THE PEOPLE IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD
Drag queens and others you could meet who walk to a different beat

PIGSKIN AND PAMPERS
A football town’s tradition goes the whole nine yards

THESE NEW HOMES
Habitat for Humanity reconstructs lives
"I need a drag queen."
That was how the staff of the last Burr of the century found out we were going to produce a package of stories about alternative lifestyles. It was very innocent. I just needed someone to find me a drag queen with connections to Kent State.

And bless contributing editor Shannon Beatty's little heart, we found a great one. I hope you enjoy Danyel Vasquez's story. I certainly did. Thanks to the talents of my creative and lovingly demented staff, we have produced a truly interesting magazine for Kent State's reading pleasure.

There were people who didn't want to talk to us because of the controversial issues we were dealing with. And some who did talk to us got cold feet after the fact. But nothing in this magazine is intended to harm. I ask everyone to read the introduction to the alternative lifestyles section, dubbed "The Peep Show," on page 18. And read it with an open mind.

But we didn't just cover alternative lifestyles. We have footballs tucked into infants' cribs. We have software pirates. We have spring break with a twist of humanity. And more.

To clear up any concerns over nepotism — we've got that, too. The baby photographed for the football story is my year-old half brother, Seth. What can I say? We needed a baby, and I happened to have access to an adorable sibling.

And to end, thank you. Thank you to my editorial staff, adviser and to everyone in the Student Media office. Thank you to my family for the constant support. Thank you to a Bob or two for the early encouragement — I finished it. Thank you to my ever-patient roommate, Kate. Thank you, Mary Sima, for the entertainment. Thank you, Sports, for picking up a dropped ball. Thank you to the adjective-providing gentleman in the booth behind us during our seven-hour editing session at a local restaurant. And I thank everyone who reads this magazine for making our work worthwhile.

Cover: Danyel Vasquez, a former Kent State student, provides entertainment at the Interbelt in Akron as a professional drag queen. Cover and staff photos by Laura Jo Quail.
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Massillon looks for the future QB in the OB

story by Jason Lloyd
photo illustrations by Andy Cleavenger

In a town that drips with tradition, there is one staple that brings past, present and future together. For more than 60 years, there has been one facet of Massillon that lifts it ever other city in Ohio. Football. More specifically, Tiger Football.

"I travel all over the U.S., and everywhere I go people ask me where I'm from," booster club member Rollie Layfield says. "And when I say Massillon, people say, 'Oh yeah, I've heard of that. That's that football city, right?' Massillon really is nationally and internationally known. It's kind of amazing." Football here isn't just a pastime or something to do on a fall Friday night. In this town, resting 50 miles south of Cleveland, it's a way of life. And it starts at an early age.

Every baby boy born at Massillon Community Hospital receives a small, 5-inch football inscribed "Compliments of the Massillon Tiger Football Booster Club" on one side and tiger-paw prints on the other. Layfield is in charge of delivering the footballs to the hospital.

"It's really a big thing," he says. "People outside (Massillon) ask me for one all the time, but they're strictly for Massillon babies.

He adds that some parents complain because nothing is done for the girls.

"I tell them to call the band and maybe hand out pom-poms or something," Layfield says. "But the footballs are strictly for the boys.

Linda Cornmesser, director of Maternal Child Health at Massillon Community, says the hospital hands out about 125 footballs a year.

"It's very popular," she says. "Everyone in the community knows about it, and the parents expect it.

No one is really sure when the tradition first started. But Phil Glick, resident historian in Massillon, says it's a tradition that is about 50 years old.

“We checked back about a year ago, and it gets a little hairy," he says. "As much as we can tell, it started around the late 1940s or early '50s.”

Neil Buckosh, a tight end on the Kent State football team, was born and raised in Massillon. He still has his football at home and smiles when he thinks about his high school days inside Paul Brown Tiger Stadium.

"That place is crazy," the freshman says. "We would have 10,000 fans there for a high school game. We would run through this black tunnel with smoke in your face. Then you hear the crowd start to cheer. I'm getting goose bumps right now just thinking about it.”

That's the way life is in Massillon. Spend Saturday, Sunday and Monday talking about last week's game, then spend Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday talking about next week's game.

In a town that values football so much, there is an equal emphasis on supporting the team. Massillon's booster club does...
I tell them to call the band and maybe hand out pom-poms or something. But the footballs are strictly for the boys.

more than just hand out footballs. Glick calls it the grandaddy of all booster clubs.

"I would say we were the first booster club," he says. "And I don’t know of any other that does more for its school than we do."

Massillon’s booster club was founded in 1934, when Cleveland’s legendary Paul Brown coached the team.

"The legend goes that during practice one day, one of the kids started throwing up tomato seeds," Layfield says. "Brown came over and asked him what was going on, and the kid said ‘That’s all we have to eat. Tomatoes.’ So Brown started the booster club to help feed some of the families that needed help."

Now the booster club is responsible for a new three-level press box, renovated locker rooms, a new scoreboard and new turf inside Paul Brown Tiger Stadium — all free of charge to the taxpayers.

"Everything we’ve done, we’ve raised the money for ourselves," Layfield says. "One guy donated the turf himself, and that was $650,000. Right now we’re working on another $1.5 million project of installing new softball fields and tennis courts."

There are branches to the booster club, like the touchdown club and the sidelines club, he says.

"In the sidelines club, for example, a family adopts a player and takes him to dinner each Thursday night before the game," Layfield says. "It’s just a nice way to support the kids. Most of the stuff we do is simple and easy like that, but every
once in a while you run into children who need more assistance than that. And that's what we're here for."

But it's the footballs in the hospitals that have attracted publications such as Esquire, Life and most recently the ESPN network to Massillon.

"It's something unique that nobody else does," Glick says. "It just another item that adds to the aura of Massillon football.

"We haven't had a state championship in 25 years, but we still average 11,000 fans per game.

"That just shows you how much people love football in this town."

Footballs and babies, that is.
Behind the shade

Neither one race nor the other, students manage a mixed background

story by Jenita McGowan

I worked at a pizza restaurant my first year at Kent State. It was not a glamorous position, but I liked it. I was washing out pizza pans when one of the drivers returned and began talking about his delivery route. He didn't like delivering to "Silver Ghettos" because too many black people lived there.

"There are so many of them it looks like night in the middle of the day," he said.

His comment about Silver Meadows Apartments shocked me. It always does. I forget people can't tell by looking at me.

I should have been bold. I should have told him how wrong he was. Instead, I looked up from the sink as my boss joined in the conversation. Not to stop him from being cruel, but to say he agreed. We stopped delivering there soon after.

For the first time, I really looked at the other employees. Although only a handful was racist, they were all white — except for me.

When I interviewed for the job, there were at least 60 applications on the owner's desk. Surely not all the applicants were white? I realized had I been born with a different hue or coarser hair texture, I wouldn't have been hired to work there.

I am mixed, the daughter of a white mother and an African-American father. Although I was raised to identify myself as black and white, my hair and complexion suggest otherwise. Because I could "pass," I've often been privy to racist remarks like the ones I heard at work.

Many times I have heard people talk about the trouble with them. Saying the word "black" in a whisper as if it is a bad word, they confide in me. I would like to think I have the courage to stand up for my ethnicity, to call people cruel and ignorant. I usually tell people when I think they are wrong, but sometimes the words just don't come out.

How do I confront my boss, my teachers or my peers, who have let me into their circle because they assume I am white or different from the rest of them? I don't always know how to react.

Sometimes I feel like a spy. I have access to those confidential, hushed conversations most black people never hear.

There are two sides to every coin, and black people possess their share of bigotry. Some people assume even though I am biracial, I consider myself only black and will bad mouth white people. This archaic attitude comes from the days of slavery when "one drop of black blood" was enough to make sure mixed children remained oppressed, too. I am black, but I also am white. I don't like to hear racist remarks about anyone.

Sometimes I feel as if I am walking a tight rope, teetering between two worlds and trying to hold on to my identity. Neither black nor white, but both. To deny either would be a lie.

Although racist remarks always hurt, I have grown adept at choosing my company. I do not choose my friends by the color of their skin. My true friends are chosen by their interests, their personalities and their willingness to accept me as I am.

There is no accurate way to measure the growing biracial population.

The number of biracial births in the United States has increased in the past 30 years. The Civil Rights Movement, the growing number of integrated neighborhoods and the 1967 Supreme Court decision to eliminate laws prohibiting interracial marriages have all contributed to the increase.

Michael Eric Dyson, author of "Race Rules," says there are more than 2 million multiracial people who cannot be labeled by one racial category. The current estimates of biracial people living in the United States vary greatly because most surveys, including the U. S. Census, require people to choose only one race.

However, there will be some changes on the 2000 Census. People will be given the option to "mark all that apply,"...
Jenita McGowan, a 21-year-old senior with a double major in dance performance and journalism and mass communication, often is mistaken for being white because of her fine hair and light complexion, according to the Census Bureau. Some people are wary of this change because they fear the government will only count the minority category even if they mark more than one.

