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Five Guys and Girls You’ll Date in College

SWITCHING ROLES
A dancer and football player kick through gender walls

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FROM THE EDITOR

When I first visited Kent State as a senior in high school, I was set on going to Ohio University. But despite my convictions — and Kent’s tundra-like climate — I came to fall in love with this university and its surrounding small-town charm, and my Bobcat pride began to slip away. On that same day, I got my first glimpse of Franklin Hall, the place I’d learn to become a journalist. I also picked up my first copy of The Burr magazine.

When I got home from my visit, I sprawled out on my bed and read the entire magazine from cover to cover. I couldn’t believe the words, photography and design that filled its pages had been created by students. Some of the stories made me laugh. Others made me cry. Some took me on a complete roller coaster of emotions from beginning to end. By the time I finished reading, I was set on going to Kent and becoming a staff member of The Burr. I thought if I worked hard enough, I’d be able to work my way up, and one day I might even get the chance to call myself its editor.

Getting here hasn’t exactly been a smooth ride. During my first weekend on campus freshman year, my roommate and I were mugged at knifepoint outside of Kent Hall. We spent the remainder of our first year afraid to leave our dorm, and we had a difficult time making friends. Between weekly trips to the campus police station and county courthouse, it took everything in me not to transfer schools.

But despite how much I wanted to leave, something kept me here. I knew if I left, I’d be running away from my problems, and I didn’t want my entire college career to be defined by one horrible experience. A part of me was still determined to fulfill what I promised myself I’d do, so at the end of my freshman year, I finally applied for The Burr.

Almost four years and a lot of sleepless nights later, I can’t believe I achieved what I set out to do and actually managed to produce a magazine (with the help of my incredible staff, that is). From the time I joined The Burr as a sophomore staff writer, this magazine has given me the drive to overcome an experience I don’t think I could have otherwise. I wear my Burr staff T-shirt far more often than I should, and I hand out new issues to my family like a little girl showing off her latest crayon creation. What can I say? I love this magazine, and I’m proud to say I’ve been a part of its 26-year history.

This issue is especially close to my heart, not only because it’s my first issue as editor but because it’s all about people who pursued their dreams, overcame obstacles or discovered something about themselves. Despite my rough start at Kent State, I’ve become a writer, an editor, a leader and someone I hope will leave an impression here after I graduate, even if it’s on another disillusioned OU wannabe like I was. So whether you’re a first-semester freshman or last-semester senior, I hope this issue inspires you to do anything you want to do before you leave this campus, whether it’s running a half marathon, breaking gender boundaries or trying to find your biological father like the writer of our cover story.

I can’t say I’ll ever be completely fine after what happened to me freshman year, but I know when I leave here, that won’t be how I remember my college experience. I’ll remember the late nights I spent proofing pages and obsessing over every last detail of this magazine. I’ll remember the crazy people I work with that I’m honored to call my friends. And most of all, I’ll remember that I actually managed to achieve something I wanted to from the beginning, even if I did run into a few bumps along the way.

Leighann McGivern

—Leighann McGivern, Editor
LEAVING RELIGION

How feminism and sexuality led two Kent State students to reconsider their faith

By Alyssa Morlacci

Amanda Anastasia Paniagua stands in the midst of the naked sculptures and thousands of Chef Boyardee soup can lids that embellish the Akron Art Museum's second floor. Through her thick-framed glasses and fire-red bangs, she gazes up at four two-dimensional women. The women sit around a table; they are decorated by rhinestones, floral patterns, gaudy jewelry and an acrylic color palette.

"That's my favorite," Paniagua says, pointing to the women who live in Mickalene Thomas' piece about feminism. "Of course it is," Paniagua's boyfriend, Laurence Skirvin says. He knows that feminism is important to Paniagua; it is the reason she left her religion.

Paniagua, an art history graduate student, believes in atheism and feminism. However, she didn’t realize a connection between the two “isms” until she heard about the movement Jen McCreight, a prominent atheist blogger, started this summer called Atheism Plus. McCreight calls it a new wave of atheism that “cares about how religion affects everyone and applies skepticism to everything, including social issues like sexism, racism, politics, poverty and crime.”

Unlike her boyfriend, Paniagua hasn’t always been without religion. In fact, she spent the first two years of her college career at Mount Vernon Nazarene University, a Christian school. After transferring to Kent State, she joined Kent State Freethinkers, an organization for atheist and agnostic students.

Women’s roles in religion “are always in relation to their submission to men and doing what men tell them to do,” Paniagua says. “I’m sorry, but that’s just not good enough for me.”

Minorities, including women, gays and lesbians, have been a part of Freethinkers since Daniel Sprockett, a Kent State alumnus, founded the group in 2008. Since then, its mission has never changed.

“Freethinkers wants to offer a safe community not only for people coming out of their faith but a safe community for people who are questioning their faith,” Paniagua says. “To not be judged, to not be told that they aren’t praying hard enough.”

Freethinkers provided support for a student this fall who was experiencing not only a transition to atheism but a transition from male to female as well.

Sophomore English major Morgan (formerly Mitchell) Ring decided three years ago that she was no longer religious nor a male, even though she had lived her entire life as both.

“I honestly think that I had to lose religion before I could transition,” Ring says. “I mean, I struggled with my identity my whole life — since I was 6 or 7 years old. When I was a teenager, I was really obsessed with this one guy at my church-slash-school, and I just felt guilty about it all the time — all the time. I was like, ‘It’s not OK for you to like guys because being gay is wrong.’”

When Ring was 28 years old, she divorced the woman she had been married to for three years. She decided to become atheist and to start taking hormones in order to make her transition.

“Long story short, I think my identity is sort of what caused me to lose religion in the first place,” Ring says. “My identity being so conflicted and me hating myself most of my life because, you know, here I am struggling with my identity issues. Do I like guys? Do I like girls? Do I even want to be a guy? Do I just like guys? Do I just like girls? And the religion I was in was pretty inconsiderate. I couldn’t keep it; I just couldn’t.””

The president of Freethinkers, who did not wish to be identified because she hasn’t told her parents she is an atheist, is familiar with Ring’s story and says she takes pride in the group’s effectiveness for students with these issues.

“Morgan, her situation is really hard for multiple reasons,” she says. “That’s why I love our group because we’re all from different backgrounds, we all have different stories, but it’s really nice because you need that sense of community. You need people you can talk to and who are going for a common goal.”
GUYS & GIRLS
YOU'LL DATE IN
COLLEGE

In high school, our dating selection was limited to the cheerleader, football star, bad boy and goody-two-shoes. But in college, a new assortment of stereotypical daters grace the campus grounds.

THE WIFEY

“I'm ready to get married — yesterday.”

Pros: Loyal, undivided attention, unlimited sandwiches.

Cons: She never goes away.
You know you’ve seen them, but now you’ll know what they’re all about. Happy dating — or avoiding.

THE ROMANTIC

“[I]’m really excited to meet your parents.”

Pro: Is always down for a cuddle sesh, gives presents, sends text messages that will make you melt, is completely wrapped around your finger.

Con: ... Said no one. Ever.
THE FRAT GUY

“We’re not frat boys; we’re fraternity men.”

Pro: Wears pastel outfits, has a band of established friends, gives invites to parties, is a ticket to free alcohol.

Con: He’ll talk to any girl who’s at least a seven (there are a lot of girls who look good after a couple Natty Lights).

THE HIPSTER

“I liked it before it was cool.”

Pro: Best-dressed boyfriend, knows all the good music before it comes out, can use his arrogance to piss off your parents.

Con: He’s too cool for everything, including you.

THE WOMANIZER

“How many girls did I hook up with last night? More than you.”

Pro: Irresistible bad-boy attitude, guaranteed to be a hottie, knows what he’s doing.

Con: You’re not the only one trying to be the only one, so get in line.

THE GEEK

“I’m the next Bill Gates.”

Pro: 4.0 finally in sight, no need to worry about other girls snatching him up, bow ties, most likely to make a good chunk of change after graduation.

Con: Do you like having a social life? Thought so.
THE SORORITY GIRL

"Chicks before dicks."

Pros: Hot girl, hot friends, avid social life.

Cons: Prepare to date the whole chapter.

THE SERIAL DATER

"I'm already over you."

Pros: She's gone before your first fight and won't pressure you to be the perfect boyfriend.

Cons: Does this girl even know how to be single?

THE STATUS SEEKER

"Are we getting fratty tonight?"

Pros: Never misses a social outing, has hot party outfits and good dance moves, is probably attractive.

Cons: She only wants you for your friends.

THE FUN SUCKER

"This is really boring. Can we leave yet?"

Pros: Let's be honest, no one likes this person.

Cons: Everything from her inability to party to her obsessive need to cuddle.
Breaking the Roles

As the first male Dance Team member and first female football player at Kent State, Liam Rogers and April Goss are defying gender roles to fulfill their dreams.

By Nick Shook
Goss wore her football uniform as part of her high school’s homecoming court.

Rogers performing a toe-touch in the M.A.C. Center with the Kent State Dance Team.

The Kent State University Dance Team gathers moments before a football game at the north end of Dix Stadium. One team member, dressed head to toe in navy blue accented by a gold and white trim, stands tall and confident. Fans who fill the stands don’t realize the dancer is nervous.

On the opposite end, a football player takes the field for pregame warm-ups dressed in a navy jersey bearing a gold No. 91. A matching helmet, emblazoned with Kent State’s Golden Flash logo, shines in the afternoon sunlight, hiding the player’s excitement and anxiety.

This is a typical scene for college football, but something separates Kent State from the rest of the NCAA. The dancer’s short-sleeved navy uniform, bearing an aggressive “Flashes” script, differentiates Liam Rogers from his female teammates who wear gold sleeveless tops. The brown pony tail sprouting from below the football player’s helmet serves as a clue to onlookers that April Goss isn’t a traditional kicker on the Kent State sidelines.

Liam Rogers is the first male student to audition for the Kent State Dance Team, and April Goss is the first female student to try out for the Kent State football team. Each athlete pursues a separate passion on his or her team, but concurrently, they are breaking gender barriers in collegiate sports.

Between the third and fourth quarter, the dance team jogs into a formation that runs diagonally from the end zone to the 10-yard line. The team members wait with their heads down for music to play. In the middle of the group, Liam Rogers stands a rigid 6-foot-2, which is much taller than the females who compose the rest of the team.

Rogers is placed in the center of the dance team whether he wants to be or not.

The lanky male dancer is immediately noticeable among his teammates. But despite his imposing frame, he quickly reveals his carefree, jovial demeanor. A smile reveals his perfectly aligned ivory teeth. His wavy, quaffed hair complements a handsome, photogenic face. His absence of bulging muscles is deceiving; a strong core helps him move fluidly throughout his performance.

“Knew that a lot of people would be watching me, being a boy dancing. That’s kind of an oddity in itself.”

