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PUTTING THE PIECES BACK

PLUS: HOW THERAPY MAKES US FEEL

THE BEST POST-BAR CRAWL BITES

THE FACE OF POVERTY
Everyday people who are struggling in Portage County

TUNE INTO SOUND CHECKS WITH BIG CITY BANDS
Congratulations to The Burr and TheBurr.com staff!

NATIONAL AWARDS – 2011
Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication

Investigation and Analysis
Second Place, Spring 2011
Joey Pomplignano, “In an Instant”

First Person
Second Place, Spring 2011
Mark Haymond, “Jess and Mark: A Stage-three Love Story”

Student Society for News Design Contest

Overall Use Of Photography
First Place, Spring 2010
Kristina Deckert, art director

Overall Design of a Magazine Special Section
Third Place, Spring 2010
Kristina Deckert, art director

NATIONAL AWARDS – 2010
Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication

First Person
First Place, Fall 2009
Jinae West, “My Family I (Don’t) Have To Know”

Third Place, Spring 2010
Kelly Petryszyn, “The Best-Kept Secret”

Single Issue of an Ongoing Print Magazine: Design
First Place, Fall 2009
Adam Griffiths, art director

Single Issue of an Ongoing Print Magazine: Editorial
First Place, Spring 2010
Sarah Steimer, editor

Single Issue of an Ongoing Print Magazine: General Excellence
Third Place, Spring 2010
Sarah Steimer, editor

Magazine Cover
Second Place, Fall 2009
Adam Griffiths, art director

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FREE STUFF?
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The Burr is an independent publication at Kent State University created for and by students. It publishes twice each semester.

{CAMPUS PROGRESS} This magazine was made possible with the support of Campus Progress, a project of the Center for American Progress, online at CampusProgress.org.
According to a recent job outlook study by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, communication skills rank first among most important job characteristics employers seek. Second and third are analytical skills and teamwork skills. Consider programs in CCI to teach you these necessary practices.

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IT'S OK TO ASK FOR HELP. You're not alone. More than ever, college students are dealing with anxiety and other mental health issues. In this issue, you'll meet a writer with a secret that she kept for thirteen years before it landed her on a therapist's couch. A skeptic at first, she now admits that the experience may have been more helpful than she gave it credit for. Plus, you'll get a look at our generation's view on seeking professional help for their problems. You don't have to suffer in silence anymore. If you or someone you know is struggling, get help.

This issue is all about healing, whether it's overcoming a body issue, climbing the ladder out of poverty or just curing your late-night hunger cravings. You could spice up your iTunes playlist with a song from a rising band from a big city near you or conquer your dry streak at the bar with pick-up lines guaranteed to land you a cocktail in the face. Reinvent your wardrobe with essential threads for making the transition from winter to spring, or find a way to eat around your restrictive gluten-free diet. And when all is said and done, we hope this magazine is a little therapy session in itself — because let's face it, we all want to overcome something.

RABAB AL-SHARIF
editor-in-chief
MAKE SOME MEMORIES TO LAST A LIFETIME

GEOGRAPHY FIELD EXPERIENCES SPRING 2012

SPRING BREAK: Costa Rica 2012 - Peru 2013 - Yucatan 2013
MAY: Parks of the Southwest - Ireland

E-mail geography@kent.edu or stop by McGilvrey 413 for more details

Peru
Join us in 2013 for our new trip to Peru!

IRELAND
From Dublin to the southwest coast, experience the beautiful Emerald Isle through the art of storytelling, music and cultural and physical landscapes.
MAY with Mandy Munro-Stasiuk

COSTA RICA
See one of the most environmentally friendly places on the planet - volcanoes, monkeys, cloud forests, waterfalls, and more!
SPRING BREAK with Scott Sheridan, Nick Wise, Mike Dunbar

YUCATAN
From Chichen Itza to the colonial city of Merida, learn about ancient Maya history, colonial transformations, and cultural and environmental issues
SPRING BREAK with Mandy Munro-Stasiuk, Kam Manahan

PARKS OF THE SOUTHWEST
Discover the physical and cultural landscapes of this remote and beautiful region from Arches to Zion, in National Parks and Navajo lands.
MAY with Tom Schmidlin and Jeanne Schmidlin
fine-tune

“The Sistine Chapel of Rock”

The city of Kent is a hub for local musicians and music lovers to hone and share their craft. Record shops, such as Spin-More Records, add to the music culture, spinning out old school records and local favorites alike.
Many musicians pack their bags and leave their hometowns for larger cities like Los Angeles and Nashville with hopes of breaking into the music business. However, in Northeast Ohio, the local music scene is gaining respect across the nation with hardworking acts that stay true to their Midwestern roots. Whether they're just starting work on their debut albums or touring the globe with a solid collection of work under their belts, these bands are making sonic waves around Ohio and beyond.

words BRITTANY NADER photos SUBMITTED
Cleveland's punk scene is alive and thriving. There are hardworking bands with humble beginnings screaming and raging through basement walls, turning quiet houses into full-blown concert halls.

One such band, a four-piece powerhouse with a sound that isn't exactly tied to one genre, has evolved and gained notoriety through good old-fashioned hard work. Signals Midwest was recently signed to the record label Tiny Engines.

"Don't be afraid to go see a band in a basement," said vocalist and guitarist Max Stern. "It could be the best thing you've ever seen."

These basement shows are what built a cult-like following for the band in Ohio. Stern and the band's original members, Steve Gibson and Loren Shumaker-Chupp, discovered the house show community in Cleveland back in 2007, and there the inspiration to start a punk band blossomed.

Along with a slew of other Ohio punksters, Signals Midwest tore through the foundation of The Soggy Dog House in Lakewood. Once the house closed in 2008, the guys shacked up in their own version of the house dubbed The Milk Crate House.

The same year, Shumaker-Chupp and Stern found their rhythm with Gibson as drummer. In 2010, the band began playing all over the country — far beyond the Milk Crate House — with new guitarist Jeff Russell.

"We all lived there; had our first practice there," Stern said. "There's an East-West divide in Cleveland, and with those two houses we sort of tried to bridge the gap between the two sides of the city."

Stern said the band's sound has evolved greatly, even in the span of two years. Each member's individual influences has painted Signals Midwest as a colorful fusion of punk rock, indie and post-hardcore with soulful lyrics and an energy that bleeds through the stage.

Each show is a unique experience, and the feeling the crowd gets is akin to having your favorite band play a show just for you in your living room. Sometimes the band plays almost spontaneously by grabbing a few microphones and setting them up in someone's basement. There are often no presale tickets, no greedy show promoters. Just four guys sweating out their hearts and souls before a lively crowd of dedicated fans.

"People talk down on Cleveland a lot, but I love it here. So I think that sets us apart a little bit because we're not from some big, major city where there's like eight thousand bands doing the same things," Stern said. "And I think there's a pretty cool determined resilience in our music that shows through."

Last summer, the band embarked on a month-long tour to promote its new album, "Latitudes and Longitudes." Stern called Tiny Engines to help out with the album's press. To his surprise, the label told him it would release the album.

"Latitudes and Longitudes" is beyond the sound of a traditional modern punk record. It is loud, but its melodies are complex and fast. The band's energy bursts through each track as if they are reaching out to each listener and tugging him or her along for the ride.

Loren Shumaker-Chupp (bass, vocals), Jeff Russell (guitar), Steve Gibson (drums, vocals), Max Stern (vocals, guitar)
Mention The Sidekicks to any Ohioan partial to local music, and you will be met with up-roarious excitement and pride. Something about this band, now rooted in Columbus, has a universal appeal to the young and not-so-young that has lasted for more than five years.

From its start as a straightforward punk band with loud, fast beats to its current evolution into a more rock-based quartet, the band has seen an outpour of love throughout Ohio and across the U.S. The Sidekicks' newest EP, "Grace," picks up where its last album, 2009's "Weight Of Air" left off, but with an obvious blend of new influences, location changes and recording processes that pour through speakers. The band released its new album Feb. 21 and embarked upon a tour around the states Feb. 23.

"With the new record, it was something where we had more time to write, record the songs and just kind of honed in on experimenting a little bit with our sound, making things louder, slowing things down a tad," said drummer Matt Scheuermann.

Taking cues from bands like Bad Religion, NOFX and Anti-Flag and the more versatile Pavement, Elliot Smith, Superchunk and The Band, The Sidekicks' sound is a collage of styles and nuances.

"Weight of Air" could be argued as the band's magnum opus. With more indie sound thrown in to the always crashing cymbals and melodic yelling, the album has a sensitive sort of vibe that pushes it out of standard pop-punk territory and into more of a swaying alternative style. With tracks like "Small," listeners will have the urge to wrap their arms around a few buddies and sing along at the top of their lungs. This is the kind of relationship the band has with its listeners both live and through speakers. Scheuermann said he and his bandmates, Steve Ciolek, Matt Climer and Ryan Starinsky, left their homes in Cleveland and Pittsburgh and shacked up in Columbus last year to live and play together in the capital city. They have enjoyed the music scene and friends they've made in the area, and the city's D.I.Y. scene has welcomed the band graciously.

Touring, Scheuermann said, is his favorite way to see beyond the limits of the city and experience the states while doing what he loves.

"The tours are nothing lavish. More just like a bunch of guys...crashing on people's couches."

The Sidekicks, Ryan Starinsky (bass), Matt Climer (guitar, vocals), Steve Ciolek (vocals, guitar), Matt Scheuermann (drums)
Hailing from a city best known for its sports and, most recently, its rap artists, one band is helping put Pittsburgh on the map with a style of music that adds a bit of diversity to the city and truly sets it apart. With its blend of rock and classical instrumentation, These Lions is a standout in the Midwest music scene.

There is a sense of longing, or perhaps a wistful melancholy found in the vocals and lyrics of this five-piece group. The music takes the listener on an emotional ride and is honest, complex and sonically engaging enough to keep fans begging for more.

"Most of the lyrics are driven off a poetry type of ballad and influenced by the notion of heartbreak that connects to the audience," vocalist and guitarist Anthony Jardine said. "I feel like the people who are down and trying to find that type of music can connect to the notion that someone else is out there feeling like the same pain that you are."

That isn't to say These Lions is the kind of music only appropriate for a misanthropic mindset. The music itself is filled with rich layers and skilled harmonies. With one album, aptly titled "One" released in 2011, the band is hard at work on its sophomore release, "Two."

"I think it's going to be a lot different from the first one — more rock 'n' roll; more of a theatrical performance with how the melody's going to carry along," Humphreys said. "We have a lot more parts written; everything's more meticulously put together."

The band sites Manchester Orchestra, Goldheart Assembly, Jeff Buckley and Arcade Fire as influences. The inspirations are apparent in the harmoniously layered instrumentation and songwriting. The band's song crafting is continuous, and the inspirations are never lacking.

"Our mentality's always been we never want to stop writing songs," bassist Bryan Humphreys said. "We never wanted to take a break or anything like that. We have the mentality if you're always writing, you're always gonna put out more songs. Because the more songs you have, the more you can pick from. It will give us a better album."

