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A story of survival

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One of Three
Hannah Kelling is ready to take on the world — without her other two-thirds.

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Literary trends that conquered the bestseller lists — and our hearts.
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Email geography@kent.edu for more information.
"Kent Read, Kent Write, Kent State" — If you're a student here, you've most likely been heckled about our university's notoriety for out-of-control street parties and a seemingly illiterate student body, whether it be from friends on social media or family who don't truly know our school's potential.

Even though at times we feel we can't argue with our school's less-than-reputable reputation, I don't think we give enough credit to the people who make it untrue. In my four years at Kent State, I have met more dedicated, talented and brilliant people than I ever imagined I would, from architecture majors who pull all-nighters to construct design masterpieces to nursing students who spend eight-hour shifts of grueling training at hospitals to prepare for when our health is in their hands. We have many people to be proud of at this university.

This issue showcases some of Kent State's most inspiring students — from a Sudanese refugee who survived unimaginable horror to a social media philanthropist who raised $70,000 for tsunami relief. These exceptions to the stereotype overshadow those who define it.

Kent State is far more than a six-word pun, as are the people who walk the Esplanade every day. A benchwarmer can be a team captain; a girly girl can suffer from PTSD; a slacker can become a famous comedian. Even Lester Lefton, the highly criticized president of Kent State, can be human — and we think that's worth writing about.

—Leighann McGivern, Editor
Luna de Negra
INTERNET DATING

While playing Words With Friends last March, Stephanie Jewell, a junior pre-business management major, stumbled across an advertisement for Skout – an Android and iPhone application that helps users find new friends, acquaintances or lovers.

The app shows users pictures of other people and lets them view their profiles. After snooping on potential friends or dating prospects, users can send each other messages and pictures. Although she created a profile for the app, Jewell doubted she would actually meet a candidate for a relationship.

"People who used the app were shallow, and it was hard to get a good connection on there," she says. "There were some creepy people who wanted to hook up, but I could block them."

Two months into using the app, Jewell found Cory Gens, who sent her a message on the app in the middle of May. She says most of the relationships and conversations she pursued on the app prior to Gens were brief.

"Unless they liked you, they would stop talking to you after a while," she says of users on the app. However, Gens was a clear exception to the short-lived, shallow relationships she typically saw on Skout.

"It was more like he cared what was going on in my life," she says. "He'd talk to me, and he didn't just want to have sex."

From Skout to text messages to phone calls, Jewell and Gens became interested in each other. At the end of a summer's flirtation, the pair agreed to meet with their families at the Erie Zoo in Pennsylvania, a midway point between both of their hometowns. Jewell says the first meeting was "kind
“Skout connects you to other users nearby or continents away, in more than 100 countries, whether looking for new friends or activity partners. Our virtual environment is rich with personal experiences, thanks to features like chatting, exchanging photos or notes and sending virtual gifts.”
—skout.com

of awkward.” She brought her mom, dad and brother; Gens brought his aunt.

“We just kinda smiled and hugged, while my parents were talking to his aunt,” Jewell says.

The awkwardness subsided after the newly acquainted couple had some alone time looking at the zoo’s animals. The couple then ate lunch at the local mall and visited a park near Lake Erie. Jewell says the best part about the first-date experience was that both families approved of the new relationship.

“Both our families were pretty supportive of it because they wanted us to be happy,” Jewell says.

The couple hit it off and made the relationship official after the first date. Gens moved to Kent to live with Jewell and her family this fall.

Not all students who use online dating sites or sources experience such successful results. Gene Centore, a freshman computer science major, says he tried Internet dating while he was in high school, and it didn’t work out.

Picture this: It’s early evening, and a teenage boy dressed in a sharp-looking outfit waits for his date at Luigi’s Restaurant in Akron. Centore, 17 years old at the time, was meeting his date from the social networking service MeetMe because they seemed to click during their online conversations. He expected her to be a high school student and single. Yet, when his date arrived, he noticed she was not alone, nor was she 16 as her profile on MeetMe described.

“Things got weirder and weirder by the second,” Centore says.
The woman who arrived as his date turned out to be 23 years old; the young, male sidekicks behind her were her "friends with benefits." She wanted to recruit him to be the newest addition to her lineup. Centore immediately turned down her offer.

"Crazier things have happened to people on dating sites," Centore says. "Thankfully, nothing went severely wrong for me, otherwise."

Centore also used GeekMeet, another social networking service. As an ambitious high school student with limited time outside his extracurriculars, online dating served as an alternative to traditional dating.

He made some connections on the sites; however, he says none of the people clicked with him for long.

"People couldn't get to know me," he says. "They got a general assumption of me, but most of the profile information is so broad."

Centore explains websites like eHarmony or Match.com are more effective for online daters, but they can be expensive for college students and young adults.

"I was too busy and just in high school when I used those sites, so I wasn't in a rush," Centore says. He says he won't be concerned about finding a romantic partner until after his college education is complete.

"One thing I would say is when anyone uses online dating, you need to have a healthy sense of skepticism," he says. "You need to be able to sift through the B.S. and seek people who are authentic and there for a real motive because not everyone is on there to find love. Some go on to be entertained, and some go online because they're bored."
Know the people you are talking to online.

"There are fake people out there," Jewell says. "You can usually figure out who's fake. Like if the person won't send you a picture on a dating site, it's probably not them."

Keep conversations flowing.

Jewell says she would advise students who try Internet dating sites to talk to the people on the site for a while before even considering meeting or exchanging numbers.

Limit the information you put out there.

Sift Through the B.S.

Child says a clear warning sign to stop communicating with a person is when the individual won't send you more than one picture of him or herself after talking for a while, or they send mixed messages.

Bring a friend when meeting an online dating partner ... or lots of mace.

Upon first meeting your online beau, it is safer to meet in a public place. Tell a friend or have someone tag along on the date as an extra precaution.

"Don't be ashamed of the date," Child says. "It's nothing wrong. Tell someone so if anything does happen, you can make sure you don't get in a situation that might cause harm to yourself."

Long Distance

Attempting long-distance relationships isn't for the weak at heart or easily tempted souls. If a summer fling or partner who lives miles away isn't willing to commit, the relationship is probably not worth the time and stress.

Emily Appelbaum, a freshman architecture major, says she and her fiancé are testing long-distance dating during her first year of college. However, he is still in high school, so the couple has been keeping the engagement on the down-low.

"We started talking in terms of permanence, and it was an unsaid thing," Appelbaum says of her engagement. "Until later, we started talking like it was a fact."

Appelbaum says the switch from face-to-face to long-distance dating has been a difficult transition. She tries to Skype her fiancé at 11 p.m. a couple times per week.

"I stay up the extra hours if I need to," she says. "It's worth it."

Long-distance dating doesn't get easier with time. Dee-Jai Grecek, a senior speech pathology major, says she and her boyfriend, with whom she'd been friends since sixth grade, decided to start dating during her sophomore year at Kent. However, there was one problem: Her boyfriend was still back in Pittsburgh, while she was at Kent.

Grecek says because they started dating mid-semester, she wanted to wait until Thanksgiving break to drive home and officially go on a date with her friend-turned-boyfriend.

"We'd been friends for years before," she says. "But it was hard to make the drive back to Pittsburgh, especially after only dating for a week."

During Thanksgiving and Christmas break that year, the new couple solidified their relationship and finally became official.

Since they started their long-distance relationship, the couple has had to work in time for each other on almost a daily basis.

"It's kind of funny because my friends who are dating guys and girls in the same city don't text as much.

STAGES OF ONLINE DATING

Stage 1: Check out different online dating sites, and see which looks most compatible for you. Some are geared more toward specific age groups or cultural demographics, and others are just strangely specific. Heck, there is even a site called DateCraft specifically for "World of Warcraft" fanatics. So if that's not your scene, you might want to try a different site.

Stage 2: Search around. With online dating, Facebook-like stalking is expected. Check out other peoples' profiles, look at their pictures and see who is out there.

Stage 3: Send out messages. Email or chat with other people on the site.

Stage 4: Once you find someone who's compatible, go ahead and connect with them on other social networking sites. Start texting and exchanging pictures, but do so gradually and with caution.
as me and my boyfriend do," Grecek says. "We pretty much text all day when he's not at work and I'm not in class. We talk on the phone about three times a week."

Texting. Calling. Skyping on occasion. While Grecek and her boyfriend currently maintain their relationship mostly through technology, they live close enough to be able to visit on weekends.

“We like to see each other every two weeks, if it's possible,” she says.

Scheduling times to meet in a long-distance relationship is the hardest part. Grecek says she and her boyfriend have to plan almost anything they want to do in advance. She says she has to check her syllabus constantly to make sure their plans will work.

“We're both super busy,” she says. “He just graduated and has a full-time job in Pittsburgh working in [information technology].”

Grecek says one of the more difficult things about the relationship is her boyfriend’s occasional jealousy.

She says although she worries a bit about cheating on his part, she knows he is busy, and he doesn't live in a college environment like she does.

Honesty, Grecek says, is key in making a long-distance relationship work during college.

“Me and my friends go to parties and everything,” she says. “With long distance, you need to have even more trust in the person than you do in a normal relationship.”

Grecek says students should try to keep relations with their significant others back home if they know there's a chance they will be close together again at some point.

Grecek says when she graduates in December, she looks forward to the end of virtual correspondence.

“You'll put up with it because you have to if it seems like there's an end,” she says. “I don't think long-distance relationships are for anyone, but you will put up with it if it seems like there's an end in sight.”

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"I stay up the extra hours if I need to. It's worth it."
—Emily Appelbaum

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Stage 5:
The phone call. This is where the online relationship gets interesting because you probably haven't heard this person speak before. Child says this is where most online dating relationships end because "people imagine the way [their partners] say things." He says this is what really makes or breaks the online relationship.

Stage 6:
Plan to meet. The meeting step can be extremely nerve-racking for many reasons. A normal first date is stressful enough, between deciding what to wear, how to act and what to say; but with a first face-to-face encounter, it's even scarier. What if the person isn't who he or she claims to be? Child says a way to combat this is to let family and friends know what you are doing. Meet in an open, public place so other people are around if anything goes wrong. Try to plan a date for midday at a park, coffee shop or restaurant.

Stage 7:
Make it official. If the date goes OK and both parties were happy with the experience, consider an official relationship with this person. Child says there shouldn't be a negative stigma for a successful online relationship. Take things slow, and let the other party know how you feel about the relationship consistently.
‘It’s always darkest before the dawn’

After three years of avoiding my problems, I’m finally ready to face them

By Leighann McGivern  Photo Illustration: Brian Smith
Regrets collect like old friends
Here to relive your darkest moments
I can see no way, I can see no way
And all of the ghouls come out to play
And every demon wants his pound of flesh
But I like to keep some things to myself
I like to keep my issues drawn
It’s always darkest before the dawn
—“Shake it Out,” Florence and the Machine

I was sitting alone in my apartment a week after the accident, attempting to tidy the piles of clothes threatening to take up the entirety of my bedroom floor, when Florence and the Machine’s “Shake it Out” began to play from my iTunes library. As I mouthed the words silently to myself, the emotions festering in my body rose to the surface. For the first time in what seemed like too long, I cried.

And it’s hard to dance with a devil on your back.
So shake him off.
I have been carrying around my own demons for three years, and that’s why I’m here — sitting in a therapist’s office for the first time in my life.

“It’s still hard for me to talk about it,” I mutter, my hands twisted in my lap.

“That’s fairly common in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder,” my therapist states matter-of-factly, jolting me from my half-trance.

Her words seem frank, as if she’s telling me I have a cold or sprained ankle.

The only time I’ve really ever heard people talking about PTSD is in reference to veterans — people who have seen real violence, experienced unimaginable fear, witnessed hundreds of senseless deaths. I’m a 21-year-old college student who spends too much time on Facebook and has more pink in her closet than is socially acceptable. I’m not a soldier.

This August, my mother and I decided to take a last-minute vacation to Ocean City, Md., where we stayed with my cousin Christopher, a 30-year-old lifeguard/artist who has lived there his entire life.

After a long day of lifeguarding on our second day, Chris joined us on the beach before we decided to go home. We offered to give him a ride home, but he insisted on riding his new bike. He told us he’d race us back.

Chris is the type of person who would surf 20-foot waves in a thunderstorm just for the sheer adrenaline rush. We told him to be careful.

When we reached his condo, Chris wasn’t back. We joked that we’d beat him, even though he’d been so confident he would beat us. After five minutes passed and he still didn’t return, our excitement turned to worry. We tried to justify it. He was driving a bike; we were driving a car. Surely it would take him a few minutes longer to get back.

