TO BE YOUNG AND CATHOLIC
DEAR BURR READER,

In this issue, writer Andy Netzel explores what it's like being a young Catholic in 2002 (see page 28). Most are deciding for themselves how they feel about such hot topic issues as abortion, pre-marital sex and homosexuality. But they aren't leaving the church, like previous generations, and are still calling themselves Catholic.

We also delve into nutrition (see page 34). And for those of you vegetarian students who feel left out of our coverage, don't. I just sent a letter to Andrea Spandonis, director of Kent State Dining Services, telling her that you want more (and better) vegetarian options in the dining halls, something we learned from our coverage.

Finally, The Burr has been popping up at some national award ceremonies lately. It nabbed first place in editorial content from the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication and best student magazine (published more than once a year) from the Society of Professional Journalists for its fall and spring 2001 issues.

To AEJMC and SPJ: Thank you! And, to everyone else, enjoy the issue!

[Mark Cina]
PLAYING MANTIS

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MANTIS

Loud music!
Raucous shows!
Punk thrives in
downtown Kent

STORY ROXANNE TOMCO
PHOTOS MICHAEL RICH
You wouldn’t believe the things that I see

A Ken doll tied in the rafters above swings in a noose like a metronome. White Chocolate, lead singer of the Kent band Sexual Tension, steps up to the microphone. “This song is called ‘My Face Hurts From Making Out So Much Last Summer,’” he says. The band then launches into a sound buildup. Chocolate punctuates the song with yelps, moans and shrill screams as he throws himself into the side wall. He rolls over the rubber tires nailed to the foot of the stage and falls face down onto the club floor.

Audience members join his show of decadent destruction. One man pounds White Chocolate on the back, while others fake kicks to his ribs. A girl ruffles his sweaty hair, and he jumps back on stage. The band finishes its roughly hewn set of songs. All the band members kneel in a circle, facing each other. They lean back hard into their heels, arching their spines, with bass, guitar and microphone in hand.

The equipment is switched, and Sexual Tension’s guitarist gets back up to lead the next act, We’ve Got Your Thunder Balls, an AC/DC cover band. Members play two full songs and a fragment of a third before giving up. They laugh as the guitarist mispicks and restarts the familiar introduction to “Back in Black.”
Cruising down North Water Street on a rainy day, it's easy to mistake the Mantis Gallery for a misanthropic art house filled with voodoo knickknacks and oddly shaped bongos — a home to tree-huggers and Nader voters.

While this impression might not be too far off in describing the right side of the building, it's the unmarked left side of 257 N. Water St. that harbors the covert punk gatherings that make up the musical counterpart of this offbeat art gallery.

The Mantis has been home to a score of unknown local and national acts that have made their mark on underground and mainstream music scenes alike. Sam Ludwig, a professional house painter and local musician, opened the dive in 1989 to spotlight local talent. Ever since, the Mantis has been a hangout for the Kent punk subculture.

"There's a whole plethora of shit that goes on here," Ludwig says, opening the door to his rented space with a can of Black Label beer in hand. "You wouldn't believe the things that I see. It's my sin bin."

**LEFT:** Mantis owner Sam Ludwig performs with the Mantis house band, Lester.

**TOP:** The duct-taped windows and eclectic furnishings are just part of the atmosphere of the Mantis for Ludwig and his 7-year-old daughter, Sarah.

**RIGHT:** An out-of-town band hypnotizes the crowd.
Black leather jackets, Converse low-tops, dirty sweaters and thrift store T-shirts seem to be the uniform for loyal Mantis-goers. It's not unusual to see someone wearing a pair of jeans held together only by safety pins and hand-stitched patches.

Often, the bands and fans are one and the same, but neither group cares much for cleanliness. They dance. They play music. They transfer equipment from van to stage and back again, intermittently running across the street to Glory Days bar for a shot and a beer. They tumble onto the floor. They sweat. This demographic is no advertisement for a Delia's catalog.

Which is just as well — the Mantis does no advertising because word of mouth gets the crowds to show.

Crowds don't seem to mind the cruddy atmosphere, either. The toilet is dirty, old and out of service. There is hardly any place to sit, unless you count the recycled bench seats from vans, rusted patio furniture and wobbly kitchen chairs. The broken windows, covered in places by duct-taped tarps, leak in frigid air and, on a busy night, leak out cigarette smoke. There is no bar, not a single Miss America in hiding and no complimentary popcorn. And for these reasons, the Mantis Gallery continues to draw devoted punk crowds from as far away as New York City to watch underground bands destroy the stage.

The icy air blows in as he moves his space heater to back of the club near the rows of Schwinn bicycles — out-of-town bands ride the bikes through town to stretch their legs after a long road trip. He runs a hand through his silver-gray hair and eases into a wooden captain's chair on the Mantis stage. Behind him, tall cardboard theater backdrops lean on the wall. They are painted in primary colors with crooked cityscapes, happy stick figures and bumpy cars.

"During the day, we do children's theater," he says, gesturing behind him at the artwork. "The kids hang curtains, do their own painting. I let them build stuff for their plays. A lot of them are home-schooled, so they have that freedom."

Ludwig is fiercely proud of that dichotomy — the Mantis is playhouse by day, punk house by night.
Ludwig can't help but think back to what brought him here in the 1970s — an explosion of art, film and music. “I was a drummer before I started singing,” he says. “Then I stumbled upon Devo and thought, ‘I’m going to Kent!’”

He arrived during a time of creative fire, each art an impetus for inspiration. He reminisces about the mass of metals majors, radio DJs, painters and independent film directors.

“We used to go out to the bars, and on Main Street downtown, we’d see all these people walking around with cameras,” he says. “They’d just be filming movies everywhere. Believe it or not, Kent used to be cool.”

So Ludwig says he maintains the Mantis and stays involved in the music world to keep that original creativity intertwined with his Kent memories. He also mourns the loss of the up-and-coming music that used to dominate the downtown Kent scene, a loss he is determined to curb. By charging low cover prices — usually $5 donations that cover some of the rent — he hopes to keep the crowds returning.

“You don’t see many places like this,” he says. “We get bands in here from New Jersey, New York, and we want to pay them, but I’ve got rent, too.”

He switches off the lights and pulls the door shut on his way to pick up his 6-year-old daughter. For his day job, he repaints old mansions in Hudson. He drops some painting tools into his sky blue El Camino. His other car is a ’72 hearse.

“I’m not a rich man, by any means,” says Ludwig, jiggling his car keys. “I live day to day. But you pick what you choose, know what I mean?”
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Daddy's little bull dyke
MOVING IN COMING OUT

Gay, lesbian, bisexual and straight students can live together in the dorms. But it’s still difficult for some

STORY BEN FISCHER
Freshmen Matt Boedicker, left, and Jarid Fitch have a "completely normal roommate relationship," even though Fitch is gay. "It has to do with personalities," Boedicker says. "And being gay is not really a personality."

Freshman Jarid Fitch arrived at 9 a.m. on moving day. He was naturally nervous. He was about to begin a new part of his life, leaving the familiarity of home and moving in with a stranger. He had boxes of belongings and hours of unpacking. A computer, clothing, pictures of high school friends, the gold ropes he planned to use to bunch curtains. The struggle, Fitch thought as he glanced around the 11-by-17-foot Allyn Hall dorm room, would be deciding what to put where.

But Fitch had more pressing thoughts on his mind that morning, those thoughts that any new person moving into a dorm gets upon receiving the long-awaited room assignment: What would his roommate be like? Would he be messy or neat? Talkative or quiet?