After a recent line-up change, These Lions added cellist Pamela Pilipovic, and the element of a classical stringed instrument has given the band an edge.

"We're primarily a rock band with a little bit of a different instrumentation," Humphreys said. "Fans who are into a classical vibe can enjoy us as well as those who are more into rock."

Tim Mulhern, who sings and plays guitar, rounds out the rock quintet.

Jardine, Humphreys and drummer David Rocco started the group in 2010 after playing in rival bands in high school. As the group experienced lineup and sound changes, its extensive touring throughout the Pittsburgh area and beyond has gained them a devoted fan base.

"We have an appreciation for our fans in Pittsburgh, and we really think there's a lot of potential as far as the music scene here. If you move out to New York, L.A. or Nashville, you're one in a million," Jardine said. "The music scene in Pittsburgh is really starting to come up big time. There's a lot of talented musicians, and we're very fortunate to be a part of it."

These Lions will tour this summer along the east coast's big cities, including New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., to promote "Two."

The band said it will continue to live and make music in Pittsburgh while they are attending college, but once that ends, they are looking forward to where their lives, and the music, will take them. For now, These Lions shines as one of Pittsburgh's most exciting bands to watch, and there is no doubt the band's sound will continue to push limits, progress and prosper.
New blues sound is bellowing out of Akron thanks to The Blue Treads, a duo that came about through more modern, unconventional methods. Pete Crane and Nick Rose met on the web by responding to a virtual flyer of sorts. Rose put out an ad on Craigslist looking for a band mate.

"My drummer was looking for someone to jam with, I was looking for something to get in to, and he put an ad up, and I responded, and that was kinda that," said Crane, guitarist and vocalist for The Blue Treads.

The pair started playing together and bonded over a love of blues. They transformed the standard style into a gritty, heavy sound produced with just two instruments. The band's blues-rock stylings have taken them through venues across Ohio.

Although the two began with the blues in mind, Crane cites Jimi Hendrix, Stevie Ray Vaughan and The Dead Weather as strong influences. Each of these music styles can be spotted in a careful listen — from the steady, rhythmic drums to the milky slide guitar, the Blue Treads use their inspirations to create something fresh.

"It's really hard to describe our sound," Crane said. "We definitely don't do any country or heavy metal, so I guess some psychedelic blues and some more classic stuff."

Although the band's sound doesn't fit the mold of one specific genre, the simple combination of deep, rhythmic drums and a roaring blues guitar create a sound so much bigger than just two instruments. Tracks like "Slide Boogie" recall a Zeppelin-like guitar paired with Crane's signature raspy vocals. He talks to the crowd with a roar in his throat commanding them to dance around. The experimental sound of The Blue Treads could find them a comfortable spot in today's modern garage rock scene without conforming to the image of the rock star prototype.

The Blue Treads have been making the rounds throughout Cleveland, Akron and Kent, but they hope to hit the road and take the sound all over the country this summer. Crane said they'd like to spend most of the spring putting together their first full-length record.

"I'd like people to be able to roll their windows down and jam to some Blue Treads."

The band recently recorded a five-song demo at Suma Studios in Painesville — a recording studio that has become infamous for laying down tracks for some famous acts, including Wild Cherry.

The band is rising and slowly but surely making its voice known in the Northeast Ohio music scene. Gigs with The Blue Treads are growing in size, from 60 to 90 attendees, and they've gone from house shows to larger venues.

They most recently took home the first-place prize at Battle of the Bands at Peabody's in Cleveland. This is sure to be a great steppingstone for the band to branch out and take its gritty, bluesy tunes beyond Ohio. Crane said he likes playing in his home state because of its various outlets for musicians to be heard.

"I think Northeast Ohio has a good music scene. If you travel down south, you don't have a lot of like rock bars or venues. It's more like some guy playing Jimmy Buffett or 'Brown Eyed Girl' in a bar," Crane said. "They don't have places that cater to a little more originally style music. I like Ohio; I just hate the weather."

Though Crane's voice has a throaty twang more akin to southern rockers, there is something clean and modern about The Blue Treads that gives the band a nice seat in Ohio's local music scene that was, perhaps, unfilled until now. The duo pull off a sound that could arguably be past its prime, but it hasn't fallen into a retro or outdated trap. It is fresh, fun and alive with a fusion of old and new.
BLACK SQUIRREL RADIO | SPRING 2012 SHOW SCHEDULE

MONDAY
10-12 PM The Hit List
Top 25 countdown and entertainment news
12-2 PM Sedatophobia
Anti-sense eclectic mix
2-4 PM Roots
60s and 70s rock 'n' roll
6-8 PM The Cypher
Old school hip-hop and R&B
8-10 PM The Fourzoko Show
Hip-hop and college controversy
10-12 AM 2D1C
Entertainment news, pop culture and controversy
12-2 AM The Real Is Back
Hip-hop, R&B, relationship talk and Cleveland swag

TUESDAY
10-12 PM DJ LL's Alternative Concoction
Upbeat alternative and indie
12-2 PM The Cure For STDs
Jazz, blues, and other study-time music
2-4 PM Hipster Garlic
Indie, lo-fi, shoegaze and other great alternative
4-6 PM The ‘Verse
Undiscovered and under-the-radar indie and alternative
6-8 PM Hot & Angsty
Alternative, indie, hotness and angst
10-12 AM Ambient Expedition
Post-rock, indie, jazz and chilled alternative
12-2 AM MileHighRadio
National and local hip-hop and R&B

WEDNESDAY
12-2 PM The Jungle
Hip-hop, R&B and campus news
2-4 PM BSR On BSR
Eclectic music mix, plus Neil Diamond
4-6 PM The Gr/nd
LGBT-centric entertainment, news and music
6-8 PM Pretty Hair And Thunder!
Comedy, talk and hair metal
8-10 PM The Sub Shoppe
House, drum and bass, and downtempo electronica
10-12 AM Rik & Rob Radio Rockstars
Rock, metal, and cool stuff like comic books
12-2 AM Cooper And Rex At The Movies
Film talk

THURSDAY
10-12 PM Sports With Shook
Morning sports talk
12-2 PM Backseat Bingo
Rockability, doo-wop, soul and sides
2-4 PM In The Mix
Eclectic music shuffle
4-6 PM The Constant Detour
Upbeat improv dance party
6-8 PM Animals On Bikes
New alternative and indie
8-10 PM BIRTHDAYCAKE
They'll even let you lick the spoon
10-12 AM Lady Business
Pop culture, local music, women's issues and crafts
12-2 AM Tom And Jesika's Incompatible Playlist
Rock, alternative and indie playlists

FRIDAY
10-12 PM Rap And Reggae Roar
Reggae and hip-hop morning mix and sides
12-2 PM Afternoon Delight
Relaxing reggae and rock
2-4 PM The Weekend Kickoff
Sports talk
4-6 PM Finders Keepers
Unsung/disco/rock punk and alternative
6-8 PM The Squirrel Attack Show!!!
Indie, classic, folk, acoustic and watersports
8-10 PM Late Night Special
Late-night eclectic
10-12 AM Animalistic Affirmation
Punk talk and rock
12-2 AM All I Ever Wanted Was A Radio Show And I Got One
Indie and alternative deep tracks

SATURDAY
10-12 PM Adderall Nation
Pop culture and music generations
12-2 PM Holdin' It Down For The Underground
Underground indie, alternative and punk
2-4 PM Through Being Cool
Pop-punk and other moshing tunes
4-6 PM The Good Fight
Video game soundtrack and news
6-8 PM Watch Yo Nutz
Fashion trends and all rock
8-10 PM Radio Gravy
Music mix, listener requests and crabcore
10-12 AM Musical Hobo And The Dead Apostles
Heavy music mix and entertainment

SUNDAY
10-12 PM Word Play
Live music, eclectic tunes and life advice
12-2 PM Kevin Miller & Company
Variety talk show
2-4 PM Celtic Fire
Celtic music and Irish rock
4-6 PM The Stat Sheet
Sports talk and interviews
6-8 PM Magical Mystery Radio
Alternative and indie
8-10 PM Radio ReBoot
90s music and talk, dudes
10-12 AM Independent Playground
Under-the-radar indie and lo-fi
12-2 AM M&C On The Weekends
Music generations

Black Squirrel Radio
taking over the world.

www.blacksquirrelradio.com
Tribal Trends

Embrace your inner wild child with some bold blocks of color, especially in red, brown or black. Wooden accents are also popular in bangles or heels, and intricate beading patterns are popping up everywhere.
The end of winter in Ohio always seems to leave students a little confused style-wise. It requires layers upon layers, yet you have to be prepared to shed them at a moment's notice. But the biggest and most common mistake you can make is ignoring trends and throwing on baggy sweat pants and a too-big-for-you zip up.

The featured styles for women, from Kent's own Figleaf Boutique, and for men not only utilize comfort, but they're affordable and stylish. You'll stay warm, and you won't look like a walking potato sack.

The best thing about them? Just strip off the top layer, and you'll have yourself an adorable style for the warm Ohio days that catch you off guard.

Gray sweater: $29
A great way to stay warm without sacrificing cute details in your outfit.

Sequin tank: $34
This looks great by itself, but pairing it with the sweater tones it down and makes it perfect for day.

Faux snakeskin bag: $32
A trendy accessory with enough room for your favorite book — and much more.

Round crystal ring: $12
Antique-style ring: $10
These rings are bold and very vintage. No, it's not too much to wear them together.

Skinny jeans: $29
A classic choice. The darker the jeans, the more versatile they are.

Nude heels: $29
These are just the right height to wear to class or to the bars. Don't forget your Dr. Scholls.
Men's

Flannel shirt: $49.50
Layer this PacSun flannel over the v-neck and you'll be ready for cold and/or wind/other.

T-shirt: $19.50
A simple v-neck from PacSun has a lot of potential. Just make sure the v isn't too low.

Watch: $100
A casual but clean way to stay on time. From Fossil.

Jeans: $54
These Levi's are the ideal shade of blue to go with almost anything.

Women's

Earrings: $8
They'll stand out in a good way. Just remember to pull your hair back so others can swim in their jealousy.

Black blazer: $29
A necessity for any girl's wardrobe. Both classy and simple.

Orange bag: $29
A great size with vintage toggles and a fun, red-orange color.

Cream blouse: $29
Sophisticated and fun don't have to be mutually exclusive, especially with this blouse.

Bracelets: $8 each
Layer these at all times and never look back.

Round crystal ring: $12
Sometimes the rings are bold and very large. No, it's not too much to wear them together.

Vintage-style ring: $10

踝带鞋: $29
Are just the right length to wear to class or the bars. Don't forget Dr. Scholls.