Ten minutes passed. Then 15. By this point, we started to assume the worst but told ourselves we were being crazy. Nothing would ever happen to Chris.

“At least we don’t hear sirens,” my mother half-joked, I think trying to convince herself that was crazy talk.

Not even 30 seconds later, we heard sirens.

We both jumped in the car and sped to where the sound was coming from. I told myself the sirens weren’t for Chris.

As the ambulance came into sight, we saw a crowd gathered around a spot on the road. Ten feet away, a mangled bike lay on the side of the road.

My mother let out a gut-wrenching scream.

“It’s him! That’s his bathing suit! Oh my God!”

“No it’s not. How do you know? No it’s not!”

When I got out of the car and realized my cousin was lying on the pavement, a 10-foot pool of blood running from his head, my knees buckled, and my body went numb.

This summer at my internship with Akron Life magazine, I interviewed a Vietnam veteran who wrote a book about his development of PTSD during the war. He talked about the moment something inside him snapped. For me, this was that moment.

I couldn’t breathe. I wanted to throw up.

Chris was life-flighted to a hospital two hours away in Delaware. For several hours before we made it to the hospital, we had no idea whether he would live or die. All I can remember about the ride to the hospital is feeling like a zombie; my body was there, but my mind was gone.

When we arrived at the hospital, we found out Chris had a punctured lung, a broken clavicle, a severe forehead laceration and a concussion. It would take some time and surgery...
for him to heal, but he would be OK.

This news should have given me solace. It should have made everything I was feeling go away, but it didn’t. Lying in a hotel bed the night after Chris’ accident, all I could do was stare at the ceiling. Flashbacks of Chris lying on the pavement and images of what happened to me three years prior kept playing like a non-stop horror film in my head.

“Just do the best you can,” my therapist implores, her pen poised above her clipboard.

I’m used to being on the opposite end of an interview, asking people to reveal the depths of their souls so I can weave them into a story. It isn’t easy being on this side.

I clasp my hands more tightly, willing them to hold me together as I threaten to fall apart.

“OK,” I breathe.

It was my third night on campus after moving into the dorms. My roommate and I were supposed to be going out for the first time with some sophomore girls that lived on our floor, but on our way downtown, we decided we wanted to go home. We tried several times to evade them, even going as far as saying we were girlfriends and holding hands to try to convince them. But they didn’t stop. The faster we walked, the closer they seemed to get behind us. At this point, my heart was beating faster than it ever has before, and my brain was thinking in a million directions at once. What do they want? Are they going to hurt us? Should we scream? Is anyone around to help us?

When we emerged on the other side of the underpass, we realized the men had made their way around the other side of the building.

The smallest of the three men approached us, introduced himself and shook our hands. He asked us if we wanted to hang out. At this point, I think my roommate and I were both beginning to feel uneasy about the situation, so we said we had to go and started to walk away. As we turned to go, his two friends began to walk toward us, calling out to us and asking why we didn’t want to hang out.

We tried several times to evade them, even going as far as saying we were girlfriends and holding hands to try to convince them. But they didn’t stop. The faster we walked, the closer they seemed to get behind us. At this point, my heart was beating faster than it ever has before, and my brain was thinking in a million directions at once. What do they want? Are they going to hurt us? Should we scream? Is anyone around to help us?

When they were less than a foot behind us, one of them said, “Why don’t you give us all your money?”

Before I even had time to process what he’d just said, he was holding a knife less than two inches from my roommate’s neck. He told her to go through her wallet and give him all her money, and she immediately did what he told her. I was frozen in fear. I just stood there, watching her, not even thinking that I’d be next. When she gave them all her money, the man turned to me.

He asked me why I wasn’t getting my money out and told me he was going to slash me. I told him I didn’t think I had any, but he didn’t believe me, so he ripped my bag out of my hands and began to rummage through it. When he found the $80 I had in my wallet, he asked me why I had lied to him and told me again that he was going to slash me. Just then, the third man, who had been nothing more than a silent bystander until this point, stepped toward me and raised his hand to my face, revealing a fist full of brass knuckles. When I looked up into his face, his eyes seemed almost demonic — so full of hatred and malice that looking at him sent chills down my spine. That image is burned into my mind forever.

All I remember after that is the men running away, us picking up our belongings and my roommate calling the police. I won’t pretend this is exactly how everything happened. Actually, my roommate says she remembers things happening in a different order. But I guess after three years of trying not to remember, you tend to forget.

After several weeks of worried phone calls and trips to the campus police station, two of the men were finally identified through a surveillance photo taken at the local Circle K. Luckily for us, both men eventually pleaded guilty, and we never had to testify against them face to face.
I have never officially been diagnosed with PTSD, which, for those of you who aren't familiar, is an anxiety disorder people can develop after experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event. There are different levels of PTSD and different ways it can affect the people who have it. Some develop the disorder after a single traumatic event, while others develop it after a series of traumatic events — sort of a “straw that broke the camel’s back,” sort of thing, which I think is the case for me. Some people experience actual flashbacks, while others have increased paranoia in situations that remind them of the traumatic event.

In a typical day, there are so many things that scare me, and not all of them really make sense.

I suppose my biggest fear is walking by myself in the dark. When I come home from a late night in the newsroom, I have about a 50-foot walk to my apartment door once I park my car. There are some nights I sit in my car for minutes at a time, mentally preparing myself for that short walk, which, for me, seems more like a football field in length. There are bushes, corners and trees along that walkway. What if someone is hiding, just waiting to mug me again — or worse? What if they start to follow me, and I can’t run fast enough to get to my door? I realize my fears are irrational, but to me, they’re not. I usually walk with my key between my fingers out of precaution. Any sound I hear sends my heart racing.

Even in broad daylight, I can’t handle people walking too closely behind me. I glance around maniacally the second I get the feeling someone is following me, even though the person behind me usually ends up being some freshman girl on her way to class.

When I hear or read about traumatic events in the news, I usually find some way to scare myself into thinking they’re going to happen to me, too. When I heard about the Colorado shootings at the premiere of “The Dark Knight Rises,” I refused to go into a movie theater for more than a month. Since then, I’ve become scared of crowded public places. Any person I see who looks or acts out of the ordinary I assume could pull out a gun at any moment.

I was supposed to go see an actual doctor, who could diagnose me and prescribe medication, but I talked myself out of it. I’m scared of the thought of being told what I don’t want to hear but really already know. I’m scared taking medication will change me. I’m scared it will make me vulnerable to the things I spend my entire life trying to avoid.

I’m still a 21-year-old college student who spends too much time on Facebook and has more pink in her closet than is socially acceptable. I also have serious anxieties most people would never realize, even if they’ve known me for years.

I suppose, for now, I’ll remain in this limbo between normality and anxiety, at least until I come to terms with what I need to do to get better.

But I think telling my story is the first step toward shaking the devil off my back.

For now, here’s to you Florence: It’s always darkest before the dawn.

“When I looked up into his face, his eyes seemed almost demonic — so full of hatred and malice that looking at him sent chills down my spine. That image is burned into my mind forever.”

—Leighann McGivern
My name is Hannah Kelling, and I was the third of three siblings born on May 3, 1994.

Go ahead, read it once more just for the sake of it. Does the word "triplet" spring to mind?

Meet my built-in icebreaker. Those seven letters may settle a bit awkwardly in your head — unfamiliar territory. I’m a what? Most people haven’t really encountered a triplet before, as I’m coming to realize, so I’ll take a step back.

At Kent State, little separates me from most of the student body. I’m a freshman, a proud member of the Class of 2016. I ride my bike to class each day and make it through the door just as my professors inhale the breath that will become their first sentence of the lesson. I hunker down to long hours of homework and live in Rosie’s Diner for hours at a time. I am, in many ways, just one of almost 30,000 students very much like me.

However, I have my own quirky tale to tell. The hubbub of Welcome Weekend 2012 forced me to realize that all of the things I had considered normal were, in fact, bizarre. Small-town, folksy ways set me apart from the average suburbanite. My willingness to go run at 7 a.m. through a crisp autumn drizzle won me a look or two. Then, there is that odd "triplet" factor and the knowledge that, for the first time in my 18 years of life, I’m on my very own.

To answer a few preliminary questions:

Telepathy? No.

What is it like being a triplet? I have never been anything else. It is rather hard to say.

Love being a triplet? Hate it? I couldn’t give you a solid, consistent answer to that last question.
if you gave me a semester of zero credit hours to think it over. If you’ve ever played a sport, imagine growing up spending every day on a team. If you’re a superhero buff, imagine going through life with a pair of fantastic sidekicks with talents wonderfully contrasted to your own. If you’ve ever been part of a musical group, imagine performing a trio of chords. In one fragile moment, they harmonize incredibly. But only a few bars down: a clash fit to break glass.

“The Three,” as we were called, went through high school as a loosely constructed unit, leaving each other room to breathe but inseparable when push came to shove.

With our last name, Kelling, there was an associated brand of sorts. Hired together, taught together, befriended together, we became known as a band of three intelligent people with eclectic tastes and odd habits. If you knew a Kelling, you probably knew at least two. And, chances are, you could even know three.

As a brand and a unit, we went through those four years together. We carved our names into the honor roll, we fist-pumped through the long hours of sports events, we sang in three-part harmonies on our way to choir rehearsals and we graduated knowing we had trekked through our young lives with two people we could always count on.

Granted, we were individuals. My sister, Claire, and I squabbled over such things as laundry on the wrong side of our shared room. Disputes always broke out regarding who was doing better in the class that the three of us took simultaneously and whom the dog loved best. This was our nature.

My sister is known for her outgoing personality and bubbly fashion sense, having once worn a different pair of earrings without repetition for more than 100 days. Attending Virginia Tech University nestled in hills too far away for a drive from Kent, she’s no doubt quite the beautiful addition to that mountainous region. I constantly wonder how that unfamiliar state is treating her — like a gentleman, I hope.

But, with conversations sparse as she battles a helter-skelter schedule, she is running low on a treasured commodity: time. I’ve never known the value of one 10-minute Skype date. My “ray of sunshine” manages to fit more warmth in a text than should be physically possible. She is my meltdown-prevention, my best friend.

Owen, my brother, was the Eagle Scout and the artist, making a name for himself with seemingly effortless
skill. My worry for him is nearly non-existent, but not in a careless way. I am proud of him, confident in him and supportive of him as he makes a name for himself as the adventure man at the Ohio Wesleyan campus in Columbus.

He is only a couple of hours away from me. But we speak less often than my sister and I, somehow operating on the mutual understanding that, unless we call, we’re OK. Maybe telepathy does have its roots between us; there is a feeling with Owen that nothing needs be said.

Yet, there’s also strength in knowing I have a Superbro in my arsenal of stress relievers.

As you can see, we’ve spread out. Going to the same college crossed our mind, of course. But only for a handful of milliseconds. We knew it was time to make the jump — a leap of faith that would transition us into independents, each with our own world. Owen has his own. Claire has her own. And me? I have my own, too.

But despite these claims of having solo existences, we still have our brand. In all things, our last name still seems to come before the first like it appears in a library register: We are Kellings, first and foremost.

Until recently, I thought I had lost this priority status of my last name in my life, and I didn’t know whether to be sorry for the transition or not. Is it better to be one of three than one of one? Was it better to be a triplet, relying on support and companionship? Or does the world require independence?

I have decided that it is not a call I must make. Having lived so long a part of a trio, to hear my own voice and live with two-thirds of my life crafting a life for itself on different campuses is still unnerving at times. It’s a feeling of exposure that few can understand.

But there’s also a sense of pride in the change. We’re doing it, not only marching our way through the first few months of college but also pounding our trails through life as individuals — individuals new to the concept of independence. This is a feeling of rebirth that no one I have met can share. But for me, it is the kernel of knowledge that keeps my chin up when I feel I might be struggling more than the average person.

Why? Because I am not the average person. I left an abruptly empty nest, three gone in one flight. And I have my own life to craft, entirely anew. I won’t see my two-thirds until November brings us, grinning, to that doorstep that watched us grow.

Until then, I’ll keep growing, knowing they are digging new roots too.

Hi, my name is Hannah Kelling. I am a freshman at Kent State University, and I am the third of three born on the third of May, 1994. I am on my own adventure for the first time in my life.

—I have my own life to craft, entirely anew. I won’t see my two-thirds until November brings us, grinning, to that doorstep that watched us grow.”