Liam Rogers
Despite the ease Rogers displays as the team performs a hip-hop routine, his path to the Dix Stadium field wasn't without resistance. When he first tried out for the team in 2010, Rogers' coach said she wasn't sure he was prepared for the pressure that comes with being a male on an all-female team.

"We wanted someone really strong that could be a focal point because of his height and because it was such a difference and change to the team," dance team coach Lindsay Weisel says. "We knew that it was going to draw a lot of attention, and we wanted to make sure he was ready for that and that he was strong enough of a dancer to hold his own."

"I made it to the last cut, but my number wasn't called," Rogers says. "I was really happy I tried out, though. I learned a lot from that two-day experience."

Rogers took what he learned from the tryout and continued to work on his skills by attending dance conventions, in which industry professionals and music video choreographers instructed him. His ultimate goal was to try out again for the dance team.

The result of Liam's second attempt at making Kent State history was surprising even to him.

"I wasn't even truthfully expecting to make it the second time," Rogers says. "I was just going because if I did make it, great, if I didn't make it, that's OK too. It took me by surprise even more that I made it. It was awesome; I felt elevated ... I felt awesome, too, because I was the first guy that was going to be on Kent State's dance team, and maybe I'll pave the way for more guys to try out in the future."

But this isn't the first time Rogers has been the only male on an all-girl team. Since he began his dance career in sixth grade, Rogers has grown used to the pressure. But a new, bigger stage meant many more eyes focused on him.

"My first instinct was 'Yeah, I'm totally excited. I can't wait to start. I just want to start practicing and start rehearsing and get ready for the games,'" Rogers says. "But I also felt like, 'Oh, this is so much pressure. There's going to be so many people looking at me.' Ninety percent of people in the audience will just throw their eyes right at me ... It was just a lot of pressure that I knew I had to work on."

But this wasn't the first time all eyes were on him.

"I knew that a lot of people would be watching me, being a boy dancing. That's kind of an oddity in itself," Rogers says.

Rogers himself never had a problem with outside opposition. Instead, the courageous dancer drew motivation from those within the dance community who supported him and his passion. Such support allows him to accept the fact that there will be groups who do take a less-than-whole view of his involvement.

"He's going to get ridiculed; he's going to get talked about, whether it be good or bad, and we needed to make sure that he understood that," Weisel says.

"He's going to get talked about, whether it be good or bad, and we needed to make sure that he understood that, instead of him just jumping in and saying, 'I want to be on the dance team,'" Weisel says.

The current members of the team accept Rogers as an addition to the dance team. Instead of being wary of a male joining the team, the women on the team welcomed him with open arms.

"They love it because it's something different," Weisel says. "They're always said they wanted a boy on the team. It's not extremely common, but it does happen in the Mid-American Conference. Every time we go to the MAC Tournament, they see it, and they see it as something that they want, something they can bring as a difference." Rogers' perseverance and courage after initially failing to make the team was impressive to both the team and the coaches.

"I think he's a very dedicated person in the things he wants to do in life," Weisel says. "For example, trying out last year, we just told him that he needed to work on his confidence, he needed to work on his strength as a dancer. He came back this year and blew us away. Anything that he puts his mind to, he's going to do it."
Gray skies and a steady drizzle bring a sense of depression and gloom to the normally picturesque city of Kent, Ohio, on a late September afternoon. But inside Kent State’s field house, no one is happier or shines brighter than sophomore April Goss.

Standing as tall as her 5-foot-4, 118-pound frame will allow among her much larger, hulking teammates, the placekicker is right at home.

Her football brothers, more than 100 strong, stand in a loosely defined line behind the on-field action, watching the starting offensive and defensive units on opposite ends of the field. Goss flashes a smile as the herd of players gathers at midfield, with preparation for Kent State’s upcoming battle versus conference foe Ball State coming to a close for the afternoon.

Goss is living her dream playing Division I football. But her path to becoming a Flash is one that is less traveled.

Goss acted out of curiosity when she put on her shoulder pads for the first time during her junior year in high school. She had played soccer for 10 years, including two at Hopewell High School in Aliquippa, Pa., but her family’s passion for football led her to consider playing.

“I’d watch [football] all the time, and more and more I’d understand it,” Goss says. “I grew so fond of it, and I’d wonder, ‘Yeah, I want to play. That would be so much fun.’”

Goss wanted to try her hand — or foot — at kicking, but her father didn’t approve. He warned her that she could get hurt and might receive a negative reaction from the male players with whom she’d be competing. After relentless pestering, her father finally allowed her to go out in the yard and attempt kicking a football for the first time.

“Those kicks weren’t so good at all,” Goss says, laughing. “I expected them to be sailing, but they were line drives.”

With her parents’ blessings, Goss approached her high school coach, Dave Vestal, about joining the team, and he invited her to its mini camp.

“As long as she could keep her grades up, we were all for it,” says April’s mother, Kim Goss.

Goss joined the team for summer practices, garnering recognition from her coach for beating a teammate in sprints. She made and played for the team during her junior and senior year, giving up soccer in favor of football. Her gender did not spare her from the physicality of the game, though, and she was once taken to the ground by an opponent during a kickoff in a junior varsity game.

“The guy came up to me and hit me, and I was like, ‘All right, whatever,’ and just kept running. Then he tackled me, and I was so mad,” Goss says. “The guys were like, ‘Are you OK, April?’ I told them I was fine, and they were like, ‘All right, we’re going after him.’ They had my back.”

By the time she reached college, Goss was accustomed to the adversity and thrived amid the doubt of others. When she told others about her ambition to try out for the team at Kent State, she received mixed responses. Some would support her, but most would not.

“I enjoyed proving people wrong,” Goss says. “That motivated me. I’d go to camps and be the only girl, and I’d feel like every guy there was staring me down. But then I’d kick, and they were like, ‘Oh yeah, wow, I’ve never played with a girl before.’ And I’d say, ‘Mmm, you say that now.’

“It was different, and it was hard because it was the one thing where, I can’t let myself believe that, I can’t let myself fall into what they’re saying. I can’t do that because that will tear me apart. There was times where I just felt like I was the only person that believed in myself.”

Although she enjoyed proving people wrong, Goss was still attentive to the thoughts and judgments of others in her quest to make the roster at Kent State. At first, she was nervous to train in the presence of Kent State football players.

“I would kick before and after [Kent State] practices last year, and guys would walk out on the field, and it was just hard because I kind of carried those voices [of doubt] with me,” Goss says. “I would see them walking and I’d
be like, 'Oh, I wonder if they think I'm good enough.'"

Goss had met with Kent State coach Darrell Hazell in the fall and filled out paperwork to join the team as a walk-on player. Hazell sat down with the then-freshman to discuss what she was potentially getting herself into.

"She was very shy," Hazell says. "... she wasn't sure what she was getting into, but she's adapted extremely well."

While relentlessly preparing for what would hopefully be a tryout for the team, Goss found solace and a fresh look at life in a book by New Orleans Saints quarterback Drew Brees, "Coming Back Stronger."

"It totally put everything in perspective for me," Goss says. "I realized that adversity is only an opportunity. It's not meant to hurt you, it's meant to help you, and you need to look at it at that angle."

"That, I think, set it in motion. Everything I encountered in life, whether good or bad, was meant to help me: meant to make me stronger and meant to make me better and meant to prepare me for wherever I am now. Without those things, I wouldn't be a Division I football player; I'd just be a regular girl going to school."

Goss referred to a verse from the New Testament book of James as the foundation of her belief in herself and the ability to overcome adversity.

"Consider it pure joy when you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance,' which is true," she says with a smile.

The team accepted her from the first time she took the field, which surprised Goss, who did not expect such welcome.

"The guy came up to me and hit me, and I was like 'All right, whatever,' and just kept running. Then he tackled me, and I was so mad. The guys were like, 'Are you OK, April? I told them I was fine, and they were like, 'All right, we're going after him.' They had my back."

Hazell says, "Really just bringing her along, helping her learn how to kick properly and keep her demeanor the way it is.

"It's in his nature to be caring, but I also said, 'Hey, you've got to look out for her. Make sure she's getting better, and you're kind of her personal coach.'"

Goss let her emotions show on the final drive of the game. Arms locked with her teammates, she cheered on the Flashes offense as they moved across the field into scoring position before Cortez booted the game-winning field goal.

"I feel like I lost 10 years on my life from being so stressed out," Goss says, laughing.

She wouldn't have wanted to experience the memorable win with anyone other than her teammates.

"I think she's found 115 brothers that look out for her," Hazell says. "This is a thing that she'll remember for a lifetime, being able to be a part of the football program at Kent State."

Goss hopes to take the field for the Flashes some day, but for now, she is happy with the rare feat she has made by being accepted onto a Division I football team as a female.

"Honesty, I would love to get an opportunity, but [playing] is not my biggest concern right now," Goss says. "As long as we keep staying strong and get to the MAC Championship, that's our goal. Whatever needs to happen for the team, I want Freddy to be as healthy as possible and make every kick. If my time comes, it comes, but right now that's not actually my biggest focus."

"I just love what I'm doing."
Goss practices kicking at her high school football field. She quit the school's soccer team and joined the football team as a junior.

Submitted photo.
POUNDING THE PAVEMENT

After nearly two decades of battling psoriatic arthritis, Angela Pino set a goal few people thought she could achieve: running a half marathon.

By Angela Pino

Music was playing and giant screens surrounded me. Cameras flashed from a crowd of spectators lining the street. Time seemed to stand still as I stood at the starting line, surrounded by thousands of other runners, just waiting for the race to begin. To my side stood my father, supporting me like he has my entire life.

Two hours, 23 minutes and 10 seconds after starting the race, my dad and I crossed the finish line. Not many people believed in me, but I had proved them wrong. My dad and I posed for post-race pictures, grins stretched across our faces. Four years earlier, when I was battling constant knee pain from arthritis, I never imagined I’d be here, having just completed my first half-marathon.

There are a lot of things 4-year-olds are supposed to be doing: starting preschool, having imaginary friends, running and playing in the park. While I was able to do most of these things, that didn’t change the fact that I was sitting in a dermatologist’s office, covered in itchy, red, scale-like sores.

I already had the chicken pox and, though uncommon, it is possible to get them a second time. The first time I had them, they weren’t that bad, except for the itchiness. It was almost like a party. All my friends had them, so I wasn’t kept in solitary confinement; we were allowed to play together. What would happen to me now? Would I be able to play with my friends? Could they catch this from me?

The dermatologist came in and examined me before diagnosing me with psoriasis, a skin condition that produces flaky red and white scales. At age 4, I had no idea what this meant. I didn’t know my body was attacking itself and my skin was the battlefield. I didn’t know my immune system was overactive, and instead of reproducing skin cells every 28 days, mine reproduced every three.

When I was sick, my parents would give me medicine, and I would get better. I assumed the same would be true for this, but boy, was I wrong. I was told this was something I would have for the rest of my life. There was medicine to help control it but nothing to make it go away completely.