"The legal system forces parents to choose one race for their child," says Barbara Stevens, a psychologist at Coleman Professional Services in Kent. "The parents have to make a decision and give up one race. This sends mixed messages and confusing emotions to their child."

Stevens began researching the dynamics of interracial families after an incident a couple of years ago.

"I saw a white woman and her biracial little boy walking down the hallway," she says. "The boy asked his mother, 'If I can't call myself white, and the kids at school say I'm not black, then what am I?' She snapped at him and told him she didn't know. I could see the boy's posture droop immediately. "If he's not black and he is not white, and those are the only choices you give that child, then he is going to feel like a nothing."

Stevens says parents greatly affect how children choose to identify themselves.

"It doesn't come from the child," she says. "It comes from the family identity and how they place that identity on the children."

The stronger the parental support, the more children will claim all of their ethnic background.

"They have to deal with marginality," Steven says. "Children can be undecided for a long period of time and try to fit into two worlds. Those with greater family support don't seem to have to choose. They can say, 'This is who I am, and I don't have to choose. I don't have to give up claiming one of my parents.'"

However, if biracial children come from a single-parent family, they are more likely to identify with the race of that parent.

"The immediate family of interracial couples is sometimes cut off from extended family," Stevens says. "They don't have that bonding and attachment of grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. In that situation, the parents are really important."

Peer pressure is also a factor in determining racial identity. When children begin socializing and dating, racial identity can become very important.

"In my research, I have found that females more often than males are pressured to choose a racial identity by peers at school," Stevens says.

She says biracial and multiracial children can feel isolated, left out and confused, but this is not always the case. The greater the family support, the less likely it is that the child will have those negative experiences.

"My mom is Italian, and my dad is black," says Madi Jackson, a 26-year-old senior dance major. "We grew up all over the place. New York, Ohio, New Jersey and California."

Jackson says she has generally experienced tolerance at Kent State.

"Because I am older and done with the social aspects of college, I don't have to deal with how people think of me here," she says. "I do have a white boyfriend, and I heard people say racist remarks while we were eating at a restaurant here."
Madi Jackson, a 26-year-old senior dance major, resists identifying with only one side of her ethnicity.

"But during my first years at college in California, it was very diverse. And I never had a problem there. I think the atmosphere at bigger universities is accepting of everyone."

Even though Jackson's father had custody while she was growing up, she says she only had a few black friends. She has a dark olive complexion, dark hair and chestnut-colored eyes.

"Most black guys I have dated think I was confused, and I didn't know what to claim myself as," Jackson says. "I would never fill out the race category on questionnaires in school. I never classified myself as anything. People think that just because my skin color is dark, I should be black.

"Even though I have experienced racism in my life, I feel like I am a well-adjusted person. I think it is pure ignorance that makes people think interracial couples and biracial children shouldn't exist. People think children will grow up confused. It is society that is confused."

Jackson says it is usually an all-white or an all-black person who has difficulty understanding the racial identity of a biracial person.

"No one ever bothers to ask a biracial child what they think," she says. "I never had an issue with who I am. Society has a problem when they want to classify people like they classify animals. I don't think I should be classified."

Nick Cain, a 21-year-old junior communications major at Kent State, has an
Irish and Scottish mother and a Cherokee and African-American father. He says his parents never forced an identity on him.

"They never taught me about being one race or another," Cain says. "They told me to find myself. When someone asks me to identify myself, I tell them I'm 100 percent American. If they ask me for my ethnic background, then I'll tell them what my roots are."

Cain says he fits in academically at Kent State, and the departments he has been involved with go out of their way to help minority students. He says he has not had any trouble with his social life, either.

His skin is an ambiguous shade, and he is occasionally mistaken for Hispanic. He says he has heard racist remarks from people who were not aware of his race.

"I don't go around looking for confrontation, but I have found the best way to stop people from saying racist things is to embarrass them in front of everyone," Cain says. "I ask them if they realize they are talking bad about me to my face. They look at me for a couple of seconds. Then they figure it out."

Skin color can be deceiving, and people of all races have made assumptions about Cain based on his shade.

"I was working at an ice cream shop in a predominantly white area in Columbus, and I was accused of being racist by a black woman," he says. "She perceived my behavior as prejudiced because I am not obviously black. When I told her of my background, she apologized."

Cain says there are two groups of people who seem to have the most
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Donice Cully, a former Kent State student who transferred to a university in Maryland, says it is easier to identify herself as black because of her skin color and hair texture.

"If you have any amount of black blood in you, and you can tell, society just says you are a black girl," Cully says. "I just say I am black because that is what everyone classifies me as anyway.

"I consider myself black. My father is Puerto Rican, and my mother is black." Cully’s Puerto Rican cousins told her she should try to identify herself as both black and Puerto Rican.

"They are right," she says. "I shouldn’t neglect part of myself. But I feel if I go around claiming myself as Puerto Rican, some pure Puerto Ricans won’t
The parents have to make a decision and give up one race. This sends mixed messages and confusing emotions to their child.

accept me because I look more black.”
Cully grew up in a single-parent home with her mother. Her father only recently became involved in her life.

“I wish I was more involved in my Hispanic culture,” she says.
Because she is not obviously a Hispanic, she feels like people will question her involvement in Latin activities.

“I think if I went to a SALSA (Spanish and Latino Student Association) meeting, people would wonder why I was there,” Cully says. “But I don’t think I am a sell-out to my other race. I go where I am most comfortable and where I don’t have to explain myself and justify why I am there.”
The image of piracy conjures up pictures of one-eyed buccaneers swilling beer and spewing tales of the high seas. In the old days, piracy involved seeking hidden treasure and sharing the loot among shipmates, all while making captured seafarers walk the plank to their doom.

Over time, the threat of piracy has changed, especially in the age of information. The ever-growing world of computers and technology has given way to a new kind of piracy and a new kind of pirate.

Welcome to the world of software piracy. Instead of sailing the Atlantic, modern-day buccaneers sail the silicon waters of the computer industry. Software piracy has been around as long as the industry itself, but in recent years the trend has gained momentum. It has produced financial losses in the United States and international markets. Despite the damage, many do not see software piracy as a crime.

Those who see it as a crime have formed groups, such as the Business Software Alliance.

The BSA describes itself as a group that "promotes the growth of the software industry through its international public policy, education and enforcement programs in 65 countries."

Based in Washington, the alliance includes some of the biggest companies in the industry, including Adobe and Microsoft. Its policy council consists of companies such as Apple and IBM. In short, think of them as the peacekeepers of the silicon seas.

Software piracy, according to information from the BSA, is defined as the unauthorized reproduction, distribution and installation of software. This can include anything from video games to art programs.

It's very easy to classify software piracy as simple theft by simple thieves, but Tom Mahon, systems coordinator for the School of Art at Kent State, says software piracy is different from going to the local store and taking something.

"It's a different type of theft," Mahon says. "Say you go..."
into a store, and you run out of there with a television. That could be the only television they’ve got, and now it’s gone.

“With software piracy, what you’re doing is making a copy of something, so the owner still has the original. But what happens is that the software company loses out on the royalties. Since you have a copy, you don’t need to buy the program anymore.”

Many methods of pirating software exist, such as using the Internet and various auction sites. But Mahon says much of the piracy happens casually.

“That way seems to be the most common,” he says. “Somebody will have a program, and their friend will come over and say, ‘Hey, that’s pretty cool,’ and then the user says, ‘Here, take it home with you.’”

Jason Penchoff, communications manager for the BSA, says many people don’t even see copying software as stealing — given the relative ease of the process.

“A lot of people don’t think it’s wrong,” Penchoff says. “People think that since it’s so easy to do, then it must be legitimate.”

Mahon says this perspective is reinforced by the constant encouragement of users to back up their work.

“In school, you make copies of everything,” he says. “In fact, you’re encouraged to make backups of everything that you have, just in case something happens.”

Mahon says there is little difficulty involved in pirating software, and many people don’t grasp the consequences of piracy.

“A lot of piracy happens through ignorance,” Mahon says. “A lot of people who are new to computers don’t realize what they are doing. It doesn’t take a genius to pirate software. You don’t have to be familiar with ‘computer-ese’ to do it.”

But the losses speak in the language of money, and the computer industry has lost a lot of it. The BSA says losses in the United States surpassed $2.8 billion in 1997. On a global scale, illegal copying of software cost the industry more than $11.4 billion, and to put things into further perspective, the BSA reports about 27 percent of the business software in the United States is obtained by illegal means.

Penchoff says it’s not just money that is lost. He says the losses can trigger a chain reaction that affects the whole industry.

“Those are jobs that are lost in the industry,” he says. “The company doesn’t make a profit, so there is no money that can go into research and development to make better programs.”

Like a bad penny, software piracy can turn up almost anywhere computers are involved, and Penchoff says a college campus is no exception.

“That age group is certainly one that is looking at,” he says. Mahon says he had to deal with a case of software piracy.

“We had a case where a student sat down at one of our computers and copied the software onto his ZIP disk,” Mahon says. He says the School of Art doesn’t have a concrete policy regarding piracy, but the problem was addressed.