—Hannah Kelling
THE END OF THE WORLD DEBUNKED

Why there's no reason to fear Dec. 21, 2012

By Britni Williams

Photo Illustrations: Marianna Fierro
“Neutrinos from a massive solar flare have penetrated the Earth and have caused the temperature of the core to increase rapidly. It has instigated a chain of events that will cause the end of the world. Micro-quakes have started to occur, causing small cracks in the earth’s surface. It all supports the theory that the Mayans predicted the world would come to an end in 2012. The earth’s temperature keeps increasing. Millions are dying in apocalyptic earthquakes worldwide. Tsunamis are engulfing the coastal regions ...”

This synopsis for the movie “2012” summarizes some of the common ideas of how the world will end.

TV specials, websites and even an entire feature-length film have been dedicated to the idea that the world will come to an end Dec. 21, 2012, supposedly because the Mayans predicted it long ago. But science seems to have a different perspective from Hollywood and pop culture.

THE MAYANS’ PREDICTION

It’s become a common belief that the Mayans predicted the end of the world, but this isn’t necessarily true. “The Mayan calendar and their view of time is very similar to that of the Hindus,” Julio Pino, associate professor of history, explains. “That is, they believe the world goes in cycles of birth and destruction and rebirth.”

Pino says Western culture has adopted the idea that time moves in a straight line, constantly moving forward from a singular starting event, usually the “Big Bang” or creation.

“The Mayans, like most ancient people, had a cyclical notion of time,” Pino says, “so it operates like a wheel. In other words, it always comes back to where it came from.”

For the Mayans, Dec. 21, 2012, didn’t necessarily mean the end of the world; rather, it marked the end of a cycle. They used their calendars to mark when they believed each of these cycles would begin and end.

“So, the real question becomes: ‘Are we supposed to interpret this literally or not?’” Pino says. “And the majority of scholars argue that no, they did not make literal predictions.”

The Mayans didn’t have the same
understanding of birth, destruction and rebirth as those in modern Western cultures.

“The world is destroyed, but because the world is in many ways an illusion — that is, that it is non-material — that destruction can actually pass human beings by,” Pino explains. “In other words, it’ll take place on a different plain, on a different level.”

In the Mayan culture, these cycles of birth, destruction and rebirth could have no physical effect on the planet or its inhabitants.

“The world will be destroyed, according to the Mayans, but we could still be here,” Pino clarifies. “There would be a different world out there, but we wouldn’t notice it because we exist on a different plain.”

In this manner, the Mayans didn’t actually predict the end of the world.

“They have this notion of perpetual motion,” Pino says. “Even if there’s a catastrophe, the world would be reborn.”

POLE SHIFT

Another common doomsday myth is that on Dec. 21, 2012, a magnetic pole shift will occur. The myth says this will cause a catastrophic continental shift that will result in devastating volcanic eruptions, earthquakes or continents colliding together with incomprehensible force.

There is a slight chance part of this myth could be true. A pole shift could actually occur on that day, though the result would be far less dramatic.

“The poles do shift some,” says Jon Secaur, assistant professor of physics. “The pole can shift at any time, but it takes a long time for that to happen, typically thousands or millions of years for a pole shift. There’s no reason to suspect it any given year.”

The poles can go through a natural reversal as well, with little to no effect on civilization. The last pole shift occurred about 1,200 years ago with no major side effects.

“If the pole shifts,” Secaur explains, “it’s way down in the core of the Earth, and the continents float all the way on top. So, if the pole shifted, the continents wouldn’t budge. If the pole shifted, we wouldn’t notice at all, except compasses wouldn’t work.”

The only other noticeable effect of a pole shift would be the occurrence of auroras, which appear as spots or bands of light in the sky over a larger part of the world and are caused by extra protons in the atmosphere.

“There’s no reason to suspect one is imminent,” Secaur says. “If it did shift, it wouldn’t be the end of the world. They do shift at other times anyway. It wouldn’t be anything of any consequence. It’s no big deal.”

GALACTIC ALIGNMENT

The presumed destruction of our planet may also come from the upcoming alignment with Earth and the center of our galaxy, the Milky Way. The belief is that this alignment could expose the planet to unknown cosmic rays or possibly put the planet in line with the forces of a black hole.

Again, there is only a slight truth in this idea.

According to National Geographic, there will be an alignment around Dec. 21, 2012, but not because it’s going to be the end of the world. Dec. 21 is roughly the date of the winter solstice every year, and there is always an alignment — at least from the perspective here on Earth — of the Earth, sun and the Milky Way at about that time. The path of the sun will appear to cross the middle of the Milky Way, which can be seen on a clear night as a hazy, cloud-like band across the sky.

“The fact that we’re aligned with
the center of the galaxy or not is completely irrelevant," Secaur says. "It's how things happen to line up, but there's no influence or anything like that. The center of the galaxy is so far away from us. We're orbiting it, but it has no influence on us in any way at all that we would ever notice."

The idea of alignment comes from the perspective of Earth. The alignment is relative to our location, rather than an actual change in the universe.

"If I sit where I am right here," Secaur explains, "then the birdhouse in the back yard is aligned in one window. If I move over here, the bird house is not aligned anymore. I didn't change the bird house or the window; nothing matters."

**SOLAR FLARES**

Some people believe that the world will end on Dec. 21, 2012, because of solar flares. The belief is that flaming balls of gas will shoot out and envelop Earth, ultimately destroying it.

While solar flares could happen at any time and could possibly destroy things, it is extremely unlikely that it would happen, especially on a specific date.

"A solar flare is like a big burp or hiccup from the sun," Secaur says. "It blows out a big blob of hydrogen that goes flying into space, and we happened to run into one about a month ago. When those things happen, the magnetic field of the Earth is distorted a bit, and we get some extra protons hitting the air and making it glow. But to have a solar flare large enough to destroy an entire planet would be extremely unlikely."

Normal solar flares can create a distortion in the magnetic field of the Earth that will pop right back into place as soon as the flare has passed. Radio communications can also be distorted by flares from the extra ions that are introduced into the atmosphere.

While the sun can flare at any time, the odds that any particular flare would hit Earth aren't very good.

"If the sun is a light bulb," Secaur explains, "the Earth would be about 21 feet away and the size of the ball of a ballpoint pen. What are the odds of a blob being spit out in a random direction that it'll hit the Earth? It's extremely unlikely."

Solar flares are a natural part of the life of a star and are usually "nothing of any great consequence and nothing biological."

**PLANET X**

Rumors of Planet X, or Nibiru, have been floating around for quite some time. According to the conspiracy website Skeptical Inquirer, this planet has a 3,600-year orbit that will come extremely close to, if not actually collide with, Earth, causing the destruction of the planet.

"If there were anything like that, we'd have seen it decades ago," Secaur says. "Nothing zips across the solar system. You can't hide something in space."

Even if there were an unknown planet in existence, simple physics explains why such a planet wouldn't collide or even come close to Earth.

"All the planets were created in the same event," Secaur says, "so they all have the same angular momentum. They're all approximately on the same plane going the same direction."

A planet couldn't just wander into the orbit of another from a different direction.

"There's no scientific evidence for it at all," Secaur says.

**ENDING THE FEAR OF 2012**

Most scientific evidence shows there may really be nothing to worry about on Dec. 21, 2012.

"The future is fundamentally unpredictable," Secaur says. "Quantum theory makes it clear that you can't predict the future in a precise way, and there's no way in the world that people thousands of years ago would know something disastrous is going to happen next year."

Secaur says the Mayan long-count calendar coming to a close is no reason to be afraid.

"Our calendar runs out every year," Secaur says. "We don't panic. We just buy a new calendar."

Pino said a possible reason for the fear and hype of 2012 comes from pop culture itself.

"Maybe they take Hollywood too seriously," Pino says.

Secaur doesn't see any reason to worry.

"It's just silly to think that anything on a human scale has any connection to anything on an astronomical scale," Secaur says. "The universe created us, not the other way around. It's just nuts to think how we count days and years has any effect on the universe itself."
WHO IS LESTER LEFTON?

By Anthony Dominic
Photo: Jessica Denton

Visit TheBurr.com for “In His Own Words,” featuring 21 quotes from President Lefton that didn’t appear in this story.

Lester Lefton, the highly scrutinized, seemingly elusive president of Kent State University, is — contrary to popular belief — a very real human being. In 70 minutes of pure candor, he meets with The Burr to talk about his salary, his escape, his popularity (or, at times, lack thereof) and why he once quit college.
"I try and interpret the world as I see it, and often what you see and what I see is very different."
—Lester Lefton

Lester Lefton is looking back at me, laughing. We're standing in his office on the second floor of the Kent State University Library, overlooking Risman Plaza, where hundreds of students are waiting in line for tickets to see President Barack Obama, who will be campaigning on campus in two days. Lefton, 66, is taller and more robust than he appears in photos. He's wearing a plaid, button-up shirt with navy slacks. A pair of thinly framed eyeglasses rest on the bridge of his nose, and a long, striped tie hangs from his collar.

A dozen photographs are sprawled across the conference table between us — his photos. Photography is Lefton's 50-year, yet little-known passion, and he is ecstatic to speak of it. As we circle the table, the admitted "gear geek," who launched a photography website in June, is telling me about his photographs ("artistic expressions," he calls them) and his influences (Trey Ratcliff, Colby Brown and Henri Cartier-Bresson, to name a few). As he speaks, I look more closely, and I begin to see each photograph as a window into Lefton's arcane world.

"Photography, for me, is not a representation of reality," he says, in what's left of his Boston accent. "I try and interpret the world as I see it, and often what you see and what I see is very different."

Lefton's photos are highly stylized. It's called high dynamic range imaging — a technique based on the manipulation of colors and lighting in post production.

"There's something mechanical to me about just shooting a landscape and having it reproduced perfectly," he says. "This allows me to express the world the way I want to see it through my eyes."

His skies aren't blue; they're lapis lazuli, alive and ocean-like. His grass isn't green; it's a seething sea of shamrock, lush and vibrant. Most
of all, his photographic world isn’t reality. Reality is a faculty union, divided on a vote of no confidence. It’s a student body, convinced its president is disconnected and overpaid. It’s an all-consuming job to keep a $750 million institution afloat, despite constant criticism and shrinking state support.

I first met Lefton on a windy September afternoon in Twinsburg. It was the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Kent State University Twinsburg Regional Academic Center — a mouthful for the impressive $24 million addition to the university’s ever-expanding purview. At the Board of Trustees’ meeting that followed, Lefton was euphoric — playing the roles of pitchman, comedian, cheerleader and consultant — as he outlined the main campus’ $146 million renovations project. More than anything, he made appeasing the board look just plain easy.

But the moment Lefton finished and returned to his seat, something changed. His shoulders slouched, his mouth tightened and his eyes sank. Everything about the man was different. As the meeting carried on, I watched as he shifted in his seat and fidgeted with his hands. He appeared uneasy, as if absorbed in some thought (or he was just absurdly bored).

Having recently polled Kent State undergraduate students, I was reminded that many perceive Lefton as non-genuine, a well-rehearsed actor, motivated only by money. Well, is that what it had been? Just another performance? Was I a firsthand witness to the contrived dichotomy that is Lester Lefton?

After the meeting, Eric Mansfield, executive director of University Media Relations, led me through the high-profile crowd for the big moment. Lefton and I exchanged a firm handshake. I said it was good to finally meet, and I thanked him for agreeing to sit down and talk with me later that month.

“Yeah, well, that’s what I do,” he said bluntly. “Talk.”

Someone else caught Lefton’s attention, and a moment later he was being whisked away.

“I’ll see you in a few weeks, Anthony,” he said, turning back.

And that was it.

In that moment, I realized, despite my efforts, I may never learn who Lester Lefton really is.

But I will learn who he is not. He’s not Holden Thorp — the soon-to-be former chancellor of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Thorp’s recent resignation, effective at the end of the 2012-2013 academic year, followed a series of controversies, including the alleged misuse of university funds, concerns about course quality and a NCAA investigation into the misconduct of university football players.

“Everybody said, ‘This guy’s
a rock star! He's like the Christ of presidents! He's, like, unbelievable!" Lefton says of Thorp, as we return to our seats across the office.

"[He] was considered a rock star, the 'Madonna,' who everyone thought was, like, the best president known to humankind because he was so in-touch with everyone."

He pauses.

"Four years. Four years," he repeats, referring to the length of Thorp's chancellorship.