His main question, however, was the one he had grappled with for months: "What will he think when I tell him I'm gay?"

Fitch had already told his Catholic parents, and he says they had gone to great lengths to keep it quiet. And although he had to risk a similar or even worse reaction, Fitch says, he had to tell his new roommate. After all, he rationalized, anyone he lives with would find out sooner or later.

Several hours later, Matt Boedicker, a transfer student from Illinois, arrived in the room with his parents and a lot of boxes.

"Nice to meet you," Fitch said in that nervous-first-encounter sort of way as he shook Boedicker's hand.

Boedicker's parents left, and he began unpacking.

He started to set up his computer. Fitch, meanwhile, got ready to go out.

"I have a date tonight ..." Fitch said cautiously, "And he and I will probably go for a walk, then come back here and talk."

That's how Fitch, in his roundabout way, told Boedicker he was gay.

Naturally, Boedicker was taken aback. A range of emotions hit him — shock, surprise and disappointment. But he could only say, "Aw, man."

That was August.

Now, as their first semester together ends, they're still roommates. And they get along fine. They're not best friends, but they keep their room clean and tell each other when they leave and where they're going.

"It's just like normal now," Boedicker says. Fitch adds, "It's a completely normal roommate relationship."

Not all gay, lesbian or bisexual college students living in Kent State dorms are as lucky as Fitch. Traditionally, dorms — especially Terrace Hall, as police reports show — are not welcoming grounds for homosexual students. Harassment reports filed with Kent State police last year detailed unrelenting harassment, from derogatory words carved into doors to prank telephone calls and chants at night. This has made "coming out" — the phrase used in the gay community when disclosing sexual orientation — to a roommate in the dorms all the more difficult.

Housing officers at colleges and universities are caught in a tough position during all of this. They want residents to be open and comfortable but have no clear-cut solutions for the problem because, as they point out, they don't see the harassment actually happen.

"It's more difficult with homosexuality
because it's not exactly a visual thing,” says Kenyon Bonner, assistant director of residence services at Kent State. “You can’t tell right off if someone is gay. So there are a lot of assumptions — a lot of uneducated assumptions — and that's how a lot of trouble happens. It can be more difficult to get to the deeper cause of disputes.”

He says housing officers work to combat any type of harassment on a case-by-case basis. For example, students who feel threatened or uncomfortable can move into a different room.

Some colleges and universities across the country, in response, have taken a bolder step. Harvard University, for example, specifically states in its housing contract clause that students can request a room change if they do not like their roommates’ sexual orientation. A small number of liberal arts colleges are even opening coed rooms to accommodate homosexual students who are uncomfortable living with heterosexual roommates. Kent State has no plans to adopt this policy.

Freshman Tiffany Graham still doesn’t know how to tell her roommate she’s bisexual. She says the issue is important enough that she doesn’t have a problem if her roommate learns of her sexual orientation from this article.

“You never know how comfortable someone’s going to be with it,” she says.

Graham “came out” her junior year of high school. Her parents still don’t know — that’s a whole other situation, she says — but so far everyone she’s told has been accepting.

But she still wants to tell her roommate. She says she knows she should.

“I’m getting tired of being so secretive about it,” Graham says. “Being a young person, sex is a very prominent part of a person’s life, and I try not to have to hide my life.”

Gay, lesbian and bisexual students say disclosing sexual orientation to a roommate poses a difficult question: Is being “out” worth facing the possibility of harassment?

Junior Kenny Manns, who lived in Terrace Hall two years ago, didn’t tell everyone on his floor that he was gay. His roommate, whom he knew from high school, already knew, as did some friends on the floor. As the semester wore on, Manns became more comfortable with his surroundings, and more open. Soon others, whom Manns describes as “big, tough athletic types,” eventually learned.

It started with signs that said “faggot” on the bathroom door. But the 10 guys got bolder (and drunker at times, Manns says) and began calling his room and screaming his name “at the top of their lungs” late at night. By finals week of the spring semester, Manns was skipping showers because he was so intimidated.

“I’d tell my roommate, ‘If I’m not back in 15 or 20 minutes, come in and make sure I’m OK,’” he recalls. “I was afraid someone would realize I was in the shower alone and come in and beat me up.”

Manns, fearing for his safety, went to his resident assistant, Kent State police and residence service officials, who filed a report. Manns also went to parking services and received a special parking pass in front of
Gay and lesbian students have long complained that college dormitories are unfriendly.

Two liberal arts colleges outside Philadelphia have responded with two of the most liberal housing policies in the country. Haverford College permits male and female upperclassmen to share apartment units. The scene is similar at Swarthmore College, where men and women can actually live together in dorms.

Wesleyan University in Middletown, Conn., and Hampshire College in Amherst, Mass., also allow men and women to live together. Students at other schools, including Rutgers University, Tufts University outside Boston and New York University, have tried to get the coed housing option at their schools but have been unsuccessful. Kent State, which allows coed floors, has no plans to institute coed dorm rooms, says Kenyon Bonner, assistant director of residence services. Students who are uncomfortable with their roommate, according to school policy, can move into another room.

And Gary Schwarzmueller, executive director of the Columbus-based Association of College and University Housing Officers

Terrace Hall to escape easily if he felt threatened. Residence services also offered him another room, which he declined because the timing was close to finals, and let him out of his housing contract for the following year.

Manns says the situation was unfortunate because his harassers never were punished.

"All the RA's were very nice to me, but they all said the same thing as the campus police: 'If we don't catch them in the act, we can't do anything,'" he says.

And that, Manns says, was frustrating. He now lives off-campus.
For Fitch and Boedicker, the key to their relationship is a mix of communicating and understanding. Sexual orientation never affects their living situation. Fitch still helps Boedicker with his homework, for example, and Boedicker takes out the trash.

“It has to do with personalities,” Boedicker says. “And being gay is not really a personality.”

For Boedicker, it took some adjusting. He still follows his conservative Protestant upbringing, and his brother and uncle are

---

International, says he expects most colleges and universities to follow the same policy.

"Coed by bedroom is at the other end of the spectrum," he says. "Some are doing it, but I don't see it as a growing trend."

Besides, Schwarzmueller says, living in the dorms is all about learning how to adjust to different types of people.

At Haverford College, it was about giving its gay and lesbian upperclassmen an option. Steve Heacock, Haverford spokesman, says some were concerned that this housing policy, implemented three years ago, would merely promote sex. Boyfriends and girlfriends can choose this option, he says, but that rarely happens.

Instead, homosexual students opt for it because they can live openly and honestly without fear. "It's been very positive," Heacock says. "It allows gay and lesbian students some flexibility because often they have felt ostracized. Now, they have an atmosphere of trust."

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The men's basketball team took Kent State into the national spotlight in the 2002 NCAA Elite Eight tournament. Pictured are recent graduates (from left) Andrew Mitchell, Trevor Huffman, Eric Thomas and Demetric Shaw.

An openly gay student told Kent State police last fall that his ex-roommate and others from his Dunbar Hall floor repeatedly wrote offensive phrases on his door (top, right). Other gay students have reported similar forms of harassment, which ranged from prank phone calls to name calling.

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evangelical ministers.

"My dad talked about homosexuality a lot," he says. "I mean, he wasn't going to beat people up, but he didn't think it was right.

"I guess that's how I was raised — just because someone's gay, I'm not going to make their life hell."

One night in September, Fitch returned home late, depressed about a fight with his boyfriend, Andy. The two roommates started talking.

