GRADUATION WITH HONORS

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The Senior Honors Thesis/Project is an independent research, creative or applied project completed under the direction of a faculty member. Students who work closely with faculty through the process have unique advantages in demonstrating their scholarly commitment.
Residents of Cleveland’s Cudell neighborhood hold protests and vigils following the death of 12-year-old Tamir Rice, who was shot by a police officer there in November 2014.
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THIS IS YOUR TIME

Learn more about your student government at kentstateusg.com
I was out of the country when I first heard the news that Darren Wilson, a white police officer, would not be indicted in the killing of Michael Brown, an unarmed black teen, in Ferguson, Missouri.

When I came back four days later, America had changed.

Ferguson, as the shooting, death, lack of indictment and resulting national unrest is now simply referred to as, was a rallying cry—not just of blacks—but of women, the LGBTQ community and others who had a word to say about their place in America's proclaimed melting pot.

With the help of our friends at Fusion and Uhuru magazines, The Burr is dedicating this issue to telling the stories of those who represent diversity.

In "Two Seconds in Cudell," editorial assistant Chrissy Suttles talks to residents of Cleveland's Cudell neighborhood, where 12-year-old Tamir Rice was shot and killed by an officer in November 2014.

In "Becoming Kyle," managing editor Marissa Barnhart profiles Kyle Dunn, a transgender student who is excited to see the physical transformations that make him look closer on the outside to how he always felt within. And in "Living in Transition," writer Kiana Duncan explores transgender students' thoughts on changes to gender-inclusive housing on campus.

In celebration of diversity and a changing world, we are proud to present the equality issue.
The Office of Global Education is seeking students to serve as international student mentors for its GLOBAL AMBASSADOR PROGRAM for May to December 2015.

Make a difference. Become an Ambassador.

Apply now to join the Global Ambassador Program and mentor new international students with adjusting to life in the United States at Kent State University: www.tiny.cc/ogegap

You will also earn a $200 book scholarship upon successful completion of the program.

Deadline: April 20, 2015
In the 45th anniversary of the May 4 shootings, the images are preserved in remembrance. One place they are archived is in the 1971 issue of The Chestnut Burr. In it, dozens of photos depict the students who protested the U.S. invasion of Cambodia and the members of the Ohio National Guard who opposed them.

Among these photos is John Filo’s Pulitzer Prize-winner of Mary Ann Vecchio kneeling, with arms spread wide and a look of anguish, next to the body of Jeffrey Miller. Below it is Howard Ruffner’s still of students holding hands in a circle around an injured person.

Aside from newspaper clippings in the back of the issue, there are few words about the incident in the yearbook.

It did publish a quote from a student who expressed despondency at not being able to get to class. She was interviewed in “The President’s Commission on Campus Unrest,” which Kent State emeritus professors Jerry M. Lewis and Thomas R. Hensley describe in “The May 4 Shootings At Kent State University: The Search For Historical Accuracy” as a thorough and accurate look into the incident.

“I just really couldn’t believe it,” the student said. “It was a very unreal feeling to walk up on your Front Campus and see these armed troops. You know, like you had been invaded, in a way.”

The Chestnut Burr was Kent State’s student-produced yearbook, published from 1914 to 1985. In 1986, students Laura Buterbaugh and Thomas Lewis transformed the yearbook into The Chestnut Burr Magazine, which was shortened to The Burr in 1988.
FINDING AN APARTMENT JUST GOT EASIER.

WWW.KENTCRIBS.COM
Lambda Theta Nu is the first Latina sorority to form on campus. Along with Latino fraternity Phi Iota Alpha and co-ed Latino fraternity Alpha Psi Lambda, it brings the National Association of Latino Fraternal Organization, a Greek council, to Kent State.

Dining Services works to accommodate students with food allergies. Among its initiatives are putting more allergen labels on menus and opening a new food station, Simple Serving, in the Eastway Café.

Brian Peters, an assistant professor in the College of Architecture and Environmental Design, creates the Solar Bytes Pavilion. Made out of 3-D printed, LED-lighted “bytes,” the pavilion harvests energy from the sun during the day, which it uses to glow at night.

Following the administration’s decision not to cancel classes despite sub-zero temperatures, students tweet negative comments at President Warren.

Arson is suspected in the torching of two campus ROTC vans in February. The Kent State Police Department and the Ohio State Fire Marshal are investigating, and the Blue Ribbon Arson Committee is offering a $5,000 reward to whoever provides information about the person or people responsible.

Researchers in the College of Education, Health and Human Services link high smartphone use and low GPA.
YOU COULD BE PART OF THE EXCITEMENT.

Earn real-world experience to help you land the position you want after school.

Kent State Student Media is an award-winning, student-run department. Our media units provide news, information and entertainment to the campus and surrounding Kent community.

Positions range from writing, photography, design, on-air talent, television crew, DJ's, sales and much more. Kent State Student Media is open to all majors and minors.

Student Media Units Include:

- The Kent Stater
- Kentwired.com
- KW App
- Kentcribs.com
- Black Squirrel Radio
- TV2

- The Burr Magazine
- A Magazine
- Luna Negra Magazine
- Fusion Magazine
- Uhuru Magazine
- Transitions Magazine

FOR INFORMATION ON HOW TO GET INVOLVED, CONTACT TAMIA CINDEA BONGIORNI AT TBONGIOR@KENT.EDU.
Class is starting...
Where r u?

I'm so LOST!!!

FIND YOUR WAY TO CLASS AND GET THOSE ATTENDANCE POINTS.
Don’t just wander around campus all semester.
Download the KentWired App for an interactive map of KSU’s campus.
Love is a weird thing. At least, I like to think it is.

I like to think I’ve always been somewhat of a romantic. I like the idea of old-fashioned romance where a guy chases after me, brings me flowers and isn’t afraid to meet my dad. It’s cheesy, but that’s me completely.

Our generation likes things done fast, unlike previous generations who believe in taking time to get things done. From how fast our Internet service performs to how quickly we can text back, our lives never slow down. I’ll admit: I, too, am a busybody who barely has time to think, let alone go on dates.

So, in this fast-paced life, who has time for the slow and steady pace of traditional dating? Well, millions of people of all ages are attempting to figure that out.

Their medium is Tinder.

Tinder is one of the most popular matchmaking smartphone applications on the market. Roughly 50 million people use Tinder every month, and 12 million matches are made daily, according to Business Insider.

In retrospect, the app’s slogan, “How People Meet,” really doesn’t do it much justice. For the younger audience, “How People Hook
Up," is more apt of a definition.

In real life, it’s just not that easy to filter out who you’re not interested in if they’re, in fact, interested in you. Not long ago I found myself at the bar making it very clear I was not interested in the (much) older gentleman who kept boldly stating how gorgeous I was. Yes, I entertained the compliment at first—I’m not that much of a bitch. It was when he kept talking after I went back to my friends that I had to move to the other side of the bar.

That’s how the makers of Tinder claim the app is “Like real life, but better,” replacing awkward turn-downs with a simple horizontal swipe. Found the creepy guy from your chemistry lab freshman year? Swipe left and you’ll never hear from him. See a guy you wouldn’t mind meeting for coffee next week? Swipe right and see if you match up. If he, too, swipes right on you, you’ll “match” and be able to message one another. It’s just that easy.

So with the normal dating world seeming to fail me (My last “suitor,” who I met in a traditional, real life setting and really seemed to like me, two-timed me. Sigh.), I did what any 21-year-old would do—I downloaded Tinder.

I’ll admit, I’ve had the app before. Usually in a fit of breaking it off with a guy, I’ll become Tinderella, if you will, and search for a new suitor in the most convenient way possible that doesn’t require me to change out of my sweats. The result is always the same: I hear a flood of bad pickup lines and more than a few sexual requests. Prince Charmings always have a way with words—but who doesn’t like that in a man?

I expected nothing less when it came to my most recent adventure. Nonetheless, I spent over an hour picking new pictures—a selfie or two because why not—and crafting a witty bio (nothing too complicated: my major and my liking toward a good pizza). Twenty to 25, I figured, was a nice span for age.

Soon enough my “inbox” was full of matches. I sifted through many questionable pictures—half-naked selfies, professional beer bongers, and my personal favorite and most popular photo, all the guys displaying various kinds of fish (one poor guy had a minnow). Although I don’t understand why Tinder bros think it’s attractive to show off their trout, I found myself talking to a few of them, some who were pretty decent guys.

It’s what most of them wanted to ask that surprised me.

“So where do you see yourself after college?” says E., 21.

“What’s your dream job?” asks D., 21.

“Can I catch you sometime?” says B., 22.

Yes, he was making a fishing reference.

I’m sorry, where are the real pickup lines and raunchy requests? Since when is Tinder a legitimate app to find anything other than a hookup?

I had guys who had to see me this weekend at the bar or tomorrow at my apartment, which never failed to make me uncomfortable. Since when is it acceptable to invite yourself to a stranger’s apartment to cuddle and watch Netflix? Some guys were patient, others definitely not. Does being a girl with ambition mean I want my love life to move that quickly?

But no matter how many guys I agreed to meet at the bar, none of them showed. I’d be out, give Guy of the Night my location, and he’d never respond. He seemed to care so much about my Cosmopolitan dream job aspirations but decided to stand me up in the end.

Then I met J., 23.

J. seemed to have it all together: He had goals and knew what he wanted in life. After his initial “We should watch Netflix and eat pizza together tomorrow” one liner, he slowed his game down and talked to me normally. We exchanged numbers after talking for about nine days through the app.

While waiting to meet up with D., 22, on a Saturday night I actually encountered J. in real life. He didn’t see me, which was good—it gave me time to scope him out. He seemed normal enough and he was attractive. But I couldn’t help but wonder: Why was he on Tinder?

J. took me to get coffee later that week. I ran late, per usual Heather. It was very T-shirt and jeans casual, which was a nice buffer to meeting someone you matched with on Tinder. Rest assured, I had a friend follow me to Tree City Coffee in case anything sketchy went down.

I’ll be honest: How was I supposed to take any of this seriously? I mean, how do you explain to someone you met this guy on Tinder? Our conversations consisted mainly of small talk: the music we liked, his job and my internship, little bits about our families and our hometowns. From my dating experience, I’ve found this small talk occurs out of nerves, but I wasn’t nervous this time. I just felt really, really weird about the whole thing, which lingered after his side-hug goodbye.

This leads me back to my gut feeling: Heather, the self-proclaimed romantic, could not muster a single butterfly for a guy she’s meeting for the first time.

As we continued texting, it became clearer that this was a typical Tinder “relationship.” In our short two and half weeks of talking he got more comfortable with bringing up more sexually explicit topics of conversation. We hung out again and with one kiss it was like the clock struck 12: This Tinderella turned back into a pumpkin.

Maybe it was because we met on a hook up app, or maybe it was because he would only give me side hugs, I might never know why I couldn’t feel any chemistry with J. With everything we seemed to have in common, and how successful he seemed, there was no magic to gush over.

Still, I’m trying to figure out if this is how our generation will continue to “date.” Despite the honesty I encountered using Tinder this time around, I just couldn’t get on the bandwagon. Tinder might work for other people when it comes to capturing butterflies or finding Prince Charming—if you want your Prince Charming to catch trout that is.

Until 20-somethings think of some new way to meet each other, I’ve decided that as an old-fashioned romantic I’ll spend my single, “pumpkin” days right where I belong: in my sweats and on my couch.
WE LOVE TO TELL STORIES

STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE

STORIES ABOUT OUR COMMUNITY

STORIES ABOUT WHAT'S NEXT

THIS IS WHERE OUR STORY BEGINS

A STORY THAT IS truly portage county
It's a Friday night, and 121 E. Crain Ave. in Kent hums with the sound of jam band funk from snow-dashed sidewalks. The band, Mr. Malarkey, spearheaded by bassist Trevor Fisher, is halfway through its set in the living room. Inside, walls are dotted with tri-color laser lights and dizzying tapestries. A couple sits on the kitchen counter in patent leather boots, as dozens jostle around them. Fisher's bass rumbles to the upstairs bathroom, where a duo of girls sit leg-up in the bathtub, a Hungry Howie's pizza box on their laps. People start to leave because there is no room in the foyer.

Days later, Fisher—better known to friends and confidantes as Fish—walks through his living room in a loosely-worn flannel and cargo shorts, stepping over effects pedals and tangled instrument cables. One of his cats, Zeus, jabs at a cord like a toy. Fisher kneels over and picks him up, and one can tell instantly he is a friend to all. The 21-year-old recaps the January show with a nostalgia that flicks his pencil mustache upward. “I felt like a fucking rockstar,” he says. “There were people raging in my house and literally screaming like it was a concert. And I was like the whole time, ‘I’m just in my house doing my thing.’”

His house, known by the moniker One Two One, has held the status as a DIY venue since last August, when Fisher moved in with fellow roommates Marcus Franklin and Brant Lally, men with hearts set on musical notoriety. Since then, local rock bands like Escape Pod, The Trunks and singer-songwriter Julia Kate Davis have played full-on living-room sets for hundreds. In his go-getting tone, Fisher lays out One Two One’s philosophy: “If you don’t have a place to play, then I’m going to create it.”

Fisher’s Do-It-Yourself routine isn’t anything out of the ordinary. Facebook has allowed any common joe to easily convert his or her basement or living room into a full-on venue, complete with merch tables and bottom-shelf beer. Fanboys and know-hows—mostly straight, white males in their twenties—flock to sites like DoDIY and Fanswell posing as booking agents pro bono. Without any high stages, a DIY show is a familial affair, a celebration ripe with the scent of underground musk, the sweet stench of bodies, all tied together by an unapologetically loud noise. It’s a scene for the people, by the people.

Yet in Kent, the spirit is only partially alive. Straight-up house venues—opposed to “total chancers” or spontaneous shows—are sparse. Housemates graduate and move out, leaving silence where decibels of guitar sounds once hummed. It’s this void, Fisher says, that he’s aiming to fill.
After meeting rap junkie Franklin—a musician going by the stage name BluUDolo—the two found synergy between alike aspirations. They both came from unfulfilled academic pasts and wanted personal growth: Fisher through jazzy funk, Franklin through hip-hop poetics. The musical idealists both took a year off of school, along with "nomadic tendencies," to furnish a hub in their own hands. Come October 2014, their living room stage was set. They aptly called the show "BluuFish."

With a trite, developing network of Kent connections, BluuFish opened on Oct. 2 with shaky legs. The congenial Fisher enlisted four groups, including "Queen of Openers" Davis, acoustic artist Hendermeimer and Chicago folk group The Wild Family, all without definite pay. With only a dozen to show up at first, Fisher was anxious. It wasn't until later in the night when local band Sales took over the main stage. "It was right when they started performing," Franklin says. "Right then and there I knew that we had to keep going along with these shows. It was that electrifying."

Fisher leapt up from his couch to agree. "I had people coming up to me afterwards," he says, "asking, 'When are you going to have the next one?'"

This was Fisher's spark. He took the following winter to draw up plans for what would be BluuFish's rolling sequel. He entered the guise of an entrepreneur, posted flyers on coffeehouse cork-boards, "covered his bases" by sweet-talking his neighbors. He even bolstered a four-man house-show staff, called them the Entertainment Department. The hype was so anticipated for BluuFish 2 that Fisher prepared two photographers to shoot the bands. Stage lighting was the final touch.

And all for a reason. DIY shows, agreed on by the programmers of unffable vibe that keeps adherents pouring through the door. "People, I think, are just more open to being themselves at a house show," Fisher says. "It's an infectious thing."

After a 25-minute drive west on Interstate 76, one of the most active scenes in Ohio operates in only a few hands. Its houses are DIY veterans, with esteem represented by the show flyers that lather their walls. With, on average, shows occurring at least twice a week, the Akron milieu undeniably has the upper hand among its neighbors. It even has its own Facebook page.

For the past four to five years, houses like The Fool House and It's A Kling Thing! have represented Akron Hardcore Punk to plug-in-and-play garage rock. At the newly-formed LICH (Low Impact Community House), folk punk duos strum after local poets read from chapbooks, as a chicken coop functions out back. These houses, on average, welcome hordes of people, many regulars apart of Akron circles, others not. Eddie Gancos, head of The Fool House, says his band's December record release party brought over one hundred.

Yet, notoriety doesn't come without some sort of establishment.

