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On St. Patrick’s Day this year I sat at the bar in JB’s and watched the TwistOffs perform. I’ve never been one for the local music scene so I was rather interested to see what it was like.

My first realization was that the TwistOffs, though essentially playing for the crowd, were really playing for themselves. They were doing their best to entertain the green-clad college kids surrounding the stage, but really, they would have been doing the same thing had everyone in that bar suddenly disappeared.

The show would have gone on. I guess that’s really the point of it all.

Sitting here at 4 a.m. just a mere 13 hours before the printer comes to pick up the magazine, I wonder, why I have done it all?

I graduate this year and I know I will no longer see the same people each day that I have become accustomed to. Though I will be sad to leave them, new adventures await all of us.

Life is a series of phases; people come into my life and then they go. A new phase is beginning and I cannot take all the people I love with me, but I have learned many lessons from them and I will take those with me.

I have learned to live every day to my best ability and even if there is no crowd, the show will go on.
Mind and body

Ed Norvell: 'It's just that pit bull in me that comes out.'

BURR 2
The connection between psychology and performance

When Ed Norvell is asked about his high school days as a basketball player, he doesn’t hesitate to talk about how competitive it was playing the sport in Detroit.

On any given night in the city, he says, the No. 1 team could lose.

The crowds at those high school games — “they were hostile,” Norvell says.

Norvell, now a sophomore guard on the Kent State basketball team, learned to stay focused while playing in front of those “hostile” crowds. The leadership role he assumed in his family when his father entered the service may be why the Detroit native is a confident leader on the basketball court. And that may be the reason why, during a game in the 1995-96 season, and in front of a crowd that booed him every time he touched the ball, Ed Norvell practically took it upon himself to try to lead Kent to an upset win against the No. 1 team in the conference.

Sometimes it’s hard, Lance Hansen says. Sometimes it’s hard putting on your Kent State football uniform — going through the same routine every day — working hard when really there is nothing to show for it on the scoreboard at the end of most games. Sometimes it’s hard when your team, just 10-63-1 in the 1990s, always is being ridiculed by the public — even by those within your own school.

But Hansen, who played in his final game last season for Kent, finds a way to look at the situation in a positive way.

In this game, there is no ball. Really, there is no way to score. The biggest battle in this game is the one deep within yourself. In cross country, the battle is about finding the strength deep inside yourself to succeed — to cross the finish line in that certain amount of time.

Kent State cross country runner Brad Hunt experiences the battle within himself. The way to be a successful runner, Hunt says, has to do with “listening to your body.”

When members of the Kent State women’s volleyball team stepped into their home floor of the Memorial Athletic and Convocation Center in the 1996 season, they felt unbeatable.

It wasn’t until the 14th match that they were beaten in their own building during the 1996 season. They finished the season 13-1 at home and yet struggled through a 3-8 record on the road.

There really isn’t an answer for this, says Robert E. Stadulis, an associate professor in the School of Exercise, Leisure and Sport at Kent.

One fact is for certain, however. The play-

by Brian Richesson

photography by Randy Snyder
ers at least thought they believed in themselves.

“We just dare teams to come in here and beat us on our own floor,” junior Angela Snow said after the Flashes beat Toledo last season in the M.A.C. Center.

The relationship

These Kent State athletes have something in common. All of them have experienced situations in athletics that showed the important relationship between an athlete’s mental capability and how he is able to deal with certain factors associated with his or her sport.

Stadulis, 53, who has studied topics in sports psychology for about 20 years, says he still is amazed by this phenomenon.

“What fascinates me and is becoming more and more obvious is how strongly related the mind and body are,” he says.

“We haven’t even begun to scratch the surface in terms of what the relationship is.”

The crowd

By looking at how he carried himself on the court, it was hard to understand that Ed Norvell was just a freshman then. What would happen in Kent’s game at Eastern Michigan in the first round of the Mid-American Conference tournament last year only would strengthen that confusion.

Early in the first half, Eastern Michigan guard Earl Boykins was accidentally flipped over the back of Kent guard Nate Reinking. Pushing ensued, and Norvell came to Reinking’s defense. The Eastern crowd noticed this. They would not forget.

“(Some Eastern players) started to get on Nate,” Norvell says. “My team is my family. Nate — he plays for Kent. It’s us against them, and I wanted to prove them wrong.”

Soon after the incident, Norvell was booed with every touch of the ball by the boisterous Eagles crowd. But the 6-foot guard seemed to feed off the crowd’s hostility. He went on to score 23 points, one point shy of his career mark, while shooting nine of 15 from the floor.

The Flashes, however, lost to the more-talented Eagles, 96-81.

“When the crowd is against me, it makes me go up to another level,” Norvell says. “It’s just that pit bull in me that comes out. It’s time to make a stand.”

What Stadulis has found from his studies on crowds is that “the better you are, or the more skilled you are, the more a crowd will affect you positively.”

“That’s individual differences,” Stadulis says. “In (Norvell’s) particular case, he would argue that he had the skills to pull it off. Somebody else might try to do the same things that they weren’t capable of doing and end up actually performing poorly.

“In (Norvell’s) case, what the crowd may have done is raise his level of arousal to a more optimal level,” Stadulis says.

Kimberly Schimmel, an assistant professor in Kent’s School of Exercise, Leisure and Sport, does much of her studies on the sociological aspect of sports.

“In this case, it seems Ed responded pretty well to (the crowd’s boos) and perhaps maybe that’s what he needed,” Schimmel says. “On the road, playing away from your school — a lot of athletes need a little bit more to get them to an arousal state.”

Accepting what hurts

Although he knew it would be a “challenge” when he signed to play at Kent State, Lance Hansen, a wide receiver, still thought there would be a time when his team would unite and achieve success. He thought it would be during his senior year. Instead, what he’ll remember is a 2-9 record.

But amid all the negatives that afflicted the Kent football team, Hansen went into every game and ended every game with a positive outlook.

“If I go into a game against anybody, and I have that attitude that we’re going to win this game,” Hansen says. “That’s where your mental toughness comes in.

“If I give 100 percent on every play and play every down like it’s my last down, I have absolutely no regrets.”

Hansen, who has been bothered by a long list of nagging injuries during his Kent career, hopes future employers will see all he has gone through as a football player and be impressed by his perseverance.
"I made the commitment and signed the dotted line back in '93," Hansen says. "If I didn’t want the challenge, I would have gone to Louisville or Minnesota and sat the bench for a couple of years. I chose to come here and try to play my freshman year. That’s what I wanted."

When describing the Kent football team, Schimmel used the phrase "culture of losing" to describe why the struggling team ends up on the losing side of a close game. The team may be locked in on negative past experiences that prevent it from winning now.

"They don’t have histories of past success," Schimmel says. "They don’t have those things to draw on that provide them with that feeling like, ‘Yeah, we will win this.’ It’s a very difficult thing to break out of."

Stadulis has talked to some of Kent’s football players in the past about how they dealt with losing.

"They all had different approaches," he says. "For some, it was business. They were here to get an education — they really believed in the student athlete idea. They saw it as a job. Other people try all sorts of different approaches — the idea of trying to get away from it — don’t think football."

The battle within

Kent State cross country runner Brad Hunt gets right to the point when he talks about how a runner must approach a race.

"Cross country is not like other sports where you have time to do whatever," Hunt says. "In 25 to 30 minutes, it’s over. If you fall asleep, the pack will pull away real quick."

That is why it is important that runners find ways to remain focused before and during a race.

Hunt says the night before a race: "You think about the competition and the main guy to look out for. You focus on your own race — how fast you need to go out. You feel what the race is going to be like and where you need to be at in certain times in the race."

Hunt wrote a paper in his psychology of motivation class on arousal. And he said it’s something that can relate to running. A runner must know when to be excited and when to relax.

"You have to know what point is mentally best for you," Hunt said. "You’ve got five miles before the race is over — four miles until the real race begins, the sprinting — so you have to be on the lower side of the spectrum as far as arousal is concerned."

Stadulis says research shows runners use two kinds of styles of thinking during a race — disassociation and association.

With the disassociation style, the athlete tries to forget about the sport. Instead, Stadulis says, the athlete may think about pleasant scenes like a flowing river or a sunset.

"From a pain point of view or from a psychological momentum perspective, you think of things where you want to relax," Stadulis says.

"The association style really focuses on what you’re doing — perhaps the relaxing of a muscle."

Home sweet home

In one of its best seasons ever, the Kent State volleyball team finished third in the MAC with a 10-7 record. It seemed to gain momentum with every home match that it played.
"Just the feeling we get when we play at home — it has to do with confidence," sophomore Becky Neglia said after a win over Ohio University last season.

The Flashes came within one win of having a perfect 14-0 home mark. That streak was ruined in the last home match of the season against conference champion Miami (OH) in five games.

Former Kent head coach Kevin Renshler says he never talked with his team about its successes playing at home.

The reason why the Flashes were so successful in their own building is a bit of a mystery, Stadulis says.

"Really, when you think about it, why should volleyball have that much of an advantage at home?" Stadulis asks. "It's probably psychological — maybe you jump a little harder or higher. You hit those spikes a little harder or accurately."

Schimmel cited how, in collegiate women's sports, the home-court advantage seems to become "even bigger," since few fans will travel with a team to an away site.

"So it is really just your people there cheering for you," Schimmel says, "and the team that comes in has virtually no voices behind them."

Kent finished the 1996 season with a 3-8 road mark. In five of those losses, the Flashes took their opponents to the fifth game before losing.

"My judgment is that they lost so many five-game matches on the road," Stadulis says. "If they would have won one of those tough matches earlier on, that might have been psychologically all they needed to make themselves believe they could win that fifth game."

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Brad Hunt (73) with Rick Antonucci (70) and Kevin Michalske (74).
Stadulis says that some of the volleyball players may think about their road failures consciously.

"They may be thinking, 'We better win in four, because if we get to that fifth game, we're in trouble,'" Stadulis says. "Things do have a habit of repeating themselves, not because of their own level of play or their physical capabilities, but more than likely because of their psychological awareness of the situation.

"The best predictor of skill performance is what we call self efficacy — the belief that someone has in their ability to perform."

As researchers search for answers into the mind-body relationship and how that is related to athletics, one can only marvel at what already has been found.

"If you get somebody to imagine or mentally practice the healing process," Stadulis explains, "you get them to see that knee that's been blown out and surgically repaired, and you spend time on that, you have image therapy. Studies show that you heal faster. It's focusing in and imagining the healing process."

Stadulis is amazed about how humans are able to perform a bodily task and be totally unaware of it.

"There is some fascinating research with shooters," Stadulis says. "They are able to stop their heart right before they pull the trigger. They want complete relaxation and control, and their heart actually stops.

"Here, people have developed that ability without even being aware of it. That's what fascinates me."

Brian Richesson is a senior newspaper journalism major and the sports editor of the Daily Kent Stater. He also is a broomball guru.

'The athlete may think about pleasant scenes like a flowing river or a sunset.'
With the

A look at the

not-so-cool side

of body piercing
It was only about 10 years ago when punk rock legends such as Billy Idol and David Bowie introduced body piercing to the music mainstream.

Along with neon hair dye, studded arm bands and the ever-popular flipped up shirt collar, multiple ear piercings joined the ranks of the nouveau hip.

Almost a decade later, the “coolness” of body piercing has not worn off. From being featured in music videos and magazine covers to adorning the basketball icon Dennis Rodman, body piercing has become one of the hottest trends for mainstream America and one of the biggest crazes to hit college campuses in the ’90s.

But while this metal mania may not seem to be a breakthrough for those sporting the latest navel or nose rings, the popularity of body piercing has turned some heads in the world of body art.
Tales of navels scarred by ear-piercing guns and accounts of painful infections resulting from at-home piercings have become the ammunition for professional piercers who say more stringent piercing regulations are needed.

The lack of regulations is a serious problem that piercers, such as David Anthony Vidra, say their colleagues and clients should know more about.