During the earlier years of my diagnosis, the medicine I was given smelled and caused a burning sensation because I scratched myself raw. It seemed as though I tried every drug on the market to help control my flare-ups, but nothing worked. I was constantly clawing at myself, oftentimes until I bled, trying to make my skin stop itching. My parents kept telling me to stop scratching, but it was hard. They weren’t the ones who constantly had to itch. My sneaky parents even let my schoolteachers in on my not-so-secret secret and gave them permission to tell me to stop scratching whenever they caught me trying to.
My mom said at my worst, my entire stomach was covered. Whenever I was out in public, people would stare at me.

One summer, when I couldn’t have been more than 6 or 7, my mom took my brother and me to a pool that wasn’t the normal one we went to. I was wearing a bikini because sun is good for psoriasis. We were walking back from the water slide when a lifeguard pulled my mom aside. She motioned for me to take my little brother back to our towel because it wasn’t too far away. I’m a very nosy person, so as soon as my mom got back to us, I asked her what the lifeguard wanted. He hadn’t stopped anyone else’s mom, so why mine?

“He asked about your skin,” my mom told me.

I was mad. I was hurt. I was embarrassed.

“We should just make me a bathing suit that says, ’It’s psoriasis, and no, you can’t catch it’ for me to wear,” I said to my mom as the pain of what the lifeguard said sunk in. I was only half-joking. Even after only having it for two years, I was tired of being different.

Sometime between the constant scratching and stares, my knees began to hurt. I would sit on my Pocahontas sheets and cry in pain.

Because I was young, my parents always told me it was growing pains. They would give me some Tylenol and tell me to go to bed, that my knees needed to rest and they would feel better in the morning. It wasn’t until years later we learned the pain didn’t come from growing; it was from the arthritis that comes along with psoriasis. It is unknown why arthritis can be a side effect of psoriasis, but it is something 30 percent of psoriasis patients develop. Most people don’t develop it until they’re between the ages of 30 and 50. I was 4.

As I got older, it was hard to accept that because my knees were deteriorating, I couldn’t participate in activities. I was determined not
to let another disease get in my way. I would quietly suffer through soccer practices, basketball practices, dance classes, even a day spent walking at a mall. I learned to suck it up and pop an Advil. My room would reek of menthol from lotions I used to try and ease the pain. Even then, the relief was only temporary.

Once I realized I wasn't that great at sports, dancing became my passion. During middle and high school, I would spend at least four days a week at my studio taking numerous classes. Some days, I would breeze through class without a single pain, while, other days, I just couldn't do what everyone else was. One of my dance teachers suffered from arthritis as well, so she understood what I was going through and would try to help me out on my bad days. She would give me other things to do that would be easier on my knees. As someone who is always up for a challenge and not one to take the easy way out, this was difficult for me. Because it was a small studio and often I was the only person in my Ballet III class, my teacher and I would be flat on our backs with our legs straight up in the air, looking like we were writhing in pain, but in actuality, we were doing our plies on the floor so our knees only had to fight against gravity and not our body weight.

By the time I was a sophomore in high school, my skin stopped responding to the phototherapy treatments I had been doing twice a week since I was in fifth grade. Though my skin cleared up some, my knees continued to get worse. It was time to meet with a different dermatologist and look into other options.

I was given a few different choices of medication. There was a type of chemo — methotrexate — I could take, to which my entire family said, "No." There was an IV I could get hooked up to twice a year that would give me medicine, but we still decided that wasn't for me, that we should save the big guns for later, if needed. That's when my dermatologist suggested a biologic medicine, a shot that I would have to give myself. I did not inherit the medical gene from my doctor dad, so the idea of needles, possible blood and giving myself a shot was not pleasing, but it was clearly the only option for me. Plus, this medicine was actually for arthritis, but clearing up psoriasis was a side effect. I'd be treating both of my diseases twice a week with a 50-milligram injection called Enbrel.

Within a few months, I saw a major improvement in my skin, and I started to notice my knees didn't hurt as much. With this newfound relief, I began to take up running on and off. I had tried before, running a few 5K races and paying for it almost as soon.
as the run was over. I also become extremely involved in community theatre, which cut in on my running time. It wasn’t until the second semester of my sophomore year of college that I became serious about running.

I woke up one February morning and decided I wanted to run a half marathon. I had been talking to a friend, and she mentioned wanting to run one. I had never run more than 3.1 miles, less than a quarter of the actual distance required. Would my knees be able to withstand the constant pounding on the pavement? I had made it a point to use the elliptical at the Student Recreation and Wellness Center because it was easier on my knees. I decided after four years of using Enbrel, it was time to stop living in fear of my arthritis and the possible pain and to just do it. I announced to friends and family that I was going to run a half marathon because I knew once it was out there, I would have to do it. My mom smiled and nodded her head with an “OK, you do that,” while my dad, a moderate runner, volunteered to run it with me.

Throughout the eight months I trained, I was cautious and slowly increased my mileage, not wanting to overdo it with my knees. If I did six miles one day and didn’t feel pain, I would try for six and a half the next day. Before I knew it, it was Oct. 15, 2011, and I was driving to Columbus to meet my parents for the race the next day.

I was so excited the morning of the run that I didn’t have time to be nervous about my arthritis. My mom wished us luck and dropped us off.

Runners are divided into corrals based on estimated finishing times. My dad and I were in the second-to-last corral. The whole atmosphere was like a party.

Before I knew it, we were passing a sign that said we finished the first half-mile of the race. As the miles began ticking by, I really got in a groove. My dad and I talked the entire time, and my pace was faster than I was expecting. Around mile nine, I started to feel a pain. This pain, though, wasn’t in my knees; it was in my stomach — I was starting to get hunger pains. As we got to mile 10, I told my dad, “All we have left is a 5k. Anyone can do that.” He looked at me, smiled and said, “You’re right. I hadn’t thought of it that way.”

After getting our post-race snack bag and meeting up with my mom, I proudly placed my pink 13.1 magnet on the back of my car and drove back to school. I awoke the next day without any knee pains, just the soreness one would expect after running 13.1 miles.

It wasn’t until I got back to school that I looked through the pictures from the race and noticed my dad had written something on his race bib. I took a closer look and realized it said, “ANGELA = INSPIRATION.”

Sharing that experience with my dad made all those years of pain and embarrassment seem like a distant past. I will always battle with arthritis and psoriasis, but now I know that I can do anything I set my mind to no matter what obstacles life throws my way. My new goal is to run a half marathon in every state. So far I’ve done New York, Ohio, Kentucky and Pennsylvania.

I have only 46 states to go.
The creators of Good Fucking Design Advice

Fail Fucking Off

Photo: Michael Reece
It's not much to look at, the "studio" of Brian Buirge, 28, and Jason Bacher, 26. Narrow stairs descend from the kitchen of the visual communication design graduate students' ranch-style home to an unfinished basement, sprinkled with workout equipment and piles of unfinished laundry. To the left, there is a humble corner, much smaller than a Kent State dorm room. It encloses a folding table covered in posters and packing supplies, a bookcase housing boxes with erasers, notebooks and pencils. A tall desk is lined with stickers that spell out "Thanks" - Buirge and Bacher are very polite, after all. It's a surprising setup for a company that sends products around the world, but for now, it works.

Buirge and Bacher's friendship began when they were undergraduate students at Kent State. After a group project that left each of them unsatisfied with the partners they were assigned, they began taking notice of each other's work. Both men quickly realized they shared similar design tastes, so they decided to stick together, forming a team that would eventually start a project none of their peers would ever be brave (or crazy) enough to pursue.

Good Fucking Design Advice is a joke - or at least that's how it started. As an adjunct instructor, Bacher quickly became annoyed with his students' often irrelevant questions. He started feeling like a broken record, and Buirge was sick of listening to his complaints every morning when they got coffee. The pair started thinking about sites they had seen before, like, "What the Fuck Should I Make for Dinner?" They even toyed with an idea of a site where students could submit work and they would critique it. That idea was quickly shot down because neither of them had the time for such an undertaking. So they settled on a site that spits out information. They never knew "Good Fucking Design Advice" would grow into so much more.

"We kinda put the pieces together, and we were like, 'Well, Good Fucking Design Advice,'" Bacher says. "Let's get our coffee."

Neither Bacher nor Buirge was in 100 percent. Neither of them had time to start a business that would take up all of their time. But before they had time to reject the idea, they found themselves putting everything together, sharing the workload 50/50. When they finished the site, they couldn't do anything but laugh.

"At the time, it was nothing; it was a joke," Bacher says. "We wasted 12 hours; we didn't do any of our homework; we threw any responsibility we had out the window. And all we have is profanity to show for it."

The day after they completed everything, they launched the site. A notice was sent out to some of their Facebook friends, people who they thought would appreciate it - collectively about 200 people. They came back to the studio late that night to work on other assignments and decided to check the site's analytics, which told them how many individual people were visiting. They both had an inkling their idea could really turn into something.
The site launched with 25 pieces of advice. One piece is displayed on the homepage, but when a user clicks, "This isn't enough, I need more fucking advice," different advice appears. Users can click as many times as they want or need. Advice is also available to be downloaded as wallpaper. Within four months, the site offered 75 pieces of advice, including:

- A computer is a Lite-Brite for bad fucking ideas.
- Never fucking get caught.
- You can't polish a fucking turd.
- "Getting up to 75 was a feat," Bacher says. "We felt like we had really achieved something."

Today, the site offers more than 200 pieces of advice. Bacher and Buirge add advice a couple of times each month. They have learned what good advice truly is, and now they are constantly looking and listening for it.

"Initially, we were trying to come up with it ourselves," Buirge says. "The next day was 6,000, so we were like, 'Wow, 6,000. Let's go get a beer.' The third night we got online, we were like, 'Whoa, 70,000. I'm tired; let's go to bed.'"

They also didn't want to buy only 10 T-shirts if they were going to pull off selling merchandise. They also didn't want to buy only 10 T-shirts if they were going to have a demand for 10,000. A friend suggested they do a pre-sale to gauge interest.

"Oh, pre-sale. Oh, we're so dumb," Bacher says. "That is a genius idea."

Between T-shirts and posters, the pre-sale generated about $10,000 in startup money. They used the money to pay for the creation of products without digging into their own pockets. That was when they learned the power of having good vendors. The person who was supposed to make the shirts and posters bailed.

"We're talking 11th hour," Bacher says. "We were finding someone to burn a screen who can produce a good-quality poster and a good-quality shirt. Buirge lost some hair and managed to grow some back. I was completely bald after that. It was the most stressed out we had ever been."

The person who had committed to doing the work for them had been given four weeks to produce everything. He told them a week before everything was meant to ship that he couldn't do it. Buirge and Bacher went on a three-day, no-sleep packaging marathon to get everything shipped by the date they had promised.