"All of a sudden I was thinking about how Andy and I have started to form a solid relationship, and I had said, "We both want kids, so obviously, we'd have to adopt,"" Fitch recalls. "I said to Matt, "What do you think about that?"

Boedicker said it's not something
he agrees with.

"I just don’t think it’s right," he says.

And that is OK with Fitch.

"We have our differences," Fitch says. "Really, as long as I’m not going to wake up one night with him drawing up ‘Ways to Kill Jarid’ plans on his top bunk, I’m fine."

Fitch is always willing to answer questions Boedicker has about gay culture. Once, he wanted to know what "fah-fah" was. (And he told him: An extremely effeminate gay man.)

Fitch says he knows his limits as well, knows that his roommate doesn’t want to hear every detail of his life.

"It’s interesting," Boedicker says. "I like learning about different types of people. This just worked out well. We got lucky."
DEGREES OF COOL
Yes, some Kent State grads have cool jobs! Inside their so non-9-to-5 lives

This 1971 Kent grad went from staff artist at The Akron Beacon Journal to nationally syndicated comic strip artist

CHUCK AYERS
Age: 54
Degree: Bachelor of arts degree in fine and professional arts
Starting Out: Ayers worked part time as a staff artist at The Akron Beacon Journal when his fellow Kent Stater Tom Batiuk contacted him about illustrating the comic, Crankshaft.
Cool factor: Ayers’ strip about a testy but endearing bus driver appears in more than 300 newspapers across the country. He tells The Burr he can spend anywhere from an hour to 12 in one day illustrating in his Akron studio, depending on characters and dialogue.

And his partner in crime...

TOM BATIUK
Age: 55
Degree: Bachelor of fine arts degree in painting and education
Class Act: Every day, Batiuk takes readers back to high school with his comic, Funky Winkerbean, which was inspired by his teaching days at Elyria Junior High.
Where It’s At: His strip runs in more than 400 daily newspapers, including The Washington Times.
Cool Factor: If you look close enough in the “Homer vs. Dignity” episode of The Simpsons, you can spot a Funky Winkerbean balloon in a parade. Way!
Funky Fans: Batiuk tells The Burr he’s developed some “long-term relationships” with readers since the strip debuted in 1972. Indeed. Some schools have even produced Funky Winkerbean’s Homecoming, a musical based on the strip.

THE POST-COLLEGE CLICHÉ: NEW YORK
They went in search of dreams of becoming famous. Here’s what really happened

MICHAEL PAOLETTA
Age: 42
Degree: Fashion merchandising
Resume: Paoletta has written for all the mags you’ve probably perused: Paper, Spin, Detour, OUT, The Advocate and URB.
Current job: He’s now Albums Review editor at Billboard.
Cool Factor: This New Yorker’s interviewed Bjork and Mary J. Blige, to name a few. Of Bjork: “She was incredibly sincere, smart and thoughtful.”
Trite but true: “Believe in what you do,” Paoletta tells The Burr, “and don’t take no for an answer.”

PATRICIA BOZZA SHAW
Age: 36
Degree: Fashion design
Starting Out: Bozza Shaw probably edited that text book you read in junior high. After all, she’s worked for Macmillan, Simon and Schuster and HarperCollins.
Current job: She now freelances and copyedits.
Cool Factor: She copyedited Hillary Clinton’s book, An Invitation to the White House (no interesting grammatical errors — we asked), and the Duchess of York’s cookbooks. Bozza Shaw breaks it down like this: “I try to get everything in place and have it work out at the end of the day.”
**LEMMIRE**

**Age:** 40  
**Degree:** Musical theater  
**Girl Power:** She started Queen Bee Productions, a theater company in Akron that showcases stage work on women's issues, "the stuff we rarely see," she tells *The Burr.*  
**Cool Factor:** Queen Bee was the first production company to produce the *Vagina Monologues* in northeast Ohio as part of V-Day, a worldwide campaign to stop violence against women. The theater also participates in a rape crisis panel.

**BROWN**

**Age:** 32  
**Degree:** Master's in criminal justice  
**Starting Out:** Brown worked at the Bainbridge Police Department in Geauga County for 5-and-a-half years before going into FBI training in Quantico, Va. He was then placed in the San Francisco division.  
**Current Job:** Brown works in the National Security Agency, handling violent crime and child porn investigations.  
**Cool Factor:** Since Sept. 11, Brown has been the tracking terrorists. He's fielded calls from people, mostly about suspicious-looking people.

**DEAL**

**Age:** 33  
**Degree:** Aerospace flight technology  
**Starting Out:** Deal "made a deal" to join the Marine Corps, starting out as a second lieutenant in 1992.  
**For Real:** She was unable to become a pilot at first because of the Marine Corps' ban on women in combat.  
**Cool Factor:** Deal became the first woman in the Corps' 220-year history to earn her wings, which got her a spot in the Ohio Women's Hall of Fame in 1999.  
**Flying High:** She now flies a few times a week at her base in San Diego.

**DUFFY**

**Age:** 36  
**Degree:** Bachelor's degree in chemistry  
**Starting Out:** Duffy went to Harvard, earned a Ph.D. in organic chemistry and then started working with Merck & Co., a pharmaceutical company, on intensive HIV research.  
**Current Job:** He now does second-generation therapy for people with the virus who no longer respond to Crixivan. Duffy tells *The Burr,* "It makes you want to come into work early and stay late."  
**To Be Continued:** Duffy says this new research drug is 100 times stronger than Crixivan. He expects it to be approved by the Food and Drug Administration in three to seven years.

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Whether he wants to admit it, Jim Christian is under a lot of pressure. When he signed a five-year contract in April to replace former men's basketball coach Stan Heath, members of the Kent community began wondering if he could come close to Heath's success. After all, the team reached the NCAA Tournament's Elite Eight for the first time last year, earning Kent State national recognition. But this year, Christian is looking at rebuilding after four players largely responsible for the championship season graduated. Christian sat down with The Burr to talk about secrets to this year's season.

Q: Do you feel like you are in the shadow of Stan Heath?
A: No, I am indebted to Stan Heath. He gave me a chance to be a part of a special program. You can't compare last year's team to this year's. They set the bar that every player who steps onto the floor with a Kent State jersey will be measured by. I'm thankful to be a Division I basketball coach. It's a position Stan prepared me for and put me in.

Q: How does a team recover from losing so many key players?
A: We lost a lot of key contributors from last season, but some of the guys we still have were a major part in what we accomplished. A lot of players on this team right now have experienced winning. The attitude, the work ethic, the heart we have right now are all characteristics similar to last year's team. The only way we'll gain that experience for ourselves is to go through wars, to go through battles as a unit.

Q: Will Mid-American Conference teams be looking to get revenge from last year?
A: Whenever you have success, people want to knock you down. I think other teams in the league are excited to play Kent State, and now I think people consider beating Kent State a big win. All wins in college basketball are big. When a team has success, people take pride in beating you.

Q: How important is family in your coaching career and professional life?
A: Well, I have a 6-year-old daughter, MacKenzie. She is the most important part of my life. She's my outlet, and whether the team wins or loses, she just wants to hear from her dad and talk to her dad.

Q: How are you going to make your own identity at Kent State?
A: I don't think I have to try to establish my own individual identity. Good teams reflect the personality of their head coach. I'm an aggressive person, so I expect this to be an aggressive basketball team. That goes for when I'm in here coaching the team or on the phone talking to whomever. This is a blue-collar program. It started with Gary Waters, it continued with Stan Heath, and now it continues to me.

