courtside access: CAVS

PLUS

• Recycling done right
• Bigfoot in the Buckeye State
• Kent State's quest to help the Gulf Coast
CYBURR:
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The Burr is a special-interest student magazine that informs students and faculty about events, issues and people at Kent State and in the surrounding communities.

Cover photo of LeBron James by Rami Daud
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**Online Resources**

- [Visit Online](#)
The Cavaliers and their fans’ hopes for a championship have never been higher. Is it enough to change Cleveland’s fortune?

In 2005 Hurricane Katrina leveled the Gulf Coast. Since then, the world has pitched in to rebuild America’s sunny southern shore. Kent State students have also contributed, forgoing vacations to patch up paradise.
LETTER from the EDITOR

The United States has taken some beatings in this new millennium. Since starting high school, this May’s graduates have witnessed both the worst terrorist attack and natural disaster to ever hit American soil, as well as two foreign wars, a domestic housing bust and a global recession. That’s why we chose to make this semester’s magazine about healing and rebirth — two warm and fuzzy buzz words to soothe what ails ye.

Some of the stories inject healing point-blank, like the ones about art therapy and acupuncture (p. 44). Ted Hamilton’s candid narrative on losing his best friend takes a more tender approach (p. 34).

The Burr is doing its part to heal the planet by switching to recycled paper. You can help, too. Turn to our guide on recycling to see how (p. 7). That should solve the global warming crisis. No need to thank us.

The world is still in danger if the 2012 predictions are correct. After talking to some experts and looking at similar predictions from the past, we believe they are not (p. 20). If we’re wrong, no one will be around to call us out on it. Now that’s safe journalism.

To bring you more national perspective, photojournalist Christabel Devadoss and I drove to the Gulf Coast to chronicle the rebuilding of Mississippi and Louisiana (p. 38). I found that every “voluntourist” makes a difference just by being there, putting money into the economy. So if your looking for a place to go this summer, go on down. Check out our interactive Google Map on TheBurr.com for some destinations to visit.

This issue has plenty of regional stuff, too. You’ve no doubt noticed the guy on the cover — LeBron James. Whether LBJ and the Cleveland Cavaliers win this year or not, they made this past Ohio winter a lot more bearable (p. 28).

Maybe the Cavaliers’ chase for a championship and its impact on Cleveland doesn’t interest you. May I direct you to an equally elusive hunt (p. 51)? There have been more sightings of Bigfoot in Ohio than anywhere in the country except the Pacific states. I don’t know if that proves Bigfoot’s existence or Ohio’s need for better education.

Scared of real monsters like inflation and rising dorm costs? Escape to a theater near you and watch any of the new superhero movies coming out (p. 16).

Don’t worry, non-nerds. We have both Iron Man and an Iron Chef. Culinary king of Cleveland Michael Symon took some time to chat with The Burr (p. 22).

We tried to inject this issue with something for everyone. So find a nice spot in the sun, relax and heal yourself. And if you’ve got a laptop handy, check out TheBurr.com. We have more pictures, stories and video from this semester, along with an archive of past issues.

Let me know what you think by e-mailing me at jhitch@kent.edu

Have a great summer,

John Hitch
Editor
special thanks

The Barr adviser Ann Schierhorn, who will pass the mantle after 23 years, or 45 issues, of service. She also helped create the Cybarr in 1996. Under her guidance, The Barr has won 12 national first-place awards for best college magazine or Web site from the Society of Professional Journalists and the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. Assistant professor Jacqueline Marino takes over.

John C. Block, who generously gave The Barr an endowment of $25,000 in honor of his mother, Marjorie McNab Block. She was an alumna of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication. This money is earmarked for reporting projects outside of the region. This semester, The Barr used that money to help fund a weeklong assignment covering the culture and hurricane relief efforts along the Gulf Coast.

The editor would also like to thank the following people:

The Barr’s talented staff and pool of contributors, without whom this issue would not be possible.

Donald and Dolores Boos, who housed and fed the Gulf Coast reporting team in Ocean Springs, Miss.

Joshua Miklowski and Maria Mohan, who housed the Gulf Coast reporting team in New Orleans, as well as led them around the city.

Kent State Student Media = Excellence in Action

Congratulations to all students involved in producing print and electronic media. Your creativity, integrity and inclusiveness make us proud.

President Lester A. Lefton and the President’s Office Staff

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- Commencement and Academic Affairs events
- Diversity and Academic Initiatives
- Institutional Research and Student Success
- Faculty Affairs and Curriculum
- Special Projects
LET the CHANGE BEGIN

How the Obama administration is changing politics and the country

BY kristine philips

PHOTOGRAPH

daniel owens

When Barack Obama was elected as the 44th president of the United States and the first black president, there was celebration from many Americans and foreign countries alike.

The inauguration was definitely one for the history books. According to estimates from security and law enforcement officials, about 1.8 million people attended the festivities, which surpassed the previous record of 1.2 million for Lyndon Johnson’s 1965 inauguration.

“I believe the inauguration was an interesting phenomenon,” says State Rep. Kathleen Chandler, D-Kent. “Everyone felt like they needed to be in D.C.”

While the momentum of Obama’s campaign continued through Jan. 20, it didn’t stop there. That same energy and participation have continued.

“The people who have been involved don’t expect they can just sit back and let Obama save us,” says Jared Slanina, former field organizer of the Portage County for the Obama campaign. “Our duty is to stay involved and educated so that we can hold him accountable for what he is doing.”

The tools used to get out the vote have now been modified to keep Americans informed about and active in the political process, Slanina says. Formerly Obama for America, Organizing America sends out e-mails regarding the president’s agenda and legislation in Congress.

“I think this will be helpful for future generations,” Slanina says. “The mentality has really changed. Before, it was rude to discuss politics. Now, we realize there’s a conversation that has to take place.”

Discussions about these issues have been met with less than enthusiastic responses from some. But despite the atmosphere, some issues were addressed quickly. On Jan. 21 President Obama signed the order to close the Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp within the year.

“The president has a wide-ranging agenda, which I think is necessary for the many problems the country faces,” Ryan says.

This may prove to be a bigger challenge in some areas, like the economy, than others.

“We live in an area that has been especially hard hit by plant closures and housing issues,” Rep. Tim Ryan, D-Ohio, says. “Some of these problems that are being faced around the country have been part of the economic landscape here for many years.”

Many of the problems in the country will not be solved in the short term. The massive deficit, for one, will continue to plague the next generation. But because of Obama’s messages to the younger demographic, many hope the president will at least lighten their burden.

“I think people are hopeful about what he can accomplish,” says Alex Vitale, sophomore broadcast journalism and political science major. Vitale, the College Democrats’ event coordinator at Kent State, volunteered many hours in her hometown of Canton and in Kent for the Obama campaign.

“There’s a lot of young people that got Obama’s message,” Vitale says. “He became a cultural icon for our generation.”
Have your old gym shoes seen better days? Couldn’t sell back your history textbook? Don’t throw these items in the trash can. There’s a better, more environmentally friendly way to dispose of your junk.

“College students should care about recycling because it comes down to money,” says Jim Schrack, director of product sustainability for the Product Stewardship Institute in Boston. “We all end up paying a portion of the manufacturer’s utility bills that go into each new product we consume, and this portion is lower if the product is made from recycled, instead of raw, material.”

Creating new products from raw materials consumes more energy, and the more expensive it is to produce the item, the more you’ll have to pay at the checkout.

And if you feel like you can’t make a difference, think again. “All our efforts collectively count,” Schrack says.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RECYCLABLE ITEMS</th>
<th>WHY YOU SHOULDN'T THROW THEM AWAY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beverage containers</strong></td>
<td>Aluminum cans can be recycled over and over again. Recycled plastic bottles can be used to make carpeting, fleece and outdoor deck lumber. Recycling one glass bottle saves enough energy to light a 100-watt light bulb for four hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Books</strong></td>
<td>Recycling books conserves resources and generates a source of recycled paper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Compact fluorescent light bulbs</strong></td>
<td>CFLs contain small amounts of mercury that could contaminate landfills and groundwater.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Electronics</strong></td>
<td>Electronics contain toxic materials such as lead, mercury and lithium that can contaminate landfills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scrap metal</strong></td>
<td>Items such as nail clippers, metal dining utensils, bicycles and keys are considered scrap metal and can be recycled to conserve resources. Sometimes, you can get money for recycling scrap metal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phone books and commercial mailings</strong></td>
<td>Every year, 660,000 tons of phone books end up in landfills. Recycling phone books and junk mail can conserve resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shopping bags</strong></td>
<td>Paper and plastic bags can take hundreds of years to biodegrade in landfills because of a lack of exposure to sunlight. Also, improperly disposed plastic bags pose a threat to marine animals, which may consume or become entangled in the bags.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shoes and clothing</strong></td>
<td>In 2007, about 690,000 tons of rubber and leather from shoes and clothing were discarded in landfills.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### How to Dispose of Them

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<tr>
<th>Instruction</th>
<th>Percent Recycled in 2007*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rinse empty bottles with water and remove caps from glass and plastic</td>
<td>Aluminum: 78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>containers. No need to remove labels, as they’ll be burned off during the</td>
<td>Glass: 31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recycling process.</td>
<td>Plastic: 36.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remove the covers of hardback books and recycle only the pages. Paperbacks</td>
<td>Books: 26.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>can be recycled with other paper products.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take dead, unbroken bulbs to the returns desk of The Home Depot. You can</td>
<td>Statistics not yet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>also drop off CFLs at the Portage County Solid Waste Management District</td>
<td>available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from April 1 to Oct. 31.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return used computers to the manufacturer. Best Buy and Staples also</td>
<td>Electronics*: 18.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accept most electronics for free recycling or a small recycling fee.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For Portage County residents, drop off these items at the Portage County</td>
<td>Non-ferrous metal: 69.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solid Waste Management District in Stow. Don’t leave these scrap metal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>items in a recycling bin, as collectors won’t take them. For money, take</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the items to B&amp;B Recycling in Ravenna.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remove magnets, plastics and other inserts from these items. Phone books</td>
<td>Phone books: 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>can be dropped off at Portage County Solid Waste Management District site.</td>
<td>Commercial mailings: 57.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact distributors to opt out of receiving future mailers or phonebooks.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toss paper bags in with other paper recyclables. Giant Eagle, Kroger and</td>
<td>Paper: 36.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wal-Mart are just a few of the retailers that collect plastic shopping</td>
<td>Plastic: 9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bags for recycling. Or use reusable shopping bags instead.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drop off athletic shoes at any Nike store, and Nike will reprocess the</td>
<td>Shoes and clothing: less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>footwear to make athletic courts and playground surfaces. Take other types</td>
<td>than 0.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of shoes and clothing to donation centers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


* Includes items such as laptop and desktop computers, computer monitors, TVs, printers and cell phones.

Figures from the 2008 report on Electronics Waste Management in the United States
Lured by sunny weather, new attractions and job opportunities, Kent State grads have packed their bags for life outside Ohio

by Jackie Vallee

Graphic: Alisha Williams

Photograph: Christabel Devadoss

Lawmakers call it Ohio’s “brain drain.” Others call it a reality of modern life: Students graduate college, pack up and head across state lines to start their careers.

After all, the average American moves 12 times in his or her life, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

But for several years, Ohio legislators have been trying to ease this phenomenon and consequently jumpstart the state’s economy by keeping educated students here.

“The ultimate glue to keep a student in the state is a good job,” says Harry Andrist, vice chancellor for research and economic advancement at the Ohio Board of Regents.

Behind job prospects, Andrist says graduates tend to stay well to the Buckeye State if they don’t like the weather and don’t have strong family ties to the region.

For others, the lure of a new lifestyle may outweigh any allureances to Ohio, says Melissa Liptak, assistant director of Alumni Relations at Kent State.

“For some people, especially if you’re from a small town in the middle of Ohio, you may want to go to a Chicago for a little while,” she says.

The struggling economy has not helped the situation either, especially since economic downturns historically hit Ohio harder than other parts of the country, Andrist says.

The unemployment rate in Ohio reached 9.4 percent in February, based on preliminary data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

“There are fewer opportunities today than there were a year ago,” he says, “but we’ll come through this.”

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Alumni groups from universities around the country populate Washington, D.C., creating gathering spots for professionals living in the nation’s capital.

Why? Because “nobody’s really from here,” says Chris Knudson, senior vice president of marketing and communications for the Washington, D.C., Chamber of Commerce.

“I think personally that the number one reason that young adults come here in the first place is if it’s not school, it’s the job opportunities,” he says.

Washington, D.C., is home to 13 major universities, boasting a student population of about 80,000. Plentiful jobs in government and trade associations keep students in the city and draw others from out of state — and so far, Knudson says D.C. has remained “somewhat sheltered from the economy.”

“We are concerned, We have seen some decreases in our job outlook,” he says. “We are not seeing the kinds of declines like Ohio and Michigan. On the whole, I think we’re not as bad as the rest of the country.”