Another method of piracy is CD-ROM pressing. Hassle-free and inexpensive, CD-ROM pressing provides welcome sailing conditions for software pirates. In many cases, the copy is almost flawless.

Gary Mote, the manager of the student multimedia and development lab, likens CD-ROM pressing to another copying process.

“It’s like making a copy of a cassette tape or a CD,” he says. “It’s basically ignored, so you’d probably get away with it.”

CD-ROM pressing, according to the BSA, allows for an “ideal residential operation.” The BSA says CD-ROM factories are a “growing phenomenon” worldwide, especially in China, despite the fact China has put more than half of the illegal CD-ROM plants out of business.

In the United States, the BSA says the main areas of illegal CD-ROM operation are in major metropolitan areas such as Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Jose, Miami and New York.

A method of piracy that has grown rapidly in recent years is Internet piracy. The BSA reports the existence of more than 2 million Web sites offering, linking or referencing “warez,” the Internet vernacular for pirated software. Two years ago, close to 100,000 of these Internet chop shops were in existence. Last year, the number swelled to 900,000.

In addition to these sites, online auctions are a problem. Through informal monitoring, the BSA indicates more than 60 percent of software offered on U.S. and European sites is copied.

Some pirates have other motives for choosing to copy.

Joe, a software pirate who would not give his real name for this story, says one of the main reasons for his pirating of software is the price.

“I know it’s wrong,” he says. “But I do it for two reasons. I do it if I need it for class, and also if I know that I’m never going to use it later. Why should I buy a $500 program that I’m only gonna use for three months?”

John, another pirate who would not give his name, agrees software prices leave him little choice but to copy.

“Why do I do it? Because I’m a poor college student who can’t afford the expensive prices,” he says. “If they didn’t cost so much, then I wouldn’t do it.”

Stephen Tapp, Kent State’s assistant director of academic computer and technology, says he runs a “pretty tight ship” when it comes to the use of licensed software.

“Our policy would be, ‘Don’t copy anything,’” he says. “It’s in the best interests of everyone that you use software that is licensed.”

Tapp says he isn’t sure if a stated policy regarding piracy exists. But he says a group under the chief information officer is looking at establishing a formal, university-wide policy.

The pirates who manage to get caught do more than walk the plank these days. The statutory damages can be as much as $100,000 for each piece of copyrighted work. The BSA reports in some circumstances a court can authorize the U.S. Marshals and the local police to “conduct an unannounced raid of your premises and seize evidence of the infringement.”

Software pirates who are criminally prosecuted could be fined up to $250,000, hit with a five-year prison sentence or possibly both.

Penchoff says the crime is officially known as copyright infringement. He says when the BSA deals with offending companies, a civil action is usually taken to prevent further use of the pirated software.

In terms of federal action, Penchoff says the U.S. Department of Justice handles the matters of software piracy. He
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For more information on these and other programs, call 672-KENT or contact us by e-mail at: alumni@kent.edu.

Also says local law enforcement deals with software piracy, and if the value of the pirated software exceeds $2,500, the infringement is considered a felony.

Karine Elsen, the director of marketing for the BSA hotlines, says some measures have been taken in the United States to guard against software piracy.

"There are many enforcement programs, along with the hotline reports," she says. "We’ve sent letters to violating companies, and there is an education awareness campaign."

In the middle of this storm lie the consumers. Penchoff says buyers face unnecessary risks if they manage to purchase pirated software.

"If something happens to the software, you can’t get any technical support for it," he says. "There are also viruses that can spread and ruin your whole system. You also can’t get the free upgrades that registered users would have. A lot of times, this software doesn’t even come with directions."

Mahon says some programs, like QuarkXPress, have security measures to guard against software piracy.

"QuarkXPress has a feature called a hardware key, which is also called a dongle," he said. "It has to be attached to the computer so the program can be used. There really is no easy way to circumvent it."

But Penchoff says while security measures address the software piracy issue, "they can also create problems for legitimate users."

To help out buyers, Penchoff says to look for the signs when purchasing software.

"The best thing is to be informed," he says. "Make sure you’re buying from a reputable dealer, and you should know what the original price should be before you buy. If you’re buying at too low a price, then the software is probably pirated."

Despite all of the security measures and the advice, Penchoff says the very nature of the industry itself can cause problems.

"As technology grows and becomes more advanced, the more opportunities there are for people to steal in a way that isn’t considered stealing," he says. "If we don’t attack piracy from the start, it will just lead to more piracy and even less innovation."

Both Penchoff and Mahon say the best chance people have against software piracy is education.

"We need to educate people," Mahon says. "We need to tell them that what they are doing could be a crime."
Carmella Labriola, a philosophy major with a minor in women's studies, created the women's support group Aunt Sophie after getting out of an abusive relationship.

Carmella Labriola woke before the nightmare ended to help women realize dreams

story by Shannon Beatty
photos by Allison Waltz

HOW MUCH DANGER ARE YOU IN RIGHT NOW?
I have sat in this place with many women. Seedy brown couches, held in by barren beige walls It is where Terri lowered her thin white shirt to show me the trail of chalky blue bites across her back It is where I caught Anna looking through the personal ads in the Beacon Journal and begged her to wait until the casts came off "This time, Anna, don’t be pushed." And now I sit with Susan, as her mousy brown hair dips down over what was once a pearl blue eye She has no fancy glass marble to take its place.

— Excerpt of a poem by Carmella Labriola

The woman sitting self-assuredly and comfortably in jeans and a T-shirt appears as though she has never suffered a day in her life. Framed by long dark hair, her brown eyes do not betray a thing.

Carmella Labriola, 36, is a philosophy major at Kent State University. She works on the layout for the student-produced publication “Stand.” She sits among a barrage of colors — furniture and the many odds and ends she has found. A cat laps up the sunshine on a warm window ledge. Her home sits in the reflection of Brady Lake. Things were not always so good. She comes from a place of nightmares. Of charades and excuses. Of worry and exhaustion.

An intelligent, strong, financially independent woman, she says she spent 10 months in the lap of domestic abuse and only recognized it with the help of outsiders. But Labriola is a woman who knows where she is going. She has spent her life overcoming adversity, and this ordeal was no different.

From the time she was 18, she knew she wanted to create signs for a living. She attended the University of Akron and received a two-year degree in commercial art.

Before she had even graduated, Labriola was searching the city for a job as a sign painter.

A man who owned a sign shop but knew nothing about the business promised Labriola a position if she could learn to paint paper signs for grocery stores.

“It’s taking a really big brush and swinging it around,” she says. “You’re expected to paint about eight or 10 of them an hour. It’s like throwing the paint at the paper.”

But she says there was a tense working environment, and she became dissatisfied with her duties at the shop.

“I wanted to do signs that took your breath away,” she says.

She started her own visual communications business on the side, called “Signs of Success,” and left the shop within two months. She offered an extensive line of services, including the design of business cards and logos, newspaper ads and signs.

Labriola says she became known as a craftsman in Akron who brought something different to the industry. The logo she designed for the Norka Futon chain can be seen on East Main Street in Kent.

“I take the environment into consideration when I do a sign, and it matches the feeling, the mood, the whole atmosphere of the business and the owner. It just looks like it belongs.”

She blames the economy and the computer age for the death of her art.

“Now, of course, it’s all done with computers,” she says. “Capitalism kills the craftsman. I can’t even stand to look at signs anymore.”

Computerized signs fade and weather more quickly than handmade ones, she says. Spacing on these signs is rarely correct. Plus, signs are so easily made on computer that people untrained in design and color routinely make them.

“It’s visual indigestion,” Labriola says.

To combat the threat, she began pitching her work as “gourmet” sign making. She doubled her prices to match. And she says it worked.

She had a thriving business when she met a younger man named Bill. She describes the beginning of their relationship...
as "wonderful." Bill was blond, handsome and attentive. "Apple pie," she says.

"You know, he'd rather have me than Cindy Crawford or Madonna, and I can tell you that honestly," Labriola says.

"He had one relationship where he beat the crap out of his girlfriend," she says. "His friends came to me, and I said, 'Well, that's ridiculous. He would never pull that with me.'"

"And here I am, six months later, making a list of things I'm allowed to do as opposed to things I'm not allowed to do and posting it on the refrigerator so I can get a handle on what's going on. I felt like I've always been a person of clarity. Let's chart it out and put it on the fridge."

Labriola says Bill's behavior crept up on her.

"It's not all of the sudden," she says. "It's not that he punches you in the eye one day. It comes out in extreme jealousy, a kind of controlling behavior: 'I don't like you wearing that dress. Other men will look at you.'"

Even with warning signs, she questioned herself.

"Other women will come up to you and say, 'Oh, you're so lucky to have him.' I would hear that all the time. You meet this great guy. You're going to have to make adjustments. You see how this happens?"

They began to quarrel.

"He was such a control freak that he wanted to fight about things before they happened," Labriola says.

Her "favorite" instance was an argument about what she would do if Axl Rose from the rock band Guns 'N' Roses came to the door.