It's a Kling Thing!, now run by 24-year-old network engineer Tyler Brown, is a collaborative deal, often running with help of Gancos and company. During its seven-year operation, and once hosting Kent band Annabel, the Kling Street house—a block away from UA's Buchtel Field—has been carried across state boundaries by touring acts. Many have left their literal marks in its interior ("KLING OWNS MY SOUL," someone writes on the fireplace mantle). At a recent show in February, in a basement not much bigger than a dorm room, Rob Anders, lead singer of Rochester, N.Y., group Until We Are Ghosts, shared respect for the venue after ending a circle pit created minutes before. "All I heard about the place"—he pauses to take a breath—"was that it was a wild ride."

What comes along with a reputation, for Gancos, makes it a blessing and a curse. Being "on a mission" to promote local and touring bands, The Fool House manager, along with DIY partner Brown, doesn't have any for-profit agendas. All bands, they say, are given a place to sleep, spaghetti dinners to eat, coffee for breakfast. And for pay, Gancos—with side-slicked hair and bomber jacket—walks around with a donation mug among guests. On average, he collects $60 a night.

"It's not that hard of a thing to do that I think I deserve money," Brown says. "We do it for the bands mostly."

With its own ebbing-and-flowing music scene, lines of college housing and downtown hubs, the question ultimately follows: Why not Kent?

Multiple Akron DIY frequenters, including Brown, Gancos, and LICH owner Ryan Carpenter, say uniformly that their knowledge of any Kent DIY scene was near zilch (vice versa for Fisher and Franklin). This musical dominance throughout the years has turned Rubber City into a sort of DIY monopoly in the area. One of Brown's roommates, Kent State graduate student Jacob Church, moved to Akron partly for that reason.

"People, I think, are just more open to being themselves at a house show. It's an infectious thing."

An often-cited scapegoat, especially for Kent DIYers, is the difference in police response to noise complaints. While Kent charged 171 residents with unlawful noise in 2014, the Akron Police Department doesn't even bother recording complaints—especially being a city with 23 murders in 2014, according to the Akron Police Department. As far as city allowance, Kent noise ordinance code 509.12 allows police to shut down any unlawful noise, between the hours of 9 p.m. and 8 a.m., if audible past the property line. Akron code adds 80 feet.

"But we're still going to be reasonable," Lieutenant Jim Prusha of the Kent Police Department says. "We're not going to give a
person a ticket just to give them a ticket. We have plenty of other things to do."

While it’s nearly impossible to separate house-show violations from run-of-the-mill violations, houses in Kent have been dissuaded from the DIY status of their Akron counterparts. Andy Perkins, a senior business management major at Kent State, used to rent a house on Crain Avenue a stone’s throw away from Fisher’s One Two One, dubbed “The Crain Commonwealth.” After about 15 police visits, and more than $1,000 in fines, Perkins decided DIY status wasn’t feasible, and shows came to a halt. Despite the inevitable presence of the law, Gancos and Brown, as with newcomers Fisher and Franklin (who haven’t had any run-ins, yet), are unshaken by police shutdowns. Gancos says that, rather than Akron PD, he’s more concerned with houses crumbling due to city-led expansion. He says the University of Akron has had its eyes on the street was destined to become a parking lot.

As a matter of fact, one of the most prominent DIY venues in Akron history is still talked about at Kling! and Fool House gigs, As a matter of fact, one of the most prominent DIY venues in Akron history is still talked about at Kling! and Fool House gigs. After 26-year-old Kenneth Lee Averiett took over 21 N. Highland Ave. near the end of 2012, he aimed to remove its stigma its previous owners let slide. He got serious about venue status, about making the house “clean and livable.” He repainted its walls a goldenrod yellow, hung tapestries and bike tires. He updated its defunct Facebook page and entered it in the Akron Porch RoKr Association. Bands like The Hobs and Sway Cherry Sway were raised in its basement, others in its living area. Above all, Averiett held onto a mantra of respect while encouraging self-expression—all with, he says, “an air of professionalism.”

“I still wanted to keep it as informal as possible, because I wanted to be as inclusive as possible,” he says. “I didn’t want to make people feel they weren’t cool enough to be at a house show—especially at a place like The Blueberry House.”

For the nine months under Averiett’s leadership, the house endured its golden age. Averiett managed to maintain determination while dealing with occasional theft—his $600 DSLR and a custom-made road bike were both lifted—and once fighting a kleptomaniac “off with a hammer.” When The Trunks played their only gig at the house in 2013, singer Nathan Brahe recalled most of the night “a disaster” until Averiett was able to find a workable mic. “Despite that,” guitarist Kyle adds, “I had always wanted to play The Blueberry at that point, ever since I heard about it in way back in high school. It was cooler than anything else.” It’s now one of their most memorable shows.

In 2013, the city of Akron had the strip of homes on North Highland slated for demolition. The big blue house on the end of the street was destined to become a parking lot.

Before the protesters assembled, a rift formed between Averiett and Ray Nemer, the last owner of the strip of homes on Highland. Blueberry had slouched again toward “squat” status: vandalized walls, broken plumbing, barely-working electricity. Shortly before its razing, the city of Akron condemned the house “unlivable.” Come June, protests led to shouting matches, dividing the block, many using Blueberry and the “Big Ash Tree” in its backyard as symbols of defiance. Fighting aside, Averiett knew destruction was inevitable. “I made amends with the idea that I would eventually have to leave,” he says.

In a last-minute effort, on June 9, 2013, Averiett hosted his official last show on N. Highland Avenue. Nearly 150 people assembled in the name of Blueberry’s memory, community and counter-cultural liberty. A farewell salute to the house’s legacy was written in red on white brick walls like a prayer:

We played here, we danced here. We puked here. But we can still play, and dance and puke in the name of the Blueberry House.

Averiett and his roommates were evicted that July. The house was brought down a year later. Yet with the death of one of the most iconic DIY houses came new life. Ever since The Blueberry House’s reign, four new houses, Averiett says, have “risen” in its place—one recently, called The Shell House, is just a 10-minute walk from N. Highland Ave. Who knows how long it will last.

For proof that Kent had any notion of a lively DIY scene, all one has to do is look back a little more than two decades, to a humble pokemark of an art gallery that once claimed the address 257 N. Water St. Kent punks knew it as The Mantis.

Owned by a ragtag house painter named Sam Ludwig, the
two-faced Mantis—children's theater by day, punk cabaret by night—began in 1989, and quickly became the nucleus of Kent DIY. Garage bands like Kill The Hippies and Teeth of the Hydra were raised in its quarter, along with the offspring of live-music junkies. Mixtapes were passed around with joints and Black Label beer. A 2002 article in The Burr titled “Playing Mantis” labeled the venue as Kent’s home of “decadent destruction.”

Joe Dennis, former frontman for The Party of Helicopters, recalls the Mantis era of Kent DIY as if talking about a long lost friend. “There was something really intimate about our scene,” he says. “It felt like it was hidden. When I discovered it, I felt like I had walked in on a secret.”

Living in a house on Lake Street—apartly called The Lake Street House—Dennis, along with POH guitarist Jamie Stillman, covered the local circuit and held the band’s own gigs. Touring acts and venues alike used a San Francisco-published resource guide called “Book Your Own Fuckin’ Life” to schedule gigs, another of Dennis’ houses listed among them. Apart from Ludwig’s hub, this house shuffled through nominal generations as the “cabiny-feeling” C-3Po Rio House, The Harriet the Spy House, and the House of Couch, named because, Stillman says, “they had a lot of couches.”

As Ludwig rode on with Mantis management, The Party of Helicopters toured the U.S. and Europe’s DIY circuits, booked shows sporadically by pay phone, crossing fingers venues existed upon arrival. With 30 DIY tours in sum, the Helicopters covered the entire pallet: an abandoned bomb shelter, a 14-year-old girl’s birthday party, a Bonanza Steakhouse, where, Stillman says, they “had to move a salad bar to make room.” If it had walls and electrical outlets, POH had it marked. They weren’t signed until 2002—but it didn’t matter. “To us, every show that we played was awesome,” Stillman says.

As The Party of Helicopters were out touring, back in Kent, things were rolling. A 15-year-old student at Firestone High School was playing his first set of shows at the Mantis. He collected Party of Helicopter albums, hung around with the likes of Stillman and older Kent punks.

"I HAD ALWAYS WANTED TO PLAY THE BLUEBERRY AT THAT POINT, EVER SINCE I HEARD ABOUT IT WAY BACK IN HIGH SCHOOL. IT WAS COOLER THAN ANYTHING ELSE."

This kid, Patrick Carney, is now 34 and in one of the most successful rock bands of the century. In a 2013 interview done by Kent historian Jason Prufer, the drummer for The Black Keys admits his admiration for his roots in Tree City.

“Back at the time there was nothing like Kent in Akron all,” Carney said. “Because Kent is a smaller town more geared towards students, it’s always been a place that’s kind of inherently cooler than Akron. That’s how we viewed it back then.”

Come 2002, when Carney was plotting out his first tour with guitarist Dan Auerbach, he looked to a mentor to drive The Black Keys’ van to Seattle after the release of “The Big Come Up.” Tired from stagnation and reasonably broke, Stillman accepted. The Party of Helicopters disbanded soon after.

With its penchant for anarchy, Ludwig moved his Mantis shakily into a new era. Things were changing. Social media were replacing “BYOFL” and spontaneity as DIY booking agents. Houses were vacated, others demolished. In March 2003, after a month-long dispute with Kent authorities, the Mantis closed its doors for good, marking the end of an era.

“Kent kind of lost that part of its identity at that time,” Dennis says. “People moved away. Scenes were slightly less clique-y and also less cohesive. Bands were promoting on Myspace. It was just a weird time.”

Both Stillman and Dennis were “burned out” anyway, after a ten-year stint as DIY kings. When Stillman had a kid with his then soon-to-be wife, Dennis knew any chance at a POH reunion was rare. Still, their dues had been paid.

In the meantime, a previously dry, homegrown music scene was brewing in the county over. Art galleries were starting to catch on, along with UA students renting out two-story houses. Stillman claims Carney’s band had something to do with it.

“I still wonder about that to this day,” he says.
Despite the subzero temperatures, ice-slicked roads and byways, Averiett packed the top floor of his new duplex on Oakdale Avenue for a recent Valentine’s Day show. Records line the walls above bronze Buddhas and string lights, reminding one of the house on Highland. Friends shake Averiett’s hand like he’s their idol. Gancos strums on an acoustic Ibanez on the couch, while girls in neapolitan hair gawk from the audience. After lo-fi group Pizza Ghost begins playing electric, an excitable guest yells into Averiett’s right ear: “I don’t know how you still do it, man! I don’t know how you do it!”

Someone mentions the comment to Averiett. He grins from under black-framed glasses. It’s clear by the look on his face that he’s heard it all before.

“It is what it is,” he says.

Both Gancos and Brown—who were both present for the first time at an Averiett show—contemplated booking one of the night’s bands at one of their houses. They’ll decide which house when the time comes.

As Fisher and Franklin plan their next big night at One Two One, the city of Kent waits. Fisher first wants to grow his band, play house gigs in nearby places (one in Miami, Ohio, recently). He wants to experience Akron’s scene, meet Averiett and the DIY crew and for One Two One to be Kent’s “Blueberry House.” He’s even planning a “Best of Kent” concert this April, he says, before it’s too late. Once Fisher’s lease ends, the house on E. Crain Avenue will be up for sale. But he, of course, isn’t worried. He’ll move onto another.

“People might not remember who Fish is, they might not remember who Bluu is,” he says. “But at least they’ll remember the house.”

"BECAUSE KENT IS A SMALLER TOWN MORE GEARED TOWARDS STUDENTS, IT'S ALWAYS BEEN A PLACE THAT'S KIND OF INHERENTLY COOLER THAN AKRON."
t was college night at the ice rink, and Kent State sophomore Haley Keding was hand-in-hand and attempting figure skating tricks with Malone University freshman Jon Farrell. Earlier that day, the pair had explored Canton, Ohio, observing art and stopping by the McKinley Monument. Farrell was shaking, due to both the frigid temperatures and his inward thoughts.

What may seem like a typical college date night was actually something much more significant: a marriage proposal. Farrell asked Keding to be his wife Oct. 31, 2014.

Farrell and Keding are part of the 26 percent of Millennials vowing to spend their life together—a minority compared to the larger percentages of Generation X, Baby Boomers and the Silent Generation, according to Pew Research Center. Manfred van Dulmen, a Kent State psychology professor who specializes in young adult relationships, says marriage is an “uncommon trajectory” on the collegiate path.

The pair, however, have purpose behind their commitment: their decision is rooted in faith. Farrell and Keding met each other at Medina High School, where they were both members of the marching band. The couple dated for two and a half years beginning when Keding was a sophomore and Farrell a junior. Farrell attended Kent State for a school year before breaking up with Keding and leaving the university. In turn, he experienced a downward spiral that would radically redirect the course of his life.

"I became super depressed, I was addicted to drugs, I was a reckless driver," Farrell says. "In that, God started working. A pastor took me in and showed me who Jesus was. After a while, I thought, 'I don't wanna be doing this on my own.'"

Through Kent State’s H2O Church, Keding attended a leadership training program in Colorado where she intended to focus on strengthening her faith.

"I idolized Jon. I told him, 'I really enjoyed our relationship, but I'm going to focus on my faith,'" Keding says. Eventually, Farrell began sending her text messages and pictures with silly faces alongside the caption “Please talk to me.” These miniatures persuaded Keding to open up again. She thought she could share what she had been learning.

Because of Keding’s involvement with H2O church, her and Farrell’s resilience and drive to say “I do” has been heavily influenced by the members of the congregation. However, even with this large community, the two are still part of a minority.

Marie Kunze, a senior English major, and alumnus Mark Cottrill have been engaged since November 29, 2013. Cottrill asked Kunze that night if they could spend some time together decorating for Christmas, their favorite holiday. He lit several candles and put Christmas music on as background noise. After some time, Cottrill changed the soundtrack and selected their song: “If It’s Love” by Train. Suddenly, he presented Kunze with an ornament flaunting a ring on top of it, posing the question, “How
about you put this one up?” The proposal was sealed with a coincidental fireworks display outside Cottrill’s apartment window. “We were celebrating, crying and kissing,” Kunze says.

Kunze says she looks to break the stereotype—what she calls the “statistics and BS”—that because she and Cottrill are young, their marriage is bound to fail. Youth, however, is one of the main sources of fuel for the couple, who are driven by their love’s potential. “It’s incredibly exciting. We have the rest of forever together,” Kunze says. “We have time to continue to grow.”

While both couples believe their marriage is meant to happen, Kunze and Cottrill attribute their pairing to destiny. “Mark promised my dad that he would wait. I’m glad we waited. I’m a big believer in fate rather than faith,” Kunze says.

Instead, she credits her happiness to Cottrill. “It’s calming to have him as a constant. In this world, there are so many scary things. It’s so nice to have something positive. He really is my anchor and my foundation,” she says.

Farrell continues to keep his eyes fixed on what matters most to him. “Following God is my main role,” Farrell says. “Lots of people want to focus on schooling and studies. My grades and schooling are not who I am. That was relieving enough to maintain a relationship in college.”

However, undeniable obligations are still bound to creep up with Farrell and Keding. With the influx of a job, school, friends, extracurricular activities and family, time management is essential. “I need to block out time and make sure it’s worth it with marriage as the number one priority,” Keding says. Sometimes that means difficult choices, all the way from the minor details to the big-picture items.

“Are we going to sacrifice credit hours?” Keding says.

Although the two carve out time for each other when they are able, it doesn’t change the fact that they attend universities more than 30 miles away from each other. Van Dulmen says long distance relationships require balancing both the needs of the relationship and the individual. While a couple should use the partnership for support, they should also, by default, maintain their unique identity.

Distance fails to faze Keding and Farrell, though. In fact, the pair revels in doing things that are outside the norm. “The American way is to go to college, get a job and get married. It isn’t necessarily bad,” Keding says.

Farrell also mentioned that there seems to be a pattern that Americans follow when mapping out the course of their lives.

“They focus on getting the highest-paying job, getting the nicest things,” he says. “Once the kids get out of the house, they go on trips, retire, etcetera.”

It can be difficult to balance both a college education and other pursuits, which van Dulmen attributes to an inability to multitask. Work and education often integrate their way into a relationship, and people have a tough time committing to each other.

According to “Knot Yet: The Benefits and Cost of Delayed Marriage in America,” being legally committed at a young age poses several disadvantages: lack of occupantional stability, exploration time and living certainty.