The cost of living in the region, however, is considerably more expensive compared to the Midwest. Becky Fortune, a 2006 Kent State graduate, moved to Washington, D.C., in Fall 2008 to be closer to her fiancé. They live in Silver Spring, Maryland — a half-hour Metro ride to downtown — where they say housing is double the cost of Ohio’s market.

Even so, Washington, D.C., offers many inexpensive leisure outlets for those people willing to explore the city.

“There’s a million things to do, and a lot of it is free,” Fortune says. “You can go to D.C. and go to a majority of the museums for free.”

Aside from traffic and elevated living costs, Knudson says Washington, D.C., avoids the drawbacks of life in a big city.

“It’s a big city, and it has the amenities of a big city,” he says, “but it has enough of a small-town feel, that it feels like home.”

LAS VEGAS

The average age of visitors to Las Vegas is more than double that of college graduates, between 48 and 49 years old.

But the region’s opportunities provide a quality of life suitable for young adults, says Alicia Malone, public relations manager for the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority.

Skiing and snowboarding await 45 minutes away at Mount Charleston. Art and historical museums add culture to what’s otherwise known as “Sin City.” And then there’s the Las Vegas Strip — where locals can get into clubs for free or at discounted prices.
Historically, Malone says the number of people moving to Las Vegas has outpaced those leaving, with about 6,000 people moving in and 3,000 moving away each year.

"Over the last decade or so, Las Vegas’s population has boomed to over 2 million people," she says. "Of course, times are changing, and we might not have quite those numbers."

Despite the poor economy, Malone says Las Vegas has consistently been a magnet for career opportunities in the tourism, construction and education fields. The hospitality and tourism industry employs about 30 percent of the city’s residents.

"Typically, the hospitality and tourism industry has been the leading industry, followed closely by the construction industry," she says. "We’re in the midst of a very significant development boom. We’re constructing several resorts."

Jade Uhler, a 2006 Kent State graduate, made the 2,078-mile move from Wooster to Las Vegas in August 2006 after being recruited by a school district there. Despite the stark contrasts to Ohio — warmer weather most of the year, no rolling fields or big yards — Uhler says most neighborhoods in the region have a suburban feel.

Although Uhler enjoys the intrigues of the big city, one new passion that’s popular in the area takes her out of the city: riding ATVs.

"I never really rode ATVs," she says. "Out here, it’s a big deal."

RALEIGH

Kent State graduate Marissa Kelly moved to Raleigh, N.C., three years ago, but rarely meets people who are actually from the area.

"There isn’t as much of the southern charm because there definitely are a ton of different cultures here," says the seventh-grade language arts teacher.

Despite only knowing her college roommate in Raleigh, Kelly wound up befriending other young, new teachers working at the same middle school.

"A lot of us are from Ohio and New York," she says. "You kind of become your own family."

Kelly’s experience mirrors the demographics of Raleigh, which has consistently been cited as one of the best places to live.

The median age for residents within a one-mile radius of Raleigh is 34, according to a fourth quarter 2008 economic development report by the Downtown Raleigh Alliance. About 35 percent of residents within the same one-mile radius of the city possess a bachelor’s degree or higher.

Kelly says nearby universities — Duke University, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and North Carolina State University — add to the region’s young atmosphere with sports, modern clubs downtown and many outdoor festivals.

"I feel like it’s a lot of young professionals, so you feel like you’re in your own element," she says. "Even though it is a capital, it feels like a small town."

And, for being a city positioned two hours from the beach and the mountains, Kelly says Raleigh’s cost of living does not cost much more than Northeast Ohio.

"I will probably be here for at least the next five years, if not longer," she says. "I miss my family, but I can’t think of a good enough reason to move."
**BEEN there, REDONE that**

**From bloggin to tweeting, from bubblegum Britney to Mama Spears, from thinking green, to going green, we map the evolution of this millennium's trends**

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**music**

Pods are pretty much like textbooks these days: There's a new edition every year.

Since the first iPod was introduced in late 2001, the portable media player has taken on 39 different forms including a recent incarnation that, despite the enterprise's relative youth, Apple had the cheek to call "iPod classic."

But Apple has done something right in branding its little mobile music devices. They’ve sold more than 100 million of them, many secured by tests of the buyer’s endurance: waiting outside electronics stores all through the eve of new model release dates.

Of the 39 different combinations of memory size, color, dimensions and interface that have emerged over the last eight years, four varieties remain: the iPod shuffle (choose between one gigabyte or two); the iPod nano (eight or 16 GB, nine colors); the iPod classic (120 GB, black or white); and the latest iPod touch, which boasts a touch-screen interface.

In 2007, Apple introduced the iPhone, a touch-screen device that’s a camera phone, music player and has Internet capabilities.

You can bet it'll soon be a classic, too.

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**going green**

The truth that started out inconvenient isn’t so much anymore. Now going green is little more than a trend.

When former Vice President Al Gore released “An Inconvenient Truth” in 2006, his aims were political and environmental. The movement to stop global warming became a movement to buy organic pants for fashion’s sake.

As early as 2007, The New York Times’ Alex Williams’ view of popular eco-friendliness was fairly accurate: “Roll out from under the sumptuous hemp-fiber sheets on your bed in the morning and pull on a pair of $245 organic cotton Levi’s and an Armani biodegradable knit shirt.”

Toyota Priuses became just as fashionable as they were fuel-efficient. Even Hummer made a smaller vehicle, the H3.

Bamboo salad bowls and organic cotton yoga bras are just a quick visit to greenshopper.com away. Look out, global warming.

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**politics**

You can’t talk about the reinventions and rebirths of the last 10 years without mentioning our entire United States political system.

To start with, Sept. 11 changed the way the government deals with security, creating a whole new cabinet-level department for it.

Then, at the tail end of the Bush administration, the federal government expanded its reach even more when it bought a large part of a private industry — banking — after a lack of lender regulations nearly brought it down.

Exit, politically conservative, white Texan rancher president.

Enter, politically liberal, black Chicago law professor president.

Against all odds, Barack Obama was elected president just four years after the country first heard his name and after beating out a woman, Hillary Rodham Clinton, who nearly became the Democratic presidential candidate. And in the interest of a full account for posterity, let’s remember the California Recall Election of 2003, which included candidates such as a used car dealer, two students, an adult film actress, Gary Coleman, Leo Gallagher and even Mr. Olympia himself, Arnold Schwarzenegger.

It’s a brave new world.

—Ben Wolford
There was a time when women did not wear pants.

fashion

UGG boots aren't enough; now they get tattoos.

The UGG boot story began in 1978 when Australian Brian Smith came to the United States with a bag full of sheepskin boots, but in 1999 the UGG brand became one of the most sought after shoes nationwide.

But catching the UGG bug was not enough for some; now the coveted shoe is getting tattooed. UGG devotees can now display their "individuality" by getting a design placed right on their favorite pair of UGGs. Using Prismacolor art markers, artists etch selected pictures onto the shoe.

In less than 10 years, the boot girls love to wear with mini skirts has skipped its post-adolescent idealistic phase and went straight to the midlife crisis, tattoos included, sans the motorcycle and 20-year-old boyfriend.

social networking

MySpace is on the out, Facebook is constantly upgrading and Twitter tweets forcefully.

In August 2003, a social-networking Web site phenomenon began with the advent of MySpace. The Web site allowed users of all ages to network with friends, create profiles, write blogs and upload pictures, videos and music. Later, Facebook, meant solely for college students, was born.

Indeed, the archaic Xanga (You do remember Xanga, right?) was the impetus for the blogging trend. But Twitter is confirmation of Web-based evolution: micro-blogging. Twitter blasted off in 2007, allowing users to "tweet" updates to their followers and read the updates of others. These tweets are text-based messages, up to 140 characters, that allow users to connect with a social network.

The New Scientist magazine in May 2008 reported that systems such as Twitter did a better job of getting information out during emergencies, such as the shootings at Virginia Tech, than either traditional news media or government emergency services.

It’s clear to see Twitter is the wave of the future, leaving users with higher cell phone bills and constant updates of what their friends are eating for dinner and when they’re using the restroom.

—Shamira Fowler

Britney Spears’ timeline

On Jan. 12, 1999, former Mickey Mouse Club star Britney Spears released the hit single “Baby One More Time” and established herself as America’s sweetheart. Spears’ next album, “Oops...I did it Again,” reached 10 million in record sales, surpassing platinum and gold and reaching the coveted diamond status.

She even had a coveted boyfriend, Justin Timberlake.

In 2003 and 2004, respectively, Spears shed her good-girl image with a controversial kiss with the legendary Madonna during a performance, and her drunken marriage to a childhood friend in Las Vegas.

In 2005, Spears married Kevin Federline. After giving birth to her second son in 2006, Spears’ inexplicable actions received heightened attention from the media. She attacked a paparazzi’s car with an umbrella, shaved her head, lost custody of her children and gave a disastrous performance at the 2007 MTV Video Music Awards.

The best thing she did that year was check into a treatment facility in Malibu, Calif.

Spears renewed her image, winning several 2008 MTV Video Music Awards for her album “Blackout” and releasing her sixth studio album, “Circus,” which reached gold status within a month of its January release. Spears sparkled, sputtered and spun back to shimmering gold all in a decade.

—Shamira Fowler
Sitting in an armchair at the local Starbucks, Kyle Marcarello, a local mash-up disc jockey, pulls out a notebook and begins flicking his hands over it, demonstrating the proper way to spin a record on his imaginary turntable.

“You don’t want to do this,” he says, holding his wrist stiffly over the paper record.

“Like this,” he explains as his wrist goes limp and sways his hands sway back and forth smoothly, evenly.

Mash-up DJs create sound files by taking chunks of existing songs, mostly by well-known artists, and overlap them to make a new song.

Created out of a need for dance music, mash-ups can be heard at almost any dance-party or club and are accompanied by bright lights and visual imagery, says Marcarello, who began making this type of music when he was 14 years old.

Some well-known examples include DJ Danger Mouse’s “The Grey Album” — a combo of Jay-Z’s “The Black Album” and The Beatles “White Album” — and the recent “Feed the Animals” from Greg Gillis, better known as Girl Talk, which samples OutKast and Roy Orbison, among others. Before going national, Gillis was a biomedical engineering student at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland.

Marcarello, a senior molecular biology major, cites both as influences, says he developed a firm knowledge of music early in his life growing up with “hipster parents.” This knowledge came with a price.

“I’ve been ripped on my entire life,” Marcarello says, referring to classmates who picked on him for his music of choice, techno.

Marcarello ignored the insults and continued working on his music. Over the years, he’s collected more than 2,500 records through a process called “crate-digging,” where DJs go to thrift and record stores to find rare, old or unusual music that can later be used for sampling.

“It’s going out, finding and listening as much as possible,” Marcarello says.

With tons of vinyls crammed into his apartment, Marcarello can easily select from a variety of beats and use them in a song he’s creating.

DJs use computers with digital audio software, such as Ableton and FruityLoops, to compose, sequence and mix music. Using these programs, Marcarello is able to smoothly transition from one song chunk to another, which he says is the most important part of the process.

“I still have a lot to learn about Ableton it seems, but wow has it produced some pretty fucking cool mash-ups.

“I’m confident this will remain the DJ software of choice for some time, especially given indie culture’s omnipresent hard-on for Apple products,” he says.

Ryan Sheridan, junior magazine journalism major, also explores the art of mashing music.

Sheridan, a DJ since last summer, admits to not having mastered the art of mashing yet.

When creating a mash-up there’s a “lot of trial and error,” Sheridan says.

“I stick with the juxtaposition idea, asking myself. ‘How cool would it be to hear a Kanye West vocal sample in a Bananarama song from the 80s?’”

So, what exactly makes a good mash-up?

“Juxtaposition of musical styles, timing, matched BPMs (beats per minute), and creativity,” Sheridan says.

On the other hand, Marcarello says “it’s all about technique,” speaking of turntable skill. “It’s 100 percent in the wrist.”

Along with some natural talent and a good ear, Marcarello says the key to a good mash-up is knowing when to hold back the sound or to let it loose.

“I believe in restraint,” Marcarello says.

“Pick things that aren’t recognizable, completely different songs where people can’t tell you’re actually [mashing].”

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**MIX MASH**

Local DJ puts a new spin on old songs

**BY**

Laura Lofgren

**ILLUSTRATION**

Sarah Cucciarre
John Randall hasn’t seen a superhero movie he doesn’t like. For that matter, he’s never seen one he does like. He says he’s never seen (and doesn’t plan to see) the new batch of superhero films.

No, Randall doesn’t live under a rock. In fact, he spends most of his days surrounded by costumed heroes and villains. Randall owns Land of Cran Comics in Canton. He prefers reading the non-hero titles such as “Transmetropolitan” or even the more tame Disney titles. He thinks that the superhero titles have grown too dark in tone.

“Give me ‘Uncle Scrooge’ any day,” he says.