Vidra is a nurse and the medical liaison for the California-based Association of Professional Piercers, an organization that is committed to making the community aware of negligent piercers.

"Ninety-eight percent of the piercers in Ohio are not professionals," he says. "Just because they do tattoos does not mean that they are qualified. Just because they have some sort of certificate does not mean that they are a good piercer."

Some of the most frequent abuses Vidra calls attention to are unsanitary piercing conditions, use of improper piercing equipment, such as ear-piercing guns, and use of inexpensive jewelry that often leads to infections and allergic reactions.

"We're going to have them shut down," he says. "The Health Department is not going to take it anymore."

But while organizations such as the Association of Professional Piercers and health inspectors in several

‘People need to realize that piercing is more than just using metal.’
states, including Oregon, Kansas, Wisconsin, Massachusetts and Hawaii have begun implementing health regulations to ban such abuses from taking place, many states are overlooking the piercers' concerns.

In Kent, no regulations have been adopted concerning body piercing, and none are expected to be adopted anytime soon.

"There haven't been any complaints so far," Kent Health inspector John Ferlito says.

Tattoo parlors that do piercings are covered by state licensing and sanitary requirements for tattooing, he says.

But those who have had to clean infections from piercings performed in dorm rooms and friends' homes say there should be some type of regulation they can rely on.

In the meantime, students are cautioning friends and younger siblings to choose wisely when deciding on a piercing and a piercer.

As Kendra Bennett points out, the piercer's mistake can cost more than just a few dollars.

Bennett, a junior sociology major, says that when she went to have her tongue pierced, the piercer decided to use a stud meant for the chin rather than the tongue. She says she told the piercer she thought something was wrong, but the piercer assured her that she would be fine.

Days later, Bennett discovered that the stud had cut into her tongue and ripped through tissue underneath.

"It swelled up like a balloon," she says. "I had to get it fixed. I could have lost all speech."

She warns others to be more cautious.

"You've really got to be careful and read up on it," she said. "I paid that guy and signed a waiver that he could screw up my face. I'm sure that some people don't even care."

Most of these problems occur because newer piercers are simply not informed about the procedures they are performing.

Their mistakes can be ones students, such as fine arts major Gabriel Delgado, see every day.

Delgado, who insisted on a small gauge for his piercing, was never warned by the piercer that he was making a bad choice.

"I guess it's not aesthetically pleasing," he says, referring to the indentation over his eyebrow. "It didn't feel right."

Unfortunately, statements such as these are becoming more familiar. Shana Myers, a political science major, has heard horror stories from several of her friends.

Many of them, she says, have had infections only days after they were first pierced.

"This one girl had to have it surgically removed," Myers recalls. "She couldn't walk for days."

But as Smokin' Tattoooz piercer Donny Brown explains, he and other piercers are not surprised to hear tales of such unfortunate occurrences.

Many people lack the knowledge, sanitary surroundings and proper jewelry to ensure clean piercings at home, he says.

"People get into it for a quick buck and don't know what they are doing."

During his freshman year at Kent State, Kent resident Frank Yamamoto says he often saw instances of unsuitable piercings right in his dorm.

"This guy's mom was a nurse," he says. "He used to get sterilized hypodermic needles from her. He studied a couple of anatomy books and would pierce people right in his room."

Yamamoto and a couple of female friends thought that getting pierced by him would be OK.

"My ear was fine, but one of the girls who had her navel pierced got an infection," he says. "He used the wrong-sized jewelry."

It wasn't until he won a radio contest for $100 worth of piercings, however, that Yamamoto says he saw how the piercings should be done.

In contrast to the dorm's conditions, the cleanliness and professionalism at the pierc-
ing store helped him feel comfortable with the situation.

"I’m an extreme person. I got the most extreme part of my body pierced," he says, referring to his penile piercing. "I would only recommend the best people when you’re messing with your body. You should only go to the best."

Still, the best and most experienced piercers often are difficult to find, especially in larger cities.

In response to the infection caused by inexperienced or unsanitary piercing parlors, a group of concerned shop owners in Akron decided to work with the City Health Department’s communicable disease inspector, John Vincent, to draw up a regulation to prohibit these abuses.

The regulation, which went into effect June 23, 1994, defines the role of piercers and outlines the sanitary requirements, sterilizing techniques and customer records they must use. Those who violate these guidelines will be guilty of a first-degree misdemeanor.

Brice Scot, a piercer for Aardvark Tattoos in Akron, is pleased with the regulation.

"Anybody who pierces should have some type of training," he says. "I’ve tried to get some things done in Summit County. People need to write letters."

But Vidra and Vincent agree that having the ordinances is not always enough because no license is required for becoming a piercer in Ohio and many other states.

Vincent says the department generally does not investigate unless it hears of a complaint.

"There are so many places out there that it’s hard for the health commission to regulate," he says.

Vidra says the lack of enforcement is an added problem.

"There really is no regulation," he says. "I know. I’ve had to fix a lot of work."

He has witnessed infections resulting from hand-made jewelry and ear-piercing guns.

"People need to realize that piercing is more than just using metal," he says.

Vidra and safety officials agree people need to become better educated on the procedure of piercing.

"People will walk into a shop, and the only thing on their mind is that they want to get something pierced," Vincent says. "They don’t even think about hygiene."

Many people are unaware that they can get staphylococcus, hepatitis or even AIDS from an unsterile needle. If they want to get it done properly, they need to look for standards in a shop, Vidra says.

"If they think they’re going to save $10 by going to untrained people, they’re going to probably get an infection," he warns.

"Getting it fixed will cost $400. But if it’s from a piercing gun, it will result in surgery."

Vidra says people must inform health officials, state legislators and unprofessional piercers that they are not going to tolerate substandard conditions anymore.

"We want to be regulated," he says. "We will pay for licensing fees."

But this only can be done if people are aware, Vidra says. "I don’t mind competition, if it’s competent."

Karen Coates is a senior magazine journalism major, who personally will not pierce any body part other than her ears.

ON CAMPUS LIVING

Make the most of your educational experience by taking advantage of the residence hall program at Kent State University. This program is designed to enhance your classroom experience. The halls provide you with opportunities for personal growth and development through living and working with others from diverse backgrounds.
Learn the essentials: 'The Basic Ten'

According to the Association of Professional Piercers, the "Basic Ten" requirements to ensure a proper piercing are:

- Ear-piercing guns should not be used. Because they cannot be sterilized, they can cause serious, permanent damage to the body. The tissue is torn by the blunt backing of an ear stud. The practice of swabbing the area with alcohol is inefficient and serves only to push the contaminants around the skin.

- All needles are presterilized, used on one person, in one sitting, and immediately disposed of in a medical container.

- All forceps and tubes are presterilized, stored in sterile bags and used on only one person. After such use, they are Autoclaved, or cleaned, in a sterilizer.

- All reusable, nonsterilizable implements, such as calipers (a measuring instrument) are nonporous and disinfected after each use with a bleach solution or a chemical hard-surface disinfectant.

- As many supplies as possible, including corks and rubber bands, are presterilized in an Autoclave or cleaned with a disinfecting liquid, stored in a clean, closed container, and disposed of immediately after a single use.

- A new pair of latex gloves is worn for every procedure, and gloves are changed whenever the slightest chance of cross contamination might occur.

- The room for piercings, bathrooms and other common areas are kept scrupulously clean and disinfected frequently.

- All jewelry contaminated with only airborne pathogens (not previously worn or contaminated) have been disinfected with a non-hazardous hard-surface disinfectant. All jewelry contaminated or potentially contaminated with blood-borne pathogens (previously worn by another person) are Autoclaved.

- Only the appropriate jewelry will be used after piercings. Appropriate jewelry is made of implant-grade, high-quality stainless steel (300 series), solid 14k or 18k gold, niobium, titanium, platinum, or a dense low-porosity plastic such as monofilament nylon, acrylic or lucite. Ear studs are designed for ear- lobe piercings and should not be used for other parts of the body. Appropriate jewelry has no nicks, scratches or irregular surfaces to endanger the tissue.

- Different bodies and different piercings call for different jewelry. A ring that's the perfect size in an eyebrow can be downright dangerous in the navel, for example. Jewelry that's too thin can tear out of the body. Jewelry that's too thick can cause a collection of pus around inflamed tissue, known as an abscess, or an effect known as keloiding, where skin heals in a lump over jewelry.

- Finally, the piercer will be open and available for consultation and not under the influence of legal or illegal substances that impair his or her abilities to perform the piercing.
Learning to Cope

An adult child of an alcoholic faces her fears by Sherita Bowling

I was late, and my mother wasn’t home yet. My sister, always calm, always unemotional, was upstairs in her room. I sat downstairs staring at the television, trying to ignore the sick feeling in my stomach. I didn’t know where my father was, but I knew he didn’t care about my mother’s whereabouts. She had been drinking all day at the local hole in the wall, and it was time for her to come home.

I had made it a habit not to fall asleep until hearing my mother’s car turn into the driveway. I’d wait for my parents’ usual argument to end and then try to fall asleep. But that night was different. It was the beginning of my breaking point. I was 20 years old, and I was physically sick and emotionally tired of worrying about my mother.

It was almost 1 a.m. when I heard two cars pull up on our street. I immediately jumped off the couch when someone knocked on the door. A strange drunk man stood at our back door. He told me that my mother needed help because she wasn’t able to drive herself home. I frantically pushed him out of the way and ran outside. My biggest fear was becoming a nightmarish reality.

I found my mother stumbling out of her “friend’s” car. Agitated, I told them to bring her into the house and to leave. I hated my mother’s friends.

My mother barely acknowledged me as I helped her into bed. She didn’t notice the anger in my eyes. She kept mumbling how sorry she was and that she didn’t feel well because the medication she was taking didn’t mix well with beer. Actually, I was more scared than angry because I didn’t want my father to come home and see my mother in this state. So I quickly put her to bed, wrapped her up in warm safe blankets and pulled her car into the driveway. As usual, I went to bed feeling sick.

That was three years ago, and I still am recovering and healing as an adult child of an alcoholic. Alcoholism means a person is physically addicted to all forms of alcohol. It often is used to mask mental and emotional problems, but the disease is not without hope. Through Alcoholics Anonymous and/or rehabilitation, some alcoholics find the support to recover.

Pamela L. Meredith, a clinical social worker at Kent State’s DeWeese Health Center, says children of alcoholics have a tendency to look at other family patterns and to doubt themselves because their
Sherita Bowling: ‘Despite it all, I really love and respect my mother, and each time she tries to fight her disease, I fully support her.’
MEDICAL SERVICES
672-2322
Medical services offers a broad range of services including a full time medical staff, pharmacy, x-ray, laboratory and physical therapy. Health education programs and services are offered through the Office of Student Health Promotion at 672-2320. Kent State Ambulance offers emergency service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (during academic year), on campus CALL 911, off campus but within Kent city limits, CALL 672-2212.

Hours:
M - TH 8 am - 9 pm
FRI - SAT 8 am - 5 pm

DeWeese Health Center
Eastway Drive

PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES
672-2487
Psychological Services provides a wide variety of services to the students. Whether the student has concerns around personal issues, managing the stresses of class work and tests, or living more comfortably with other students in a class or residence hall, Psychological Services provides high quality personalized service.

Hours:
M - TH 8 am - 9 pm
FRI 8 am - 5 pm

I can relate to that description. My sister, Sharon, and I grew up with the shame of having a mother who was an alcoholic. We felt alone, frightened and abandoned. I felt that nobody else lived with this same problem and that everyone else had normal families.

My mother has been drinking for as long as I can remember. It was natural to see her walk in the door late at night with bloodshot eyes, a happy face and smelling of alcohol. It also had become normal to see my mother cry and become angry at the slightest bit of agitation.

I wasn’t the only one to notice.

“I didn’t like it, and it upset me, but I knew that there was nothing I could do,” Sharon says.

My sister and I found a measure of safety and security in each other. Although we never sat down and spoke about it,” Sharon says, “it was a mutual understanding that we had to ignore it.”

