Life after Iraq

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FROM THE EDITOR

When going through the selection process to become this semester’s editor of The Burr, my main goal was diversifying “my” issue. Our audience is the entire Kent State community—a community that’s diverse through and through.

I want you to be able to pick up this issue and find a story that speaks directly to you. For some politics, Katie Alberti’s cover story delves into a soldier’s experience in war-torn Iraq. Want something a little more lighthearted? Steve Schirra’s story answers the plaguing question: Just what can you do with an English degree? If minority issues are your thing, Ryan Loew’s story investigates Kent State’s friendliness toward the gay community.

Whatever your poison, this issue is for you. I know you’ll enjoy it.

Danielle Toth
GETTIN’ THRIFTY
No need to pay top-dollar prices for cool threads — find out how

WRESTLING WITH A DREAM
A former Kent State wrestler lives out his pro-wrestling fantasy

THE RAT PACK
Take a step into the Kent State underground

burr.kent.edu
THE HOUSE WITH A SECRET
A 19th century home in Kent was once part of the Underground Railroad.
By Allison Remcheck

WHAT IS KENT STATE'S GAY-POINT AVERAGE?
Many students feel the university community is gay-friendly; however, some faculty disagree.
By Ryan Loew

GEOCACHING: THE GLOBAL HIDE-AND-SEEK GAME
Treasure is hidden all around — if you know where to look for it.
By John Oberlin

PLURALISM FOR PEACE
Two professors and their students study Ohio's religions to understand them better.
By Sean Ammerman

CRISIS IN DARFUR
A journalism graduate student shares his experience volunteering with aid organization World Vision in war-torn Darfur.
Photo story by Dan Teng'o

LIFE AFTER IRAQ
Kent state student Mark Tiearney returns home after seven months as a soldier in Iraq.
By Katie Alberti

LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX
We all know the song, but what do students really know about getting it on?
By Brianne Carlon

IF YOU CAN COUNT TO 9, YOU CAN SOLVE SUDOKU
This simple puzzle craze is sweeping the nation — are you next?
By Brian Thornton

MAJOR: UNEMPLOYMENT
Some undergraduate degrees are more marketable than others.
By Steve Schirra
A centuries-old house on Fairchild Avenue has a secret.

Inside, a rickety, wooden staircase leads to a basement. Splintering beams hold up the low ceiling. The walls are white-washed stone. The air is stale.

In a small room adjacent to the stairs, the walls are the same white-washed stone, but there is a gap between the top of the wall and the ceiling.

The gap is about a foot-and-a-half high. It's a crawl space, littered with pebbles and crumbled mortar.

Hardly big enough for two people to squeeze through, this space was once a secret hiding place for slaves when the home was part of the Underground Railroad in the mid-1800s.

The Woodard house, at the intersection of Fairchild Avenue and Woodard Street, was one of several houses in Kent, then known as Franklin Mills, that provided a safe haven for fugitive slaves making their journey to freedom.

Kent attorney Elizabeth Sheard bought the Woodard house two years ago and has been working to restore it to the way it was when the Woodard family built it. She has been looking through old documents with a local architect and examining the house's structure to determine what it would have been like back then.

"It's the oldest Underground Railroad house (in the area) that is still a residence," Sheard says. "It's also an unusual architectural style. Although it's a Greek Revival, it's not really. It looks more like a Southern house."

While the only differences between the house now and a picture of it taken in the mid- to late-19th century are a few added dormer windows and a missing chimney, Sheard is working to undo other modernizations previous owners made to the house.
A Message from the President

Dear Students,

As we count down to the end of fall semester, I want to thank you for making my first months at Kent State as rewarding as I hoped they would be.

This is the first semester in 34 years that I have not taught a class. I miss that daily interaction with students. So I appreciate the time many of you have taken to send me e-mails, tell me about yourselves at campus events and share short-cuts as I learn to navigate our eight campuses. I have found what many of you told me to be true: our caring faculty and staff make the university feel smaller, warmer and more welcoming than its size and complexity might suggest.

I know that some of you do not feel that way. Maybe you are struggling academically. Or maybe you have not been able to forge the personal connections that lead to friendship, fun and finding your unique voice. If you are dissatisfied or drifting, I want you to know that there are hundreds of members of our community who want to change that. I am one.

A major focus of my administration is and will continue to be the success of all students. I have been working with many dedicated members of our faculty, staff and administration to find new ways to make student success "job one." I believe that the coming months will bring changes that do just that.

I invite you to share your thoughts about how Kent State can make your college experience better. Please write to me any time at lepton@kent.edu.

In the meantime, I encourage you to give your best efforts to completing final projects, papers and exams. For those of you who have succeeded in completing a degree, I look forward to congratulating you at Winter Commencement.

Finally, I wish you a happy and healthy holiday season.

Sincerely,

Lester A. Lefton
President
After emerging from the woods, runaway slaves used the storm cellar doors behind the Woodard house to enter the basement.

The secret compartments also will receive a bit of work because Sheard would like to share her home's history with area students.

Although no one knows exactly how old the Woodard house is, the Woodard family moved to Franklin Mills in 1818. According to "The History of Kent," written by Karl Grismer in 1932, Joshua Woodard built a wool factory and dye house on the east side of the Cuyahoga River near the Crain Avenue bridge with his partner Frederick Haymaker.

Woodard also owned a tavern at Fairchild Avenue and Mantua Street, while his house sat up the hill on Fairchild in what used to be deep woods. The family welcomed fleeing slaves into their tavern, and after dark, the family sneak ed the slaves through the trees and into the crawl spaces under their home.

When it was safe, the slaves, covered and hidden, would ride in a wagon to Cleveland. They would then travel across Lake Erie to freedom in Canada.

The abolitionist movement in Kent was strong because Kent has always been a liberal city, says Guy Pernetti, board member for the Portage County Historical Society.

"I believe that when people first came here, they came from Connecticut, and they had Connecticut or New England sensibilities," he says.

People who settled in northern Ohio came from New England and wanted slavery abolished, Pernetti says, but the people who settled in southern Ohio came from Virginia and were pro-slavery.

After the 1857 Dred Scott decision, which continued to enslave an African-American man who had lived in the North for an extended period of time and declared blacks could never become citizens of the United States, Pernetti says the abolitionist movement in Ohio grew.

"The people around here became very active," he says.

Anti-slavery meetings were held in private homes, and 38 people from Portage, Stark and Summit counties signed a secession petition in 1848 stating they did not want to live in a country that allowed slavery.

But even though these people were open abolitionists, Pernetti says it did not mean they were harboring slaves, and if they were, they were not open about doing it.

"You can't create dissension with your neighbors," Pernetti says. Not everyone in Kent was an abolitionist, and they didn't want to seem as if they were going against the law by keeping runaway slaves.

"The issue was so veiled in secrecy, that even when it was over, people still didn't talk about it with their neighbors," Pernetti says.

"It only takes one generation for it to disappear."

Mary Kathleen Lilley, a descendant of the Woodard family, says she didn't discover her ancestors were part of the Underground Railroad until about 10 years ago.

"I thought, 'how neat!'" she says. "They must have been really special people. There are people who do things, and there are people who don't do things, and I think the Woodards were probably doers."

Today, most of the Underground Railroad stations in Kent have been burned or destroyed, but the Woodard house and one of its more famous escape stories still remains. "The History of Kent" dates the tale back to 1825.

Lilley says one night a slave family with a
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Allison Remcheck is a senior magazine journalism major. This is her first story for The Burr.
"The issue was so veiled in secrecy that even when it was over, people still didn’t talk about it."

Runaway slaves hid underneath the floorboards of the Woodard home. Artifacts such as bottles and pots have been found in this one-and-a-half foot space below the ceiling of the cellar.
What is Kent State's Alex Dimmick, freshman bassoon performance major, and Sam Windler, freshman music education major, attend a PRIDE!Kent meeting in September.
Many gay students feel accepted at Kent State, but some faculty find it harder to come out.

In many ways, Carrie Wicks' experience at Kent State has so far resembled her older sister Angela's. Both chose the university for its liberal reputation. Both became involved in campus activism from their first years at the institution.

And both came out while in college.

For Wicks, junior sociology major from the tiny Sandusky County town of Woodville, the latter came with a reassuring amount of support from fellow students.

"My friends were like, 'bout time," she says. "I didn't feel uncomfortable talking to them."

That's a typical scenario at Kent State, though, she says. With such a big campus and large network of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students, coming out of the closet often means walking straight into the arms of a room full of friends.