Q: What will be the hardest transition to head coach you'll have to make?
A: The hardest thing will probably be juggling the non-related basketball things with the related things. The hardest challenge I'm going to face is budgeting my time accordingly and maximizing the time I have to prepare for things. It's a challenge every new coach has.

Q: What are the positives and negatives of Jim Christian as a coach and a person?
A: Every coach wants to be a role model for his basketball program. My door is always open for communication with my players. I want them to be able to come to me with any problems they're having in their lives. I treat the players on my team like I would treat my own son. The biggest struggle I have is maintaining the balance in my life and not becoming obsessed with the basketball team.
A Kent State student searches for acceptance after surviving a house fire that burned most of his body

He has to be careful of how he handles the bags. Although his skin looks tough and leathery, it can be easily torn open by the serrated edge of a brown paper bag. His contorted hands grasp cans and boxes of food and gently pack them. A woman and her children place their food on the conveyor belt. He feels the woman staring at the pink, scarred flesh that runs down the left side of his face into his neck. He matches her stare. She quickly looks away with embarrassment and pulls her children close to her side as if he were contagious.

Rob Davison is used to people looking at his scars. For the past 10 years, this 21-year-old from Aurora has endured stares from most people he encounters. While he has made attempts to live a normal life — attending college, working at Giant Eagle — he still faces each day with difficulty. Rob, who will come to Kent State this spring, says the stares and reactions make him more conscious of how different he really is.

Rob says he would rather have people ask him what happened than simply stare or look away. “Don’t ignore me,” he says, assisted by his mother’s translation. “Don’t look away like I’m not here. Instead, ask me what’s wrong or what happened. One word can cure it: Fire.”

Ten years ago Rob was trapped in a fire at his home. He suffered third-and fourth-degree burns over 85 percent of his body. The only parts not burned were his feet and genitals. The scars permanently altered his physical appearance. His index fingers were burned down to the knuckles, and his earlobes were hardened.
Top: Rob’s personal nurse, Jill Hauser, drinks a milk shake with Rob at Dairy Queen. Hauser also accompanies Rob to his job at Giant Eagle in case he has trouble breathing.

Right: Rob says that his faith in God has played a central role in his recovery.

Despite his deformities, Rob says he made a conscious decision not to pity himself. He wants to live life like anyone else.

“I admire him a lot for his courage,” his father, Mike Davison, says. “The doctors thought Rob would be a vegetable if he came out of the accident alive, but he refused to give in. He’s a fighter. He overcomes any obstacle set out in front of him.”

The smoke alarm went off at 2 a.m. on Feb. 10, 1992. It was an electrical fire that started in the wall of the living room. In 13 minutes, the Davisons’ home was engulfed in flames.

Mike and Carla Davison managed to get Rob’s younger siblings, Matt and Nicole, out through a bedroom window. Mike searched for Rob on his hands and knees but couldn’t find him. Rob got trapped trying to escape. He made it from his bedroom to the kitchen area before he lost consciousness from smoke inhalation.

Mike tried to let smoke out through a window so he could find Rob but was blown out the window by an explosion. Mike and a neighbor attempted to get back inside the house but failed because the door was swollen shut from the heat of the fire.

The Aurora Police kicked down the kitchen door to rescue Rob. He was transferred to Cleveland Metro Hospital by life-flight. His heart stopped beating once on the way and another five times at the hospital.

After two and a half weeks, Rob was transferred to the Shriners Hospital in Cincinnati, where his burns were treated for two more months. Then he was transferred to Health Hill Hospital for Children in Shaker Heights, where he was treated for complications from smoke inhalation.

Rob has suffered 50 strokes and, in the past 10 years, has had a total of 97 operations. Acting spontaneously is still tough. It took him two years to walk again. He says he still has to think through every small task like opening a box.

Speaking has been difficult, too, because of damage to his vocal cords. It took him eight years to speak well enough to hold conversations. His voice is muffled. Every word is a breath, making it difficult to understand.

Although he can vocalize, it is still difficult for people to comprehend what he is saying. One of his parents usually has to translate for him.

“At first Rob used a talking machine, much like a mini-computer, to vocalize
Don’t look away like I’m not here. Instead, ask me what’s wrong or what happened.

One word can cure it: Fire

with people,” Carla Davison says. “After a while he got sick of it and refused to use it at all. He had a stoma stent placed in his throat instead of a trach because it allowed for more vocalization and sounds.”

A trach has a harness-type device that ties around the neck to hold it in place, and it also has a breathing tube, which sticks out of the neck about an inch. The stoma stent is more internal because there is no harness around the neck, and the tube is inside the throat. Rob says he also likes the fact that the stoma stent can be concealed more easily than the trach.

Despite this accommodation, he says, he still has had to alter his career goals. He originally wanted to go to college to become a teacher, but communication barriers have forced him to pursue computers.

His injuries have compromised his college living situation.

He pursued an associate’s degree of applied sciences from Ohio University through a distance learning program last year. He chose Kent State because it was closer to home, and he could actually attend classes on campus. He says he would eventually like to live in the dorms.

Rob’s unstable airway, however, needs to be monitored at all times by a nurse or skilled person who knows CPR. Breathing in the hot air during the fire melted his trachea. His entire airway was filled with blisters that eventually turned into scar tissue. Doctors surgically removed the scar tissue, but it left his airway very thin and flimsy. Any cold or infection in his throat can cause a major problem because Rob can’t cough up anything.

“I feel like I am missing something, but I’m not sure what just yet,” Rob says. “I miss having my individual freedom that I used to have. I can’t just get up and go like I did before without someone accompanying me. I know now I took just walking down the street by myself for granted.”

Rob says he doesn’t focus too much on the “what ifs” because they would depress him. Instead he and his father, Mike, try to make an example of their experience by speaking on behalf of Shriners Hospital across northeast Ohio about the importance of home smoke alarms.

Rob tells people he found strength to endure the physical pain and mental anguish through his faith in God. He truly believes
I know now, he says, that he is here for a reason. His family also has been supportive.

“We really pulled together as a family for Rob,” Carla says. “I think most families wouldn’t have been able to deal with the stress, but we just dealt with the problems at hand and moved on. Laughter has been our biggest remedy so far.”

Just because Rob looks different on the outside, his siblings don’t treat him any differently. Nicole, his 14-year-old sister, says he is still the same funny and sarcastic brother she has always known.

“I don’t baby him or treat him any differently,” she says. “We tease each other every chance we get just like any normal brother and sister. Having Rob as a brother is no different than having Matt,” her 15-year-old brother.

Rob still enjoys the same activities as he did before, such as music, computers and collecting key chains. Although these aspects of his life remain constant, he says he still feels out of sync and longs for a normal life.

“I feel like I have become invisible because I don’t have any social interaction with people outside of my family and nurses,” Rob says. “I just want to live a normal life. All people have to do is look in my eyes and see that there is a normal 21-year-old guy inside this shell.”

Rob’s family, which includes his brother, Matt, 16, his father, Mike, his mother, Carla, and his sister, Nicole, 14, has been supportive of him.
THE NEW CATHOLICS

Today’s generation of worshippers poses one of the most radical challenges for the church yet.
Sarah Neumann appears to be the definition of Catholic. All her church memories include a front-row seat. Now, at the Newman Center, the Catholic church on campus, things have changed some — as a veteran choir member, she sits in the row behind the priest. But she usually sits in the front row of the singers as well.