Some Kent State students believe in playing now and settling later. “[Marriage in college] kind of holds you back,” says Alexis Gissentaner, senior fashion merchandising major. “You’re not able to meet new people or experience new things. You’re staying stuck.”

Other students take a more lenient stance on the matter. “A lot of people might think this age is too young, but it’s not up to anyone else. It’s not high school. We’re pretty much adults,” says Tyler Sanders, junior computer science major.

Farrell and Keding are confident in their philosophy and plan to wed in the summer of 2016, even with the rising tension from family. Keding’s parents believe their daughter and her fiancé lack the relationship experience and money to have a successful marriage. Still, Farell and Keding are unmoved.

“We want to do what Christ wants, not what the world wants,” Keding says.

The couple would rather spend time with each other and be financially lacking than have money and be bogged down with work, Keding says. She and Farrell are both currently working part-time jobs; Keding interns for Flash Communications, and Farrell has a job at Panera Bread and was just hired at Aladdin’s Eatery as a server.

Fiscal responsibility has crept up on Kunze and Cottrill as well. Originally, the couple wanted to wait until after graduation to shell out the money for their wedding. They received opposition to marriage while in school, typically from friends and peers posing the question, “How are you going to afford it?” Kunze would answer with, “It’s called being an adult.” Since then, the pair has also decided on a summer 2016 wedding, for them, at Todaros in Akron, Ohio.

Essentially, a couple’s maturity level determines how successful they will be, van Dulmen says.

“If it is supportive, that’s beneficial,” he says. “If it’s abusive, that can have
detrimental consequences. It depends on the qualities and the goals of the relationship."

Because of these setbacks, marriage in college is becoming more rare. The phenomenon of "delayed marriage" experienced a steady incline between 1970 and 2011; the average age has jumped from 21 for women and 23 for men in the seventies to 27 for women and 29 for men, according to "Knot Yet."

However, length of time together also seems to be a determining factor. The Kent State University Department of Psychological Sciences holds studies of student couples. The researchers found that the dissolution rate is fairly low for relationships lasting between a year and 18 months. Most pairs that partake in the study are "relatively stable" van Dulmen says, meaning they seem to have a good handle on the goals they want to reach and the ideals they want to set.

For a couple that feels this stability, acknowledging the possibility that they could be part of a statistic is a nerve-wracking concept. However, Kunze refuses to let that or her surroundings shake her.

“No matter what your family, friends or Buzzfeed says, this is real," she says. “There’s a reason for everything, and I have no regrets.”

Farrell and Keding emphasized the quasi-set of rules they went by when considering their relationship. “Find a rock solid couple that’s been together for 20 to 50 years," Farrell says. “Surround yourself with these people and see what they’ve been doing. Try to mimic them in their relationship.”

Keding attributes her wisdom to Eva Frank, the wife of H2O church pastor Chad Frank. “You have to have five things you’re not going to budge on," Keding says. “Compare who you’re dating to those things.”

With all this in mind, Farrell and Keding are looking forward to commencing their future at Rivercrest Farm in Zorr, Ohio. They plan to hold the service in a field and then move the reception to a barn. As for the rest of the wedding, it’s still in its early stages.

After gliding on the ice for some time, Farrell decided it was time to pop the question. He recruited the ice arena staff to turn the music off and dim the lights so Keding could hear his proposal. Keding admits she was taken aback by the sudden change in Farrell’s demeanor.

“There’s a certain way that he holds my hands when he’s nervous," she says. “He got into proposal speech mode, and I just thought, ‘Are you serious?!’ I started putting all the pieces together, and I was mind-blown.” As Farrell stood up, staff members who had helped orchestrate the proposal revealed themselves. The crowd populating the periphery of the arena stood up and began cheering, celebrating Keding’s response of, “Yes.”

"HE GOT INTO PROPOSAL SPEECH MODE, AND I JUST THOUGHT, 'ARE YOU SERIOUS!' "

BOTTOM LEFT: At home in Medina, Haley Keding and her sister, Janine, look through a David's Bridal catalog for wedding dress inspiration. Keding has yet to find her wedding dress, but she has a style in mind.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Haley Keding looks through a rack of wedding dresses at David’s Bridal. Some of her friends, her mom and her soon to be sister-in-law and mother-in-law went with her to help narrow down her options.
Proud to call their campus home, many Kent State students pursue careers in areas they truly love. Two of these students are Robin Bonatesta, a senior computer science and fashion merchandising double major, and Paul Dilyard, a senior digital sciences major. Both are leaders of the student organization Hacksu, where they teach students about web and mobile technology. They attribute their success and self-discovery in part to their college years. “College isn't something where you just get a degree and then you go work,” Bonatesta says. “You can actually build a life for yourself.”
Dilyard hopes to do back-end web development for a large company after he graduates. "I got into programming when I was in high school," he says. "I had a project idea—I don't remember what it is, but I made it once and I was like, 'Oh, that sucks.' So I made it again differently and then did it again differently—and made it better each time."
A string of incidents—including the documented police chokehold of Eric Garner, a black man, in Staten Island, N.Y., in July 2014, and the shooting of three Muslims in Chapel Hill, N.C., in February—is furthering public dissent about how marginalized groups are still being pushed into the margins, and at deadly costs. In response, people are forming protests, holding vigils and taking to Twitter with hashtags such as #BlackLivesMatter and #MuslimLivesMatter. In March, the Justice Department reported widespread racial bias within the Ferguson, Mo., police department.

In 2013, black males in the United States were eight times more likely to be killed with a firearm by police and federal law officials than white males, despite the fact that the population size of the former is nearly a sixth the size of the latter, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Discrimination extends beyond race and religion and affects other diverse populations, such as the LGBTQ community.

On January 4, another fatal incident took place, this time in Kings Mills, Ohio. Leelah Alcorn, a 17-year-old transgender girl, committed suicide after writing on her Tumblr page that she would never be accepted because of her gender. After her death, people condemned her parents’ use of conversion therapy.

Kent State students and faculty note that people overcome adversity every day through actions such as continuing their education, stepping into leadership roles and embracing their background and beliefs. But the responsibility, they say, also falls on others to be more accepting.

The following pages will outline cases of misunderstanding with regard to diversity and highlight the triumphs of a few of those who are working to fight discrimination.
crowd gathers around a once unremarkable concrete picnic table, seeking respite from frigid temperatures under a gazebo on Cleveland’s West Side. At the heart of the table, pressed against stuffed animals, candles and brown-skinned angel statues, is a black piece of paper enclosed in a charcoal frame. Written on it is an excerpt from Esperanza Spalding’s song “Black Gold.”

"Hold your head as high as you can High enough to see who you are, little man Life sometimes is cold and cruel Baby, no one else will tell you so remember that You are Black Gold."

The picnic table sits adjacent to the Cudell Recreation Center, less than a foot from where 12-year-old Tamir Rice was shot and killed by a Cleveland Police officer on Nov. 22, 2014. Dispatch alerted officers someone was “pulling a gun in and out of his pants and pointing it at people.” What the dispatcher hadn’t relayed to responding officers is that the caller said it was “probably fake” and that the boy was most likely a juvenile. When Rice didn’t put his hands up at police request, officer Timothy Loehmann fired two shots in two seconds, fatally striking Rice in the torso. Rice had been carrying an airsoft gun. His death was ruled a homicide by the Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner.

Less than two months after Rice’s shooting, on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, more than 100 community members reflect on the incident that tossed Cleveland into the national spotlight.

The four-mile march is organized, in part, by Patrick Mahoney, a Lakewood resident and recent veteran of the 2nd Marine Division.

Mahoney, sporting a black beret and peacoat, says he immediately felt a kinship with Rice and his family following the shooting. He tells stories about growing up in a Cleveland suburb, playing “army” with his brothers.

“I was stopped by the police [for] carrying toy guns,” he says. “They just told me,
‘Don’t do that,’ and I think, ‘What if I didn’t live in the suburbs? Would I still be here today?’ Tamir Rice isn’t here today and he’s no more guilty of a crime than I was.”

In the wake of Staten Island resident Eric Garner, who died in a police chokehold, and 18-year-old Michael Brown, shot six times in Ferguson, Mo., by police, motives and policies of police departments around the U.S. have been sternly criticised for using excessive force, the Cleveland Police Department being no exception. Moreover, local media’s portrayal of Cudell put the community on defense, with residents publicly and privately condemning the depiction of their home.

Before the march begins, Mahoney asks for a moment of silence for “Tamir, Eric, Trayvon, etc.” As heads fall in solidarity, a brawny gust of wind strikes a worn, marigold stuffed dog and it falls into a puddle of ice and mud. No one seems to notice.

“We’re on the right side of history,” a buoyant, anonymous man shouts above the crowd. “Martin Luther King Jr. marched in the streets.”

Then they turn right on West Boulevard, four miles from their destination: Public Square.

More than Meets the Eye

The City of Cleveland is composed of 36 neighborhoods, divided in half geographically by the Cuyahoga River. More than 53 percent of its 390,000 residents are black, many of whom traditionally lived on the city’s East Side because of legal, and later, social segregation. Once Cleveland became the first U.S. city to elect a black mayor, Carl Stokes, in 1969, societal norms began unravelling.

One of the most ethnically diverse neighborhoods in Cleveland is known as Cudell. South of Edgewater and north of West Boulevard, Cudell lies two miles off the banks of Lake Erie. It includes an area of about 1.3 square miles between W. 98th and W. 100th streets and Detroit and Cudell avenues. Cudell’s demographics don’t resemble those of Cleveland as a whole, with 48 percent of its residents being white in 2010 and 34 percent being black. Nine percent, Cudell’s third largest demographic, are listed as “other,” and 5 percent are “two or more” races, according to Census data.

In the ’70s, the working class town was awash with Irish, Polish, Armenian, Italian and Hungarian Americans. Today, its ethnic pie chart looks like what designers and art students refer to as a color wheel, where all colors are complementary.

Each block of Cudell offers its own perspective: Some are laced with vacant portico-style, two-story houses residents warn have the potential to become “the newest collection of whorehouses.” Others are mid-20th century duplexes with columns and outward-facing verandas, steep sloping yards and trees lining the roadway. Parts of West Boulevard fit the latter description perfectly and many in this part of town are considered wealthier.

“But most of us are stuck right in the middle,” says Susan Zimmerman, who’s lived within walking distance of the Cudell Recreation Center since 1985. “That’s part of the beauty and diversity of my neighborhood. We have a mix of incomes as well as a mix of cultures.”

Zimmerman is an adjunct journalism instructor at Kent State and Cuyahoga Community College and has taught at Lakeland Community College. She has a professorial look to her, with long gray and white hair tumbling down her back and thin glasses sitting on the edge of her nose. Retired ’70s feminist comes to mind when addressing her wardrobe.

Growing up in Manchester (now New Franklin), Ohio, she made the conscious decision to move to Cleveland in 1979. She sought relief from what she says were tremendously prejudiced parents, devouring media coverage of civil rights activity around the country, most notably marches led by The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. It became a cause deeply embedded within her. Having covered the anti-war protests at Kent State for the Daily Kent Stater, she says she’s kept her distance from recent marches for personal reasons.

“The last time I went to a demonstration, four people were killed,” she says.

The complexity of Cudell is fully realized in Zimmerman’s assessment. She admits sometimes being uncomfortable in particular areas because, she says, residents can fall victim to urban crime. Many residents on her block have experienced a break-in, or worse, she says.

Her most frightening experience in Cudell happened when her neighbor was attacked in front of a vacant home on their street.

Her neighbor is Ron Phillips-Bey, a notably
tall, wiry black man in his 60s who lives four doors down. Laugh lines contouring his face and short gray hair receding above his forehead, he has a subtle fearlessness about him—a straightforward ease. He was drafted as a Marine during the Vietnam War in 1969, serving two years. He performed an array of jobs during his years of service, into which he says he adamantly tried to avoid being drafted.

"WE'RE ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF HISTORY. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. MARCHED IN THE STREETS."

“One of my buddies told me if you take women’s birth control pills, that it would come up that you have too many female hormones and they’d think you’re gay,” he says, followed by his booming trademark laugh. “That didn’t work.”

He recounts the attack in vivid detail. Having used the vacant house next door as a parking lot for some time, he pulled in with his son and wife after returning from a movie. The family spotted two suspicious-looking young men about to enter the home and confronted them.

“I asked them what they were doing, one of the guys said, ‘I’m gonna deaden him,’ and I say, ‘Oh, maybe I better tone it down a bit because this guy may have a pistol,’” Ron says.

As he backed off, one of the men began “sucker-punching” him until he was unconscious on the concrete, after trying to defend himself for several minutes using martial arts training.

“They knocked me completely down on the ground and then began kicking me in the head with what were probably metal boots,” he says.

His son, Dahren Phillips-Bey, then a junior in high school, called 911 at the request of his mother.

“I wanted to jump in, but my mom was screaming at me to back up and go get some help,” Dahren says, in the same alarmingly baritone voice as his father. “That’s good advice I guess.”

After regaining consciousness, Ron began to chase the assailants, who fled after a neighbor came outside carrying a shovel, his face swollen and bloodied until police arrived.

They never found the suspects. It was Martin Luther King Jr. Day. While Zimmerman was left frightened following the attack, both Dahren and Ron were angry.

“I wanted to put my fist down their throat,” Ron chuckles. “I said for all the progress we’re supposed to be making for Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday, I go out here trying to protect my neighbor, and I get my ass kicked. Yeah, that’s not progress.”

The attack, if anything, has strengthened Ron’s resolve to protect Cudell from going the way of neighborhoods such as Central, Cleveland, which is by and large considered one of the most dangerous, impoverished neighborhoods in not only Cleveland but the entire country. With a median household income of less than $9,000 in 2000 and more than 90 percent of its population being black, Central is neither diverse nor economically balanced.

While Cudell offers an array of incomes, the neighborhood is no stranger to economic hardship. In 2010, the median income was less than $22,000, about $6,000 less than Cleveland’s during the same year and less than half the national rate of $49,445. The poverty rate was 39 percent during a time when the national rate was 15.1 percent.

Ron moved to Cudell after marrying his wife “about 23 or so years ago,” he says. His aging memory often leaves room for imagination. Growing up on 51st and Woodland, what he says was an equally diverse area, was his inspiration for moving to Cudell.

“It helped, because I didn’t grow up in a segregated neighborhood,” he says. “This area reminded me of when I was a kid. Mixed neighborhood. When I was on 51st there were people of all races and, like here, it’s people of all races. It’s a beautiful blend of people.”

A Happy Medium

The Cleveland Plain Dealer published a heavily scrutinized article three days after Rice’s shooting, which claimed Cudell is “marred by violence, according to police records and interviews with people who live in the vicinity.”

However, Cleveland’s first district—Cudell’s district—accounted for the smallest fraction of violent crime in the city during 2014, despite it being the city’s second largest of five districts, according to crime statistics from the Cleveland Division of Police.

District 1, which includes Cudell and six other westside neighborhoods, has a population of more than 96,000, only 10,000 less than Cleveland’s largest district. Last year, only 8 percent of citywide homicides, and 17 percent of rapes took place within district lines.

Theft and burglary accounted for the most crime in the district, with 18 percent of citywide theft and 20 percent of burglary.
"I would not call it a violent neighborhood, but I will say that there have been instances of violent crime in that neighborhood as there have been in many neighborhoods in the city," says Sgt. Ali Pillow, public information officer for the Cleveland Division of Police.

Christopher Quinn, vice president of content at Northeast Ohio Media Group, which works in conjunction with The Plain Dealer, declined an interview to discuss the article, but the organization has published follow-up articles defending its stance, while remaining firm in the belief that Rice's shooting was a universal tragedy.

"I don't agree with the criticism, as I believe our duty is to illuminate," Quinn writes in the Nov. 27, 2014, piece titled "Our stories on Tamir Rice are the latest in the Northeast Ohio Media Group's examination of how Cleveland police use force."

Zimmerman is one of a few residents of Cudell who publicly repudiated the paper's assessment in an op-ed submitted to cleveland.com. Her article, titled "Come Take a Walk on My Block," was published Dec. 19. In it, she expresses the admiration she has for her neighbors.

"My neighbors are great," the article reads. "A dozen of us have lived here 20 years or more. People have raised kids here; one family has five children younger than 10. We look out for each other; in nice weather, we hang out on each other's porches and gather in backyards for special events. Yes, we actually drop in to borrow a cup of sugar or laundry detergent."