Throughout high school, I never had the opportunities or self-esteem to do things that other kids did. Instead, I would come home and try to make our home life perfect. Although I did not excel in school, I made sure that I did the best I could, hoping to ease the tension. But it didn’t work. And I was still miserable inside.

I would try so hard to make everyone happy. When my mother was sick and tired, I would do everything I could to take care of her. I thought that maybe if I made her happy, she might not go out and drink that night. I was wrong.

I spent my teen-age years constantly living in a state of depression. It was then that I began to realize our lives were abnormal. Yet I felt helpless; my mother was drinking by night and fighting with our family by day.

I became embarrassed of my mother, and I began to lie to my friends about our situation at home. At that time, I did not want to understand my mother’s problem. I just wanted her to stop drinking. I wanted my family to have the normal life it deserved.

Near the end of high school, my mother checked into rehabilitation centers several times. These were the most heartbreaking of
times for me. It is difficult for a child to see a parent give up and admit they need help. Despite all her problems, I really love and respect my mother. Each time she tries to fight her disease, I fully support her.

There came a time when I felt like my own alternatives were facing death or getting help. While my mother dealt with her recovery, I did nothing to help myself. Chronic depression, anxiety and insomnia had begun to affect my relationship with my family and friends, as well as my performance in school. I was diagnosed with irritable bowel syndrome, caused by stress.

The biggest obstacles were the twin hurdles of denial and fear. But getting help isn't as easy as it sounds. It's not just going to a group session and listening to other people talk about their problems—it requires a lot of work.

I've attended many support groups like Al-Anon, and believe me, there's nothing harder than entering a room full of strangers and admitting you can't survive on your own much longer.

My mother is doing well now. She has finally gotten out of her unhappy marriage. She sought out help and has relied upon Alcoholics Anonymous for support. She is in the process of rediscovering herself.

Although there have been some minor setbacks, for the first time in my life, I can see that my mother finally has found some sort of inner peace.

I too have realized how important it is to get help, to make that first step. I still have difficulty coping with having once lived in an alcoholic family.

"Children in these situations have learned skills in order to survive in alcoholic families, so it becomes harder to adapt to what is normal and abnormal behavior," Meredith says.

At Adult Children of Alcoholics in Kent, I am learning that I am not alone. I am learning to understand that my mother's drinking was not my fault, and there was nothing that I could have done to have stopped it. I am learning to take care of myself.

My mother and I have both learned that the road to recovery does indeed exist, if you're willing to look for it. Now, it's up to me to travel it on my own.

Sherita Bowling is a sophomore magazine major. This is the first time she has written about her mother's illness.
I sat there shaking, shivering at the thought of cutting myself. My heart pounding, I slowly took an alcohol swab, disinfected an area and took the lancet and sliced my finger. Ouch. I had pierced the surface but not enough to fill the test paper with blood. Feeling moisture across my forehead, I wiped away the sweat and prepared to prick myself again. I winced as I saw the blood begin to surface and then began to squeeze the punctured area to drip my blood sample on the test paper.

I don’t know why I was so scared. I only had to make a small cut, and I’m not at a high risk where I could get infected with HIV. But still, there was that slight amount of doubt – that maybe one of the nurses who once drew blood for a basic test might have used a contaminated needle. I pushed it to the back of my mind. I knew the results of my test would be negative.

I put a bandage on my finger and packaged the lancet in the disposable vial. Slipping the blood-soaked test paper in the pre-addressed, pre-paid envelope, I cleared away the pamphlets and made sure I put my assigned test number, the one I registered over the phone, in a safe place. Now only seven more days until I could call for results. I was number 475-613-72.
The tests can provide an alternative way for people to get tested who wouldn’t otherwise do so.

Testing for the AIDS virus has become quite ordinary. Instead of visiting a doctor’s office, a person can find out if he or she is infected with HIV by buying the newly developed home HIV test at a local drugstore. A prick of the finger, a sample of blood and the test is in the mail. In an age when the threat of AIDS is rampant, medical professionals stress the importance of finding out whether a person has the deadly virus.

But professionals, AIDS experts and those who are HIV-infected disagree over whether these home tests are a step forward from the traditional confidential and anonymous tests, arguing there are both benefits and drawbacks to these new tests. The possibly HIV-infected individual seeking an answer must now decide whether he or she wants the face-to-face contact a person receives at an anonymous testing site or if it is better to receive results and counseling over the phone. The debate continues as to whether receiving an answer over the telephone is too impersonal or if it provides sufficient counseling.

Home Access, approved by the Federal Food and Drug Administration in July 1996, and Confide, approved in May last year, allow a client to anonymously collect a blood-spot sample and send it to a laboratory. Test results then can be obtained by calling an 800-telephone number three business days to one week later—about two weeks quicker than a clinical anonymous test. The home tests cost $30 to $50. According to the Center for Disease Control, the home tests are more than 99 percent accurate—just as precise as an on-site test. The waiting period is shorter, and the accuracy is equal, but the question still remains: Is the counseling sufficient?

If the results to the home-HIV test are negative, a recording typically bears the news. If the results are positive or if there is a problem with the test, a counselor gives the results.

Dr. Bill Ruby, HIV clinical specialist physician for Akron City Hospital’s Center For AIDS Research and Education, says the tests are a good thing. “We are hitting a population that wouldn’t get tested,” Ruby says. “Some people just don’t like the clinic.”

Ruby, who is treating about 500 people with AIDS, says about five of the people were diagnosed by home-HIV tests. “Some of the people caught were working businessmen,” Ruby says. “They wouldn’t have been tested otherwise. Some of them say, ‘My physician is a personal friend of mine,’ so they don’t want to get tested by that person. The choice to take a home test is very individual. For some people, they’re more comfortable at home.”

From that standpoint, Dr. Thomas Alexander agrees. “If the testing actually does uncover people who are positive and gives them incentive to go to a physician, this in a sense might be a help,” says Alexander, an immunologist for Summa Health Care in Akron. “But the question is, ‘Will the person who tests positive, the person who sends in blood, get appropriate counseling regardless of the result?’”

Alexander says the concern extends further than where the test is performed. It is important to realize risky behavior and become better aware of a potentially dangerous lifestyle. This can be achieved through counseling, he says. The person, especially if the results are negative, needs to understand the risky behavior that caused him or her to believe testing was necessary. “I’m actually less concerned over someone getting a positive result over the phone than a negative result in a clinic and thinking, ‘I’m OK. I can do what I want,’” Alexander says. “The converse has to be put in context. It’s important a person realizes he or she doesn’t have to be a homosexual or drug abuser to be HIV-positive.”

More than this, the question still remains: Will getting a “death sentence” over the phone put a person over the edge?

Chris Sweiger thinks this is a definite risk. Sweiger, a 21-year-old Kent State senior psychology major, participated last year in an AIDS research project where the participants took home-HIV tests. Having never taken the home test before, he wasn’t exactly sure what to expect. Sweiger had been tested three times before at anonymous
‘It’s nicer to talk to a face — even when the results are negative.’

testing sites but later had unprotected sex with a high-risk person.

“In the past, all my tests were negative,” Sweiger says. And although he didn’t suspect the test would be positive this time, he wasn’t quite sure. Three days later, he called for the test results and breathed a sigh of relief.

The results were negative. “The waiting was hell,” Sweiger says. Sweiger, like Ruby, says he supports home tests because they provide another option. But he adds, “They are also very impersonal. It’s nicer to talk to a face — even when the results are negative. I could just imagine getting results over the phone. When a person first finds out he or she is HIV-positive, (the person) is going to have a problem with that. I would feel better about going to a clinic because there is post-test and pre-test counseling.”

Gil Kudrin, who has been infected with HIV since 1978, couldn’t agree more. He says there is no substitute for the human contact and understanding an in-person counselor can provide.

“The post-test and pre-test counselors are trained to look at body language,” says Cleveland-resident Kudrin, who trains HIV test-site counselors. Kudrin found out he was infected with HIV when doctors were first discovering AIDS. He sat anxiously in the lobby of the McCafferty Free Clinic anonymous-testing site with his daughter-in-law waiting to hear his results.

Then the bomb dropped. “You’ve tested positive,” the doctor told him. Tears began to stream down Kudrin’s face, and he clasped his hands over his forehead.

“I started to panic,” he says. “My first thought was ‘I’m going to die from this.’ I still believe I’m going to die. It’s a fatal disease. But this isn’t something you want to hear when you’re completely alone. I was with someone I loved when I found out. I don’t think there’s a good way to tell someone you are going to die, but (it) sure was a lot easier to get the news with someone else there.”

Kudrin, who attended Kent State in the late 1970s, is a faculty member of the Boulder, Colo.-based AIDS, Medicine and Miracles group. An active member of AIDS education awareness groups, he also lectures around the nation, during which he voices his opposition to the home-HIV tests.

“I think the tests serve to further isolate a person,” Kudrin says. “The tests are completely opposite to what people suffering from AIDS have learned. I can’t imagine getting results over the phone. Any amount of human contact that people who deal with this disease can get is important.”

Unfortunately, if a person goes without contact after receiving the news of a positive result, he or she can become isolated. Kudrin says through research and personal interaction, he has discovered that people who don’t receive proper counseling once they receive the bad news many times shut out the world. “To this day, I remember every word my post-test counselor told me.”

Renee Axiotis, coordinator of student health promotions for Kent State, says she hopes people will stay on the telephone if they get a positive result. “Some people may want a human there,” Axiotis says. However, she also says handling such a touchy manner is sometimes much easier over the phone. And currently, DeWeese Health Center has a sampling of home-HIV tests available that were provided as a trial from the Home Access company. The tests are available if a student requests one or the health center is not able to fit a student in for anonymous testing.

Despite the controversy, Kevin Johnson, director of communications for the Hoffman Estates, Ill.-based Home Access Health Corp., is an adamant supporter of the new tests. He says the tests “are happening,” and people should learn to use them and take advantage of a home test’s convenience. And in keeping with the criticism that home tests do not provide proper counseling, Johnson argues that home-test companies have a database full of referral information.

During the pre-test period, after a consumer has purchased a test but before it is taken, the instructional information included in the package advises the test-taker to first register his or her number with the company and then listen to counseling information. At this time, after selecting whether to listen in English or Spanish, a person registers his or her test number followed by demographic information (such as age group, ethnic background and the number of times a person has been tested). This helps to provide specific counseling referral services when a person receives the test results, Johnson says. However, participation in the anonymous data collection is not mandatory.
"By collecting information with an automated system, we have built up a database of about 15,000 referral places," he says. "In the pre-test, we ask for zip code and give them the option (by using an automated system) of talking to a counselor."

By using the automated system, Johnson says the home-test company has been able to collect specific data, which would nullify a gripe some medical professional have against the tests. He says that through the automated system, it has been revealed that 53 percent of people using Home Access (brand of home-HIV tests) are being tested for the first time, and two-thirds of them are males. The largest group using the test ranges from ages 25 to 39 and the second-highest is age 18 to 24. As of April, 581,429 people had been diagnosed as having AIDS, with 102,904 of these people being between the ages of 20 to 29, according to the Center for Disease Control's Department of Human Services.

Consumers of the test are counseled effectively, Johnson claims. He also says the counselors are highly qualified. They are required to have a bachelor's degree in client-centered counseling and more than 50 percent have advanced degrees.

But when told of Johnson's view on the home-HIV tests, Kudrin chuckled a bit. Kudrin says he believes the home-HIV tests are "nothing more than just someone trying to make an incredible amount of money off of a horrible disease."

Regardless of companies making money or not, it was time for me to call and get my results. Dialing the number, I waited for the automated instructions, not really worried about how the results would turn out. I was calling just to hear how they were given. I knew that negative results are usually given by an automated voice, so I waited for it.

Sure enough, the voice came on: "To hear instructions in English, press one. To hear instructions in Spanish, press two." I pressed one and was instructed to enter my assigned-test number. I did. But the voice came on again. "Please wait while we connect you to a counselor."