“It’s kind of a comfort thing,” she says. “I feel uncomfortable not being in church and not sitting in the front row.”

On a typical Sunday, Neumann might spend eight or 10 hours doing things for the church, whether it’s choir practice or cleaning up the basement so the garage sale will be a success.

Church, Neumann says, means everything to her. In fact, she rarely misses a Mass. But for Neumann and thousands of other young people, being a practicing Catholic, especially in 2002, is a subjective interpretation of the faith and doctrine.

Students, as a result, are making up their own minds on hard-line Catholic issues.

The church is against pre-marital sex and any form of contraceptives, such as birth control pills or condoms. It also is against abortion. It accepts homosexuality but is against acting on those urges physically. Even masturbation is forbidden.

What’s interesting about Neumann and other young practicing Catholics today — at a time when the Church is trying to move past the recent sexual abuse scandals — is that they are living by their own rules. Unlike previous generations who have left the church, they still consider themselves Catholic and go to church but take different social stances than the Vatican does.

Neumann is in favor of birth control and really hasn’t settled on premarital sex. (She says she would have to be in a committed, loving relationship.) She also supports gay rights, remarking, “Who am I to judge?” But she says abortion is still murder.

Neumann still isn’t convinced she has it right. Not yet at least.

“Part of me thinks you never really learn what it means to be Catholic,” she says. “It’s a long process.”

She pauses. Her eyes dart back and forth as she selects her words carefully.

Lawrence Cunningham, professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame, calls these young people “Gen X Catholics.” While every generation raises issues that the church usually responds to, this generation brings one of the most radical challenges yet.

He says this also is the first generation of American Catholics who are heading to colleges and universities and experiencing real independence from their families.

“The attitudes of young adult Catholics are not particularly in line with those of tra-

Students kneel at their pews as others take communion during evening mass at the Newman Center, the Catholic Church on campus. Communion is one of the seven sacraments that Notre Dame professor Lawrence Cunningham says young Catholics like but don’t embrace like their parents did.
ditional Catholics," he says. "It's a lot less focused on rules."

Young Catholics like the sacraments, Cunningham says, but do not live for them. The seven sacraments are special bonds Catholics share with God that also define the differences between Catholicism and other Christian faiths. They include baptism, the forgiveness of original sin (something, Catholics believe, everyone is born with) and reconciliation, among others.

The young Catholics are a lot less institutional, too.

"They tend to pray a lot," Cunningham says, "and take Jesus very seriously."

Freshman Aaron Chicatelli says he's not sure whether he's the right guy to talk to about being young and Catholic.

He doesn't go to church every Sunday, but he makes it at least once a month. He's always gone to Catholic Church, but his views don't all fall in line with the church. He's not against same-sex marriage, supports birth control and feels sex before marriage is acceptable. But God is important to him.

"Basically the only thing that can judge me is God," Chicatelli says. "But the best Catholic would be someone who goes strictly by the Catholic way: No premarital sex, no birth control, goes to church every Sunday.

"I'm not saying I'm a horrible person. I'm an average teenager in college. But my faith still does mean the world to me."

But Cunningham, the Notre Dame professor, says Chicatelli has the one credential necessary to be Catholic: He considers himself Catholic.

"We don't use those loyalty tests," he says. "We don't ask people if they are in line with the catechism of the Catholic Church. We're not a perfectionist sect that expels people who don't meet items on a list."

And Neumann says this is one of the main reasons she remains a Catholic.

"You need to personalize your religion," she says. "It's really hard to talk about religion and faith because it's such an individual thing.

"Yes, I'm part of a huge church community, and I follow their prescription for practicing faith. But it's so different for every person."

That goes down to the way people pray. Some, like Chicatelli, never pray out loud. It's private and quiet. For Neumann, it depends on how she feels.

"When I was a kid, you knelt next to the bed and said your prayers," she says. "And they were said out loud. But it's different now.

He's still a source of inspiration and a man in touch with their generation. Three Kent State students traveled to Toronto in July to hear Pope John Paul II speak for World Youth Day. They say seeing him in person only reaffirmed their faith. The Pope told 80,000 teenagers from over 170 countries "not to lose the faith because of the harm done by some priests to the young and vulnerable." His speech came at a time when almost 300 of the United States' 46,000 priests had been removed from their jobs this year because of sexual abuse allegations.

ROSEMARY REILMAN, 20:
"You could tell he loved the youth. He said, 'You are all real strong, and I'm an old man, but I still know what you go through.' He really has a heart for the youth. He's the leader of our church, and he is just an amazing man."

NATHAN FRANIA, 25:
"I'm Roman Catholic. I have always wanted to see the Pope. You could tell he wasn't doing too well, but it was uplifting to see the love he had for young people. It's nice to know the leader of the Catholic Church believes so strongly in youth. Eventually, he's going to leave us. I hope the next Pope carries on the tradition of this youth day."

TRICIA FREY, 18:
"It was unbelievable to be in the presence of someone so faithful, so willing to serve God. When I went on the trip, I felt like I needed a renewal in my burning passion. It wasn't like I was falling away from my faith. I just wanted to rekindle my awe and love of God. And it was very humbling to be in the presence of the Pope."
Neumann carries the Gospel during the first student Mass of the semester. "You need to personalize your religion," she says. "It's really hard to talk about religion and faith because it's such an individual thing."

"Sometimes when I'm lying in bed, and I'm thinking, it turns into a conversation with God. It's kind of funny for me not to kneel down when I'm going to pray. So that's what I'll do, just like when I was a kid."

Neumann packed her bags for the five-hour drive to Rochester, N.Y., before summer vacation. This, she says, wasn't a completely joyous experience.

She had just learned her pastor from her hometown church had been accused of sexual misconduct that allegedly occurred 20 years ago.

"The bishop said Mass that week I came back," she recalls. "To go home and see the pain people were in, seeing a man they trusted violate their trust — I understand why celebrities hate to read about their lives. Everything that happens is news to the world. It hurts so much."

Young people haven't left the faith because of the recent sexual abuse allegations, though. Cunningham says the issue has perhaps added a complexity to their relationships with the church.

Less than 10 percent of practicing
Ca th o li cs sa id th ey w e r e up se t e nou g h to b e a n g r y a t th e c hur c h o r d ec id e no t t o go an y ­ m o r e, acco rdin g to a s tud y Cunningham is cu rre ntl y co ndu c tin g .

“ It’ s a m az in g h o w littl e th a t h as imp ac t­ e d a n y Ca th o li cs a t a ll ,” he sa ys.

T h e R ev . J o hn J e re k fr o m th e N e wma n Ce n te r , sa ys th e effec t th e sex u a l a bu se sca n da l h a d o n th e fa ith of yo un g Ca th o li cs was mi s un d e r s t oo d. A tt e nd a n ce a nd m o n e t a r y d o n a ti o ns , he sa ys, b o th h ave inc r ease d eac h S und ay.

“W e m ay h a v e los t a fe w of th e frin ge Ca th o li cs, th e o n es wh o d o n ’t n o rm a ll y co m e to M ass,” he sa ys, “but yo u d o n ’t r ea ll y see th e m in th e c hur c h a n yway . A s b a d a s it so und s, yo u h ave n ’t n o ti ce d yo u l os t th e m. ”

Pippin went to a parochial school from kindergarten through high school. He says growing up Catholic shaped the way he looks at the world. He’s against same-sex marriage and abortion. On some issues – like premarital sex and birth control – he says the church is behind the times.