"I sat through a whole night of his yelling about if Axl Rose came to the door, I would sleep with him. And you realize that there was a very small chance of this happening."

Labriola says he questioned her about everything she did and everyone she saw, worrying most about her contact with other men. One night, she snapped.

The phone rang at 1 a.m. while she and Bill were in bed. She was terrified, knowing what was coming next.

"I hear it's this guy that I went out with," Labriola says.

"I said to him, 'Never call me again. I never want to speak to you again,' and hung up. I responded in what I thought would be the correct way, and still the problem was that he called."

She says Bill was irate and interrogated her for more than an hour. Labriola finally rolled over and began punching him. Ten minutes after they calmed down, he started again. She called her brother, who came over and ordered Bill to sleep on the couch.

The next day, Labriola and her brother deposited Bill at Akron's Haven of Rest homeless mission.

"I called the hotline and said, 'I'm not battered, but this is going on. This is happening.' And they said, 'Oh, yes, you are being battered. Here's a support group.'"

"When I attended group, I saw 'Reasons Women Stay,' which was this little handout. I'm reading all this, and none of it was me — none of it was me at all. And at the bottom was 'Hope that he'll change.' And I said, 'Oh, my God.'"

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She says the support group made her realize Bill was not
the first man to abuse her.

"My father had been a psychological abuser, and that's
what I thought was normal," Labriola says. "I realized I was too
old to live this way anymore."

Slowly she began to work through a lifetime of pain. She
sent her father a 10-page letter, letting him know she held him
responsible for his actions. She realized her business was as
demanding and controlling as an abusive relationship, so she
changed it overnight.

Her relationship was over 10 months after it had begun.
Labriola says she was cleaning her house for a holiday party five
months later and boxed up Bill's remaining possessions. When he
came to pick it up, she says he walked in and out of the house,
slinging insults, while she painted signs in the basement and tried
to ignore him.

Labriola says he knew what made her mad, continuing
his slurs and daring her to hit him. After 20 minutes of verbal
assault, she went upstairs and began hitting him with "open­
handed slaps to the upper body."

"He took me and shoved my head into the wall — into
the corner molding," she says. "Then he threw me on the ground.
The next thing I know, he's stepped over me. I picked my head up,
and I had these big, thick droplets of blood on the floor. I look up at
him, and he's smiling and nodding. Just like, 'Serves you right.'"

She says the police and ambulance drivers were
disrespectful to her.

"Bill is talking and having a rational conversation with the
police, and I'm hysterical," Labriola says. "I'm screaming, I'm
bleeding, and the cops are telling me to shut the hell up."

She says Bill told the police officers he was defending
himself because she had been hitting him. The prosecutor told
Labriola that she could not press charges because she had started
the violence. She instead took him to small claims court, where
she says the judge forced him to pay her hospital bills.

Thankfully, Labriola says, she does not know where Bill is
or what he is doing.

A year and a half in the support group gave Labriola a push
forward, and she wanted to help others in her situation. She went
through training for six weeks to work at a shelter and hotline for
abused women. She was offered a paid position after only a month.

Talents that had not been fully realized until working with
these women helped her with her duties. Over three years, she
used them in two different shelters.

"I can do many different things at once, whether in my
head or writing things out," Labriola says. "I would remember
names and voices, their case numbers, their stories."

Labriola says she expects to graduate from Kent State in
December 2000 with a degree in philosophy and a minor in
women's studies. She says she always has been a philosopher,
influenced by her childhood during the Vietnam War. The conflict
taught her to question truth at an early age.

"My favorite toy is my brain," she says. After taking her
first philosophy class, she knew she was "home."

Her friend Deborah Metzger sees Labriola as "evolved."
"She has modern ideas," Metzger says. "Her thought
process is ahead of her time."

Though Labriola has a full schedule, she finds time to
take care of a 2-year-old child for a friend. Labriola rearranged her
schedule to take care of him 30 hours a week.

She occasionally volunteers at the Kent State Women's
Resource Center. During the 1998-99 school year, she designed
its Web page. Kathe Davis, director of Kent State's women's
studies department, called her "indispensable" to the center.

Molly Merryman, director of the Women's Resource
Center, called Labriola "creative, talented" and "an expert" in
the field of domestic violence.

"Because of her work, we are able to have a greater,
more significant image," she says.

In January 1998, Labriola founded "Aunt Sophie," an
organization which deals with domestic violence and crimes
against women. The name "Sophie" comes from the Latin word
for wisdom.

"Usually when you name a business, you want people to
know what it is by the name," she says. "Not in this case."

On Monday nights, she runs "Chat with Aunt Sophie," a
discussion group for women in abusive relationships. She begins
each group informally, a few minutes late. She asks the women to
state one good thing about themselves.

Most of the women at this particular group have moved
away from their situations. They speak in light tones about the
dark topic. Labriola acts as a shepherd to the conversation. While
they air their emotions, she focuses the discussion.

There is a theme of fear around the table that the past
will come back to destroy present homes, relationships,
happiness. Labriola listens. At the end of two hours, the women
go back to their lives with the knowledge they are not alone.

"I've been really impressed with how she handles the
group and the way she interacts with the women," Merryman
says. "The groups of women who attend are such a diverse
gathering. She still makes everyone feel comfortable.

"The energies of Carmella are essentially what make
Aunt Sophie."

As painful as Labriola's brush with domestic abuse has
been, she sees it as a guiding light for her future.

"I have to be grateful," she says. "For as hard as that
was — and it was a very hard experience for me — he hand­
delivered me to my calling."
Some people walk through life without ever touching anything new. Open your mind. Imagine walking in someone else's shoes for a day — even if the shoes are six-inch stilettos. You wonder what it is like to step out of your own life and into one you have created. But imagine what it's like to be judged by a definition society has dictated. We all dance to the beat of our own drummer. Some choose to do this through the heavy thumping of all-night techno parties while others use the spoken word as a means to direct their energy. Let your imagination rest.

In this issue of The Burr, we have chosen to give you a glimpse into lifestyles that might be different from your own. It would be impossible to discuss every unconventional way of life people choose in this world. But these stories portray a small sampling of people who have veered from the paths most of us travel. They represent themselves through different routes. These stories might surprise you. They might make you laugh. They might make you cringe.

But they definitely will open your mind.
Danyel Vasquez is just a regular working gal. She shaves her legs. She applies her makeup heavily and meticulously for the spotlight. She chooses fabulous high-altitude hair for the evening and slips it over her medium-length strawberry blond locks. Sucking everything in, she squeezes into a corset and pulls on her hose. Just a costume and this performer's ready to shake her stuff.

This is her life — the night scene where the bass of the dance mix dictates the rhythm in the chest. The audience is wild, wasted and wicked. Cigarette smoke churns as a theatrical fog, and the diva parts it with a "don't give me shit" walk — striking a pose, prowling and pouncing on those seated around the stage.

But when the afternoon light hits Danyel's bed, she is not the person who just the night before worked the crowd into a frenzy. She awakens to care for her grandmother, straighten her apartment and prepare for the night. She is withdrawn and shy. She is a he. "Now that I've found my hidden self, I love it," says Danyel, who prefers to be called "she" when in drag. "I should have been born a woman."

Drag queens, also called female impersonators, have become much more visual in mainstream society. Straight or gay, right-wing or liberal, most Americans are familiar with RuPaul, a black, 8-foot-something drag queen with legs that just keep going and an attitude to match. She made it to the top and even hosted her own talk show on VH-1.

But most never see the inner sanctum of the drag queen. Behind closed doors, she adds some bulges and hides others. She powders her nose and slips a mask over her personality.

"We drag queens go through a lot," Danyel says. "I shave my eyebrows completely off. When people see me as a boy, they know I'm gay. My hair is longer and cut into kind of a female style."

Danyel, 27, is a sight to behold in her full glory. But sitting in the dark, empty Interbelt Nite Club in downtown Akron before the music starts, she is low-key in her "boy clothes: a baggy striped shirt, shorts and tennis shoes. Her hair and makeup are already done because she has to help the other queens prepare.

"It really is amazing," she says. "I never thought I would be doing this as a career."

As the Interbelt's entertainment director for the past four years, she calls other clubs and bars around the nation and books entertainment. In return, the clubs book her. She performs Monday, Thursday and Sunday. She recently hosted the Interbelt's first "Miss Hidden Woman" contest.

"The first time I did drag, I hated it," she says. "I was so uncomfortable."

A Kent State student named Jeremy dressed as a woman for Halloween five years ago, and Danyel was born. The graphic design major used his artistic ability to create a costume and routine that won a talent show. Jeremy then entered the "Miss Interbelt" contest and won the right to represent the nightclub for a year.

Danyel took the spotlight while Jeremy exited stage left. "I don't think anyone has called me Jeremy in years," she says with a laugh. She gave up college to work full time at the Interbelt when the owner needed an entertainment director.

Her family in Barberton was not enthusiastic about her choice of lifestyle.

"My father was gay," she says. "He died three years ago from AIDS. That doesn't mean he approved of what I was doing. No one expects his son to dress like a woman."