What Randall has seen is possibly the cinematic Golden Age of the Superheroes. The first two Spider-Man movies were financial and critical successes, as were the first two X-Men films. “Iron Man” made $582 million worldwide and revived Robert Downey Jr.’s career. The recent Batman franchise has basically printed money, netting a posthumous Oscar for Heath Ledger.

From what Randall has seen, his customers are enjoying Hollywood’s obsession with comic book movies.

“With computers, it is finally possible to make (the comics) realistic,” he says. “Fans will always see the movies.”

Digital artist Chris Ingersoll, who worked on special effects for movies including “The Incredible Hulk,” “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button” and the upcoming “Star Trek” film, thinks that the “cape and cowl” won’t keep pulling movie lovers into theaters.

“In the early ’90s, there was a glut of hero comics hitting the shelf, with every writer and artist thinking that they had the next ‘Batman,’” Ingersoll says.

“Most of them weren’t anything new, and dozens of books were killed by publishers after 10 or so issues.”

“We’ll probably see the same thing with the movie business,” he says. “The books that translate well into films will be successful, the others won’t.”

Not every comic makes the leap from the page to the screen well. The widely respected forerunner of graphic novels, “The Spirit,” created by Will Eisner in 1940, got terrible reviews and tanked at the box office last December. Alan Moore and Dave Gibbon’s graphic masterpiece “Watchmen” made Time magazine’s list of top 100 novels of the 20th century. It twisted the benevolent, immaculate superhero into a nihilistic sociopath crusading for selfish reasons.

The R-rated movie directed by Zack Snyder earned $55 million its opening weekend, but has struggled since then. It made back its budget of $150 million, but its nowhere near “The Dark Knight,” which has earned more than $1 billion world-wide.

What does it all mean? Make a good movie and people fans or not, will spend money to go see it. In this age of Web sites like Rotten Tomatoes and MetaCritic it is possible for moviegoers to get an instantaneous and holistic opinion about every film at the theater.

And here’s a hint to the big studios: Want to fill theaters with comic book fans? Make a super hero movie. Want to fill a theater with everyone else, for more than the opening weekend? Make a GOOD super hero movie. Just don’t expect to see John Randall there.
**Comic Movie Dates**

"X-Men Origins: Wolverine" May 1, 2009
20th Century Fox
Directed by: Gavin Hood
Starring: Hugh Jackman, Liev Schrieber, Ryan Reynolds.
A leaked, unfinished version of the film featuring the popular Canadian mutant hit the Web on April 1. Only the box office will tell if Wolvie can heal from this.

"The Green Lantern" Dec. 17, 2010
Warner Bros.
Directed by: Martin Campbell
Cast to be announced
A nearly omnipotent alien ring selects flyboy Hal Jordan as its next master. The plans are to develop this into a galaxy-hopping trilogy.

"Iron Man 2" May 7, 2010
Marvel Studios
Directed by: Jon Favreau
Starring: Robert Downey Jr., Don Cheadle, Mickey Rourke, Scarlett Johansson
Its critical and commercial success guaranteed a sequel, which Downey Jr. says focuses on the "man behind the armor."

"Spider-Man 4" May 6, 2011
Sony
Directed by: Sam Raimi
Starring: Tobey Maguire
Raimi has been promised creative control, so hopefully Spidey won’t cry and dance the whole movie, and then let the villain escape in the end like in his last adventure.

"Jonah Hex" Aug. 6, 2010
Warner Bros.
Directed by: Jimmy Hayward
Starring: Josh Brolin, John Malkovich, Megan Fox
Think the good, the bad, and the really ugly. In this sci-fi western, a disfigured bounty hunter (Brolin) must stop a voodoo practitioner (Malkovich) from raising an army of Confederate zombie soldiers.

"The First Avenger: Captain America" July 22, 2011
Marvel Studios
Directed by: Joe Johnston (Jumanji, Hidalgo)
Cast to be announced
The military’s super soldier serum endows scrawny recruit Steve Rogers with the strength and speed to take on the Nazis in World War II. Near the end of the war, he’s frozen in ice and thawed out in present day. This period piece will set up a hero team-up in “The Avengers.”

"The Avengers" May 4, 2012
Marvel Studios
Directed by: Jon Favreau
Starring: Robert Downey Jr., Don Cheadle, Samuel L. Jackson
Alters Assemble! Iron Man, Thor, Captain America and the Hulk team-up to fight a common enemy. The movie’s biggest enemy is managing its stars’ schedules for production.

May 2 is Free Comic Book Day (aka Geek Christmas). Comic book stores nationwide receive exclusive issues from all the major companies. Chuck Switzer, manager of North Coats Nostalgia in Lyndhurst, says proper etiquette dictates that you should take just one. —John Hitch
HOLLYWOOD in the HEARTLAND

Visit these classic movie locales about an hour’s drive from Kent

BY

Jim West

PHOTOGRAPHS

dave ramacci
The Shawshank Redemption

The Ohio State Reformatory, a sprawling stone structure in Mansfield that covers more than 200,000 square feet, was the uncredited star in Frank Darabont’s “The Shawshank Redemption.” The 1995 film chronicles the journey of Andy Dufresne (Tim Robbins), a man who is sent to prison for murdering his wife and her lover, and Ellis Boyd “Red” Redding (Morgan Freeman), “the only guilty man in Shawshank.”

Constructed in 1886, the reformatory was originally used as a boys’ rehabilitation center and later was turned into a medium- to maximum-security prison. It closed in 1990 due to court challenges of cruel and inhumane conditions and reopened 10 years later as a historic landmark, with help from the Mansfield Reformatory Preservation Society.

Dan Seckel, president of the society’s board of trustees, says producers chose the location for the movie after a person from the Ohio Film Commission actively marketed the reformatory.

“I was there during the filming in 1993,” he said, “I got to hang out and know a number of the crew.”

The interior shots of the cellblocks, Seckel says, were filmed in a nearby factory, built to resemble a prison. Other scenes were shot in downtown Mansfield.

A drive-it-yourself tour, sponsored by the Mansfield Convention & Visitors Bureau, allows tourists to visit notable locations featured in the film, beginning at the reformatory and ending at the Stephen Lumber Co., in Upper Sandusky. The lumber company served as the prison workshop.

In addition to “The Shawshank Redemption,” the reformatory was featured in the films “Air Force One” and “Tango & Cash.”

A Christmas Story

In 2005, Brian Jones of San Diego bought a house for $150,000 on eBay. Of course, it wasn’t just any house. It was the home of a Major Award. It was Ralphie Parker’s. It was anyone’s who had ever watched “A Christmas Story” on a 24-hour loop in December and felt nostalgic afterward.

It also happens to be in Cleveland’s historic Tremont neighborhood.

Before he bought the house, Jones made and sold leg lamps online. He started the business following a failed vision exam to become a Naval pilot.

“My parents made a leg lamp and sent it to me in California,” he says. “It was my Major Award for my big life disappointment.”

A longtime fan of the film, Jones spent 11 months and another $250,000 restoring the house to its original “A Christmas Story” luster. He purchased the lot across the street and turned it into a museum, which showcases film memorabilia, behind-the-scenes photographs and newspaper clippings. The house opened to the public in November 2006.

Although “A Christmas Story” featured shots of the house’s exterior, the scenes inside were filmed elsewhere. Jones worked closely to recreate the appearances of the kitchen, living room, bathroom and bedroom as seen in the film.

The most recognizable piece in the house is the leg lamp in the window. The gift shop sells them for more than $75. From the road, it’s easy to see the soft glow of electric sex, the symbol of lost and renewed adolescence. And is that the sound of “Taps” being played? Gently,
The human race will end one day, but contrary to the doomsayers' predictions scattered across the Internet and “edutainment” cable channels, Dec. 21, 2012, won't be that day.

Hundreds of Facebook groups, millions of Google hits and “2012,” a new major motion picture, refer to the Dec. 21, 2012, end-times prophecy. The newest insight into humanity’s day of judgment comes from the ancient Maya empire. Our culture has ascribed this inclination of doomsday to the 2012 winter solstice for many reasons.

The winter solstice lands on Dec. 21 every year. But what makes the 2012 date scary to speculators is that the sun's alignment with all of the planets may cause an intense gravitational pull that will elicit a polar shift, throwing Earth into a geological maelstrom. Physics lecturer John Barrick says every 250 million years this solar system completes one revolution around the center of the Milky Way, causing the alignment. And in 2012 the revolution around the galaxy will be complete.

The Seven Ideas That Shook the Universe instructor says if people understood the effects of gravity, they would realize that the alignment would not have a devastating pull on the Earth’s 23.5-degree axis. He says more than eight years ago the planets aligned, and many people were scared for their lives, but nothing — obviously — happened.

“You probably have more gravitational pull stepping outside of a 737 jet at 30,000 feet than you do from the planets' gravitational pull on each other,” Barrick says.

Ancient civilizations were much more aware of the sky’s motions than scientists are today, Barrick says. Unlike modern astronomers, though, the members of ancient civilizations didn’t know why astrological movements in the sky happened.

“Since they didn’t know why, they would assign rather superstitious types of mythological stuff to it,” Barrick says, “trying to reinvent the heavens on Earth and a lot of the things we get from history’s perspective that we look at today. They didn't know how else to explain it, and now we have a firmer hold on why these things take place. And for most cases they don’t cause for any type of torrential devastation throughout the Earth.”

It is a part of the human condition to want to believe in the surreal, he says. Society often fears or makes a god out of what they don’t understand. Throughout recorded history, there have been more than 200 prognostications of end-of-the-world events, he says.

On NASA’s Astrobiology Institute’s Web site, the administration’s senior scientist David Morrison refuted a question posted on the Web site regarding Earth’s demise in 2012 because of the pole shift myth. A reversal among the poles is possible and has happened many times — but a shift is not, Morrison says.

“Unfortunately, those who are trying to scare people about 2012 confuse the two,” he says, “pretending that the bad effects from an impossible sudden shift in the rotation poles will happen when the magnetic poles reverse. And also, there is no evidence that a magnetic reversal will happen anytime soon. So the bottom line is that there is no reason to expect a magnetic reversal, and it would probably not cause any damage even if it did happen.”
The date is just as arbitrary as Dec. 21, 5012, says T. Kam Manahan, an assistant professor in archaeology. Because the Maya used a random creation date, Aug. 11, 3114 B.C.E., the cycle was deep in time, yet far enough forward, placing their civilization right in the middle, he says. There were two types of calendars used by the ancient Maya, he says, and the one that emphasizes the supposed apocalypse is called the long count. It is used as a means of counting one day, 20 days, 360 days, 7,200 days and 144,000 days, he says. The significance for Dec. 21, 2012, is in the 144,000-day cycles called b’ak’tuns, and on the upcoming date, the Long Count Calendar will be reaching its 13th b’ak’tun. Those who fear the doomsday, whether they know it or not, are putting stock into the fact that the Long Count Calendar will reset, signifying the end of times.

Manahan says there is only one inscription in Mayan history representing the date, and he says the writing is most definitely not talking about the end of the world. Jokingly, Manahan says Americans are worried about the end of the world because of the rotten economy and the never-ending wars that the United States is entangled in right now.

“I think there is some appeal in this millenarian idea of an apocalypse and the end being near and all this transformation,” he says. “People have been saying the world is going to end for a long time, and we’re still here.”

Apocalypticism may be attributed to humanity’s innate paranoia mingling with its rudimentary ignorance of astronomy. But, it’s also a tradition.

Armageddono

- Date: Dec. 31, 999 (Julian Calendar)
  Prediction: Exactly one millennium after the birth of Jesus Christ, the apocalypse will commence, an apocalyptic tone prophesized.
  What really happened: Since the end was nigh, no one saw the need to form in the year leading up to the “Apocalypse.” Thousands died from famine. In 1033, a new “corrected” prediction had the world ending a thousand years after Christ’s death.

- Date: Sept. 23, 1186
  Prediction: According to sky-watching scholars in Toledo, Spain, the seven known planets’ alignment in the constellation Libra would cause the usual end-times mayhem: pestilence, plague, famine, etc.
  What really happened: The celestial conjunction came and went without consequence. The Toledo Letter, which portended the string of disasters, even convinced the archbishop of Canterbury. He called for a three-day fast to prevent the disaster. Maybe it worked?

- Date: March 10, 1982
  Prediction: “The Jupiter Effect,” the force of a planetary alignment proposed in a 1974 book of the same name by two astronomers, would manifest solar flares that would create tectonic terror on Terra Firma.
  What really happened: Gainning no credence by his scientific peers, the theory was retracted by author John Gribbin before the doomsday date.

- Date: Sept. 10, 2008
  Prediction: During an intrepid experiment to reenact the Big Bang at the European Organization for Nuclear Research, particles speeding around the 17-mile-long underground tunnel would smash together and create a black hole, which would then devour the Earth.
  What really happened: No black holes in the large Hadron Collider, but nine days after the first test, an electrical failure of the steering magnets caused a massive helium leak. The next test won’t happen until September 2009.