What could have gone wrong? Shouldn't I just get a recording? If the results were negative, why would I need a counselor? After one or two very long minutes, a man's voice came on the line.

"What is your test number so I can verify it?" he asked me. I told him.

Another pause.

"There was an insufficient amount of blood given for the results." My heart slowed down. I had thought he was going to give me a death sentence, although I should have known better.

Then he asked me how it was during the waiting period. Of course I didn't tell him I took the test as an experiment.

"Hard," I replied, which was all too true considering the terror I felt during that few-minute waiting period.

"How are you feeling today?" he then asked.

"Fine," I said.

Then he offered to sell me a new home-HIV test at half price. I told him I wanted to wait.

"I'll put your test number on a list in case you call back and change your mind." I mumbled appreciatively and then he said, "Well, is there anything else I can do for you today?"

"No, thanks," I said.

Then I lay staring in the dim light of my room, all alone, looking at the tiny mark on my finger where I had poked it.

I silently thanked the heavens that I didn't have to worry that there was a chance I was HIV-infected, and thought to myself how horrible it must be to have to wait and be put on hold to find out results as important as these.

Tina Grady is a senior magazine journalism major. Her dedication to reporting social issues led her to lance her finger for this article.
Cough Syrup

The over-the-counter underground drug of the '90s

I can’t walk, so I guess I’m gonna stay at home.

They can have my legs, just leave my tail alone.

And I can’t talk, so I guess I got nothing to say.

I’ll keep my eyes, just take these tears away.

Butthole Surfers “Cough Syrup”
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story/photo illustrations by Kevin G. Brosien

illustration by George Coghill
Nov. 10, 1996. Evan Dando of the Lemonheads waxes poetic on the virtues of Robitussin while being interviewed by Matthew Pinfield on MTV's "120 Minutes."

In a dimly-lighted house in Kent sit two men and one woman.

Gene (not his real name — all the cough syrup abusers in this story asked to remain anonymous) is just under 6 feet tall and rail thin. His jet black hair is spiked with hair goop, and a growth of hair spurts from his chin. He wears jeans and a body-hugging Kiss "Destroyer" T-shirt he's probably had since junior high.

Snowflake is about Gene's height and also rail thin. Her short hair is bleached blond, with a long strand of bangs that repeatedly fall in front of her face. She wears a long-sleeve, black T-shirt, jeans and Doc Marten boots.

Stymie is 5 feet 10 inches tall and stocky. His hair also is bleached blonde. Right now, it looks like he just got out of bed, or more than likely, off the couch. He wears a stained T-shirt and jeans.

The three have meticulously laid out all the essentials for this evening's entertainment. Cigarettes and an ashtray, glasses of water, a pipe, a bag of marijuana, three four-ounce bottles of Robitussin Maximum Strength Cough syrup and two boxes of Drixoral Cough Liquid Caps are placed on an oversized coffee table laden with burning candles. Hawkwind plays on the stereo.

Gene is a 23-year-old Kent State student who is familiar with the "trip" they are about to have. He has pulled out a stack of records and CDs, including Social Distortion, Iron Butterfly and the Rolling Stones, and placed them next to the stereo. This is necessary because in about two hours, none of them is going to be able to move — at least not with much coordination or, at times, purpose.

Each grabs a bottle of cough syrup, making a toast and slugging it down. Their faces contort at the taste, and they periodically sip the water to kill it. But they manage to finish off their bottles, and then they grab some Drixoral and swallow five to 10 capsules each. The cough medicine is all gone in under an hour.

Within 45 minutes of ingestion, Stymie puts on a flowery, calf-length, polyester muumuu, and the drugs take hold. For the next nine hours, they sit in the living room hallucinating and going through phases of catatonia, contemplation, laughing fits and paranoia.

The only light on is one that Gene calls the robo-light, which is hidden behind stacked stereo equipment. It changes colors and blinks. Eventually, the candles will become too bright and be extinguished.

The drug surging through their brains is dextromethorphan (DXM), commonly found in many brands of over-the-counter cough medicines. Gene says it is "the over-the-counter underground drug of the '90s."

DXM has been available for more than 30 years for various medicinal purposes. Subgroups of the counter-culture have perpetuated the information of its misuse for nearly as long.

Today, the Internet spreads the information worldwide, and icons of pop culture sing and talk about it through mass media. Clique of "syrup heads" regularly get together and do the "Robo-shuffle," which refers to a popular brand name of cough syrup and the trouble users of high doses encounter with mobility. The ease of access...
to DXM can be unsettling when its potential for misuse is realized.

William White, a 25-year-old computer science graduate of Ohio University, has produced a web site, "The Dextromethorphan FAQ: Answers to Frequently Asked Questions About Dextromethorphan (DXM)."

White has spent more than 2,000 hours researching DXM and its effects on humans. He has documented all his research and has about 200 medical references to back up his work. He also has interviewed and tested numerous DXM abusers.

White's interest in DXM came about by accident. "I was sick with the flu," White says. "I misread the directions on a bottle of cough syrup and drank two shots of it instead of two teaspoons. I got a buzz from it and was surprised." He says that his awareness of music and motion became heightened.

This incident and his interest in the human brain led him to study neuropharmacology, with special attention to DXM. While researching on the Internet, White began to see web sites that provided potentially harmful misinformation about DXM.

White's site contains all the information necessary for a person to have a "safe" DXM trip. It includes lists of cough syrups and capsules, warnings for drug interactions, methods for extracting DXM from syrups and detailed medical explanations of how the drug affects the brain and nervous system.

"I don't advocate recreational drug use for anybody," White says. "But I'd rather have one person tripping safely than 100 people getting sick or damaging themselves because of wrong information. I have spoken to people who have liver damage because they didn't know what they were doing."

Gene is aware of the dangers from cough syrup misuse.

"There were two high school kids in my hometown who died from drinking cough syrup with acetaminophen in it," Gene says. "They (the police) wrote it off as a double suicide, but those kids were just trying to get off."

White's web page explicitly states the dangers of ingesting large doses of acetaminophen and other drugs commonly mixed with DXM in cough syrups. It explains that the only "safe" cough medicines to misuse are those in which the only active ingredient is DXM.

So why, with all the inherent dangers, are people abusing cough medicines? Because some people enjoy the effects it has on them.

Stymie, the 24-year-old syrup head who introduced Gene to DXM, began mega-dosing cough syrup at the age of 14. He learned about it from his friend's older brother and first tried it "because we were underage and couldn't get any beer."

Stymie says mega-dosing cough syrup is one of the world's best kept secrets. "It's like being on acid (LSD), morphine, and drunk off your ass and in a vacuum," is how he explains the feeling he gets from DXM.

Kirk, Stymie's 21-year-old roommate, a Kent State student and fellow syrup head, joined the conversation. "I take cough syrup for no other reason than getting as fucked up as possible," Kirk says. "It's everything that I thought taking acid would be, but acid never was."

Stymie shared a memorable syrup experience he had with his roommates last Christmas.

"There were a bunch of us on cough syrup. We all had laundry baskets on our heads and we were flying in the Millennium Falcon," Stymie says, referring to hallucinations of flying Han Solo's ship from "Star Wars."

"The Christmas tree had a space helmet on it, and it was our god."

When under the influence of cough syrup, Stymie always sees pink specks on the walls. Sound takes on an echo-like quality, and movement becomes difficult while on DXM. "One time, I was going to the bathroom, and there were two doors. I had to stop and close my eyes and reassess the situation," he says.

The only residual side effects he has noticed are that it makes him, "slow, dumb and tired" the next day.

Stymie has been abusing cough medicine about 10 times a year for the past 10 years. He usually drinks two four-ounce bottles of syrup and takes 10 capsules in one sitting.

He can rattle all the brands of "safe" cough syrup off the top of his head. He has a small file of cough syrup information containing two pages of handwritten notes on how to extract DXM from capsules. This process breaks down the DXM into a concentrated powder so it can be snorted, smoked, injected or swallowed. However, Stymie says he has never used these methods.
Gene has been misusing cough syrup about once a month for the past year. He first tried it out of curiosity. “I thought it was nonsense, so one night I decided to try it,” he says.

He describes his trips as a “hallucinogenic, fourth-dimensional experience. It gives you the essence of space travel without leaving the house.”

“I consider it fun,” Gene says, “but that’s my kind of fun.”

Snowflake, a 19-year-old Kent State student, first tried cough syrup after Gene told her about it.

“I didn’t feel out of control, just really wasted. I felt like a vegetable,” says Snowflake, describing her first DXM overdose. She also vomited.

In the past nine months, she has misused DXM seven times.

“I usually take a box of pills, and I smoke pot. If it doesn’t kick in, I’ll drink some cough syrup but usually just the pills,” Snowflake says.

Snowflake explains how her body reacts from mega-dosing cough syrup.

“It’s typically like a deep relaxation. Your body is relaxed, but your mind is doing all kinds of crazy stuff,” she says.

White says cough syrup is definitely not a party drug. “You don’t tend to move or commit crimes on DXM,” he says.

People high on DXM usually look drunk and may exhibit “socially inappropriate behavior” such as lack of movement for long periods of time, glassy-eyed staring and an inability to speak.

DXM belongs to a group of drugs classified as dissociative anesthetics.
“Dissociatives are a dangerous class of drugs,” White says. PCP (angel dust), cocaine and amphetamines also belong to this category.

Dr. Martin Schechter, chairman of the Department of Pharmacology at Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine (NEOUCOM), explains how dissociative anesthetics work. “They allow a patient to, in a sense, come out of their bodies. With the management of pain by other drugs, surgical procedures can be performed,” Schechter says.

“They are not used much anymore. Nearly 50 percent of patients had hallucinations after they came out of surgery.”

DXM’s medicinal uses include the treatment of Lou Gehrig’s Disease, applications against cancer, chronic pain management and prevention of the pain and damage caused by shingles.

Schechter explains that long-term use of high doses can cause some people to behave like schizophrenics. The drug causes certain brain receptors to shut down and others to become over stimulated. Eventually, the overactive cells shut themselves down. These cells can shut down permanently with regular use of the drug.

“I met a three-bottle-a-day person who had trouble walking a year after he quit,” White says. “The damage is real and may be irreversible.”

Although DXM is generally not physically addictive, daily use can create a psychological addiction, Schechter says.

White does not foresee the drug companies pulling DXM off the shelves. “They’re making too much money off it,” he says.
Carol Dornbush, director of public affairs for A.H. Robins Consumer Products, the manufacturer of Robitussin, says it would not be ethical to pull DXM off the market.

“The products are safe when you use them as the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) says to,” Dornbush says. “It (cough syrup misuse) is of great concern to us because we are here for people’s health and quality of life ... You’re talking about a small number of people who abuse the drug.”

Dr. Patrick Janovick, a Kent State University physician, says he has not found anyone he would call “truly addicted to DXM.”

“As for the recreational use of DXM, we have not experienced it at all,” Janovick says. “The stuff tastes like crap. I hate to say it, but on our campus there are a lot easier ways to get high.”

Janovick finds it hard to believe that somebody can get that “messed up” on a bottle of cough syrup. “You can go downtown to the bars and drink four shots of whiskey and get the same effects.”

Schechter, the NEUOCOM pharmacologist, shares a similar disbelief when confronted with the notion that people are misusing cough syrup just for the fun of it. “I’m sorry to hear that it is coming to this. This is really surprising to me, but it allows one to account for the large number of people on the Internet who relate their experiences under the influence of the drug,” Schechter says. “If you are abusing it — if you are looking to go sideways, that is hallucinate, there are many other drugs out there that do a better job — but they are illegal.”

Schechter explains that the hyperactivity and hallucinations come close to being classified as toxic psychosis. Furthermore, interaction of DXM with alcohol and other central nervous system depressants may add to the depressant effect and lead to a state of coma.

“They are taking a big chance of overdose. Some people don’t get off right away, so they take more and the side effects may outweigh the dissociative effects. Respiratory depression is a possibility at that point,” Schechter says.