"My mother just recently came around about it. I think she thought I was some kind of freak. When she finally came to the show, I think she saw that all kinds of people like it. But she has always supported me."

Danyel says she sometimes feels trapped in a male body.

Above: Danyel Vasquez pulls Mark Labay of Akron on stage between dance numbers. Labay came out to support brother Carmen Demarco, who competed in her first drag pageant that night. Opposite: Danyel is all sass as she peeps out of her dressing room before the show.
The queen of queens, Danyel Vasquez, drags her life into the spotlight.
"I don’t ever think of men things, even when I’m a boy," she says. "I would rather think of fashion and hairstyles than boy things.

"There are a lot of things you can do to become a woman without actually having the operation. I wouldn’t do it because of my mother. This is a sacrifice I make because I care what she thinks."

Doctors can inject silicone into cheeks, hips and breasts to make them appear more feminine. Some queens take hormones to grow breasts and raise their voices. These men usually spend 24 hours a day as women. In queen jargon, they are "transies," or males transformed into females.

Danyel simply is a professional entertainer. She has won 12 different drag pageants, including "Miss Ohio" twice. Recently, the Interbelt crowned her "Miss Interbelt" for life.

"It made me feel appreciated," she says. "Sometimes you need to hear that you’re good. Queens are very competitive."

Rivalry isn’t the only issue. Danyel has female insecurities. "I’m very self-conscious about my weight," she says. "Usually, if somebody wants to say something, they’ll say, ‘She’s fat.’ I could stand to lose a few pounds, but I’m not sloopy or obese."

There are about 30 established drag queens in Akron, she estimates. Within the inner circle of drag queens, Danyel says gossip is common.

"I’m not like that," she says with a wave of her hand. "Some queens are kind of shady, but we’re all pretty much friends. And I have my life. I have two little Chihuahuas. I’m in the process of buying a house."

But there is no more talk. It is already 11 p.m., the disc jockey has arrived, and the music begins to bump. Danyel has to move quickly — the drag queens are arriving and wandering upstairs to make their transformations from gruff to girly.

Some queens are kind of shady, but we’re all pretty much friends. And I have my life. I have two little Chihuahuas. I’m in the process of buying a house.

She floats into her own small dressing room at the far side of the DJ booth and shuts the door. A bumper sticker in the place of a gold star proclaims: "The Goddess is in."

With the help of two other men, she squeezes into her corset. Over this goes an outfit of sunflowers and vines that wrap down her legs. Her giant hair holds a sunflower ornament. This outfit cost $200.

Danyel makes most of her own costumes. Sewing might be a skill she can fall back on after being a queen is no longer profitable, she says. Other costumes come from a dress shop in Canton. One beaded gown could cost up to $2,000.

Shoes, fake nails, makeup, false eyelashes, dance hose. The investment can be staggering for a queen who is not professional. Danyel owns 40 wigs, which cost about $50 each.

The other queens struggle in various states of transition. They crowd around the lighted mirror, gluing their eyelashes and heavily shadowing their eyelids. A small blond queen named Angelica slips into two pairs of pantyhose and duct tapes her waist to shrink it a couple of inches — a medieval-type torture. Powder and hairspray hang in a thick haze in the room.

Danyel flutters to a new queen named Briana who struggles with her foundation makeup. She demonstrates how to effectively blend her cheekbone color. Danyel considers Briana a "daughter" because she taught her what she knows about being a drag queen.

"I came out seven months ago," Briana says. "Then I watched Danyel get up on the stage and do a dance number. Watching her and the other entertainment, I thought, ‘I can do..."
Danyel performs to "Nasty Girl" by Vanity 6 at the Interbelt on a Thursday night.

that; I don't know if I could actually do this as a career, but I'm having fun with it."

The newest of the group, Carmen DeMarco, is ready first. Sporting four-inch stiletto heels and a short black-sequined dress, she practices her walk in the hall behind the dressing room. She giggles when she is caught squeezing her "falsies."

Everyone parts as Danyel breezes through. She is, after all, the queen of the show.

"Danyel is faaa-bulous," says Darien Terrell, Miss Hidden Woman Columbus and a judge for the contest.

It is 11:45 p.m., and there is still much to do before the 12:30 a.m. competition.

Danyel hits overdrive as she straightens the contestants' dance mix tapes to prevent mistakes. She gathers the judges to explain how to score hair and makeup, lip-sync, coordination, costume and entertainment value. Two of the judges are former contest winners, including Joey Wynters, Miss Hidden Woman 1998. Startlingly feminine, Joey has long dark hair and a small frame draped in a beaded gown.

Danyel points to Joey's cheeks. "This is an example of silicone."

"Don't give away all my secrets," Joey says in a fake stern voice.

The judges find their seats. The contestants calm themselves and watch Danyel, Darien and Joey perform. Danyel commands the microphone, teasing the crowd and indiscriminately pulling people on stage.

Darien sits down in a huff after her slightly botched performance and says to another judge, "It's a bad, evil night. These are the bad things that happen to us. You forget your boobs at home, you cut your number short."

The hopefuls for the "Miss Akron" crown finish their routines. They collect dollar bills from rowdy audience members. Angelica does a medley of Madonna songs, changing costumes several times. A roar goes up in the crowd when a queen named Serena Hunter throws off her wig and her shoes and pulls a rainbow flag from the bust of her dress while singing "This is my life and I don't give a damn!"

For her first contest, Carmen is all attitude, making a
grand entrance wearing a black feather boa and headdress. Her brother, Mark Labay, and parents stand proudly in the audience.

"He does it at home," Labay says with a grin. "He impresses the shit out of me. I hope he does it more."

The moment of truth comes as the competitors stand in a rigid line. The winner is ... Azha, a tall queen in a slinky leopard-print gown. All smiles, she accepts her crown, but it is obvious some queens aren't going to be happy tonight.

It's 2:15 a.m. In the aftermath, the dressing room takes on a different feel. The hurricane of sequins and Styrofoam wig heads slowly disappear as the queens drag themselves down the steps. Some are smiling and some yawn as they become men again. Carmen is still high from her performance — she placed second runner-up — and she savors her moments in the outfit.

"It was very scary," she says on her way out. "But as soon as I got onstage, the nervousness went away. I turn into a major bitch. I don't smile."

Azha sits with another man and happily reviews her score sheets. And Danyel puts her boy clothes on and prepares to go home to bed. She must save her energy for another night.

Despite the adoring crowd, the life of a drag queen can be a very lonely one, Danyel says.

"I know you're basically hiding behind a costume," she says, smiling slightly. "I get this little 'oomph' onstage. People look up to you. I'm kind of a role model."

Many people know her, but she says a love life is difficult. She had relationships as Jeremy, but never as Danyel.

"It's very hard for me to find a guy who wants a girl who's a guy," she says. "I don't want one-night stands with some guy who just wants someone in drag. I'm not unhappy. I don't ever think, 'I wish I had a boyfriend.'"

"It's basically another sacrifice I've made. I wouldn't give this up for anything."

Resolute, ready to perform until she just doesn't have "it" anymore, she's ready to get some sleep. After all, tomorrow is another show.
Candy Yafaranro of Chardon twirls her glow sticks to the beat of techno music at Trilogy in Cleveland. Glow sticks, bracelets, necklaces and wands often are sold at raves and techno clubs. Yafaranro says she likes to perform light shows with other dancers.
**Two turntables and a microphone**

*Where it’s at: Techno music takes the club scene by storm*

Patrons are frisked for weapons, drugs and recording equipment upon entering the Space Rush 2000 rave at the Agora in Cleveland.

*Photo by Laura Jo Quail*

Kellie Crowe, a Kent State junior, has worked at The Avenue for more than three years. Crowe, 22, is in charge of organizing the Thursday techno nights. She is responsible for booking the disc jockeys for the club. Crowe says while the music has a rave feel, all are welcome. “I don’t want people to feel like they have to look like a raver in order to come in here,” she says.
Jim Pokorny, 18, of Chesterland dances with glow sticks at Trilogy. The club’s music and atmosphere attract a younger crowd on Sunday nights.

A techno party held at a private residence in Ravenna was broken up by local authorities early in the morning, ending a night of music and break dancing.

Dave Shaw, a student at the University of Akron, dances the night away at the Elixir held Thursdays at The Avenue in Kent.
The Kent Neo-Pagan Coalition dispels the misconceptions of witchcraft and casts new light on an old practice
They have graced the stage since Shakespeare, mixing free will and magic in a bubbling cauldron. The modern ones are as beautiful as Sandra Bullock and Nicole Kidman, using magic to seduce and destroy men.

Witches have a notorious past, but those at Kent State do not adhere to the popular images of green old women with cats and pointed hats. The Kent State students “in the broom closet” practice a more practical magic, minus the eye of newt. And they are flourishing.

“We’re everywhere. We’re like lesbians,” says Trudy Young, a senior psychology major and secretary for the Kent Neo-Pagan Coalition.

“Magic is something everyone does without knowing it,” says Aurora Mallin, a junior graphic design major who is treasurer and Web mistress for the Kent Neo-Pagan Coalition. “It’s not nearly as glamorous as the cinema has made it.”