It's a telling aspect of a university's character — students can largely come out without fear of being judged, she says, and they can find common ground with others.

But Wicks' story reveals a question commonly overlooked when assessing a university: Just how gay-friendly is this campus?

At Kent State, Wicks says, there's room for improvement.

At first glance there's the good, she says: The sheer size of PRIDE!Kent — about 150 members — is indicative of a voice for that student population.

But there's also the bad: Some students still have bigoted views, she says. The university does not offer domestic partner benefits to employees, and unlike students, she says, faculty members can have a tough time coming out.
For many gay faculty members at Kent State, the environment is anything but welcoming, says Dianne Kerr, associate professor and program coordinator for health education. And because of it, she says, some hide their orientations.

"I'd like to think we've come a long way on this campus, but I don't think we have," Kerr says.

Much of how a faculty member is treated depends on his or her department, she says. Some are respectful of gay colleagues. Others are not. She knows of colleagues who have come out of the closet only to receive negative responses from fellow faculty.

"That just makes you want to close up more and hide more," Kerr says.

Others conceal parts of their personal lives, she says. Some change the pronoun or name used to describe their partners — "he" becomes "she," and "Michelle" becomes "Michael."

But coming out can be the biggest issue.

"It's damn scary," says one Kent State faculty member, who wishes to be identified as Joe to protect his privacy. He has not come out to students and has told only some of his colleagues he is gay. He says he never knows how anyone will react.

"Most have been supportive," he says. "However, the people who haven't been supportive — it's painful."

"For every three people you share this with, there's one who says, 'Are you going to kiss me?' or 'Why did you tell me that?'"

It's that chance of a negative reaction that makes him nervous.

Joe says he frequently, and subconsciously, switches pronouns when talking about his partner. He calls it "queer code switching."

"I do that in class all the time," he says.

And there's also the wedding band on his finger.

"I'm not going to not wear my wedding band," he says. "I consider myself married. When people look at that wedding band and say, 'How nice,' I say, 'Oh, thank you very much.'"

Molly Merryman, assistant professor and chair of Kent State's LGBT Faculty Concerns Committee, says Joe is not alone.

"At Kent State I can say the majority of faculty that are LGBT faculty are closeted," she says. And it's done out of fear for how they'll be treated, Kerr says.

"There's a big difference between gay-tolerant and gay-friendly. If we were gay-friendly, we'd have domestic partner benefits and an LGBT resource center. We wouldn't have to protest. We wouldn't be seen as 'the angry homosexual'"
Kerr says she knew a young staff member who recently left the university because she felt the atmosphere wasn’t welcoming to LGBT staff members.

“You lose talented people,” she says. “Honestly, we can’t afford that in Ohio. We have such a brain drain already.”

While Merryman has no quantitative information, she estimates based on anecdotal evidence that two openly gay faculty members leave Kent State every year.

Merryman says she once tried to organize an LGBT committee for staff members similar to the Faculty Concerns Committee. It never got off the ground, she says, because only four people came to the initial meeting. But about 25 people called her later saying, “Glad you’re doing this, but I can’t come,” she says.

They were afraid their names would get out, she says.

Gay-friendly? Or just gay-tolerant?

It’s a little after 7 p.m. on a Thursday night as PRIDE!Kent board members file into their tiny office in the Lost Leaders Lounge of the Student Center. In about an hour, the rest of PRIDE!Kent will come together for its full weekly meeting.

There’s a lot to be planned. Within a month is Coming Out Week, and there’s also the upcoming Halloween Ball and Safe Zone training.

Fifty to 100 people typically attend PRIDE!Kent meetings, which makes it one of Kent State’s larger student organizations.

Tonight’s mass meeting is on the smaller side, about 50 in attendance, board members say. And as 8 p.m. approaches, Room 317 in the Student Center starts getting crowded.

Across the hall, group members get together in a smoking lounge to mingle with friends.

“There’s a big difference between gay-tolerant and gay-friendly,” PRIDE!Kent member Jae Lerer says as he sits at a round table in the lounge and talks in between puffs. “If we were gay-friendly, we’d have domestic partner benefits and an LGBT resource center. We wouldn’t have to protest. We wouldn’t be seen as ‘the angry homosexual.’”

And PRIDE!Kent has protested. In November 2005 the group sat in on a Board of Trustees meeting to demand domestic partner benefits for faculty and staff. As part of the protest, PRIDE!Kent members sat in the public section of the meeting room with Duct tape over their mouths.

And if Kent State were truly gay-friendly, Lerer adds, the university would be attracting more gay students and faculty, not losing them. Because of groups such as PRIDE!Kent, he says, it’s typically easier for gay students to be accepted than it is for faculty.

“Generally I haven’t seen any anti-gay stuff,” says Craig Snell, PRIDE!Kent board member and second-year business major. “I don’t hang out with anyone who’s not gay-friendly, so I really don’t experience any of that.”

Greg Jarvie, dean of students and student ombudsman, says about twice a year LGBT students come to his office to discuss some form of harassment.

It’s usually about something offensive written on a wall or an inappropriate phone call, he says. And it’s usually difficult to locate any “suspect” involved.

In regard to harassment, Jarvie says, Kent State isn’t any different from other universities.

“There’s always issues. I don’t care what campus you’re on,” he says.

And it’s the kind of thing “the university always needs to take its own temperature” on, he says.

But if Kent State were to be tested, what grade would it receive?

Measuring gay point averages

On a scale of 1 to 10, Wicks gives Kent State a 5.

“Maybe a 6,” Kerr says. “I don’t know, that may even be generous.”

Joe gives it a C.

Different ratings, but the same sentiment — Kent State is average, they say.

Residence Services does an exceptional job of training resident assistants, Kerr says, and the DeWeese Health Center does a good job of handling LGBT health issues.

Steve Michael, Kent State’s vice provost for diversity and academic initiatives, says an “absence of negative factors and presence of positive factors” means “categorically, yes, Kent State is gay-friendly.”

The number of harassment complaints from members of the gay community is comparatively low, he says, and people are generally accepting of LGBT students and faculty. According to the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, of the 32 complaints and consultations made, a small percentage of them were based on sexual orientation.

“There are campuses where if you express yourself as gay, they will come after you,” he says. “Fortunately, I don’t think Kent State has become that kind of campus.”

Then there’s the positive: There is visible leadership on campus from members of the gay community.

Several members of the university administration are openly gay, Michael says.

“And that’s about as high as you can go,” he says.

As far as faculty members who are afraid to come out or feel they are discriminated against, there’s no law regulating friendship, he says, but there is protection against discrimination in the workplace.

And if that happens, faculty members “have the law to back them up,” he says.

“If they take it to Affirmative Action, we will take it seriously,” Michael says. “If you don’t have confidence in the university, you can go to the Ohio Civil Rights Commission.

“That is why we have Affirmative Action and the Ohio Civil Rights Commission. If you don’t know your rights, anyone can abuse them without consequence.”

For students, having a gay-friendly campus is crucial because, as Merryman says, timing is everything.

“For many LGBT students, college is either
a time of coming out or a time of (being) fully accepted," she says. "It can be permanently damaging to not have that process be allowed. "There's a lot of identity issues that are still being processed. If something negative happens — if it's not handled properly — you're getting the message that society doesn't care about you."

Comparing GPAs
At the beginning of fall semester, a different kind of college guide was stacked on bookstore shelves. Not about financial aid or the top 100 research programs, it profiles the "100 best campuses" for gay students. "The Advocate College Guide for LGBT Students" is nearly 400 pages of information on what it considers the best programs, services and student organizations universities across the United States offer. It calculates all of this into what the book calls a "Gay Point Average."

Among the top 20 colleges featured in the book is Ohio State. Kent State is not included. Ryan Fournier, president of Ohio State's Undergraduate Student Government, says the guide is on target. Ohio State is a gay-friendly place, he says.

"It's almost a non-issue," the 21-year-old Sylvania native says, "which is reassuring to students like myself who identify as LGBT." Fournier looks at his own life as evidence of that. This past year he was elected student government president — the first openly gay student to do so at Ohio State, and the first at a Big Ten school since 1978. "The student body at Ohio State was able to look past that," he says.

The guide also includes whether a university has domestic partner benefits for its employees. The debate for partner benefits at Kent State has been around since the early 1990s. The main reason behind the push for benefits is to provide health insurance coverage for partners. The Undergraduate Student Senate, Graduate Student Senate and Faculty Senate have all passed resolutions supporting benefits, but the administration holds that Kent State cannot offer partner benefits because of Issue 1, a constitutional amendment that prevents the university from offering the benefits.