Boat shoes: $80
Sperry's aren't great for the snow, but they'll do just fine in the rain.
Throughout history, fashion has reflected the time in which it was created.

words YELENA TISCHENKO illustrations GLENNIS SIEGFRIED

From the deerskin garments worn by Native Americans to the silk bodices and full skirts worn by high society women, fashion has come to define different cultures of people and the time periods they lived in. Clothing has come a long way from the hoop skirts of the Victorian era of to the miniskirts and leggings we wear today, and we've decided to take you on a trip down memory lane to show the evolution of fashion since the late 19th century.
By the 1900s, feminism, glamour and looser fabrics took the world of fashion by storm.
The gowns twinkled in the lights from the sequins and beads, and the fabric dripped off of the bombshell actresses like liquid silk.

The gowns twinkled in the lights from the sequins and beads, and the fabric dripped off of the bombshell actresses like liquid silk.

1908
1914
1925
1934
1944

1897

1960s – 2000s

The space age had a huge impact on fashion design in the 1960s. Girls marched around in shiny, metallic material and clothing that looked good enough to explore Mars in. Kinky platform boots and kitten-heel sling backs were replaced by flared pants and the ever-so-popular mini skirt. The mini was rocked by Jacqueline Kennedy as well as models and regular women in everyday suburbia.

“The 60’s were the decade of the young, when revolutionary changes in lifestyles and sexual attitudes were accompanied by equally far-reaching design and the media,” the book said.

Emilio Pucci, Pierre Cardin, and Yves Saint Laurent were just a few of the many fashion designers who went crazy trying to find a style that would work for the new generation. A variety of styles, from miniskirts to beaded dresses, were popular. In the 1970s, new designers such as Halston and Versace took over the fashion world, and their designs were often the epitome of 1970s fashion.

The 1980s saw the rise of designers such as Gianni Versace and Donatella Versace, who were known for their bold, colorful designs. The 1990s saw the rise of designers such as Tom Ford and Alexander McQueen, who were known for their edgy, modern designs.

As the 2000s began, designers such as Stella McCartney and John Galliano took over the fashion world, and their designs were often the epitome of 21st-century fashion.

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"Fashion is not something that exists in dresses only. Fashion is in the sky, in the street. Fashion has to do with ideas, the way we live, what is happening."

Coco Chanel
LUNA NEGRA, ON NEWSSTANDS NOW

Luna Negra is Kent State's literary publication dedicated to publishing poetry, short stories, photography, and artwork. Visit our website lunanegramag.com or e-mail us at lunanegramag@gmail.com

10s in a minute

Get your 10 jumping jacks in fast and then follow out this routine with a fridge and

10 jumping jacks
10 jumping jacks
10 jumping jacks
10 jumping jacks
10 lunges
10 jumping jacks
10 jumping jacks
10 jumping jacks
10 jumping jacks
10 jumping jacks
10 calf raises
10 10-second

**

Sports
10s in 10

Get your legs fit for spring with this fast and fun 10-minute routine. Tear out this page, and hang it on your fridge as a reminder to stay focused.

10 jumping jacks (low intensity) 10 calf raises
10 jumping jacks (moderate) 10 scissors*
10 jumping jacks (high) 10 jumping jacks (moderate)
10 squats 10 squats
10 jumping jacks (moderate) 10 lunges on each side
10 lunges on each side 10-second rest
10 jumping jacks (high) jumping jack pyramid**
10 squats 10 scissors
10-second rest 10 squats
10 lunges on each side 10 calf raises
10 jumping jacks (moderate) 10 scissors
10 squats jumping jack pyramid
10 calf raises
10-second rest STRETCH for remainder

* scissors: jump from right-leg lunge to left-leg lunge
** jumping jack pyramid: 10 low intensity, 10 moderate, 10 high, 10 moderate, 10 low
Headlights raced the streetlight shining. Fry twirled a hula hoop, small frame. Camille stopped to watch her dance on Summit Street. She moved the rope as her roommates blasted from the whooshing noises.

Two days before, the peaceful living room and space Tommy, who shares a name with her on the arm of the couch, reminisced on the yard with her little sister.

"I remember my mom doing that; you’re a good hula-hooper with fire now!"

Now, she grabs her fire tattoo of her mother and herself when she was very young.

Fry’s misfortunes are reality, and she said the next time she met a “hooper”

During her sophomore college Towers.
Headlights raced through the slushy road, and a dim streetlight shined through a tree while senior Riana Fry twirled a hula-hoop with six flames around her small frame. Cars beeped their horns and passersby stopped to watch her dance in the front of her house on Summit Street. She moved the flares from hip to hip to the music her roommates blasted from indoors, accompanying the flame's whooshing noises.

Two days before, the psychology major sat in her much calmer living room and spoke about hula-hooping. Her cat, Tommy, who shares a name with her father, was perched next to her on the arm of the couch.

She reminisced on the times she hula-hooped in her back yard with her little sister.

"I remember my mom being like, 'Oh yeah, you're good at that; you're a good hula-hooper.' I had no idea I would be doing hula-hoop with fire now for fun."

Now, she grabs her fire hoop with one hand and reveals a tattoo of her mother and father's names on her wrist. Both died when she was very young.

Fry's misfortunes are not present in her energetic personality, and she said the next time she picked up a hula-hoop was when she met a "hooper" named Keysia Crews.

During her sophomore year, Fry lived next to Crews at College Towers.

"She would always be like, 'Oh, I'm going to hoop, I'm going to hoop,' and I thought she meant play basketball," Fry said. "And then one day I was walking home from class, and I saw her outside and she was hula-hooping. And I thought it was the coolest thing ever."

A couple of weeks after seeing Crews hula-hooping, they made Fry's first hoop together and started going to the Rec to practice tricks.

"At first, I could only do it around my waist, but then I just fell in love with it because I thought it was so much fun," Fry said.

What sparked her interest the most was the light-emitting diode hoop, which lights up and is intended to use while hoop-ing in the dark.

"LED hooping got kind of boring, so I decided to make it a little bit more risky," Fry said. "And that's when I bought the fire hoop."

No one she had hooped with before had ever tried to add fire to the experience.

"I was kind of the Guinea pig for that," she said. "So I just bought it and figured it out myself."

Fry's hula-hoop has six attachments that screw into the hoop and are dunked in kerosene before they're lit on fire.

"It has skulls on it just to emphasize how bad-ass I am when I'm hula-hooping with it," Fry said.
On a brisk, January night, Kent State student, Riana Fry, 21, waits patiently as a friend lights the attachments on her fire hula-hoop in Risman Plaza. While she and her friends hoop with homemade hoops, she purchased a fire hoop, which she taught herself how to use.

Fry said she takes her hoop with her to music festivals. “They have a whole bunch of bands and you camp out for like three days and it’s a whole bunch of hippies listening to music,” she said. “It’s like a whole culture, really.”

Some people judge the culture, but Fry said she embraces it. “Most people are like, ‘What is it with those hippies and their hula-hoops?’ But I think it’s just more of a friend thing,” she said. “I feel like hoopers are accepting to other hoopers.”

She emphasized her belief that everyone should learn how to hula hoop. “Sometimes in the summertime when I’m hula-hooping or when I was at the drum circle, people will say, ‘Oh I can’t do that,’ and things like that, and I think they’re scared of looking silly,” Fry said. “But I think everyone should try to hula-hoop and give it a shot.”

Fry said she makes her own hoops using tape, water and different materials. “It’s easier to work with, because the heavier hoops make for a harder hoop to use for doing tricks.”

Hoops can also be purchased even in stores such as Walgreens.

28 THE BURR SPRING 2012
MAKING HULA-HOOPING YOUR OWN

Not only is hula-hooping exhilarating, but it is also a great workout.

"It's a lot of cardio," Fry said. "It's really good for your abs, the hoop-ing around your waist and love handles and stuff like that."

1. Make or buy a hula-hoop.

Fry said she made her first hoop with water piping, a connector, duct tape, water and different tapes for decoration. To make a heavier hoop, Fry said add a lot of water before closing the tube with the connector.

"It's easier to work with, and it's actually a really good workout," Fry said. Although heavier hoops make for a better workout, Fry said lighter hoops are easier to use for doing tricks.

Hoops can also be purchased on websites such as superhooper.org or even in stores such as Walmart.

2. Start with "simple hooping" — hula-hooping around your waist

When you've gotten basic hula-hooping down, try to move in a circle. "When you turn, you can feel your abs clench up, and it's harder to keep the hoop up that way," Fry said. "But it's good for your abs because they're all tight and they're working."

3. Next try the "lift up" trick to work out your arms

Begin simple hooping and bring a hand to the small of your back. Slide that hand around and up the front of your body, not grabbing but guiding the hoop above your head. Then guide it back down with the other hand, keeping the momentum. The trick should resemble a lasso above the head if it's done correctly.

4. A more difficult trick is called shoulder hooping

Instead of circling the hoop around your waist, hold it up around your shoulders. Start the circular motion, letting go of the hoop, and quickly tuck your arms down by your side, trying to keep the hoop from falling.

"This one was the hardest one for me to learn how to do because I am a bad dancer and you have to learn how to wiggle with it," Fry said.

5. A challenging trick that is good for the legs and abdominals

"This is a new development," Fry said. Lie on your back and begin circling the hoop in your hand that should be stretched above your head. Place a straight leg perpendicular to the ceiling and hand the hoop off to your foot, keeping the circular motion going. Once you've mastered this move, try passing the hoop from foot to foot.

If you prefer live hula-hoop training, there are groups that welcome new members at all experience levels.

Rachel Nershi, nutrition and food major, created the Kent State Hoop Troupe last spring after meeting other hoopers.

"After jamming occasionally together, we decided to make the group official so that we could have a practice space no matter what the weather," Nershi said. "In warm weather, we hoop it up outdoors and meet with other expressive students for weekly drum and dance circles. For those not-so-sunny days we dance indoors in a dance studio inside the Music and Speech Center."

Nershi said the group will soon resume its meetings this semester and more information is available on the Hoop Troupe Facebook page.

Fry met with the group during the fall semester, but her schedule hasn't allowed her to return.

For visual learners who would rather learn alone, check out the video of Fry hooping on TheBurr.com.
At some point in our lives, we've been exposed to societal expectations for our bodies. We're told they must be flawless skin or hair, but nothing is often an overlooked aspect.

Men face many of the same issues related to fitness and self-esteem as women but are expected to hide these issues without much outside pressure. For some guys, fitness is not as much of a requirement for everyday life.

In the world of men's sport, for an elite athlete, not only is there pressure to perform but also to look good. At this point, Bryan Karazia, assistant professor at the College of Wooster and doctoral candidate at State University and specializes in body image issues. Karazia says body image issues are often not discussed because of the media's larger focus on women.

"Historically, over the last five decades, we've seen a lot of pressure on women in the media," Karazia said. "We've seen Miss America, we've seen Playboy models."

Body image issues in men seem more prevalent because it is brought up more often. Men are more likely to discuss their concerns with friends.

"The pressures of sport are very high, and if you don't do well, you're going to be embarrassed in front of your peers. I think it's more of a problem than we think."