Mallin says most of her spells involve herbal healing. She tried a fidelity spell designed to keep her boyfriend faithful to her.

“But it turned out bad because two months later we switched personalities, and he was too devoted to me,” she says. “You shouldn’t make a specific person love you, but you can. If I want a guy to sweep me off my feet, it may take five or six years, but it will happen.”

Mallin also has performed a money spell in which she charges pennies with energy and puts one in a jar every day while visualizing receiving money.

“The concept is that it keeps you concentrated,” she says. “That’s how all spells are,” Young says. “They make you sit down and physically do it. It’s like how everyone wishes for things.” But, she adds, “it’s not a good idea to try to control other people.”

Amy Pavelko-Mundhenk, also known as Zon, is a co-founder of the Kent Neo-Pagan Coalition. She graduated from Kent State last year and calls herself a “kitchen witch,” using magic mostly in herbal healing spells.

“I am always surprised at the way things happen,” she says. “All the miracles happen around me. I don’t make anything happen. I’m a conduit for energy that’s already there. Magic is making people see the wholeness of themselves.”

She says she has also tried to use a spell to get pregnant.

“I’m still waiting, but in the meantime, everyone around me is pregnant,” she says. “Birth control is failing all over the place.”

Brad Bonnell, a Kent State graduate also known as Java, says he practices sorcery more than witchcraft. He says witchcraft is nature-based while sorcery is related to words and incantations.

“I try to influence life events,” Bonnell says. “For the most part, things come true, but anyone will tell you not everything always turns out exactly how you want. It’s like the Christian idea that God works in mysterious ways.”

Paul Reeves, a junior theater major and president of the Neo-Pagan Coalition, says he uses meditation more than spells.

“You don’t have to work toward results,” he says. “You can but usually don’t. It works with the expansion of awareness. I don’t believe in coincidences. I believe in free will, but some things just happen that you have to move with.”

Mallin and Young say spells can sometimes be a means to learn about their spirituality or life lessons.

“There is usually some lesson you have to learn, like you don’t need that guy,” Young says. “But be patient.”

“Sometimes the world needs to show you something,” Mallin says. “You have to be patient, and you can’t expect big things right away because all things come with time.”

She says she tries not to cast many spells because “it seems to others and myself that it sounds like changing fate or
forcing your will on fate."

According to the Church and School of Wicca, witchcraft is connected to natural meanings behind events. The organization also stresses that witches are not Satanists.

The Wiccan organization teaches the importance of understanding the meanings behind the actions a person takes and that if a person does not understand the spiritual implications behind his or her actions, the results of those actions will not be understood.

Overall, Mallin says, "to do it successfully you can't have a big ego." She also stresses everything a witch does can come back to her.

Both Mallin and Young became involved in witchcraft when they discovered its foundations were consistent with beliefs they already held.

"It's weird," says Mallin, who as a high school sophomore was introduced to witchcraft by a friend. "There's not really a why. I started reading, and it matched what I believed. That's usually how it works."

Also for Young, becoming a witch was more of a feeling she says she's always had as opposed to a conscious decision. "Most people have the general feeling all their lives and find people who believe the same thing," she says. "It's not like you don't already have it. You just find it and find a name."

Both say they will always practice witchcraft, saying it is the same as a Christian always remaining a Christian.

As far as the popular beliefs about witches and magic go, Mallin and Young say many movies about witchcraft are not entirely representative of real witches. "(In 'Practical Magic') they had a sense of humor, like they were human," Young says. "But 'The Craft' is loosely based on reality."

"Most people have the general feeling all their lives and find people who believe the same thing," she says. "It's not like you don't already have it. You just find it and find a name."

Both say they will always practice witchcraft, saying it is the same as a Christian always remaining a Christian. As far as the popular beliefs about witches and magic go, Mallin and Young say many movies about witchcraft are not entirely representative of real witches. (in 'Practical Magic') they had a sense of humor, like they were human," Young says. "But 'The Craft' is loosely based on reality."

Mallin says "The Craft" demonstrates high magic, which requires the user to be incredibly powerful and in tune with nature. Low magic, on the other hand, is what most witches do and involves herbal healing and simple spells. "I don't know why people would want to do high magic," Young says. She explains some people don't even believe in high magic and, Mallin adds, if people do try high magic, it could easily backfire. "If people think they can, they could do it wrong and screw things up. So we say it can't be done," Mallin says. The methods and words for high spells are so precise they can easily be done wrong.

The Church and School of Wicca says magic, high or low, is not inherently
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University Band (Music 45221 section 2) W 3:20-5:15 pm / Sp. Semester
Marching Band (Music 45222) M, W, & F 3:20-5:15 pm / Fall Semester
Basketball Band (Music 45224) M 3:20-5:15 pm / Sp. Semester
Jazz Ensemble I (Music 45231) M, W, & F 5:30-7:00 pm
Jazz Ensemble II (Music 45231) T & TH 5:30-7:00 pm

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Young, raised as a Baptist in Arkansas, says she was stalked by a friend when she found out she was a pagan. “He decided at that point that I was an evil person, and I was going to hell,” she says. “So he decided to make my life a living hell.”

She says he prank ed her, created a “Trudy die, die, die” Web site, threw Bibles at her and constantly cited Scripture while walking behind her. Young says he told everyone about her private life and paganism, which, in Arkansas, was far from tolerated. She eventually left school there, but not before putting him in front of the school’s judicial review board, which made it impossible for him to apply for medical school. “The minute he found out I was pagan, I was a different person to him,” Young says. “I was a ‘dirty pagan,’ not who he knew. We do have problems. We’re human. We’re not Satanists. We don’t even believe in Satan.”

Young says she does not have any religious beliefs or friends, either. The only reference she has encountered to her religious decisions occurred when an instructor saw her pentagram necklace and wished her a happy Hanukkah. She says most of her friends accept it, don’t care or ignore it. “They don’t care or they come to know me first,” she says. “It’s just one of the things about me.”

Young says the only problem the Kent Neo-Pagan Coalition has as a group is people ripping down their fliers. She says if she posts them on Tuesday, by Friday 75 percent will be gone. Some of them reappear, but symbols such as the Confederate flag are added. “They don’t want people to know about us,” Young says.

Mallin says the group contains about 30 people, a figure that may...
fluctuate throughout the semester. But Young says the reason is not a change of heart by the students. “It’s like any student organization,” she says. “They don’t stop being pagan. They just stop coming.”

“It’s like any student organization,” she says. “They don’t stop being pagan. They just stop coming.”

The coalition is a social group and a place for people to go,” Mallin says. The coalition participates in several rituals and ceremonies during the year. On Nov. 1, it celebrates Samhain, which is Irish Gaelic for “summer’s end.” The holiday signifies the end of the year, when the coalition remembers people from the previous year and anticipates the coming year.

Mallin says this holiday is the early root of Halloween because, on this night, it is believed the veil between this world and the spiritual world was the thinnest. “They thought the evil spirits could come into this world, so they dressed evil to not be harmed,” she says.

Most of the other ceremonies occur on the seasonal equinoxes and the harvest. In a typical ceremony, Young says, they make a sacred place for the ritual and then call on something, usually the elements or the directions. “It’s a reason for getting together,” she says. “The final harvest (Samhain) is like the new year, a clean slate, or catharsis, where you remember people who are gone.”

Young says the coalition has only a few things to ask from other students. “You don’t have to agree with us, but respect us,” she says. “We will give you information, but we don’t try to convert. “And please don’t rip down our signs.”

Alyssa Portwood, a graduate student in library science, and Keith Young, a Kent graduate, set out “cakes and ale.” These are eaten at the close of the Mabon ceremony to represent the reconnection to the physical world after a spiritual ritual.
ACTING OUT OF

CHARACTER
Role players turn the Kent State Student Center into their own world of fantasy and drama

story by Lauren B. Worley
photos by Alex Capaldi

It’s been called a lifestyle.
It’s been called an occult fad.
But those who take part in role playing games, like Paul Burdick, owner of Spellbinders, say it’s a game they play just because they enjoy it.

“It’s in the basis of play as children,” Burdick says. “There’s nothing mystical, it’s certainly in the roots of play.”

Burdick says “Dungeons & Dragons” was the first popular role playing game. “D & D” was designed as a secondary game to an original played with lead figures on a game board.

“The idea was, ‘What if we took on the personas of the characters?’” Burdick says. “That’s nothing new.”

In “Dungeons & Dragons,” dice are thrown to determine hits, failures and successes. Players follow a story line and roll the dice to determine their direction in the game. In other games, direction is dictated through cards or the narration of a storyteller. Characters increase score through the acquisition of special powers, charms, weapons or gifts during the course of the game.

It’s not certain when “Dungeons & Dragons” started, but Burdick believes it was developed in the early 1970s.

“Dungeons & Dragons” is a popular role playing game, but it definitely isn’t the only one out there.

Dennis Yukie, a sophomore art history major, has been a gamer since the fourth grade. He says he has participated in a variety of role playing games.