-John Hitch
If you stand still in the restaurant business you die, says Michael Symon, owner of the bistro Lola in downtown Cleveland and winner of the Food Network’s “Next Iron Chef” competition. He also was a temporary host of the cable network’s “Dinner: Impossible.”

During the day, the employees of Lola keep to the beat of Symon’s philosophy. The rhythm of the kitchen resonates with the sound of knives chopping parsley, mixers pureeing parsnip and broths boiling on the range. Hanger steaks settle into a bath of salt. Chorizo and capicolla cover plates for the day’s charcuterie board. The appetizing smells fan through the air, and the culmination of all the sensory stimulation not only echoes the soul of the city, but makes stomachs yearn. We sat down with Symon at Lola to talk about why he hates tofu, his favorite places to eat and why he loves Cleveland.

KYLE ROERINK: Why is Cleveland a great city to work in, and why do you stay in Cleveland?

MICHAEL SYMON: It is a great city to work in because, obviously, the people that are here. It is a city that continues to develop and move forward, and I think that a city its size, compared to other cities its size, has the best dining scene in the country ... It’s my hometown — my family is here. I love the city, and the people have always supported me here. It’s my home.

KR: Where do you see Cleveland in the future?

MS: I think it is going to continue to move forward with the dining scene. We have a tremendous amount of green markets and farmers. I think the food scene will continue to move in that direction. Hopefully, downtown continues to develop at the pace it is. It would be fabulous if more people started living downtown or near downtown because at the end of the day, that’s what makes a city strong. I have high hopes for the medical mart and the convention center and things like that downtown because I think it will draw towners there.

KR: Has Cleveland inspired your cuisine?

MS: Very much so. I think our cuisine is driven by the city itself. We try to do food that is approachable for the city and maybe spins on things that are Cleveland classics, like pierogies, different sausages and things of that nature. I think Cleveland’s melting-pot mentality is inspired by the way we cook.

KR: In Cleveland, where does Michael Symon go to get a steak?

MS: Red (a steakhouse in Beachwood).

KR: Where does Michael Symon go to get a burger?

MS: Lolita for happy hour. (Lolita is Symon’s budget-friendly restaurant in Cleveland’s Tremont neighborhood.)

KR: It’s game seven. Cavs are in the finals, it’s an away game and you’re throwing a party. What do you cook for your guests?

MS: I would do a lot of comfort food, kind of braised dishes. I would definitely do some wings, a big pot of chili, like our pork-cheek chili, maybe some short ribs, all that stuff. It’s got to be hot and something that people can scoop at all game.

KR: What is your least favorite thing to cook with?

MS: Tofu. It has no flavor whatsoever. You might as well cook a sponge.

KR: What is your favorite city in the world to eat in?

MS: San Taurine, Greece, because the pure simplicity of it and how literally you can get a fish that came out of the water three hours beforehand.

KR: Do a lot of chefs not stick with simplicity and try to do too much with their plates and presentations and flavors?

MS: Absolutely. To me, the more confidence a chef has in himself, the more secure he is and the simpler the food will get. A lot of times the food is too busy. For us, we spend so much time searching for the perfect ingredients, and I feel there is no reason to muddle them with 100 different flavors.

KR: When did you start cooking?

MS: I have always cooked with my family. Since I was a little kid, and I started working in restaurants when I was 15.

KR: How has your mom influenced what you serve at all of your restaurants?

MS: My mom and my dad both have influenced the way I cook. We always say the cuisine we do is more of a heritage cuisine, and it stems from things in my childhood.

KR: What are the hardships about being a chef in a tight economy?

MS: Fortunately the economy has not hit us hard yet. I think at the end of the day, truly great chefs love to cook to make people happy. Whether the economy is good or the economy is bad, the reason restaurants succeed or fail is whether they can put a smile on people’s faces when they leave the restaurant.

LOLA: 2058 E. 4th St. Cleveland, Ohio 216-621-5652
LOLITA: 900 Literary Road Cleveland, Ohio 216-771-5652

q&a with MICHAEL SYMON

Cleveland’s celebrity chef reveals why he stays in his hometown and how to make the perfect meal

BY kyle roerink

PHOTOGRAPH adam harris
I’ve always loved New York. Some people find that strange because I’m shy and have lived in Ohio most of my life and think I wouldn’t last a day there, poor thing. Like a lady I once worked with told me, “New York is a tough place,” adding later, “You wouldn’t last a day there.”

You’ll shoot your eye out, kid.

But I decide to take the semester off and move to New York City anyway, in a classic tale of a girl in the city: A 19-year-old brimming with doe-eyed optimism and the kind of delusions that exist in television shows like “Friends.” The One Where No One Works and They All Have Great Apartments.

I’m sharing a one-bedroom apartment in Spanish Harlem with a roommate I don’t know much about. For the past few weeks, we’ve corresponded through e-mail, but what she’s really like remains a mystery. On the drive there, my dad asks how I can be certain this person isn’t an ax murderer — or a complete psychopath. He rattles off a long list of criminalities, which I can’t recall in detail, except that he uses the word “cannibal,” and in all of his scenarios, I am killed in my sleep and possibly eaten.

“I’m pretty sure she won’t be a cannibal,” I say.

He turns off the radio.

“But you can’t be positive, can you?”

Her name is Shannon, and she ends up being a 20-something vegetarian who kindly offers to help unload my things. While my dad finds a parking spot, Shannon and I go in to see the apartment. The hallway leading to the staircase is long and narrow,
lit by a flat fluorescent light that flickers on and off. Discarded newspaper fliers litter the floor. It smells like urine. As we walk up the stairs, I begin to panic.

“What do you think so far?” Shannon asks. “I know the stair-well is scary.”

“Oh, it’s fine,” I reply, walking past a half-eaten Blow Pop that has attracted a small colony of ants.

Has anyone died here lately?

We live in Apartment No. 9 on the third floor. Shannon fumbles with her keys while I stare at the gold-plated “9” on the door, waiting for one of its nails to somehow break and swing ominously into a “6.”

The apartment itself isn’t bad. It’s tiny but clean. It has three windows that look out across the airshaft to other windows that look out across to us. It’s January, but the apartment is stifling. It has no ventilation or cross breeze, and I wonder what it’s like on a sunny August afternoon.

Shannon tells me I can take the bedroom. She’ll sleep in the living room. The radiator in my room is steaming like a teakettle on the stove, and it actually makes that whistling sound every few minutes or so. No wonder it’s so hot. The bottom leaks a little, but I figure it’s just the condensation. I find a plastic bowl and put it underneath to catch the water. I open a window.

After I unpack, it’s time to say goodbye. My dad gives me a hug and tells me to call him if I need anything. I feel the swell of panic rising again, but I don’t want him to worry. If he worries,
so will I. We’re both scared, and for the sake of protecting the other, we remain silent. He closes the door behind him.

Shannon apologizes for having to leave, too, but she has to go to work. I tell her it’s Ok, that I have to sort through my things and get organized. As I sit on my air mattress and fold clothes, I hear a neighbor next door having it out with his wife. Someone across the air shaft has children, and the youngest cries for his mother. Out of the corner of my eye, I think I see something skitter across the kitchen floor. The traffic outside plays a low, deep hum in the night, the bass of a five- borough jazz quintet. In a city of eight million, I ache, I am alone.

I work as an intern at “The Colbert Report,” the sole reason I moved out here in the first place. I log and transcribe footage, locate props, assist with the audience and fetch coffee. The hours are long, but I like it. I stay late to watch the show tape live, mostly because I want to, partly because I don’t have a TV and secretly because I don’t want to go home. In fact, I try to get away from the apartment as much as possible.

On my days off, I visit museums. I’ve been to the Met four times, the American Museum of Natural History three times and the Museum of Modern Art twice. Other days, I wander aimlessly around the city, pretending to have a destination as important as the people around me. I try my best to blend in. It’s my silly dream for a tourist to ask me for directions. Eventually, a woman does and, caught up in my own excitement, I send her the wrong way.

From downtown Manhattan, I ride the 6 train back to the apartment. My stop is 103rd Street. The stop before that is 96th and before that it’s 86th. You can always tell who’s getting off where. It’s not so much a race thing, but a class issue. The well-to-do in overcoats and shiny shoes get off between 77th and 96th. That leaves the rest of us. Some ride the train to the end of the line. Some don’t have anywhere else to go.

Walking home one night, a girl who looks about my age asks if I have any spare change.

“T’m hungry,” she says, eyeing my backpack. “You got anything in that bag of yours?”

“No, I’m sorry,” I say.

I avoid looking at her in the eye. This is what people do in New York. You look away when people ask for money. It happens a lot. The reality is you can’t help everyone, and that is what you tell yourself at night to go to sleep.

When I get to my building, I decide to turn around and go back. Maybe it’s because she’s my age or because I feel guilty, I don’t know, but I want to give her money. By the time I reach the spot where she had been, she’s gone, replaced by someone else who asks for change. Homelessness is the face of many and the face of one.

“I have five dollars,” I say.

“That’ll do,” the man says. “That’ll do just fine.”

The air is cold; I can see my breath. And his. I wonder where he’ll go.

For the second time that night, I head home, though the walk feels remarkably different.

As the months pass and I settle into my internship, I realize Apartment No. 9 is out to get me. When I wake up, I take a cold shower. Not by choice, but because we have no hot water. The irony that my radiator leaks bucketfuls of scalding water is not lost on me; I often spend time trying to figure out how to bathe in it. On the opposite end of that spectrum is the foul-smelling brown liquid that occasionally leaks from the ceiling and once caused the kitchen floor to flood. The landlord says it’s because of a problem with a toilet upstairs.

Along with leaks, I find cockroaches everywhere, creeping in our cupboards and crawling up our shower drain. I keep a can of Raid near my pillow like a former federal agent would keep a gun under his. It’s my only defense against the slithering things that lay in wait in Apartment No. 9’s countless cracks and crevices.

Every night, I discover something new and horrible about the apartment: the neighbors across the air shaft who play loud music in the middle of the night and sing along drunkenly or the flaky bits of ceiling I find on my bed in the morning.

At least the people on my floor are pleasant. A family of five
lives in apartment no. 10. The father speaks limited English but knows enough to tell me how beautiful his daughter is. On the second floor is an elderly woman who seems to live alone. The one time I catch a peek into her apartment, I wish I hadn’t. It looks as if she hasn’t thrown anything away in years. And I have yet to meet the people who live above me, the ones with the broken toilet, but I’d like to. I’d let them know that with every flush, they’re ruining my life.

My friends tell me to move if I want to live to see my 20s. I tell them I’m just waiting for the damn place to implode because that’s the next logical step in a series of unfortunate events.

But to be honest, it’s growing on me. What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger. Living so close to the Upper East Side, to unfathomable wealth and prestige and co-ops, I am the underdog.

Or Underdog. The apartment is my telephone booth.

It’s been five months since I moved to New York. In May, Shannon is leaving for Los Angeles. I plan to live in a brownstone in Park Slope in Brooklyn for the summer. Park Slope has treelined streets, trendy restaurants and boutiques, People drive Subaru Foresters and push doublewide strollers while they sip Starbucks and chat about real estate. It’s the suburbs. It’s nothing like it is here. In Park Slope, young families thrive. In Spanish Harlem, you can get divorced for $399.

Soon I realize it’s my last night in the apartment. For once, the water is hot, and my radiator stops leaking. A cool spring breeze rushes through our open windows, and, instead of the music my neighbors like to blare across the airshaft, I hear the playing of a slightly out-of-tune piano. I have no idea where it’s coming from, and I don’t recognize the song. But it’s melancholy and a little bit sweet. There’s something sad about it.

The next morning, it rains. The water is cold again. The ceiling has started to leak and so has the radiator. I kill a cockroach in the bathroom sink before spotting another one that I decide to spare. I leave my key on the table for Shannon and move out.

This kid lasted more than a day. Oh, home sweet home.
RISE UP, CLEVELAND

What a championship would mean for Cleveland

by ben wolford

photographs

rami daud

adam harris

daniel maxwell
F

from East Fourth Street, you can see The Q three blocks away where Lakers and Cavs fans are start-
ing to go into the game. Strangers drift up and down the restaurant-lined alley. Sometimes they exchange compliments as they pass each other.

“I like that jersey,” one man shouts across the street to another.

The guy smiles and touches his LeBron James jersey.

“That’s where it all started,” the man shouts again.

LeBron James scoops up some talcum powder and swirls it around on his hands.

The lights are on, and there’s no spotlight, but there might as well be. No one at Quicken Loans Arena is watching anything else.

LeBron mounds some powder onto one hand and heaves it 10 feet over his head in his signature puff as the audience explodes.

Nike features the pre-game ritual in a dramatized, black-and-white “Just Do It” commercial for LeBron’s latest sneaker, the Zoom LeBron VI.

He has the third-most popular jersey in the NBA and is the front-runner for the Maurice Podoloff Trophy, awarded to the season’s Most Valuable Player.