Lefton rattles off a long list of other short-lived public university presidents, including former University of Tulsa President Geoffrey Orsak, who was fired without reason after 74 days. This is what keeps Lefton up at night, literally. This is why he tosses, turns and stares at the ceiling. This is why he has asked himself the same question every day for six years, while in the car, in the shower, on the elliptical. It's the question he's expected to solve. It's the question he's so highly compensated to solve: "What is right?"

"What is right for our students?" he expounds. "What's right for Kent State! What's right for Ohio! What's right for America?"

Lefton says the answer "isn't always what a 19-year-old journalism student might see because he doesn't know what's right."

"For example," he begins. "If I were to ask your average 19-year-old journalism student, 'And what did [the College of] Podiatric Medicine bring to Kent State?' They'd go, 'That was a waste of time and money.' And [the College of] Public Health? They just don't understand. And there aren't enough hours in the day for me to educate every student about every decision that I make."

As Lefton speaks, it's obvious he's not acting; he's opinionated and often curt in his delivery. I see why the Aldridge Group called him "prickly," "thin-skinned" and not "overly warm" in his 2012 performance review. (This is the same firm that praised his strengths in "strategic thinking," "persistence" and "leadership.")

As Lefton points out, the media often "reduce presidents to their salaries." While I can conclude that few would put a $409,608 price tag on his personality, Lefton reminds me that he's not evaluated for his personality; he's evaluated for his effectiveness as president and CEO. And each year he has held those titles, he has been granted his full performance bonus by the Board, which was $102,402 this year.

"[My salary's] got nothing to do with how well I do my job," he says in regard to critics. "So, they would have liked me if I were only making $30,000 a year."

If Lefton is overpaid, all public university presidents are overpaid — grossly. Gordon Gee, president of Ohio State University, has a base salary of $814,000; however, his bonuses and deferred compensation push his annual intake to nearly $2 million. But, as Lefton notes, in size, Ohio State (64,429 students at six campuses) is not twice as large as Kent State (42,513 students at eight campuses).

Lefton says the media coverage of his compensation can be a "wildly misleading cheap shot" and "doesn't talk about what a president does or the results or quality of the institution." He adds that an average student doesn't have the basis for judging his performance because they are likely "really clueless" as to what he actually does.

Which, as it turns out, is fundraising. It's why he was hired and why the trustees still love him. Since his appointment in 2006, Lefton has consistently demonstrated an uncanny ability to appeal to alumni, investors and the general public. In September he closed the two-year, $265 million Centennial Campaign, the largest fundraising initiative in Kent State's history.

If Lefton were merely the well-rehearsed actor, what are the donors who contributed to the campaign? Fools? Lefton says the only reason his fundraising initiatives have been successful is because he's not acting.

"I actually believe in what's going on at Kent State, and I can speak about it for hours on end with passion and enthusiasm."

—Lester Lefton
don't actually make the music, but if I do my job well, hopefully all the moving parts work better together and we get a better symphony. And I think that is, in fact, the case. And that is what the Board, in fact, thinks."

While Lefton is not directly responsible for changes in tuition, curricula and contracts, issues in these key areas have contributed to his declining popularity among students and faculty. Under Kent State's recent tuition hike, in-state undergraduates enrolled in 11 to 17 credit hours now pay $9,672 per academic year. This is a 3.5 percent increase, the largest allowed by state law. And students taking more than 17 credit hours must pay an additional overload fee of $440 per credit hour.

Frustrations over rising costs culminated with an April 12 student protest in Risman Plaza (right below Lefton's office windows), where signs reading, KASICH AND LEFTON SITTING IN A TREE, and, NO CHILD LEFTON BEHIND, could be seen as the crowd chanted, "We are the 99 — Lefton is the 1 percent!" My most vivid memory: a flattened Cap'N Crunch box that read, I CAN'T EVEN AFFORD A REAL SIGN.

"There's a saying," Lefton says, clearing his throat. "Everyone who has gone to college thinks they know how to run a college." And the truth is they don't. Your typical student only knows that I raise tuition. Well, the truth is I don't raise tuition; the Board of Trustees raises tuition."

He raises his arms.

"It's very easy to say 'No more tuition increases ever!' It would make me very popular, right? I'd be king as we closed the doors of the nursing school."

Lefton retorts that many of the students' grievances are actually with the faculty, not the administration.

"The faculty determine requirements, what courses [students] should be taking, the rules to change majors," Lefton argues. "The faculty decide [students] need 157 credits to get a chemistry degree, not the Board of Trustees or me."

Many of these faculty members Lefton speaks of are still bitter after a long year on the job without a contract. The Board of Trustees only recently approved a new three-year deal for tenure-track faculty, entitling instructors to back pay and a 2 percent pay increase moving forward. In April, before a deal was reached, members of Kent State's faculty union, a university-exclusive
branch of the American Association of University Professors, proposed endorsing a petition of no confidence against Lefton. While the petition never led to a vote, and even a successful vote does not remove a president from office, it is a serious benchmark.

However, when given the opportunity to speak about Lefton, Paul Farrell and Thomas Janson, faculty senate chair and senator, respectively, did not return my phone calls. Even other phone calls regarding Lefton, including several to Kent entrepreneur Ron Burbick, went unreturned. Lefton has gone on record about himself; why won’t anyone else? The one place his critics can be consistently found: largely anonymous comment sections on KentWired.com.

I lean in closer to Lefton. "Well, let me ask you this: Is it unfair to say you’re a bottom-line president?"

A smile spreads across his face. "You say that in a pejorative way. I say it with some pride."

"You are a bottom-line president."

Lefton leans forward. We’re nose-to-nose. "What is a bottom-line president?"

he asks.

"You’re here solely to fulfill duties set forth by the Board of Trustees — which hired you."

The smile returns, wider this time. "Then I’m a bottom-line president."

A moment of silence passes. Then another. We both lean back. I’m writing “bottom-line” over and over in my notebook. I want him to speak first. He does.

"I’m running a large multi-million dollar corporation. I’m not Madonna. But more than that, I’m not a [public relations] agent. I’m not here to fill a chair and make everybody happy."

Lefton laughs. "They don’t know whether I’m a jerk or not."

"I guess that proposes the problem,” I say. “The impossible situation. If you were to go out and — "

"Then I wouldn’t get anything done," he finishes.

I have a very optimistic view of the world,” Lefton announces, as he returns from his mini fridge with a can of Diet Coke. “A very realistic one. I’m in a realistic job that deals with real politics, but my inner soul is much more optimistic.”

Between long swigs, Lefton explains that his “rose-colored” outlook comes from his mother, Sylvia, who never believed in worrying. (“You’ll find the right girl, and it will all work out — that kind of thing,” he says.) From his father, Bernard, he was taught that conscientious hard work and focus would win the day.

When Lefton was growing up in Boston, his parents owned and operated a photography business; Bernard did the shooting, and Sylvia did the bookkeeping. As a teenager, he served as his father’s assistant, learning how to compose shots and develop cut-sheet film. By 17, he was a “full-fledged photographer,” and he spent his weekends shooting portraits, bar mitzvahs and weddings.

"I was pretty good,” Lefton laughs. “I had my own tuxedo.”

When he was 19, a sophomore at Northeastern University, his father died. Lefton abruptly quit college and returned home to take over the family business. Three months later, in the midst of “figuring out what to do,” his mother died.

"I could have made a living at [photography],” Lefton says as he straightens his tie. “But I’m the first in my family to go to college. So, that was part of, ‘Well, what would Dad have wanted?!’"

Lefton sold the business in the summer of 1965 and returned to Northeastern in the fall.

"I just couldn’t see myself taking baby pictures for the rest of my life,” he says.

Today, Lefton takes the pictures he wants to take; he sees things the way he wants to see them. Is there a happy medium between “the Christ of presidents” and the bottom-liner? Probably. But it’s not Lester Lefton, and it’s not going to be. And it’s not because he’s a bad person; it’s because the Board of Trustees and the public
hold, on some level, fundamentally different expectations for the president.

"The Board expects [Lefton] to be spending more and more time out in the northeast Ohio community meeting and interacting with business leaders, as well as lobbying for the University in Columbus and Washington — in between visiting with high-potential alumni donors," writes Gary Kustis, an Aldridge Group management consultant, in Lefton's 2012 performance review.

Kustis suggests that not only will Lefton "need direction on where to balance these competing demands," but the Board must "appreciate that large strides in these areas may not be possible." Kustis also concludes that "the Board's direction to him to raise promotion and tenure standards helped to create the tension he is now dealing with."

Lester Lefton, the pitchman, the comedian, the cheerleader, the consultant — the embattled optimist — is in the midst of a six-year, high-wire act. The stakes are high, the crowd is restless and the wire only tightens with each step. This is why Lefton's nights are sleepless; yet this is why his world must remain rose-colored.

"It's always there," he says. "It doesn't go away. In a large, public university, where you've been given this trust, it's a privilege, and it's a burden."

As I walk out the door of Lefton's office, I have to wonder: Which was it today? After a few steps, I glance back. Lefton's still lingering outside his door. He's grinning, as if he has his own private joke. Then, the hallway bends, I meet the exit, and he's gone.

Lefton shoots photos at the Kent State vs. Ball State game on Sept. 29.
Photo: Brian Smith
Tree branches twist snakelike as rain accumulates along the university walkways. It’s Thursday, Oct. 18, and another autumn monsoon is blowing in from Lake Erie. Its wrath is proving more annoying than usual for Kent State students. Computer screens flicker blankly in Franklin Hall. Centennial D goes dark, with only emergency lights to dimly illuminate the hallways. Sewing machines smoke in Rockwell Hall, prompting evacuations. Midterm exams will have to be finished later.

An event as minor as a temporary power outage — ultimately attributed to substation problems with a regional power distributor — can be seen one of two ways. Sure, it’s an inconvenience. But it’s also a reminder. Because every time you flip a light switch, you’re at the tail end of a chain reaction that spans thousands of miles. Turbines, pipelines and wells all lead back to a single source. Along the way, mountains of paperwork, rooms of glowing computer screens and a complicated, evolving marketplace keep everything under control.

Seemingly insignificant events like taking an extra shower in your residence hall mean millions of gas molecules flow a tad bit faster. It means a technician in Macedonia is gripping a valve. It means a new gas well in someone’s backyard. It means, for some, a sleepless night and a second income.

It also means if you think hydraulic fracturing does not affect your life, you’re wrong.
campus by about 7 million kilowatts a year — nearly 8 percent.

Lights linked to motion-sensors shut off when the room is vacant. Toilets adjust to the amount of waste they flush. Air circulates at different rates, depending on the room temperature. Everything that used to be a manual, household adjustment, Renovich says, is now managed by a computer.

“It's like turning your thermostat up and down,” he reasons. “If no one's in the room from 4 p.m. on a Friday till 8 a.m. on a Monday, you don't have to keep it nice and warm or nice and cool.”

An abstract knowledge of the market for energy, however, is just as much a key to keeping the lights on as myriad boilers and pipes. It used to be, the market was rigidly regulated, which meant Kent State paid a local utility for its fuel at a flat rate that was set by the energy provider. Then, about 20 years ago, the market deregulated and suddenly the university had more at stake at the negotiating table.

That's where IGS Energy, the largest independent retail of natural gas in the country, comes in to help. Doug Austin, its co-founder and vice president, has dealt personally with Kent State for more than a decade, in the meantime taking the company's value from $6 million to $1.4 billion in 20 years.

During a conference call from the IGS headquarters in Columbus, Austin refers to his company as an energy marketer. Its responsibility is to "go out and shop" for the university, meaning it determines the cheapest costs of transportation and production for Kent State by contracting hundreds of local producers.

“The utility wouldn’t take the time to do that,” he says. “Without a market, it doesn’t matter if it's your house or Kent State, doesn’t matter how efficient you are or how you use it because we are not regulated. We have incentive every single day to be absolutely as efficient and low cost as we can.”

—Doug Austin

Since Kent State built its plant, a new technique to get gas changed the market dramatically.

Ten years ago, Austin says, 90 percent of gas came from Gulf of Mexico. Then came the concept of drilling horizontally instead of simply straight into the ground, a technique that allowed access to a broad pool of natural gas in shale formations in Ohio and Pennsylvania. Energy companies always knew it was there for the tapping, he says, but no one knew how to unlock it until “fracking” came along.

Hydraulic fracturing, or “fracking,” has replaced conventional gas well drilling in Northeast Ohio. By injecting underground a combination of sand, water and other chemicals that companies refuse to release to the public, the shale rock shatters and the gas flows freely.