Karazia says that men in the sport of wrestling are not the only athletes who face pressure. Kent State wrestlers are weighed in with their coaches on a daily basis and must stay in the weight class that is right for them. Their particular weight classes have unique goals for maintaining muscle and weight. Some must build muscle, while some need to lose weight.
During my freshman year, I had to lose 21 pounds in about a week. It was tough, but my goals are important to me. Wrestling does make me feel good about myself.

At some point in our lives, we've all been exposed to society's expectations for our bodies. Ladies are told they must be thinner and have flawless skin or hair, but male body image is often an overlooked issue.

Men face many of the same challenges related to fitness and societal pressures as women but are expected to deal with them without much outside help. For some guys, fitness is not always a choice, but a requirement for everyday life.

In the world of men's sports, striving for an elite, athletic body can cause more pressure than just trying to look good.

Bryan Karazsia, assistant professor at The College of Wooster, received his Ph.D. in clinical psychology from Kent State University and specializes in special body image issues. Karazsia said male body image issues are often overlooked because of the media's large focus on women.

"Historically, over the past four or five decades, we've seen a lot of focus on women in the media," Karazsia said. "We've seen Miss America become thinner; we've seen Playboy models become skinnier.

Body image issues in women also seem more prevalent because the topic is brought up more often. "Females are more likely to discuss the issues, and men tend to internalize," Karazsia said.

"The pressures of sports have less to do with excelling in the sport and more with being in a culture of men who tend to exemplify the ideal [body image]," Karazsia said.

Kent State wrestlers are required to weigh in with their coaches on a weekly basis and must stay in the guidelines of their particular weight class. These athletes have unique goals for their bodies and weight. Some must be smaller, and some need to gain weight to compete to their best potential. Others are just trying to maintain what they have.

"Wrestlers have this phenomenal body [standard], and they have to constantly compare themselves to other people who look great," Karazsia said. "It's like the perfect body ideal, being muscular and skinny.

Mallie Shuster, senior general studies major, weighs in at 165 pounds and has wrestled since he was 8 years old. Shuster said he is more worried about being a successful wrestler than striving for the ideal weight.

"It's all function over form for us," Shuster said. He puts his health above his weight requirement but admits some people focus more on fitting in their weight classes.

"I know a lot of people who've lost weight too quickly, but I try to maintain a healthy weight," Shuster said. "I tried to get into a lower weight class when I was 15, and I physically tapped myself out. I had put myself in danger and couldn't really compete.

Because of the element of competition, some wrestlers lose weight not only to fit their "ideal body image," but also to look more like their opponents. Karazsia called it upward-social comparisons.

"They compare their bodies to peers," Karazsia said. "You compare yourself to people who look better than you."

When it comes to competing, a lot of athletes strive to mimic the bodies of their biggest competitors in order to perform at a similar level.

Nic Bedelyon, senior physical education major, weighs in at 135 pounds and wrestles in a weight class with a 125-pound limit. He has struggled with weight since he was a freshman and constantly tries to reach his goal weight of 125 pounds.

"During my freshman year, I had to lose 21 pounds in about a week," Bedelyon said. "It was tough, but my goals are important to me. Wrestling does make me feel good about myself. You just have to stay fit and look good.

The most common image of a wrestler is an athlete who constantly monitors diet and exercise habits in order to drop pounds or maintain a current weight. But for some wrestlers, competing means gaining weight in order to keep up with the competition.

This is the case for Brendan Barlow, senior exercise physiology major, who weighs 235 pounds in a 285-limit weight class.

"My coach wants me to gain weight because I go up against guys over 250 a lot," Barlow said. "Gaining weight in a healthy way can be difficult. You have to eat healthy food but eat a lot of it." Although wrestling makes him feel confident about his fitness and athletic ability, Barlow admits it sometimes affects his body image.

"You have to be out there in front of people in a singlet," Barlow said. "It's obviously going to make you self-conscious sometimes."

It may seem like wrestlers are constantly combating their weights to fit an ideal. However, Karazsia said once the event where men need to stay trim is over, the desire to lose more weight is over as well.

"The motivation for weight loss or gain is extremely context specific," Karazsia said. "The motivation goes away whenever a match is over or in the off-season."
Medicated

When we were younger, our mothers gave us cough syrup for our colds and Band-Aids for our cuts. But as we get older, some of us depend on medications to heal much deeper wounds. It is estimated that 25 to 50 percent of U.S. college students who are seen in counseling are taking antidepressants, according to the New England Journal of Medicine.
I sat on a floral love seat, wringing my hands as the soft music streamed through the speakers. I'm sure my mom could tell I wasn't feeling light, promising me it was just a bad week. I laughed at her off and to the side, telling myself: You don't have to stay here alone. You're fine.

I was so not fine.

"Taylor?" a voice asked, startling me from my thoughts.

I looked up to see a young therapist, similar in age to myself. She motioned for me to follow her to her office, my mom one last look over her shoulder.

This was my first visit, but I was surprised at my being there, ready to talk. I decided to either, but I wasn't sure why.

It's always been easier for me to write than to talk.

My therapist was a slender woman, with long brown hair. She offered me a chair, a seat to sit in.

I sat down and one of those long pauses happened.

I glanced to my right, but couldn't see it, but I was looking for her face, quickly rising. I really didn't want to say anything... limited feelings.

She took a seat across from me, and then asked me why I was there.

"Something happened to me a long time ago," I said.

She looked at me carefully.

"A man molested me," I continued, the words coming easier the more I spoke.

Her expression-hardened, she seemed to have the feeling that I had thought this would happen. She asked me how long it had been since the incident, even after 13 years it still seemed like a long time.

She offered her apology; something that made me feel better.

I could see her wasn't very good with words. And I certainly wasn't either.
I've never been a big believer in therapy. But after thirteen years of keeping quiet, my secret, a secret I never thought I’d have to reveal, was affecting too much in my life to be silenced any longer.

I had to take a seat on the proverbial couch.

words TAYLOR ROGERS  photos THOMAS SONG

I sat on a floral loveseat with my mom to my right. I was wringing my hands; scowling at the many self help books placed strategically around the room and the soft music streaming daintily through the speakers.

I'm sure my mom could sense my discomfort, but she kept things light, promising me sushi the minute it was over. I laughed her off and stewed in my skepticism, repeatedly telling myself: You don't belong in therapy. You can figure this out alone. You're fine.

I was so not fine.

"Taylor?" a voice asked.

I looked up to see a young blonde woman with a pretty face. She motioned for me to follow her up a narrow staircase. I gave my mom one last look of uncertainty and made my way.

This was my first visit with my therapist, and I was truly surprised at my being there. My family didn't know why I had decided to either, but I knew I needed to go - I just didn't want to.

It's always been easiest for me to keep my past at an arm's length.

My therapist was a small woman with a small office on the second floor. She offered me a spot on yet another floral loveseat. I sat down and once again began playing with my hands.

I glanced to my right and spotted a box full of tissues. She couldn't see it, but I was rolling my eyes. I could feel my walls quickly rising. I'd really never warmed to the idea of uninhibited feelings.

She took a seat across from me, made some small talk and then asked me why I was there.

"Something happened to me when I was little," I said.

She looked at me curiously.

"A man molested me in a drug store," I told her.

Her expression hardly changed, and I went on to tell her that I thought I might be having some, you know, adverse affects, even after 13 years.

She offered her apologies - something people often do (something that makes me cringe).

I could see I wasn't the first to tell her something like this. And I certainly wasn't the only one still wondering how to deal with it.

She told me how it would work. I'd come in, and we'd just talk. She'd use this first "session" as a way to calculate how often I should come back. I raised an eyebrow at that. I didn't want to be plugged into a formula.

She then asked me to be more specific about what happened.

I was surprised at how quickly the words came to me.

I was seven years old. When he approached me, I was standing in an aisle, touching the loops of soft, shiny hair that represent the colors of boxed dye kits. My mom was just a few aisles away.

"Excuse me?" he said.

And I stepped aside, thinking I was in his way. He looked down at my shoes and complimented my feet.

In my child-like naivety, I smiled at him. Realizing I had bought it, he went on to tell me that he was a "foot doctor." He asked if he could take a few pictures of my feet and pulled a disposable camera from his brown leather jacket.

I began to suspect something, but my mind was reeling. I sat down on the cold floor, and he snapped two or three pictures of my Looney Tunes Converse.

When I got up to leave, he stopped me.

Out of fear, the kind of crippling fear that erases all thoughts of what I could and should do, I listened to him as he told me to open my mouth.

He unzipped his pants, and I froze.

After what was probably only a few seconds but what felt like forever, I could hear my mom calling my name. The thought of her being there made me sick. I ran away from him and didn't say a word until we reached the car.

I was embarrassed, so I lied and told her he'd just said some strange things to me. No big deal — just a local creep.

I think she could tell I was bothered because she went back inside to see if he was still there. He was gone.

My therapist nodded sympathetically when I wrapped up my story. She gave me her best "concerned face" (there's a slight chance she was actually concerned, but I was just too cynical to
notice) and granted me five or six sessions.
I gave her and myself the benefit of the doubt and came back. I almost immediately regretted it when she told me I would have to draw out what happened that night. She handed me some colored pencils and a sketchbook.

Maybe she could feel my uncertainty or maybe she just knew what to say next, but she reassured me. She said this was a way for me to understand that although it was a traumatic event, it was just one event of many in my life, and it was over.
I liked that idea, so I drew a few really awful, stick figure-esque sketches.
I had literally no idea how to draw out what happened without feeling incredibly vile, but I powered through.
We talked about each one. She sat the last drawing down and asked me how I felt.
I honestly wasn't sure.
This was my last visit with her for about five months.
When I brought this up to my mom years later, she provided brutal, but accurate, insight into why I stopped going.
"A little bit of me thought maybe she was starting to hit closer to home and you weren't ready to face that yet," she said.
"A little bit of me thought maybe you didn't think it was useful."
She was right on both counts.
I wasn't ready to face it because I felt guilty, but I hadn't always thought about it that way. In fact, I hadn't thought about it at all until I was in my late teens, probably because I didn't understand it.
That's when I started to realize that what he made me do had a name, and it was something to be ashamed of.
When I did decide to return to therapy, I was a mess. My relationship of five years had ended just a few days before. I had tested Steven's patience a million times too many, and I knew it. I had been withdrawing into my issues more and more. He had known about my past for a few years and had dealt with it more than admirably.
But he said he was frustrated with the idea that he could get more attention from a girl he'd only known for a few hours. I said I understood.
How could I possibly ask him to stay with someone who felt queasy at the thought of being alone with him? Not because I wasn't attracted to him — because I was and yet I didn't know how to stop feeling cornered.
I was a little relieved when my therapist told me this was very common.
Years later, Steven and I discussed our issues, hoping to gain some insight into why we struggled so much with something that happened more than a decade ago.
In the middle of our conversation, Steven balled his hand into a fist and struggled to answer me. He told me how sick it made him to think someone could be so polluted.
"I hate that bastard," he said.
I looked down nervously.
"This is uncomfortable for me too," he whispered.
The awful breakup wasn't the sole reason I'd chosen to go back to therapy.
I explained to the woman sitting across from me that for 13 years, I had told my mom only part of what happened. Thinking I was to blame for giving in to the stranger, I just told her that he'd taken pictures of my feet and freaked me out a little in the process.
But a few days prior to my return, we had a conversation that would lead me back to the floral loveseat.
I explained to her that Steven and I were spiraling into a routine of fights and tears. I was scared to think it might have something to do with what happened years ago.
She didn't understand.
"Is there something se" she asked.
I looked down. I knew the truth anyway. My guilt, knowing that I should've just been silenced for a minute more.
Tears streamed down my face.
"I never should have done that," I told her. I knew I had acknowledged my error.
She released them. They were around inside my head, like old attraction — a constant reminder.