But he says he still wants to pass the faith along to his children.

“When I have kids, I want to raise them to be good Catholics,” Pippin says.

“I’ll want to bring them to church, so I think I’ll be going more then. I guess I could go to church more now, but I don’t.”

Cunningham, the Notre Dame professor, says Pippin’s story is just like that of many Catholics.

See CATHOLIC on page 56

Sarah Neumann, middle, dances with friends at an indoor picnic following Mass at the beginning of the semester. She usually attends similar events in the reception hall of the Newman Center.
**EATING ON CAMPUS**

Four brave Kent State students let *The Burr* track their food intake for a day. What a nutritionist had to say.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candace Wiggins</th>
<th>Nick Hernandez</th>
<th>Jill Coleman</th>
<th>Justin Culver</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class: Sophomore</td>
<td>Class: Senior</td>
<td>Class: Junior</td>
<td>Class: Junior</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### BREAKFAST
- **Justin skipped breakfast**
- Candace Wiggins:
  - 1 fruit juice drink
  - 1 plain bagel
  - 2 packets of cream cheese
- Nick Hernandez:
  - 1 Kellogg’s Nutra-Grain bar
  - 1 Lipton Ice Tea
- Jill Coleman:
  - 1 banana
  - 2 bowls of Raisin Bran
  - 1 pint of 2% milk

### LUNCH
- Candace Wiggins:
  - 1 fruit juice drink
  - 1 egg roll
  - 3 cheese sticks
  - 1 small serving of apple sauce
- Nick Hernandez:
  - 1 Zen green tea
  - 1 small Sprite
  - 1 egg roll
  - Lo mein noodles with vegetable stir fry
- Jill Coleman:
  - 1 turkey sandwich on wheat
  - 1 apple
  - 1 cup of water
- Justin Culver:
  - 1 slice of broccoli and cheese pizza
  - 1 slice of everything pizza
  - 1 medium soft drink

### DINNER
- Candace Wiggins:
  - Chicken strips and fries
  - Honey mustard sauce
  - 1 medium Sprite
- Nick Hernandez:
  - 2 slices of cheese pizza
- Jill Coleman:
  - 1 small salad with vinaigrette dressing
  - 1 serving of pasta shells
  - 1 box of Cracker Jack
- Justin Culver:
  - 1 Italian sausage
  - 4 oz. spaghetti pasta
  - Snap green beans, boiled with salt
  - 1 cup of 2% milk

### Nutritionist Comments
- **Karen Gordon**
  - **KENT STATE NUTRITION EXPERT**

- **Candace Wiggins**
  - “She’s really low on her calcium and protein. Kind of high on calories, but it might be fine if she is active.”

- **Nick Hernandez**
  - “A very high-fluid diet. You’re not getting the vitamins and minerals you need that would be in food.”

- **Jill Coleman**
  - “She has a little from each food group — a good variety.”

- **Justin Culver**
  - “Often if you skip breakfast, you eat larger meals later to make up for the missed calories.”
1. **EAT BREAKFAST**
   People who skip breakfast also have a harder time concentrating in class and often binge later in the day.

2. **INCREASE WATER INTAKE**
   Limit soda. After all, a 12-ounce can of most carbonated beverages contains 11 teaspoons of sugar.

3. **LEARN ABOUT PORTION CONTROL AND FOLLOW THROUGH**
   Most people do not need more than 5 or 6 ounces of meat for the entire day. That's equivalent to the size of two decks of cards. Think of your plate being divided into four quarters and give yourself a modest serving in each quarter of meat, starch, fruits, and vegetables.

4. **SELECT FOODS THAT HAVE COLORS OF THE RAINBOW**
   The more color in your food, the more nutrients you get.

5. **LEARN SMART SALAD BAR SELECTIONS**
   Studies show that people who choose the salad bar as their entree often eat more fat than those who eat an entree. Limit mayo-based salads, regular dressings, nuts, Chinese noodles, regular Jell-O, and puddings. Ask if low-fat cheese, dressings and other items also could be on the bar.

6. **DO NOT TOTALLY CUT FAT FROM YOUR DIET**
   Cutting down on fat is good, but some people take decreasing their fat intake to the extreme. Too little fat can actually be harmful to your heart health. Also, fat helps keep you in a state of satiety, or of feeling full, because it slows down digestion. Cut out the fat, and you'll constantly be hungry.

7. **LIMIT INTAKE OF HIDDEN FATS**
   Fried foods and pizza taste so good but are also very high in fat. Once or twice a week is OK, but consuming these foods almost every day may promote weight gain. (If you like meat on pizza, choose ham as an extra topping instead of sausage, pepperoni or ground meat. Load your pizza up with veggies, too — remember to add the colors of the rainbow into your diet.)

8. **TAKE YOUR TIME TO EAT**
   This may be difficult if you are used to eating on the run, but it may help make a difference in cutting down on the amount of food you eat. Your brain doesn't get the message that you have eaten food until 20 minutes after you ingest it, so if you gulp your food down in three minutes or less, your body thinks you still need food.
The condom industry could be likened to that lesson of supply and demand drilled into you during microeconomics sophomore year.

The variation in condoms that exists today is a result of the growing competitive market. Demand for condoms has increased since the AIDS epidemic emerged in the 1980s and educators began stressing the importance of safe sex.

Condom companies, as a result, have tried to entice and intrigue consumers to increase their business. By the mid-1990s, for example, the style of condoms shifted from simple latex. You can now find ones that taste like strawberries — a response to oral sex — and others that glow in the dark or ones that are larger sized for more headroom. Most recently, companies unleashed extended pleasure condoms for, well ... you get the idea.

Kathy Wilson, associate professor of economics at Kent State, says the nation’s major condom manufacturers rely on product differentiation to catch consumer dollars.

“These condom companies are in a chess match,” she says. “If one company comes up with colored condoms, the other companies must react and follow so they do not lose business. Then another company comes up with a new idea, and the process continues.”

A study in the September issue of Sexually Transmitted Diseases found that a small sample of sexually active heterosexual males did not know how to inspect a condom for visible damage or check for its expiration date. The survey, by health researchers at Emory University and Indiana University at Bloomington, looked at 158 men on the Indiana University at Bloomington campus from November 2000 to January 2001. The men reported putting on a condom at least once during that time but using it incorrectly.

**RESEARCHERS FOUND**

| 43 percent only put condoms on after sex began |
| **DO YOU KNOW HOW?** |
| 40 percent did not leave enough space at the tip |
| 30 percent put them on inside out first |
| 15 percent took them off before sex was over |

**CONDOM TIMELINE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3000 B.C.</th>
<th>1600</th>
<th>1844</th>
<th>1960</th>
<th>1990s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First condom illustration, found in Egypt, dates back to this time.</td>
<td>Reusable condoms are made of fish and animal intestines to prevent STDs</td>
<td>The first rubber condom is invented</td>
<td>Sexual revolution and “the pill” stifle condom sales</td>
<td>Consumers have a choice of a variety of condoms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1500</td>
<td>Latex condoms are mass produced for the first time</td>
<td>AIDS epidemic increases condom sales</td>
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THE BURR | 37
My girlfriend dumped me!

STOP POVERTY!

My life is over!

Slam poetry, a three-minute rant, is the kind of poetry Kent State students actually like.
Sarah McKenstry-Brown performs during the Classic Cleveland Poetry Slam at the Beachland Ballroom in spring.
I am not just reading poetry
I am poetry

Freshman Katie Wallace is nervous. She'll be the first to admit this. On this chilly October night — any minute now, to be exact — she will get up in front of a dozen or so students and read a poem about domestic violence, a poem she says she wrote about her mother's emotionally abusive ex-boyfriend. (Either that, she says, or "I've watched way too many Lifetime movies.")

