of Verrucose.

When Keith Peterson, then a Kent State anthropology student, joined the Verrucose line-up, the music became more serious. Peterson, working alongside Popovich, helped give the band the hardcore edge that it fought so hard to achieve. Peterson gave the band what they were looking for — a fuller, more powerful sound.

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"He had it all together, especially the way Keith and Brad worked together. They were really close so they worked together really well."

The change of direction, musically and personally, paid off. The band’s live performances generated the energy that they had all begun to feel about the music. The crowds grew both bigger and wilder, creating a following of students, both friends and strangers, who were searching for the release that a Verrucose show provided. The furor of the crowd, coupled with Peterson’s drums, Mazzola and Taylor’s driving guitars, Popovich’s bass and Byers’ anguish-ridden screaming, created the
Their shows became a release for the players, participants and spectators, the therapy of a generation on overload of reality. Byers’ lyrics are shrouded in anger and pain, the remnants of mistakes and relationships gone sour. It’s an integral piece of both the music and the shows that not everyone always understands. And on occasion, this misunderstanding has ended in violence.

“A couple of times that we played the Mantis, you get somebody there who’s never been to a hardcore show before and doesn’t know what to do so they end up punching someone,” Byers says. “The last two times we played the Mantis we had to stop. The times it happened was because stuff was going on at JBs and Ozeez, and they could hear the music and they come in — they’re just regular guys — and they don’t have a clue what’s going on. They just heard of the Red Hot Chili Peppers last week.”

Byers attributes the attendance of Verrucose shows to the energy that the band generates. But it’s something that he does not profess to understand.

“I still have yet (to understand), for the kind of music we play, the age group that comes to our shows. We should be attracting young kids, but we’re attracting people our age or older, people who are really tired of those types of music.”

Kent State students used to avoid the popular and flock toward the unusual, Haines says. Now, if the rest of America likes country or alternative music, most of Kent State likes country or alternative music. That’s where music is headed in the near future, toward alternative and country, and that’s where live music is headed in Kent, he says.

“Alternative music will outlive country music in Kent,” Hair says. “Alternative music isn’t as happening as it was six months ago, but it’s as strong in Kent as it is anywhere else. Country is popular but it hasn’t really caught on as well in Kent. Hard rock was on top ten years ago, then dance music was hot, but I think people are really tired of those types of music.”

Haines agrees. “Things have definitely gone to an alternative swing. We used to be able to bring in a good classic rock band and draw a crowd, but now people want to see more progressive bands. I try to bring in a variety of music to please the many different tastes on campus, but you can’t please everyone.”

A band needs a manager or must know club owners to do well, Hair says. Connections are just as important as talent in the music business. But for a band to make it in Kent today, it has to be different than all the others. A band doesn’t necessarily need a gimmick, but it does need to stand out from the crowd in some way, if not by its music then by the show it puts on.

“A band has to put on a good show and keep the same energy level up whether they’re playing for 20 people or 200 people,” Haines says. “They’ll be successful if they can maintain good ties with the bars around Akron and Kent and keep their name out there.”

Hair says he hopes live music will become more popular in the future. “Live bands are having trouble in Kent but there are still plenty of good bands playing here.”

— Jamie J. Gooch
older,” says Byers, who graduated from Kent State with a bachelor’s degree in sculpture. “When we play out and it’s crowded, I just don’t understand. I’m like, ‘Why do you people want to hear this stuff?’ I don’t know, I guess it’s because it’s such a small town and everybody knows us from school.”

Now, three years and two line-up changes later, the members of Verrucose are rebuilding again. With Peterson in graduate school and Popovich on to new projects, the slots of drummer and bassist have been filled by Steve Glorioso and Greg Lee. Deep in the basement of Byers’ house, the new members are learning old material as well as creating new sounds. With the same tenacity and drive that helped to develop Verrucose in the beginning, the new line-up is working hard to keep the foundation of the sound still intact, while at the same time paving new musical roads. The practices are serious ones, and the music is reflective of that. There is a fuller, stronger and louder sound than what was heard in the past, and there is a new addition to the music of Verrucose that has provided a sharper edge to their live performances — funk.

Lee, a senior general studies major who also plays bass in two other groups, was taken in as the band’s bassist after talking to Byers about an interest in starting an entirely new band. “Jason (Byers) and I had been talking last year about putting another band together, and when they decided to pick a new bass player, he called me.” Lee says.

While Mazzola, Byers and Taylor were wrecking up the hardcore scenes in their neighborhoods, Lee was teaching himself to play bass to be selected for his high school jazz band. Influenced by the improvisation of jazz great John Coltrane and funk legends like James Brown and Bootsy Collins of Parliament/Funkadelic fame, Lee’s playing style is a brassy one. But of all the experiences that Lee has had, playing in a hardcore band was not one of them. Seeing Verrucose perform in Kent created a desire in Lee to participate in this new musical experience.

“I remember listening to them and wanting to try that out and play with them, and I’m glad I have the opportunity to jump on that,” Lee says. “The music is something totally different for me. I’ve never played that before and I think I’ll be adding a lot because I haven’t played that before.”

Byers says he believes that selecting Lee as the new bassist was the best decision.

The respect of the music and one another’s skills are the things that each of the band members share. New drummer Glorioso, who went to the same high school as Mazzola, says that his respect of his band mates, both personally and artistically, fueled his desire to get involved with the band. “I was more familiar with the people than the material,” Glorioso says. “I knew most of the material, not like the back of my hand, but I knew it. I thought that they were a good band to begin with, and that’s why I wanted to get involved.”

Verru cose: adj., studded with wartlike protuberances or elevations

Glorioso’s experience on the drums, which includes hardcore and rockabilly, provides the band with the same full sound that the band had with Peterson, but at the same time provided a new playing style to which they had to adjust. Glorioso says that his respect of Peterson’s style makes the process of learning his parts all the more intense.

“That part is tough,” he says. “Especially learning Keith’s stuff cause he was such a good drummer. Our styles are pretty similar, but they’re also a bit different. I’ve been laying back, playing the basics, so that we get through them and make them sound good. Eventually I’ll come in with my own flamboyance.”

Although the early practices were peppered with breaks and questions as Glorioso and Lee struggled to get the Verrucose material down, the recent practices are quite a different story. Glorioso’s loud and aggressive drum playing and Lee’s reverberating bass strokes bring a new, original sound to the past music of Verrucose. The band members are excited, and it shows in the music of the practices. Eager to fall back into Kent’s playing circuit, the band members are ready to make a fresh mark on a past following.

With the same old dedication and a
crashing pit of motion, only to be stopped by frequent police visits.

new outlook, Verrucose is excited about the year to come. Glorioso has mentioned an interest in playing outside of Kent more frequently than the band did in the past, and each of the band members has discussed the future possibility of investing in a bus to tour in the summer. Right now, however, the goal remains to master the material and play live.

“I don’t really try and think about (future endeavors) until things are a little further along,” Taylor says, lighting a cigarette, “(The goal) is getting back in the groove of things. Getting in and making things tight. I try to avoid concerning myself with future.”

Verrucose isn’t scared, though. The members’ history of serious practice, dedication to the music and respect of one another’s performance skills has only helped them to grow stronger throughout the band’s changes.

“As with any other member, you build a relationship between members and you build a sound and all that, and when someone leaves, it’s a bummer when they leave, but then it’s up to the new people,” Mazzola says, leaning back in a chair in Byers’ living room.

“You get the right people and it starts a whole new thing. It adds freshness to everything about it.”

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