Schechter says recent reports state that there may be a drug interaction between DXM and Prozac. The result of the interaction can result in what is known as “serotonin syndrome,” and can be fatal.

Schechter warns of the long-lasting effects of DXM.

“People getting off on this drug better not have anything important to do the next day. It is metabolized quite slowly by the body,” he says, explaining why Stymie feels “slow, dumb and tired” the day after a cough syrup binge.

Gene laughed when he heard about Janovick’s comparison of cough syrup to alcohol.

“That’s why it’s underground,” he says. “Nobody believes you can get this fucked up on cough syrup.”

Kevin G. Brosien is a senior magazine journalism major. He doesn’t own a working car and he lives with his dog, Stiv, and a bunch of carpenter ants.

If you want to touch the sky,
you must be prepared to die.
I hate cough syrup don’t you?

I hate cough syrup don’t you?
The

by Kevin G. Brosien
photography by Tanya Ackerman
and Kevin G. Brosien
TwistOffs
An epic novel with some really groovy photos
The band is overwhelmed by its own sense of purpose.

The TwistOffs have been weaving their musical web over Kent for nearly 10 years. Over the past four years, they have begun to cover all of North America with their silky strands of sound. They tour the country in their customized yellow Bluebird school bus called “Betty,” performing 200 shows a year.

This is not the story of success. Although the TwistOffs signed a three-record contract with Sol 3 Records in New York City, it is a small label — one they hope will catapult them into rock ’n’ roll financial security, if there is such a thing. Right now, though, they continue roaming the country in an unreliable bus, running their own affairs.

This is the story of hard work and tenacity. If you want to know how hard it can be to have a touring band, ask a TwistOff. If you want to know how much fun it can be, ask a TwistOff. If you want to know how stinky it can get, ask a TwistOff. You'll probably get more than you bargained for.

The founding father of the TwistOffs is a Kent native, 29-year-old Erik Walter. His 6-foot-1-inch frame is thinned from 10 years of jumping around on stage, a lifetime of walking around Kent and malnutrition incurred during the band’s cross-country tours.

He has spent the past 10 years bringing his adolescent dreams to fruition. He has been honing the band for this precise moment.

Touring in a band was what Walter wanted to do ever since he started playing the electric guitar. In high school, Walter, Phil Adamek and Greg Schidlowski, all original members of the TwistOffs, used to hide their bikes in the bushes and sneak into JB’s. The underage trio watched numerous bands rock the joint and roll out of town.

“I always wanted to go on tour like the guys I saw at JB’s, dirty and stumbling out of a ’71 Ford van,” Walter says.

Walter’s musical inspiration began at home with his parents, Tom and Susan Walter. “My father played piano and spoke French,” Walter says. “He didn’t do it all the time, but after a few drinks, that side of him came out. He played casually, mostly ragtime versions of non-ragtime songs. Interpretive, I guess you would call it.”

Walter now slides into interpretive versions of songs from pop icons like Madonna and Hootie and the Blowfish during the TwistOffs’ shows.

Walter took piano lessons for less than a year when he was in kindergarten. He credits his father for these early music lessons. “That and the fact that we had a piano,” Walter says.

His next formal music education came in the form of group folk guitar lessons while he attended St. Patrick’s Elementary School.

“It was this hippy-esque type guy teaching a bunch of kids folk versions of rock numbers like ‘Come Together’ and ‘Stairway to Heaven’ and Kiss and Black Sabbath songs,” Walter said. “To this day, I
still come across those old blue mimeographed copies of chords with lyrics written under them and it scares me to think I learned this stuff as a kid.”

Walter continued these lessons for two years and then began playing in the Folk Mass Ensemble at St. Patrick’s Church. He played in the church group until one day at the age of 13, when he got in a fight with a nun in the group. The argument was over which one of them was out of tune.

“We were probably both out of tune,” Walter recalls, “but she was farther out of tune than me.”

After that experience, Walter did not touch the guitar for two years. Then, in high school he started buying Sex Pistols records, got an electric guitar and started the garage band that would become the TwistOffs. He took lessons briefly from Ken Leonard at Woodsy’s Music and later took Jazz Ensemble at Kent State with Chas Baker.

“I got a ‘C’ out of mercy,” says Walter about the Jazz Ensemble. “My sense of humor and sense of time were not appreciated.”

In the spring of 1990, the TwistOffs began touring more extensively. The rigors of touring and missing classes forced Walter to drop out of college.

“My classwork may have been suffering,” Walter says, smirking. “I always figured I’d go back to school if things didn’t work out.

Past the point of turning back, the TwistOffs roll on.

A leaflet at a recent New Jersey show called the TwistOffs’ music “quirky pop alternative.” Eclectic circus rock provides a better picture.

All of their songs are upbeat and have been known to induce happy feet. Drums, a bass, two guitars and a three-piece horn section blast out big band harmonies.

The band is animated to say the least. Seeing a TwistOffs show is akin to watching popcorn pop in the bottom of a greasy pan. The kernels start dancing around as they get agitated by the heat. Then blammo, they start going off one by one.

At Mothersbaugh, the trombone player, jumps around the stage like a little lost boy who ran out of Ritalin. He jumps off the stage and thrashes among the crowd. He climbs anything and hangs from rafters.

Andy Stephan, the saxophone player, makes a strong case for “most disturbed of the bunch.” He has developed a strange habit of putting things in his mouth. He’ll actually go into the crowd, find some trash and shove it in.

Though not immune to bouts of weirdness, Brian Fricky, the trumpet player, is the most mild mannered member of the horn section. On stage he is Stephen and Mothersbaugh’s victim of cruelty. They don’t hate each other. Heck, Fricky and Stephan have been kissing at least once a show for over a year. Beer is dumped on Fricky’s head and squirted into his crotch during his solos. During a show at Ozeez (now JB’s) a couple years ago, he was accidentally set aflame. It happened during what used to be a TwistOff ritual of blowing a ball of fire.

Walter usually blows the 151 rum, creating a ball of fire. But this night, Walter and Mothersbaugh both grabbed a shot. They coated the back of a guitar with the rum and blew a double fireball, igniting the guitar and Fricky who was holding it.

The band, seeing a fellow member in peril, promptly doused him with soda, beer and pitchers of water.

“I didn’t actually know what happened,” Fricky says. “I felt heat and saw everybody looking at me with a look of fright.”

After finishing the song, Fricky went to the hospital, where he got smeared with ointment. He made the gig in Youngstown the next night with minor burns and one eyebrow. Fricky plays on unfazed.

Pat Drouin, on lead guitar, is usually too busy playing to get involved in many antics. Drouin related the story of his first meeting with Walter at Mother’s Junction (now Ray’s upstairs) in Kent.
Erik Walter contemplating what it really means to be the walrus.

“Al introduced me to Erik, and before he even said anything, he hit me in the head,” Drouin says. “I grabbed him by the shoulders and we went down on the ground brawling. When we were done, we got up and Erik said, ‘He’ll do.’”

Dustin Elliott is the bass player and the newest member of the band. He is quickly finding his niche in the band and on the bus while learning all the songs.

Gregg Garlock, the drummer, says he enjoys being behind the scenes. You can barely see him behind his cymbals and all the commotion on stage. When he joined the band three years ago, he quit his full time job with benefits.

“When my girlfriend found out I was dissing it all for the band, she kicked me out,” Garlock says. He spent some time living in the band’s practice space during his early days as a TwistOff.

When performing, Walter positions himself at center stage. He sings the majority of the songs and plays his Fender Stratocaster slung low on his hip.

“Walt has an uncanny ability to play and sing,” Stephan says. “Have you ever watched him play? It’s not all bar chords and strumming. That fucker’s pretty busy with his fingers while he’s singing all those lyrics.”

While singing, Walter’s head often tilts to the right. He sinks down to his knees and sings up to the microphone as if trying to muster something up from the bottom of his soul.

“Love Cowboy” incites another bunch of drunks to fisticuffs at Gerity’s in New Jersey.
Walter says that going on tour with the TwistOffs is like going on an expedition.

He sings the lyrics with a biting voice as unique as the sound of the band. He sings about things that would make his grandmother cringe with a barely visible smirk on his face. An ornery smirk that his girlfriend, Maria Burr, says is there for a reason.

“He always seems to have something up his sleeve,” Burr says. “You never know what’s going to happen with Erik around.”

Walter writes most of the songs. His creative process is disjointed at best. All of the lyrics he sings are stored in his head. He never puts them on paper unless they are to go in the liner notes of an album. He does not write poetry or much of anything else. His lyrics seem to come out of some kind of mental vortex.

“Sometimes I’ll forget something I was singing or playing in a song, then I’ll use something a little bit different. Later I’ll forget that and remember chunks that I forgot before. Eventually, I end up with a complete song,” Walter says.

From here, the songs go to the band for musical processing by something Fricky calls, “The Fill The Bucket Theory.”

“Erik comes in with the rhythm and the lyrics and we all add to that,” Fricky says. “We all dump what we have into the bucket.”

Mothersbaugh says Walter doesn’t title his songs. He may not have a title until the song is recorded and a name is needed to put on the album jacket.

“We delayed the release of our last CD (‘Cup of Fish’—since re-released by Sol 3) a month because we couldn’t come up with a title for the album,” Mothersbaugh says.

Greg Schidkowski describes Walter as, “very bright, witty and funny. He has a keen ability to observe the absurdity in life.”

This absurdity can be heard in the lyrics of many of the TwistOffs’ songs like “Falsetto Detective” and “Love Cowboy.” The latter has become something of an anthem of the band, complete with Village People-like arm gestures. It is a rousing number with a groovy vamp that has incited drunken minions to fisticuffs, like on a Feb. 7, 1997, show in Laurence Harbor, N.J.

Signing the record contract hasn’t changed Walter. He and his girlfriend are still remodeling their new house by themselves. He still works his day job at Woodsy’s Music and he still doesn’t own a car.

Walter is committed. He has been dating Burr for nine years. He’s worked at Woodsy’s for 11 years. The TwistOffs is the only band Walter has ever played in and it has been together for 10 years.

Mothersbaugh says Burr is an influential person in Walter’s life. “I was listening to Donovan (Leitch) on Howard Stern the other day and he was talking about his muse. Erik has a muse. It’s Maria. Listen closely to the lyrics of the songs. They’re all about Maria and Kent.”

As for not having a car, Burr says Walter is not afraid of driving, “he just hasn’t taken the time to stop and buy a car since his 16th birthday.” She says he is an avid skateboarder, pedestrian and unicyclist, “Whatever it takes to get him where he’s going.”

Along with their extensive touring, the TwistOffs have recorded three albums (“Make Me Laugh,” “Live in Ohio” and “Cup of Fish”). They run almost all of their own marketing and sales. Sol 3 has just taken over distribution of “Cup of Fish” and it’s hand is just beginning to be seen in promotion. In October of 1996, the band played its 3,000th show.

“For the past four years its (the band) been a business,” says Walter. “I’m doing it more for accomplishment now than the art. You can do art at home. I look at it as a challenge with one hell of a fringe benefits package.” Some of the fringe benefits are free beer when they play and being able to do what they enjoy and having other people enjoy it, too.

Walter says that going on tour with the TwistOffs is like going on an expedition. Betty, the band’s bus, breaks down frequently. There is a hole in the hood where the fan shot through, and the left front headlight is held on with medical tape. On one tour in New Mexico, the band put up the bus as collateral for a $5,000 loan so they could buy a new engine for it, rent trucks to get home and fly Walter, Burr and Garlock back to New Mexico to pick it up. The old engine blew up.

The band eats, sleeps and cooks on the bus. Sometimes they will go to a campground if they have a day or two between shows. They
rarely stay in hotels because of the cost.

Mothersbaugh says that when Walter is on tour, “He is like the kid on the after-school special whose parents leave. They end up living for two weeks in an empty house doing what they want, not bathing and eating Reese’s Peanut Butter Cups for breakfast.”

“We get hotels when we smell so bad we must shower,” Walter says, “unless they are provided for us, which is few and far between.”