Issue 1, of the November 2004 election, is now Article 15, Section 11 of the Ohio Constitution. It specifies a marriage is only valid and recognized between a man and a woman, and it also states unmarried individuals cannot receive a legal status equal to marriage.

"Kent State is gay-friendly to the extent that Ohio is gay-friendly," Michael says. "The university's stance has always been that the domestic partner benefits will be adopted when it becomes legally permissible in Ohio to do so."

Miami University offers partner benefits, and last year, Ohio Rep. Tom Brinkman Jr., a Republican from Cincinnati, sued Miami for its domestic partner benefit program because he said it goes against the marriage amendment. Kent State President Lestor Lefton has said he believes it would be a waste of university resources to fight such a lawsuit here.

But Merryman maintains the university must provide such benefits. "There needs to be supportive policies and a structure that allows people to exist," she says. So is Kent State gay-friendly? Merryman says the answer is simple — "No."

It's a factor
It's about 9 a.m., and Wicks, a resident assistant in Kent State's Wright Hall, is on duty. The door is open.

Her room, a bit more spacious than those occupied by her residents, is decorated with photos of friends. As an RA, Wicks says she's seen the good and bad: successful diversity training and bigoted residents.

Kent State is gay-friendly, she says, but it could be more gay-friendly.

What makes a campus a gay-friendly campus is first and foremost a question of its atmosphere — "that overall vibe that students feel accepted," she says.

And when deciding on what university to attend, Wicks says that was the first question that came to her mind. 

Ryan Loew is a senior newspaper journalism major. This is his third story for The Burr.
Students from Kent State's gay organizations speak out

**Delta Lambda Phi**

Delta Lambda Phi is a national gay fraternity that aims to unite LGBT students and promote LGBT acceptance.

"For the most part, I believe that Kent State has a safe environment for gay students," says Cory Molner, president of Delta Lambda Phi and junior theater major. "Generally, gay students are accepted, except for the occasional snide comments from individuals."

"I haven't personally heard any direct negative comments toward myself, but I have overheard remarks from one individual to another."

Molner says he finds Kent State to be an easy place to come out.

"When I was a freshman living in one of the Freshmen Experience dorms, I was comfortable being the only gay student in the dorm and being out," he says. "Much more comfortable than I was in high school."

**PRIDE!Kent**

PRIDE!Kent, an organization of LGBT students and allies, hosts events such as HIV testing, Coming Out Week and proms aimed at the gay community.

Molner says he tries to attend PRIDE!Kent's annual Coming Out Week every year.

"Last year the week ended with a performance by (gay comedian) Margaret Cho," he says. "I thought it was a really well put on event."

PRIDE!Kent is not affiliated with any political party and is non-profit, says Christopher Taylor, last year's PRIDE!Kent president and senior nursing major.

"PRIDE!Kent focuses on issues and is a social cultural organization, not a political organization," he says. "PRIDE!Kent does, however, focus on political activity."

**Fusion magazine**

*Fusion* is a student-run magazine aimed at the LGBT community, says Jackie Mantey, *Fusion* editor and junior magazine journalism major.

"First, it offers a voice for LGBT students to speak and share stories," she says. "Second, it offers information for them and lets them learn about their community."

Mantey says she thinks the magazine helps address problems in the university community.

"We want to address sexual minority issues," she says. "We feel there's more to it than black and white — there are various sexual identities on campus. We raise awareness about sexual identity but not just an awareness. We try to create an open mind."

**LGBT Studies**

Kent State offers a LGBT Studies minor, one of the first universities in Ohio to do so, says Richard Berrong, LGBT professor and co-coordinator of the program.

"(The LGBT Studies minor) was created so that students with interests on the topic could get something other than just a bunch of courses on their transcripts," Berrong says.

Berrong says he tells LGBT students acceptance is something that comes from within.

"That's something the students have to initiate," he says.

—Ted Hamilton
Take a minute to stop and look around — there may be a hidden treasure near you

The game — or sport — is played on a global level, but the rules are simple: take something, leave something and log it. The game is geocaching (pronounced “geocashing”), a global treasure hunt anyone can play.

About 325,000 caches have been hidden in 218 countries from Canada to Afghanistan. Operating from the Web site geocaching.com, more than 22,000 people comb the Earth, looking in every natural and manmade crevice. The caches can be anywhere but are mostly located in public places such as parks, forests, cemeteries and libraries, and most people likely pass one or two every day.

The caches can be anything and in any type of container: a magnetic key holder, a film canister, Tupperware, a five-gallon bucket, or any prop, like a plastic owl, that might fit into the surroundings.

Geocaches contain all the random small stuff that idly sits in that one drawer at home. Some common items include erasers, business cards, lucky coins, CDs, Happy Meal toys, super balls and photos. (Hope for a wealthy, or generous, hider.)

Ted Wands, 65, has been geocaching since November 2004. He found out about the game through his amateur radio buddies.

“A lot of people are putting junk in these hides,” says Wands, whose geocaching username is Ted II. Children like to find the trinkets and things, but “the old-timers take nothing, leave nothing and sign the logbook,” he says.

Geocaching.com’s parent company, Groundspeak, also sells travel bugs — dog tags whose ID numbers can be tracked from the Web site. Trading is encouraged, sending objects on trips around the world.

To play the game, geocachers depend on their GPS device, although some play without one. Each cache has an online profile, providing its coordinates to the second. The location can be detected within about a 15-foot radius, depending on satellite positions.

But to most, the game is not about the money or the treasure; it’s about the challenge of the search.

Kathleen Walker, a Kent State assistant professor of human development and family studies, has been geocaching for about five years and says the idea of actually finding a treasure, whether it’s junk or not, is the fun part. She also says geocaching coincides with traveling and provides much needed breaks in the monotony of long drives.

Some caches will require an overnight campout miles into the forest. Some may be

Professor Kathleen Walker (right) and her friend Kai Kaneshiro follow their GPS units to a section of woods off state Route 59 in Kent, where a geocacher has hidden a cache.
the global hide-and-seek game
Geocaching made possible, thanks to Bill Clinton

Before May 1, 2000, these games would've been much harder to play — 10 times harder, actually, according to a statement from then president Bill Clinton. His 1996 Presidential Decision Directive pushed to turn off Selective Availability, or SA, which purposely degrades civilian GPS signals for security reasons. At midnight May 1, Clinton flipped the SA switch, and civilian GPS units became 10 times more accurate. Although Clinton's aim was to encourage investments in GPS technologies and help emergency units respond to calls faster, his decision made the world-wide geocaching game possible.

Two days later, Oregonian Dave Ulmer celebrated the end of SA by placing the first geocache — a five-gallon bucket containing mapping software, videos, books, food, money and a slingshot — and publishing its coordinates online. A combination of exploration, education, technology and community, his idea blossomed into multiple cache-listing and GPS-gaming Web sites and has taken cache hunters on beautiful hikes to new parks, memorials and fresh scenic views.

Because a mower mauled Ulmer's original cache container, a plaque now marks its place off an Oregon road, on the exact coordinates of the cache that started it all.

For geocaching enthusiasts, the natural environment plays an important role. Many caches provide a trash bag for those who discover or create trash while hunting.
an odd tree or a monument as the cache, where people neither take anything nor leave anything.

Mark Szeremet, Summit County Metro Parks planner, says the staff has found caches at the parks and removed them. Although he hasn’t seen any damages noticeably related to geocaching, he says the parks have conducted natural resource inventories showing the parks’ natural environments are already fragile.

“At the moment,” Szeremet says, “geocaching is prohibited, but the park would be willing to consider a cache if the hiders were to ask for permission.”

Geocaching.com’s “Cache In, Trash Out” program promotes a “leave it better than you found it” policy. Cache hunters are encouraged to take a trash bag with them to help clean up cache-friendly places. Some caches even provide a trash bag stuffed inside a film canister.

Walker says she has considered geocaching’s impact on natural areas. “In general, geocachers are trying not to destroy the environment,” she says. “And I also think that the whole “Cache In, Trash Out” is a real effort of geocachers to clean up parks that might otherwise not get cleaned up.”

There are other games that use GPS devices. GPS enthusiast Wesley Woo-Duk participated in the Degree Confluence Project (DCP), at www.confluence.org. DCP says it is trying to collect photos of every whole-number latitude-longitude confluence — aside from ones in the oceans and at the poles. Snapping photos of these human-made invisible geometric lines can be dangerous, even life-ending. After much consideration, Woo-Duk decided against attempting to capture 38°N 126°E — one of North Korea’s 18 confluences.