The effect on energy companies across the spectrum is easily understood, Austin says. It's economics 101: Supply goes up, price goes down. The fact that the supply is directly beneath us, he says, means we don't have to worry — for now, anyway — about the massive gas reservoirs in other countries.
While the majority of gas wells in the region are still conventionally vertical, horizontal wells are being drilled at an increasing rate.

"It's an absolute wealth," he says. "We've got more gas in our backyard than we could've ever dreamed of."

Even President Barack Obama is sold on the idea. In his campaign stop at Kent State in late September, Obama declared to a rousing cheer: "Let's tap into the 100-year supply of natural gas that's right beneath our feet."

Kent State's decision to self-generate half its energy from natural gas has indeed proven fruitful. "I think [fracking] needs to be properly used, exploited and standardized statewide," Renovich says, leaning back in his chair. "For me, the more you frack, the better. I love it."

DEAD DINOSAURS

Standing among a playground of enigmatic, nondescript pipes erupting from the ground, Denny Pesecky tries to explain what is going on underneath. He points to the meters and valves that control and provide information about the flow of gas. Like polyethylene Loch Ness monsters, the two pipelines that slither through this station provide gas to power the East Side of Cleveland.

"If we do our job well, the customer won't even think about us," Pesecky says. "All they know is that we're here when they need it."

The fiery scent of gas pricks the nostrils this morning on the barbed-wired grounds of Dominion East Ohio's Twinsburg Station. Pesecky, a technician for Dominion, is joined by Neil Durbin, the company's senior communications specialist.

Hundreds of gas wells in Ohio feed into Dominion's 1,000-mile network of highly pressurized distribution pipelines and delivered to consumers. Like blood pumping through underground veins and arteries, natural gas circulates nonstop and unhindered by nature across the country. This means although Kent's State's gas mostly comes from local gas drilling, Durbin says technically it's all the same. It's like the interstate highway system, except every car is a molecule of gas.

It also means every person along the pipeline expressway has a unique responsibility.

"We have a lot of e-brakes around here," Pesecky says, laughing. "What happens here can affect the whole system." Most of the emergency brakes are pulled by a central control room at the Dominion headquarters in Cleveland, which receives all of the information through a microwave.
FEATURES

tower. Any natural disaster or threat, and the gas can easily be re-routed to another station.

The challenge at the Twinsburg station, as with all of Dominion’s 10 to 15 stations in Northeast Ohio, is to keep the pressure at the right level. As the gas gets closer and closer to Kent State, the pressure is dropped steadily at each station until it arrives on site.

During peak hours of energy use, he says, the flow of gas drastically increases through the station, and the station is automatically ready for that surge.

“You can tell when people are waking up,” Pesecky says, “and you can tell when people are sleeping.”

Durbin says Dominion’s success from the “fracking” boom is a rebirth, an allusion to the company’s founding as part of John D. Rockefeller’s Standard Oil Company in Cleveland, one of the most successful enterprises in history. Now, the industry’s wealth is once again centered on Northeast Ohio.

Rising costs and environmental concerns have made the competing energy source, coal, relatively unattractive. But fracked or not, he says, gas is gas.

“By default, natural gas has become the energy of choice ... [but] when it comes down to it, energy is energy,” Durbin says. “It’s all dead dinosaurs anyway. A million years from now, we’ll be somebody’s natural gas.”

That kind of philosophy was perhaps behind Dominion’s $3.5 billion exchange of land in 2010, which gave an energy company based in Pittsburgh — CONSOL Energy, Inc. — wide opportunity to exploit the fracking boom in Ohio from all angles.

“We see our future in transportation,” Durbin says. “That’s where we see the real growth opportunity. We’re going to see the [fracking] boom — just not in the drilling sector.”

CONSOL, on the other hand, expanded its drilling operations in the following years. After creating a gas division just ahead of the shale gas boom, it opened operation in Portage County earlier this year.

Because the bigger the supply of gas, the better for Kent State. And that gas has to come from somewhere.

I think [fracking] needs to be properly used, exploited and standardized statewide. For me, the more you frack, the better. I love it."

—Frank Renovich

JUST VISITING

From behind the fortified walls constructed on the edge of Pat and Gary Robinson’s property line, finally — silence. It’s a Sunday, and the incessant truck traffic and work crew activity appears to have halted for a day of rest. Although, as the they say, there’s not too much to see.

A high sound barrier is built into the dense row of trees, dividing the company’s land and Robinsons’ own, shielding the surrounding Rootstown residences from the process of hydraulic fracturing inside. The one entrance to the well site, a road of freshly strewn gravel, is guarded by Dennis and Arvin, two self-described “gatekeepers” to the fracking site who laughed at the concept of anyone getting inside.

“You’d have to, um — gee, what would they have to do?” Arvin wonders aloud when asked if we could talk to someone inside.

“It’s very a personal thing,” Dennis offers. “They don’t want no one back there. They hardly want us back there.”

After trudging through Robinson’s lush, manicured backyard and muddy field of dying soybeans, the barrier dies into high-tensile fencing and
reveals the 40-acre site. It's only from a yellow 1946 Piper J3 Cub plane at 2,000 feet that an ugly scar is visible among the disfigured marshes southeast of Kent. The curling cul-de-sacs of Ravenna are inseparable from the rolling family farms split by I-76; the farms are inseparable from the Robinsons' house, the size of a Monopoly game piece.

No, how Pat Robinson really knows there's a break in the action is by the sound.

"The only way we can tell if they're fracking is the noise level," she says, standing in the doorway leading out to her deck. Gary appears behind her in the doorway; Obie the terrier scurries outside. "We've had some sleepless nights because they do a lot of it at night, and it's loud."

It's like a jet engine, Gary says, putting a foot up on the rope fence and gazing. At sunset on a chilly, overcast day, the damming gray only gets grayer. "I wonder what they're doing," he says, curious but not imposing. Five or six uniformed workers in navy overalls with scarlet straps operate a crane-like machine, attached to the drill.

Since the onset of the multi-billion-dollar gas drilling boom, energy producers have been expanding in Portage County. As of this summer, the county has four permitted fracking wells. Three of the four sites are owned by Chesapeake Energy, which is also sectioning off a 4-acre corner of Hartville's Quail Hollow State Park, the first public park in Ohio to be taken for fracking.

The drill the Robinsons face every day — the fourth — is owned by CONSOL Energy.

"We asked them how we've been here for 36 years and all of a sudden, there's a well that's going up, and we didn't even know about it, in our own backyard," Pat says.

According to her, it all started happening in March, first with the site clearers ripping up trees and hauling them away. Then came the construction of the access road. Then, the drillers showed up, silently sliding more than a mile and a half into the Utica shale rock. Earlier that month, Pat saw the dust storm arrival of silver trucks filled with the 4.5 million gallons of water mixed with sand and other chemicals necessary to fracture the rock.

That's when the noise came.

But the noise, she says, is only temporary pollution and, therefore, tolerable because of that fact. It's when Pat watches the silver trucks
leaves, this time filled with the waste water that spews out of the ground during the fracking process, hauling it to another well for disposal. It's this briny substance, with its potential to seep into drinking water, that has her worried.

"Nobody knows exactly what they're putting in there. It's all top secret; they don't want to tell anyone what they're using."

—Gary Robinson

"Many people are against fracking; some are for it — so you have a lot of people who are curious driving up and down this road," she says. Obviously, it's enough to fracture a community.

Despite all her concern, when pressed, Pat shies away from questions about the environment, quickly pointing out that the suspected potential for pollution has never been found. It just makes for an uncertain future.

"I think they're a very safe company," she says.

A CONSOL Energy sign faces all who leave the well site, reminding them sternly their job expectations outside of the fracking domain:

All Well Traffic
Respect Local Residents
They Live Here
You Are Just Visiting

In reality, energy companies are not just visiting. The first link of the energy chain is anything but temporary. Thirty-five years ago, the Robinsons signed a lease that allowed Dominion to bury the pipeline that plows north-to-south, gathering all the gas in the area. In exchange, Gary hasn't paid a cent of gas for 35 years, which he values to be around $50,000 in savings.

But now, Robinson says, another pipeline is needed to serve the new well — once again, directly through their yard. After all, the gas has to get to Kent State somehow.

"It'll cut my property right in half," Gary says, as if the matter is already closed. He leans on the fence and watches the workers. "Dollar-wise, what's it worth?"

"We're really hesitant," Pat says slowly. "It's very dangerous. The gas that goes through the pipeline is very, very hot. We wouldn't get free gas off of it because of the temperature. So what what are we gonna get off of it? Nothing but loss of value of our property."

"There's always the chance that it'll leak," Gary adds, now walking back to the house. "It'll destroy the ground."

It's yet another change for the Robinsons, one that, at least by all appearances, they're intending to fight. With little to gain and much to lose, the Robinsons are sure they're making the right decision — for themselves, of course, not for CONSOL, Dominion, IGS and surely not for Renovich.

Because from 2000 feet, beyond the scarred earth bordering the Robinsons' tiny white house, you can see the University Library in the distance, the size of your fingernail, just waiting for that next drop of gas, that lifeblood, that new source of energy to keep things going.
After an unimaginable past, a Sudanese refugee is determined for a better future

It was 1987 when war drove 7-year-old Majier Mamer Deng from his home.

Like many boys of the Dinka tribe, the largest tribe in South Sudan, Deng was tending to the cattle outside his village when it was attacked.

"I hear the guns, and they told us to run," Deng says. "Some people cry and say, 'No, I'm not running,' and they went back home."

Many of those who tried to return to their villages were killed. Those who did survive became known as the "Lost Boys," a term coined by aid workers to describe the group of 20,000 orphans — mostly boys — displaced by the Sudanese Civil War since 1983.

Although UNICEF and the Red Cross attempted to aid the group of boys, ages 6 to 17, it wasn't until 1999 that the United States created a program allowing approximately 3,800 refugees to enter the country.

Deng, a senior at Kent State, is one of those 3,800 refugees, whom the New York Times once referred to as "the most badly war-traumatized children ever examined."

THE CONFLICT

North and South Sudan were once two separate independent nations existing side by side. North Sudan was and continues to be made up of mostly Muslims, while South Sudan was and continues to be populated by mostly Christians.

The two countries coexisted peacefully until the late 19th century, when the British colonized the two nations, combining them into one colony. During the colonization, Britain hired Egyptian mercenaries to maintain control in Sudan, arming them with weapons and training them for combat.

In the 1950s, when Britain ended its colonization of Sudan, the country was urged to restore the original border between South and North Sudan, but they did not. When the independent state was restored, the people of North Sudan received weapons and military training from their Egyptian leaders and began to seize control of South Sudan to utilize its resources.

While North Sudan began to thrive, South Sudan remained undeveloped. South Sudan had little safe water, and over 80 percent of the region had no access to education or health care, according to RebuildingSouthernSudan.org, a
group whose mission is to “educate students in the newly independent country of South Sudan so they have the skills necessary to help rebuild their nation after 30 years of oppression, war and genocide.”

In 1985, North Sudan declared Sharia law, which meant everyone in Sudan, both North and South, would have to follow the Islamic religion.

When most of the Southern Sudanese people refused to become Muslim, the North Sudan government enlisted the help of gunmen from Darfur — a group that became known as the Janjaweed.

The Darfurians were told to invade Southern Sudanese villages by force, killing any men and boys in the villages. Many of the women and girls were raped and taken as slaves, while men and boys were left to run for their lives.

SAFE FOR A WHILE
When the group reached Ethiopia, they had more resources, such as water and wood, but their hardships were not done. It was the first time the group received aid from the United Nations, but even then, they had limited resources.

“Believe it or not, some people were drinking their own urine,” Deng says.

Deng and the other boys would not leave the camp out of fear of the local tribes.

“If we go to the river to get water, sometimes you never come back,” Deng says.

Ethiopia was also the first place Deng learned the alphabet. UNICEF introduced the boys to education, but there were not enough supplies. Children wrote in the dirt with a stick. Those who were given a notebook and pencil had to split the items in two and share them.

“When I wrote my ABCDs, I was so happy to hear the teacher say, ‘Yeah, you’ve done well. Excellent,’” Deng says.

DISPLACED AGAIN
After four and a half years in Ethiopia, the country experienced a change in power, and the village that had become a safe haven to the Lost Boys was soon under attack.

“They say, ‘You have three days to leave,’” Deng says. “We didn’t even say, ‘No, we didn’t want to leave.’”

The boys were driven into the Gilo River, near the border of Sudan, where they were fired upon

“Fighting for Survival
After being driven out of Sudan, Deng spent the next three months walking barefoot to Ethiopia, where it was rumored to be safer. On the way, other refugees joined Deng’s group. The group, consisting mostly of young boys, survived by eating tree leaves and fruit. There was no water, and many died of dehydration and starvation.