My therapist went on to talk about the handling of the situation. Telling me that my two of my classmates were in the Walmart parking lot.
They, of course, never talked to the man with his car and when he got into her car with a knife. She was a foot doctor.
My family made me feel bad for being a mess.
The man in uniform scanned the pages looking for me. All I could remember was the smell of cigarettes.
My mom later admitted she was worried about making me do this.
"I was worried that it would be too much for you," she whispered.
"But I felt it was a necessary part of moving forward."
From what I know, this was Steven and I did every few weeks without any comment.
But brutally honest with him.
I planned to move on with his
care.
I came back to the therapist who talked about making me do this.
I explained to her that in social situations, especially in a couple years at the inevitable moment that we could almost always cambio.
She handed me some.
By this time, I was exhausted.
I was out of my class.
I took it back to me what I thought that I wanted.
I continued to hum.
I read back to me what I thought that I wanted.
Check, check and check.
But these seemed were.
I thought that I wanted.
She assured me that what that needed to be cured.

She suggested I try to
and tears. I was scared to be close to anyone, and I told her I thought it might have something to do with what happened years ago.

She didn't understand.

"Is there something about that day that you're not telling me?" she asked.

I looked down. I knew she'd be upset, but I told her the truth anyway. My guilt, which stemmed from a nagging feeling that I should've just walked away from him, couldn't be silenced for a minute more.

Tears streamed down her face.

"I never should have left you," she said.

Once I told her, I knew I'd have to go back to therapy.

I had acknowledged my demons, and in doing so, I had released them. They were now untamed dragons, free to run around inside my head, breathing fire at the first sign of physical attraction — a constant reminder that I wasn't wired to be comfortable with closeness.

My therapist went on to ask me questions about my family's handling of the situation. I smiled, remembering my mom telling me that my two older brothers had sat outside the Drug Mart parking lot.

They, of course, never saw him, and the headlines showed that a man with his description had chased another woman into her car with a knife at a local supermarket. He had claimed he was a foot doctor.

My family made me feel safe, I told her. When the police pulled me out of my classroom one morning, my parents stood beside me.

The men in uniform held a large book full of mugshots, and I scanned the pages looking for his face, but I couldn't remember it. All I could remember was his brown leather jacket and the smell of cigarettes.

My mom later admitted she and my dad were apprehensive about making me do this.

"I was worried that it would deepen your fear," she said, "but I felt it was a necessary evil because I didn't want it to happen to someone else."

From what I know, the police never did catch him.

Steven and I did eventually get back together. After a few weeks without any communication, I decided I needed to be brutally honest with him about what I could handle and how I planned to move forward. As it turns out, that's all he wanted.

I came back to my therapist again, and we continued to discuss how I thought that night was still affecting me.

I explained to her that I thought I was excessively nervous in social situations, especially when men were involved. I would almost always carry a book with me, arming myself for the inevitable moment that I'd become uneasy.

She handed me some personality tests.

By this time, I was extremely frustrated — frustrated with her and frustrated with me. I didn't want to take a test or to draw. I wasn't seven anymore.

I think what I wanted was a cure, plain and simple.

I continued to humor her. She looked over my answers and read back to me what I already knew: Your anxiety in social situations is severe. You prefer being alone. You fear intimacy.

She didn't seem like the kind to shell out pills without cause. I was on Lexapro for about ten months. I didn't feel any dramatic changes as a result of the pill, or of the therapy.

But I was surprised by her honesty when one afternoon, she told me I would probably never be entirely comfortable with men. However, I should want and be able to be close with one man — the one I'll eventually spend the rest of my life with.

She also said while I did seem to have some excessive anxiety, many of my introverted tendencies (my love of being alone, my quiet nature and my fear of attention) were just part of my personality.

I should eventually embrace it, she urged.

For the first time, I left feeling comforted.

I do eventually stop going to therapy. I didn't feel I needed to be one of those people with their therapist on speed dial, though sometimes I think differently. Life is, after all, a never-ending race, and I sometimes look back at the hurdles behind me and wonder how I ever made it through or why I didn't just avoid them.

I have embraced at least some of what she said, but like most things in life, it's a daily process.

Steven, however, feels differently.

"I know you said you weren't a big believer," he told me one evening, "but I think it did help you a little bit, maybe even more so than you thought."

I hate to admit it, but he's probably right.
People, now more than ever, are accepting they need help. You don't have to struggle in silence.

words KELLY TUNNEY photos BRIAN SMITH

The word “LOVE” is etched on Sabatino A. Verlezza’s right wrist in a color slightly darker than his skin, meant to blend in with a patch of scars that surround it. Some remain from a time when he would cut himself to escape the embarrassment associated with being gay. To Verlezza, the tattoo is a reminder of the steps he has taken on a path toward self-acceptance.

“It’s been a long journey,” he said.

Verlezza’s journey began in elementary school, where classmates bullied him. Although his parents informed the teacher, they didn’t know how to prevent their son from coming home hurt and upset.

Later in high school, the teasing continued. As a male dancer, others called his sexuality into question. Verlezza questioned his sexuality as well, but because of the negative views of homosexuality in his high school, he was ashamed by what he felt. His shame was overwhelming, and he succumbed to depression.

So he searched for an outlet to mask the conflict that was happening internally.

He began smoking, but it didn’t relieve his depression. Cutting himself, he soon found, provided the release he was looking for. It was a physical pain to overcome the emotional pain.

At first, Verlezza cut only after especially difficult days. While it was a way to handle his feelings, it was also scary to physically harm himself. However, he eventually became comfortable with the self-infliction.

As cutting became a routine, Verlezza realized he was relying on it heavily, to the point of addiction. A friend eventually saw how serious his situation was. She went to the school guidance
Sabatino A. Verlezza, a 21-year-old dance major, got a tattoo of “LOVE” on his wrist to remind him of his struggle with self-in infliction.

“If I can go through the pain one more time, that will be the end of it. And it was, I haven't done it since.”

Sabatino A. Verlezza, a 21-year-old dance major, got a tattoo of “LOVE” on his wrist to remind him of his struggle with self-in infliction.

“If I can go through the pain one more time, that will be the end of it. And it was, I haven't done it since.”

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Kent State chapter of TWLOHA, also experienced a period of depression when she was in high school. Rather than receive medical treatment, she relied on her close friends in order to express her feelings and talk about her struggles.

"You don't have to be quiet about it; you can talk about it," she said. "It's completely normal."

During fall 2010, Shaffer's friend, J.T., committed suicide. A year later, in fall 2011, her friend Martin also took his life. While each was difficult for her to deal with, she leaned on a foundation of friends who accepted her for her struggles and helped her to get through them.

"Our generation especially is becoming more open to therapy and support groups and to talking about these things that don't have to be hush-hush," she said.

Caitlin Ellmore, senior visual communications design major and president of Active Minds at Kent State, has not struggled with mental illness herself. However, through Active Minds she has worked with students and adults who have battled the stigma associated with therapy.

Active Minds focuses on raising awareness of mental illness and promoting acceptance for the problems students deal with. It allows people to openly discuss problems without the fear of judgment.

"We're not a counseling service and we can't diagnose anyone," she said. "It's more that we put events on at campus or put tables out so that people can see that OK, this is totally normal to talk about."

Ellmore has seen how medical treatment for mental health issues enables healing where communication and peer support cannot.

"I really strongly believe in the therapist or in the counselor, just because it is a scientific thing," Ellmore said. "As much as it is based on feeling, it's also based on chemicals."

When Verlezza was sent to counseling in high school, his psychiatrist prescribed him a generic version of Prozac called Fluoxetine. Taking this blue and white capsule once a day helps keep his chemicals at the level they need to be and prevent his depression from getting out of control.

At first he was reluctant to take the medication. In his eyes, cutting was a release from his struggles, not a problem. However, in time he realized he had to deal with his conflicting emotions.

"I had to internally have a discussion with myself to say, 'Well look, something's wrong, whether we're trying to deny certain feelings or not,'" he said. "I had to have that discussion alone before I could talk to somebody else."

Verlezza came to Kent State as a senior in high school as a post-secondary student to join the dance program, where he met dancers who embraced him for who he is. At 18, he was finally honest with himself about his sexuality and was able to accept himself the same way his friends did. With a strong support group around him, he officially came out.

The scars on his arm remind him of his struggle, but the tattoo that rests within represents a future without cutting. The day Verlezza got his tattoo also served as the end to his self-infliction, the final cut.

"If I can go through the pain one more time, that will be the end of it," he said. "And it was, I haven't done it since."
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Keeping the Faith

On Jan. 12, 2010, the small French-speaking country of Haiti experienced a magnitude 7.0 earthquake that shook its foundation — from its homes to the families inside them. Through international support and unwavering faith, the country is well on its way to rebuilding what it lost.
he gray skies are expected.

This Thursday the weather on Highway 74 with wintry
Ravenna means the present will linger through moder-
dering visibility. Just like

Unlike the weather, things are going according to plan.
Stewart's transitional home, sanctuary Place. It's 9:30 am.
Ashley Grace and 3-year-old Grace should be at school, but she's
sick, vomiting and feverish. They're home and acting "ow"

The TV rolls credits to a new movie. A toy laptop sits
Dolls litter the floor. As Rebecca eats a banana, Rebecca receives
s's girlfriend, Courtney, nosebleeds at work many times at Goodwill.

Could she come bring her her shirt?

"I told you, there are
Sighs, trailing off miss
halt Vivian from running
without her shoes on an
impromptu car trip.

You might shrug off
problems because, as Stewart says, there are days. There's an
promise tomorrow will be better.

But the reality is Rebecca's,
lives in poverty. And this things.

Cathey DeBord, the
director for Family and
Services in Portage County,
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rules and regulations. Part
the panhandler on the corner
isn't just the beggar by himself,
just the person "sucking up" money
by collecting government
instead of taking the

The reality is that po...
Climbing the Ladder

How one woman and her family are learning to escape the culture of modern day poverty.

words DANIEL MOORE photos JACOB BYK

The gray skies and icy rains are expected. It’s no surprise this Thursday morning that the weather coats County Highway 74 with wintry slush, January in Ravenna means the previous night’s fog will linger through mid-morning, hindering visibility. Just like any other day.