Another site, GPSgames.org, provides games that are safer than the DCP and more competitive than geocaching. Shut­terspot is a game in which a person takes a picture of an area and others must find that exact spot. MinuteWar is a worldwide capture-the-flag game. Each player’s local map is divided into squares, one longitude minute by one latitude minute, and is theoretically imposed on every other player’s local map. First to capture a designated square wins ... nothing but online GPS glory.

John Oberlin is senior magazine journalism major. This is his second story for The Burr.
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Kent State professors and students study Ohio’s lesser-known religions to encourage understanding among different cultures.

Next door to a small house in Coventry Township, a man spends the Sunday afternoon working on his car, while someone fishes in a nearby pond.

From the outside, the house appears to be ordinary. It’s easy to pass by without ever noticing its existence. But on closer inspection, one can see golden Buddhas sitting in the window, and it is clear that this is a place of worship.

Ashin Warinda, along with four other Buddhist monks, lives inside. His living room has been transformed into a shrine complete with dozens of Buddha statues and pots of flowers that signify reincarnation. Hiding within the objects is a small American flag.

Warinda, who came to the United States from Myanmar, a country in Southeast Asia formerly called Burma, says it represents the integration of his culture with America.

"I'm happy to stay here. I like it," he says in a quiet voice with a Mon accent. "When I first came here, they had never seen a Buddhist monk. When we would go to a pharmacy like Walgreens... they would say, 'Look at the funny man.' But now it is peaceful."

He calls his home the Mon Temple, which is a division of the larger Wat Lao Temple a few miles away.

About 40 families come to worship at the temple every week, he says. And it’s not uncommon for the temple to receive visitors who are slightly nervous yet eager to learn more about his religion.

Most of the time the guest is a Kent State student from the Comparative Religious Thought class, which is taught by David Odell-Scott or his wife, Lauren.

Warinda doesn’t mind; he enjoys telling anyone interested about reincarnation, nirvana or anything else associated with Buddhism.

Students also come representing the Ohio Pluralism Project, a research project headed by Odell-Scott that aims to educate Americans on religious diversity through research, outreach and the presentation of resources.

Land of immigrants

The United States may be a land of immigrants, but people from all walks of life have not always been welcome.

Once it relaxed its immigration laws in 1965, the country saw a rapid growth in many new cultures and religions.

Ohio is no different than the rest of the country in increased plurality, or diversity in religious beliefs. As part of the Ohio Pluralism Project, Odell-Scott and Surinder Bhardwaj, Kent State professor emeritus of geology, have undertaken the task of tracking and mapping those religious cultures that arrived after 1965.

Their findings unearth the development of numerous religions, many unknown by those who may be familiar only with the more mainstream religions.
Throughout Ohio, Odell-Scott and Bhardwaj have identified at least 56 Buddhist temples, 24 Hindu temples, 66 mosques, 13 Sikh temples and four Jainist communities.

"As these groups institutionalize, they buy property, and they buy temples," Odell-Scott says. "We're trying to track that emergence."

The increase in different ethnic cultures is in direct contrast to Ohio's shrinking population, Bhardwaj says. "Our own American population has been migrating out," Bhardwaj says. "The younger people and the generation that was trained here are trying to move. But to the outside world, Northeast Ohio is still a place where they can find pretty good jobs."

The two have focused the majority of their research in northern Ohio but are working to increase their work to the rest of the state.

"It is one thing to academically try to gather the data — it's quite another to get out and be a part of interfaith activity. The pluralism project is not simply counting heads. The pluralism is engaging with the other faiths."

From Harvard to Kent State

Odell-Scott began the Ohio Pluralism Project in 1998 as an affiliate of the National Pluralism Project at Harvard University. Shortly after receiving a grant from Harvard, Bhardwaj came aboard as a co-director with Odell-Scott, and the two have been close friends since.

Grove Harris, the managing director of the Pluralism Project at Harvard, says the Ohio project presents the only research of its kind in the state. The national project depends on local affiliates such as Odell-Scott and Bhardwaj to do the research.

"This is the only partnership between a professor of religion and a professor of geology, so that makes it unique," Harris says. "And their long-standing friendship is what has made the partnership so fruitful."

When meeting with the two men, their differences could not be more apparent. Odell-Scott, a Christian minister from Alabama, works in an office littered with boxes, books and pictures. His mind is rarely doing one thing at a time.

"I was used to dialogue across cultural conditions, across religious conditions, across racial traditions," Odell-Scott says. "It was also in the middle of the civil rights movement. So, all of those influences were a big deal, and I decided I was going to be a minister in my denomination."

Bhardwaj, on the other hand, is a Hindu priest and Indian immigrant. His office is stuffed with many of the same books as Odell-Scott's, but his are neatly organized on a bookshelf. Bhardwaj was a cultural geography professor for 35 years before he retired in..."
2004 and became an emeritus professor.

His interest in religion came from a desire to look back on his own life.

"As you grow somewhat older in life, you want to reflect a little bit more," he says. "When you reflect, usually your own tradition comes into play a great deal more than when you're constantly concerned with making progress in your profession."

The two share a bond and fascination for all things spiritual. And with the Ohio Pluralism Project, the two say they wish to spread a greater knowledge and acceptance between religious groups.

"Mapping" is just a metaphor

When a religious community is established, Odell-Scott and Bhardwaj get to work. The two insert themselves into that religion's culture and try to develop a relationship with its leaders. A research template that requests information on statistics, development and history is sent to each new religious site.

This involvement has made the co-directors well known in many religious circles.

"They voluntarily are interested to participate because they want to share the story of their lives," Odell-Scott says. "Sometimes they contact us to tell us if something has changed."

They are aware of some places of worship through general knowledge, and they discover others from simply driving around town. If a place of worship grows or divides, the leaders make sure Odell-Scott and Bhardwaj are the first to know.

Because of the recent political climate, Bhardwaj says mapping religions is taking a back seat to helping different faiths understand each other. In addition to researching the religious communities, he and Odell-Scott work to promote interactions between faiths by speaking at conferences, working with local religious groups and exposing students to different religious communities.

"It is one thing to academically try to gather the data," he says. "It's quite another to get out and be a part of interfaith activity. The Pluralism Project is not simply counting heads. The pluralism is engaging with the other faiths."

Revealing different cultures to students

In the eight years of its existence, several Kent State graduate and undergraduate students have helped contribute to the Ohio Pluralism Project.

Bob Christy, former student of Odell-Scott's and university photographer, became the project's official photographer in 2001.

One of his first assignments was to photograph local mosques.

"I was sort of apprehensive, as it was not long after 9-11," Christy says. "There were these men there who were watching me wander around. They were laughing because I was so apprehensive."

Christy says his uneasiness turned out to be unwarranted because many Muslims were eager to debunk the stereotypes that came after the terrorist attacks.

The events coinciding with the War on Terror have made the goals of the project even more relevant today.

Mohamed Ismail, executive director for the Islamic Society of Akron and Kent, has worked with Odell-Scott and Bhardwaj to increase understanding through groups such as the Akron Area Interfaith Council. He also encourages professors to send students to visit.

"We invite people to come and see for themselves," Ismail says. "That way they get their information straight from the horse's mouth, rather than from the newspaper, TV or radio."

Sophomore English major Erin Maxwell visited the Kent Mosque to fulfill her class requirements for Comparative Religious Thought. She admitted before she went her perception of Islam was affected by negative media coverage. But after her visit she says she was comforted to find more similarities than differences with her own beliefs.
Ismail says coverage of Islamic societies is mostly distorted in the American media, focusing on marginalized cases having more to do with cultural rather than religious beliefs.

Nadir Taha, the imam at the center, agrees, saying the biggest misconceptions about the religion are its connection to fundamentalists and its treatment of women.

"If you want to know about Islam, you have to look at what the Quran says about these things," Taha says. "In it the Muslims were always peacemaking. And never did Mohammed insult or beat his woman."

Odell-Scott says he begins teaching his Comparative Religious Thought class by telling students the study of religion is dangerous. This thought leads others to believe their own faith will be tested, he says, and "forces people to think for themselves."

He says he doesn't want to blend cultures into a melting pot, but one of the best ways to understand something is to see it directly. This is why he requires all of his students to visit a religious community they are unfamiliar with.

"It doesn't mean they understand that religious community, but it gives them an opportunity to have a dialogue and experience," he says. "They begin to realize that these people are not from another planet. They begin to appreciate them and begin to understand their religious tradition."