“There’s card games, paper games and live action,” Yukie says. “There’s also miniature games, which are like playing army men except there are rules behind it.”

Yukie plays a live-action game called “Vampire, the Masquerade.” He is the storyteller, or narrator, of the game which takes place in the Kent State Student Center Plaza. Yukie says one of the appeals of live action is getting to create your own world and characters.

“With live action, it’s unpredictable because you don’t have control over everything,” he says. “It makes it harder, but it can also make it more exciting.”

Joey Kowalczyk, a senior computer science major, plays “Vampire” with Yukie and says he prefers live action to paper games.

“It brings a lot more people together,” he says. “The problem with paper is it limits the number of people you can get involved, and it does tend to limit the choices and actions. It narrows the scope of the game sometimes.”

Burdick narrates “Call of Cthulhu,” a game based on horror writing. Burdick’s group of six gathers once a month to play the game.

“All the players are characters traveling across Europe on the Orient Express, collecting parts of a giant statue with arcane abilities,” Burdick says. “They are investigators looking for why some strange things are going on. I am the narrator, so I lead the players in their goals and lead them on their adventures.

“It’s creepier than ‘Dungeons & Dragons,’ and that’s why I like it.”

Games vary in size as well as style of play. The number of participants in role playing can range from pairs to a small group like Burdick’s to an all-time attendance high of 80 people at one of Yukie’s games. Yukie’s live-action game takes place in the Student Center Plaza, where it tends to attract a lot of attention. He says he’s been playing in the plaza for five or six years, and the Student
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65% of KSU students have 4 or fewer drinks when they party.

Based on survey data collected by the office of Student Health Promotion (1998) from a representative sample of undergraduates on the Kent Campus.

Kent Roosevelt High School student Forest Green plays a character with Stargate.

Center personnel always have been very understanding.

"I appreciate playing there," Yukie says. "It's a nice big area with different floors."

Yukie says some players have trouble respecting the property, as well as students who are studying.

"Some of them (Student Center officials) don't like us up there," he says. "I can understand it. Most people come in extreme costume."

"Vampire" characters wear dark clothing or dress as their characters, donning dresses or suits.

Kowalczyk wears a suit and carries a spatula around when in character. He says playing in the plaza is "common ground."

"It's a central location and big, wide-open space," he says. "It allows for people to get together all at once.

"It's a nice public place so you don't feel like you have to hide out. When you're playing in the Student Center, you can almost show other people the game. If they'd like to play, they can ask about it."

Jim Augustine, assistant director of the Student Center, says he hasn't had any big problems with the people who role play in the Student Center.

"There hasn't been any problems in the past, but we want to make sure our registered organizations are protected," he
says, "They make people feel uneasy, but you’re going to have that when you have a group of people that nobody knows what they’re doing."

Yukie says there are bad apples in role playing, just like in any group activity.

“I know a couple of people who carry it too far, but I also know people who do it very casually,” he says. “It’s a lifestyle for me. I don’t want to make it sound like I’m obsessed with it, though. I know the difference between fantasy and reality, and the people I role play with do it to keep out of trouble.

“I don’t associate with those who take it too far.”

There are groups that vehemently oppose role playing games, from religious leaders to Tipper Gore. There’s even a group called B.A.D.D. (Bothered by “Dungeons & Dragons”).


She cites Pat Pulling, founder of B.A.D.D., who says her son killed himself after becoming involved with “Dungeons & Dragons.” In Gore’s book, Pulling says her son killed himself in response to a “death curse” threatened by a fellow player.

The backlash against Gore and the group B.A.D.D. is prominent on the Internet.

Kowalczyk says he thinks the stigma associated with role players is undeserved and comes from a lack of understanding of the game.

“It draws from all walks of life, and more or less, it does tend to draw from people who are less socially accepted,” he says. “They see it as something you shouldn’t get into instead of something they haven’t gotten into.”
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Discovery through drywall

With Habitat for Humanity, personal reconstruction takes place with hands and heart

story and photos by David Frabotta

Directions are unclear. We are aimless. Frustration surfaces. We are hungry and cramped after the 30-hour trip to Miami. Tempers flare a bit. Traffic is ruthless. Florida drivers seem to think they are running the Daytona 500, but I'm not afraid — not as afraid as my passengers.

Habitat for Humanity builds houses and reconstructs communities. And it creates a place where volunteers can learn about themselves and their environment.

I had seen Habitat for Humanity construction sites around Kent, and they seemed to have little progress and presumably little impact. I didn't anticipate 22 college students on spring break, a minister, his wife and daughter would have much impact on Homestead, Fla., which had been ravaged by Hurricane Andrew in 1992.

But soon, my anxiety would dissipate, and my skepticism would be replaced with an honest admiration for the human spirit. I didn’t expect a personal transformation. It didn’t sound like much fun, but I was pleasantly surprised with the perspective I developed in Homestead while surrounded by 25 strangers volunteering to build houses.
We found the site, and those who built houses last year were elated to see people living in them. Habitat co-president Annie Anderson, 21, a therapeutic recreation major who went on the trip last year, navigated our van. Her frustration from getting lost was visibly transformed into joy. She was glowing when she saw people living in the houses she helped build.

“When we first rolled in, I was so excited,” Anderson says. “It was neat to see all those little kids running around and to know they actually had a safe place to live.”

She reached for the radio to talk to the driver of our buddy van, public relations coordinator Patricia Link, 24, an elementary education major who also went on the trip last year. Link beat her to the radio.


“The most rewarding thing was when I first got there and saw the houses from the year before,” Link says. “All week I kept thinking about the houses people were living in. I saw bikes sitting outside and lawn mowers. It was an instant thing, like I need a moment to myself to cry for a couple of minutes because my two hands helped build that house people are living in. It was unbelievable.”

Hurricane Andrew destroyed 58,000 homes in the sprawling urban community of Homestead, 35 miles south of Miami. Habitat for Humanity of Greater Miami is the most organized effort to replace those homes, building more than 190.

Habitat of Greater Miami, the largest of the 1,000 nationwide affiliates, completed 15 homes in 1999 and raised about $700,000 for building projects through Collegiate Challenge, an alternative spring break program.

More than 8,000 students volunteered for Habitat's Collegiate Challenge in 1999, and 1,200 went to greater Miami. Kent State participated in the final week of Habitat’s eight-week busy season.

As Collegiate Challenge coordinator Melissa Kollitides scans the construction site, she says the volunteers get a year's worth of work done in the eight-week period.

Still, I wasn't sure what nine men and 16 women, few with construction experience, could accomplish in one week. I soon would find out.

**4 P.M., FRIDAY, MARCH 26**

The group arrives at the United Christian Ministries building on East Main Street in Kent. By 5 p.m., the luggage is loaded, the vans are gassed up, road meals provided by Food Services are distributed, and the group is ready.

The Rev. Chuck Graham, Habitat's faculty adviser, rallies the troops into the chapel for a departing prayer. We sit in the chapel and introduce ourselves. It is the first time some of us meet. The air is heavy with anticipation while Graham takes roll call.

We depart in four vans and Graham’s car, which pulls the luggage trailer. We travel in pairs and communicate via portable radios. The radios help with directions and rest stops, but they also help us get to know each other during the trip. Our only entertainment is each other, but I don’t hear any complaints.

We stop at St. David's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Columbia, S.C., for a few hours of sleep and breakfast.

We are back on the road by 9:30 a.m., and the buddy van system is in full effect. By 1 a.m., the entire group arrives in Homestead. Cabin assignments are finalized, and people settle into their bunks.

The complex is directly off U.S. 1, and it is surrounded by a 6-foot, chain-link fence topped with three strands of barbed wire. Gunshots ring out a few hours after we arrive. Later that morning, I see a car racing down the highway with the alarm sounding — big city fun.
The trip leaves us physically and emotionally famished.

One van goes to get cleaning supplies and Raid for their awful little huts. Little do we know that not all the insecticide in the world could keep the fire ants out of our things. They are a permanent fixture in the Florida soil and our temporary homes.

Camaraderie develops out of mutual misery, but some of us wonder why we decided to come in the first place.

Taylor University from Indiana rolls in just in time for the orientation meeting at 8 p.m. Sunday. They are fidgety and rowdy from the long drive. A high school group from Chicago is also there with bottomless energy. We gather into a 30-foot by 25-foot cabin, the largest by far, for a program briefing by Collegiate Challenge coordinator Melissa Kollitides and volunteer coordinator Kathy Broyard. The group numbers 117, and the room is warm and chaotic.

The meeting is short, but the coordinators’ energy is contagious, especially for Kent State chapter Vice President Carey Hovland, 20, a nursing student.

“They really like what they do,” Hovland says. “They really enjoy it, they really enjoy being down there meeting 100 new people every week. That is exciting. It gives you that new energy. And when you have excited people, you do amazing things.”

8 A.M., MONDAY, MARCH 29

We drive about 10 minutes north on U.S. 1 to the construction site. We have a brief orientation where we meet the staff and discuss the construction site rules.