One person I knew, he said, ‘No, I can’t walk; I’m done; I’m going to die here,’” Deng says. “If you try to motivate them, say, ‘Keep walking,’ they say, ‘No, leave me,’ and if you say, ‘No,’ you would die there together.”

Somehow, through faith and determination, Deng survived.

“My music gets me through the hard times,” Deng says, plucking the strings of his “thom,” a Dinka instrument.

“I love music.”
and forced into the crocodile-filled waters. Some were shot, while others drowned or were killed by crocodiles. Deng said thousands of children died that day.

"I still have the vision, seeing people die and the crocodiles," Deng says.

The remaining Lost Boys spent the next two months in Sudan before relocating to a refugee camp in Kenya, where Deng stayed until 2001.

COMING TO AMERICA

Although the Lost Boys were no longer in the line of fire, they still had little food, and life in Kenya was difficult.

In 1999, the U.S. government created a program for refugees to be relocated to the States. To qualify for the program, the Lost Boys had to go through an extensive interview process. Deng said many did not pass because they did not remember all the details of their journey or they were too scared to explain it properly.

"When I opened my letter that said I passed and I'm qualified to come to the United States, I was very excited," Deng says. "I was very happy, but at the same time, I was worried about my family back home."

While living in Kenya, Deng received his high school diploma and was able to write a letter home with help from the Red Cross. His cousin found his letter and wrote back that Deng's family, with the exception of his father, was still alive.

Deng began contacting his mother, who was safe living in Sudan, but when he told her he was going to the U.S., she did not want him to go because he would be even farther from her.

"I'm going to America," Deng wrote to his mother. "It is a better place, and I can do something different. But one time, I will come back to meet you, and I will keep praying that God will keep you alive."

EDUCATION IN THE STATES

Deng came to Cleveland on May 1, 2001, with four other Lost Boy survivors. His first job was working at an art studio, a hobby he once enjoyed as a boy in Sudan.

"I still remember seeing my artwork on Cedar Road." Deng says. "I see those stain glass on the window, and I was real happy to see my artwork there."

The other Lost Boys were content with working, but Deng wanted to go to school.

"I learned that if you're a well-educated person, you can live a better life," he says. "Wherever you go, you are able to communicate with people."

Deng spent two years at Cuyahoga Community College pursuing a physician's assistant degree. When the school increased the program's requirements, he transferred to Cleveland State University. There, he researched malaria until 2008, when his mother asked him to come home. While visiting his mother in Sudan, Deng was reminded of his love for airplanes and toy cars as a child.

"I need a career that will allow me to go from place to place to see other cultures and way of life," Deng says. "Aviation may give me that opportunity to go from place to place."

When Deng transferred to Kent State, he changed his major to aviation management and aeronautics with a minor in computer information systems.

"A lot of my friends didn't like that because they say I spent so much time in biology and science, and I said, 'You know, it's OK to do something that you really love to do,'" Deng says.

GIVING BACK

When Deng came to Kent State, he joined the Kent African Student Association, a group that represents Kent State students from different countries in Africa. The group holds social gatherings to help students become acclimated to American culture. Here, they know him as Nico.

Isaac Richmond Nettey, associate dean of the College of Technology, first met Deng when he was a student in his aviation class.

"Looking at his name, I was able to deduce that he may be from South Sudan, and by talking to him after class, I got to learn some of his story," Nettey says. "Much of our emphasis was more on how the education he is receiving can be put to use back in Sudan."

Nettey explains that as a new nation, South Sudan has promise and potential. The country is rich with oil, gold and mercury.

"I see aviation as a tool to expedite growth and development there in a way that would translate potential into reality and translate raw resources into actual benefits for the people," Nettey says.

Once Deng graduates from the aviation program, Nettty believes he will have the skills to make important contributions to the nation he still calls home.

"He understands the language and culture but also has the education," Nettey says. "He could serve as an important bridge between the people and the developers."

Deng says if God wants him to help South Sudan, he would love to do his part.

"South Sudan in years to come will be one of the great places to live," Deng says. "I will bring all of my friends from here ... because I want them to enjoy it, too. [The United States] has done so much for me, and I want to give it back."
Social media helped one Kent State student raise $70,000 for tsunami relief

By Caitlyn Callahan

Alexandria Rhodes raised nearly $70,000 to help the victims of the March 2011 tsunami that ripped through Japan.

"What you could buy with $70,000: a 2013 Cadillac Escalade, four to six years of college at a public university, a private jet trip to nine countries in 23 days, a condo on the beach in Florida. After raising nearly $70,000 through social media, Alexandria Rhodes, a senior English major at Kent State, donated it all to the Red Cross to help the victims of the tsunami that ripped through Japan in March 2011.

"[The morning of the tsunami,] I was in my room, still in my pajamas, in bed drinking coffee and getting ready for Zumba," Rhodes says. "The fierceness of the tweets that were coming in and the desperation of people trying to find loved ones and sharing information via Twitter — it was just so powerful to me, and I thought, 'I have to do something.'"

According to Tweet-o-Meter, a website that keeps track of the number of tweets per minute in 12 of the top cities in the world, the number of tweets coming from Japan on March 11, 2011 topped 1,200 per minute.

"I glanced at the news in the morning," tweeted @ouioui73 on the day of the tsunami. "A child was in a car, and the parent was crying."
Worse than I ever imagined, worse than any images can convey. Magnitude of destruction brought tears to my eyes.
—@HABurton.

I thought the parent was crying because the child was found alive. But, in fact, the child was found dead. It’s too cruel. Why did this happen?” (Because of language differences, tweets in other parts of the world can have more characters than tweets in the United States.)

Photographer Andrew Burton went to Japan after the tsunami to shoot photos for USA Today and regularly tweeted about his experiences.

“Worse than I ever imagined, worse than any images can convey. Magnitude of destruction brought tears to my eyes,” he tweeted. Later, he wrote, “Very long, emotionally draining day shooting families sorting through destroyed homes, body recoveries and army checking house by house.”

Others tweeted their support for Japan. “Let us lift a prayer for Japan. As the night covers their nation in darkness, let our prayers be their light,” read one tweet from March 11.

Rhodes, emotionally affected by the tweets pouring in, decided to get involved. She contacted a Twitter friend from Georgia whom she had never met, and they made a plan to raise money for the Red Cross to send to the victims. Their Twitter account, @fandom4tsunami, took off on the first day, gathering more than 200 followers in a few hours.

“I was feeling sadness, compassion and adrenaline,” she says. “I set up the Twitter account literally in between walking to classes.”

The two girls, motivated by social media, began contacting various famous authors and asking for donations of work to create a compilation of stories for people who donated.

“Celebrities would re-tweet information and donate items. We had ‘Twilight Saga: New Moon’ director Chris Weitz send tweets out, [producer] Giovanna Agnelli, Candace Charee, the Hillywood Sisters and creators; it was amazing,” Rhodes says. E. L. James, author of “Fifty Shades of Grey,” also contributed. Donated items, such as autographed photos, were auctioned off for donation as well.

With a minimum donation of $10 to the Red Cross, people could send Rhodes and her partner their donation receipt and receive the compilation of donated stories.
AROUND CAMPUS

from 200 authors called “Fandom Fights Tsunami Compilation.”

“We set our goal at $5,000 and thought that would be perfect,” Rhodes says. “It went a little crazier than that.”

She also created a website, fandomfightstsunami.blogspot.com, to give donors more information about the compilation and auctions and to tell them how to donate.

Rhodes took on the challenge of raising money while juggling a double major in English and creative writing, working at Tallmadge Branch Library, preparing for her senior year of college and making time for family and friends.

“When I first did it, [my parents] were like, ‘You have full time school, and you work. How are you going to do this project?’” she says. “By the second day they were like, ‘Whoa, you’re supposed to be doing this.’ We made $5,000 in the first week or two.”

Recent studies are showing there is a growing trend in Generation Y — those born in the 1980s and early 1990s — to raise large amounts of money for nonprofit organizations, especially through the Internet and social media.

A study released in 2010 by Convio, “a leading provider of constituent engagement solutions that enable nonprofit organizations to maximize the value of every relationship,” showed this generation holds high expectations for online attempts at fundraising, but it also has a strong desire to help others and raise money for its favorite causes.

Future Leaders in Philanthropy, or FLiP, is a blogging website recently established to “create a community and a network where other future leaders can meet, learn, exchange ideas and contribute to each other’s success.”

The site was created specifically to foster the growth of young leaders in nonprofit work. College business schools offer classes, even majors, dedicated to helping young people make a difference in their communities or even the world.

Nathan Grove, senior marketing associate for the American Red Cross in Washington, D.C., says he thinks it’s wonderful so many young people are showing a passion for philanthropy and really using it to support their causes.

“All the studies we’ve seen [show] Generation Y as being one of the most altruistic generations out there, so always working to make the world a better place and growing up with focusing on being very green or helping your neighbor out and also having a very global point of view,” he says. “We’ve really seen this trend reflected during times of big disasters like Japan, or we’ve also seen it with everyday fundraising in terms of people wanting to support the Red Cross’ mission ... but really trying to go above and beyond.”

For Rhodes, all of the hard work paid off when she remembered where the money was going. Three months and nearly $70,000 after they began their project, she and her partner officially closed the fundraiser. More than a year later, she still gets emails from people asking for the compilation and offering donations.

“It was extremely humbling and amazing,” she says. “I was very moved by the willingness of people that wanted to help, and I can just remember day after day getting like, $5,000 in donations a day, and it was just mind boggling.”

Because Rhodes raised her funds solely through Twitter, she thinks the
The debris of the destroyed Natori neighborhood of Sendai, Japan, on Sunday, March 13, 2011, that was hit hard by the tsunami in the aftermath of an 8.9 earthquake.

Photo courtesy of MCT campus.

The power of social media, specifically Twitter, is still forming but has the capability to make a real impact.

"[This project] really showed me that yes, social media can be sometimes dangerous and negative, but this was just a declaration of how powerful and positive it can be," she says. "I think it's phenomenal. I think this is just the beginning of social media."

Grove says social media is a great way to reach young people, and the Red Cross uses social media for fundraising to encourage youth and other individuals to raise funds and awareness with their friends and families.

"I don't know any young person that doesn't have a Facebook or Twitter account, so using social media allows us to have that direct connection with them to find out what's on their mind, what they are thinking, and also as a way to engage them," he says. "One of the things we think is so cool about youth is how innovative and creative they can be, and a lot of times, we take their ideals and try to make them more readily available, and we try to incorporate them into our other marketing programs."

Rhodes has some advice for other young people looking to make a difference and give back.

"Just do it, even if it's just re-tweeting something," she says. "Don't be intimidated by social media. Just try. Don't be afraid to ask and push boundaries to get what you need."

Rhodes is currently working on another similar fundraiser for Kent State's chapter of To Write Love on Her Arms that she hopes will be just as successful. She is also in the process of finishing a fiction book, "More Than You Know," which she has been writing for more than two years.

After graduating this year, Rhodes hopes to continue to write and perhaps work for a public relations firm or nonprofit such as United Way. She has fundraised in the past for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society and is setting her sights on future fundraising opportunities.

Grove said the Red Cross relies on the generosity of its volunteers and donors such as Rhodes to carry out its mission every day.

"We just want to thank Alexandria for raising so much money for the Red Cross and her support," he says. "We really, really do appreciate it."
Nearing the buzzer, Kent State calls on its sideline celebrity

'Ve want Frank!'

Spotlights give the polished parquet floor a warm glow at the Memorial Athletic Convocation Center. Cheerleaders and dance team members chant in unison as the sound of squeaking sneakers fill the arena. The bandbox gymnasium is packed with faithful, blue-and-gold-clad fans, all attentively watching Kent State finish a blowout victory against Northern Illinois. The game clock winds under three minutes when the first requests for Brian Frank are made.

The chant first starts slowly, with a few dedicated, gutsy student section members quietly repeating the expression. Unsuspecting students nearby pick up on the chant, and it quickly grows.

"We want Frank," they chant. "We want Frank."

Soon, the entire golden sea of fans joins together as one, calling for the player hunched over in his seat toward the end of the bench.

"WE WANT FRANK!" they scream. "WE WANT FRANK!"

Frank, a 6-foot-5 walk-on Kent State basketball player, leans forward and looks in the direction of his head coach, Rob Senderoff, seated at the other end of the bench. Frank hasn't done more than clap his hands or stand and wave a towel in support of his teammates. He hasn't taken a jump shot since warm-ups following halftime. Senderoff keeps his eyes fixed on the game.