Unlike the weather, things aren’t going according to plan inside Rebecca Stewart’s transitional home in Renaissance Place. It’s 9:30 a.m. Five-year-old Ashley Grace and 3-year-old Vivian Ruth should be at school, but Vivian woke up sick, vomiting and feverish, so the girls are home and acting “overly silly,” their mother said.

The TV rolls credits for an animated movie. A toy laptop sits open on a chair. Dolls litter the floor. As she feeds Ashley a banana, Rebecca receives a call: Her son’s girlfriend, Courtney, has had two nosebleeds at work manning the register at Goodwill.

Could she come bring her another shirt?

“I told you, there are days…” Stewart sighs, trailing off mid-sentence to halt Vivian from running out the door without her shoes on and prepare for the impromptu car trip.

You might shrug off these apparent problems because, as Stewart said herself, there are days. There’s always a chance tomorrow will be better.

But the reality is Rebecca Stewart lives in poverty. And tomorrow isn’t a sure thing.

Cathey DeBord, the housing services director for Family and Community Services in Portage County, describes poverty as its own culture with a set of rules and regulations. Poverty isn’t just the panhandler on the corner anymore. It isn’t just the beggar by the freeway. It isn’t just the person “sucking off the system” by collecting government welfare checks instead of taking the minimum wage job.

The reality is that poverty is those who you encounter every day without even realizing it. It’s those who are working job after job, paycheck-to-paycheck for survival. It’s those who want to fight for a change.

“I think they’ve got to be mad about it,” DeBord said. “They crawl up the ladder really slowly, and they hit one bump, and they slide all the way back down to the bottom. Something they’ve been working a year for could go away within a month.”

On a normal day, Stewart wakes up at 6 a.m., makes sure Jonathan gets to school on time and puts her girls on the bus by 7:45 a.m.

“Then I look to see what’s next: OK, do I have paperwork that has to be filled out? Do I have to go to an appointment of some sort?”

For Stewart, every day is a struggle for some sense of stability. Every simple comfort the middle class takes for granted is a hard-fought battle against a flawed class system. DeBord and Stewart agree the first step to self-improvement is adopting this new view of poverty as a culture.

GETTING AHEAD

Every Tuesday night at the United Methodist Church of Kent, Stewart is in and out of the kitchen. As co-facilitator for the Getting Ahead class, she is asked to do anything to prepare for the weekly class. She has been here for a while, preparing food and decorating the round dining tables with ribbon. Her daughters, run rampant with the other children — they’re ready to eat. Balloons tethered to their hands, they sprint the length of the room, down to the altar and back.

This Tuesday, dinner includes tuna sandwiches and chicken noodle soup, apples and grapes, candy canes and Mountain Dew. By 6 p.m., a small group is gathered and chatting in circles. Each person is drifting from one circle to the next, laughing, catching up, unleashing a mouthful of words.

It’s not long before somebody makes the decision to approach the long table Stewart has filled with dinner. What has the first-glance impression of a toddler’s culture really slow, and they hit one bump, and they slide all the way back down to the bottom.”

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I think I win more than I lose. I was told when I was a kid, I’d never amount to anything ... Here I am.

"You also learn what there’s absolutely nothing you can do about — how it keeps you in the system," she said. "You learn that you make a certain amount of income, and you lose all the benefits and help that you had, and you have to be able to make it on your own. There’s no middle ground, there’s no adjustment time, so then you just try to make it."

Rebecca married at age 21. She had her son, Jonathan, at 22. Ashley and Vivian came along at 32 and 35, respectively. She left her husband about a month after Vivian’s birth, she said, and started to walk down Route 14. She remains married because she can’t afford a divorce. She was headed to her mother’s home in Ravenna’s Pine Cat Trailer Park. After being ordered out by the living community’s management after only a month, she moved into Renaissance, where the amount you pay in rent is proportional to how much money you actually have.

"When I moved in there, my advocate was like, ‘I have a program for you to try because we think you’d be good for it.’ So, of course, you do what they tell you because you don’t wanna get kicked out of your house, so I did — and I’ve loved it ever since.”

The program was Empower Portage. After graduating her Getting Ahead class, Stewart had her younger sister, Sheila Straw, go through the next class the following spring. Tonight, she sits across from her sister, who’s having a tuna sandwich.

Straw is a 34-year-old sophomore at Kent State. She is studying public health education, one of the first nine students to be admitted to the university’s College of Public Health in 2009.

Despite her success at Kent State, Rebecca said she’s still in the middle of the struggle. “Me looking at my situation, I don’t see a lot of positives.”

Straw describes them as a ball she cannot stop from rolling. She married her husband Dale in July of 2007 — wearing a wedding dress that she worked to pay off in the months following the wedding. With some of the money saved from her work for the dressmaker, she and her husband moved into a home in Kent.

"There was a drug bust every other night. One of our neighbors would knock his girlfriend down the stairs every night. It was bad."

The day her son Joseph was born, they were kicked out. Now, Straw lives with her mother in Pine Cat. Dale lives with his family. She said they’d rather live separately temporarily or move into a shelter and be separated for God knows how long. At least this way, they can see each other every day. No restrictions.

Straw has a contentious relationship with public assistance. She was told to leave her husband and temporarily give custody of Joseph to someone else so she could get help. She was told not to have any more children. She was asked about her bedroom relationship with Dale.

"They think just because you’re getting help or you need help, that they have a right to get in your business," Straw said. "There’s some things they don’t need to know ... My goal is to get off public assistance because of all the crap we go through. It’s not worth it to me. But right now I don’t have a choice."

TAKING FROM PETER TO PAY PAUL

In five minutes, Stewart’s to-do list is scribbled on her whiteboard by the fridge — sort clothes, do homework, make dinner, clean car, clean bathroom. The kids are wrangled into the car in another 15 minutes. The house is then powered down and locked in about five. The car is started and headed west on state Route 59 in 10 more.

Outside of poverty, DeBord said, personal power comes from achievement. Income, productivity and punctuality are products of a society in which all resources people need are operating on middle class values.

"We love our lists," DeBord said. "That’s what everyone in the middle class does for a sense of achievement ... We expect people in poverty to make lists, to plan ahead. That’s probably the biggest clash you run into is that we operate from very different modes. One’s proactive, and one’s reactive."

While the middle class conserves money and tries to build on it, she said, people in poverty view it as here today, gone tomorrow. There’s no saving for that new car, that cul-de-sac split-level, that retirement fund. When one is placed into survival mode, it’s not about possessions; it’s about people.

In poverty, true personal power is found in others. It’s found in close-knit relationships that include sharing homes and showers when somebody’s water gets turned off. It’s found at all levels of the community, from the politicians to the employers to the priests.

It’s found in the allies. Christine Bhargava didn’t know when she retired in 1991 as a Kent State mathematics professor of 25 years that she would be putting her teaching skills to use in the Getting Ahead class. She only knew that when she joined the program as an ally, she wasn’t exactly sure what she was going to do for anyone.

Bhargava said she and Stewart would meet before class Tuesdays, or at the Kent Free Library, to go over the Algebra lessons. Stewart had failed her Algebra class twice already, which Bhargava blames on the style of online classes: no personal help, no structured lessons, no feedback — all of which are especially important in math classes.

"I’ve seen her develop so much," Bhargava said. "She’s really smart. She picked it up really quickly. She just didn’t have anybody explaining it to her."

The pair meets every now and then. They plan activities for Vivian and Ashley like going to the zoo or having a picnic in the park.

"There’s a lot your deal with when you’re trying to get reestablished who you are," Stewart said. "It’s very hard sometimes to juggle — even though it’s not the way it should be, it’s how it is. You pick and choose. I hate when I have to take from Peter to pay Paul. You think, ‘what needs done right now?’”

Now that the day is winding down, this heads to Goodwill. The pair visits DeBord at Ravenna. Courtney says dinner for everyone tomorrow night. One list — offered to buy the ingredients.

Another list — chicken.

Moving away from the idea of leaving, she asks, "Do we need anything else?"

Courtney smiles at her. "A million dollars."

DON’T HAVE TO BE RICH

Dinner supplies in the refrigerator go to the back seat. Rebecca needed help getting mom’s home at Pine Cat Trailer Park.

For her daughter, Grace, 27, another resource in her life that is invaluable. She’s her best friend. She’s her personal help, no structured lessons, no feedback — all of which are especially important in math classes.

"We’ve seen her develop so much," Bhargava said. "She’s really smart. She picked it up really quickly. She just didn’t have anybody explaining it to her."

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Straw is picking up her son, Joseph, from school. She smiles as she drives west on state Route 59. She says she’s planning on breaking even on her $100 a month gas budget. She says she’s not worried about paying for clothes this month.

"You learn that you make a certain amount of income, and you lose all the benefits and help that you had, and you have to be able to make it on your own. There’s no middle ground, there’s no adjustment time, so then you just try to make it.”
Rebecca escorts her two children from Wal mart back to her car on Jan. 29. She decided to buy the ingredients for dinner if her son's girlfriend, who works at Goodwill across the street, would cook it. She agreed.

Now that the day is organized, she heads to Goodwill. The rain still spits on Ravenna. Courtney said she is making dinner for everyone tonight, and Stewart offers to buy the ingredients at Walmart. Another list — chicken, noodles, veggies.

Moving away from the counter, turning to leave, she asks Courtney, "Do you need anything else?"

Courtney smiles a little. "A million dollars."

DON'T HAVE TO BE SUPERMOM

Dinner supplies in the trunk, precious cargo strapped in car seats in the back seat, Rebecca's next stop is at her mom's home at Pine Cat. The chief babysitter, Grace Dickerhoof is just like her daughter: She's trying to help everybody. Stewart considers herself lucky to have a resource in her life that many don't.

Willard is a kind of living miracle — the 70-year-old has undergone multiple surgeries, including a 15-hour, eight bypass marathon during which he died twice and had the largest crowd of people waiting on him in Akron General's history.

"That's how popular I am," he laugh. "I think I win more than I lose. I was told when I was a kid, I'd never amount to anything... Here I am."

The surgeries ended his 16-year career at the foundry in Kent. Recent struggles with bone spurs in his spine have limited his capacity at the hospital, where he used to push wheelchairs and serve food.

The girls are getting antsy again: "Ashley Grace, do you want stood in the corner?"

The solution: popping in a VHS of Christian musician Mary Rice Hopkins, circa 1990. Hopkins appears on stage with her guitar in front of a live audience of jovial children and parents. As she and Vivian copy the hand motions of the kids in the crowd — arms clapping together vertically like the mouth of a gator.

"Hip hip hooray, God made all of us!"

Willard quits Solitaire. Grace and Stewart take a seat behind the girls and sing along. They know all the motions.

"I think my girls like me," Willard said. "They're actually my step-daughters, but I still call them my daughters."