Rule No. 1: There is no rule No. 1. Whatever you are doing at the time is the most important thing you will do all day. At the time, I thought it was pragmatic construction advice and crucial for avoiding careless mishaps. In retrospect, I think it has profound implications about how our daily routines influence our immediate environment and the immediate environment of others.

Rule No. 2: Don’t sweat the small stuff.

Rule No. 3: It’s all small stuff.

One of the site managers told me the way he sees it, professionals built the Titanic, and volunteers built Noah’s ark.

Finally, we get our assignments. Half of our group is hanging drywall and the other half is nailing soffits, the exposed undersides of porches and overhangs. Installing soffits requires nailing boards overhead. It is monotonous, frustrating and difficult to drive a nail cleanly. I don’t envy them. I’m with the group hanging drywall.

We walk into a stark frame. It is empty except for a pile of Sheetrock in the living room. Raymundo Torres, a full-time
It's hard to maintain an energy like that when you're doing the same thing for so long.

They were really cool. Everyone was very excited about being there. It's hard to maintain an energy like that when you're doing the same thing for so long.

The environment is nonauthoritarian, and we wander aimlessly without orders. Eventually we are shown what to do, and Torres doesn't hesitate to delegate responsibilities.

We work alongside Torres, and we frequently ask him questions such as, "Is this OK like this?" and "Should I do this again?" We call it quits at 4 p.m., and we are about half done drywalling our first house.

The other group has finished the soffits on an entire house, and many are complaining of sore forearms and blisters. We return to the cabins for dinner before heading out to a party boat.

Morning comes quickly. We do the same tasks as the day before. It is day two, and there is more of a group effort today. We start to congeal as a productive crew, and we finish the drywall in our first house. Everything is done: living room, kitchen, three bedrooms, two bathrooms,
The morning meeting at the construction site surprises the volunteers. The site manager asks “Who’s been working on lots 19 and 20?”

There is no response. Volunteers are looking at the floor, fearing their labor was wasted on a project which didn’t meet building codes. A room full of tile was ripped up yesterday because it was crooked, and some roofing shingles were torn up because they were installed wrong.

“Come on, someone was working on those houses,” he persists.

A few tentative hands raise.

“Those lots are no longer sites 19 and 20,” he says. “They are now 24418 and 24408 S.W. 131 Place. They’re done.” All 117 volunteers erupt into cheers and applause.

It lasts for a good 30 seconds.

Anderson says the announcement is profound. “It was probably the most emotional point for me,” she says. “It really hit me that we’re really doing something for these people. It was very cool.”

I am overwhelmed, too. I have to bite my lip to choke back the tears welling in my eyes as I walk to my site to begin the day’s work. Finally, it appears we have had some impact on the project.

The announcement motivates us to work harder.

We start to install drywall in the adjacent house — another bare frame. There is no hesitation. People know exactly what to do.

Graham, who has led similar missions since 1976, says starting the second house gave him a sense of accomplishment, and it made him feel like our group was successfully furthering the building project.

“When we started drywalling the second house, it was like, OK, we got one down,” Graham says.

Half done with our second house, we return to the cabins for dinner. The soffiting group has nearly completed three houses.

We return to the cabins, shower and pick up our food to take back to the site for a picnic.

4 P.M., THURSDAY, APRIL 1

It is quitting time on the final day because Good Friday is observed tomorrow. We almost finish drywalling our second house, and the soffiting crew finishes its fourth.

The crew is tired and excited to get on with its last night in Miami. But the work day is not over. A pallet of sod still needs to be laid. It is perishable and will not last the long weekend. The site manager rallies the volunteers. There are about 100 pieces of sod. Most of the 117 help. Everyone installs one or two pieces, and the task is done in about 10 minutes.

With everyone doing a small part in a large task, I couldn’t help but think it metaphorical to the houses we helped build. My all-or-nothing attitude had changed a bit. Somehow, life taught me it’s OK to rely on people for help. It seems as though nothing is impossible.

The volunteers are everything to this program, and they are appreciated. One of the site managers told me the way he sees it, professionals built the Titanic, and volunteers built Noah’s ark.

“The thing about volunteers is that Habitat can’t work
without them,” volunteer coordinator Kathy Broyard says. “They are what makes the houses affordable so we can offer them at such a low cost to the home owner.

“Even if it’s minuscule work, such as caulking the baseboards or putting a door knob on; it is just as important as putting the walls up or putting the drywall on. Without the caulk in the corner of that baseboard or that door knob, it will not pass inspection. As little as it seems, it’s all part of the puzzle. It’s all important, and the volunteers are everything.”

The staff orders ice cream for the volunteers, and we say our farewells to them. We give Torres a KSU Habitat shirt with our autographs. He pays his gratitude, and the group listens intensely while he talks about our effort during the last week.

It was hard leaving each other when we finally returned to Kent. We united to form more than a construction crew. We developed a support network we were all comfortable with.

We all had fond memories of each other and of the trip. We all talked too much about our personal lives, and we all listened. And though we had our memories, we knew most of our new friendships would fade once we fell back into our daily routines.

Brice, who plans to take a trip like this again, says he was impressed with the energy and dynamics of the group. While his doctoral fellowship requires him to live in his native England when it expires, he plans on keeping in contact with the people he met on the trip.

“It was one of the best weeks of my life, without batting an eyelash. I mean that,” he says. “I really can’t express it, but there wasn’t a bad moment on the trip. There was an amazing feeling of security.”

My sentiments exactly.
Students were surrounded by a different habitat beyond the construction site

story and photo by David Frabotta

We wake up Sunday with a new perspective after the long drive. It is our only day off, and all four vans go to Miami Beach.

We arrive by 10 a.m. and claim our territory in the sand. Miami Beach is colorful. Yellow, pink and light-blue hotels monopolize the skyline. Even the sidewalks are brick red, and they are cluttered with restaurants’ tables and patrons. Collins Avenue, the main strip, is packed full of cars.

Countless pelicans feast off the crests of waves all day long. Women wear less than bikinis. I feel like I am in an MTV video, but Vanilla Ice is nowhere to be seen.

That evening, one van goes to a movie. Most of the group stays at camp to recover from the subtropic’s cruel sun and wind. Nine of us decide to check out Miami Beach’s club scene.

Collins Avenue is congested with cars and trucks boasting booming systems. It takes us almost an hour to find a parking space. Hoards of people crowd the sidewalks and overflow into the streets. There are beautiful women, showing lots of skin — or plastic as the case might be — through their halter tops, micro-mini skirts and sundresses with high slits. The men are buff, built and tan, and they wear tight shirts to show off their solid physiques.

It is midnight, and some clubs are just opening. We walk the streets a while before we find a club with a $20 cover charge, all you can drink. We proceed to reclaim our entrance fee at the bar. I reckon we succeed.

They dance. I sit at a table and smoke cigarettes while drinking bottom-shelf rum. Markus Murphy, a sophomore communications major, joins me. We watch Jessica Gessner, a sophomore interior design major, dance the salsa. Her partner leads like a professional, and she follows with acute precision.

We are free to come and go at the club, and we do so to eat and to walk. It is nearing 3 a.m., and we decide to depart soon.

But Murphy doesn’t want to leave, and it’s difficult to convince him to exit the dance floor. He says he just got his groove on. He’s right, and none of us wants to go. But we reluctantly return home to rest before our first day of construction. We make it back to the cabins by 4 a.m. Patricia Link, our fearless driver, advises the group to drink lots of water. There is no response.

MONDAY

Waffles, sausage and scrambled eggs, affectionately called “scrambie eggs” throughout the trip, are served. Murphy doesn’t move. He barely acknowledges our attempts at waking him. Murphy misses breakfast for the few extra minutes of sleep, and he barely makes it into the van to go to the construction site.

We return to the cabins tired and hungry, and many of us pace until dinner arrives. Tonight a large group is going back to Bayside to shop. The malls in Florida are outdoor and wonderfully aesthetic, but they don’t offer anything unusual or even interesting. Xavier Brice and I scoff at the ceramic alligators, parrot-shaped coffee mugs and mock road signs that read “pelican crossing.” But I am impressed with the reggae selection in the music stores. Finally, something you can’t get in Ohio.
Above, D'andra Mull, a junior political science major, reads in the kitchen of her four-bedroom Engleman apartment. Right, Despite extensive interior renovations, the exterior of Engleman has not changed much.

paintings on the hallways, countless things. They just should have left it alone because the building just had a lot of irreplaceable elements."

D'andra Mull, a resident of Engleman, says she thinks the renovations provide a different living experience.

"It's a really great place to live. It's so new and it provides a lot of wonderful opportunities," Mull says. "You get to have your own place but still get all the benefits of living on campus. That's why I love living there."

Christenson says there are countless benefits to living in Engleman.

"Engleman is an in-between place," he says. "It has all the comforts of being on-campus — being able to pay with scholarships and such, but you are not in a typical residence hall. "You don't need to have a roommate. You are living with people who are mature. And you have the convenience of paying only once a month. You don't pay for electric or water or gas. We include everything, and it's completely furnished. "It's a great opportunity for students."
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