Amanda Hunt, senior art history major, says she decided to take the class because of her lack of exposure to non-Western religions. In the days leading up to her trip to the Wat Lao Temple, her first to a Buddhist temple, she says she was excited.

However, she says this excitement was replaced by trepidation as she approached the front entrance.

"Mostly I was worried about defacing Kent State or offending somebody," Hunt says.

Before she managed to open the door she was greeted by a man saying, "You're welcome." That was enough to settle her down.

"I thought that was so cool," she says. "We could have been anyone. Once I got over my initial nerves of being in a new place, it turned out to be very relaxing."

Bhardwaj also promotes these new cultural experiences in the geography department, taking incoming graduate students on a daylong tour of local religious communities once a semester.

"I think it is time for us to put our theological differences aside and recognize what are our common human problems. In other words ... distress, hunger, poverty, depression," he says. "We are certainly a little bit of an agent to create that understanding, and if we can do even a little understanding between different faiths, I think we would have contributed something."

Sean Ammerman is a senior magazine journalism major. This is his first story for The Burr.

Above: Two women talk before services start while a young girl crawls around. Women pray in a balcony in the prayer room while the men stay below. Left: Copies of the Quran are placed around the prayer room and on shelves for attendees to use.
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CRISIS IN DARFUR
Journalism graduate student Dan Teng’o worked in Darfur this summer as a member of World Vision, a non-profit organization that helps children in poverty-stricken countries. The following photo story illustrates the conditions in which the residents of Darfur, a war-torn region in western Sudan, live in daily.

**Sharing essentials**
Women share food rations at Kalma, the largest camp for displaced persons in south Darfur. The newly displaced receive monthly food rations, which consist of grain, sugar, vegetable oil and salt, from various aid organizations. The agencies are the main source of food for the displaced people.

**Family ties**
Kaltuma Khatir holds her 2-week-old granddaughter, Fatuma, in Otash, another camp in Darfur. As the conflict continues, more people are displaced, swelling the size of the camps. Most of the newly displaced often spend days or weeks without shelter.
Braving the elements: Displaced families create shelter under a tree at El Salaam camp in south Darfur. In Darfur's desolate, treeless landscape, most displaced people consider it a blessing to find a tree under which they can create shelter.

photo story | Dan Teng'o

More than 200,000 people have been killed and 3 million displaced from or within the Darfur region in western Sudan during the past three years. The crisis is caused by a conflict pitting rebels from African tribes against Arab militias allied to the government of Sudan.

The United States has called it genocide, and the United Nations has said it is the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

Efforts to restore peace in war-torn Darfur have so far been unsuccessful. The killings and displacements continue, sending inhabitants into refugee camps across Sudan and neighboring Chad. Humanitarian organizations are attempting to offer various forms of relief assistance in the hundreds of camps that dot the region.
Daily chores: Two girls carry water for their families to use at the Otash camp. The demand for water in the camps often outweighs the supply.
Moving forward
Above: A newly displaced woman moves into the Mershing camp. The camps offer residents little safety from armed militia attacks.

Staying positive
Right: Amidst the gloom that surrounds their lives, children seek some fun in a soccer match at a children’s center in the Otash camp. Play is a major healing tool that helps the children live through the effects of the conflict.
Creating a home
Displaced families live in cramped, temporary structures they pitch across semi-arid Darfur, which is about the size of Texas. The structures are mainly constructed using sticks and burlap sacks.
Waiting for aid
Displaced and war-affected families wait in line for medical assistance at the World Vision clinic at the Mershing camp. The conflict has created an increase in sickness and injuries, especially among children.

Sticking together
A group of young boys huddles together at the Mershing camp. Aid agencies have set up children's centers across Darfur to offer children places to play and forget the ravages of the conflict.
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Most often Mark Tiearney doesn’t sleep.

When he does, dreams turn into nightmares where bombs explode and threaten his life.

Nothing can make him forget about his experiences in war-torn Iraq.

His father says he has seen changes in his son since he returned from Iraq.

“Lots of people go through this,” his father says. “Fighting in a war does affect soldiers. He was around death day after day.”
"I could hear them getting closer and louder. It was like a smack and then dirt and smoke. It wasn't close, but it was close enough"
“There was a lot of Iraqi-on-Iraqi crime in the area,” he explains. There had been rumors that Al-Qaeda leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was in the area for some time, he says. Nervousness was unavoidable. “We were really here now,” he recalls. “Stuff could happen.”

**Daily routine**

After a night’s rest in a tent housing 12 to 14 Marines, a fickle air conditioner and unreliable electricity, Tiearney worked guard duty from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m.

While patrolling the base, he was advised to drink seven to eight liters of water before noon. “During the hot season (July to October), it was hot enough that while you were sitting in the shade — just sitting with your arms hanging down — you could feel all of the sweat drip off,” he says.

The Marines were all aware of the possibility of heat exhaustion. Besides their long-sleeved shirts and pants, each person had to wear a 20-pound ceramic vest. “They’re effective,” he says. “The vest can stop a bullet up to an AK-47 round or shrapnel.”

After his eight-hour shift, Tiearney began his administration job. Until 11 p.m., he and another Marine made sure everyone was paid and accounted for daily. He kept the Marine record book and regularly updated life insurances. “In case something happened, the correct people would be notified in a timely manner,” he says.

When he wasn’t sorting mail until midnight or 1 a.m., he found leisure through small, daily routines. “I’d call home and shower if there was water, which there usually wasn’t, watch a DVD or go to bed,” he says. “That’s about it for free time — there wasn’t too much of it.”

His father, Mark Tiearney Sr., remembers the only contact he really had with his son was through e-mail. The two wrote back and forth daily. Tiearney Sr. says his questions to his son were always the same: How are you doing? Is everything OK? Have you had any close encounters with the enemy?

Phone calls were a rarity. Satellite phones were only available for Marines to use “once in a great while,” Tiearney Sr. recalls.

**Facing Attack**

Things changed when his son’s base was attacked.

“There was always a sense that something could happen,” Tiearney says. “We didn’t have a big base — anyone could attack it.”

On the morning of Aug. 1, 2004, Tiearney didn’t have guard duty and was spending his free time sleeping when he heard the blast. “I was scared shitless,” he says. “I jumped down (underneath the bed) like a little girl.”

The base had been hit by 15 mortars. Tiearney describes mortars as small bombs that are shot out of tubes toward targets. In addition, he could not describe the loud sounds the blasts created. “I could hear them getting closer and louder. It was like a smack,” he says as he slaps his hands together, “and then dirt and smoke. It wasn’t close, but it was close enough.”

The attack started at the base’s supply lot. The next mortar hit near the Marines’ tents and then another hit to the supply lot.

A 15-second walk from his bed, a neighboring tent was hit. Tiearney could hear the wounded soldiers screaming inside. After he hid beneath his bed for 15 to 20 minutes, the attacks ceased. Finally, the soldiers who had been hit could be treated.

During attacks, nothing could be done to help the wounded. Tiearney says they had to wait for the attacks to stop before assisting those who needed medical attention.

Having experienced countless attacks, Tiearney says they always left him feeling the same.
Above: Tiearney and other soldiers finish a military-style Thanksgiving dinner.
Right: Tiearney smokes a cigarette. "At $5 a carton, you have to," he says.

"I drove straight to North Carolina and saw him for an hour. It was spur of the moment — I didn’t even have a change of clothes. I just wanted to see him, hug him, touch him and make sure he was OK."

"I was personally angry and pissed off," he says. "It was a huge adrenaline rush. I was pumped up and ready to go.
"Just getting attacked and hearing bullets fly overhead — that’s pretty damn scary."
With his heart pumping and anger level rising, Tiearney says nothing usually happened after the base was attacked. The Iraqis tended to leave immediately afterward.

Necessities
Keeping himself together emotionally was never an issue. Tiearney was around his fellow Marines every day. This, he says, helped him deal with being away from home.

"Everyone was in the same shit together," he explains. "People had their own problems at home. I had two friends whose wives had babies when they were gone. We supported each other and joked around."