“We’ve never had a LeBron James before,” says Joe Tait, radio voice of the franchise for all but two seasons. In fact, few franchises have ever had such a transcendent player. The Chicago Bulls had Michael Jordan, who brought in six titles and has sold his share of shoes. But “this is a first for the Cavaliers,” Tait says.

It all started when (a pingpong) ball finally bounced Cleveland’s way. By winning the top spot in the 2003 NBA draft, the Cavs earned the right to select an 18-year-old phenom from Akron’s St. Vincent-St. Mary High School. LeBron James was hyped more than any other high school player. ESPN televised his games and Sports Illustrated dubbed him “The Chosen One.” Now he’s revered as royalty: King James. His first season was the only time he didn’t set a franchise scoring record, but he did win Rookie of the Year. Since then, he has led the Cavaliers to four straight playoffs, including their first NBA Finals appearance in 2007.

Even Jordan didn’t win titles by himself. Seven-time all-star Scottie Pippen was just as pivotal. Cavaliers’ General Manager Danny Ferry has always sought a super sidekick for LeBron. Now he has one: Mo Williams. He joins a starting rotation of Zydrunas Ilgauskas, Delonte West and Anderson Varejao, who all give the Cavs their best chance ever of bringing multiple championships home.

“Nothing can take a big city and turn it into a small town faster than a championship team,” says Terry Pluto, Plain Dealer sports columnist and one of the foremost authorities on Cleveland sports. In 2007, he published his latest book, “The Franchise: LeBron James and the Remaking of the Cleveland Cavaliers.”

“It’s things people talk about at work.” Pluto says, “It’s a great diversion is really what it is. It’s also something that can unite races and classes, whereas something like politics could be very dividing. You go to a game and there could be a guy who’s a Greyhound bus driver sitting next to a millionaire businessman, and they both are just cheering for LeBron.”

People already talk about the Cavs at work. But there’s a new word in the conversation, a word rarely spoken with optimistic in-

flection in Northeast Ohio: championship.

Championships are slippery things in Cleveland. The Cleveland Indians didn’t finish in either of their World Series appearances in the mid-1990s or close out against the Red Sox in 2007. The Indians boast two World Series crowns, the most recent one coming out of the same year as the color newsreel, 1948. And the Browns ... uh ... they’re rebuilding.

To their credit, the Browns earned Cleveland its last championship by beating the Baltimore Colts in 1964, the year before the first Super Bowl. (Baltimore secured its revenge by stealing the Browns and winning a Super Bowl as the Ravens in 2000.) The Browns have never been to the big show, flirting with the notion three times in the late ’80s.

As for the Cavs, their trophy case is still barren.

But this season they rank among the Eastern Conference elite, along with the Boston Celtics and the Orlando Magic. They haven’t had any luck against either team on the road. Fortunately, if the Cavs face either the Magic or Celtics in the playoffs, game seven would be in Cleveland. Almost invincible at home, the Cavs’ only loss came against their purple and gold opponents.

LeBron and the Cavaliers lost both regular season games to Bry-

ant and the Lakers, a team with 14 national titles and a legacy that includes icons like Wilt Chamberlain, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Magic Johnson. Their culture is winning. Cleveland’s culture has been losing. A role-reversal is needed this summer to prevent a regional depression and provide a need for a trophy case.

Cleveland sports fans have been conditioned for 45 years to expect failure — The Drive, The Fumble, The Error — terse phrases from a troubled playoff past. Perhaps this season, no John Elways will cover 98 yards in 15 plays, no Ernest Byners will be stripped at the 3-yard line and no Tony Fernandezes will forfeit double-play opportunities.

Todd Brandeberry of Geneva has been watching the Cavs for a while.

“I’ve followed them since their inception, and this is actually more exciting than what we had back then with Austin Carr and all those guys,” he says on his way into the Feb. 24 game against the Memphis Grizzlies, which the Cavs won handily. Incidentally, Carr’s 1976 team made all the way to the Eastern Conference playoffs, but Jim Chones, the leading scorer, broke his foot two days before the series began and the Cavs went on to lose.

Tait has seen all that. The veteran sportscaster says he doesn’t “get excited about much of anything anymore.”

“Let’s wait till they play it out,” he says. “I mean, LeBron gets hit by a bus in Phoenix. Why, all of a sudden it’s a whole different game.”

Cleveland fans would just add it to the list. The Drive. The Fum-

ble. The Absent-minded Bus Driver.

Because of all the flukes and failure, ESPN’s Kieran Darcy called Cleveland the number one most tortured sports city. But this city’s torture goes beyond sports heartbreak.

Cleveland is the second poorest major city other than Detroit, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. In 2007, nearly a third of Clevelanders lived below the poverty line ($16,530 or less in income). That’s 17 percent above the national average.

Educational attainment and unemployment rates were similarly grim. And when the housing bubble burst late last year, Cleve-

land’s soaring foreclosure rates caught the eye of the national me-
dia. All this, and not to mention the city’s population has been steadily decreasing, losing more than 130,000 people since 1980 with no sign of stopping.
The Quicken Loans Arena is one of few places in Cleveland still attracting out-of-towners.

Every purple or gold thread on Rus Walia’s body reveals the city he came from, where he was “born and raised.”

He and his two friends look around like out-of-towners from their seats on a fountain in Tower City Center in downtown Cleveland. A general enthusiasm circulates among the people buzzing through the lobby. Kobe Bryant and the Los Angeles Lakers are in town.

“We’re seeing the two best players on the planet go at each other,” says Walia, a 28-year-old Lakers season ticket holder.

In 1970, the Cavaliers’ first year in the NBA, few would have flown all the way from Los Angeles for a basketball game in Cleveland, the mistake by the lake that has the dirty Cuyahoga. Yes, it caught on fire. No, not once. Ten times.

But those days are gone. The river is clean(er), and the Cavs have LeBron.

Tad Carper, the Cavaliers’ vice president of communications, says 30 percent of game attendees now come from out of state, and more than 65 percent are from outside the Cleveland designated market area.

“So what that means is when folks are coming from outside of the area — outside of the state, certainly — they’re coming in and spending money locally,” Carper says. “And the better the team gets, the longer we play. We end up going into June for the NBA finals, and each one of those games has a multi-million-dollar economic impact on the region.”

Actually, it adds up to $4.6 million from each game Cleveland hosts, says Tamera Brown, vice president of marketing for Positively Cleveland.

It’s an organization that tries to draw “business and leisure travelers” into the city. They compile statistics on the Cavaliers economic contribution. In the 2008 regular season, the Cavs’ economic impact was almost $123 million, according to Positively Cleveland.

“We work with the Cavs to develop the background information based on how many people from out of town are coming versus how many people in town, and then come up with everything they spend on souvenirs and meals and parking and all that sort of thing,” Brown says.

It’s money spent by people like Walia and his friends, who said, “We’re here till Tuesday,” two days past the Cavs-Lakers game. What will he do the extra days?

“Party.”

Flannery’s Pub on Prospect Avenue is just about the closest place you can “party” without being inside The Q. Barney Patterson, a kitchen manager, says traffic through the restaurant has gone up since the Cavs have been playing well. He says the bar has been packed.

The nearly $123 million isn’t just a drop of water in a burning river, either.
“It absolutely does something. If you consider that that’s just for the people who go straight to the game, and that it doesn’t include anybody else and their spending or the taxes, then it really is a very significant impact for the community,” Brown says.

They’ve only been tracking numbers like this since 2006, so there’s no way to see if that amount has increased since the pre-LeBron era. But Dedrick Stephens, Cleveland commissioner of Assessments and Licenses, says the municipal taxes collected from games have definitely gone up.

“Over the last seven years, it was more than it has ever been,” he says. That’s because game attendance is the highest it has ever been. They sell out nearly every game. When LeBron joined the team in 2002, average attendance shot up nearly 7,000 from the year before.

Eight percent of every ticket sold is taxed directly into the city’s general fund, Stephens says. On top of that, 8 percent of every dollar spent on parking goes into the fund, and 3 percent of money spent on hotels is taxed, too.

He says specific numbers on what the Cavaliers pay the city in taxes are confidential, but in the grand scheme of Cleveland revenue, taxes from Cavs games aren’t saving the city. “I wouldn’t say [it’s] a lot,” he says. “However, once you start looking at the trickle effect — people come downtown, they have to eat, they look for entertainment and all the other things that go on — it helps the economy, of course. Eventually it starts to add up the longer the Cavs are in the playoffs.”

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**CAVS CALCULATIONS**

- **8 percent**: tax on each ticket sold
- **$55.95**: average Cavaliers game ticket price
- **20,562**: Quicken Loans Arena capacity
- **$92,035**: amount that goes into the City of Cleveland general fund in taxes for a sold-out game

- **8 percent**: tax on each parking sale
- **$10**: average parking price
- **6,854**: number of cars, assuming three people per car
- **$5,483**: amount that goes into the City of Cleveland general fund in taxes for a sold-out game

- **3 percent**: tax on each dollar spent at a hotel
- **$150**: average hotel price per night
- **6,169**: about the number of out-of-state attendees to a sold-out game
- **$6,940**: amount that goes into the City of Cleveland general fund in taxes for a sold-out game, assuming all out-of-town attendees stay in a hotel, four to a room

**$123 million**: Cavs economic impact, 2007-2008 regular season

**$4.6 million**: Cavs economic impact, each night the Cavs had 2008 playoff games in Cleveland
"You got tickets?" the man on the street corner asks.

Lots of people do, this Lakers game is packed. But the ticket scalper can’t find anyone to sell to, and he’s reticent to talk. “I got none.” If he lands a sale, though, it’ll go for at least $100, he says.

Up the road and around the corner, people cram into the Winking Lizard. They aren’t courtside, but the dollars they drop at the bar stay in Cleveland.

Still, one economist isn’t convinced professional sports teams have their alleged financial impact. Ian Hudson, professor of economics at the University of Manitoba in Canada, has conducted research that suggests as much. He looked at how professional sports teams in a city affect the employment rate.

“All I can say is that none of the impacts that they claim — whether it’s tourism or funds-moving or people-moving — must be very large at all,” he says, otherwise the unemployment would have been impacted, and it wasn’t, his 1999 research found.

“There is no evidence that teams make a significant positive impact to a city’s economy,” Hudson’s report reads.

When Browns owner Art Modell was moving the team to Baltimore in 1995, Norm Krumholz, Cleveland State University professor and urban planner, told Fortune magazine the jobs are “seasonal, temporary, low-income jobs.”

“Sports is not a tremendous part of the regional economy,” he says. “It occupies a lot of space in the newspapers, but it’s not a tremendous part of the regional economy — it’s relatively small.”

But Krumholz says the Cavs’ run of success does no harm. “Every little bit counts, particularly in a city that’s been so devastated with job losses. The Cavs are hot. Lots of people go to see the Cavs ... they’re spending money, and that’s going to help the local economy.”

Even Hudson concedes money isn’t everything. “What you could argue is that sports teams create some intangible sense of civic pride for their city,” he says. “It gives people something to talk about, something in common, something to cheer about. It makes them feel better about where they live.”

The fans in the “Loudville” (that’s a euphemism for nose-bleed) section of The Q don’t seem upset about where they live. A “Cleveland rocks!” chant echoes down from the rafters at the Grizzlies game. “Cleveland Rocks,” the song “The Drew Carey Show” made famous, might be Cleveland’s only anthem.

Chicago and New York got Frank Sinatra. Cleveland got Tan Hunter.

“In terms of how Cleveland feels about itself,” Pluto says, “really, until the city gets itself back up on its economic feet, takes care of some of the unemployment and that kind of thing, there’s always going to be kind of an inferiority about Cleveland. A championship won’t change that.

“I just think Cleveland would be a lot better off if they didn’t worry so much about what everybody else thought of them in California or New York. We’re from here, and we like it here, and that’s really what matters.”
Tom Edwards’ friends reminisce about the 21-year-old’s life and lament how short it was.
The loss of a friend is one of the hardest things a student has to deal with during college.

By: ted hamilton

Photographs: sam twarek
One afternoon in May 2007, I am walking to my room in Verder Hall when I get a phone call from my friend Corey. We do not talk much anymore, so I know something is wrong. After the initial pleasantries, he springs it on me.

“Cowboy is dead.”

Cowboy’s the nickname for our 21-year-old friend Tom Edwards, my best friend of more than 15 years. We grew up so close together I can see his front porch from mine.

His nickname comes from his outdoorsy lifestyle — he loves to fish, hunt, ride horses and wrestle steers. He dresses the part well: boots, big broad-brimmed hat and a big belt buckle he won during a rodeo competition.

After an extended silence, I think to breathe and ask, “Are you sure?”

Unfortunately, he is positive. His dad — who works with Cowboy — found out that the night before, Cowboy and his friend had gone mudding, a common sport in rural areas, involving people driving anything with four-wheel drive through a muddy patch of land.

Cowboy’s lifted truck couldn’t get through all of the mud, and the muffler was plugged with the mud he and his friend were driving through. The poisonous fumes seeped into the cab, killing them both.