Mary Rice Hopkins' set continues; the girls dance around the TV. Willard admires his wife from afar.
“Next to being saved, she’s the best thing that’s happened to me,” he said. “You don’t hear too many men say that.” Stewart’s family is part of the Orthodox Pentecostal Church, which Stewart describes as pretty strict. But when you look at the different religions and faiths, she said, aren’t they all trying to teach the same thing? Among the “hidden rules” of poverty taught in the Getting Ahead class, is destiny. Those in poverty, the class teaches, believe in fate.

“I’ve prayed for people who — they give up on life,” Willard said. “Next day they get up in the hospital and go home. I know what God can do. He’s done it for me; he can do it for them.”

Mary Rice Hopkins is wearing a pair of comically oversized sunglasses on the TV. She bought them at the toy store, she croons. The package said, “God’s Eyes.” Scrutinizing the crowd of children, she strums the next song, “Superman.”

“I’ve got freckles on my nose and holes in my shoes! And the wrong color clothes and a missing tooth! I’m not Superman! God, You made me the kid that I am!”

Straw comes home after a morning of classes, Dale grinning behind her. She sits down and shares images from the ultrasound of her recent pregnancy. Vivian curiously pokes at her belly. “Most of the time I don’t know how I’m going to take care of Joseph, let alone another baby on top of that,” Straw said. “Like I said, right now I don’t have a choice. I’ve done everything I can do. I’m looking for a job; I’m going to school so I can open up doors to get a job.”

Mary Rice Hopkins sings on. A verse for all the mothers out there.

“I decided I was going to do things that I’d never be able to do,” she said. “And one of those things was a college course. Or going to college, in general. So I look at life differently now. I’ll try anything. And if it’s a challenge, I like it even more.”

Why Public Health Administration? “I like helping people.” Her philosophy transcends to all aspects of her life. To Straw and Liz, to Ashley and Vivian, to Jonathan and Courtney, to Grace and Willard, to her church family, to her “Getting Ahead” students and to every person who needs a helping hand.

Now, Stewart said she is better than she was. She wants to finish her online Associate’s Degree in Health Care Administration. She’s planning the next phase of Getting Ahead classes. But her utmost concern always is stability, the daily grind of climbing the ladder without slipping.

“It’s almost like you need the encouragement to know you can step again without falling because you worry you’re going to mess up. Now, it’s not only me. I have kids that I don’t want them to get stuck in the system. I want to be able to not have to have assistance to live.”

Heat waffle iron and pour batter into waffle iron. Serve with warm maple syrup.

Yields: 6-8 large waffles

*Bacon

This sweet and smoky breakfast is perfect a

2 cups box pancake mix
1 1/4 cups water
1/4 cup vegetable oil
1 egg
6-8 pieces of thick cut bacon

Combine sugar, cinnamon, and salt. Heat waffle iron and pour batter into waffle iron. Serve with warm maple syrup.

Yields: 6-8 large waffles

*Don’t have a waffle iron? Bake batter before pouring it into a muffin tin.
Bacon Waffles

This sweet and savory carb-filled breakfast is perfect after a long night of drinking.

2 cups box pancake mix
1 1/4 cups water
1/4 cup vegetable oil
1 egg
6-8 pieces of precooked bacon

Heat waffle iron. Combine all ingredients except bacon and whisk until smooth. Spoon batter into waffle iron. Tear bacon into bits and sprinkle on batter before closing the iron.

Serve with warm syrup and whipped cream for extra indulgence.

Yields: 6-8 large waffles

*Don't have a waffle iron? Follow the box directions for pancakes and mix bacon into the batter before cooking.
Melodramatic. Somewhat true.

I've been on a gluten-free diet for three years for medical reasons, which means I can't have anything with wheat, rye or barley. No breads, pastas or flour-based desserts. I have to meticulously read the labels at grocery stores, which means I always end up heating up variations of tasteless, colorless foods in the microwave. My stove top serves as another shelf in my apartment. I always undercook or overcook. I can't figure out how to use my blender.

After watching an embarrassing number of shows on the Food Network, I decided I spend way too much money on take out — especially when they make it look so easy. It's about time to combat the constant hunger in my stomach.

Result: I (kind of) conquered my kitchen and made an entire meal without catching anything on fire.
MAIN COURSE

CHICKEN WITH A SALSA GLAZE AND RICE

Salsa: Crushed pineapple, roasted red peppers, minced red onion

Chicken: Marinate chicken in Greek yogurt for two hours. Spray a baking dish with Pam and place chicken in baking dish. Bake covered dish for about an hour at 350 degrees.

Rice: Add two cups of beef stock (broth has gluten) to a cup of brown rice. Add peas and goat cheese. Put in baking dish and cook for an hour at 350 degrees. If it gets dry, add stock.

APPETIZER

PEPPERONI PIZZA POTATO SKINS

Bake sliced potato for 10 minutes at 350 degrees. Add tomato sauce and cheese to the skins. Place back in oven until cheese melts.

DESSERT

NUTELLA RICE KRISPIES TREAT ICE CREAM SANDWICH WITH BANANAS

Melt 4 cups of marshmallows and 4 tablespoons of butter in a dish. Add in 6 cups of Rice Krispies cereal. Stir.

Once mixed, place on wax paper to cool.

Cut into rectangles, put ice cream between it.

Drizzle Nutella over the sandwiches and garnish with sliced bananas.
RAY'S PLACE

Food Hours:
Monday-Saturday: 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.
Limited Menu 10 p.m. to Midnight
Sunday: Noon to 10 p.m. Limited Menu 10 to 11:30 p.m.

Address: 135 Franklin Ave.

Dish: Jerk fries

Description: Fries are a staple bar food. But one glance at Ray's Jerk fries, and you can tell they are something special. The mixture of their signature Cajun seasoning and fried potatoes make for a heavenly aroma. They are served in a heaping basket, which is enough to feed the whole table not that you'd want to share. They're deep-fried to a golden perfection and flecked with just the right amount of seasoning.

Why we love 'em: They're easy to share and the perfect complement to any beer.

Price: $4.75
We've all been there.
It's past 10 p.m., and you're suddenly hit with a bad case of the munchies. Fear not. Your options are not limited to drive-thrus and diners. Kent is full of unique places to subdue your stomach and tantalize your taste buds. Forget fourth meal and explore some of these tasty treats Kent has to offer.

words JUSTINE STUMP photos BRIAN SMITH

Stromboli from Eldorado's

"Stuffed with your choice of pizza toppings, it's baked with a garlic butter sauce, giving the crust a golden brown sheen that can rival that of the Jersey Shore cast."

ELDORADO'S PIZZA PIE

Food Hours:
Monday-Saturday: 11 to 2 a.m.
Sunday: 11:00 a.m. to Midnight

Address: 1331 S. Water St.

Dish: Stromboli

Description: Served fresh out of the oven, the cheese artfully seeps out of the corners and the delicious aroma of garlic fills the air. Stuffed with your choice of pizza toppings, it's baked with a garlic butter sauce, giving the crust a golden brown sheen that can rival that of the Jersey Shore cast. And don't forget the side of marinara dipping sauce.

Why we love 'em: You can make it any way you want it, and it's cut into bite size pieces so you can share. The secret, Owner Jack Elrod said, is they make their pizza dough fresh every day.

Price: $4.99 on Thursdays. Regularly $8.49
**Guys Pizza Co.**

**Food Hours:**
- Thursday-Saturday: 11 to 3 a.m.
- Monday-Wednesday: 11 a.m. to Midnight
- Sunday: Noon to 11 p.m.

**Address:** 146 S. Water St.

**Dish:** Small Loaded Baked Potato Pizza

**Description:** A small is enough to share because it's worth its weight in toppings – literally. The crust is covered in a creamy, white garlic sauce, then covered with all the fixings of a loaded baked potato: smashed potatoes, crispy bacon, all smothered with cheddar, mozzarella, and provolone cheeses.

**Why we love it:** The combination of pizza and potato skins equals one epic late night meal.

**Price:** $10.99

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**Cajun Dave's**

**Food Hours:**
- Monday-Thursday: Noon to 10 p.m.
- Friday-Saturday: 4 to 11 p.m.
- Sunday: Closed

**Address:** 138 S. Water St.

**Dish:** Mississippi Catfish Bites

**Description:** These Catfish filets are cut down into bite-sized pieces and crusted with corn breading, then sprinkled with a Creole seasoning to give a nice, crisp exterior. They are served with a side of chipotle pepper tartar sauce that will have you scraping the bottom of the container. You'll feel as though you died and went to Mississippi heaven.

**Why we love 'em:** They combine classic Cajun ingredients into one delicious finger food, and they're not too spicy.

**Price:** $7
Chicken Hoagie Deluxe
sandwich from Euro Gyro

Food Hours:
Monday-Wednesday: 10:30 to 3 a.m.
Thursday-Saturday: 10:30 to 3:30 a.m.
Sunday: 10:30 to 2:30 a.m.

Address: 107 S. Depeyster St.

Dish: Chicken Hoagie Deluxe

Description: The quintessential hoagie with a twist. They take a toasted garlic bun, add two chicken breasts, then cover it with grilled onions and mushrooms that have been sautéed in two sauces: honey gold and teriyaki. The distinctive combination of sauces is topped off with two melted cheeses: American and provolone. Hmm... we're sensing a theme. Maybe two really is better than one.

Why we love it: It's a twist on the classic hoagie, and you can't get this unique combination of sauces anywhere else.

Price: $4.75
For all things Kent,
kentwired.com
There’s nothing like the rush you get racing down a hill with the wind in your hair and pedals under your feet. But you don’t have to wait until spring to experience it. Take your bike out of hibernation and hit the trails. Just watch for ice patches!
Excited to devour all known game you have for years. You analyze screenshot as you wait until the estimation.

Then the dreaded words:

Your hopes are ruined, buried, lost forever. You bought the prophecies and disillusioned games, refusing to watered-down truth. The series has become.

Chances are you're not entirely.

Over the last few years, many modern games for an easy audience. These games are the result of the games for an easy audience. This is a multi-billion dollar business with big business sensibilities, profits.

In attempt to appeal to players, many modern games have undergone in order to appeal to players. This sometimes results in deliberate decisions to appeal to a broader audience.

It can easily be said that cases, being able to play it right away, is several well-known things, so more streamlined games appeal to players.

Ian Fisher, leading game based development at Entertainment, says that purchasing successful games is not the result of the game industry business. As a game industry professional with more than 15 years of experience, he has been involved with various games, including several major titles, and has seen the evolution and accessibility model for

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(words) CONNER HOWARD (photo) illustration MEGANN GALEHOUSE
fun

Are game developers focusing too much on accessibility?

"Everybody wants to keep the lights on and wants to keep food in their kids' mouths, but a lot of people who are making games are making games because they like making games," Fisher said. "A lot of companies that publish games are publishing games because they're trying to raise their shareholder value."