"We were like, what? Is this some kind of joke?" Bacher says. "It's not April Fool's, is it?"

After the one-year mark, things died down. Most of their business had been international, so to boost local sales, Buirge and Bacher started donating their products, and they hired an intern to help them out. Around January of last year, they were only shipping about 10 items per week.
“And we were completely happy with that,” Buirge says. “We were never really in this to make money in the first place. That wasn’t an objective, and it still is not.”

They had to make the decision to either improve or end the project altogether. They decided they wanted to tell their story and make the site more personal. Up until then, they said it sounded like an angry person, basically like a sailor. And that wasn’t the impression they wanted to give people.

Buirge and Bacher created a three-minute video and re-launched the website. They added a page for their intern and did all the things they wanted to do in the beginning but didn’t have the time for. Buirge says they were always running behind because they were learning as they went. The first 50 coffee mugs they sent out broke because they didn’t know how to package them properly.

“Everything that we did, we failed first, and we didn’t anticipate the demand we had, so it was like trying to catch up,” Buirge says. “Initially, we didn’t even think of it like a business. It was a side thing we were having fun with.”

Bacher says they began waiting to see if the pot would boil, and it boiled over. Sales increased more than 500 percent. They went from shipping 10 items a week to 10 items a day. It was almost as if they were starting it all over again. They bought what they thought was enough product to last a couple of months, but they sold out of everything they had within three weeks. And since then, Good Fucking Design Advice has been consistent.

In the 18 months the site has been around, it has grossed more than $100,000. Buirge and Bacher pay themselves modestly. Bacher says he and Buirge are no different than the other students struggling in their house. (They live with two other roommates, both named Jason).

“Before, we really didn’t really know what direction to go,” Bacher says. “We just kind of got lucky, I guess. But now I think we have a little bit more of a chemistry for success.”

Buirge and Bacher’s site now includes another person’s story: Tim Johnsen, a student from Arizona State University, spent a week with the designers and developed a Good Fucking Design Advice app. Their goal is to offer people different experiences through their company.

“He sent us a PDF of what he was thinking about and a video of a rough prototype he had put together,” Buirge says. “We were like, wow, this guy’s really into it.”

They decided to bring him to Kent so they could tell his story better.

“We weren’t really sure if he was going to be some crazy ax-murderer or what,” Buirge says. “We had never met him.”

“Everyone was like, ‘Oh my God, what if he kills you in your sleep?”’ Bacher says. “We were like, ‘He hasn’t even met us yet. We’re crazy.’”

“We might kill him in his sleep,” Buirge says.

Buirge and Bacher put Johnsen to work in order to get him into every aspect of what they were doing. He had to roll posters and stuff tubes along with them. They still can’t believe “some crazy website” made him want to travel across the country and sleep on their couch.

“It makes you realize, you don’t need a lot to change the way someone thinks or invite a great deal of inspiration in someone’s life,” Bacher says. “I mean, hell, look at this room. We have a shower in the middle of our poster space.”
Making amends with my INVISIBL HALF
How I stopped being angry and found my biological father (kind of)

By Rebecca Reis

I was a junior in high school when my parents told me the truth about my biological father. Truth is, they didn’t really know.

It was a fall afternoon after an extremely ordinary day at school. My mom and dad shuffled into my bedroom, perched themselves on the edge of my bed and told me we needed to talk. I dragged my attention away from Facebook and tried to make a joke about not needing the birds and the bees speech anymore, but neither of them laughed.

My mom cleared her throat and explained they had struggled to conceive children for years, attempting adoption and in-vitro fertilization that never panned out. This wasn’t news to me; I knew they’d had trouble conceiving, and I’d heard my entire life how blessed they were that I was born.

I silently waited for my mom to continue, completely unaware of where this was going. After a short and uncomfortable pause, she told me the biggest secret of my short 16 years of life: my parents had used anonymous sperm donors to conceive both me and my then-12-year-old brother.

My typically boisterous dad, who can carry hour-long conversations with complete strangers and whose loud, booming laughter can be identified
from miles away, was, for once in my life, completely silent and stoic while he waited to see my reaction. My mom’s eyes kept flicking back and forth between us, like she was waiting for one of us to shatter into a zillion pieces. I was stunned for a few awful seconds. The room felt uncomfortably hot for autumn, and for some unknown reason, I felt embarrassed. Cutouts from magazines and photos of my friends examined me from my tacky teenager bedroom as I stared behind my parents’ heads, thinking, “This is something from a soap opera. This must have been in an episode of ‘Dawson’s Creek.’ This kind of stuff doesn’t happen in real life.”

I felt like I should have had some sort of “Dawson’s Creek” reaction. My parents, the two people I trust more than anyone in the universe, just revealed that I’d been lied to for 16 years. My biology, the literal blood in my veins, was a mystery, and I had to accept that my entire existence was based on a secret science project.

Instead, I just brushed it off like they had just told me that the Reds had won or dinner was ready. My head was whirling, but I wasn’t angry or upset like I thought I should be.

“OK, that’s fine,” I said. “Dad’s still my dad as far as I am concerned; this really doesn’t change anything.” Somehow I managed not to throw an Emmy-worthy tantrum.

I rationalized it. My parents said they didn’t tell me earlier because they wanted to make sure I could handle it. OK, that makes sense. I cried when I was 10 and found out Santa wasn’t real. It follows that they would wait to tell me my biological father wasn’t real either.

My parents both released their breaths and hugged me, saying they loved me and were proud of me and not to tell my brother just yet. I was too embarrassed to ask any questions, and they seemed happy not to dwell on it. The after-school special was done. The credits were rolling. We moved on like it hadn’t happened.

After that, we didn’t talk about it much. I occasionally wondered about my bio-father; what he looked like, what shows he watched, if he liked to read. I wondered if I had any half-siblings, whether they knew about their conceptions, if I’d ever met any of them without realizing it. I’d read stories about people who found their bio-fathers through registries and DNA tests and wondered if I could do the same.

But I didn’t want to hurt my dad’s feelings, so I didn’t talk about my questions or follow through on my research. I just locked it up and kept it deep down inside, where it festered and gnawed at me for years. As time passed, it manifested as anger toward my bio-father, which in turn evolved into some deep-seated bitterness. I would self-deprecatingly refer to myself as a “catalog kid,” whose bio-father did you-know-what into a cup for money and promptly forgot about her. I didn’t realize then what a huge waste of time and energy it is being angry at someone who doesn’t know you exist.

Before I continue, let’s get the “which dad are you talking about” stuff out of the way. One phrase in the donor community I find really upsetting is “social dad.” I’m not kidding. The technical term for the

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“I felt like I should have had some sort of ‘Dawson’s Creek’ reaction. My parents, the two people I trust more than anyone in the universe, just revealed that I’d been lied to for 16 years. My biology, the literal blood in my veins, was a mystery, and I had to accept that my entire existence was based on a secret science project.”

Rebecca Neva
man who taught me how to ride a bike, change a tire and enjoy a good sci-fi movie is "social father." It's like he's just for show, as if I just keep him around so others think I had a “normal” conception. I don't even like calling my biological father my “birth father.” He wasn't there at my birth. My dad waited by my mom's side through her entire labor, and as she was sleeping, he held me for 14 hours and wouldn't let me go. So forgive me for not using the "technical" terms in this article, but from here on, the name for the man who donated sperm for my conception is bio-father, and the name for the man who raised me to be the person I am today is, and always will be, Dad.

Fast forward to three years later. The New York Times had just released an article titled “One Sperm Donor, 150 Offspring.” You can imagine what the article was about, and needless to say, it stirred up a whole new host of issues for me. This may not have been my bio-father (trust me, I checked), but he might as well have been. How many men have gone to these clinics to make a quick buck again and again, I thought, without considering they are fathering real offspring? The article discussed facets of being donor-conceived that I hadn't thought of: latent genetic diseases, hundreds of half-siblings and even rare cases of accidental incest. I decided then that I couldn't just sit and wonder. I had to know.

My first step was joining the Donor Sibling Registry. The DSR is a website that was started in 2000 after its creators, Wendy Kramer and her donor-conceived son, discovered how hard it is to track down an anonymous sperm donor and how many people wanted that option. The DSR is now one of the foremost registries for sperm and egg donors to connect with their offspring and for offspring to connect with each other. According to its website, it now has more than 30,000 members.

I interviewed Kramer so that I could get an idea of the industry and community as a whole. She told me how the DSR was started — when her son found himself in a situation very similar to mine — and where it's going in the future.

"It's just one of those things. I had a donor-conceived child who was curious, and there was nobody to help us. Talk about a grassroots organization. We grew from one kid's curiosity into what we do today," Kramer says. "In the process, we've learned a lot. We've learned the issues and how unethical the industry is and how things need to change."

I started reading and listening to Kramer's interviews in newspapers and radio stations and learning as much as I could about the system. I always knew what happened at sperm banks in the general sense but not a lot about the specifics. For example, what kind of genetic testing was done? How many children are donors permitted to father? What kind of regulations exist?

Turns out sperm banks in the United States aren't very well regulated at all. Many countries have national laws and limits on the number of offspring a donor can produce, where the United States doesn't have any. There was a case in Denmark where a sperm donor passed on a genetic nerve disease, and the government intervened immediately by limiting the number of offspring a donor can produce.

"Denmark saw a problem, jumped in and is trying to fix it," Kramer says. "And nothing like that happens here, nothing, no regulation whatsoever."

Maybe it's because I work in the media or because I felt wronged by the system, but sperm donation has become a bit of an advocacy project for me. It's something I constantly
"I imagined him playing with his brood of children, my half siblings with their complete medical histories in his ivory tower with his intact family tree. Most of all, I imagined I saw him out in public everywhere I went recognizing me from my 130 x 121 pixel registry photo and deliberately ignoring me."

Rebecca Reis
keep up on, especially as it becomes a more relevant topic in TV shows and movies. A great example is “The Kids Are All Right,” a 2010 movie about two kids who find their anonymous sperm donor, written by Lisa Cholodenko, who also used a donor and who Kramer says is a member of the DSR. This overload of information gave me even more reasons to be angry about my conception, but it also gave me more reasons to keep looking.

I waited a few months to join the registry. The DSR costs $75 a year or $175 for a lifetime membership, and as a sophomore at Kent State, I couldn’t just throw money toward something I wasn’t even sure would pan out. I did browse for listings under my donor’s place of donation, but no one with my donor number had contributed. Eventually I had some extra student loan money, and seven months later, I forked over $75 and joined.

I finally had to start talking to my mom about my curiosity to get my bio-father’s information. I explained that I had a lot of pent-up emotions about my bio-father, and the idea that the man responsible for my life didn’t know I existed was too much for me to handle. I didn’t even like calling him a “donor” at the time. To me, a donation means you don’t receive money in return. Mom understood my feelings and was gracious enough to give me everything she had regarding my bio-father, although it wasn’t a lot.