She's been sitting in a booth at the Rathskeller in the basement of the Student Center, smoking her pack of Camel Reds for 20 minutes now, making changes on the pages of her lime green journal where she keeps all her poems.

This will be the second time this semester she performed in a slam poetry contest, where students read original three-minute poems and are judged on their deliveries. Wallace, whose knack for theatrics blossomed in high school drama club, says performing is her own version of therapy, a chance to free her mind. Still, she says, it can be intimidating and scary.

"No matter how many times I do this," she says, "it's still nerve-wracking to see how people will respond to your poem."

She pushes her McDonald's Chicken McNuggets and fries aside as a female student performs a slam about sex. "Sex with beer/Sex with pot/Why the hell not?"

The crowd laughs, of course. Wallace chuckles.

The announcer calls her name, and Wallace gets up from the table, her roommate and friends patting her on the back to wish her good luck.

Her blue hair shines under the stage light as she leans on her left leg and clutches the microphone. Her face is a combination of nerves and anguish.

"You swing at me and hit me twice!" her voice shrills, almost sounding as if she'll break down and cry. "I'm used to it ... You show your love by pushing me around."

Don't mess with these judges: On a scale of 0 to 10 (with a few decimals in there, too), they look for performance, creativity and crowd response.
Name: Saul Williams

Age: 30

Early Days:
Williams moved to New York City in 1994 to pursue a master's degree in acting at New York University. There, he delved into acting, writing and music. But his engaging slam poetry performances, which combined social commentary with crisp language and vigor, got him noticed.

Accomplishments:

Sundance Child:
Taking his passion for slam to the big screen, Williams co-wrote and starred in Slam, which won the Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival in 1998.

Jack of All Expression:
Williams still finds time to write for The New York Times, Details and Esquire and publish his own books of poetry. He also performs with hip-hop guru Erykah Badu and De La Soul.

Famous Line:
"Cancel the apocalypse! Cartons of the Milkway with pictures of a missing planet/In search of the American dream/This fool actually thinks he could drive his hummer on the moon/blasting DMX off the soundtrack of a South Park cartoon."

Kent State connection:
Williams came to Kent State in February to celebrate Black History Month, sponsored by Black United Students. "I find spoken word to be a natural evolution of where I'm going," he told The Daily Kent Stater.
She finishes and returns to the table, looking somewhat disappointed.

The five judges hold up their results on small white boards: 7.6, 7, 8.5, 8.4, 7.3.

"Ah," Wallace says ruefully, "I could've done better."

To be honest, Wallace says, it didn’t matter whether she won or lost that night. In fact, she didn’t even make it to the final round.

Like the dozen or so Kent State students who also performed, what mattered was that they had the opportunity to stand on stage and bare their souls.

"It is great release," Wallace says, "whether you are performing a piece or admiring from the sidelines. For me, it is a chance to vent about an ex-boyfriend or the problems with society."

This is the art of slam poetry, a spoken rant that originated in 1987 in Chicago as a way to build more interest in open-mic phone nights.

The enthusiasm and underground popularity has now hit Kent State. Attendance is up at the biweekly competitions, now in their second full year. And language experts couldn’t be happier. Slam, they say, appeals to students because it allows them to express themselves and use crisp language to gripe about their problems. And psychologists concur that slam is a healthy catharsis, a way to relieve emotional stress and share universal problems.

College students enjoy poetry but aren’t so keen on the stuffy, academic setting it’s usually performed in, says Robert Grotjohn, an associate professor of English at Mary Baldwin College in Virginia and expert on poetry and multicultural literature. Slam poetry, he adds, is different.
Junior Greg Spiegel, who has won two Kent State slam competitions, says delivery — whether that be stomping his feet or yelling — is key to his performances.

“It's fun,” he says. “It's also an excuse for drinking and making fun of people in public.”

Slam poetry is not someone just reading from a page, slam poets say. Performers use their voices and gestures to bring more expression to the poems.

“Slam breeds a different kind of poetry,” says slam poet Michael Salinger of Cleveland. “The poems are in the vein of a pop song. It has to be easily digested and understood in a short time.”

It also must be conducive to performances, Salinger says, because judges will only hear it once. Typically, judges are picked at random from the audience to award point values — 0 (the worst) to 10 (the best). Poets can’t use props or musical accompaniment, either.

“They do not have the luxury of mulling over the work, of catching nuances and line breaks the way one could with a work on the page,” Salinger says.

Alice Cone, assistant to the coordinator of Kent State’s Wick Poetry Program, began slamming in 1998 at the Red Star Café in Lakewood. Initially, she had her reservations.

“I was appalled at first with the whole judging and holding numbers,” she says. “Then I realized it was about fun and expression.”

Junior Greg Spiegel has been doing slam at Kent State for two years. He says he really got into it after watching the motion picture Slam and seeing its star, slam poet Saul Williams, who visited campus in April.

“When he came to Kent, that was a really big deal,” he says. “It was inspiring, just how he combined his words and expressions.”

For Spiegel, who has won two Kent State slam competitions, the key to slam is not just what he says, but how he says it. In performances, Spiegel combines gritty, intense facial expressions with colorful hand gestures, stomping feet, shouting words and emphasizing key phrases.

“It’s more pressure than an open poetry reading in a coffee house,” he says. “It’s very gratifying when you feel the energy of the crowd.”

Spiegel says his performances have changed since his first one. Every time he goes on stage, he says, he learns something.

“When I first went up there I was reciting a poem,” Spiegel says. “Now it’s like I’m
expressing my ideas. I’m not just reading poetry, I am poetry.”

The events of Sept. 11, he says, were particularly empowering to his poetry.

“It forced so many people to wake up, to question what’s going on, in terms of social commentary,” Spiegel says.

Social commentary is one facet to slam, but poets are free to address any issues personally meaningful to them.

And that’s the goal, says Tiffany Ball, who brought slam to Kent State last spring through Kent Student Center Programming. She says the growing turnout at slam contests is inspiring.
Freshman Katie Wallace performs *Bittersweet Revenge*, a slam poem addressing domestic violence. It was nerve-wracking but also a "great release," she says.

"Most people think of poetry readings as snobby," Ball says, "and that you have to be dressed in black and suicidal.

"This is a creative writing culture in Kent," she adds. "There is a slight demand. There has been a response, and we're trying to provide it."
ALL ABOUT MY BROTHER

Living with an autistic family member is a bittersweet mix of hope and frustration

STORY: Jaclyn Youhana
PHOTO: Serin Galletta
My brother Joey entered the pool without a fuss. It was surprising because he usually gets nervous in crowds. But this June afternoon seemed to be starting out differently. He was enjoying himself. When he splashed in the shallow end, I splashed back.

His favorite part of the pool was the water slide. We must have walked up those steps dozens of times. As he slid down, he grinned. He splashed in the water below and waited for me to follow him down.

Joey then figured out a new trick: He began going down the slide on his stomach. My aunt Kathy and I laughed when we saw him do it. The lifeguard looked at us with a fake smile and said, “He can’t do that. Can you tell him to stop?”

“Joey, you can’t do that anymore,” I told him. “Stay on your back, sweetie.”

He laughed. I had no idea if he understood what I had said. It’s like that with him most of the time.