Zimmerman does not, however, believe the Plain Dealer's assessment was an inaccurate description, just an incomplete one.

"The Plain Dealer portrayed our neighborhood as gang- and crime-infested," she says. "I never had any problems with anybody," he says. "Everyone seemed friendly. No one bothered me. I guess I felt safe with the good people in our neighborhood."

Protesters make their way down Detroit Ave., a select few carry sizable Pan-African flags, signifying universal civil rights and black liberation. The group is led by powerful, confident-looking members of the Black Man Army, a small, but vocal grassroots organization in Cleveland that supports community-based movements, primarily those of blacks.

Now, they're in the middle of the road loudly chanting in unison what sometimes resembles beat poetry.

"Tell me what democracy looks like!" "This is what democracy looks like!" they shout, in call-and-response form.

A woman leads the group with a megaphone as residents on the sidelines peer out their windows and doors, offering a curious glance or thumbs up. A vacant police car sits

"THEY DROVE UP INTO CUDELL, INTO THE GAZEBO, LIKE THEY WERE GESTAPOS AND DIDN'T EVEN TAKE FULL ASSESSMENT OF WHAT WAS HAPPENING."

"I wouldn't say my particular area is infested, but I know some of my neighbors who live on different streets have had those problems."

Dahren Phillips-Bey, a junior history major at the University of Akron who grew up in Cudell, says some of his more evocative memories come from learning to swim and play baseball at the Cudell Recreation Center, which he says was at the center of his summertime routine growing up. Even after witnessing his father's attack and hearing countless rumors of violence in the area, he never felt frightened as an adolescent because, he says, he knew his neighbors would have his back.
down the road with its lights flashing.

"Back up, back up, we want freedom, freedom. All these racist ass cops, we don't need 'em, need 'em."

Oncoming drivers quickly realize the pending traffic jam, and almost instinctively, cars begin to whirl down side streets in hordes. Some sit idly by and honk at the demonstration. It's unclear whether they're doing it in accordance or hostility.

Only stopping to momentarily block intersections, demonstrators inch closer to the Veterans Memorial Bridge.

Two and a half miles down Detroit Avenue, demonstrators take quiet note of the burgeoning police presence around them. Alternating red and blue lights can be seen conspicuously ahead, arms loop and tighten as unsettled whispers bloom. "Link up or they'll start snagging people from the back," the march's caboose shouts, semi-successfully.

Veterans Memorial Bridge, also known as The Detroit–Superior Bridge, can be seen on the horizon. Protesters ready themselves to make the 949-meter trek across the Cuyahoga River, officially crossing into the city's east side.

At the bridge's edge, tensions mount and intonations pierce the air in what seems like anticipation. Reams of Cleveland police cars cut off the bridge's westbound lane, a man in a blue cap gives careful instructions.

The westbound lane is off limits and anyone who crosses over the burly yellow line will be arrested on site.

"IS this what Democracy looks like?" they shout defiantly as officers call for backup.

**Sea of Troubles**

On Oct. 20th, 2014, Ron Phillips-Bey and at least three of his neighbors on West Boulevard dialed 911 in response to what he says was a several-minute-long domestic assault taking place on his street around noon—broad daylight.

"He beat the girl from down this way to up that way," he says, pointing from one end of his street to the other. "He snatched her purse and threw her down several times." Instead of sending a car, the dispatcher repeatedly asked Phillips-Bey if the assailant knew the victim.

"I'm not gonna get out in the middle of it and ask if they know each other," he says. "I was in worse shape than I'm in now, on two canes."

Even after the couple fled, no car had arrived to even file a report with the witnesses. The only trace of the incident was calls the department received.

When asked about police response time, Ron struggles to speak, often stuttering. "I was gonna start cussin'," he laughs, and spends a few more moments trying to articulate his thoughts aptly. He says he has close friends in the Cleveland police; it's dispatchers he's had the most complications with over the years.

"The dispatchers are not sensitive enough and that's what caused that kid up there to be shot. They drove up into Cudell, into the Gazebo, like they were gestapos and didn't even take full assessment of what was happening," he says.

The average response time from when a call is dispatched until when an officer arrives is eight minutes in Cudell, Pillow says.

Beth Mandl had been working as a dispatcher for the Cleveland Police Department about four years when she was tasked with relaying a Category 1 at the Cudell Recreation Center to responding officers. According to police use of force policy, a Category 1 is a deadly active, or anyone "presenting a deadly threat with a firearm, edged weapon, deadly ordinance, Taser/Conducted Electrical Weapon, or any other instrument or substance capable of causing death or serious physical injury." This, according to the policy, justifies using deadly force at the discretion of the officer involved.

"Simply carrying a gun might not be a crime and might not generate a response from an officer. But all encounters with someone carrying a weapon are done with caution," Pillow says.

Mandl was informed the gun was probably fake, but her decision not to relay this information to officers was defended by...
police spokespeople because, as Cleveland Police Patrolmen’s Association president at the time, Jeffrey Follmer, said following the shooting, “We have to assume every gun is real. When we don’t, that’s the day we don’t go home.”

Both Mandl and Timothy Loehmann, the officer who shot Rice, had questionable backgrounds before arriving in Cleveland. Mandl was fired from her previous job as a dispatcher for Case Western Reserve University’s police department, most likely following a concealed carry violation and subsequent arrest in 2008. Loehmann was in the process of being fired by the Independence Police Department when he resigned in December 2012. Official memos stated he was “distracted and weepy” during weapons training and was repeatedly disciplined for being inattentive and emotionally unstable. He was hired as a Cleveland police officer less than two years later.

Because the most recent hiring policy does not require department officials to review previous employers’ personnel files, both Mandl and Loehmann were hired with arguable ease. Pillow says the department is now working to amend those policies in order to set more rigid guidelines.

Although Cleveland police policy explicitly states “a respect for human life shall guide members in the use of force,” U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder and the Justice Department called the city to adopt swift, widespread reform in the department Use of Force policies. The investigation revealed a longstanding use of excessive force, lack of accountability and ineffective policies throughout the department—from falsifying police reports to unnecessary brutality—including violating citizens’ constitutional rights.

“The current pattern of constitutional violations is even more troubling because we identified many of these structural deficiencies more than ten years ago during our previous investigation of CPD’s use of force,” the 58-page review reads.

The most striking of the report’s findings: Officers often fired their guns at those not posing imminent danger and are unlikely to be challenged about it.

Despite these findings, on February 27, city officials’ response to the 71-page lawsuit filed by the Rice family following the shooting indicated they will argue Rice’s death and subsequent suffering the family endured was “directly and proximately caused by their own acts, not this Defendant (Loehmann).” Not until the Cuyahoga County Sheriff’s Office’s investigation into Rice’s death is complete will these charges possibly be addressed in court. The Rice family, alongside the Cleveland Police Department, declined to comment on these recent developments.

Zimmerman says she’s had mostly positive experiences with the Cleveland PD, but the Cleveland veteran offers some suggestions she believes would mend the tensions between citizens and enforcement, such as community policing and the use of rubber bullets. Overall, though, she wants to see healing in her home.

“I hope that this is bringing our community together because the violent death of a child diminishes all of us,” she says. “I like to imagine most of my neighbors are in sympathy with the family and friends of Tamir and that we all will work together to avoid such issues in the future.”

Regardless of how Cudell residents feel about police, everyone seems to agree this particular altercation should’ve never happened.

“When you’re 12 years old, you do some foolish stuff,” Ron says. “I did some very foolish shit when I was 12. The policeman didn’t get a chance to stop and see if it was a kid and see if it was a toy gun. We’ll never know [what he was doing with the gun] because the way he was shot.”

At least seven police cruisers impede the westbound lane of the Veterans Memorial Bridge as rallyers unbraided to squeeze through the mass of metal and rubber. Clearly spotting an opportunity to intervene, police step out in droves to, it seems, reason with the now scattered, disorganized horde before taking disciplinary action. The better part of the demonstration concedes and continues down the bridge in the eastbound lane.

“We have to get people off this bridge now,” someone shouts as the crowd accelerates.

A few feet behind, cries of “They’ve got Michael!” erupt and they come to a halt. Not everyone followed police instruc-

“I HOPE THAT THIS IS BRINGING OUR COMMUNITY TOGETHER BECAUSE THE VIOLENT DEATH OF A CHILD DIMINISHES ALL OF US.”
Matthew Thompson and Marvin Logan are two influential leaders at Kent State. Logan is executive director of Undergraduate Student Government and Thompson is president of Black United Students. The two friends and leaders continue to work to mend race relations. Although some of their views differ, they are striving for the same thing—racial equality.

**DO:** Are there any current race-relation issues on this campus?  
**ML:** There are lots of issues on this campus... Being elected executive director as a black male, it's no coincidence that we've begun to turn up the volume on some of these issues and demand results. For the first time in a long time, we have forced ourselves to discuss this topic and also have solutions and work towards action items.

**DO:** As executive director, what have you done to bring awareness to race relation issues?  
**ML:** I try to establish the fact that this actually is a problem and it's a problem that we can help solve. I don't believe that we're the end-all. For instance, the issue between USG and BUS this fall was unfortunate—how that happened—but I thought it was the perfect opportunity to bring awareness to that issue. Establishing a diversity committee and an international student affairs advisory council has been one of my biggest objectives for the year, and I think because of what we experienced in the fall, that has now been made possible.

**DO:** How can we get non-blacks involved in trying to alleviate these issues?  
**ML:** The gateway to any problem is education. We need to be able to talk about it inside the classroom, outside the classroom. And I think it takes more non-blacks, more non-Latin Americans and more non-international students who express a concern on the issue to be educated on the issue and go out and educate their peers.

**DO:** Do you believe student protests are really effective?  
**ML:** Yes, and I think that we should have more. I believe protests are catalysts to action items. Protests bring awareness. A lot of people say they never knew we felt so passionately about things.

**DO:** What is your current opinion on the national concern of police brutality?  
**ML:** This isn't anything new. It is statistically beginning to happen at an increasing rate, and I think our civil liberties are being threatened. The civil rights movement never ended—we just lost our leaders. What's happening today in our country isn't anything new, but we still have to fight. Someone is still dreaming. We are still trying to reach the mountain top. We've made progress but not enough.

**DO:** Do you believe it's up to the black community to educate their men on how to not live in fear?  
**ML:** We always have a responsibility. We have to do our part to see the continuing advancement of mankind, and that includes the folks that look like us. We're responsible first and foremost for the education of ourselves. A lot of the tactics that were used to restrict us then are being used now. So we need to use some of the same tactics that liberated us then, as we do now.
MT: Black United Students has mobilized hundreds of people to bring together the community and create a better understanding around issues of race. We create spaces for judgment-free dialogue and progressive mindsets.

AD: How can we get non-blacks involved in the effort to alleviate these issues?
MT: For those that want to get involved and help alleviate issues of race and racial disparity, they have to stop waiting for an invitation. This is a movement that is a 24/7 job so time is limited. All are welcome—that has been said for a long time. At this point, if someone wants to get involved, they just need to show up.

AD: Do you believe student protests are really effective?
MT: I believe student protest are very effective. What needs to be understood is that protests are an outcry. They are a means to garner attention for issues that negatively affect communities across the world. Students have leverage and can quickly mobilize. We are also the future leaders of the world, so when we speak together and focused we are always effective.

AD: What is your current opinion on the national concern of police brutality?
MT: I am pleased that attention is being brought to police brutality, and I love all the conversation, but we have to start focusing on our individual communities on a local level. That is where change can happen in a real way. That is where we hold power. Police departments are the responsibility of the community that they are located in, so we must hold them accountable for their actions and shift focus to policy that can better regulate the officers.

AD: Do you believe it’s up to the black community to educate their men on how to not live in fear?
MT: No, I do not believe it is up to the black community to alleviate black men of a fear that is inherited from years of abuse from the hands of a system that has declared time after time that black men are public enemy number one. That job is up to the people that hold their purses when they are around a black man, the people that wear “I Can Breathe” shirts, the people that listen to Darren Wilson describe Michael Brown as “hulking” and co-sign that statement as legitimate. It is their responsibility to put the black man at ease because they are the reason that he lives in a constant fear for his life.
Here we go, Chris, you can do this," I told myself in Mrs. Kumari's biology class my sophomore year of high school.

My stomach turned, my eyes watered. I swore I was going to vomit.

"If your friends are your friends, then what you say won't matter to them, just breathe and say it," I told myself as I mentally prepared to stand up to the bully. He tormented me daily with insulting comments and found pleasure in belittling me in front of the entire class.

I couldn't deal with it any longer.

"Only half," was my response to his calling me out in class for being gay.

I guess coming out as bisexual, or bicultural, was a lot easier than openly saying I was strictly attracted to males. No one really knows what they want when they're in high school. Now I'm a college senior about to graduate and I've had time to grow into the person I am today.

Looking at the LGBTQ community at Kent State, it might be easy to think that its members are confident in their own skin and sure of who they are, but the process of getting there may not have been the easiest. Many of us ask ourselves questions before coming out, such as:

Will people treat me differently if they know the truth?

Am I ready for the stares if I want to hold hands in public?

Zachary Vonderau, freshmen special education major, says he first noticed he had an interest in boys in the fourth grade.

"I didn't come out until I was 16 and in the 11th grade," Vonderau says. "I told a good friend from cross country first."

Vonderau says that telling his friend didn't have any negative effects on his coming out.

"It felt so good to get it off of my chest, especially since he was completely OK with it," Vonderau says.

Since then, Vonderau has told other friends and started his journey in college, opening up about who he is as a person—sexuality and all.

Vonderau says everyone who knows about his sexual preference has grown to accept it, even his parents.

"I told my mom, and she actually told my dad with my permission, and they've both come around," Vonderau says. "Not all of my family knows, however a large portion do. The ones that know were wary about it but are now accepting."

In his first semester, Vonderau found support in Pride!Kent, an LGBTQ student organization. He found friends through it after attending meetings and events.

Vonderau says people struggling with their identity or sexual orientation should be themselves, even if they don't come from the most supportive background.

Ashley Linke, sophomore accounting major, says her sorority sisters supported her in coming out, a process she considers to be one of the most courageous things she has done in her lifetime.

"The process was very different, not only for me, but for these girls, too," Linke
says, remembering her sisters had seen her interact with boys. "These girls had seen me dance with boys, talk about boys, be semi-obsessed with boys, but here I was proclaiming that I actually like women." linen says other members of Kent State’s Greek community have been supportive.

"People never really look twice at me in the Greek life here," Linke says. "I’ll get the occasional fraternity brothers asking what it’s like to like girls and how 'hot' it is, but besides that, I’m pretty normal.”

Linke says she didn’t find women attractive until her senior year of high school, but decided to admit to herself that she was ready to pursue women once she came to college last year. Having the sorority to help her grow into herself gave Linke the strength to talk to her parents.

"I had to talk to them about how long I’ve had these feelings, if this was something that I was sure of to prove that it wasn’t just a ‘silly phase’ and reassure them that they will still be grandparents someday, even if I have to grow into my own gave Linke the strength to pursue women once she came to college last year. Having the sorority to help her grow into herself gave Linke the strength to talk to her parents.

"I’ve been in my share of relationships since then, but I’m not right now," she says. "I think it’s what’s best for me, too, with school, and still learning the difference between what I want and what I need.”

These students have found that being true to who they are has given them all the love they will still be grandparents someday, even if I have to grow into my own gave Linke the strength to pursue women once she came to college last year. Having the sorority to help her grow into herself gave Linke the strength to talk to her parents.

My mother has since come around to the idea of my being interested in the same sex, even asking if someone was my “male friend” while I was home over winter break. I can see the growth in her from my sophomore year in high school until now, slowly, but surely, coming around to the idea that one day I may be at the altar marrying a man.

In hindsight, my coming out experience has made me who I am today. I’ve dealt with bullying and my mother not wanting to believe I am attracted to males, and I have since realized I’m happier now than I ever was keeping the secret.

For information about LGBTQ support services at Kent State, visit the Division of Diversity, Equity & Inclusions’ LGBTQ resources web page.

GLOSSARY
by Marissa Barnhart

Agender: Used to describe anyone who does not identify with any gender.

Ally: A person who actively supports the LGBTQ community.

Asexual: A person who experiences little to no sexual attraction to others.

Biological sex: The physical anatomy and hormones a person is born with.