I know my friend is talking, but I find myself on autopilot, hardly listening. I make my way toward the stairs of my dorm in a haze, my whole body feeling sluggish — like it weighs 2 tons — until I finally make myself stop walking. I lean against a wall and slide down.

“He was a great guy,” Corey says.

“Uh-huh.”

“Remember the last time we all hung out?” Corey says. His tone of voice just seems wrong, like we are talking about football, not our friends’ death. “You guys wanted to try to drive the truck through the shallow part of the pond?”

“Uh-huh.”

I say as little as possible because I am two seconds away from bawling. My eyes have begun to water, and people are giving me looks that say, “Take your drama somewhere else, kid.”

I finally get off the phone with Corey, and escaping the conversation is like a personal victory. Like I am in control of something. I wipe my eyes and start the climb up to my room on the fourth floor. With each step my feet get heavier, and it’s difficult to see straight; my breathing becomes labored like I am running at full speed. When I open the door to my floor, I realize I do not want to be alone right now.

Luckily my friend Morgan lives down the hall and I stumble my way to her room. The memory seems as surreal as the moment — I feel like the floodgates are about to open again and I half-run the rest of the way. I stagger to the open door, a wild look in my eye. I can remember Morgan and her roommate staring at me, and I manage to blurt out, “Cowboy’s dead,” through a new rush of tears.

The next hour is a blur as thoughts, memories and regrets fight each other for room in my skull. I remember calling my parents but not being able to tell them. Morgan has to take the phone from me and break the news to my dad. By the time I shore up my feelings and get the phone back, I hear my dad start to choke up. He had watched Cowboy and me grow up together, from us shooting each other with water guns in my father’s front yard to taking our girlfriends to prom.

The next day, I decide the best thing is to just act like it’s any other day. I throw on my work clothes and cross the parking lot to Prentice Café. A lot of my friends ask what is wrong, and I just let the words tumble out of my mouth while trying not to think about what they really mean.

My oldest friend is dead, and I can’t understand why. I don’t know what to do or how to feel. All I want to do is scream, cry and, after all is said and done, drink myself into a coma. I can’t stand to be here, but I do not want to be alone and sit around the dorm trapped with my thoughts.

Finally, the manager sends me home. After an hour and 15 minutes of my walking like a zombie, my eyes glazed over and going through the motions of flipping hamburgers, I decide he is right — I need to go lie down. I get home and sit at my computer, trying to block out the memories of all the time I spent with Cowboy, but all it seems I can think of is drinking beers with him while fishing or playing pool or riding in his truck.

Suddenly Brad Paisley’s song “Time Well Wasted” comes on, and I finally break down.

I let out the scream of a wounded animal, pick up my heavy wooden chair and throw it as hard as I can into the closet.

Afterwards, for good measure, I punch and kick the air conditioning unit until my knuckles are raw, and I feel like my toes are broken.

Letting It Out

Thomas Harding was on his way to class when his mother called and told him to turn off his phone. Thomas, a senior technology major, was another of Cowboy’s closest friends and found out about Cowboy’s death from his parents.

His mother had wanted to wait until he was out of class to give him the news, but instead ended up catching him right as he was about to go to class at the Kent State Tuscarawas Campus.

That is when she told him what had happened.

Out of control is the best way to describe what Thomas felt when he found out. He says his faith helped him through the worst of it.

“Probably the hardest thing I’ve ever done in my life was put my best friend in the ground at 21,” he says.

For a while, one of the things that helped him was to talk to Cowboy as if he were right beside him. Thomas would talk to him when he was driving or he would stop at his grave. To him it did not matter if Cowboy could hear or not. It helped him accept his friend’s passing.

Thomas thought of his friend every single day the first year after Cowboy had died. He says he still thinks about him and will never forget him — but the pain is not as sharp as it once was.

...the best way to help get over the ache you feel is to share a story of the person you lost.
REMEMBER

Thomas Harding (left) and Ted Hamilton (right) are beyond grieving, but still think about their friend who died from carbon monoxide poisoning which seeped into his truck cab.

One of the things that helped was that Cowboy’s passing was as gentle as possible. When someone dies from carbon monoxide poisoning, it is said to be relatively painless.

“Everybody’s got a time and place — you never know when you’re going to go,” Thomas says. “I’m just happy he went in a peaceful way, you know? I mean, he could have been torn apart or he could have suffered, but poison gas is what happened, and they said he pretty much just fell asleep. I mean, that’s comforting to know it wasn’t painful.”

Thomas says he thinks it is best to accept the loss and work at moving on. The important thing is to remember the times you shared and keep the person in your heart and memory. If you lose a close friend or family member unexpectedly, there is a lot to get over, but it is something that needs to be worked on.

Keeping all of the emotions inside instead of letting them out is not good for a person, and Thomas says it will just cause more problems in the end. You just need to hold on to that person in your head without getting upset about it, he says.

“Even if it’s by yourself, just remembering a person helps them live on,” he says.

I think Thomas is right — the best way to help get over the ache you feel is to share a story of the person you lost. There have been many times I have hung out with my friends who never met him and when something happens that reminds me of Cowboy, I say, “Oh yeah! I remember this one time when my buddy Cowboy and I...”

The Long, Hard Goodbye

The last time I see Cowboy alive is on a land-bridge that crosses over Tappan Lake. We are fishing with our friend Eric and drinking a couple beers. At one point a sheriff’s deputy stops, and we nudge our empty cans behind the tackle boxes. Cowboy goes up to the car and starts smooth-talking, mentioning how the fishing is going bad, but how it was pretty good last week. Once he’s satisfied we aren’t up to anything, the deputy slowly pulls away.

As soon as he turns off the bridge, we all open new beers.

We sit there for hours, just bullshitting about life and where it is going. Cowboy is in a serious relationship with a girl he loves, he has a good paying job at the most impressive factory in the area and he already owns his own house.

Cowboy shows me something that night, something he figures I should have learned at the beginning of my college career. I was, after all, a “college boy” as he likes to put it. I tell him no, I do not know how to shotgun a beer.

Not long before I leave for the night, he gets out his keys and shows me, puncturing a hole through the side of the aluminum skin of the beer. I don’t do so well, and he says as much, but I can tell he’s excited he has taught me something new.

“Take it easy, man,” he says as I pull the door shut on my Ford Taurus.

It is past midnight and we are silhouettes to each other. The only light hitting the bridge is the moon reflecting off the lake. I start the car and put it in drive, but before I take my foot off of the brake I lean out the window to say good-bye.

“You too,” I say, “I’ll catch you later.”
When asked why he would sacrifice his week-long respite for complete strangers 1,100 miles away, Jacob Rooroo was honest.

"I went because of a girl," he admitted. The shy freshman from Clyde had developed a crush on a co-ed. She was going on the trip, so naturally, he signed up as well.

After shelling out $299, Rooroo's romantic gesture backfired. His crush started dating someone else just weeks before the trip. Initially, he wanted to back out.

"I was like, 'Man, I want a refund.' Then the guilt hit me."

After introspection, he said to himself, "Just suck it up and go."

Rooroo did go, in a long caravan of buses that took almost a full day to reach the Mississippi coastline. He remembered "the horrendous lines for the bathroom" along the way.

The conditions would not get any better.

They arrived in Tent City, which Rooroo says reminded him of the show "M.A.S.H." Ten to 15 volunteers were crammed into each tent.

Over the course of a week removing debris and "mucking out" houses, Rooroo discovered the images on television couldn't prepare him. "You don't know it, how bad it is, until you get down there," he said.

The trip made him a changed man, he said. "It brought me back to reality."

"It's something I won't ever forget. It's something I don't want to," he said.
The Gulf Coast went from a vibrant escape to a global charity case in a day. Almost four years after Hurricane Katrina, volunteers from Kent State still answer the call to service.

It’s fitting that the casino-laden Mississippi coast would get help from a bet. After playing some racquetball at the Student Wellness and Recreation Center in Fall 2005, Gary Padak, dean of undergraduate studies, and chef Ron Perkins made a weight-loss wager in which the loser would donate $500 to the winner’s charity of choice. They remembered George Garrison, Pan-African studies professor, who had just driven a truckload of supplies to the devastated Gulf Coast. After talking with Garrison, their little wager inflated to a full-blown effort to support Katrina victims in Mississippi, which Padak says was “shuttled to second-place in the news.”

By November, Kent State United for the Gulf Coast had formed. The following spring break, a group of 300 volunteers from Kent State and 100 more from the surrounding area volunteered to help those affected by the storm in Pass Christian, Miss. An estimated 35-foot tall tidal surge, a U.S. record, blindsided the quiet town.

The volunteer base from Kent has dwindled over the years as Katrina fades from memory. Sixty-five people — 20 of whom are returning volunteers — went on the most recent trip from March 21 to March 28. They returned to Pass Christian to work with Habitat for Humanity and Camp Coast Care.

The incentives have improved. Return volunteers pay $199. First-timers still pay $299. Students can also earn one course credit for making the trip. Pamela Jones, academic program coordinator for undergraduate studies, says the work also builds a strong résumé and fosters personal development.

“It defines your character, your maturity level, your degree of risk...
taking and defines that you are an individual comfortable with stepping out of your safe zone," Jones says.

Roope agrees.

"It's that self-actualization everyone tries for," he says.

Roope, now on Padak's administrative support staff, has remained faithful, returning six more times to the Biloxi area including this past spring break. He even recruited his younger brother Nicholas, a Kent State freshman.

The January trip was in jeopardy, because Jones, as the primary organizer, couldn't juggle planning two annual expeditions with her university-related work. Roope and two other students, Sarah Weekly, a seven-trip veteran, and Emma Sherrie, who made all but the last two, took charge.

"They handled all the details, from beginning to end," Jones said.

The small contingent of volunteers worked with Camp Victor Ministries, a Lutheran-based organization serving Jackson County, Miss., founded because of Hurricane Katrina. Comprised of a full-time paid staff, long- and short-term volunteers, the former sewing factory in Ocean Springs has helped about 29,000 families. The staff there says the rebuilding is only about 30 percent done and could take another eight to 10 years.

Roope doesn't know how long his streak will go, but he wants to
help one person at a time. He has seen the region's three-year metamorphosis from wastelands back to beach towns and wants to see it through.

"We're not doing something half-assed. We're going to finish what we started. So many people have been let down. The whole point is to get their lives back to the way it was."

**Rebuilding faith**

Nine college guys on winter break in New Orleans. It's an archetypal blueprint for disaster, by crude comedy movie standards.

These construction management majors used their hands, hammers and skill to build houses for New Orleans Area Habitat for Humanity. It was their second year in the city. The experienced builders had also worked with Habitat for Humanity Greater Canton.

"To have them understand the lingo and the mindset, it's super invaluable for us," said Alexis Tusa, New Orleans Habitat spokesperson.

Even more invaluable is getting this professional labor for free. Of course, anyone who's been to Northeast Ohio in the winter knows five days of southern sunshine are worth a week of hard labor.

After the first day of sawing and sweating, the guys went to Jimmy Buffett's Margaritaville in the French Quarter. Leader Neal Konesky struck up a conversation with a local named Frank at the bar. He explained to Frank why the group had flown to the Crescent City from Kent State.

Through their conversation, Konesky learned a lot about this man with the thick Southern accent. Frank lived in a million dollar house up until the end of August 2005. A Category 5 hurricane and systematic levee failure later, Frank's home and more than 80 percent of New Orleans were submerged in a mix of sewage, salt water and despair. In southern Louisiana 200,000 homes in all were damaged, according to the Louisiana Recovery Authority.

Frank was one of the lucky ones; he had flood insurance — as did 65 percent of the residents. The rest would have to call a FEMA trailer or federally subsidized apartment home.

When the meal was over and it was time to pay, the waitress told the travelers everything was on Frank. It was his way of thanking complete strangers for still caring.

Konesky said other acts of kindness and expressions of gratitude trailed the men the whole week.

"They were stunned people would fly across the country and pay out of their own pocket to help," Konesky said.

Sponsorship from the Mechanical Contractors of America of Cleveland, of which they are student members and Konesky is the president, paid for much of the airfare and accommodations. Working concessions at Indians' games and building cornhole boards also helped. The guys were responsible for their meals — the exception being the one courtesy of Frank.

Habitat for Humanity directed the volunteers to the Upper 9th Ward — the deluged district where people waited for help to come as Americans watching from their sofas wondered why no one came.

Since then, help has never been in short supply. Neither is the work. Rebuilding projects have sprouted up throughout the storm-torn ward. But for every new house, a string of rotted relics remains.

The progress disappointed Konesky, who had volunteered in the ward the previous year as well. "I expected to see less people living under bridges and living in tents. I expected to see more progress," he said.

You could spend a whole day walking through the French Quarter, visiting "authentic" voodoo gift shops and sampling bits of praline, unaware that another world exists on the northern side of Interstate 10. Scores of mangled houses linger throughout the 9th Ward like jack-o-lanterns left until December.