His friends gave him support, but Tiearney says he missed being home, seeing friends and family and "the everyday luxuries of life."
More than anything, he says he missed football. He loves the sport and was upset he missed the entire college football season.
He was homesick "every damn day," he says. Although he was able to e-mail his friends and family often, he tried not to write letters home.
After finding out his father had prostate cancer, Tiearney began calling home more frequently.
Because his administration job gave him regular access to computers, he was able to e-mail his family daily.
Covington says she never discussed anything too serious with her son. The two talked about "general, lighthearted things," such as how they were doing and what was going on in the United States.
One of the things that kept him happy was the packages he received from his loved ones. His parents sent him boxes of cigarettes, chewing tobacco, magazines and snack items such as jerky and peanuts.
Out of all the goods he received, baby wipes were an item the Marines requested.
Tiearney smiles as he recalls the popularity of the wipes. The Marines' source of water was a canal near their base. The Iraqis who lived nearby drank the water and used it as a sewer.
In addition, the pumps from the base to the camp frequently broke, leaving them waterless.
Because it was a rarity, they requested the wipes so they could stay clean.
Before the base's mess hall was completed, dinner options were rare. Tiearney could choose between two meals throughout the day: Box A or Box B. Every meal was identical.
Each contained meat; crackers or wheat bread; cheese, peanut butter or jelly; mixed fruit or apple sauce; gum and a spoon.
When the mess hall was finished, more food was added to the menu. The hall regularly served hot dogs, hamburgers, ice cream and lemonade, though Tiearney complained poultry was always a main dish.
"I swear every night was chicken," he says. "There was fried chicken, teriyaki chicken and baked chicken."

Departure
In early January 2005, Tiearney was told he would be going home within a week. His unit was soon to be replaced by the 155th Mississippi National Guard Unit.
On Feb. 6, 2005, he arrived at his base in Cherry Point, N.C. and traveled by bus to Marine Corp Base Camp Lejeune, N.C.
After unloading his gear and turning in his weapons, Tiearney met his old roommate, Charles Miranda.
With a smile, he recalls drinking a 12-pack of Corona while watching the Eagles lose to the Patriots in Super Bowl XXXIX.
The next day, Shore drove down to his base to visit him. A mother of five children, she couldn’t stay with her brother for the day because she had her family to tend to.
"I drove straight to North Carolina and saw him for an hour," she says. "It was spur of the moment — I didn’t even have a change of clothes. I just wanted to see him, hug him, touch him and make sure he was OK."
In March, he was able to return to his home in Streetsboro to reunite with friends and family.
"It was such a relief to see him," Covington says. "I was so glad he came home in one piece."
His father's reaction was identical.  
"I was in the hospital when he came back," he says. "He called me and said he was back. It was a sudden rush of relief and joy. It was great to know he was back in the States."

Although he was happy to see all of his loved ones, Tiearney says he never really wanted to share his experiences in Iraq with anyone.  
"I just wanted to get back, be by myself for a while and think about everything," he explains.

Reflection

Eighteen months later, Tiearney says he is happy he joined the Marines and "made a small contribution to the country."

He says he believes because the United States got itself into the war, it needs to be there to finish what it started.

He says he expects Iraq to one day be able to govern itself, but the new Iraqi government needs to learn to run itself the way it sees fit. With continuous fighting between the Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds, he says it will take a while for things to fall into place.

Looking back on his seven-month experience is somewhat difficult for him. Now that he has been home for more than a year, he says it's hard not to think about going back into service.

"I think about it every day," he says. "I try not to, but sometimes I feel like I didn't finish my job. I feel a need to be over there with my brothers and sisters — we're like a big family. I lived, worked and saw these people every day."

Tiearney says he witnessed a lot of horrific events that make it hard to return to his normal life back in the United States.

He was at a loss of words to describe how it felt to lose his friends in the war. While shaking his head "no," he briefly recounts the events that have really made an impact on the person he is today.

"I saw vehicles blow up," he says. "I don't know how to describe it."  
Although he says he never saw someone killed, the memory of the deaths of his fellow soldiers is enough to keep him silent.

Tiearney says he doesn't know if he'll ever return to the normal life he lived before fighting in Iraq. With mixed emotions about the war, desires to go back and his second start at Kent State, he's uncertain about what his next steps will be, but says he hopes to regain some of life's normalcy he once took for granted.

"I was used to military life," he says. "I just got out, and I'm still not used to my life now. I think it's going to take a while to adjust to real life."

Katie Alberti is a senior magazine journalism major. This is her second story for The Burr.
Let’s talk about SEX

We all know the song, but what do students really know about getting it on?

Would you know what to do if your condom broke? You should because almost half of pregnancies are unplanned.

Do you know the symptoms of chlamydia? (Here’s a hint: In most cases, there are none!) But it is the most frequently reported bacterial sexually transmitted disease in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

How about the effectiveness of birth control? There is no method that is proven to be 100 percent effective.

Many students do not know the answers to these questions — but want them.

Trisha Fader, senior sports administration major, says she thinks incoming freshmen should have sex education during college orientation, which is their first week on campus.

“I don’t think (sexual) safety is practiced enough,” says Fader. “If they don’t have it, then after the first week of school, they’re screwed — literally!”

On the other hand, not all new students want sex education.

“I wouldn’t go,” says Karli Balmenti, freshman art education major. “If it was required then I would go, but I wouldn’t like it. I think I got enough in high school.”

Uterus and Fallopian tubes and ovaries, oh my!

Sarah Hallsky, graduate assistant in the Office of Health Promotion at the DeWeese Health Center, says there is not enough sex education on campus.

Hallsky has created and facilitated programs on campus concerning sexual health, skin health, body issues and suicide, and she is also involved in the World AIDS Day and LifeShare Blood Drives. During the sexual health programs, which she is asked to present in Human Sexuality courses, personal health courses and residence hall programs, she stresses the need to use condoms.

“I don’t care if it is your 180th partner, I want you to wear a condom and go for regular testing,” she says. “I am not here to judge. I just don’t want you to end up with AIDS or herpes.”
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Hallsky says she tries to focus on specifics. "I am telling students to use condoms, but I am not going out there thinking that they don't already know that they should," she says. She says students do not understand that there are different sizes of condoms, or just because condoms say they are lubricated doesn't mean extra lubricant is not needed.

Hallsky says she would like to see condom vending machines next to pop machines in the Hub; however, this seems a long way off, considering condoms and birth control are not discussed with incoming freshmen.

In fact, according to a 2005 Plain Dealer column by Connie Schultz, Pulitzer Prize-winning Kent State alumna, Kent State removed a brochure providing birth control information from the freshmen orientation packets in 1979. "Apparently someone in Kent State University's administrative maze thought that teenagers with quivering hormones and no parental supervision for the first time in their lives could be deterred from pursuing their natural urges as long as they knew how to join an intramural football team and where to find the best hoagie," she wrote.

Michael Lillie, assistant director in the Center for Student Involvement, says he is not aware of any current birth control pamphlets or if they had been distributed in the past. "It is not what we focus on during this time," he says, referring to the Week of Welcome freshmen are required to attend before their first semester. It is more about getting students acclimated to the campus, he says.

Lillie says sex education may be covered in the weekly orientation class freshmen attend during their first semester.

As a requirement of the university orientation course, freshmen must attend one health issue presentation — a presentation or lecture about health-related topics including nutrition, body image and pet therapy.

Only six of 33 presentations are sex-related. The National Organization of Men's Outreach for Rape Education presentation discusses rape, and "Relationships: The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly" discusses the positives and negatives of relationships.

The Women's Resource Center offers two presentations, and the topic of women's health is covered twice.

It is not mandatory that students attend one of these six presentations. Instead, they can attend presentations such as "Marijuana: Friend or foe?" or can avoid attending a presentation by giving blood at the American Red Cross Blood Drive.

Human Sexuality instructor Dawn Kearns says there is enough sex education on campus, but students are not taking advantage of it. "I think there is a difference between putting sex education out there expecting students to find it and saying we think this is important enough that it is required," she says.

As of now, only certain majors, such as education and community health, are required to take Human Sexuality.

Laurie Wagner, a part-time instructor who also teaches a section of the Human Sexuality course, says all students, especially underclassmen, need accurate information about sex education.

"The first semester or quarter, students are at the highest risk for rape, unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections because they are unaware of the consequences of their actions," she says. "I am just alarmed about 40 percent of Kent State students used condoms during sex in 2004.

Seventeen percent of Kent State students used withdrawal as a means of birth control during sex in 2004.

Six percent of Kent State students used no means of birth control during sex in 2004.

About 51 percent of Kent State students had vaginal sex one or more times within one month in 2004.

About 9.6 percent of Kent State students used Plan B emergency contraception in 2004.

Source: the National College Health Assessment: Kent State University Executive Summary 2003
at where students say they get their information," she says. Most students' sexual education is from personal experiences, friends, the Internet and television, she says, all of which can contain false and dangerous information.

Kearns says students do not know their own bodies.