Donor number 117. Caucasian. Brown hair. Hazel eyes. Of English and Swedish descent. A+ blood type. At the time of his donation, he said he was 6’1” and 158 pounds. He was a student at the time with 20 years of education. This is quite literally all I know about the man who gave me half of my genes. It fits onto two inches of text in the catalog my mom saved all these years.

I posted all of it to the DSR on March 1, 2011 and waited. And waited. And waited some more. I figured once I posted my information, my bio-father or half-siblings would see it and join as well, as desperate to meet me as I was to meet them. But nothing happened.

I went back to demonizing my bio-father. I imagined him sitting in front of his computer and watching my attempts to find him and grimacing in disgust. I imagined him playing with his brood of children, my half siblings with their complete medical histories in his ivory tower with his intact family tree. Most of all, I imagined I saw him out in public everywhere I went, recognizing me from my 130 x 121 pixel registry photo and deliberately ignoring me.

In an act of desperation, my search took me to Facebook. I joined a Facebook group for donors, donor-conceived offspring, mothers of donor offspring and, to my surprise and initial disgust, men considering donating their sperm.

I had conversations with a few of them. They wanted to know how I felt about not knowing half of my medical history, not knowing how many siblings I had or not having a relationship with the guy that gave me half my DNA. One was actually afraid of not having a relationship with his offspring. They didn’t even ask about being paid, they just wanted to give someone the chance to have children. They were not demons at all. They were very human and very excited to help others. It was a side of my bio-father I hadn’t considered. When a woman asked one donor what he intended his donation to be, he responded, “The gift of life to change a woman’s entire world forever.”

I brought this up to my mom, and she gave me some other points to
consider. My bio-father was a college student, my age, when he made his donation. Did he tell his family? If he married, did he tell his spouse? Assuming I did find him, would I be harming his family by coming forward? I started to realize that sperm donation is not a one-way street. He may have a good reason for not wanting to meet me just yet. For all I know, he could even be dead.

He could have just been doing a good deed. After all, if he hadn’t donated, then I wouldn’t exist. My parents would have chosen another donor, and Rebecca Reis could have been a rocket scientist or a teacher or a fire fighter and maybe never would have gone to Kent State and become a writer. These words wouldn’t exist without him. I wouldn’t exist without him.

So I stopped being angry. I still wanted answers, but I was done holding a grudge against him.

I wasn’t any closer to finding him, though. I went as far as ordering a DNA test, which was another $289 spent on answers. On a hot day in May, I swabbed the inside of my cheeks and shipped the cells to a company called Family Tree DNA.

When the results came back in June, I was put on another registry, this time with people who shared my DNA. I didn’t have any close relations on the registry. It did get me in contact with some third and fourth cousins, but after lots of email exchanges, none of them seemed to know anyone who could be my bio-father.

Still, the DNA test did answer one valuable question. I ran my DNA results through a program called Promethease (this one was free!), and I obtained the majority of my medical history. Now at least I know I have an extremely low risk of restless legs syndrome (I’m not kidding, it is really that thorough), but I’ve started doing simple monthly eye tests to check for age-related macular degeneration. It was terrifying to see all my risks laid out in front of me at first, but at least I know what to look out for now.

But now that I have my medical history, it’s unclear to me why I still want to find my bio-father. I’m not looking for a dad. I already have a great one of those. I’m not looking for siblings, either, because the brother I have is pretty great, too.

I guess it’s just the feeling of not knowing, of having someone out there with a strong biological connection to me who may not know I exist, that keeps me looking. I just want to know.

“I think it’s an innate human desire to want to know where we come from,” Kramer told me. “Part of deciding who you are is knowing where you come from.”

When I decided to write this story, I knew I’d have to talk to my dad about it. We hadn’t spoken about my conception since that fall evening four years ago because I thought it would anger or upset him. I didn’t expect his actual reaction at all. He said he was proud of me.

“It’s an internal drive that we get to know as much as we can,” he said to me. “You are my daughter, and you’ll always be my daughter. You have my total support to find out as much as you can.”

My little brother is now a junior in high school, and my parents haven’t told him how he was conceived yet. I’m not sure how he’ll handle it, if he’ll lock it up like me or have a Dawson-esque ordeal. What I do know is I’ll be there to support him, answer his questions and maybe help him find his bio-father, if that’s what he wants to do. At the very least, I can share my experience with him, and hopefully spare him the bitterness it took me four years to overcome.
luna ñegra
When you're the first person in your family to graduate from college, getting a diploma takes on a whole new meaning

First Degree on the Family Tree

By John Milligan

For many high school graduates, college seems like the next logical step. One minute, you're learning to write in cursive, and the next, teachers, coaches and parents are feeding you a line about how you can either go to college or die penniless in an alley. Well, maybe they're not that direct, but we're certainly taught to think highly of higher education.

They're not wrong. We know a college education is a good thing, and most graduates can help guide you from a high school diploma to a bachelor's degree. Yes, aside from spamming your inbox with membership offers, alumni, especially in the form of parents and siblings, can offer valuable advice and guidance for navigating the collegiate landscape.

But for some students, higher education doesn't run in the family. Whether they're looking to follow a particular career path or just want to broaden their horizons, first-generation college students have several reasons for breaking the chain and taking a shot at higher education. But one thing's for sure – it's not easy.

Shelby McMillin, a junior fashion merchandising major, is the first in her family on track to graduate with a bachelor's degree. And for her, being first means shouldering a lot more than just a backpack.

"It was incredibly difficult [being the first one to go to college]. Even now, it's so difficult because all of my friends say, 'Oh, I don't know about my financial aid, my mom or dad takes care of that for me.' No one takes care of anything for me," she says. "I do all of that on my own. When people say they're stressed, they have no idea."

She may be weighed down by day-to-day responsibilities, but McMillin said she relishes the freedom. Coming from Gibsonburg, Ohio, a town carrying a population of just 2,500 people, college seemed a long way off. Her mother spent a few semesters in college but left for a full-time job. Her older sister was on pace for a university degree until pregnancy changed those plans.

"So then it was just me; my mother's last attempt at legitimacy as a parent," she says with a sarcastic smile. "I don't know. In a way it was an option, but I always thought it was out of reach because I knew how expensive it was. But my mom wasn't going to let that happen. She made me apply. Here I am."

McMillin's story isn't unique. Yes, it's clichéd (and also a massive generalization), but most parents want better for their children. For parents who missed out, college is the gold standard for their progeny.

Chris Corsi, a junior visual communication design major, said that while music is his passion, his collegiate future was absolute, especially to his parents. Corsi's father worked for Cleveland's water department for more than 30 years but wanted something different for his son.

"I had always really been into music, but my parents were always pretty serious about getting an education and thought it was a way better idea than taking a year off or doing something independently," Corsi says. "I guess
I didn't ever have a choice really. I guess [not going to college] was one of those things he always regretted.

Still, for the fortunate few who know early on what they want to do for the rest of their lives, college is a necessity. After all, no hospitals hire doctors with a high school diploma and a really good work ethic.

Chad Long, a senior zoology major, said he always knew he wanted to work with animals, but the only way to break into the zoology field was by making a four-year stop at Kent State.

"I mean, it's a competitive field and lots of people want to do it," Long says. "You need experience and education to be able to get into a zoo."

He said his parents, who didn't go to college themselves, didn't pressure him into higher education, but he knew his future would be textbooks and term papers or nothing.

"It's hard to think about what I would do if I didn't go to college. I mean, I've been thinking about college since ninth grade in high school," he says. "So... I don't know. I would probably be working at a job I didn't want to. I can't even imagine."

Although Long knew college was his chance to get ahead, others just hope not to be left behind. According to the latest U.S. census, half of all 18 and 19 year-olds are enrolled in college.

At some point, despite its usually negative connotations, peer pressure and societal expectations can influence recent grads.

"Aside from the family aspect, it's just drilled in your head throughout school," Corsi says. "Like, you got to go to college and even in your group of friends... you don't want to fall behind when everyone is progressing. It's just like, 'I guess that's what everyone else does.'"

Whether they were pushed, pressured or chose to continue their educations, soon McMillin, Long and Corsi will be sitting in the middle of the M.A.C. Center surrounded by thousands of friends, faculty and, of course, family. As they walk through center stage under spotlights and flashbulbs, they'll share a celebratory moment with hundreds of their peers.

But in finishing their educations, these three are starting a legacy that will be passed down to siblings and, maybe one day, their own children.

And when they're handed an empty leather case and presented with a handshake, a passing moment for those in attendance, they're really ensuring the start of something very big for them and their families.
MOVING OUT

By Alexis Pfeifer

Brian Straniak, an autistic student at Kent State Trumbull, prepares to live on his own for the first time
Fifteen years ago, when Brian Straniak turned 4, his parents suspected something was affecting his ability to socialize. The family visited a doctor in Cleveland and found out Straniak might have autism. After a trip to Chicago to visit an expert on autism, the family learned his diagnosis.

Straniak has Asperger's syndrome, sometimes known as ASD, a disorder on the autism spectrum characterized by difficulties in social interactions and repetitive behaviors. Although Straniak showed small signs of functioning on the spectrum, his parents first noticed certain strong abilities, such as his unusual interest in reading and reaction to loud noises.

Straniak has Asperger's syndrome, sometimes known as ASD, a disorder on the autism spectrum characterized by difficulties in social interactions and repetitive behaviors. Although Straniak showed small signs of functioning on the spectrum, his parents first noticed certain strong abilities, such as his unusual interest in reading and reaction to loud noises.

Straniak currently attends school at the Kent State Trumbull campus, where he maintains a 3.76 GPA. The sophomore technology major lives at home with his mom and dad. He hopes one day to become a video game designer.

Managing his autism became a feasible task for Brian when he joined a Students Against Drunk Driving group in high school. He participated in certain group activities that helped him talk to others about basic community matters. However, Straniak's unfamiliar social interactions sometimes scare away potential friends.

"He still finds it challenging to have extended conversations but is much better at initiating a typical greeting," his mother says. "He learned to deal with loud noises and unexpected changes in a schedule, but he's somewhat shy, and conversations are still a bit of a struggle."

Straniak referred to himself as a hermit in high school, hiding from conversations in fear of his apparent social awkwardness. He shied away from prom and other social activities. After starting college, Straniak's thought process changed.

"As I continue through school, I would like to get out of my shell," he says.
Though Straniak’s cognitive skills had developed by the time he began college, his social skills remained the same. He tended to hide from social interaction and focused on his grades.

Attending his first college classes at Kent State Trumbull were not much of a change for him. During his childhood summers, he took children’s typing, robotics and photography at the campus. Additionally, Straniak started his college classes during his last year of high school.

Growing up in Warren, Straniak did not like boring small-town life. For this reason, he turned to video games. “I get lost in them,” he says, “maybe a little too much.”