 Bisexual: People who experience sexual attraction to members of their gender as well as the opposite gender.

Cisgender: People who identify with the gender they were born with.

Drag King/Queen: A gay man or lesbian woman who dresses as the opposite gender.

Fluidity: Describes a person whose identity (gender, sexuality, etc.) alternates.

Gay/Lesbian: A man/woman who is attracted to members of the same sex. Gay is also used by women to describe their same-sex relationships.

Gender identity: The internal awareness of a person’s gender—not to be confused with gender assigned at birth or biological sex.

Heterosexual: A clinical term used to describe the sexual attraction between men and women in place of “straight.”

Homophobia: A fear or intolerance of members of the LGBTQ community. It can also be internalized.

Homosexual: An outdated clinical term that is often used in place of the preferred terms “gay” or “lesbian.”

Non-binary: Any person whose gender identity does not fit within the limits of “male” or “female.”

Pansexual: A person who experiences sexual and romantic attraction to all gender identities.

Romantic orientation: A person’s romantic interest—this is often separate from sexual orientation. A person can have romantic feelings, but have no sexual desire.

Sexual orientation: A person’s sexual interest in other people.

Transgender: People who do not identify with their gender assigned at birth (examples: MTF = male to female, FTM = female to male).

Transsexual: People who do not identify with the gender assigned at birth and have undergone surgery to change their biological sex.

Transvestite: People who dress as the binary opposite of their gender for any reason.

*NOTE: This list of definitions does not cover every single LGBTQ term. For a more comprehensive list, visit wearefamilycharleston.org’s A-Z glossary.
Kyle Dunn, a sophomore at Kent State, is in the process of transitioning so he can match his appearance with his gender, all while taking classes and staying involved in the organizations Trans*Fusion and Delta Lambda Phi.

That's not gonna come off," he says, pointing at the ornament hanging from his rearview mirror. His car is the quietest place on campus at 2 p.m. on a Thursday.

"It's devil hands," he continues. "They were my mom's. They were to protect her while she was driving."

In two months, his voice is noticeably deeper, cracking here and there as a reminder of his "second puberty. Facial hair is poking out around his chin, and he appears more defined, his former softness turning sharp—all signs the hormones are working.

Kyle Dunn has taken his testosterone shot every Wednesday since Dec. 10, 2014. Referred to as "T," it is only one of Dunn's steps in transitioning from female to male—he's just waiting for the effects to take over.

"Body hair, voice dropping, fat redistribution, weight loss, muscle gain—anything you can think of on your body is just changing," Dunn says. "I'm loving it."

On the Homefront

Dunn was born Sept. 22, 1994, in Mayfield, Ohio, and grew up in Mentor. He's always known he was a boy, but it wasn't until he was 15 that he found the word "transgender" through a musician on YouTube who appeared on Tyra Banks' former talk show.

"I found it and I was like, 'Oh my God, that fits, like, my life,' and ever since, I've been trying it out on chat rooms and just different names and things and see what would fit," Dunn says.

Before coming out as transgender, Dunn told his family and friends he was bisexual. He felt he needed to give an explanation, because he was dating girls but wasn't ready to use transgender. His friends were the first to know.

"I had always gone by Kyle—in the back of my head I was like, 'that's right,'" Dunn says. "Then I just started coming out when I knew."

Dunn says for him, coming out had two steps.

"The first one is telling people that you're not the gender you were born—you're not the gender that matches your sex," Dunn says. "The other one is telling them that you are transitioning and going through the transitioning process."

Dunn says his family had mixed reactions to his coming out. Initially, Dunn came out to his stepmother. They were in their garage and sitting in wicker chairs. His stepmom smoked a cigarette while Dunn battled his nerves.

She questioned him, and he put a name to it.

She told Dunn's father, who didn't accept it at first.

"My dad wants me to have a family," Dunn says. "When I was little, he used to have this fantasy: 'You're going to grow up, you're going to get married, you're going to have a family.'"

Over the years, Dunn says his father came around to his transitioning and has since become his number one supporter and best friend, specifically during summer 2014.

"My dad sat next to me at my name-change court day," Dunn says. "When I got my gender marker changed on my license, the paperwork got sent to his house. He faxed..."
it to me the next day, so I could go get my license immediately instead of having to wait until I got home to get my mail. And now he is helping me with the insurance paperwork."

Dunn says he is grateful to have his dad in his life, and he’s glad Kent State isn’t too far from home because he can visit his dad on the weekends.

“It’s weird how it changes,” Dunn says. “I don’t know what I’d do without his support... I couldn’t really see myself transitioning unless I knew he was OK with it.”

**Brothers in Arms**

Dunn says he was nervous about on-campus living when he came to college. He found Kent State appealing because it advertised gender-neutral housing, which he calls a “myth,” because at the time, the gender-inclusive housing form didn’t exist.

“The phone number on their website didn’t work to call for gender-neutral housing,” Dunn says. “Pretty much they’d put you in Leebrick. If you wanted to live with someone, they would either try to room you with someone else who is trans*, which wasn’t actually a thing until this year when they started getting more trans* people on campus... or people of your birth gender.”

Dunn says he didn’t have the best housing situation in his first year on campus because he moved between multiple buildings, but he did get involved in organizations. The main two are Trans* Fusion and Delta Lambda Phi.

Trans* Fusion co-president Reilly Smith met Dunn initially through a mutual friend while Dunn was still in high school. They met again when Dunn was a freshman.

Smith says Dunn has come a long way in maturing from when they first met. During the fall semester 2014, Dunn served as the treasurer of Trans* Fusion. In January, he became vice president. Smith says appointing Dunn to the position was an obvious choice because Dunn had already been taking on the vice president’s responsibilities.

“He spent a lot of time building up the group and being our rock,” Smith says of Dunn. “It

made sense to move him up this semester.”

Alongside Trans* Fusion, Dunn is active in his fraternity, Delta Lambda Phi, the LGBTQ-inclusive fraternity on campus.

Dunn learned about the fraternity at a PRIDE! Kent open house during his freshman year. He learned it was transgender-inclusive and was encouraged to join.

“There are actually two fraternities in the country that are trans*-inclusive for pre-T,” Dunn says. “The fact that I was accepted and I didn’t need to be medically transitioned and didn’t have to hide anything was really awesome.”

Dunn attended the rush events and eventually became a brother. He was taken as a little brother by Dakota Stephens.

“I wasn’t originally supposed to get one,” Stephens says. “But I got Kyle. We didn’t get really close until later, but we started hanging out more.”

Dunn and Stephens currently share an apartment. They have two cats, Lucifer, affectionately called “Luci-purr,” and Peanut. Dunn has a turtle named Raphael, named for his favorite Ninja Turtle.

Stephens says he often jokes with Dunn, telling him, “I’m going to find a new little,” and “I’m kicking you out,” in retaliation to Dunn’s own comedic jabs. They frequently send their friends Snapchats of each other, catching the other in an awkward moment.

Dunn thinks of Stephens as a real older brother. Stephens says his little is smart and goal-orientated; the crease in his brow shows he truly cares about Dunn.

“I worry sometimes whether he’s getting enough sleep or if he’s eating enough,” Dunn says. “But he’s a good kid. I can’t say anything bad.”

Dunn holds three positions in his fraternity: pledge educator, sergeant at arms and alumni relations. He is in charge of educating new brothers, managing risk control and rituals and reaching out to alumni members. Dunn says he enjoys being in the fraternity because of the time he’s spent and the bonds he’s formed with his brothers.

“It’s a lot of work, but what you give comes back,” Dunn says. “The time I’ve spent with these guys—we just know each other so well. They know when something’s up and I know when they’re feeling down.”

**Branching Out**

Since starting testosterone, Dunn says he’s become more confident. He feels comfortable speaking up in class and can now look in mirrors because he’s satisfied with what he sees. One of his favorite things to do is take selfies.

“The more pictures I have, even if I take one once a week, it’s still a big enough change that you can tell,” Dunn says. “And when you look at everything side by side, it shows the

minor changes and not just the big ones.”

Dunn also says that testosterone isn’t always the answer—it’s a work in progress.

“It’s a waiting game because you’re waiting for all the effects to take place, and you’re waiting for yourself to turn into the person you always thought you were or you’ve always been,” Dunn says.

For other alternatives to combat gender dysphoria, Dunn recommends looking into websites that sell binders, packers and gaffs. He says it’s important to find safe alternatives because some things, such as

"I HAD ALWAYS GONE BY KYLE—IN THE BACK OF MY HEAD I WAS LIKE, ‘THAT’S RIGHT.’ THEN I JUST STARTED COMING OUT WHEN I KNEW.”
binding—compressing breasts to look flat-chested—can be dangerous to people’s health.

Dunn says he’s trying to raise money for top surgery—breast removal. He has a GoFundMe page, and he’s selling T-shirts, which can be found at t-fueled.spreadshirt.com.

Dunn says he’s taking his transition one step at a time, but he’s glad he came to Kent State, and he thinks he’s come a long way from his teenage days in Mentor.

“I’d still be sitting in Mentor in my dad’s place going, ‘Wow, I want to transition,’ like every other trans* kid in Mentor instead of actually going out there and doing something for myself and getting it done,” Dunn says.

While he says he wishes he had chosen a warmer campus, he wouldn’t change his decision to move here.

“For what I have, this is pretty damn good,” Dunn says.

KYLE’S SIX SYMBOLS

1. "Semicolons are used in a sentence to continue it on instead of ending it. Instead of ending my life in middle school, which I could have, I decided to continue it on. It is on my ring finger because it is the only finger with a blood vessel directly to your heart. So it’s like close to my heart. That was my first-ever tattoo."

2. "In Italian culture, black bands on your arm are to mourn the death of someone you love. Normally, they go higher up on your arm, but mine is covered with arrows, so I got it below my elbow. I got it in honor of my mom (when I was 7, one night when we went to bed, she had a massive heart attack and rolled off the bed. The paramedics came, but by the time they got to the hospital, she was already dead). Actually, if you were to unravel it and slide it off my arm, it would be an infinity symbol because she’s always with me. I have that below my arm so I can always see it. It’s one of my favorite tattoos."

3. "The shovel is for my best friend who moved away my sophomore year of high school—she moved to Columbus because she graduated and she went to OSU. She was my go-to, so when she left, it was really hard to get over that fact. We bought a shovel together (she got dumped like a week before and her ex was already dating a new girl. So we bought a shovel and we were like ‘beat her with a shovel hahaha,’ and we just carried the shovel in the trunk of our cars for a while. After she moved, me and one of my other friends, we taped her face on the shovel and we would take pictures of it around town. We would carry it with us and we would take selfies with the shovel with her face on it and send them to her) when I was a freshman, so I got a shovel tattooed on my arm for her in dedication to our friendship."

4. "I started out with this one arrow. Arrows are used as a symbol because, when you shoot an arrow, you pull it back before you launch it forward. So it’s kind of like things are going to get worse before they get better. So each of these arrows on my arm represent some part of my life that was decently bad but got better."

5. "That one said, ‘The best things in life have some assembly required,’ and it wrapped around my knee. But it didn’t stick, so no cool tattoo on my knee, unfortunately."

6. "I have a stick-and-poke tattoo of the male symbol that I did myself in the kitchen with a sewing needle and India ink. That represents the fact that I’m a self-made man. That’s one thing that, throughout my transition, I’m proud to have on my body because it’s something I think has helped me grow as a person. It’s accepting the fact that I am trans."
Excitement and nervousness thicken the summer heat for students awaiting arrival at Kent State and what could be the most influential years of their lives. Soon to be independent, they will have to say goodbye to hometown friends and make Target runs for dorm essentials. However, LGBTQ students have other things to worry about than whether their comforter will match their trashcan.

For freshman Jefferson Truman, it was having to choose his gender on his application—a small answer with a big impact. Truman hadn’t yet come out to his parents then, and therefore, he was forced to select “female.”

“It’s hard when they tell you that you have to choose to be either male or female,” Truman says about his housing experience. Although he doesn’t seem angry, his eyes convey the seriousness of the issue.

Truman is sitting in room 309 in the Student Center, before a meeting with Trans*Fusion, a group dedicated to trans* individuals on campus. He doesn’t say it, but it’s obvious he’s comfortable here. Members frequently nudge Truman and grin as they walk by or yell from across the room. His body language is relaxed as he begins to recount his story of being treated as the wrong gender.

For Truman, coming to Kent State had a bit of a rocky start when he was placed in the incorrect housing. “I contacted Kent before I moved in and told them that I needed gender-neutral housing and they told me that at the time there wasn’t a place for me to stay in gender-neutral housing, so I got placed on an all-girl floor,” Truman says.

A sign on the bathroom door saying, “No Boys Allowed,” made Truman feel as if he couldn’t even use the bathroom on his own floor. However, the problem was resolved after Truman spoke with residence services.

After hearing concerns from the LGBTQ community, residence services added a gender-inclusive request to the housing application on February 1. A gender-neutral dorm room is not merely a single-occupancy room. Kent State defines it as a housing option that allows students to live with any other student—regardless of sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression or sexual orientation.

But defining gender-inclusive housing isn’t the only housing problem the university and students face—all aspects of comfort and living come with it as well. Because the university turns to students to understand their wants and needs, creating housing that is helpful to all students is an ongoing process.

Application Process

Three new questions on the housing application help residence services assign students to a comfortable home on campus. The first asks the applicant to select if they prefer to live in gender-inclusive housing. The second is for students who do want gender-inclusive housing but don’t have a specific roommate in mind. The third is to...
The policies are not only designed for trans* students but also for students with other sexual orientations who would rather room with someone of another gender. Even close friends of different genders can room together if they both request each other as a roommate.

On the housing application, students cannot currently declare a sexual or gender identity that differs from the one they used to enroll at the university. Jill Church, director of residence services, says the admissions process would override the preferred name every day. It would revert back to the gender on the student's admissions application in the system at midnight. Also, she says, this would mean disclosing more information than is necessary to make a housing assignment.

“We are currently of the opinion that that would potentially force a student to answer a question that we’d really have no business knowing,” Church says. “Legally, I think it’s kind of a murky water, and I think it might infringe on students’ right to privacy.”

She says asking what students identify as still wouldn’t tell her who they wanted to live with. It would just feel intrusive.

Ken Ditlevson, director of the LGBTQ Student Center, takes a personal approach to helping students. In order to better understand what students want, he has talked one-on-one with them, sent out surveys and even formed an advisory council with LGBTQ organizations on campus.

“My goal is that we make these changes so that there’s inclusion for all of our students, whether they’re LGBTQ, an ally, a friend, a family member of someone who knows an LGBTQ person,” Ditlevson says. “We’re here to represent everyone across the campus.”

Following meetings between staff and students that Ditlevson says resulted in mixed messages, representatives from residence services, Pride!Kent, Trans* Fusion and the Undergraduate Student Government met in January to look further into LGBTQ students’ wants and needs. Residence services called on those who represent the LGBTQ community to voice their opinion. USG and Pride! wrote a paper called “The Gender Friendly Initiative,” but to their surprise, residence services was already on the same page.

“It is absolutely clear that we have a residence department that is very interested in hearing the voice of the students,” Ditlevson says. “It is excellent, strong relationship.”

Brandon Stephens, president of Pride!, says at the meeting, he expressed the need of a community for gender-inclusive housing rather than an individualized case-by-case housing situation, which was the situation before. To his surprise, residence services was much further along than he had thought.

“It’s all incredible the way they’ve laid out the program,” Stephens says. “It was probably one of the best meetings I’ve ever had in terms of LGBTQ issues on this campus.”

Stephens says he was very impressed with the new questions on the application and that more housing options are becoming available for students.

Brad Gregg, a senior electronic media production major, believes these changes to policy are long overdue.

“I think it’s a great change that’s needed to happen for awhile and it’s finally awesome to see something happening because before, for years, we had a phone number that didn’t work and now we actually have a process that works,” Gregg says.

Gregg lived in Olson Hall for three years, and was then moved to Leebrick because he had gender-inclusive housing.

Moving forward, Gregg believes the disconnect between the living-learning community and where trans* students can live should be resolved. Even though trans* students can join living-learning communities, he doesn’t think a gender-inclusive community should be isolated so students outside of the LGBTQ community can be more exposed to those inside of it.

Church says availability can become an issue when students request gender-inclusive housing after they move in.

“Now if students are following our application guidelines, deadlines and application fees and things like that, going through the process just like any other student, and they do everything on time, we assure students that we’ll be able to accommodate them in gender-neutral housing,” she says.