The night after the Laurence Harbor show, the TwistOffs had a gig in New York City.

That afternoon, Scott Cohen, the president of Sol 3 Records, invited them to his apartment to take showers before a photo shoot for the label.

Burr says the band is tolerant of each other. “It drove me crazy driving back from New Mexico with only two of them. I couldn’t imagine being on the bus with nine people.”

Walter admits that living in close quarters with nine men can create some high tension moments. Walter and Mothersbaugh are the only two who have brought the bus to a halt as the result of a fight.

The two were arguing about something stupid when, “Al jacked me in the head with the atlas,” Walter says.

“Damn right I jacked him in the head,” Mothersbaugh says. “And it was a milk-soaked New York Times.”

Mothersbaugh says the argument was, literally, over spilled milk. “It wasn’t even my mess and Erik was sitting there drunk and yelling at me about leaving milk out. Spilled milk must have fucked him up as a child or something.”
Walter then attempted to dump mayonnaise onto Mothersbaugh.

"The jar slipped and went out the closed window," Walter says.

"We have our moments," Fricky says. "But they end quickly and are forgotten."

Now, 10 years after Walter cracked open the cold one that would become the name of his band, his tenacity seems to be paying off. The TwistOffs didn't just go with the first label that offered them a deal. "We got a really cool developmental deal," Fricky says. "They're (Sol 3) not just trying to cash in on us. They're trying to develop us."

Scott Cohen, president of Sol 3 Records, is excited to take the TwistOffs under Sol 3's wing. His first impressions of the band were positive.

"I got a copy of their album, 'Make Me Laugh.' I don't think we ever made it through the first song. That opening horn riff..." Cohen dropped off as if listening to it in his head and then chimed back in, "We knew we wanted 'em."

The TwistOffs' first three albums were produced by the band with extra input by Walter because he knows how to work the equipment as a result of his job at Woodsy's Music running sound for live bands in the area.

Walter isn't worried about turning the band's control over to someone else. "The guy produced Blondie! I can't wait to work with him to see what a producer actually does," Walter says.

Walter's hopes for the next stage of his career seem restrained. With his band on the cusp of stardom, he hasn't changed and he's taking it all in stride.

Mothersbaugh is titillated by the prospects that now lie in wait beyond the open door. "I've got something to tell you," he said. "We are going to be a really big band someday."

Kevin G. Brosien is a Gemini and a senior magazine journalism major. He is an accomplished singer/songwriter/musician.

Erik Walter
29, Virgo, lead vocals, guitar, bus driver, once ignited the trumpet player, claims he is the "walrus." Kent State drop out (like Joe Walsh).

Pat Drouin
39, Cancer, lead guitar, vocals, graduated from Kent State in 1990 with an advertising degree. He doesn't care about making money, he just loves to sell carpet. Seven years as a TwistOff.

Al Mothersbaugh
29, Gemini, trombone, vocals, business/tour manager, graduated from Kent State in 1991 with a degree in sociology. At the age of 6, his parents sent him to live in the jungle. Nine years as a TwistOff.

Andy Stephan
23, Cancer, saxophones, local promotion, e-mail tracking, regulator of beef jerky intake, Kent State drop out (he had a saxophone scholarship and dropped out to become a TwistOff with a little over a semester to graduate), two and one-quarter years as a TwistOff.

Dustin Elliott
24, Leo, amazingly eager bass player, webmaster (a.k.a. computer geek), Don Knotts impersonator, ginseng addict. Because of a rare vitamin deficiency, he believes every show is at the Gund Arena. Three months as a TwistOff.

Gregg Garlock
35, Sagittarius, drums, bus mechanic, designated bus driver, roadie, he's pretty sure they were looking for a drummer first and a mechanic second. He lives on a steady diet of Pepsi and Reese's Peanut Butter Cups with a strict aversion to cheese and onions. Three years as a TwistOff.

Brian Fricky
25, Virgo, trumpet, bus driver, Kent State drop out. He spent the '70s playing basketball with the likes of Lew Alcindor and World B. Free, as Low Top Sweeney. Seven and one-half years as a TwistOff.

Kevin Walter
19, Gemini, merchandiser, Erik's brother, volunteered for merchandiser duty because: "I didn't have a job. I get to travel. I have fun. Plus, they take care of me," he says with an ornery smirk that must run in the family. Nine months on and off the bus.

Karl Armstrong
Aries (he also drives one), old enough to know better and young enough to still do it, sound guy, lives in Toledo. "They made it worthwhile. They threatened to kill me if I didn't join," he says. Stephan swears Karl used to be a consultant for Fashion magazine. Eight months as sound guy.
It stood on the cracked pavement painted white with gold and blue trim and the KSU symbol on its tail.

"This is ours. It's a Cessna 172," said Kevin Hart, my pilot and instructor.

We opened the compact doors of the Cessna and climbed in, Hart on the left and me on the right of the controls. He started the engine, while explaining that pilots steer with pedals on the floor of the cockpit when the airplane is on the ground.

Our four-seater plane rounded the Kent State Airport to the runway. Increasing speed and lifting off at 60 knots, the Cessna shook slightly from winds blowing from the west. And we were airborne.

Hart told me to hold the yoke: the U-shaped steering mechanism of the plane. The muscles in both my arms tensed as I pulled out on the yoke to point the nose upward. The small aircraft ascended until it reached 2,000 feet. The humming engine pumped, full throttle.

"See the horizon disappearing as you pull up?" Hart asked into the mouthpiece of the intercom headset. Already sitting up straight, I had to stretch my neck to peer over the control panel and out of the slightly bubbled windshield.

"Level it out, and then I want to show you something," Hart said.

He had me pull out the throttle knob, slowing down the plane and bringing the engine to a quiet idle. This was a demonstration of aerodynamic forces acting on the plane. Our plane descended, which is what happens to the lift when power is reduced. The Cessna seemed to hang in the air, suspended.

We waited. I held my breath, my whole body tight with fear.

"You may feel as if the airplane is going to drop right out of the sky," Hart said. "But that isn't what's happening. Planes are gliders. We're gliding."

My knuckles were white from clutching the yoke.

"Are you OK?" Hart asked.

"Yeah," I said. "I'm just a little nervous. It got so quiet."

Hart told me how to make a level, right turn. Maintaining the pressure on the yoke, I hesitantly turned it to the right at a 40-degree angle. I had to hold the yoke for a while in that angle to make a wide, smooth turn. Sharp turns can cause the aircraft to jerk.

The plane was tilted on its right side. I turned my head to the right and looked out the window. Only a pane of glass separated me from 2,000 feet of sky. I could see patterns of boxy houses and zig-zagging roads below us.

"Beautiful turn," my instructor said. "Now, start leveling it out."

I gently pushed the yoke to the left. I sat back and let my shoulders drop a little. I could
Lake Rockwell, facing south at 4,000 feet.
feel the tension leaving my arms.

This was my first flight lesson, and it was certainly thrilling. But piloting an aircraft gave me a new sense of understanding of the immense responsibility that pilots undertake. Passengers of any flight are literally trusting the pilots with their lives. For fearful fliers, not being in control of the flight or aircraft can give them the jitters. Other nervous passengers might suffer from the fear of heights or from the fear of crashing. But experts on flying — a pilot, an instructor, an airplane designer and a therapist — say air travel is safe and passengers can overcome their fears.

**Fearful Fliers**

The fear of flying can be blamed on an overactive imagination, affected by vivid images from the news media. There are classes, videotapes, cassettes and books designed to help people overcome their phobia of flying.

For 21 years, therapist Carol Stauffer of Pittsburgh has been treating people to overcome their flying phobia. Stauffer says she has treated about 5,000 people with four types of flight phobias: the fear of not being in control of a situation, claustrophobia, fear of heights and fear of crashing.

“We work with the body and the mind,” Stauffer says. “No matter what the cause of fear, fearful fliers have to develop a new response to flying.”

Stauffer says the two most important tips for anyone who is anxious about flying are to keep your body relaxed and to keep your mind occupied.

Some experienced pilots and instructors say the fear of flying has to do with a lack of proper education. They say that flying isn’t dangerous and shouldn’t be feared.

“If it was something so dangerous, I would not be in that airplane,” says Seth Kornblum, a flight instructor at the KSU airport.

He says fear is due to ignorance. “Not knowing your limitations in any endeavor is dangerous,” Kornblum says.

Kevin Hart, chief flight instructor at the campus airport, says flying is extremely safe, despite what the general public perceives. When comparing numbers of car and plane accidents, he says it’s still considered safer to fly.

“The news media makes a big deal out of airplane accidents because it’s going to sell. Blood and guts are going to sell,” Hart says.

“When an airplane goes down, there might be 200 to 400 people aboard. The degree of injury and loss of life is greater per occurrence than it would be in an auto accident.”

National Transportation Safety Board data reports there were 35,831 more fatal motor vehicle accidents in 1994 than there were fatal general aviation accidents.

“Flying is a very safe mode of travel, as long as you conduct it with a safe attitude and a respectful attitude,” Hart says.
One Pilot's Struggle

On July 13, 1985, Hart experienced a freak and nearly fatal occurrence while flying for a sky-diving company in Canton. Hart's engine failed after takeoff at 600 feet in the air.

"A pilot's job during an engine failure is to maintain control of the airplane and keep it gliding," Hart says. "But we had a failure close to the ground, and there was no time to attempt to restart the engine."

Hart says he only had time to turn the Cessna 182 around toward the airport and attempt to land in a gravel quarry, away from populated areas.

The plane initially landed on bumpy ground, shaking and causing Hart to knock his head against the door frame. The uncontrolled plane then went into a lake.

"I was knocked out after landing - unconscious," Hart says. "Everything here is speculated based on what we could piece together. The airplane passed through some trees and came apart as it was going through the woods. The whole front section of the airplane was gone, the engine had pulled from the plane and made a big, wide-open gap."

Everyone else on the plane swam out of the gap to safety, he says.

"When I awoke, the plane was completely submerged," Hart says. "The water was apparently what revived me. I came to, but I was pinned inside the plane. I wasn't able to get out, and I started to struggle."

After several failed attempts to free himself from the plane, Hart gave one more try. He pulled himself from the wreckage and swam through jagged metal at the front of the plane. Hart suffered a broken collarbone and several bruises and cuts.

The Federal Aviation Administration concluded the crash occurred from unknown causes.

"As I was swimming to shore, the first thing I heard were the sirens," Hart says. "I remember thinking that I would never get back into an airplane."

But that thought faded quickly. Hart went up a month later, although he says the first time back in a plane was an uncomfortable experience.

"I've wanted to fly since I was this high," he says, holding his hand down at knee level. "People have a passion to fly. It gets in their blood."

With the support of family and friends, Hart says he overcame his new-found fear of flying.

"The phrase people kept using was, 'Kevin, when you get thrown from a horse, you gotta get back on and ride.' And that's what I did," he says.

Today, Hart shares his near-tragic story with his pupils. He encourages his students to learn from his accident and to be aware "freak" occurrences while flying could happen to anyone.

Preventing the Crash

Although the causes of airplane accidents sometimes go undetermined, several factors could be involved: poor weather, human error or mechanical malfunctions.

However, the FAA says the No. 1 cause stems from human behavior.

An FAA-accident prevention program directed toward pilots, reveals accident-prone pilots tend to be over-confident, self-assertive or tense and panicky. Safer pilots tend to be those who are cautious, well-controlled or tolerant and aware of their limitations. The program emphasizes most aircraft accidents are preventable and that most were precipitated by some human failure rather than a mechanical malfunction.

Hart says overconfidence can be a problem for some pilots. The most crucial time for overconfidence to affect pilots is after they receive their private pilot's certificate, when they have 200 to 500 hours of flight experience.

"It's very important that any pilot realizes his or her limitations, whether they're in training or acting as a professional," Hart says. "The less experienced you are, the more limitations you're going to have."