Although he spends several hours a day in front of the TV screen, lost in the digital world of video games, Straniak has managed to maintain high grades in most of his classes.

“He seems to always be in constant thinking mode,” his mother says. “His ability to focus is probably most challenging.”

However, keeping a high GPA can be difficult when the professor’s teaching style doesn’t keep the already distracted boy focused. Last semester, Straniak found himself struggling in a class where the professor was uninvolved.

“I felt detached,” he says. “I lost interest. It’s all in the presentation of information. I’ll have to motivate myself, which I’m really good at when I feel like it, to retain my GPA. I keep it high mainly because it keeps my mom happy and benefits me on an academic standpoint.”

“Brian has always been Brian,” his mother says. “[He is] smart, quirky [and] has a dry sense of humor.”

The young boy who couldn’t stand loud noises and had problems paying attention has grown into an almost independent college sophomore. Next year, the “over-spoiled child,” as he refers to himself, will transfer to the main campus.

The idea of moving out on his own gives Straniak feelings of excitement and nervousness for the year to come. Leaving the home of his attentive mother, who was partly responsible for his high GPA, will force Straniak to take on the responsibility of turning in his work on time, paying attention in class and focusing on schoolwork instead of video games.

His mother remains proud of the independence he is preparing for, but she isn’t sure if he is ready. The hardest part of him moving to main campus will be realizing he’s not at home, she says. However, she wishes for him to reach his educational and career goals in the future.

“My desire and hope is that I can succeed. I’d like to show how I can do things on my own without any oversight. I don’t want it to feel like a chore to me.”

Brian Straniak

“My desire and hope is that I can succeed. I’d like to show how I can do things on my own without any oversight. I don’t want it to feel like a chore to me.”
When students' main support systems don't support their college majors

By Alicia Balog

The Compromise

Andrea Malys loves theatre - the music, the scenery and especially the people she meets, many of whom are her best friends. She has performed in various productions from "Children of Eden" to "The Emperor's New Clothes" and "The Skin of our Teeth." She once landed the role of Wendy Jo in "Footloose."

She planned on majoring in musical theatre until she began her freshman year at Kent State. Now, Malys, a sophomore, is majoring in Spanish with a minor in education.

She compromised with her parents for the Spanish major, but even that took some convincing for her father. He eventually warmed up to it after seeing a presentation at Kent State about all the opportunities a Spanish major presents.

Malys says when she told her mom about her desire to pursue a major in musical theatre, her mom gave her a look that said, "Are you serious?" and told her no. Her dad agreed.

"I would've had a lot more enthusiasm for college if I had gotten to be what I wanted," Malys says. "I mean, I'm fine doing what I am, but I would have had a lot more drive to do it."

She did not major in musical theatre because her parents think of it more as a hobby and less as a career. Her parents originally wanted her to major in math because of the possibility of landing a better job.

However, Malys' hatred for math prompted the compromise.

Although Spanish wasn't her first choice, she likes it, and it comes easy to her. Her parents have stopped pushing math.

Money also factored into the decision. Malys made a deal with her parents that if she keeps up her grades, they'll help pay for college.

"That's one of the major reasons I listened to them with not doing the
major I wanted," she says. "I knew I wouldn't be able to get through college without help."

Malys says sometimes other family members question why she wants to major in musical theatre and tell her it won't get her far in life. While this upsets her, she knows their hearts are in the right place. They just want her to do well in life.

Not only is her family against her major but so are some of her friends who study math and engineering.

"They feel like they're going to be more successful because they're going to make more money," she says. "But I don't think success is measured by money. It's measured by happiness and being able to do what you love."

Even though she isn't majoring in what she wants, she says she's happy. She likes her Spanish major now that she is getting more involved in it and says she is getting an excellent education.

Despite not being able to pursue the major she loves, Malys says it's important for students to choose something that makes them happy.

"No matter what you end up doing, you're the one that has to live with what you go through with," she says. "Not anyone else."

Family Influence

Freshman Jamie Dye loves science. When she was little, she loved to watch shows and documentaries on the Discovery Channel.

“When I was really little, like 4 or 5 or 6, I watched CSI, and I wanted to be like a forensic-scientist-type thing,” she says. “And after that phase kind of headed out, it was the medical field. I wanted to be a doctor of some sort.”

Now at Kent State, she is studying biology/pre-med to be an anesthesiologist and wants to eventually work with Doctors without Borders.

“It changed around from what I wanted to do every so often, but I kind of knew I wanted to do Doctors without Borders,” Dye says. “It was my end goal because I think that’s a really cool opportunity to help out people and to get to explore the world.”

Although she enjoys her biology major, she sometimes still wishes she could pursue a major in zoology because of her love of animals. In her opinion, zoology is more biology-oriented, while actual biology involves more chemistry. However, under the influence of her cousin, Dye entered Kent State for biology.

Dye’s cousin played a major role in her life. She helped raise Dye because her mother worked so often, and she pushed her to always strive for success in school. She says her cousin didn’t think zoology would get her anywhere except working at a zoo.

Dye tried to explain to her cousin how zoology could help her get into medical school, but her cousin wanted her to pursue a medical major.

“It was funny because for the longest time, when she would complain about [the zoology major], I’d be like, ‘OK, well in that case, I’ll just be an art major!’ which, you know, you can see her blood pressure rise and her pulse go crazy,” Dye says.

Dye’s cousin’s opinion had an emotional impact because she looks up to her and wouldn’t be where she is without her. Dye inherited her cousin’s stubborn drive, and she gives 100 percent of herself toward everything she attempts.

Even though she isn’t studying zoology, she knows her biology major will help her reach her goal of being a doctor for Doctors without Borders. Before that happens, though, she says there is one other change she will need to make.

“Obviously, I’m going to have to change my name before I become a doctor because ‘Dr. Dye’ probably won’t attract so many people,” she says.
Concerned but Supportive

Skyler Toller’s inspiration for becoming a teacher stemmed from a special relationship she held with one of her own teachers.

“When I was in sixth grade, I had a teacher who really did a lot for me personally and with my writing, and it occurred to me that I want to be that teacher for someone else,” she says.

After graduating from college, the sophomore integrated language arts major wants to teach high school English courses for a few years before teaching at the college level. She says it’s the only dream she’s had that has lasted more than a year. Everyone around her is supportive of her career decision — except her parents.

Ever since she told them about her goals for the future, Toller’s parents have been suggesting various majors she could choose instead.

“They’ve been trying to get me to do psychology and medical fields, and I think they tried lawyer once,” Toller says.

Her parents are concerned with her decision to major in integrated language arts. Toller says they primarily worry about her job security. How will she find a job? What happens once she does? What if the school loses funding and she loses her job? What if she never gets hired in the first place?

Even though Toller has listened to their concerns, she still dreams about being an English teacher.

“It’s a little discouraging to think that, even though what they’re saying is kind of very real, everything they’re saying is based on something logical,” she says. “But I have a real passion for it, and that kind of helps me feel a little better for it.”

Toller told her parents about her passion but says they don’t think it’s a good reason.

“They’re not happy about it, but they’re not trying to sabotage my success even though I’m shooting for a field they’re not exactly proud of,” she says.

Rather than sabotaging, her parents are helping her pay for college and haven’t made her switch her major because of it.

“It would be so easy for them to say, ‘Well, you’re not taking the major I want you to; I’m not going to pay for it.’ They have been surprisingly supportive despite their disapproval of the final job I’m going to get,” she says. “I consider myself very lucky.”

The Independent

Senior Matt Branco is self-sufficient when it comes to attending college. He paid for college with scholarships, grants and less than $5,000 in loans. Because of this, he’s been able to study what he wants without his parents controlling his decisions.

As a freshman, he enrolled in Kent State as an architecture major — a major his mom thought would give him a stable job and financial security.

Three months into his freshman year, he discovered he hated architecture. He made a deal with himself that he would wait until he decided on a different major and then drop architecture.

He soon switched to philosophy.

Three years later, he still desires to one day teach people skills for life.

“I want to teach people about critical-thinking skills,” Branco says. “I want to teach people about different religions they are not familiar with and how to
relate to people they don't know or they don't understand."

However, not everyone was happy with his decision. Although she did not have any say in the matter because Branco was able to pay for college on his own, his mother worried about his decision and was skeptical of the security of landing a job in philosophy.

"I kind of put it off because my mom doesn't really understand college," Branco says. "She just worked blue-collar jobs her whole life, so the idea of the significance of what you study and having a degree isn't equivalent to getting a job. They're almost two completely different things, and that doesn't click with her."

Branco would like to attend grad school to get his Ph.D., but after talking to his adviser, he's realized universities want more than just produce philosophers for the job market.

"More importantly, they want people who will publish and who will bring renown to their program," he says. "So if you say that teaching is your greatest desire, they'll be less interested in you because they don't want someone who just wants to learn to be a good teacher. They want someone who is going to make a big name for themselves and make a big splash in the philosophical community."

Branco is still anxious about going to grad school and finding a teaching job, but he says he has been coming to peace with the idea that he might not go to grad school.

He says if he doesn't get in, he can use skills he already has to get a job working on cars or using his communication skills in a human resources department. He would like to continue to apply for grad school each year until he finally gets accepted.

Even though his mom was skeptical of his major, he says his family doesn't see how he can fail.

"To them, they don't even think there is any doubt that I'm going to grad school," he says. "I don't want there to be any doubt that I'm going to grad school, but it's all a matter of if someone will accept me."

Branco says he's glad his mom is optimistic about his chances of getting into grad school even if she was skeptical of his major initially.

"I'm sure she's realized it's not worth it to badger me about what I'm studying or to tell me there's no hope in my future with what I'm studying and stuff like that," he says. "So of course, she is being optimistic and encouraging, which is all I really want."
Four nontraditional students prove it's never too late to go back to school

By Drew Parker and Kelli Fitzpatrick

It's 3 p.m. in Adolescence in Society class. The professor asks if students ever fought with their parents as teens. Most students nod their heads silently. Cheryl Peterman laughs softly in her seat. "We're living in a very different time," she says to the professor as class dismisses.

A 48-year-old grandmother and senior general studies major from Warren, Ohio, Peterman has raised a child, gone through a divorce and enrolled at Kent State three times since she was 19.

"I always knew I wanted to go to college because my parents never stressed the importance of education when I was growing up. My father retired from the steel mills, and my mother did several odd jobs," she says. "I'll be the first person to get a bachelor's degree in my family. I want to stop that cycle."

Having to work overtime at an automotive parts distribution center and struggling with finances got in the way in the past, but this time, Peterman knows she will finish. "I really wish I would have finished back then because it is so hard out there," she says. "It was convenient to get to class from the dorms, and I got to have something I had missed out on earlier in my life."

Peterman says she enjoyed meeting all the students but found residence hall life wasn't a perfect fit for her. "I made a lot of relationships with some sweet girls," she says. "But I felt like was always cleaning up after everyone, like a mother."