To meet the demand, Habitat for Humanity has increased the number of homes it works on from 10 homes a year pre-Katrina to 84 in

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**TEAMWORK** Kent State's construction management student organization members (left to right) Tyler Wilhelm, Bob Fiala, Kevin Miazga, Kyle Craven, Jesse Acevedo, Eric Marchetti, Zach Durbin, Neal Konesky and Cory Bevis. Photo courtesy of Neal Konesky.
2008. Its most visionary project is Musicians Village, an eight-acre neighborhood of uniformly constructed, pastel-colored houses that looks like a giant Easter basket in a graveyard. The enclave, brainchild of native sons Harry Connick Jr. and Branford Marsalis, provides affordable Habitat houses to local musicians. Once complete, it will have 72 single-family homes, five duplexes available for senior musicians to rent and the Ellis Marsalis Center for Music. The center will act as a stage and classroom for both budding and veteran musicians, ensuring the cradle of jazz will always sway.

The Ohio volunteers tenaciously swarmed the project, working on 30 houses during the week, more than enough for a few ensembles.

At lunchtime, the neighborhood residents broke out their instruments for an impromptu jam session for the volunteers.

One of the residents, Jesse Moore, usually plays solo, but he’s warming up to the idea of a musical community. “It’s an incredible sociological experiment.”

Moore, who justifiably calls himself a lucky man, nabbed the last house in the village — one the Kent State volunteers helped complete. To obtain his 1,200-square foot house, he, like all recipients, had to log 350 hours of work — so-called “Sweat Equity” — on Habitat projects. That’s the down payment, while the rest is paid off over the next 20 years, at $350 to $600 a month. This includes both homeowners and flood insurance. The shotgun houses — named for their long and narrow frames — are built to the strict Florida hurricane code and stand on about five feet of cement block legs.

Moore was in the process of moving to the French Quarter when the storm rolled through the gulf and over the levees. He made it out before the flooding. He watched from afar as his city suffered on a global stage. “It was day after day of just weeping,” he recalled.

On his “evacuation,” an amalagamation of evacuation and vacation, the former daytime soap actor and international musician settled in Austin, Texas. One day, he woke up and knew he had to go home. So he returned to New Orleans, ready to play and ready for more storms.

“You don’t just live in New Orleans, you love New Orleans,” he said.

He has shown that love by giving other musicians some work, hiring them to play with him at his regular French Quarter gigs.

Moore says the volunteers who have forsaken Mexican resorts to help out have given him more than just a house.

“It’s given me a lot more faith in the next generation.”

REFLECTIONS

Nathan Oldmixon, a nurse at Biloxi Regional Medical Center, was on duty the night Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast. “I just remember saying a prayer, Lord don’t let me not wake up and if I do wake up, don’t let it be at the bottom of rubble,” he said. Oldmixon said that the Beau Rivage Casino shielded the hospital from the surge. “Many of us are convinced that if it wasn’t there, it is certain the tidal wave would have made it with much more force all the way up to us and probably would have done some horrific damage.”
The Louisiana sun reaches its apex in a cloudless blue sky on Feb. 24. Mardi Gras, the merry solstice of New Orleans, is also shining on the Mississippi Delta. Since January, the pre-Lenten celebration has been building along the Gulf of Mexico—from Florida to Texas—but nowhere is it bigger or more desperately needed than here.

A glimmering hailstorm of plastic beads, doubloons and cups, called "throws," fly out from the caravan of colorful floats rolling down Canal Street. Each float's cache of throws seems bottomless, as does the enthusiasm of the harlequin-masked Krewe — locals who pay membership dues for the privilege to run the floats and chuck party favors into the wild crowd. Serious parade-goers bring homemade ladder chairs, setting them up near the median curb to control the high ground and catch more loot.

The median is broken into little kingdoms of pop-up marquees and giant grills. Every five feet, another grill is sizzling burger meat or charbroiling ribs. Rarely visible through the thick plume of mesquite smoke, towers of empty beer cans stand as monuments to the freedom of public consumption. Everyone is happy.

It's called The Big Easy, after all.

Six months from now, a different, darker period will be at its peak: hurricane season. About 97 percent of Atlantic hurricanes occur between June 1 and Nov. 30, according to the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration. Most of those happen in and around September, like hurricanes Katrina (landfall Aug. 29, 2005) and Rita (landfall Sept. 24, 2005).

The repercussions are almost incomprehensible. Katrina was directly responsible for the deaths of at least 1,464 people, the displacement of one million more, and a $31.3 billion bill for the nation's taxpayers.

Three-and-a-half years later, the Gulf Coast is still years from recovery. And that's if another mega-hurricane doesn't strike in the meantime. Thousands still call Federal Emergency Management Agency trailers home, and many more have left the region.

New Orleans, the elegant soul of the South, has lost nearly half its population, withering to 225,000.

But for today, none of that matters.

**Mardi Gras** Above: Along the Gulf Coast, Mardi Gras is more than just a day, it is a season. Parades march down the streets of the region's cities, from big (New Orleans: population 239,000) to small (Gulfport, Miss: population 66,000).
When Tonya Hill couldn’t tell her therapist exactly how she felt, why she hurt so much because of being sexually abused as a child, her therapist gave her another way to communicate. She gave Tonya an art project.

“It was a blessing,” Hill says simply.

Art therapy, often used in conjunction with medication or other therapies, helps patients express emotions without being stifled by trying to find the right words. Patients range from young to old and from the mentally to physically injured.

“We use it with almost everybody who wants to,” says Heidi Larew, an art therapist at Akron General Medical Center. “Someone who has the desire. That’s the main thing, that they would have the desire to be engaged in therapy and appreciate the use of a visual medium.”

Art therapy can be found in hospitals, rehabilitation centers, senior care homes and specific art therapy studios. Organizations such as Ohio’s Buckeye Art Therapy Association, an affiliate chapter of the American Art Therapy Association, exist to further educate people on the use of art in recovery.

Choose your materials: Paint, crayons, clay, markers, scissors, ink, stencils, pastels, glue

Depending on the patient’s psychological situation, interests and therapy setting — group or private — different materials are presented for the crafting.

Larew, who has a bachelor’s in psychology with a minor in...
art and master's degrees in both art therapy and clinical pastoral counseling, works with adult inpatients who have mental illnesses. She says her patients are in a life crisis and have a variety of different diagnoses. They tend to be at risk of harming themselves or others.

"I find out what their goals are, what they're working on in therapy, then I relate the artwork to that," Larew says. "For example, if a person's goal would be to learn how to manage anger, then we might do 'anger volcanoes.'"

Many of the adults Barbara DiScenna works with are cancer patients who have become depressed after spending weeks or even months in the hospital. She works with children as well, many coming from bad family situations where they were abused.

DiScenna says abused children have a difficult time even understanding what is going on in their lives, let alone how to verbalize their emotions toward the situation. They're often very wary of what confidence they would possess as adults.

"They may have that lack of trust," she says. "And maybe expressing themselves on paper would be an easier place to start instead of expressing it verbally."

Even being able to control the materials in their small hands gives them an enormous sense of empowerment.

"I think it gives them mastery and control over situations where they may not have mastery and control," DiScenna says. "That's a big issue, especially with kids who feel kind of powerless over different situations. They can choose the color. They can choose the materials that they're using or the way they're doing it.

"There's choice, there's control, and sometimes with words it takes awhile to get to that point."

Art therapy, Larew says, has a containing aspect. If a patient's feelings are "all over the place," she won't have the patient use paints or other fluid mediums. Instead Larew suggests using markers or colored pencils so the patient feels they have more control over the situation.

DiScenna says she does have to be selective of which materials she'll have patients use when there is limited time, such as during group sessions. For children, she often sticks to more structured art activities like collages or masks.

Although the boundaries seem limitless with art, DiScenna says situation and practicality must be kept in mind when deciding on the right materials for different patients. When she goes to the cancer unit, for instance, she doesn't bring clay and is careful to wash everything down before leaving to prevent the transmission of germs.

Art is not always something everyone feels comfortable dipping his or her brush into. If a patient doesn't find him or herself inherently creative, DiScenna makes sure to start slowly. She'll introduce the patient to making collages or she'll cut out quotes of hope and bring picture frames for her patients to decorate. She keeps the crafts success-oriented, and as the patient becomes comfortable, she introduces them to new materials.

"I try to personalize it as much as possible, and that's another way to draw people in and just go with where they're at," she says.

Larew even sees the importance of how the materials are presented and the room in which the projects are born. She keeps everything in order. Beautiful objects — usually shiny pieces of glass and pieces full of color — are always present for inspiration. But, she also stresses having white space on the walls so not to overwhelm patients. The studio she works in has a very colorful and comfortable feel — like a favorite high school art classroom where students go to escape.

"People open up in this room," Larew says. "It's like a kitchen where people are cooking dinner, and you just get comfortable and start talking."

Create: Swirl, clump, stick, rip, fold, smooth, trace, fill, color

Once a creative medium is chosen, it's time for the best part: creation.

The end result isn't always what tells a therapist most about a patient; the process by which the patient creates the project can explain a great deal. DiScenna says. "Watching what they do and how they do it, not necessarily analyzing and looking only at what they did. How they approach it using maybe paint. Were they splattering it all over? Were they able to focus and relax?"

Larew has also run into people who become nervous once the brushes, inks and pencils are laid out in front of them. But she, too, stresses the importance of the process over the "prettiness" of the end result.

"You don't need to be creative. You don't have to have any artistic skills," she says. "It's about learning about yourself, developing new ways of coping and looking at life."

Tonya Hill considers herself living proof of the non-artistic types who gained miles from the practice.

"In art therapy, you don't need to be an artist. It's more about expression and expressing how you feel through art, but you really don't need any sort of creative abilities — I don't have any," Hill says.

While the paint is spread or clay sculpted, the theory of transference phenomenon is often said to occur. The
patient releases feelings from a bad experience, be it childhood or otherwise, and transfers these feelings into his or her art. In other words, something as simple as sketching a picture can mean years of psychological relief.

“It is a safe place to put your feelings. Art won’t get mad at you,” Larew says.

In other psychotherapies, the transference relies heavily on the therapist. In art therapy, the phenomenon occurs between the artist and his or her art, making the experience extremely personal.

“There’s something unique with the process and the product itself, which to me is very empowering to the patient because they don’t just rely on the relationship with the therapist,” DiScenna says. “They’re relying on the transference and the empowerment and the relationship with the materials and the process which they’re, in essence, doing themselves.”

During group therapy sessions, there is sometimes an opportunity to learn about a patient through his or her interactions with others.

Art therapy is also a convenient way to work with individuals on a shorter time slot. A therapist may learn much more about the patient from an art project than discussing the patient’s feelings in the same amount of time.

“Patients are not here for very long so the art can sometimes help get to the root of the problem quicker than talking about it. Sometimes something will come out in the artwork that maybe they were not able to say or talk about,” she says.

Frame and Display: Now to sit back and relax ... enjoying the fruits of your labor.

There are plenty of success stories in the world of art therapy. Although the therapy is most often used in addition to medications and other forms of therapy, Larew says she sees many people who seem greatly healed with the help of this practice. There is some scientific research on the topic, she says. But it’s also just a matter of believing in the feedback patients give.

Hill received art therapy for about three months around 1998 and 1999 during her stint in an intensive treatment program. Noticing she was having difficulty explaining the way she felt with words, her therapist decided to introduce her to art therapy. It changed the way she was able to describe her feelings and helped her work through the abuse she endured as a child. She says she noticed a major change right away.

“I think it brings out a deeper expression of how you feel,” she says. “When you’re talking, sometimes you can’t get that word that you’re looking for or you might not have time to process what you’re trying to say in that time in the therapy session. Drawing it out or using any other type of art, it gives you a deeper look at yourself. I think it’s a fabulous thing.”

Hill was so influenced by art therapy she decided to go into a human service career herself. She works for the Lake County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities as a resident worker. She’s also attending classes at Lakeland Community College and plans to transfer to Ursuline College for — what else — art therapy.

In the meantime, Hill continues to use this artistic healing for herself, and she says she sometimes gets together with friends to get creative.

“I’ll bring out a list of projects and we’ll just go off of that. We’ll just have a group session of doing art, talking about how we feel,” she says.

Art therapy has its benefits for both the patient and the therapist, allowing for a human connection not otherwise found in different therapies, medication or alternative medicine. The patients learn to cope with and relieve their psychological pain through interacting with both the therapist and the creative mediums. Both patient and therapist can display far more than just art afterward.

“I’ve been doing this for over 30 years, and I’m still doing it, so I must like it!” DiScenna chuckles. “The pay isn’t always fantastic, but you feel good about what you do. You don’t dread getting up and going to work.

“It can be very beneficial helping people communicate what’s going on inside of them in a very creative way. It gives them a way to see themselves from the inside out.”

Larew is just as proud of her work with patients over the years.