The clock nears two minutes, and the student section is relentless with their request, restating the chant, getting louder and more demanding with each repetition. They want to see the walk-on enter the game.

Senderoff looks down toward the end of the bench and motions for Frank. The students erupt with cheers.

"My spot is at the end of the bench. That's where I live."

—Brian Frank

By Nick Shook

Photos: Jessica Denton
As a team captain, Frank has found he doesn't need to be on the court to exercise leadership. Kent State vs. Rochester, Sunday, Nov. 4.

Thus is the popularity of a typical walk-on.

Frank now relishes the attention students give him at the end of a big Kent State victory, but that wasn't always true. The first time the student section, nicknamed “The Krew,” called for Frank’s participation in a game, he was embarrassed.

“I kind of just looked at my teammates and was like ‘Is this serious? Are they really doing this?’ Then, as it happened from game to game, I really started to appreciate it,” he says.

“I used to play into it; I would hear a couple of them, and then I'd look over and egg them on and tell them to get louder. Then, I'd point to my coach and stuff like that, play around with it. It's an honor, really, to be the one that they're cheering for, and it puts a smile on my face every time that happens.”

Frank’s teammates encourage Senderoff as soon as the students begin calling for him, but the coach claims to remain unfazed.

“Usually, when I hear people chanting for Brian Frank,” Senderoff says, “I'm happy because that means we've won.”

It took more than a few weeks for Frank to acclimate himself to the pace and lifestyle of a Division I college basketball player. It took about as long for him to hit it off with his new teammates, most of whom were scholarship student-athletes.

“You've got to earn guys’ trust; you've got to warm up to people,” Frank says, “especially since you're not contributing that much on the court.

“I make jokes about being the walk-on. I'm not there to steal anybody's minutes or embarrass anybody.”

Frank’s participation in practice fluctuates, he says. One day, he’ll be needed to play the entire practice, and other days, he will rarely see the floor. When he first arrived, Frank wanted to be on the floor at all times. It took him two years to figure out his role and how he can best help the team in practice.

“I'm not going to be the guy who is taking reps away from the younger guys,” he says. “I'm kind of over that... Last year is when I figured out I know the plays; I don't need to take time away from the guys who are going to do the majority of the
playing ... It’s an ‘I’m ready to go whenever called upon’ kind of thing.”

During one afternoon pre-season practice in late October, the team’s conditioning was placed in Frank’s hands. Two free throws, in the form of a one-and-one, lay ahead for the senior. Make both, and the next man is up for his attempt — but miss one, and his already-fatigued, sweat-drenched teammates have to run to the other end of the court and back in less than 10 seconds.

Frank approaches the free-throw line.

“Come on, B-Frank,” a teammate shouts.

Frank takes the ball, dribbles it twice and smoothly flings it off his fingertips, calmly sinking the first shot. Teammates wait nervously on the baseline as the captain sizes up his next attempt. He slowly looks up, cocks the ball above his head and releases.

Swish.

The ball falls through the net. The senior leader proves why, whether he is a star player or walk-on, he belongs on this team.

While he may be best-known for his clapping and towel-waving abilities on the bench, make no mistake — to the lighthearted Frank, these are finely tuned skills.

“We use those huge towels,” Frank says. “They aren’t like a rally towel. You’ve got to like fold it in two and twist it around the wrist so it doesn’t fly off and hit somebody. It’s a technique; not everybody can do it.”

A version of musical chairs, a juvenile game typically played at children’s birthday parties, often occurs on the Kent State bench during games. Frank spends much of his time during games encouraging his teammates, all the while shuffling up and down the bench, seat by seat.

“Guys always want to go to the end of the bench when they’re tired or at the end of the game,” Frank explains, “so I would always end up scooting forward and sitting next to the coaches.

“I usually start near the end of the bench and then kind of work my way up and back down as the game gets more intense or less intense.”

Frank wasn’t always as bold in his seating endeavors.

“Last year was the first year when I really started venturing up toward the front of the bench,” he says. “I never wanted to be that close to [Coach] Sendy. I never wanted him to look over and be like, ‘What are you doing up here?’”

Daring quests and emotional advancements aside, Frank knows where he is most comfortable.

“My spot is at the end of the bench,” he says. “That’s where I live.”

While he may live at the end of the bench during games, Senderoff is quick to vouch for Frank’s character and leadership, so much that he named Frank one of three captains for the 2011-12 season. The move was unexpected to Frank, but he was honored and thankful for the responsibility. The new role is a rare one; it isn’t often in major college sport that a walk-on player eventually becomes captain of a team. But Frank has taken full advantage of his title and has become more vocal in practice.

Senderoff attributes Frank’s increased leadership to his class standing as a senior and the team’s overall lack of experience with eight newcomers.

“He knows that he’s a captain and he knows that I’m gonna have his back on the things that he says, because he’s gonna say the right thing,” Senderoff says. “I think it’s given him more confidence and more of an ability to speak his mind and say what he wants to say, because he knows he has an important voice on the team.”

Respect is not an issue when it comes to Frank and his teammates, Senderoff says.

“It is difficult when you’re a guy that doesn’t play, to be one of your leaders, but I think Brian does a really good job with that,” Senderoff says.
“He knows what he can do, he knows what he can’t do and he knows that when he gets mad at guys, it’s mostly because of work because the one thing he can do is work hard, and he does work hard. He does a great job, and I think all our new guys respect him.”

Frank struggled with his position at first, fearing he might have a difficult time influencing his teammates when he doesn’t see much playing time himself. But his involvement with the program and his firsthand experience with a few of the greatest players in Kent State history provided him the leverage to voice his suggestions and encouragement.

“I’ve been here for so long, and I’ve seen the people that have been some of the greatest to come through here, you know, Chris Singletary, Justin Greene, Mike McKee, all these guys that played here and had long, really good careers,” Frank says. “I kind of just took it as, ‘I know what they did, and that’s what we should be doing.”

D espite the raucous cheers at the end of victories, Frank knows his playing time is very limited and will remain that way in 2011-12. But he’s OK with that; he’s not one for the spotlight, anyway.

“I’m fine being the guy that lays low and doesn’t get as much notoriety because at the end of the day, it’s about the program,” Frank says.

Senderoff isn’t sure how much playing time Frank might receive this season, but he is dead set on one starting lineup, even if it doesn’t arrive until the final home game.

“I don’t want to say that there’s no chance that he will play, and I will say this, he’s going to start senior night against Akron,” Senderoff says. “I couldn’t care less if we’re playing for the championship or not; he’s earned that for sure. He will start that night. If we lose because of that, then we lose because of that; I don’t care. He’s earned the right to start that night, and he will.

“I love the kid and have the ultimate respect for him and appreciation for what he’s done for our team and our program.”

A s the substitution buzzer sounds, Frank trots out onto the court to wild cheers from members of the Krew. A few possessions later, a teammate finds Frank wide open on the right wing, just outside the 3-point line and not a single Northern Illinois defender in sight. Frank catches the pass, lines up his shot and fires from deep.

The ball floats softly through the air, arcing high toward the hoop positioned just in front of the student section. The students hold their collective breath, hoping, praying for the ball to fall through the net.

Swish.

The crowd roars, and the walk-on is officially in the box score.
How 16 Indian students became acquainted with Kent, Ohio

By Maura Zurick
All things considered, I'm a pretty lucky girl. I've studied abroad twice in my four years at Kent State, first in Florence, Italy for a semester and then in India for two weeks. I spent 10 days in New Delhi at Amity University for an international reporting class, where I met people who changed the way I look at life.

As part of the India exchange program, 16 Amity students and two professors came to Kent for 10 days in September, and I signed up to be a host. The purpose of my trip to India and their trip to the United States was to work on stories as part of both of our journalism programs. The classes were designed to help us learn how to become international reporters and gain confidence reporting outside our comfort zones.

The most rewarding part of hosting the Indian students was watching them experience America for the first time. They traveled to Cedar Point in Sandusky, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Niagara Falls, Amish Country and New York City, but for 10 days, they explored their first college town: Kent, Ohio.

When I arrived at the airport the Saturday morning they arrived, Varun Bansal, a 25-year-old student from Delhi, looked exhausted as he moseyed through the Cleveland airport with a huge suitcase. But when we went outside, he livened up. “I’m finally here,” he sighed to himself. “It seems like a dream. It’s too clean.”

In India, the streets are crowded and polluted. People and animals roam freely, and mopeds and taxis wind through the narrow streets.

On the bus ride to Kent, Bansal still had trouble believing what he saw — and smelled — was real. “I’ve been here for 20 minutes, and every time I take a deep breath, the clean air just reminds me that I’m in a whole different world,” he said. “Your roads are smooth and lined, and cars drive at a speed limit. My first few minutes in Ohio, and I’m already amazed.”

He wasn’t alone in his impressions. His classmates agreed that Ohio was “so clean and green.” They were also shocked at how cold it was. Most arrived in sandals and T-shirts but soon discovered their Indian attire wouldn’t suffice in Ohio weather.

Their first stop in Kent was to Wal-Mart so they could buy warmer shoes and clothes.

After spending four hours in the store, the three Indians I brought with me left with absolutely nothing. Everything they found was, ironically, made in India, and they considered it too expensive here. They were also disturbed at the amount of prepackaged food that filled the aisles. Indians are used to small shops and fresh food markets, not corporate superstores like Wal-Mart.

“All of your food is frozen or in a box!” Bansal asked, as we walked up and down the aisles in search of something he might like to try for lunch. He picked up a bag of frozen vegetables and read the label. “Do people really eat this stuff?” he grimaced. All I could do was laugh.

Even though we left the store empty-handed, Bansal remained in good spirits. “Wal-Mart was great,” he said. “Let’s go back tomorrow. There’s just so much stuff to look at, and it’s all in one big building.”

Because he didn’t find anything to eat at Wal-Mart, I brought him and the two others to Continental Grill, where they tried gyros for the first time. It might not have been “American” food, but they loved it.

Nine of the Indians chose to spend their second day in the U.S. at Cedar Point for HalloWeekends.

Ishita Kinnoo, 21, of Delhi, was excited to experience Halloween for the first time because they don’t
celebrate the holiday in India. “For me, this is the most exciting part,” she said. “I’m in a new country experiencing a cultural event. I’m at an American amusement park and going to haunted houses. I never expected to do such incredible things.”

She didn’t care that it was raining and cold; she just felt grateful to be in America at Cedar Point.

“I’ve never seen anything quite like that park,” she says, looking back on her trip. “It was big, so big. There was so much going on that when I got in the car, I had to sit in silence for a moment and let my mind digest the experience. I saw monsters and spun upside-down hundreds of times all in one day. It was thrilling.”

On the way home, two of the three Indians in my car fell asleep. Kinnoo and I spent the drive talking. We learned that even though we live so far apart, in completely different worlds, we have so much in common.

“This is something I never expected,” Kinnoo says. “I was a little nervous to come here. I’m foreign; I didn’t expect Americans to be so friendly and welcoming. That’s just not what movies and TV shows portray. But here I am, making best friends. It makes me never want to leave this place.”

The Indian students had a lot of first experiences during their visit to the States. They had the opportunity to see President Barack Obama speak on campus, tried hamburgers for the first time, watched American football and baseball and even ate atomic wings at Quaker Steak and Lube.

When I traveled to India, my favorite part of the trip was meeting new people. The Indians said they felt the same way. I think seeing people experience something for the first time makes you closer because you become a part of their memories.

It could be something as simple as shopping at Wal-Mart or visiting the bars downtown, but now every time I go to those places, I think of the Indians. Those 16 students from Amity University became some of my best friends in less than two weeks, and I know I’m not the only one in my class who feels that way.

Their final night in Kent was a sad night, but it was also one of the best nights. The Indian professors sponsored a farewell dinner at Laziza, where we exchanged gifts and memorable experiences.

After dinner, even though the Indians had to be up at 6 a.m. to catch a flight to New York, we went to the bars.

That night, my new friend Surbhit Jain, 20, of Calcutta, India, told me he was having trouble packing. I offered to help, but he said it wasn’t because his suitcase wouldn’t zip; it was because he didn’t want it to.

“I don’t want to leave,” he said. “Of course, I want to see NYC, but honestly, I’d rather stay here in Kent. America is a beautiful place because of the people. We might speak different languages, live in different places and believe in different things, but we’re all the same at heart. If I wouldn’t have come on this trip, I wouldn’t have missed out on a great travel opportunity, but I would have missed out on making life-long connections. The best thing I’m bringing home is memories with new friends.”