### Issues with Pricing

When Willemina Davidson first called about gender-neutral housing, she was pleasantly surprised at how easy the transition was.

“It was great in my experience—my hall was okay with it,” Davidson says. “A lot of people at first were like, ‘Oh, that’s interesting,’ but no one actually cares.”

However, Davidson wasn’t able to stay on campus last year for financial reasons.

“I tried to get gender-neutral housing a second year in a row and they wanted to put me in Centennial. I couldn’t afford Centennial, so I lived off campus,” Davidson says.

Davidson feels residence services should make exceptions, or at least work out a payment plan that involves students working to earn money to stay in expensive housing. She feels there should be more ways to help students find funding.

“Gender-neutral housing is a need,” Davidson expressed. “[Ignoring it] would be like making someone that was in a wheelchair pay more for having wheelchair accessibility.”

Ditlevson says while no students have asked for him to “intervene and advocate” for them, he has heard them vent about only
being offered a pricier option of housing.

Church says that currently there are 13 out of 24 residence halls available at the base price for students outside of gender-inclusive housing, but the goal is for more gender-inclusive options to become available. Although 14 buildings on campus are gender-inclusive, this year Korb is the only one at the base rate and only allows freshmen. Next year, it and Van Campen will both be at the base rate and welcome students of any age.

"Kent is making progress," Davidson says, "and that's great."

**Finding a Roommate**

When stepping into freshman philosophy major Andi Kiss' room, the first thing that can be heard is a band called "Snowing." Inside, there's coffee, philosophy books and walls covered with band posters. Kiss also has an impressive collection of cassette tapes and vinyl records.

Kiss identifies as non-binary, meaning neither male nor female, and therefore prefers "they" to any other pronoun.

Kiss' room contains what makes them comfortable: their ukulele, Tumblr and iced tea—but there's also an empty bed topped with clothes, personal belongings on one desk and food on the other; it's apparent Kiss is missing a roommate.

Kiss didn't have any problems with their first roommate in the fall of 2014—the two just didn't hit it off. Kiss says they didn't even think their roommate knew they were transgender.

"He watched 'The Big Bang Theory'," Kiss groans in annoyance. "It's objectively not funny." When Kiss contacted their residence hall director about finding someone they could bond with, she was able to give them the contact information of a transgender student in the hall who needed a roommate. The arrangement worked out well, until their roommate decided to move out later that year.

A big issue, if not the biggest, is roommate pairing. Church has had students express their desire for gender-inclusive housing with no roommate in mind. "What we realized in the process is that we need to come up with a way to help students meet each other," she says. One way to do this, she says, is through the new questions on the application.

Although some students, such as Truman, will move to preferred housing, there might not be roommates available.

Ditlevson understands the disappointment that can arise from a situation like this. After all, having a roommate is a part of the dorm experience. "When you live in the dorms, students are typically looking for that true academic experience and connection," Ditlevson says. "And not even academic, but just social interaction."

Ditlevson says he's heard of situations where a student is set up for a room, but can't find a roommate who is willing to live in the same arrangement. Students who request gender-inclusive housing and also want to be placed in a living-learning community compatible with their major often find that such buildings don't always support their needs. Ditlevson and Church both say they turn to students to understand their preferences in situations like these.

Church and residence services created a survey and sent it to three LGBTQ-based organizations—the LGBTQ Center, Pride! and Trans* Fusion—to ask about interest in a living-learning community for LGBTQ students, and Pride! is distributing it to students. Down the road, Ditlevson says he thinks this could definitely be popular among those wanting gender-inclusive housing.

In addition to housing, gender-neutral bathrooms will become available in the fall, and Ditlevson says the university is working on a preferred name policy.

"I just want to make sure whatever we select here at Kent, that it truly is going to meet the needs of our students."
FEMINISM

The Kent State community adds voices to the debate.

words by Melissa Puppo | illustration by Mark Tabar
With a single glance at April Goss, one sees long, tousled brown hair and a sweet smile. She speaks in a soft voice, but another side of Goss is unknown to many—a side dedicated to early mornings and intense practices.

As Kent State’s kicker, Goss is the team’s first female player and the second woman to play D-1A college football. She admits that more than once she has kicked a football “like a girl”—a common phrase she often questions.

“I still find myself doing stuff like that, but it’s something that I’m just trying to be proud of,” the senior criminology and justice studies major says. “Like, I am a girl, and I am playing football and that’s nothing to be ashamed of.”

Goss is just one example of women shattering stereotypes of what they can and cannot do.

“Most feminists are, frankly, uneducated on the subject. They don’t know what they’re fighting for and therefore take things to the extreme.”

At Kent State, students and faculty discuss whether feminism should be treated purely as a women’s issue or in the context of other human issues. Women and men are challenging the beliefs of the past and are realizing firsthand the significance of feminism.

“I remember trying out for the football team and thinking that my gender is the first thing that people see, and it’s the first thing that people automatically count me out at because I am a girl,” Goss says.

As a past intern at RAPE crisis center, she learned that the push to end domestic violence and sexual assault is to stop looking at them as gender-based issues but rather as human issues. Goss feels feminism is much the same.

“I think just stripping away that idea and just, you know, realizing that we’re both human beings, and we both deserve love, respect and kindness and humility and stuff like that.”

At Kent State

Suzanne Holt, the director of women’s studies at Kent State, knows exactly what feminism means to her.


The irony of people misunderstanding feminism, she says, is that it is, simply put, equality between genders.

Holt remembers growing up in a small town where she and her twin sister excelled at sports, but when they went to school, there was no opportunity.

In her P.E. class, she wasn’t allowed to play the sports she’d play in her backyard and had to sit on the sidelines watching the boys play. She says she knew she could have played, maybe even better than them.

“We weren’t allowed for one reason and one reason only: We were girls. And it didn’t make sense,” Holt says.

Senior fashion merchandising major Emily Chumbler remembers when she first started identifying as a feminist. It was during her sophomore year in college when she learned about author and filmmaker Jean Kilbourne’s work studying images of women used in advertising. Chumbler began looking into the subject and soon realized feminism was everything she had already believed.

She’s since taken a handful of women’s studies classes on campus, including a special topics class called Witches: The Monstrous Feminine. Not only is feminism still an issue, she says, but oversimplifying the word also becomes a problem.

“I know people say it’s just equality for men and women, but for me, that over-simplifies it a little bit,” she says. “I kind of look at it as just questioning everything—every aspect of our culture—and pushing its origins and the reason behind it.”

She wishes there were more people who studied feminism in depth, rather than just calling themselves feminists. She feels feminism is a huge area of study and an all-encompassing term. However, she thinks feminism has negative associations, which is a problem.

Chumbler believes it’s not only men who might withhold from feminist ideals but women might, too.

“I definitely think there’s a whole women against feminism movement where women say, ‘I don’t need feminism because—’ and they have all of these negative connotations of the word,” Chumbler says. “I feel like for a woman to say she doesn’t need feminism is because she doesn’t have a good understanding of what it is.”

Jared Ankrom, junior managerial marketing major, feels feminism might turn people off because of certain feminists.

“Most feminists are, frankly, uneducated on the subject,” Ankrom says. “They don’t know what they’re fighting for and therefore take things to the extreme—to the point where they reject anyone other than a female’s opinion—some even taking it to the point of only considering fellow feminists’ thoughts.”

Ankrom feels the feminist movement today is almost making matters worse, and feminism needs to be “restructured” to be successful.

While he might not always agree with all feminists, he believes feminism is still relevant.

“Women still get paid less across the board. Equality in every sense is the first step to bettering the world, and we seem to collectively keep tripping.”

At a National Level

Susan Iverson, an associate professor of foundation, leadership and administration at Kent State, says the wage gap indicates continued inequality.

In 2013, the American Association of University Women (AAUW) gathered
information from the U.S. Census Bureau, the Department of Education and the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and found that "the median annual earnings in the United States for women and men working full-time, year-round were $39,157 and $50,033, respectively." That means women made 78 percent of what men made.

The gap widens further when looking at marginalized groups, Iverson says.

"When you disaggregate and say, 'Let me look along racial lines. How much are African-American women making?' that number goes down, or Latina women—that number goes down," Iverson says.

In 2013, African-American women who worked full-time, year-round made $33,780 or 68 percent of what men who worked the same amount made, according to AAUW. Hispanic or Latina women made $28,526 or 57 percent of what men made.

Iverson says the women's movement of the '60s and '70s came about in accordance with other movements.

"It's not that the feminist movement was in isolation to the civil rights movement or gay movement or other movements occurring at the same time," Iverson says. "There's some intersecting interests around civil rights and equity."

**Not Just Women**

Jake Evans, junior computer information systems major at Kent State, says society defines feminism as purely a women's movement, but he believes it expands beyond that.

"It is an incredibly inclusive movement that has provided both men and women with rights, and it's helped tackle certain aspects of our culture that have oppressed many groups of people and helped many others," he says.

Evans believes feminists are misunderstood.

"There's a stereotypical notion of the 'big, mean feminist,' " Evans explains. "The problem is that those anti-feminists are going around hating superficial qualities of somebody, instead of focusing on their beliefs."

Specific issues with women arise on college campuses. Among them are domestic abuse, sexual assault and the perpetuation of rape culture—issues, Evans says, place people on a pedestal where every aspect of their personal lives are put out for the world to analyze.

He feels people need to understand feminism is not going anywhere.

"You don't stop learning or recognizing. It's like riding a bike." Evans says.

John Hess, a senior political science major, believes feminism and women's issues need to be incorporated into other kinds of activism. Otherwise, there is only equality or liberation for men, which is counterproductive.

For Hess, he believes people who question feminism come from two positions: feminism is a battle that has long been won or the battle is illegitimate in the first place.

"I think the less people continue to push feminism now, the more we kind of acquiesce to that first position, the more people are actually wont to the second position that feminism is in and of itself unnecessary," Hess says.

There are people who assume that being a feminist entails a lot of baggage. Hess feels men should encourage and engage in conversations with people who have problems with feminism.

**Future of Feminism**

Jessica Valenti, a feminist author and columnist for the Guardian US, feels people have a lot of misconceptions about feminism with regard to people believing the fight for equality is over.

"I think feminism still matters because sexism still exists in 2015, and so long as we have sexism and sexist laws or even sexism in the culture, we're going to need feminism," Valenti says. "I very much look forward to the day we don't need it."

Valenti praises the Internet as an incredible platform for feminism in the last 10 years. She feels it will continue to grow with new technology, communication and social media.

"Feminism is going to continue to both gain more mainstream power but also be more of an aggressive movement."

She says she feels women in different industries should ask about their salaries and hold their employers accountable for appropriate pay.

Iverson believes there are a lot of starting points to distance feminism from being what she calls "the other F word," starting with discussions that arise on social media about women's issues and concerns.

Iverson says there are "ripples that can start to happen from a simple Tweet."

A lot of people ask why feminism has to exist, Holt says. She explains if the fight for feminism stopped for even a little while, getting society back to where it is today would be difficult.

"I don't know if we realize that," Holt says, "but the only thing that keeps us from going right back to the worst periods of our history, of returning to the things that are in today's standards so backward, is a group of women fighting to keep the progress we've made locked there so that we don't go backward."
The security camera zoomed in on a teenage boy and his father. The boy stood proudly by the gates, clad in a dark suit and light blue shirt. With short black hair combed neatly in place and eager eyes ready for the challenge, he spoke through the intercom: “My name is Alfred Shaker. I am here to apply for my student visa.”

A low rumble erupted as the gates to the U.S. Embassy of Kuwait parted for Shaker and his father. They stepped through a metal detector and submitted to a brief search before making their way into the lobby.

On the left side of the small waiting area, three interviewers were perched behind glass partitions, calling out numbers and exchanging papers through thin slots along the windows. On the opposite side of the room, families with hopeful eyes filled the rows of plastic chairs.

“There were pictures along the walls of New York City, the Statue of Liberty and Chicago scenery to get people excited about coming,” Shaker says. “No pictures of snow, so they were deceiving us.”

Shaker sat with his father for about an hour before the woman behind the left-most window called his number. She tucked a loose strand of her short hair behind one ear and examined Shaker’s passport, bank statement, acceptance letter and other paperwork. She glanced up at Shaker through the frames of her glasses and slid him a thin sheet of green paper: a rejection notice.

“My bank statement had the appropriate amount listed on the website, but according to the interviewer, it didn’t,” Shaker says. “She rejected me for insufficient funds.”

Alfred Shaker, Egypt

International students attempting to earn college degrees in the U.S. must endure the process of obtaining a student visa, a temporary permit that allows access into the country for an academic period of up to five years. While many Americans don’t fully understand the visa process, international students around the world face the issue on a regular basis.

For Shaker, pursuing a college education in the U.S. required ample time, grueling paperwork and a leap of faith. With his green rejection form in hand, Shaker left the embassy in May 2011, determined to reapply. Earlier that month, Shaker had graduated from The Universal American School of Kuwait with dreams of pursuing a college education outside of his home country, where he says the opportunities for learning were greater.

During a college fair while Shaker was still in high school, David Di Maria, a representative of Kent State from the Office of Global Education at the time, told him he had a good chance of being offered a scholarship and the opportunity to enroll in the Honors College at Kent State.

“I had never heard of Kent State before, so I researched it after the college fair,” Shaker says. “I didn’t think it was a big school at first, but when I looked it up, it was actually in the top 200 schools.”

On his second attempt to obtain a visa in Kuwait, a woman behind the middle window called Shaker’s number.

“The way she spoke to me was condescending and rude,” Shaker says. “I had my uncle’s bank statement with me this time just in case anybody said anything about my funds, but that wasn’t the issue anymore.”

When she asked Shaker about his ties to Egypt, Shaker said his plans were to pursue higher education in America and return home to his family after earning his degree.
Akanksha Singh, from India, says she was accepted for a visa relatively quickly, almost as if luck guided the process.

Akanksha Singh, India

In 2010, Akanksha Singh left Pune, India, her mother and her comfort zone to pursue a higher education at Kent State.

Her mother introduced her to Kent State after hearing about the school’s strong nursing program. Singh then looked into its College of Business Administration. Of the four schools she was accepted to, she chose Kent State.

Once the university accepted her, she began applying online for her visa. Singh, now a finance senior, traveled to the U.S. Embassy of Mumbai, awaiting her interview.

Singh says the embassy in Mumbai strives to limit the number of people attempting to enter the U.S., making sure applicants are not traveling overseas to permanently settle. When she sat among the others who were waiting for their visas, she was anxious to face the odds.

“It was kind of like a ‘cross your fingers’ situation,” she says. “The visa process is just luck. You can’t prepare for it. All you can do is try not to look too nervous so as to make them suspicious.”

Singh says the process lasted two and a half hours because she had to wait in line until she was called. After her wait, her interview was surprisingly quick.

“Mine was very short, like two minutes—almost like they had already decided” she says. “I had a whole stack of documents well-organized but they didn’t look at anything. They just said ‘OK,’ and I was approved.”

Singh received her visa, valid until May 2016. She arrived on campus with no one close to her who could help her adapt to her unfamiliar environment.

“That was the worst part of my time here,” she says. “I lived in a dorm, and I didn’t know anyone. I remember going to Walmart and buying milk and cookies, and I thought, ‘Who knows when I’ll find food next?’”

Because she was alone, she immersed herself in every opportunity to make a friend and feel connected to her new campus. Once other students arrived, she slowly began to adjust.

After college, Singh plans to find work in the U.S. She says she has also applied to graduate schools in case she can’t find work right away.

“That everything is available to you, and all you have to do is ask,” she says.

Shui Yu, China

Shui Yu, an international relations and finance senior who has worked at the Office of Global Education for the past three years, says the office helps students around the world adjust to Kent State upon their arrival.

When he first came to Kent State in 2011, Yu says the office found Chinese translators to help him adjust to campus.

“I was crying when I came here,” Yu says. “I felt lonely. It was very hard to make friends at first. I tried to spend time with U.S. people to learn the language. After half a year, it was OK for me.”

Yu says the U.S. is a very popular place for international students, especially in Beijing where he went to apply for his visa.

Yu says he waited in line for two hours, and when it was finally his turn, he was confused as to where he could proceed.

“When his attitude was so bad at the embassy,” he says. “You cannot imagine how bad it is. Just evil. And the lines are so, so long. The
workers are impatient and very rude. They throw back our documents to us. They don’t give them back. We have to pick them up.”