When she grew tired of having to move out of the hall for holidays, Peterman decided to move to Allerton apartments, where she currently stays. "I do understand my priorities better now, though. You can't play around in school. You have to get your education because it's so hard out there."}

Cheryl Peterman

"I'm interested in pursuing psychology and women's issues," Cheryl says. "Women still have so many difficulties to overcome that aren't always known about. I want to help with sexual harassment, physical and mental abuse, anything women are dealing with."

Thirsty-four-year-old senior psychology major Norman Duderstadt has similar dreams of helping others. He began his 14-year military service after graduating from high school in Paris, Ohio, in 1996.

"Society didn't push education nearly as much back then," Duderstadt says. "I had no idea what I wanted to do, and the military sort of found me."

While serving four years in the Marines and 10 in the Navy, Duderstadt discovered the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder among his friends.

After finishing his time in the service, Duderstadt decided to pursue a psychology degree at Kent State on a GI Bill. He had worked with a PTSD class in the military and decided to make his passion for helping those affected by the
disorder into a career. After graduation, he hopes to work with the military to help people understand the disorder and counsel veterans who are affected.

"PTSD is a daily stressor that not only affects the veterans but their families as well," he says. "These men and women were like my family, and I want to help them as much as possible."

As for life as a nontraditional student, Duderstadt says he had a little trouble adjusting to a schedule with more free time but feels that he is better at understanding priorities and deadlines than younger students.

With a 3.8 cumulative GPA, Duderstadt has discovered a routine that allows him to succeed in school. "Every morning, I wake up early, study for a few hours, work out at the rec, go to class and then study again," he says. "I never pull all-nighters or study late in the evening. I treat school as a full-time job, and I realize its importance."

"I don't have to worry about fitting in or partying now," he says. "I've already sowed my wild oats. I understand how to spend my time wisely and not procrastinate."

Sherman and Dolores Rappaport went to college in the late 1940s but never finished. After a lifetime of busy careers, European vacations and two sons, they have settled in Aurora, their home of 38 years. They don't fill their retirement days with golf, bingo or hour-long naps. Instead, 60 years after their first college experiences, the Rappaports are back in class.

The Rappaports are two of the 55 senior guest students at Kent State. Senior guests "attend classes which are of personal interest to them," says Monica Brately, outreach program manager for the Office of Continuing and Distance Education in an email. "Senior guests may only attend classes with the permission of the instructor and/or department after all regular students have been registered for the classes."

The Rappaports, both 82, have been guest students at Kent State for a while. "I'm going to say 15 years," Sherman says. "But it might be longer than that."

"No, I don't think it's been that long," Dolores says.

"It is," Sherman says. "It is."

No matter how long they have been here, the Rappaports do know why they keep coming to class.

"For one, it keeps me busy," Dolores says. "For two, I've learned things I would not have known otherwise."

Sherman says he takes classes "to keep [his] brain working."

Dolores attended Western College, now a part of Miami University, in 1947, and Sherman began at Miami University in 1948. Sherman says neither finished school because they had some other plans.

"We got married in 1950," Sherman says with a laugh. "My father says, 'Well, you don't seem very interested in school, so come to work.' And I did."

Sherman worked at his family business, Rappaport Studios, which he later renamed Rappaport Exhibits, for 51 years. Dolores worked "little jobs," including the family business.

"[My father] was right," Sherman says. "It took me about 60 more years until I got interested [in school] again."

Six decades later, the Rappaports say they enjoy being guest students and have taken literature, history, film and music classes at Kent State. They enroll in many courses, including Children's Literature and Graphic Novels, with English professor Vera Camden.

"We've had several of [Camden's] courses," Sherman says. "I think she's terrific."

"We both do," Dolores added.

The feeling is definitely mutual, Camden says.

"I really appreciate their insights," Camden says. "They bring a world of experience and a world of having lived full lives, both professionally
and personally, that adds depth to their wisdom."

Brately says most professors enjoy having senior guest students in their classes, even if a class size is already large. "Many faculty enjoy having senior guests sit in and participate in the classes, while some faculty do not wish to allow senior guests to join their classes for a variety of reasons," Brately says. "Because there is not credit earned, senior guests can participate at a level that is agreeable to them and the instructor."

The Rappaports participate in class discussions but do not take tests. Sherman says he did choose to present a verbal report on a graphic novel for a class in the spring. Camden says the Rappaports contribute to her lectures.

"They have a firm grasp of history," Camden says. "So if I ever need to support an observation with historical references, it's nice to have Sherman's perspective because he's lived through most of our century."

The Rappaports may be older than their classmates, but Sherman says they still benefit from the younger-generation students.

"They're tremendous," he says of younger classmates. "They're great. I learn from them as much as I learn from Dr. Camden."

Camden says they also provide an example of lifelong learning for other students.

"It's a good example for students because they stay fit and keep their minds active and keep positive outlooks," Camden says. "I think they're wonderful examples of students whose lives and learning have remained vital."

For Peterman, Duderstadt and the Rappaports, coming back to school has given each of them a new chance to learn, whether they intend to pursue careers after their studies or not. Duderstadt says the military helped him understand the importance of human life and changed his perceptions on academics.

"In the military, if you make a mistake, people die," Duderstadt says. "Not to say that exams and projects in college aren't very important, but I now believe in second chances much more. It might not turn out the way you thought it would, but as long as you're here, you can always try again."

There are currently 55 students enrolled in Kent State's Senior Guest Program, which allows Ohio residents ages 60 and older to enroll in one or two classes each semester free of charge.
MODERN VINTAGE

Fashion is and always will be an evolution

Photos: Megann Galehouse

Some styles have been exalted, while others (like the ever-ambiguous gaucho pant), we'd rather not remember. Today's fashion industry is full of vintage influences, and we're showcasing the best modern looks inspired by decades past.
the '20s

Location
Empire, Kent
Dress
Figleaf, $42
Hair
Skullz Salon
Location
Van Deusen Hall, KSU

Blouse
Figleaf, $26

Hair
Skullz Salon
Location
Skullz Salon, Kent

Jacket
Einstein’s Attic, $8

Bandeau
Figleaf, $6

Belt
Figleaf, $14

Hair
Skullz Salon

THE 80s
Alfredo Cacioppo is tall, dark, handsome and has been in a Facebook-official relationship with Pinocchio Scordos, a lovable pug, since July 14, 2012. He's also prone to napping for hours at a time, chasing mice and coughing up hairballs.

"He's a character. He's definitely a player," says Gea Cacioppo about her cat with a big personality. "He likes to be the center of attention, and he's very conceited."

Cacioppo, a sophomore fashion design major, decided to make her gray and white fluff ball a Facebook page after her friend, Kat Scordos, suggested Alfredo and her pug, Pinocchio, make their relationship public on Facebook. Cacioppo says her friends were sick of seeing pictures of Alfredo on their Newsfeed, so creating a Facebook for him was the best solution.

Furry companions and four-legged friends, like Cacioppo's, are accepting Facebook friend requests, filling Twitter timelines and dominating Instagram feeds. With college students being some of the biggest contributors to this social network traffic, these animals are dressed in outrageous costumes and leak candid photos to followers.

When Gea Cacioppo was moving out of her parents' house last January, her mom found Alfredo to keep her company while living alone for the first time. Her family members, whom she describes as "cat crazy," are friends with Alfredo on Facebook.

Cacioppo calls Alfredo her "sidekick" and her partner in crime. "He's like a child to me. He follows me around everywhere," Cacioppo says. "I got him a leash, and I take him on walks. Sometimes we have photo shoots. He even sits down at the table for dinner with me. If I'm trying to do my homework, he'll just lay on it until I give him attention — It's terrible. He's like a little person."

Breanna Fitzpatrick, a sophomore speech pathology major, went one step further describing her hamster, Charles, by saying he embodies a personality similar to her own.

"He's like me in hamster form," Fitzpatrick says, as she gives Charles one of his hamster croissants.

Fitzpatrick says she did her research before she found Charles, a Syrian hamster.

This past June, Fitzpatrick went to Jack's Aquarium at Polaris Mall in Columbus and found her hamster. Charles, whom she calls "Charles bub," often hobbles across her MacBook while Fitzpatrick tackles assignments on Blackboard or scrolls through the Facebook album she created for her furry friend.

"He's so photogenic. He's an outgoing little bug. He likes to chatter a lot," Fitzpatrick says, as Charles makes a chattering noise in the background.

Fitzpatrick says she gets mixed reviews from her friends and family for posting pictures or status updates about Charles on Facebook and Twitter.

Her roommates always jump at the chance to play with Charles, but her parents don't quite understand her attraction to the hamster. Fitzpatrick says her boyfriend, who's not a fan of rodents, dislikes her use of the hashtag #Charlesbub when she relays information about Charles on Twitter.

Unlike Fitzpatrick, Nicole Pajstka chose Instagram as her medium to share her chinchilla's exploits.

"I feel like it's interesting to have a chinchilla because not many people have chinchillas or know anything about them," she says. "When he's doing something cute, I post it. I made him this little hammock to sleep in, and when he sleeps in it, it's really cute. I always get a ton of likes on [my pictures]."
Pajestka says she bought her chinchilla, Kirby, from ForCHINate Chins, a chinchilla rescue center in Parma, Ohio, this past February. She decided to make the chinchilla commitment after doing her research about this rodent, which is indigenous to South America.

“A lot of people buy chinchillas and don’t realize the kind of work it takes to own one,” says Pajestka, a sophomore fashion merchandising major. “It’s a commitment when you get them. They’re really smart, and they get bored really easily.”

Pajestka says Kirby likes to bounce off the walls like the Nintendo videogame character he is named after.

“They get bored if you don’t interact with them,” Pajestka says. “You would never be able to catch him. He likes to hop around and crawl all over things.”

Pajestka says chinchillas can live from 15 to 20 years and need a large cage with many levels and toys to play with so they are stimulated at all times.

Pajestka says although she loves playing with Kirby, he can be very intrusive into her studying time. She says Kirby is nocturnal, so he’s ready to play when she wants to work at night.

“I think he’s more distracting than...
a stress buster because I’ll just be sitting there doing homework, and he’ll jump around in his cage to try to get my attention and get me to play with him,” she says. “He’s very aware of people being around. Sometimes I have to walk away, and I’m like, ‘I can’t play with you right now.’”

Pajestka says Kirby’s cuteness always wins out in the end. She says her friends were scared of Kirby at first, but now they love getting updates via social media.

“Most of the time my friends love it. He’s about the size of a small rabbit, which is a pretty big animal for a cage. They’ve grown to like him because they realize he’s not scary by any means,” Pajestka says. “I get a lot of comments like, ‘Oh my gosh, that is so cute. I didn’t know you had a chinchilla. That’s weird.’”
Mikey Aller’s binder is plastered with stickers – Jigglypuff, Charmander, Pikachu and Blastoise decals stare up from behind a thick, glistening laminate. The booklet’s spine is tattered; rough cardboard edges peek out from the folder’s peeling plastic skin. Casketed inside the bookends rest tens of hundreds of thin, paperboard Pokémon cards.