Fisher said many modern game publishers view successful competitors as models to base their own products on, though artistic sacrifices are often made. "This may be motivated by profit and stock values, but it also may stem from a simple lack of knowledge of how game design is normally handled."

"One of the reasons that you see people that are trying to take existing franchises and retooling things is because they don't know," Fisher said. "Some of the people that are working at companies now that are responsible for publishing games have never developed a game before. They look at games that are popular and they start to think about how they can emulate the successes that those games have."

"The burden is on the producer to sell the lowest common denominator,'" Barnes said. "People come in and they try EVE on the 21-day trial, and they'll know pretty quickly whether or not it's for them. The retention rate for our players is so high because we've chosen to focus on keeping them."

The dynamic between game developers and publishers plays a vital role in this trend. On the creative side of the process, the developers generally envision the game's concept and flesh it out during their time with Ensemble Studios, and then make demands of their studios to change their accessibility models firsthand.

"It can easily be argued that, in many cases, being able to pick up a game and play it right away is a virtue. But what about the long-time fans of the series who were expecting a nuanced product tailored for them?"

Ian Fisher, lead designer at Texas-based development studio Robot Entertainment, said this phenomenon of chasing successful trends is an inevitable result of the game industry's growth as a business. As a game developer with more than 15 years of experience, Fisher has been involved with many major projects, including several Age of Empires titles, and has seen the effects of profit-driven accessibility models firsthand.

Kelly Barnes, marketing director for White Wolf Publishing and a producer for EVE Online, says EVE Online competes with more popular mainstream online games by forming the experience solely around the player. "EVE has one of the highest learning curves in the [field,] so they don't play to the lowest common denominator," Barnes said. "People come in and they try EVE on the 21-day trial, and they'll know pretty quickly whether or not it's for them. The retention rate for our players is so high because we've chosen to focus on keeping them."

The dynamic between game developers and publishers plays a vital role in this trend. On the creative side of the process, the developers generally envision the game's concept and flesh it out during their time with Ensemble Studios, the development company behind the Age of Empires game series. "When Age of Empires Online started to get traction and our publisher wanted to move that franchise in a more accessible direction, we as developers didn't see that as serving a lot of existing fans," Fisher said. "But our publisher wanted to take it in a different direction, and they own the property. They had a right to do that."

Publishers pushing their properties into new directions is not a new or uncommon phenomenon. It's a band or artist experimenting with new
genres and musical styles. Some players feel betrayed by these shifts in artistic direction, as they expect a pre-defined experience, only to receive something different. Elrod said such entitlement is detrimental to the development process.

"A lot of times, people feel they are owed something because they've been the audience before," Elrod said. "So, they feel that the studio is obligated to provide them with an experience that appeals to them. I utterly object to that notion. Hardcore fans like that tend to be very off-putting to everyone else."

Die-hard franchise fans tend to be unwelcoming to change and new fans, Elrod said. This sense of elitism can subtract from the hard work that goes into new games.

"All you are owed for the money you paid for a game is that that game to be relatively bug-free and provide an experience the developers wanted to provide," Elrod said. "That's all those core players are owed. Developers are allowed to change what they design."

For most developers, the issue boils down to the question of how to create a new installment to a series while keeping old fans and simultaneously gaining new ones.

"You want your evangelists," Elrod said. "You want your base, and you need them to evangelize for you so you can attract a wider audience for your next game. Invariably, that's a very tricky balancing act."

Most studios cannot survive on small niche audiences alone and are forced to appeal to the largest possible fan base. Despite this, Ben Chronister, a junior secondary education/integrated language arts major at Kent State, says such displeased reactions to sequels are unavoidable.

"Even when games are successful, even when sequels are successful, you're always going to have some of the fan base feel spurned for one reason or another," Chronister said. "It's just like when fans of a band start complaining about their new stuff."

Some developers, such as Fisher, attempt to tackle this issue by making a distinction between accessibility and usability.

"Usability, to us, is more of, 'Once you get to the game, can you figure out what you're supposed to do?'" Fisher said. "Whereas accessibility is more, 'Are you interested in the game in the first place?'"

During his work on the Age of Empires series, Fisher often faced issues of how to increase usability. Fan feedback was crucial in deciding what features to keep and what to drop. Among Ensemble Studios' top priorities was improving the way the game plays while staying true to the context of the franchise. Fisher said he and his colleagues achieved this by being fans of their own work.

"The only way to make a truly inspired game is to love the stuff we make," Fisher said. "We don't sit down and figure out what we think is the most profitable business plan for us to approach. Our approach here is to make games that we love. When we get to the state where we have to figure out what to do next, we can use ourselves as a reference point for that."

Motivations behind increasing accessibility vary widely; although many companies are driven purely by profit, it is just as likely that just as many of them are simply branching out and exploring other creative avenues.

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The market for video games has grown so steadily that many approaches to video game development can be accommodated by the industry. Indie developers, artists, and programmers who create games without corporate budgets and backing are becoming increasingly successful in the current game market.

"A lot of indie games are made by people with a solely artistic drive and almost no understanding of marketing or the business side of things," Chronister said. "You get, in some cases, terrible pieces of crap. But in lots of other cases, you get surprisingly well-polished games with really cool kernels of gameplay or story at the core."

Indie developers are far from the only ones interested in artistic and nuanced experiences.

"For all those games that are trying to get every person in the world, there's always going to be a group of people out there that are trying to make an experience that appeals to a smaller group of hardcore fans," Fisher said.

Barnes holds a similar view, espousing niche games as a rewarding investment for developers who take the risk to make them.

"I still think niche games are a way to survive in the industry," Barnes said. "If your game strikes the right chord with the right people, and you can provide content and excitement to them, you can sustain without... having to compromise the complexity of the game you want to have."

Elrod believes it is important for gamers to support creative exploration in all of its forms. Trends come and go, and there will always be a market for the enthusiast, no matter how profitable accessibility becomes.
The Problem:
These games are prime offenders of putting accessibility before creativity.

"HITMAN: ABSOLUTION"

The upcoming installment in the Hitman franchise, "Hitman: Absolution" is scheduled to hit the shelves sometime this year, but gameplay footage has been released for fans and critics to peruse. From these trailers and demos, it's clear the game is taking a departure from their expected formula. Previous games in the series heavily encouraged critical thinking, adaptability and strategy. On the other hand, "Absolution" seems to demand little more than using cover to avoid detection, breaking a few necks and following a set path to your goal. Why the change? Simply put: games that force the player to apply brainpower to overcome challenges don't sell very well. Cinematic action and intrigue at the push of a button does.

"DRAGON AGE 2"

Widely considered a misstep by otherwise-talented developer BioWare, "Dragon Age 2" eschewed several of the adventure/role playing aspects that made the original "Dragon Age" a success in favor of a heavy-handed plot and stale combat. Red flags were waving even prior to the game's release: Bioware Senior Producer Fernando Melo stated outright in an interview that the game was targeted largely at the "Call of Duty" audience.

The Solution:
These games give us all hope of a game industry dominated less by profit margins and more by titles crafted by gamers, for gamers.

"DISHONORED"

Completely original intellectual properties are a relatively rare sight these days. Nearly every major title that comes along is either a sequel or reboot, but "Dishonored" is shaping up as a fresh take on first-person stealth/ action. Set to release in the second quarter of 2012, this game shows great promise as an original project from some of the minds responsible for games such as "Thief: Deadly Shadows" and "Dark Messiah of Might and Magic." Though it may be too early to comment on the quality of the final product, "Dishonored" looks to be breaking new ground with its mechanics, premise and presentation.

"SPEC OPS: THE LINE"

On its face, "Spec Ops: The Line" may seem like yet another cookie-cutter modern military shooting game, but there are some refreshing elements that set it apart as a potentially engrossing gameplay experience. With a third-person perspective and an emphasis on atmosphere and storytelling, this shooter could shatter some preconceived notions about what contemporary shooters are supposed to be.
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THE BURR

WEAR ME

1. "I have only

2. "Smile. It is

3. "Your ass is a

4. 'I'll make you

5. "You must want

6. "Crap. Someday

7. "I know I can

8. "Did you even

(Turn pockets)

"Do you want
1. “I have only three months to live…”

2. “Smile. It is the second best thing you can do with your lips.”

3. “Your ass is so nice that it’s a shame that you have to sit on it.”

4. “I’ll make you see Jesus.”

5. “You must work at Subway because you just gave me a footlong.”

6. Crap. Something is wrong with my cell phone. It’s just that your number’s not in it.

7. “I know I can’t have your cherry, but can I get the box it came in?”

8. “Did you ever kiss a bunny between the ears?”
   (Turn pockets inside out)
   “Do you wanna?”

9. “Do you like strawberry or blueberry? Good, now I know what pancakes to put on in the morning.”

10. “Can I read your T-shirt in braille?”

11. “This isn’t a beer belly; it’s a fuel tank for a love machine.”

12. “Don’t be so picky, I wasn’t!”

13. For women: when he asks to get into your pants just say:

   "No, thanks. I have one asshole in there already!"

14. "I’m like a snow storm. I’ll give you 8 to 10 inches and keep you inside for the whole weekend.”

15. “That dress looks very becoming on you. If I were on you, I’d be coming too!”

16. “We’re like Little Caesar’s; Hot and Ready.”

17. “Sex is a killer ... Want to die happy?”

18. Lick your finger, touch the person, touch yourself, and say.
   “Let’s get out of these wet clothes.”

19. “True, there are a lot of fish in the sea, but you’re the only one I’d like to catch and mount back at my place.”

20. “Girl, I wanna use you as a muzzle.”

Last year, a man walked up to me and said, “Girl, you got a boyfriend?” I replied, “Yes,” and he said, “How do you feel about having two?” I laughed and made my getaway, but it got me thinking: Do people think pick up lines actually work?

So I searched the Internet and chatted with students at Kent State and found the top 20 pick-up lines. Do these lines get the digits? You be the judge.

words CASSIE NIEDEN
LAST SHOT

JACOB BYK

This photograph was taken in the largest open-air food market in Jerusalem, which is arguably the most religious city in Israel. This girl isn’t much older than I am, and quite frankly, she didn’t grow up that differently than I did. I was born in Morristown, New Jersey, to a Reform Judaism family and upbringing. I went to Israel over Winter Break of my freshmen year of college at Kent State to, not only take advantage of a free opportunity to travel, but to feel a connection to the Israeli and Jewish people. As I enjoyed a fine cup of coffee outside a café in the marketplace, I saw a group of Israeli soldiers who looked my age. (In Israel, once you turn 18, you are automatically enlisted in the Israeli Defense Forces, so that if the country comes under attack, everyone in the country is trained to respond.) I felt the need to say hi to this girl, so I did. Turns out, she’s from Livingston, New Jersey, (twenty minutes from my hometown) and made Aliyah (Immigration to Israel) and joined the military as a citizen of Israel. By the time I graduate my freshmen year, she will have undergone two years of IDF training, and she will go on to New York University to pursue a degree in theatre. Small world, right? I certainly felt the connection I traveled for.
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