Despite his rocky transition to the States, Yu says he enjoys helping people from other cultures through his work at the Office of Global Education. In the future, he says he hopes to find employment that will sponsor him to stay in the U.S.

Niles Cole, from the Bureau of Consular Affairs of the U.S. Department of State, says U.S. Embassy employees are trained in Equal Employment Opportunity principles to perform their responsibilities actively and effectively. Cole says the vast majority of visa applications are accepted, and the requirements for obtaining a visa vary between embassies.

“The Bureau of Consular Affairs is committed to facilitating legitimate travel of qualified applicants,” he says. “All visa applications are reviewed individually in accordance with the requirements of the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act, and other relevant laws that establish detailed standards for determining eligibility for visas and admission to the United States.”

After a high school college fair event, Roufael chose Kent State, where he planned to major in public health as a pre-med student.

While he was applying to Germany, Roufael says he filled out a basic list of instructions before traveling to the embassy. When he began the application process for the U.S., however, he says the difference was surprising.

“The visa process, among other countries, is the hardest in America,” he says. “There is no interview or big fuss about it in Germany. But the American visa online application takes at least an hour of questions and information about you and your relatives.”

He says that aside from the differences in requirements, the interview process itself is grueling.

“During the day, around 200 or 300 people apply, and I could see all these people walk in and walk out either super happy or super sad,” he says.

Roufael says he was overjoyed when he passed his interview, and from there he knew the rest would be easy for him.

With his graduation expected in May 2017, Roufael says he has ample time to assess his options for the future but hopes for the opportunity to aid the people back home.

“Ideally, I would love to go back to my country and help the efforts in Syria, but with the civil war going on in my country, I don’t see it becoming safer any time soon.”

Shaker: Then and Now

Sporting his long dark locks in a low ponytail and with an abundance of facial hair, Shaker no longer resembles the teenager his father sent off to America. Four years have changed him, shaped him. An avid programmer, Shaker is soon to be a computer science graduate in May.

Although his family does not have immediate plans to visit him in the U.S., Shaker is proud to carry the torch for higher education in his family. Looking ahead, Shaker says he even plans to attend graduate school at Kent State.

“I’m first generation in the States to study in college,” Shaker says. “It’s exciting and scary, because I don’t want to screw up. I want it to be a good experience, so I can tell everyone in my family to come here.”
The lunch bell rang, and Alyx Weaver stayed behind in the empty classroom of her high school. The teacher turned off the lights and closed the door behind her. Silence. Weaver closed her eyes, escaping the bright lights and loud noises that overwhelmed her mind. Her anxiety slipped away as she began to breathe deeply, decompressing. She struggled to block out the stimuli of the morning to recompose herself. She tried to clear her mind and prepared herself for the second half of the day.

"I HAD SOME TROUBLE INITIALLY ADJUSTING TO A DIFFERENT ENVIRONMENT. I WASN'T SURE IF I WANTED TO BE IN COLLEGE ONCE I GOT THERE."

Growing up, Weaver always knew she was different. Isolated, bullied and teased, she struggled to fit in and make friends. The other kids didn’t understand her routines and compulsions—why she felt the need to rub her hands together exactly 60 times before deeming them clean enough.

"I was not very well-liked when I was younger," Weaver says. "Unfortunately, it was very difficult growing up. Kids can be really mean. When people aren’t understanding, it tends to spread."

People who are unaware of the Autism Spectrum Disorder, ASD, or have never been around a person on the spectrum, do not usually understand why a person with autism will act or behave a certain way. In the 2013-2014 school year, there were approximately 30 students with autism who attended Kent State's Kent campus, says Amy Quillin, director of Student Accessibility Services (SAS). The struggles these students face differ from those of neurotypical students, who are those outside of the autism spectrum, because of the anxiety and underdeveloped social skills many of them deal with.

Weaver says she was "almost a celebrity" because of how mean some of the kids in school were to her.

Her school was located behind her house. Her mother June Volz remembers how one afternoon, Weaver’s classmates threw stones at her and called her names on her way home.

At 6 years old, Weaver was diagnosed with Asperger’s, a form of high-functioning autism. Growing up through high school and beginning college as an undergraduate was difficult for Weaver, but today she is learning to cope with Asperger’s as she studies neuroscience as a graduate student at Kent State.

Each individual with ASD, a complex disorder of brain development, will have different symptoms, according to Autism Speaks, an organization that advocates autism. However, there are a few characteristics that are more prominent in people who are diagnosed with ASD, including difficulty with social interactions. They also tend to have repetitive behaviors.

Lisa Audet, assistant professor for speech and pathology, says people on the spectrum have idiosyncrasies that make them stand out or seem odd to others who are unaware of ASD. An idiosyncrasy could be compulsive flicking of their hair, rocking back and forth or asking a lot of questions in class.

"It presents a barrier for peers to reach out to students on the spectrum," she says.

Audet has worked in the area of ASD as a researcher, speech-language pathologist and teacher. In the 1990s, Audet co-developed the first treatment facility in Northeast Ohio for children with ASD before coming to Kent State. She also helped develop the Autism Spectrum Disorder Certificate at the university.

"Some people who are on the spectrum have a hard time reading the environmental cues and putting that all together," Audet says.

Weaver says she has a hard time picking up on social cues from others, which makes it difficult for her to connect with them. She often feels as if she misinterprets what others are saying to her. And when she...
According to Autism Speaks, one in 68 children are born with autism. Quillin said that she became overwhelmed and needed to study constantly.

Sometimes Weaver would feel like students thought she was stupid because she felt the need to study constantly. She said people just see her as an "idiot doing things repeatedly."

Generalizing people with ASD can be difficult because there are different degrees and forms of autism that fall into the spectrum.

"It’s impossible to say all people with Autism Spectrum Disorder have a first grade reading level because that’s not true," Quillin says. "Or [neurotypical people] think, well, all people with Autism Spectrum Disorder are really brilliant. Well, that’s not true either."

Other students who knew Weaver, especially girls in the same dorm as her, would go to the resident assistant, concerned about why she spent so much time alone in her room.

"That was her place to go where she could decompress and be by herself and get herself together if she became overwhelmed," Volz says. "It made a lot of difference I think."

According to Autism Speaks, one in 68 children are born with autism. Quillin says between 2010 and 2013 the number of students with autism enrolled at Kent State has grown from around 15 students to more than 30 students. The majority of these students have high-functioning autism, such as Asperger's.

Students diagnosed with a disability can register with SAS. From there, SAS will determine what kind of accommodations any given student is eligible for. However, that student is not obligated to utilize the accommodations offered.

Nick Piazza, a sophomore mathematics major, lives with Asperger's as well. But he lives a typical life of a college student, hanging out with a few close friends in between his studies.

"I don't try to study myself," Piazza says, "But I live life every day. I just want to get good grades."

Piazza says he feels he is able to interact with others, but he doesn't always want to. Some days he feels like staying in his room and playing FIFA, a soccer video game, with his roommates. Other days, he works in the downstairs market in Eastway, interacting with customers and making them laugh as he stocks shelves and rings people out at the cash register. "I could be an outgoing person or I could be an enclosed person; I guess it just depends," he says.

Piazza began to become more social when he moved in with his aunt and uncle after his mother died of a heart attack in 2009. "My life was a lot different then," Piazza says.

When Piazza lived with his mother, he mostly spent time by himself. "I might talk to my mother a little bit, but she'd do her thing and I'd do mine," he says. Piazza often did simple things with his mom, like shopping or watching movies. However, he didn't spend much time with friends outside of school.

His aunt and uncle participate in more outgoing activities and Piazza began to socialize with his cousin's friends and spending less time alone. As he went through high school, he slowly came out of his shell, interacting with his classmates and making plans outside of school.

"He started opening up and he really came a long way socially," says Mike Piazza, Nick Piazza's uncle. "When he was with my sister, he was really secluded. He didn't get much social interaction."

Piazza says he has a few close friends on campus, including his cousin and his best friend from high school. He believes having a few close friends is better than having many acquaintances because it creates a stronger relationship.

Though Piazza has learned to deal with social problems by participating in outgoing activities with his family, many people on the spectrum lack social skills and find it difficult to fit in with other students.
Volz says Weaver often says she is lonely when she talks with her mother over the phone, but Weaver has learned to cope with the social disabilities she has through educating herself on Asperger’s. When Weaver grew into her teenage years, she denied there being anything wrong with her.

Growing up, making friends was nearly impossible for Weaver. However, she says she currently has friends she regularly sees outside of class, going with them on Starbucks coffee dates and to the movies.

Quillin says that even though SAS does not have a structured way of dealing with students who are having difficulty fitting in, SAS does listen to their problems.

"ALL PEOPLE WITH AUTISM, WE’RE JUST NORMAL PEOPLE. WE MAY THINK DIFFERENT OR SEE THE WORLD DIFFERENT. WE’RE JUST LIKE YOU."

“I would probe and ask what’s been helpful in the past,” Quillin says. “How did you meet people in high school? What kind of things are you interested in?” She often finds it can be helpful for students to join organizations or get a job in a field that interests them.

Andrew Budny found his niche when he got a job at the library on the Trumbull campus. Budny, who also has Asperger’s, is a library and information science graduate student. He has been working for the library for nearly three years as a full-time library assistant following five years of part-time work.

Aside from having Asperger’s, Budny also has severe anxiety, which makes it difficult for him to approach strangers. People on the spectrum often deal with secondary diagnoses such as obsessive compulsive disorder, anxiety and depression, says Audet.

Walking into a completely new environment can be nerve-racking for someone who has both Asperger’s and anxiety. Still, Budny decided to further his education.

“When I first started I was nervous,” he says. “It was completely different than high school. I didn’t know anybody here at this campus when I first started except the accessibility coordinator. I didn’t know if I would be able to fit in.”

Budny knew his professors were not going to hold his hand. Getting through college was going to be entirely up to him and his own personal drive to succeed. He started off easing into college as a part-time student with seven credit hours. Budny knew college courses would expect more; he wanted to be able to do his best.

“It was a bit of a challenge after I graduated from high school,” Budny says. “It’s a completely different experience for me interacting with different people from different backgrounds.”

Budny also believes his thought process differs from other neurotypical students. He isn’t always able to communicate all the thoughts inside his head. At any given time, multiple thoughts will be consuming Budny’s mind—thoughts that are difficult to separate.

“I think differently and I like planning ahead,” Budny says. “It makes my life easier because I don’t have to rush things.”

Budny had a lot of support from both parents and teachers, giving him the confidence he needed to make it through his undergraduate studies and onto his master’s degree. Without that support, Budny’s anxieties might have been too overwhelming for him to pursue his degree.

However, he was able to overcome these struggles through the extra guidance of SAS and his professors. Now, as an employee of the library, he is proud to consider them his colleagues.

Budny does not see himself as less important or less valuable than a neurotypical person.

“[People] may see me on the outside as different,” Budny says. “I’m just a normal person. All people with autism, we’re just normal people. We may think different or see the world different. We’re just like you. I completely understand people. People may think I do things weird. It’s just the way I am. We’re, simply put, normal people.”

Each of these students has individual needs and is affected in his or her own way by Asperger’s, but these students all have one thing in common: They have all accepted their differences and looked past them.

After studying Asperger’s and how having it affects her daily life, Weaver has grown to be more accepting of herself. She has learned coping mechanisms to deal with her sensitivity to light and noise. She has learned how to make friends and be more social than she was in high school. She has accepted that she is different from other kids and sees that as a blessing.

“You have to say, ‘There before the grace of God go I,’” Weaver says. “It is a blessing to have Asperger’s because there are so many people that destroy themselves trying to please other people.”

THE WRITER’S CONNECTION

Growing up with a sister who has autism was not always easy. Alli has a temper. Sometimes the smallest things would set her off. She is also the most stubborn person I know. Even though I know Alli has a disability that makes her different than other people, I don’t see her that way. To me, she is just my older sister. Alli has low-functioning autism, which means that her intellectual level will never be equal to that of neurotypical people her age. Now that Alli is graduated, she works in a job program. Even though she will never have the chance to experience college, there are many people on the spectrum who have that opportunity. However, having autism will hold challenges for them that a neurotypical student would not face.
A SHARED ENTERPRISE

Local car restorers talk history and heroes.

words by Nathan Havenner | photos by Andre Forrest
As a kid, I always went out to the garage with my dad to watch him labor over his prized Rallye Red 1971 Plymouth Cuda.

I was 17 years old when he finally let me take the driver's seat. We were on our way back from a cruise-in, and he just pulled over, opened his door and said I could drive it the rest of the way home. I grabbed the wheel and put the Hurst shifter into gear. I was nervous, but not too nervous. I stepped into the throttle and wound it up, and my dad told me to slow down. I couldn't help it. I was driving the most important vehicle of my childhood.

For many people like my father and me, these cars are more than just a hobby—they are a passion and a way of life.

There are two men in Kent who have made the automobile their life's work. They represent two different generations, but share a love of cars and the craftsmanship it takes to keep them running.

Dale Adams, 62, is the elder statesman and industry standout. His apprentice, Jon Smith, is the up and coming future of the industry. Their relationship represents a longstanding tradition—the passing of knowledge from one generation to the next.

The duo works in an 87-year-old building on Gougler Avenue, conveniently situated on the Cuyahoga River waterfront and home to a family of mechanics and car lovers alike. Eventually Adams will relocate to Ravenna to give his business a fresh start, and 315 Gougler Avenue will become a brew pub and patio.

Today, Adams' office looks like it could have belonged to one of the great automotive designers from the Art Deco era of the '20s, '30s and '40s. It is accented by detailed woodwork and antique light fixtures that hang from the high ceiling. His wooden desk features a bronze name plaque and antique hood ornaments.

When I arrive at Adams' shop, he greets me with a firm handshake. His hair is white but still shows some remnants of the blond it used to be. His two German Shepherds look over to make sure I'm a welcome guest.

As Dale Adams Enterprises has restored antique and classic cars for about 40 years. Adams has possessed some of the rarest and most valuable cars in the world, including a 1911 Mercedes Skiff and a 1934 Packard Dietrich Victoria speedster. His restorations have won at some of the most significant car shows, such as Pebble Beach in 2012 and Veteran Motor Car Club of America in 1994. He even sells his own brand of mechanics creepers.

Although Adams is a well-respected authority figure in the industry, he makes it clear he has not forgotten where he came from. Once an apprentice himself, he believes in the passing down of knowledge that isn't attainable through a formal education. "You got a lot better education at the hand of a master," he says.

His wooden desk features a bronze name plaque and antique light fixtures that hang from the high ceiling. His wooden desk features a bronze name plaque and antique hood ornaments.

"FOR MANY PEOPLE ... THESE CARS ARE MORE THAN JUST A HOBBY—THEY ARE A PASSION AND A WAY OF LIFE."

He credits his education to the men who came before him and believed in him, including his old boss Glenn Pray at the Auburn-Cord-Duesenberg Co. The ACD Co. would supply the owners of luxury cars with replacement parts, service and restoration work, an outlet Adams would latch onto later. In just four years Adams learned a wealth of knowledge from Pray—how to weld, solder, hammer weld and paint.

After opening a restoration business, Adams caught the attention of Tom Lester, a significant collector of antique and classic cars. Lester became both friend and mentor to the young craftsman, pushing him into dimensions of restoration work he hadn't previously been able to do.

Lester expected the mechanical aspects of his cars to perform as if they were new. He loaned Adams the money so he could buy a machine shop and move up in the industry—an essential move, Adams recalls, to the building of his enterprise. 

"Towards the end of Glenn's life, all that he had done didn't matter as much as what he was passing on," Adams says. "If you don't have a person like Tom or Glenn to invest in you with time, money or friendship, you can't learn the skills—they're just not taught."

Working alongside the antique gas pumps and neon Auburn sign is Smith—the 24-year-old apprentice and mechanical engineer Adams hired on a gamble in 2012. Hearing of Smith's eagerness and work ethic from a mutual friend, he invited him to the shop. Smith arrived for his first day of work feeling nervous. He had experience working on newer cars, but not on the classic ones. He had learned textbook knowledge of mechanics from four years at the University of Akron. But this, Smith says, was different.

When hiring an apprentice, Adams says he looks for someone who has already invested in themselves, someone with experience working on their own cars—both are qualities he felt Smith had. Adams started Smith out working on small pieces, gradually teaching him the skills he himself had mastered over a 40-year career.