We went down the slide a few minutes later, and he flopped over on his belly again.

“He’s really gotta stop doing that,” the lifeguard said.

“Well, I did tell him,” I said, “but Joey’s autistic — he doesn’t quite get it.”

“Yeah, well, he can’t do that,” she said, not getting it either.

I wanted to yell at her, tell her that I can scream at Joey until I pass out, but that he’ll just laugh because I’m being too loud. Then, he’ll just flop over and go down the slide on his belly again.

I wish I had said that. Instead, we just stopped going down the slide. I was afraid we’d get to the top, and the lifeguard would refuse to let him go down. And that would have been enough to evoke a tantrum, which I will do anything to avoid.

Joey was diagnosed with autism when he was 3. And, for me, it’s been a bittersweet mix of hope and frustration. We spent this summer together, and I took care of him with my grandparents while my parents were on vacation. For two weeks, I lived in Joey’s world: His finicky eating habits. His occasional tantrums. And his behavior that doctors are still only beginning to crack. I didn’t need to look up statistics and technical terms. For me, this was about getting to know my only brother.

Like any 13-year-old, Joey has his moments. But they’re different. He has never had a girl call the house, giggling nervously on the other line. He has never cared about a giant pimple on his nose on picture day. He has never even been busted for having a dirty magazine under his bed.
"I take any opportunity I can to steal some affection from Joey," Jaclyn kisses Joey before bedtime while they are brushing their teeth.

Kelley Johnson, one of Joey's school aides, helps him to answer questions on a worksheet that he fills out daily. The worksheet requires him to identify photos of what he ate for lunch and his other activities of the day.

But Joey has gotten in trouble for licking photo album pictures. He stuck them together, found an air vent near the ceiling and deposited them in the slot. He's gotten in trouble for flushing toothbrushes, hair ties and bobby pins down the toilet, too.

But this is all pretty normal to me.

Joey doesn't talk, something else I've gotten used to. But he can get his point across fine. He grabs my hand and drags me to what he wants. Sometimes I can just tell by the look on his face.

Perhaps this has hindered his relations with other children in our neighborhood. From our front window, Joey watches them play soccer in the cul-de-sac and Ghost in the Graveyard when it gets dark. If he could talk, maybe he'd play.

That's how it is for most autistic people, says Lisa Audet, assistant professor of speech-language pathology at Kent State. About 70 percent of them don't verbally communicate.

Apraxia, a motor planning problem, keeps many of them from moving their mouth muscles the right way, she says.

"Many with autism have difficulty developing the skills to verbally say, 'I love you, mama,' or 'Did you know that's my favorite truck?' or make those kinds of connections that solidify for us that they're communicating," Audet tells me.

This doesn't mean Joey and the others don't have feelings.

"I operate under the assumption that people with autism are first and foremost human beings who crave human contact," Audet says. "Just because they lack communication skills doesn't mean there's not desire."

Joey has that desire. He tries to talk. I tell him, "Joey, say Jaclyn." It comes out "Jay-AH-ah." It's frustrating but endearing.

I gained more than the "big sister" title this summer when I took care of Joey. I became his guardian. I fed him two Ball Park franks for lunch and two more for dinner, along with a variety of cheese crackers, trail mixes and Waffle Crisp cereal. And Diet Pepsi in between, whenever he wanted.

I bathed him. After he got in the water, I shampooed his hair from outside of the shower with my sleeves rolled up.

I dressed him, handing him his underwear, T-shirt and denim shorts.
I also brushed his teeth and cleaned his face with a wet washcloth before he went to bed and again when he got up in the morning.

“You gotta go pee-pee?” I asked him and then checked for any messes.

I tried to make sure he got out of the house at least once a day by making him take a walk with Papa. The mismatched pair of a 13- and 74-year-old had an unspoken connection: Joey doesn’t speak English, and Papa doesn’t speak it well. But Papa would smile at him, and Joey seemed to notice that acknowledgement. So they communicated in a weird sort of way.

I’d take him out occasionally, too, but as I soon learned, cramming in too much activity was a mistake. One afternoon, we had gone to Bob Evans for lunch — Joey refused to eat — and then we went to Blockbuster to rent a video a few hours later.

The aisles were small, and the store was crowded. Joey got too nervous and excited. And this has happened before. After we had been at Blockbuster for 10 minutes, his mood change was noticeable. His eyebrows...
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I visited Joey in September at Liberty Junior High School, where he is in seventh grade. His special education class includes a work program that teaches him everyday skills. I found Joey in the cafeteria with an oversized Pittsburgh Steelers ball cap that day. He lifted his chin and gave me a look that said, "What are you doing here?"

One of his aides, Barbara Watson, led him to a refrigerator stocked with cans of juice. Joey’s job was to stock the shelves.

“He’s very methodical,” Watson told me, “and he follows directions better when I point. He gets confused if I tell him what to do, so I just let him be.”

I stood there and watched for three seconds before Joey decided he didn’t want me there.

“Eh, eh, eh,” he said, turning his face away and reaching his arm toward me, flapping his fingers in a stiff goodbye.

Clearly, I was getting in the way of his routine, so

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furrowed together, his eyes flashed angrily and he wore a deep frown. He clenched my hand all of a sudden, straightened his arm and pulled me sharply through the store.

He had already gone out once that day. I should have known better.
Joey stands far enough for comfort, but close enough to watch Jaclyn and Liz hold a conversation in the kitchen. He often follows his mother around the house.

I hid in a nearby hallway. I inched my way back into the room where Joey was stocking the refrigerator.

"Eh, eh, eh." So I left again.

In dealing with autism, families tend to have one of two views, Audet tells me. "Some accept the child as a person, where finding a cure is not priority but making sure they have an enhanced quality of life is," she says. "And then there are those who want to find the cure. Is it medicine? Faith? Vitamins?"

My family has tried all those.

Joey spent the night in churches, even visited a woman's apartment where the walls were bleeding with holy oil to have it rubbed on his forehead. A psychic used to come over to our house as well.

"I hated it," my mom says to me. "I thought he was a fraud."

"But you try everything — you try all the tests. You try everything people tell you. You pray for a miracle. It's what you gotta do."

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Part of me thinks you never really learn what it means to be Catholic

CATHOLIC continued from page 33

College, he says, is a time of rebellion from parents and everything else these young adults have done for their entire lives — including going to church.

“They describe themselves as ‘raised Catholic, but not practicing,’” Cunningham says. “It’s a kind of way of cutting their ties to their parents.

“Studies show well-educated people often do this. A large portion of them will come back to their faith when they are forced to think about it in one way or another.”

And the church knows this, Cunningham says, and tries to welcome those who don’t show up every week.

“We would want them to go to Mass more frequently rather than less frequently, but we wouldn’t kick them out of the church,” he says. “It’s not like that — or at least it shouldn’t be.”

Neumann doesn’t want the “C-and-E” Catholics booted from the church, either.

But sitting in choir, her eyes squeezed tightly together as she belts out hymns, she can’t help but be frustrated.

She just wants everyone to forge a good relationship with God. Whether that’s in the Catholic Church, a Presbyterian one or a non-Christian faith is unimportant to her.

“I know how much peace and joy I’ve gotten by being involved in the church, and I wish they could find it,” she says.

“Maybe it’s because they’re not meant to find it in the Catholic Church. And that’s just the way life goes.”
ALOOKBACK
From a drag queen to a Cartwright, The Burr has changed its face—a lot—since its move from yearbook to general interest mag in spring 1986