"You would think every woman knows they have a uterus, Fallopian tubes and ovaries," she says. "But they don't! Men definitely don't know their internal anatomy — and that's their own bodies!" she says, referring to a male student who labeled the urethra as the "pee hole."

Beyond porn and Jell-O shots

Human Sexuality used to be a lower-division course, but now it is an upper-division course, which means it is only offered to juniors and seniors, Wagner says.

"It is slightly unfortunate, but the maturity level is not quite there with freshmen," she says. Even the upperclassmen who take the class have a skewed view of its content.

"Students think Human Sexuality (the course) is about porn and Jell-O shots, but they will have to do some work," she says. Wagner says one of her biggest class objectives is helping students realize sexuality is broad and complex. "It's not just about the best positions. We cover upsetting issues as well, such as porn, rape and abortion."

Students in Kearns' class are required to write four reaction papers on speakers or videos shown in class. She says every year she has many students write, "I was shocked to learn ..." and "I didn't know ..." With these types of reactions, it is obvious students who do not take the class are missing out on important information, she says.

Another objective of the class is to help students become more tolerant of people who are different from them in sexual orientation and gender identity, she says.

Wagner has similar objectives. "I want to provide students with the most accurate variety of information and arm them with a body of skills, including critical thinking and healthy communication skills," she says. "This class is students' first opportunity to think and talk about sex issues without judgment."

Junior psychology major Alex Bea says she took Human Sexuality in fall 2005 because she thought it would be interesting. She says she recommends the class to everyone.

"We had condom races," she says. "We were all given models of penises. Then we had to see who could open the condoms up and get them on the penises the fastest. It was a fun day." She also says it is a great class because there is a lot of information, and anyone who takes it would definitely be prepared for sexual relationships later in life.
Get the ‘hook-up’

Extensive sexual health information is also available at the Women’s Resource Center, which has a library with more than 1,200 books and about 100 pamphlets pertaining to women’s studies and sexual health. Students can check out books or take home pamphlets about sexual assault, STDs and relationships. The center distributes condoms and moisture dams as well.

The center also hands out the “Healthy Hook-up Kit,” which contains a condom, breath mint, pick up lines, date rape warning signs and tips for a healthy hook-up, says Hilda Pettit, Women’s Resource Center coordinator.

“The kits are humorous, yet useful,” she says. “There is also a card with all the local numbers to get help. This way, no matter where you are, you will have the numbers to call.”

The choices students make now can affect them for the rest of their lives, Pettit says. This is why students, especially freshmen, need sex education.

“Freshmen now have a huge amount of independence, and they try it all out within the first two weeks,” she says. “There is no one to say, ‘Don’t forget your condoms,’ or ‘Don’t forget to come home tonight!’”

Playing around with sex

Safe sex has become Hallsky’s mission. During her programs, she grabs the attention of the students by asking, “How long do you think it takes to put on a condom?” When students respond “about 10 seconds,” she replies with, “OK, then let me see you do all eight steps in 10 seconds.” That usually does the trick, she says. Then, to keep their attention, she has the students fill condoms with a gallon of water to show how strong the condoms are. Because the condoms are so stretched out, it is the perfect time to try lubricants on the thin material, she says. Some lubricants will cause the condom to break, and some won’t. It is a fun experiment, and students can take something from it, she says.

“I have noticed students act like it is their first time seeing (condoms),” she says, referring to her demonstration. She stresses sexually active students need to become familiar with them. “If it takes opening a bunch of condoms and playing with them, then do it.”

Yet it is important to be careful even when using a condom, Hallsky says.

“(Condoms) protect you really well, but it is not like wearing a latex suit,” she says. “If someone has herpes, you can still get it.”

According to a fact sheet for public health personnel on the CDC Web site, latex condoms, when properly used, can reduce the risk of STD transmission. However, no protective method is 100 percent effective.

To force students to think about some of these risky situations, Hallsky created a game called “Sexes Hold’em.” The game is played with a deck of cards, and each card has a “What would you do?” scenario on it. Students then think critically about the answer and what the best-case scenario for each situation would be.

During the program, Hallsky also asks questions such as, “Do you have health insurance?” “Do you go for a Pap test every year?” and “Did you ever think that you may need to set aside money to buy condoms?” Hallsky promotes condom use outside of her programs as well. She helped Eta Sigma Gamma, the national professional honorary for men and women in health education, with one of its fundraisers. Participants could win a jar of condoms, lubricant and candy. For $1, they got one guess at how many condoms were in the jar. The closest guess won. The table was set up for seven hours at the Black Squirrel Festival, but the honorary received only six guesses.

Even if you can’t win them, condoms are available at the online pharmacy. “They are three for $1, and they are good ones,” Hallsky said. “Lifestyles.”

Brianne Carlon is a senior magazine journalism major. This is her third story for The Burr.

“Freshmen now have a huge amount of independence, and they try it all out within the first two weeks. There is no one to say, ‘Don’t forget your condoms,’ or ‘Don’t forget to come home tonight!’”
If you can count to 9, you can solve SUDOKU
Simplicity — and one man’s passion — creates a worldwide puzzle craze

Past the margins filled with complex geometric doodles, past the chunk of pages slipping from the cracked spine, past the hundreds of grids filled with blue and black digits, she flips to a clean sheet. She holds her red-ink ballpoint pen in her left hand, the point hovering just an inch from the page as she scans back and forth across rows and up and down columns. Then, with an intent gaze and confident motion, she stops at an empty box, drops the tip to the page and marks her first number.

With that crimson number six, Kerri Rainbolt, junior art history major, launches into another Sudoku puzzle, just one of hundreds she has tackled since becoming hooked more than a year ago.

In just two years, Sudoku has risen from a popular Japanese brainteaser to an international sensation. Each puzzle, about the size of a standard crossword, consists of a nine-by-nine grid of boxes.

The solution follows three simple rules: Each row, each column and each of the nine three-by-three sub-grids must each contain the digits one through nine. To find the only correct solution, players rely on a handful of clues, which are provided as numbers pre-printed in their proper squares.

For Rainbolt, the addiction began on a long car trip to Chicago with her father. She says she heard about Sudoku on television, so she picked up a book of puzzles at Target.

“I started out with the easy ones at first,” she says. “Now I can do hard ones, and it’s like nothing.”

Puzzles are rated as easy, medium and hard. Rainbolt says she can complete an easy one in two minutes and a hard one in 15 minutes.


She carries two well-worn Sudoku books in her bag and solves the puzzle in the Daily Kent Stater each day. For a while, she would solve four or five at night until she fell asleep.

Rainbolt says she gets a rush from the sense of accomplishment.

“I can do them,” she says. “I don’t have to think too hard at it.”
She doesn’t have any tricks, she says — just simple rules of deduction. Once she places a number in a row or column, it can’t appear anywhere else in that row or column.

For this puzzle, after filling in “sixes” where she can, she moves on to “twos,” then “ones.” She pauses, tilts her head to the side, then rapidly fills a row, then a column.

She floats the pen across the board, bobs her head, then begins filling in “threes” and “fives.” Another column, another row, another column. The puzzle is more than two-thirds solved.

By now she slows, moving more methodically. Square by square, she intently examines the grid. Then — suddenly — a revelation. Seven quick numbers, and she proclaims, “Tada!”

Medium puzzle. Four minutes.

A Sudoku book in a Tokyo store inadvertently launched the current craze when it captured Wayne Gould’s attention in 1997. The 61-year-old New Zealand native, puzzle enthusiast and retired Hong Kong judge did not invent Sudoku, but he certainly manufactured today’s global infatuation.

“I immediately knew that I would enjoy it,” he says. “I bought the book of puzzles, and, indeed, I did. So I thought if I enjoyed it, other people would, too.”

Puzzles similar to Sudoku appeared in Paris in the 1890s, Gould says. Magazines published them in the 1970s, and by the 1990s Sudoku had acquired its Japanese name. But outside Japan, it was largely unknown.

So after his 1997 retirement, Gould spent six years developing a computer program that would randomly generate Sudoku puzzles. His computer skills were self-taught, but his family was certain what he was creating would be a winner.

“They were telling me as I was writing the program to hurry up because they thought it was great,” he says.

In 2004, the program was ready. He pitched one of its puzzles to a newspaper in New Hampshire, where his wife is a college professor. Shortly thereafter, he visited his daughter in England and pitched the idea to The Times, he says. Both papers bought it.

In the two years since, Gould’s marketing push has created ardent Sudoku fans throughout the world. Puzzles generated by his computer program appear in more than 500 newspapers in 64 countries on six continents, he says. Gould offers the papers free puzzles for two reasons: first, because he’s a fan; second, to market his program.