In those 10 days, I experienced some of the most incredible moments of my life. You don’t have to leave the country to have a life-changing experience — those can happen anywhere. It’s about the people you meet, not the sights you see or the food you agree to try.

I didn’t say goodbye to my Indian friends. When it came time to bring them back to their hotel on their last night in Kent, Bansal and Kinnoo taught me a Hindi phrase, “Phir milenge,” which means, “We’ll meet again.”

I hope we do.
TIMELESS TIES

Bow ties are back, and they’re here to stay

By Yelena Tischenko

Photos: Marianna Pierro
"When I find one, I think to myself, 'How many combinations can I make with that? How can I make it work? And how can it [be] formal or casual?' It's all just a play-as-I-go thing, and I've been making up the rules as I go."

—Evan Gildenblatt

Evan Gildenblatt addressed a crowd of Kent State students waiting to see President Barack Obama on Oct. 26, 2012. The Undergraduate Student Government Executive Director looked at home standing at the podium, sporting his signature accessory — a bow tie. That afternoon, he chose a bright yellow bow tie with thick navy and light blue stripes.

Gildenblatt has a collection of more than 60 bow ties that is steadily growing. It all started when he was running for Undergraduate Student Government, and he considered the idea of branding his image.

"My campaign people picked the bow tie, and I started getting a reputation for it," Gildenblatt says. "Now when I wear neckties, people either don't notice or notice, and they get kind of upset about it because they're so used to seeing me with a bow tie. And that's the persona that I've enveloped here."

In the past few years, bow ties have become staples on covers of men's magazines like GQ and Esquire, and celebrities like Chris Brown, Justin Bieber, Kanye West and Darren Criss have rocked bow ties on and off the red carpet. The bow tie doesn't always have to match the outfit — it's about making a statement.

"What I like is I can look at old pictures of my grandparents, and that's what they were wearing, Gildenblatt says. "It's from a bygone era, but it's a nice little piece of nostalgia that I can hold onto."
FAMOUS BOW TIE ENTHUSIAST:

Pee-wee Herman, comedian (born in 1952)

Donald Duck, Walt Disney cartoon (created in 1934)

Fred Astaire, Entertainer (1899-1987)

Winston Churchill, British Prime Minister (1874-1965)
HOW TO
CONFIDENTLY
ROCK A BOW TIE

1) Choose something simple, and start with solid colors.

2) Learn how to tie it properly. There's nothing worse than wearing a bow tie tied wrong.

3) To avoid looking like a high school principal or a politician, wear dark jeans, polished shoes, a nice button up and a classic blazer.

4) Wear the bow tie; don't let it wear you.
HOW TO TIE A BOW TIE

1) Place the bow tie around your neck, situating it so one end is about two inches longer than the other.

2) Tie the two ends into a single knot to create a collar around your neck.

3) Fold the shorter end in half at the widest part of the fabric.

5) Wrap the longer end over the center of the folded piece twice, looping through the collar the second time around (this should be done at the thinnest part of the folded half).

6) Holding everything together, thread the remaining fabric through the loop behind the bow tie toward the side that isn’t folded in half.

7) Adjust the bow tie by tugging at the ends of it and straightening the center knot.

8) If all else fails, ask your significant other for help.
Kent State's FUNNY MAN

Alumnus Mike Polk talks Steelers, slacking and swearing in front of his mom

By Alexis Pfeifer
Photos provided by Mike Polk

“Browns versus Steelers, a storied rivalry for the ages. Well, not so much anymore,” comedian Mike Polk says, as he opens his rant about his favorite NFL team in a YouTube video that reached more than 100,000 hits. “It’s still a rivalry, but now it’s sort of like a the rivalry between the Harlem Globetrotters and the Washington Generals, or Verizon Wireless and Boost Mobile — it’s a little lopsided.”

The Cleveland native opened his piece, “A Cleveland Browns fan’s Steelers rant,” with this phrase, which stemmed from his frustration with his long-loved team. However, this longtime Browns fan and season-ticket holder’s video doesn’t compare to his most famous videos on YouTube, “Dear the Cleveland Browns...” and “HASTILY MADE CLEVELAND TOURISM VIDEO,” which has millions of hits on YouTube.

But while this funny man currently has the online comedy world abuzz with his brutally honest Cleveland Browns rants, he didn’t begin his professional comedy career until after he graduated from Kent State.

ON HIS COMEDY ROOTS...

Polk was introduced to comedy early in life through his “big, loud, Irish family.” In high school, he was the funny guy, having never developed any sort of athletic aptitude. Polk says he looked like Napoleon Dynamite, “just not as cool.” His mother, Peggy, says his study habits were less than commendable.

Polk: “I didn’t have a ton of options other than to try to develop some sort of a personality. My options were either to try to be funny or become a goth kid, and I didn’t want to have to put all that makeup on every day.”

Polk’s mom: “He had lots of fun in high school and rarely applied himself to his studies.”

AT KENT STATE...

The extent of Polk’s career was an occasional joke on his TV2 dating and talk/sketch shows or in his weekly column — that came out monthly — for The Daily Kent Stater.

Polk: “I wasn’t really a comedian in college. I just did some comedic things.”

Polk’s mom: “It was his first chance to write and perform. He has always had a knack for finding humor in almost any situation. This was where he also discovered that he doesn’t mind making a fool of himself.”

AFTER COLLEGE...

In 2004, Polk started performing stand-up comedy in Cleveland. He wrote for online humor sites before getting hired as a producer at an HBO startup called HBOLabs. Polk currently works as a writer and producer of ads for a company that owns websites. He is responsible for writing pre-roll ads, which run before online videos, and pop-up ads. Additionally, he works for Fox

"I am hoping that the audience thinks he is as handsome, charming and hilarious [as I do]."
— Polk’s mom
8 Cleveland, contributing to the morning and evening shows and producing his own specials.

Polk: “I've been fortunate in that I have been able to make a go of things for the most part, but I've never been a particularly driven or focused person. I wish that I were. Two goals that I have stuck to since high school, I have managed to maintain. One is not waking up early for a job for as long as I possibly could. So far, I've been pretty good on that one. The other is to stay happy no matter what I'm doing.”

Polk's mom: “Michael loves the idea that he has never had what he calls a 'big-boy' job. His life suits his creative personality, and he works very hard at his craft. Anyone who has worked with him will tell you that he is a perfectionist in his writing and producing.”

ON HIS INSPIRATION...

At Kent State, Polk found inspiration for his TV2 shows in the bar and party scenes, but as he continues his career outside of Kent State, it has become increasingly more difficult to find material.

Polk: “Kent was a great place because it had so many distinct groups. I found a lot of humor in meathead dudes and vapid girls. I loved the hippie kids who usually weren't sure what they were protesting about but were just happy to be a part of something.”

ON GROWING UP...

Polk says he's less obnoxious now than he was in college, but his material never matured; he just yells less than he did and has a slightly better “batting average” with audience swings and misses than he used to.

Polk's mom: “I am hoping that the audience thinks he is as handsome, charming and hilarious [as I do].”

ON BEING OFFENSIVE...

The reality of Polk's comedy — and comedy in general — is that some people will be offended by what he says. Some of Polk's crude humor, especially his sketches in the comedy troupe Last Call Cleveland, have made his mother cringe.

Polk: “I have intentionally offended people before, in a sense. That is to say, I wrote something or said something, not directed at a certain person but maybe a group of people. I knew it was harsh and that it would upset people. You have to weigh
it out and decide if it's worth it. I certainly don’t rush into those things or just throw blind haymakers and thoughtlessly scream a bunch of terrible things just to get attention.”

ON HIS INSECURITIES...
The process of maturing through comedy has led the somewhat famous comedian on a weird pursuit to keep his hobby going. For Polk, it’s about not letting mistakes hold him back. 

Polk: “You have a bad show, and it still gets to you. You see someone better than you, and it can be both inspiring and make you feel hopeless at the same time. One of my least favorite things that I experience to this day is an awful-but-usually-attractive-girl saying the words, ‘Say something funny.’ Then, she pouts when I respond that she’s ‘probably going to die alone,’ even though it’s her own fault for not specifying whether what she wanted me to say should be funny to her or to me.”

ON THE STEELERS...
“All right, I’m just going to say this,” Polk continues in “A Cleveland Browns fan’s Steelers rant.” “I respect the Steelers, and yes, that hurt, but it’s the truth. I respect their organization, and I respect their dumb luck, but that doesn’t mean I don’t still hate the Steelers. They are whiny, and they are cocky, and they are thugs.”

‘My options were either to try to be funny or become a goth kid, and I didn’t want to have to put all that makeup on every day.”
—Mike Polk

ON HIS FUTURE CAREER...
The Kent State comedian has no idea what the world of comedy holds for him. 

Polk: “I’m just going to keep doing my thing, and I’m going to remain open to whatever, and I’ll see what happens.”
Wizards and Vampires and Dystopias, oh my!

By Angela Pino

For our generation, it started with the “Harry Potter” series. More than a decade after that, it was “Twilight.” A few years later, “The Hunger Games” burst onto the scene. Within the last year, “Fifty Shades of Grey” has made erotic novels socially acceptable. The popularity of these books has skyrocketed the authors’ careers as well as the actors who play their beloved characters. These book trends even have so-called “non-readers” joining in on the craze.

Karen Long, book editor for The Plain Dealer, says there are several elements that determine what makes a book popular, but right now people love themes that involve the supernatural. She also says while the execution of these popular books leaves much to be desired, most people read solely for plot.

“There are only six or seven stories in the world, and they are being retold,” Long says.

One of the stories that is often retold in books involves a stranger moving to a new town, which is seen in “Twilight” when Bella moves to Forks, Wash.

Allison Rybak, an employee at the University Bookstore, says the store has sold numerous copies of these popular books, but “Fifty Shades of Grey” tops the list as the series that sells the most.

“When people buy the book, they usually go ahead and buy the whole set,” Rybak says.

“The Hunger Games” series is found in five different sections of the bookstore alone, with one section containing four entire shelves dedicated to the series and its accompanying merchandise.

Copies of any of these books are hard to come by. In the Portage Library Consortium, there are only eight available copies of “The Hunger Games” series, and no copies of the “Fifty Shades” trilogy are available. The “Twilight” series has the most available copies.

Stephanie Tanner, senior education major, says she has no regrets reading any of the books, but she did hold out on reading “Fifty
Shades" until a friend suggested she read it.

"Personally, I choose to read books based on recommendations," Tanner says.

Alex Redick, sophomore education major, says she refuses to read "Fifty Shades of Grey" after her mom read it. If she read the book, she says all she would be able to think about is how her mom read some of those graphic scenes, too.

It's not just children or teens who are reading these popular books — even adults are indulging themselves in books targeted toward "Young Adults."

"People like 'Young Adult' books so much because it gets to the point quickly," Long says. "There's usually a dead body on the first page, and that gets readers to turn the pages quickly."

Even though the writing may not be the best in some of these popular books, Long says it's OK to read books purely for entertainment and joy. She hopes these books will act as a gateway to other books.

When it comes to great literature, Long says much of it still comes from England. She says it is hard to predict what the next trend in books will be, but she is constantly looking for new work from Africa and other countries.

If you like: "The Hunger Games," try "The Knife of Never Letting Go" by Patrick Ness

"Twilight," try "Dark Lover" by J.R. Ward

"50 Shades," try "The Reluctant Dom" by Tymber Dalton
Obama in Kent

On Sept. 26, the Kent State campus came alive to welcome the first president to come to Kent in 100 years. Over 6,000 students would hear President Obama speak in the M.A.C. Center that day, and we, the Daily Kent Stater staff, were determined to cover every aspect of his visit.

The day of his speech, I received special permission from White House Press staff to shoot alongside a pool of the president’s personal photographers, including the infamous Pete Souza. I watched from above as a wet, but ecstatic, crowd filtered into the M.A.C.

They were fired up and ready to go.

When it was time to take photos, the pool photographers were led to the area next to the podium, where we were literally feet away from the president.

Obama’s visit unified the newsroom staff and gave us a chance to shine as student journalists. Kent State student media continued coverage throughout the election, and I even had the opportunity to cover President Obama’s victory speech in Chicago. I’m proud of all my fellow staffers and grateful to have been able to do my part.

— Laura Fong
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”

2012 Associate Collegiate Press

Feature magazine
Best of Show, Second Place, Spring Issue 1
Rabab Al-Sharif, Editor

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

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