“I absolutely love art therapy and using it to help people in their journeys to getting better,” she says. “In my own life, I have used my creativity to express my emotions and to process my thoughts, as I have been through difficult times.”
Kirsten Ericson had chronic headaches as a child. On a scale of one to 10, her pain always ranked above a five. In her early 20s, Ericson went to an acupuncturist near her home in New Jersey. Within three months of treatment, she says her migraines and stress headaches disappeared. Ericson’s experience, in addition to her acupuncturist’s encouragement, led her to study at the Pacific College of Oriental Medicine in New York City.

Ericson, now a master of science licensed acupuncturist, has been practicing acupuncture in Ohio for about seven years. She started about the same time the State Medical Board of Ohio began issuing licenses for non-physician acupuncturists. In the first year, the state issued 38 licenses, says Joan Wehrle, executive staff coordinator for the board. In 2008, the state issued 147 licenses.

Ericson has also seen a steady growth of clients each year at Summit Acupuncture in Cuyahoga Falls. She says her clients tend to be well-educated and at least 30 years old. She says she sees more women than men.

One of the ways Ericson says acupuncture helps prevent problems is by decreasing stress. “Stress contributes to the development of acute and chronic illness,” she says. “Pain, disrupted sleep, anxiety, heart disease, headaches, weight gain, depression and digestive disorders can all be related to stress. Acupuncture helps to calm and regulate the central nervous system, which is affected by stress.”

Acupuncture has been practiced in China for thousands of years and is based on qi (pronounced “chee”), the vital life force that flows through all living things, according to an article from the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine. Qi flows along pathways in the body’s estimated 14 to 20 meridians. These meridians are thought of as main channels that connect the body in a web of at least 2,000 acupuncture points.

Nola Ruble, 38-year-old sophomore nutrition and foods major, says she first began going to her acupuncturist when she had a bout with a spastic colon 19 years ago. Her husband and three teenage sons also go to the acupuncturist. She continues to go to
Acupuncture helps to calm and regulate the central nervous system, which is affected by stress.

On a first visit, Ericson says the patient fills out a health history, which gives Ericson an overview of his or her overall health. She says she also checks the patient's pulse and tongue. Ericson says the tongue's shape, color, coat, cracks and the location of these observations indicate which parts of the body are affected. The patient then changes into a gown and lies on a massage table.

Acupuncture points are chosen based on the patient's symptoms and the underlying cause of the symptoms as determined by the intake, pulse and tongue. Needles are gently inserted into the points and left in place for 20 to 40 minutes. During that time, the patient lies still on the table and listens to relaxing music. She says many patients are so relaxed that they fall asleep during treatment.

"Basically, it's a sense of relief because I know it's going to feel better and it's calming and relaxing," Ruble says. She says acupuncture helps to put her body back in balance. "After I lost my mom and was grieving and really upset and not myself, it helped emotionally and with stress," she says.

Ruble says acupuncture is more of an ongoing treatment. "That's the thing about alternative medicine — it takes time because it's a healing process," Ruble says.
Yoga

About 15 people ignored howling cold winds one Thursday evening in February to release the day’s stress. They gather in the social hall, but they are quiet — they are breathing calmly and kneeling with their arms outreached on the floor, as demonstrated by instructor Heidi Shaffer.

Shaffer explains the importance of breathing and gives a brief description as she introduces each new pose. Soft instrumental music plays in the background of the dimly lit room. “Yoga helps you slow time down and helps you prioritize,” she says after class.

Sarah Malcolm, who is a special analyst in the Provost’s Office, says yoga helps keep her centered because calmness is contagious. “When you think you shouldn’t go because you don’t have time is when you need it most,” she says.

Marianne Rieske, a part-time yoga instructor at the Student Recreation and Wellness Center, says yoga is about opening the body up so you can release and work through feelings. She explains there are different asanas that concentrate on different areas of the body. “First you do the asanas (postures) to settle the body, pranayama (breathing exercises to settle your mind) and then you’re ready for a meditation.”
Rieske says, “In meditation, after you practice for a long time, you merge with a source. Some people call it god, some people call it the universal source.”

Rieske, who is also a massage therapist, says she first began doing yoga about 10 years ago because of necessity. “I noticed that if I wanted to continue with doing massage therapy, I would have to take care of myself,” she says. “I picked yoga because it really keeps the body strong and limber and increases endurance. Yoga is actually good for every system of the body — circulatory, endocrine. It’s amazing.”

Bonnie Harper, 5th grade language arts and social studies teacher, says she does yoga with Shaffer so she can stay flexible and keep up with her students. “My hip joints used to hurt; they don’t hurt anymore,” she says. As she walks out the door, Harper says her class is having a party tomorrow. “Wish me luck,” she says with a laugh.

Malcolm says the two most important things people need as they age are flexibility and balance. When asked if yoga has or will help, she says, “I’m hoping. Ask me in 20 years.”

Malcolm says yoga has already improved her balance when she runs.

Rieske isn’t surprised by results like Malcolm’s. “So many say that once they fell or got in an accident that they weren’t hurt,” she says. Rieske says yoga helps keep the cartilage healthy. “When your legs are strong, then you are less apt to fall because your balance is good,” Rieske says, adding this strength and fluidity may also help prevent arthritis.

Malcolm says yoga has transcended into other aspects of her life. “When you think about breathing or are posing, you’re in the moment,” she says. “And [when I’m at] work and I have to decide where to start or prioritize, I just take a moment and just breathe and focus on the moment, I’m ready to go. I’m ready to start the project.”

Perhaps the most important philosophy of yoga is to listen to your body, Rieske says. “If you need to lay down for 15 minutes, lay down,” she says. “Honor your body, and it will guide you through your life and get you where you need to go. ... A body is a temple.”
WHAT GOES STOMP in the NIGHT?

Dozens of Ohio sightings of Bigfoot are recorded a year

by kelly pickerel

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It's summertime. You're out at Nelson Ledges Quarry Park or some other densely wooded area, just hanging out one night. You're roasting marshmallows and making s'mores when all of a sudden, you think you see something. The sound of crunching leaves and snapping branches becomes louder. Something is sniffing around the campsite. No one breathes. After what seems like forever, the snapping and crunching trails off. It's gone. Was that a bear? Not likely. This is Ohio, not Tennessee. It couldn't have been a little rodent making that much noise.

Then you hear your friend quietly ask, "Was that Bigfoot?"

It's possible. Ohio has the fourth most Bigfoot sightings in America, trailing only California, Oregon and Washington. Most sightings are concentrated to central and eastern Ohio, but sightings in Portage County date back to the '60s and '70s near Aurora, according to the Bigfoot Field Researchers Organization.

But why would Ohio have so many recorded instances? This area is definitely different than those out west. Joedy Cook of the Ohio Center for Bigfoot Studies says Ohio is a great breeding ground for the tall, ape-like creature because of the flat land and farm areas.

"Ohio is a very rural state," he says. "Most residents are by the big cities. But when you go to the eastern part of Ohio, there are a lot of wooded areas, mostly foliage."

The majority of eastern Ohio is covered with state parks, providing lots of tree coverage for unknown creatures, especially in campground areas.

"Wherever you have forests and stuff like that, you're going to find a lot of sightings," Cook says.

Wayne National Forest, in southern Ohio near Ohio University, has had 25 Bigfoot sightings. OU does have a reputation for partying, and no one's sight is improved after shotgunning a case of Natural Light.

Lately, though, Cook says the magnitude of sightings has dropped. "The 1990s was a big time. There were a lot of sightings," he says. "Things have kind of started slowing down."

But one area of Ohio is still feeding Cook and other Bigfoot enthusiasts multiple sightings a month: Salt Fork State Park, Ohio's largest park, is about 70 miles south of Canton and 90 miles east of Columbus. Within this park is an area labeled the "Sasquatch Triangle." This triangle, including sections of Tuscarawas, Guernsey, Muskingum and Coshocton counties, is home to the most frequent Bigfoot sightings in the state.

Here is where witnesses say they see a 7-foot — or taller — ape-like creature stumbling in and out of the woods, with large eyes and a protruding brow. The hairy being has big feet and broad shoulders. Most reports state that it was unmistakably non-human.

Don Keating of the Eastern Ohio Bigfoot Investigation Center says Bigfoot could survive in Ohio "the same way bear or deer or any other animal" does with basic food, water and shelter. "They may semi-hibernate, but that is just theory," he says. "If I had to guess, I'd say they go deep into the forest during winter."

What other large, hairy, non-human hibernators amble through the forest? Bears. According to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, black bear sightings in parks near the Pennsylvania and West Virginia borders have been becoming more frequent. The numbers aren't alarming, more like three or four bears in an area that previously had none. And when black bears stand on their hind feet, they can reach heights near 7 feet. They have shaggy hair and can match descriptions of their Sasquatch friends.

Skeptics are quick to point this out. Richard Meindl, chair of Kent State's anthropology department, says there is "not a chance" that a Bigfoot-type creature could survive in Northeast Ohio or the Northern United States in general.

"For an animal that big to go undiscovered...," he says concerning Bigfoot. "There has to be a few of them in order to reproduce. It'd be like missing a herd of bison."

Even with the forests in central and southern Ohio, Meindl still says the state cannot produce this creature.

"This state is covered by people. We're everywhere," he says. "It's not like 200 years ago when we were kind of sparse. For a place like this to harbor a Bigfoot, I doubt very much that there's any large, hairy primate in the American Northwest."

But Keating, who has been involved with Bigfoot research since 1984, says he saw Bigfoot twice, once near Newcomerstown in 1985 and once in 1997 between Plainfield and Coshocton, both sites nearly 70 miles south of Akron. He captured video of his most recent sighting, although an expert who examined the footage said it was not Bigfoot, but "actually an out-of-focus branch, swaying in the breeze."

Cook says the first documented sightings date back to the 1830s. "There are a lot of Native American stories from the Shawnee and Cherokee dealing with the Bigfoot subject," he says.

William Henry Venable, an author from the turn of the century, published the book "Buckeye Boyhood" in 1911 about his youth in Central Ohio. In the story, Venable speaks of sightings of a tall creature, similar to a gorilla. Cook says he believes this was a classic case of Bigfoot in Ohio.

Nowadays, Cook says he gets most of his information from con-
cerned Ohioans, and while he's serious about finding out the truth, the Ohio Center for Bigfoot Studies is just a hobby. He has been involved with the organization for 18 years.

One sighting closer to home came from Akron, when an electric company worker saw something peculiar while working on an electrical tower. He called into a local radio station, and the information was passed on to the center. A large shelter made out of sticks, grass and other brush was found near the area.

"We had engineers look at it, hunters look at it. For man-made, it was really difficult to do. This thing was done beautifully," Cook says of the shelter. "It was completely hollow, and it smelled really bad like a wet dog. There were animal bones in there. There was something odd about it."

Cook and his crew attempted to recreate the shelter themselves but found that it was a difficult feat to accomplish. While there are still questions about the shelter, Cook says nothing else similar has been seen within the past two years around the Northeast Ohio area.

As for now, Cook and Keating look for solid evidence and good sighting reports that "point to the existence of this creature living in Ohio," Keating says. Most of the reports come in the warmer months.

"Summertime is normally the best time," Cook says. "In winter-time, you only get footprints in the snow."

In August 2008, Matthew Whitton and Rick Dye played out a hoax for the whole world to see when the pair says they found a Bigfoot in the Georgia woodlands. The media gobbled up the news while the pair stole away with $50,000. The Georgians were asked to promote the idea of finding the creature by using a Halloween costume and some organs of road kill. Whitton and Dye blamed the trick on a Bigfoot investigation Web site.

Although a hobby, Keating and Cook take their investigations seriously. But what actually grabs enough attention to warrant an elaborate investigation?

"Well, if I gave that information away, some people might think it a cool idea to contact me and make a false report just to 'pull one over' on me," Keating says, possibly just as Whitton and Dye pulled one over our eyes last summer.
On Feb. 21, the economically bruised Youngstown played host to the Middleweight Championship of the World title fight, at the request of current champ and lifelong Youngstown resident Kelly "The Ghost" Pavlik. It was the 160-pound pugilist's first pro fight in his hometown.

Pavlik's only loss came in his last fight against super middleweight (170 pounds) Bernard Hopkins in October, so he retained his WBO middleweight title. He was defending it this night.

The Chevrolet Center was packed with Pavlik supporters, filling to its capacity of 7,228. The Burr's Adam Harris procured press passes for both fellow photographer Rami Daud and himself and headed to Youngstown. The team noticed a unique vantage point dangling above the red, white and blue ring — the catwalk.

"It was wide enough for one person and shook when walked on," Harris said. "It was a little unnerving to say the least. We were at least 100 feet above the dead center of the ring."

"As my hands slowly stopped shaking and I settled in a little, I realized that it wasn't the worst place to take pictures from. It wasn't the best, but I did what I could," Harris said.

Pavlik did the best he could, pounding Rubio for nine rounds. The Mexican boxer's team threw in the towel before the next round, and the 27-year-old Ohioan won by TKO, improving to 35-1.

"The crowd was insane," Daud said after the fight was called. "They had a personal stake in the fight, and it was really great to something positive happen for Youngstown."
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