Aller and some of his friends compiled the collection during their years as Pokémon trainers. Most of them have stopped playing Pokémon. Aller doesn’t battle with cards much anymore, even though he is now the only owner of the binder.

“Most people understand it enough to realize it doesn’t make me like a total crazy nerd,” Aller says. “I don’t consider myself over it or anything, especially since the new game is coming out soon.”

Aller, a freshman hospitality management major, says Pokémon is not just a relic of childhood for many college-aged students. Although most Pokémon fans he knows aren’t forking out cash to buy new booster packs, the video games remain as popular as ever.
"It's still around, and it hasn't really changed much," Aller says. "It still appeals to that nostalgic value."

Sarah Foley, junior integrated language arts major, knows the feeling of childhood comfort Pokémon evokes. It's her escape into infantile bliss.

"It's like Harry Potter — if you grew up with that sort of thing, then you're going to keep playing it," Foley says. "It's just an element of your childhood. I'm sure one day I will grow out of playing ... but I don't really have a reason to stop playing it if I still enjoy it."

Foley has refused to "grow out" of Pokémon. While most of her friends eventually stopped mashing Gameboy buttons and wearing Clefairy T-shirts, she has not. Foley has collected the video games and other merchandise since the second grade.

"Every time a new game came out, I would go ahead and get it," Foley says. "It was the thing to do at the time, but I started getting into it so much that I would keep getting games even when everybody else stopped."

Aller also plays the video games often. Today, there are over 600 Pokémon to collect, but even back when there were fewer than 500 pocket monsters to catch, Aller made sure he caught them all.

"It's 493 that I bothered to collect," Aller says. "I've logged a little over 400 hours, and I got all 493. I had to go online and trade with strangers."

He laughs and says he does not want to estimate how much money he has spent collecting cards or buying the video games, as he fingers through a deck of a few hundred cards — this one in particular is his "fire" deck.

Foley, in addition to the cards she collected as a girl and video games, has also purchased Pokémon stuffed animals and clothing. Like Aller, she does not want to estimate the total cost of her Pokémon interests.

But not all collegiate Pokémon fans play hundreds of hours of video games to get their fix. Angelia DiAntonio, a junior visual communication design major, enjoys the cuteness and simplicity of Pokémon. In other words, it's not hard for her to draw Pikachu.

"I'm a VCD major, so I like drawing stuff," DiAntonio says. "It's people making their pets fight each other to win a match. The idea itself is kind of stupid ... but the whole thing itself is fun."

DiAntonio also names nostalgia as a driving force behind her interest in Pokémon. Jigglypuff's massive, adorable eyes and Pikachu's bad temper have a way of making her happy.

"When I was little, I used to love drawing Pokémon," DiAntonio says. "I'm a VCD major, so I like drawing a lot. It's fun, it's simple, it's recognizable — Pikachu's like an icon. I'm an RA, actually, and I made Pikachu my door decks, just for that reason. I want to make people smile."

The three agree the innocence of Pokémon grants the game its popularity with young adults. While most video games are rampant with blood and sex, Pokémon offers a reminder of simpler days. It's made for kids, but that does not mean it's just for kids.

"Games today, they're trying to appeal to the common gamer — you know he's like an aging 25-year-old," Aller says. "A lot games seem to be extra gory, extra sexual, playing to that kind of guy. I like the series because it doesn't have that. It's not trying to grow with the gamer. I like the fact that it's not overssexualized. It's appealing to me as a gamer, not as a guy."

It isn't uncommon to find somebody in your dorm hall or morning class who secretly wishes to catch them all. Foley says Pokémon no longer carries its "nerdy" connotation. People have no problem coming out of the Pokémon closet.

"In college, I don't think there is a negative stigma about it," Foley says. "It was more so in high school where you kind of kept your mouth shut if you still played Pokémon. In college, I don't really have a problem admitting to people, 'Oh yeah, I still play the Pokémon games.' You end up running into a lot of people who are like, 'Hey, I do too!'"

DiAntonio put it simply: "You have to admit, everyone loves Pokémon."
Remember When?
The ‘90s

We are the ‘90s generation at Kent State, the kids who grew up playing with (and then trying to deactivate) our Furbies, wishing we could live in New York apartments like the characters of “Friends” and trying to choose which Power Ranger or Spice Girl we identified with most.

By Carley Hull

The ‘90s were a great time to grow up, and as much as we might not like to admit it now, there are certain parts of the ‘90s we’d trade a lot of the Pokemon cards in the world to relive — unless, of course, trading Pokemon cards is exactly what you miss. Reminiscing about the good times, we’ve looked at what students miss and remember the most about the ‘90s. It’s time to take a blast into the past.

Movies
Disney produced some of its greatest classics in the ‘90s with “Aladdin,” “Beauty and the Beast,” “Toy Story” and “The Lion King.” Other childhood favorites such as “The Sandlot” and “Home Alone” still remain close to our hearts. Don’t be ashamed, we all watched “Space Jam” more times than we’d like to admit and cried when Julia Roberts fell in love in “Pretty Woman.” Haley Joel Osment had us seeing dead people in “The Sixth Sense,” and “Titanic” still has us wishing Rose would have just made room for Jack on that door. For sci-fi fans, the ‘90s introduced a new “Star Wars” movie, “Jurassic Park” brought dinosaurs back to life and “The Matrix” had kids everywhere trying to mimic Keanu Reeves’ martial arts skills.

Toys
The ‘90s brought us the useless (though theoretically epic) Moon shoes, and Sock’em Boppers took tormenting our enemies to a whole new level. Hot Wheels cars celebrated their 30th anniversary and were popular with the boys, while the girls watched their Sky Dancer dolls fly. Our siblings drove us crazy with their Tickle Me Elmos, while future architects played with K’NEX, and Beanie Babies were all the rage.

Games
The introduction of the Sony PlayStation and Gameboy Color created a new world for video games, while Japan was responsible for our virtual pets from Tamagotchi to the Pokemon games that ruled the school lunch tables. Kids were glued to their controllers playing “Mortal Kombat,” “Super Mario Bros.,” “Doom” and “The Legend of Zelda.” Games like “Tomb Raider” and “Resident Evil” are now classics in the gaming world and have been made into major movies. Playing with Pogs was a great playground pastime, and who can forget hours of Bop It?

TV Shows
Nickelodeon was at its peak in the ‘90s with cartoons such as “Hey Arnold!,” “Doug,” “Rugrats,” “Aaahh!!! Real Monsters,” “Rocko’s Modern Life” and “CatDog.” We enjoyed the twisted humor of “Angry Beavers” and “Ren and Stimpy,” while Cartoon Network dished out the always hilarious “Dexter’s Laboratory” and “Pinky and the Brain,” as well as the adorably tough “The Powerpuff Girls.” Teen Nick brought live comedy shows “All That,” “Kenan and Kel” and “The Amanda Show.” Kids learned about animals from “Going Wild” with Jeff
Corwin and science from “Bill Nye the Science Guy.” The “Mighty Morphin Power Rangers” was a huge hit, while older kids watched “Beverly Hills, 90210,” “The X-Files,” “Friends” and “Beavis and Butt-Head.” “America’s Funniest Home Videos” taught us to laugh at others’ pain, while “Boy Meets World” and “Full House” showed us the power of family and friendship.

Music
The ’90s popularized drastically different styles of music. Grunge rock was all the rage at the beginning of the ’90s with Nirvana, Pearl Jam, Alice in Chains and Soundgarden. Punk rock re-emerged with Green Day, The Offspring and Blink-182. Rhythm and blues became mainstream with Mariah Carey, Boyz II Men, TLC and SWV. Dr. Dre and Snoop Dogg expressed themselves with rap. Bubblegum pop exploded in the mid-’90s with female stars like The Spice Girls, Britney Spears, Jessica Simpson, Mandy Moore and Christina Aguilera. Long before One Direction took over the airwaves, adolescent girls swooned over boy bands like the Backstreet Boys, BBMak, 98 Degrees and ’N Sync.

Fashion
Fashion in the early ’90s continued on with the ’80s trends of slim legging pants and oversized shirts for girls. During the grunge music phase, denim and flannel had a comeback, while piercings and chains started gaining popularity in certain crowds. Overalls and windbreakers were socially acceptable in the early ’90s, and later on we began to see midriff tops everywhere and boys wearing oversized, baggy jeans and bandanas. High-waisted jeans were extremely popular and mood rings were a must have. Boys began bleaching their hair to keep up with the boy band phase, and girls craved velvet everything.

Movies
“I remember when ‘The Lion King’ came out, and I was kind of scared.”
Keegan Larwin, sophomore

Toys
“We had a lot of Hot Wheels. OK, and Beanie Babies. I think we still have some of them.”
Jordan Michael, senior

“I was terrified of Furbies. They would never shut off until you took the batteries out, and they would still stare at you.”
Kyle Randby, junior

Games
“‘Zelda,’ ‘Banjo-Kazooie,’ ‘Spyro’ and the ‘Mario’ brothers as well. It was when I first got into gaming in the ’90s, and it got me addicted.”
Dan Olsota, sophomore

TV Shows
“‘Boy Meets World’ was always great. [It was] something you could relate to.”
Connor Cotton, freshman

“‘Rugrats’ was my number one. It was awesome because they were so adventurous.”
Ian Klein, freshman

Music
“My favorites were probably ’N Sync and the Backstreet Boys. I was obsessed with boy bands for sure.”
Kianna Bugglin, freshman

Fashion
“Crop tops, jean jackets, crew neck sweatshirts. The ’90s [had] great fashion trends that are coming back today.”
Erin Cawthorne, sophomore
Congratulations to The Burr and TheBurr.com staff!

**NATIONAL AWARDS – 2012**

2012 Society of Professional Journalists
Mark of Excellence Awards

**Non-Fiction Magazine Article**
National Finalist
Joey Pompignano “In an Instant”

2012 Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Student

**Magazine Contest**
General Excellence, Third Place
Rabab Al-Sharif, Editor

**Consumer Magazine Article**
Feature, Third Place
Leighann McGivern, “Waiting for I Do”

**REGIONAL AWARDS – 2012**

2012 Society of Professional Journalists
Mark of Excellence Awards, Region 4

**Non-Fiction Magazine Article**
First Place
Joey Pompignano “In an Instant”

**Best Student Magazine**
Second Place
Jennifer Shore, Editor

**NATIONAL AWARDS – 2011**

Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication

**Investigation and Analysis**
Second Place, Spring 2011
Joey Pompignano, “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
MAKE A DIFFERENCE. EVERY DAY.

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Read about issues and keep an open mind.

VOTE
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VOLUNTEER
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