Melissa Farson, a Kent State graduate and full-time flight instructor at the KSU airport for two years, says she never had problems with confidence levels affecting the performance of her pilot trainees.
"These students that come out here want to do this, and they sometimes have anxiety only because they want to learn," Farson says. "There's a class taught to the students where they study aircraft accidents. They learn from other people's mistakes."

John Roncz, an Indiana aerodynamicist who helped design the wings of the Voyager and the Long-EZ canard, says the key to overcoming a potential accident is to learn risk management.

"You have to be willing to accept some risk by the very fact that you're leaving the ground," Roncz says. "But you have to manage that risk and try to limit your exposure to it."

Roncz, who also is a long-time private pilot and frequent flier, says most of the near accidents he was involved in were caused by weather or air-traffic control mistakes.

"I was in the clouds flying blind, and so I had to rely totally on air-traffic control," Roncz says. "Somehow, they lost track of me, and a jet passed so close to me. It was a near-miss collision."

Roncz says bad, unexpected weather conditions sometimes are to blame for accidents. The four forces on an airplane, lift-weight, thrust-drag, are affected by too much ice forming on the wings and outside the aircraft. Ice forms as a result of moisture, which can come in different forms: precipitation, rain or snow.

"Ice adds a bunch of weight and increases the drag," he says. "Normally, a plane can tolerate a little ice, but too much will cause the airplane to descend."

Although ice is dangerous, the worst weather condition during a flight is a thunderstorm, Roncz says. The winds and turbulence can rip off the wings of a plane, and hail can dent the airplane. Dents on an airplane can change its lift.

Only in rare cases do accidents result from mechanical problems or poor design, he says.
“Every airplane is tested to death,” Roncz says. “It has to meet all kinds of standards. The quality in an airplane is extremely high.”

Reports of spontaneous movements of the rudder on the Boeing 737 may be one example of poor design being responsible for accidents. Fatal accidents have been blamed on these movements of the rudder, an instrument on the back of the plane that deflects air flow in to turn the nose left or right.

A September 1994 flight from Aliquippa, Pa., crashed in Pittsburgh, claiming 132 lives. The Boeing 737 reportedly suffered a spontaneous deflection causing the plane to roll over.

The FAA recently has ordered the Boeing company to redesign the 737’s rudder, following new guidelines.

Flying Commercial
Ted Orris, who flies a Boeing 737, has been a USAir co-pilot for eight years and is a Kent State graduate.

“I had to fly a 737 to Phoenix the day after the Pittsburgh accident,” Orris says.

Orris knew two passengers who died in the crash, Kent State graduate and fellow pilot Tony Rich and his wife.

“I can’t say I was nervous, but the accident was in the front of my mind for the entire trip,” Orris says. “The 737 is one of the most popular planes in the world. And if the FAA thought the 737 was that dangerous, they would have parked all of them.”

Orris, who has flown for 17 years, says he never thought about giving up flying after hearing about the fatal USAir accident or other freak occurrences.

Although an overconfident pilot is a problem, Orris says a pilot’s lack of confidence is just as dangerous.

“A pilot must have enough confidence to continue,” he says. “When the pilot in ‘Top Gun’ gave up his wings, that was a good thing.”

Any pilot lacking that confidence, Orris says, should be brave enough to admit it and move on.

“You pay for your mistakes with your life. That gives you a wake-up call. You don’t want your family and friends to read about you in the paper,” Orris says. “I don’t want to be critiqued when I’m dead.”

Katie O’Keefe is a senior newspaper journalism major. She doesn’t have a fear of flying; she has a fear of falling.

Do you have friends or relatives interested in college? Have you meant to send them information about Kent? If your intentions are good, but you’ve been putting it off...

CUT IT OUT!

Dear Admissions Office
Please send undergraduate information and an application to:

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Address __________________________ | Address _________________________
City ________ State ________ Zip______ | City ________ State ________ Zip______
Phone (_____)_____________ | Phone (_____)_____________

RETURN TO: ADMISSIONS OFFICE, KENT STATE UNIVERSITY, P.O. BOX 5190, KENT, OH 44242-0001
Sister to sister

A week long glance into an African-American sorority

by Tanya Ackerman

Dancing at the Kent roller rink at 3 a.m.

From left to right: Tiffinae Ware, April Flood and Esquillitya Ward picking out tunes to karaoke.
Although they are few in number, they say they are united by the bonds of sisterhood.

April Flood, a senior criminal justice major and president of Sigma Gamma Rho, says “We don’t let our letters wear us. We wear our letters.”

Together, the sisters of Sigma Gamma Rho share similar, challenging experiences as active members of an African-American sorority on a predominantly white campus.

The sorority was founded in 1922 at Butler University in Indianapolis by seven teachers who were interested in all phases of education.

The active sisters of Sigma Gamma Rho at Kent say they decided to join because the members before them “were very friendly and very real.”

Flood says, “They accepted us for who we are and they didn’t demean us. They helped us understand sisterhood.”

Members of Sigma Gamma Rho say one of their biggest challenges is getting the African-American community involved in their activities.

Of their small numbers, Nicolette Warren, a junior pre-med major, says: “I’d rather have five dedicated people than 25 who aren’t.”

A single mom proudly distinguishes herself among the sorority’s small numbers. She is accepted and supported by her sisters.

“Having a child is not a drawback,” says Flood.

Tiffinae Ware, a junior finance major, adds, “The black community welcomes single moms, and we are just a part of the black community.”
Nicollette Warren and Tiffinae Ware learning about facials during one of the sorority's many things they do together.

"We're not the first sorority, but that matters the least. It took three rough drafts, to make the masterpiece."

"Greater Service, Greater Progress."

-Sigma Gamma Rho motto
Gamma Epsilon Chapter of KSU
Angela Wilson and 6-year-old son Dennis at a seminar in Humphrey Hall.
"It's so Marge!" was one of Brendan's favorite lines, says Elizabeth Wagner as Holly Hagan chuckles softly. 

"I was the one who started it," Hagan declares. "Well, it was a line in this book that I lent Brendan, Shampoo Planet by Douglas Coupland."

"We used it so no one else would know what we were talking about. And then he quickly adopted the word for his own."

Wagner explains that Brendan's usage of "Marge" was for kitschy, retro-looking eye-catchers. "You know, like a funny diner," Wagner says. Hagan interrupts with an example: "Like a '50s-type diner with waitresses wearing matching pink outfits."

Wagner and Hagan look at each other and smile. Then Hagan gingerly stands up and extracts a box from a closet. She dips her hand in the box, and photographs of Brendan emerge.

Brendan, the crown prince of baggy pants and clunky shoes, smiles slightly at the camera. Cherub-faced and rosy-cheeked, he looked like the poster child for old school raves.

Brendan, Holly, Wagner and Stephanie Wilson were on the way to a pre-party for a rave in Cleveland the night of the accident.
Rain was firing down that morning in Cleveland when Brendan Daugherty died. It was that time of morning that still seems like part of the night before - it was about 2 a.m. when Brendan, a Kent State freshman at the time, was killed by a drunk driver. The accident took place on April 20, 1996.

The passengers in Brendan's grey Ford Tempo - Hagan, Wagner and Wilson - survived with severe injuries, and the damage from the collision was massive.

"He was hit so hard that the roof buckled upward," says Emil Cielic, a case investigator of the accident Investigation Unit with the Cleveland Police Department. "On the driver's side, both doors were pushed inward 18 inches."

Cielic says the other driver's car was going at least 55 miles per hour when it slammed into the driver's side of Brendan's car on the junction of East 40th Street and Euclid Avenue in Cleveland.

Cielic adds that the driver who hit Brendan's car, Eric Wilkes of Cleveland, had a blood alcohol level of 0.14 (0.10 is legally drunk in the state of Ohio). Wilkes, 25, was sentenced to five to 10 years at his hearing on Oct. 30.

It seems like a closed case. The drunk driver is doing time after pleading guilty to the crime. It has been almost half a year since the official book has been closed on the loss of Brendan, yet the survivors of the accident, Brendan's family and his friends are still grappling with their lives without him.

H is head fell into my lap, but he was already dead," says Holly Hagan, Brendan's girlfriend, and occupant of the passenger seat the night of the accident.

Thin and pale with large, intense eyes, Hagan, 20, has a slow, other-worldliness in her gait. Her eyes look like they are on the verge of tearing, but she does not wipe them or blink as she stares ahead, saying this past year has been her worst, as reality seems to have a hard time settling in.

Certain dates in Hagan's personal calendar seem like a perverse twist of fate. April 20, 1996, was the day her boyfriend died, and also the day of her 19th birthday. Today, on what would have been Brendan's 20th birthday, she is reliving his death.

"Today, when I woke up, I remembered what day it was, and I was like, shit, I wish I could stay in bed all day," Hagan says on Feb. 4, Brendan's birthday.

Her pain is palpable as she emotes quiet sadness through her downcast eyes and resolute voice. Hagan says she suffers more from a broken heart than injuries now.

"I only have a few scars now from what they did to me in the hospital," Hagan says almost flippantly. Yet she had multiple fractures in her leg and shoulder, a couple of broken ribs and a crushed spleen.

"They were deciding whether to take it out, but they decided to save it," Hagan says of her spleen. "I guess it's OK now since I haven't had any problems with it."

Hagan was out of the Mt. Sinai Hospital in Cleveland in eight days. "I could barely walk," she says of her condition then.

The news of Brendan's death was kept from Hagan while she was still in the hospital. "I only found out about it four to six days after they had the funeral," Hagan says.

"I remember them (her parents) saying, 'Beth and Stephanie are OK, but Brendan didn't make it.'"

"I thought it was a dream," Elizabeth Wagner, also called Beth, adds. Wagner, 20, survived the accident with more battle wounds than Hagan because she was sitting behind the driver's seat - on the side of the impact.

With injuries ranging from a torn aorta to multiple fractures nearly everywhere, Wagner says she was so completely broken up she could not physically support herself for a very long time.

"I was completely out of it," Wagner says. "I had three-fourths of my body completely cut open and sewn back together."

The harrowing surgeries do not look like they have taken much toll on Wagner. She looks robust with her olive complexion and ready smile, as she talks about being wheelchair-bound for six weeks. She graduated to a walker, to crutches and now attends the dance classes required of her as a theater and dance major at Kent State. She is thinking about dropping the dance component of her major, as the stress on her repaired bones and muscles hurts a little too much.
Although almost a year has passed for Hagan and Wagner, they both say their memories of the night of the accident are in shards, badly fragmented because of the drugs and medications they received for their pain while in the hospital.

One of the hardest parts, according to Hagan, was the lack of closure to Brendan’s death because she and Wagner were in the hospital during the funeral. “When I got out of the hospital, it just felt like he had been gone,” Hagan says while staring at the ceiling. “There was no funeral, there was no sitting around crying with your friends.”

After being released from the hospital and a restful summer, Hagan and Wagner were back to school for fall semester 1996. They resumed being roommates, but the close quarters of Beall Hall were not conducive for their post-accident situations.

Their relationship was tested since both had personal traumas to work through while sharing a confined space. Hagan says Wagner moved out by November 1996 because they were fighting.

Wagner still lives in Beall Hall, and Hagan now lives in Verder Hall, where Brendan used to live. They agree they are much better friends, and Wagner says, “Maybe we’ll be roommates again next year.”

Hagan and Wagner add that they were both concentrating more on personal recuperation than catering to each other at the time.

“For me, it was that my independence was totally gone,” says Wagner, who asserts that she used to do everything herself before the post-accident physical problems.

While having to rely on others was difficult for Wagner, Hagan’s problem was just the opposite. “I was very, very dependent before the accident happened,” Hagan says. “I really loved Brendan and cared for him, and the only time I was happy was when he was around.”

Hagan softly adds, “For a while, I wish I had been the one who died instead of Brendan.”

Depending on Brendan to be the sociable one and only feeling happy around him were crutches for Hagan, but crutches she has learned to shrug off.

“I’ve just gotta get out there – to do things and meet people,” Hagan declares, strong yet shaky. “Brendan was such a good
role model for that. Now I’ve got to learn to do it myself.”