“People wouldn’t buy a Sudoku program without knowledge of the puzzle,” he says.

The program, which he sells for $14.95 through his Web site, sudoku.com, generates a nearly indefinite number of new puzzles for users. Fans don’t need to worry about running out in their lifetime; the exact number of unique puzzles has been calculated as more than 6 sextillion — six followed by 21 zeros, he says.
Beyond the more than 50,000 unique visitors to his Web site each day, Gould has 16 to 18 books in print — "It's a bit hard to keep count" — in 29 different languages.

Gould said he doesn't know the number of aficionados worldwide.

"Anecdotally, it's gotten pretty huge," he says. "I think that I have only a small interest in the market right now."

Of the hundreds of books on the market, only a few are his. Still, he says, "I've done quite nicely."

Gould says he was a world traveler even before Sudoku gave him global celebrity status among puzzle solvers. Now his fame has taken him to the World Sudoku Championships in Italy last March and to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., for a Sudoku symposium in September.

It was a summer trip to New York City this year that created a Sudoku addict in freshman business major Winnie Wong. During hour-long subway rides from Brooklyn to Queens to visit her cousins each day, she watched Wall Street types, kids, women — nearly everyone — solving puzzles.

"It makes you look smart," Wong says. "I think that's why I started doing it."

She, too, owns the books, but humbly declares she is not very good. When she buys a book, she tears the solutions out and throws them away so she can't cheat.

She also visits counttonine.com, a Web site that tracks the time a user takes to solve a puzzle.

"I think my fastest was two minutes, but that was an easy one," she says. "I don't like to challenge myself too much."

Wong's method is deliberate. When she starts, she counts each number out loud.

Within a minute, her intensity builds. She stops speaking but jabs her pen at the page in a manner that implies the counts continue in her head. She scribbles numbers in the margins as placeholders, which she checks on occasion to aid her progress.

Hunched over the puzzle, she appears oblivious to chattering students who walk by. She counts to nine, stabs her pen, scratches a number — repeat.

With just five squares to go, she pauses, stuck. In a misstep, she writes the wrong number — a "one" — which she immediately corrects with a "six." She sees an obvious digit in the center of the grid, and with three rapid-fire strokes, finishes the board.

Easy puzzle. Five minutes.

"It makes me giddy for 10 seconds, and then I want to do another one," she says.

Wong says she finds it relaxing because it helps time pass quickly.

"I have no idea what just happened," she says. "Sudoku eats brain cells." ■

Brian Thornton is a graduate journalism student. This is his first story for The Burr.
So, I’m getting a bachelor’s degree in English — now what?

I think I’ve known I was an English major my whole life.

I started becoming curious about English and literature as a child, though I never knew what to call myself or what it meant. I remember my brother walking in on me reading “The Lottery” by Shirley Jackson. I told him I was just experimenting.

Coming out to my mother was probably the hardest. I tried to cover up my English major tendencies by pursuing “trophy” degrees — international relations, biology — but after meeting other English majors, it just seemed right.

My mother and I were in the kitchen making dinner when I told her.

"Mom," I said, "I'm ... an English major."

She looked forlornly to the cutting board and continued chopping carrots for the pot roast. "How long have you known you were a ..."

"It's OK, mom. You can say it."

"An ... English major," she managed.

"My whole life," I said. She began sobbing.

"Oh, Steven," she said. "That's a degree in unemployment! My own son, an English major! What will your father say? What are you going to do?"

The sad truth was, I didn’t know what I was going to do. But I wasn’t alone.
Those B.A. blues

A group of fellow English majors turn their desks and converse before class begins. The topic: what to do with their lives post-graduation.

"I'm sure we all started out as English majors with grandeur of writing the 'Great American Novel,' and now that we're about to graduate, that's all gone out the window," one student says.

"Yeah, our degree will make great kindling," jokes another.

Senior English major Ashley Shuckerow laughs at the discussion but later admits there is some truth behind the cliché that majoring in liberal arts is "majoring in unemployment."

"I think it's definitely a cliché that students live up to," she says. "There are a lot of students out there who don't know what they want to do with their lives."

Shuckerow changed majors four times before finally deciding on an English degree. She's not alone. A recent study by the U.S. Department of Education shows nearly half of students change their majors at least once. She says one of the largest factors in her decision to stay with an English major was that it allows her to finally graduate in May, although she says she's still confused about a career track after college.

However, Shuckerow doesn't think getting a liberal arts degree will affect her chances at any career path she chooses. "I think that with any degree, you can do almost any job," she says.

Like Shuckerow, senior English major Elizabeth Lahey says she is confused about a career track somehow," Shuckerow says.

Lahey thinks of her B.A. as more of a starting point. "I don't think you're destined for unemployment, but I don't feel like you can do anything with an English major alone. It's more of a stepping stone," she says.

Taking a detour on the road to unemployment

It's not just English majors with anxiety about what to do after graduation, says Hobson Hamilton, assistant director in the Career Services Center.

"(Students) are aware of trends that say that things like nursing degrees and accounting degrees are highly sought after," he says. "They say, 'I am behind the curve now. Am I going to be able to get a job at all?'

However, Hamilton says most students with degrees in the liberal arts, such as psychology, history and English, aren't necessarily at a disadvantage for getting jobs after college.

"We feel those majors have a good outlook for jobs. They have a good degree of flexibility. Employers realize they can be trained."

Lahey says she thinks earning a minor is something liberal arts students should consider. "I think if you were an English major and had a solid minor in something more career oriented and not as academic, you would be more marketable," she says.

Hamilton says minors are a good idea, but degree programs give candidates the edge. "I believe that picking up a minor may sometimes be invaluable," he says, but adds that the competition for some jobs can be tough.

"For example, if they have a minor in marketing and they're competing against someone with a marketing major, they may be at a disadvantage," he says. "They may have to market that effectively."

With 200 majors at Kent State, Hamilton stresses the need for career counseling for students who are unsure of what to do with their major. "There is certainly a place for the exploratory major," he says. "There shouldn't be any shame. That person just needs a little more time to work things out."

At the Career Services Center, students are able to take various assessments, most free of charge, to help evaluate skills and abilities they possess and how they can use them toward a future career.

On the Career Services Web site, career.kent.edu, students are able to access a free Sig13 assessment that helps them create a list of possible occupations based on their values, interests, work skills and major.

Hamilton says these assessments aren't meant to solve all of a student's concerns with employment, but they're a good starting point. "It's not a cure-all," he says. "But it is a way for them to validate if they've made a good choice."

Hamilton says students should prepare as soon as possible for their post-college careers, whether it's obtaining internships or simply creating a career plan.

"It's a tough job market today, especially in northeast Ohio," he says. "I don't want to scare anyone, but it heightens the preparedness the students need."

With unemployment rising in the area, Hamilton says students should also consider relocating to areas with a better job outlook. According to the Ohio Bureau of Labor Market Information, Portage County's unemployment rate is slightly above the U.S. average of 4.4 percent, and four out of six of its neighboring counties are above the state average of 5 percent.

For those who stick around and have trouble finding a job, Career Services is still available. "We're there for them even after they graduate," he says.

So maybe I'm safe.

Though I am not guaranteed a job, it seems my alternative, liberal-arts lifestyle doesn't put me at a disadvantage. And for all you nay-sayers out there, be careful. Your best friend could be a liberal arts major and you don't even know it.

Steve Schirra is a senior English major. This is his third story for The Burr.
Congratulations to the Burr and CyBurr Staff!

NATIONAL AWARDS – 2006

Magazine Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication

Best Single Issue of an Ongoing Print Magazine: General Excellence


"Selection of stories and presentation, both layout and photography, and the first-rate reporting and excellent writing gave readers of the Burr a magazine to dig into."

Judge: John Walsh, executive editor of ESPN magazine

Best Single Issue of an Ongoing Print Magazine: Design

Third place: The Burr, Kent State University, Katie Phillips, editor, Logan Sommers, art director, spring 2006 issue.

Judge: Bob Gray, design editor of National Geographic

Best Single Issue of an Ongoing Print Magazine: Editorial


Judges: Editors of Outside magazine

REGIONAL AWARDS – 2006

Society of Professional Journalists, Region 4

Best All-Around Online Student Magazine

First Place: The CyBurr, fall 2005
CyBurr editor, Grace Dobush. CyBurr webmaster, Rami Daud

Best Magazine Non-Fiction Article

First Place: Ryan Loew, “Kent’s Secret Stash,” The Burr, fall 2006
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