At the time of the accident, I didn’t know them very well,” says Stephanie Wilson of Hagan and Wagner. “Since then, we’ve become pretty good friends.”

Wilson, 20, recalls she had met Hagan a few times through Brendan, and only met Wagner the night of the accident. Rolling her Camel Light between her thumb and forefinger, Wilson narrows her eyes as she says, “Brendan was one of my closer friends. He used to stop by everyday and have a cigarette, talk about what was going on.”

Friends since their first semester at Kent State, Wilson says she and Brendan went to a lot of raves together, as they were the night of the accident.

“We had planned this for months ahead of time,” Wilson says, grinning. “We had to get everything and everyone together. We had planned to be there around 12:30, but we didn’t leave till around 1:30.

“We were really excited about it. We planned to go Friday night, Saturday night and Sunday night.”

Like Wagner and Hagan, Wilson’s memories of the night are clouded. Her memory kicks in when she recites a list of her injuries: a compound fracture in her left leg, a pelvis broken in 10 places – resulting in torn internal organs, a collapsed lung, a cracked clavicle, a broken thumb and a broken left arm that she rolls up the sleeve of her military surplus shirt to exhibit.

“See the stitches?” she asks, grinning. “That’s from when they took the rod out.”

She unrolls her sleeve and lights another cigarette, continuing her damage list nonchalantly.

“I was in a wheelchair for a couple months and didn’t start walking until July,” she says.

Wilson adds that the past year was more emotionally than physically trying for her because she was assailed by flashbacks and pressure from the pre-trial hearing and sentencing of Eric Wilkes. She laughs when reminded that she was quoted as saying that the sentencing was “a bunch of shit” in the Daily Kent Stater last year.

Wilson says about Eric Wilkes at the sentencing: “He had the Bible in his hands, but I think he’s just sorry because he’s going to jail.”

Wilkes is in the reception process at the Lorain Correctional Institute; he is waiting to
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Daugherty, and a younger brother, Adam.

The Daugherty family moved to Sicily in 1988 when Brendan's father was transferred. Daugherty is employed by the U.S. government to teach school on American military bases.

Brendan lived in Sicily for eight years before deciding to attend Kent State and major in graphic design. Wanting to study in the United States, Brendan made a trip with his father to visit Ohio's universities in his junior year of high school. "Kent State was the one he liked best," Daugherty says.

She was worried when Brendan first left that he might have trouble assimilating into American culture. Growing up in Sicily, Brendan had to live inside two cultures because he attended an American high school there.

"He wasn't your typical American," says Mrs. Daugherty, "not all apple pie."

"I learned from Brendan's brother that he was homecoming king one year in high school," says Joe Cline, Brendan's best friend.

Mrs. Daugherty laughs as she recalls Brendan's mortification at being named homecoming king. "He was so embarrassed because he wasn't that kind of person," says Mrs. Daugherty. "But the one that killed him most was winning 'athlete of the year'."

"We teased him about winning a huge, big trophy, and he would try to shut us up."

"Athlete of the year?" yells Ben Barnes. "With his lungs? Damn, damn."

Putting the shameful past behind him, Brendan never breathed a word to his new college friends that he used to be 'best jock' in a graduating class of 22.

Choosing to practice the education he was getting in graphic design, Brendan started working in the composing room at the Daily Kent Stater in fall 1995. There he designed advertisements and worked with the paste-up process of publishing a newspaper.

"I officially met him in spring '96," says Shawn Hoefler, who was a foreman at the Composing Room at the time. "That's when he had that funky bangs-thing going on. He also had a little raver-thing going, but he still had style."

Brendan's personal style had evolved since the homecoming king era. Gone was the side-swept hair, and a tousled Caesar-cut became its replacement.

Barnes remembers bringing his sister to
visit on the weekend of April 13 last year, and she had met Brendan then. A week later, when he told her about the accident, Barnes remembers her telling him, "Oh Brendan, I liked him. He was the one with the really good shoes."

"They were those burgundy and black things that looked like wingtips with lug soles," Hoefler gushes about Brendan's shoes. "I loved those shoes."

Brendan's appearance was important to him. Wagner remembers that prior to the accident that night, Brendan, Hagan and she were having dinner at Rockne's with two other friends.

"Brendan sat in gum and got really pissed off because they were his favorite pants," Wagner says.

Brendan's appreciation for style was linked to his strong visual inclination.

"He looked at visual things normal people wouldn't bother about," Wilson says. "Like streaks of light, colors, the way the snow falls in a pattern."

We had a little bitch-out the week before the accident," says Hoefler, who was very close to Brendan. "He said, 'I hate getting into arguments with you because you're the only one I'm intimidated by.'"

Hoefler sounds relieved as he says they reconciled a week later, and he told Brendan to give him a call on Saturday night. That was Hoefler's farewell to Brendan.

Joe Cline says his last contact with Brendan was just before Cline was leaving for work on Friday evening.

"I was standing in his room, planning how our room was going to look next year," Cline says. "We were like, 'This will go here, that will go there and the disco ball will go up there.'"

Unfinished memories, adjusting to his absence and dealing with anger seemed to fill the year for those who loved Brendan.

The Daugherty family moved from Sicily to Munford, England, in August 1996 when Mr. Daugherty was granted a transfer, says Mrs. Daugherty.

"Brendan was kind of the spark in our family," says Mrs. Daugherty. "The three of us were talkative, but Brendan was the one who always had the punchline at the right time."

Denise See is a senior magazine journalism major. She worked with Brendan in the Daily Kent Stater composing room.
Playing Hard to Get

It happens all the time. You see them stroll through the door, giggling and chatting. They seem so sweet. So carefree. But then the door closes behind them, shutting out the deafening music and the clouds of smoky air.

And suddenly, they are transformed. They become devilish scheme-sters. And there, under the fluorescent lights, plans for their top-secret operation start to unfold.

"Smile at him, but don’t talk to him first."

"Don’t be too nice and definitely don’t ask for his number."

"If he asks you out, say you’re too busy this weekend. Say, ‘Maybe next weekend.’"

"And, for the love of God, stop drinking before you ruin everything."

Five minutes later, the Ladies Room door swings open again. They emerge with powdered noses and touched-up lipstick, ready to launch their attack on the opposition.

But the opposition is always ready. They know about the game.

“We know they sit in there and pick each other’s brains to see what they can do to toy with the poor boys outside,” says Kirk McCauley, a senior operations management major. “When someone plays hard-to-get with me, I just play it back.”

It’s a two-way street, he says.
According to psychologists, playing hard-to-get can be an effective technique for gaining and keeping someone's attention; however, it should be played with caution and discretion.

Peter Ditto, an associate professor of psychology, says playing hard-to-get is like advertising.

"Advertisers use the same technique all the time," he says. "They'll say something like 'one time only' because they want people to think that if a product is harder to get, it must be a more rare commodity."

The best way for people to advertise themselves is to never make themselves too available, says Carrie Hoffman, a senior early childhood education major and McCauley's off-and-on girlfriend of two years.

"I would never just go up to somebody and say, 'I want your phone number,'" she said. "I don't care if he is Mr. G.Q. man – I just wouldn't do it."

She says her mother always told her not to chase.

"I can still hear her voice ringing in my head, saying 'If he wants to talk to you, he'll call you,'" Hoffman adds.

If she actually does call a guy (usually McCauley), she waits as long as she can to do it. She doesn't want to seem like an "eager beaver."

McCauley uses the "keeping busy technique" to play the game.

When he knows that Hoffman might be calling or that he should be calling her, he often goes out with his friends or works on his cars.

"Being busy is the best way to play the game," he says. "If you know a lot of people and have a lot of things to do, you can always come up with something."

But why do they go through all the trouble of coming up with schemes and holding back their true feelings?

Some say it's a good way for each of them to measure how much the other is still interested.

"Playing hard-to-get can be described as a game with the purpose of uncovering what the other person has to offer," says Adam Hill, a teaching fellow in the Counseling and Human Development Center.

And if someone is not very interested in the other, research shows that playing the game can change his or her mind, Ditto points out.

"There's something called the reactance theory," he explains. "And it says that when people think they can't have something, they want it even more."

He adds that when people put a lot of effort into doing something, they tend to think up some sort of justification so they know it was worth it.

"That's the cognitive dissonance theory," Ditto says. "It explains that when people work hard for something, they don't want to think that they did it all for nothing."

Yes, the game can work, Ditto says. But it usually only tends to work for the short term.

"It can help spark initial attraction," he says. "But I think it's ultimately ineffective for a long-term relationship."

Playing the game might be OK at first, but it shouldn't last very long, says junior nursing major Jennifer Mowery.

"Once you're comfortable with the person and you can start building on your relationship, it's time for the whole challenge deal to be over with," she says.

Jennifer Paskey, a senior secondary education major, says when she and her
boyfriend, Rich, starting dating 2 1/2 years ago, she played a little of the hard-to-get game.

"I acted like I wasn't as excited as I really was when he called," she says. "I didn't push him aside, but I didn't want to act like I was dropping everything for him."

After they had been dating a while and were comfortable with each other, Paskey asked him what he thought when she did.

"He said he thought it was kind of rude, but he could look past it," she says. "Now, I don't think it should be done, either. I think you should just be yourself." She says she thinks playing hard-to-get can be a bit deceptive.

But not everyone thinks so.

Senior business major Kim Wanski said she likes to play the game with her boyfriend, Todd.

"You have to keep a bit of mystery in the relationship," she says. "Otherwise, people might take each other for granted, and it gets boring."

McCauley says he and Hoffman play the game all the time, not to be deceptive, but just to keep the relationship exciting.

"It's like a necessary evil that's essential to the relationship," he says. "I don't enjoy playing the game or get any thrills out of it, but when we aren't challenged by each other, things can go downhill overnight."

Hoffman agrees. She says she and McCauley are the type of people who can't bear the thought of getting into a routine.

"We have to keep that element of surprise and guessing there," she says. "Kirk and I never get bored with each other because there's always a challenge there."

So they always wait a while before they call each other back and make sure that they're not too accessible for each other.

Of course, they have been dating OFF-AND-ON for two years now.

But many people play hard-to-get when they first meet someone, and they don't know if the person is interested at all.

That's when they have to be careful, Hill says.

"It's safe to say that playing hard-to-get works, but be careful about what it works at doing," he advises. "It may work at pissing off the person you're trying to attract."

Mowery says the plan has backfired on her in the past.

"It works sometimes," she says. "But sometimes, the guy just thinks, 'Oh screw her! She doesn't like me.'"

There has to be some indication that the person is interested for the game to work, Ditto says.

"You need to have some basis of attraction before playing hard-to-get works," he says. "More often than not, people tend to think that if someone is mean to them, they're not interested."

He says that simply being nice is the best way to go.

"To be nice to people is invariably the best way to show them that you like them," Ditto says. "And people tend to like people who like them."

Even though McCauley plays hard-to-get with Hoffman now, he thinks it's very risky to play it when first meeting someone.

"It's hard enough to meet the right people in college," he says. "So I don't think you should play games at the start. Who knows what you could miss out on."

Jean Tarbett is a junior magazine journalism major. She's not telling whether she plays hard to get.

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“I think you spent too much time as a child watching ‘Project X’ and not enough time tuning into that little station called reality.”
Mike Pfahl in the column “Activist was just monkeying around” in response to a student who was arrested and charged with breaking into the Kent State primate lab and stealing files. Daily Kent Stater, Feb. 25, 1997.

“There comes a time in a man’s life when he must defend the best nation in the world — urination.”

“Toledo had height. Kent didn’t. End of story.”
Scott Patsko in his article “Falling a little short” about Kent’s women’s basketball team losing to Toledo in the MAC tournament championship game. Daily Kent Stater, March 11, 1997.

“What are we supposed to do, design clothes for fat people?”

“They are regular boys in every sense of the word. If you find any angels when you meet them after the show, you let me know.”

illustrations by Pat O’Connor

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