For many novices like Smith, the main difference between new and classic automobiles is clear from first glance. Almost everything is bigger on an antique car, from the brakes to the rear end to the engine itself. In the time before World War II, luxury cars such as Cadillac and Marmon could have engines with up to 16 cylinders. The majority of cars produced today have six at most.

As for replacement parts go, calling up your local auto parts shop isn't an option. If you break something, you'll usually have to repair it or make a replacement. "I've fabricated quite a few parts here," Smith says. "It's the only way to learn."

As time progressed, and Smith's skills improved, Adams let him craft more intricate pieces. Smith was slowly but surely learning the art of automotive restoration. Like any other art, it takes years to become a master.
And this means making mistakes along the way.

"Dale is always willing to step in and help if I get in over my head," Smith says. "He has all the experience, so he knows from his mistakes where I am likely to screw up."

In retrospect, Adams realizes he has become to Smith what Lester and Pray were to him. He wants to make sure his employees learn the same skills he was taught so they will continue on through future generations.

Together, Adams and Smith are working on a 12-cylinder 1934 Packard, the first car Adams is building for himself in more than 40 years. Taking a page from the craftsmen of the past, Adams is hand-forming the entire body of the car, which was common practice all the way back to the Art Deco period, when these cars were first made. Although Adams designed the entire body of his Packard himself, Smith will be right there alongside him in the building process.

"IF YOU TAKE HIS CURRENT KNOWLEDGE AND HIS ATTITUDE, IN 20 YEARS HE WILL REALLY BE SOMETHING ELSE."

Despite his love of cars and the knowledge he is learning from Adams, it's not always easy for Smith and guys his age to be involved with collecting cars. The cost of owning a classic car has skyrocketed in the last decade, and continues to climb as the years go by. Classic muscle cars sold new for roughly $8,000 routinely fetch north of $1 million at high-profile auctions. While the increase in value is beneficial for those who already have their dream car, it can be a tough situation for young individuals starting out on their own. Even a young buck like Smith frets at the thought of it.

"Some of those auctions pull ridiculous prices for the cars and then everyone on Craigslist selling their car says, 'I've got a $100,000 car here,' " Smith says. "No, you've got a $5,000 shell that will be worth $25,000 when it has a $100,000 restoration in it."

Smith's love of cars does not just include the pre-war classics like those at Adams' shop, but cars from all eras. "There is not one thing I like—I like muscle cars, classic cars, little British sports cars," Smith says. "I like new cars, old cars, and it's really hard to pick one."

After some thought, he settled on a 1968 Dodge Charger. But later that night I received a text from him saying that he had changed his mind—his favorite car is actually a Dodge Viper. If the classics define style and luxury, then the Viper is the definition of power and brute force. It is a modern sports car, much like Adams' Jaguar was many years ago.

As Adams continues to take on his latest Packard project, and an upcoming relocation, he's also continuing an education. Hoping to be involved in the industry for as long as possible, Smith has invested in himself and is appreciative of Adams' investment in him. Adams says Smith has the potential to succeed, even if it takes decades. "If you take his current knowledge and his attitude, in 20 years he will really be something else," Adams says.

"It takes a long time to learn what we do."
A growing population of "second-chancers" takes another shot at higher education.

words by Mariam Makatsaria | photos by Re'Yana Graham
Beverly Johnson was not always a poet. In fact, five years ago, she was nervous about reading any of her writings to anyone but herself. She’s a slight woman with curious, wet eyes behind a pair of burgundy-framed glasses and a scarf always looped around her neck. Sitting in a small classroom a semester ago, Johnson listened intently to her poetry professor, who happened to be about her age, if not younger.

“People asked me if I was the professor,” she laughs now, delicate hands cupped around a mug of coffee. She has a thin voice, which could be easily mistaken for a 20-year-old’s if she were speaking on the phone. It was intimidating, she says, reading her work in front of a room full of young and fresh-faced students who have seen little of life compared to her. Nevertheless, she wrote poems raw with memories of her husband, Harlan Johnson, and shared them. She did so without evidence of self-pity or bitterness but with a certain kind of hope.

As the reality of retirement prodded three Kent State students to answer the looming “now what?” question, they found comfort in the expansiveness of poetry and prose. It brought them so much enjoyment; it became their passion. To help pursue unexplored endeavors, Kent State offers retirees a chance to enroll in college courses through its Senior Guest Program.

“Each state institution of higher education in Ohio is required by Ohio law to offer this type of program,” says Monica Brately, outreach program director at the Office of Continuing and Distance Education at Kent State. The program began in 1999 as a result of the enactment of the Ohio Revised Code that allowed senior citizens 60 years or older to attend state university or college courses on a noncredit basis without being charged tuition.

In the 2014 academic year, 109 older adults opted to go back to school at Kent State, instead of kicking back and relaxing, according to enrollment statistics by the Kent State Office of Continuing and Distance Education.

This exploration of continual learning was conceptualized in the 1970s, with the emergence of multiple initiatives, including the “Learning to be” report by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1972. Also known as the Faure Report, it accentuated the establishment of a continually evolving body of knowledge throughout the course of life—from cradle to grave.

Lifelong learning had a second wave of popularity in the 1990s and is having one again now as baby boomers begin to retire. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the youngest baby boomers just turned 50 in 2014, leaving the oldest on the cusp of retirement. The shift in an older population is beginning to change the age distribution of the U.S., especially in Ohio.

The Ohio Department of Development states that 15 percent of Ohio’s population is age 65 years or more. About 84 percent of the U.S. population in the same age group is no longer in the labor force, according to 2013 population statistics by the U.S. Census Bureau.

“The baby boomer generation includes a highly educated population of older adults who know the benefits of cognitive, physical and social activity, and everything suggests that they would be eager to take advantage of these types of opportunities,” says Kelly Cichy, associate professor teaching courses in gerontology. “Universities could and do play an important role in this lifelong learning.”

As of 2015, there are 58 colleges and universities in Ohio with programs for senior citizens above the age of 60, according to the Ohio Department of Aging. The Kent State program caters to retirees, who no longer receive the stimulation that comes with working in a challenging environment. Some are hit by a realization, or an insight in the flow of life-changing events, such as the death of a loved one or the birth of another. Others are overwhelmed by a sudden urge to rekindle a lost passion or inspired by their tremendously curious minds. The motives vary.

For Johnson, it was her husband’s death from lung cancer on Oct. 9, 2009. The year after her husband’s passing was a stream of grieving thoughts and reminiscences of their life together—their travels, their love for gardening, hiking, sculpture and all that’s artistic. That was her pain; for months on end, she was dwarfed by it.

Johnson remained at home most of the time, refraining from parties and outings. She allowed herself to grieve and even went as far as to join a workshop at a grief center in Beachwood, led by John Fox, a certified poetry therapist and president of the Institute of Poetic Medicine. This is where she would ultimately meet David Hassler, director of the Wick Poetry Center at Kent State. Hassler encouraged her to take poetry classes at the university.

“Sometimes [my husband] would look up from TV-watching and say, ‘Why aren’t you writing?’” Johnson says. “I remembered those words after he passed away. I decided to take poetry courses at Kent.” The will to learn, she says, changed her life. The sheer existence of poetry, through which she could describe her loss and confusion, became a comfortable idea. She had an impulse to write, and she indulged it.

Her poem, “Ready,” reads:

That soft whisper sweet as honey on a warm biscuit traveled right past my ears straight to my heart. I knew it was you; my name spoken like no one ever had or ever could again. I lay on our cold bed for my heart to quit, my tears to dry and I was ready. Ready to go wherever dead people go so I can answer: ‘What?’

Johnson says the poetry classes did help her heal, and she has now moved on to write about other tragic experiences—the
passing of her father and her 18-year-old son. She writes in a conversation-like prose with her youngest son, who was only 9 years old when a train split his older brother David's car in half, killing him and his girlfriend instantly. Johnson and her friend Judy Wilson even started a writing group that meets at Kent Free Library every month.

"Beverly was a wonderful addition to classes and her friend Judy Wilson was also a wonderful presence," says Katherine Orr, associate professor of English at Kent State. "I find that the Senior Guest Program lends a refreshing diversity in the classroom and it's a win-win for everyone."

Wilson, 75, also has been taking writing classes at Kent State. Having worked as a bank teller, book keeper and the director of the literacy coalition in Portage County, writing had never occurred to her—nor did she ever think she would be good at it. It wasn't until a friend recommended the Senior Guest Program that Wilson decided to pursue it.

"I love learning and enjoy writing, though until I started taking classes at Kent I've not done any serious writing," Wilson says.

"The Senior Guest Program also provides benefits to older adults by introducing those who participate to new perspectives and to opportunities to work and learn side by side with younger adults," says Cichy. "This benefits the older adult, but it also brings their experiences and perspectives into the college classroom, which has benefits and significance for the younger adult college students in their classes."

But the best part? No prerequisites, no exams, no grades. Just learning for learning's sake. In contrast to students in their 20s, retirees are not troubled by the pressures of loans, career prospects or finals. This seems to comfort a lot of retirees, as the notion of facing tests and exams a second time around makes them chronically fretful.

Johnson says that she, too, loves the idea of not having to deal with the anxiety. She merely wants to be there for the connection. "The fact that you had to share your personal feelings in a classroom, that's the thing I loved the most," Johnson says. "It's a sensitive community in class because people are sharing such deep feelings and you can just become emotionally attached to them."

One of the most consistent findings in the literature is not only the importance of maintaining cognitive activity but also of remaining socially integrated in later life, Cichy says. "The program allows older adults to learn new things, and there is clear evidence that those who engage in these cognitively stimulating activities often remain 'intellectually younger, longer' and often live healthier lives and report greater life satisfaction," she says.

It's not only a sense of social integration that retirees get when they immerse themselves in the culture of higher education. They also obtain what it takes to age successfully. The reality of older adulthood is that maintaining high cognitive and physical functioning is essential for positive aging.

"Learning is absolutely wonderful," Wilson says amusingly. "Why would you ever stop learning? There is so much to learn and the more I learn, the less I know. I truly believe in lifelong learning. I could never sit at home and do nothing."

Another second-chancer shares this belief. As opposed to most poets who feel the urge to externalize everything, Toomas Tubalkain is quiet and poised, with grayish-green eyes so strikingly large that they seem to obscure the rest of his face. Even against the cacophony of coffee machines hissing, people chattering and others walking into the warmth from the outside cold, Tubalkain does not vary the volume of his voice. He is a man of not too many impassioned words, yet his poems are full to the brim with them.

Tubalkain wrote his first poem only a couple of years ago—and as his younger classmates were bashful about sharing their work, Tubalkain had already put that awkwardness behind him. Born in Sweden to Estonian parents, Tubalkain lived in Montreal before moving to Cleveland when he was 5. He graduated from Kent State in 1973, majoring in anthropology and flying through his courses as an honors student.

Because of his vivid, touching enthusiasm for academics, Tubalkain didn't have to think twice about going back to school. "I even got a backpack," he says, punctuating his sentences with smiles and ephemeral chuckles. "[The classes] allow me to pursue an education for its own sake, not for any job-related purposes."

Tubalkain retired from his job at the Department of Defense in Cleveland almost three years ago. A year earlier than that, he bought a farm where he now raises sheep and tends to a vegetable garden. He is also quick to mention the 1830s barn on his property, which he seems very fond of. He is a grandfather to three, a stepfather to two and a husband to Paula, who, along with her faded red hair, makes occasional appearances in his poems.

He wrote his favorite poem, "Temptation," while sipping a glass of Cabernet Sauvignon at the Secret Cellar in Kent. After describing the Cabernet's oaky and earthy notes, he wrote: "The redhead in
the corner booth flavors my eyes with her smile. While I write alone at the bar, I cannot help it, our eyes meet.” Following another amorous stanza, he ends the poem saying: “Too content with my life, I close the binder. I pay up, pay for parking and drive home to my redhead wife.”

But his wife is not the only subject of his poetry. Tubalkain writes about war, freedom and his Estonian identity. A lot of his poetry is derived from Estonian folklore and proverbs, he says. He talks about his confusion when consciously translating thoughts into English and his constantly mispronounced name. “Toooomas,” he says, heavily stressing the “O,” his lips forming a circle. He’s okay with people calling him Tom, though. He knows that his foreign name is hard for most people to wrap their tongues around. His classmates learned a lot from him, though—and so did he from them. He describes them as being “mature beyond their years.”

“I was surprised by how well they could express themselves,” he says after pausing to nibble on his blueberry scone. “To some extent, it’s the genuine emotion that makes poetry classes so special. You get to see inside the other person’s head.” Recovering from a shoulder surgery, Tubalkain decided not to take any classes this semester, but he is already considering taking a philosophy class in the fall. He says he wants to keep his mind as active as he possibly can—for as long as he can.

As for Johnson, she now indulges in dancing and has found a new appreciation for graceful movement. Next semester, she will try her hand at penning a memoir while taking a class at Kent State. “When I write, I always hope that something I’ve written will give someone else a clue about life,” Johnson says. By unfurling her feelings, meaningful events and memories, she hopes to pass down a chronicle of life to her son. She will also preserve her life stories, like the moments she continues to mould in stanzas and verses.
THE CRUX OF MODERN MEDICINE

Students who choose to go unvaccinated put their lives, and the lives of their peers, at risk.

BY CHRISSY SUTTLES

In the late 1990s, a medical researcher by the name of Andrew Wakefield published a piece in a national independent medical journal linking the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine to childhood autism. The paper was almost immediately discredited as fraudulent, and Wakefield lost his medical licence following the investigation into his claims.

Nonetheless, almost 30 percent of adults nationwide believe an overload of vaccines can be a catalyst for autism and 41 percent of adults under age 30 favor allowing parents to decide not to vaccinate their children, according to a recent Pew Research Center study.

These misconceptions about the risks of vaccines are to blame for the recent outbreak of measles and mumps in the U.S. Ohio had 383 reported cases of measles in 2014, and 482 reported cases of mumps—making it the national frontrunner, according to the Ohio Department of Health. Because of this, it’s imperative Kent State students educate themselves about the necessity of vaccines before taking them for granted.

Actress Jenny McCarthy, America’s own Lifetime Original Movie, publicly jumped on the anti-MMR bandwagon after her son was diagnosed with the neurodevelopmental disorder. Although she recently said she’s not against all vaccines, thousands of moms-turned-epidemiologists have used her experiences as an excuse to deny their children immunity from preventable viruses.

Students don’t have to be immunized to attend any Ohio colleges under state law. However, Kent State does require two doses of the MMR or recorded proof of immunity. Guidelines for not providing records can be fluid, though, as some students have simply forgotten to submit their records to the university.

“I have had every shot one is supposed to receive growing up, and my mom made sure I was protected,” says Parker Lipscomb, senior public health major.

Lipscomb doesn’t know whether or not he’s submitted records to the university, but as a public health student, he knows the importance of immunity.

“I feel vaccinations are necessary and extremely important,” he says. “The whole point of a vaccination is to prevent disease. I’ve never seen measles, and this younger generation has no clue about what these diseases can do to us. Disease is out there and the people who don’t get their shots invite that sickness into their bodies. That’s not a risk I’m willing to take.”

Students who are not vaccinated can have deadly repercussions, according to Tara Smith, associate public health professor, whose expertise includes infectious and emerging diseases.

“Like chickenpox, measles can be more severe when it is caught as an adult,” she says, “So college-age students are at risk for severe infection, which can include hospitalization for pneumonia or measles encephalitis.”

Measles, which usually begins as a fever, cough or runny nose, can quickly become pneumonia in children of all ages. The virus can lead to inflammation of the brain, which can cause seizures and brain damage in older children, according to the CDC.

Students who were not vaccinated as children can still receive the shots today at the De Weese Health Center.

“There is a lot of misinformation about vaccines out there, which overstate their potential side effects and underestimate the dangers of the actual germs,” Smith says. “As a consequence, many become more afraid of the vaccines and opt out of those.”

Smith says people don’t realize these deadly diseases that were more common in the past have the ability to re-emerge if vaccine rates decrease further.

Vaccines can have potential side effects, Smith says, but they’re extremely rare and the benefits greatly outweigh the risks.

“It’s often tough to separate good information from bad, especially on the Internet, but you’re at a much greater risk of a bad reaction to the food you consume every day or over-the-counter drugs—or even a lightning strike—than a serious reaction to vaccines,” Smith says.

Individuals who choose not to vaccinate put not only themselves, but anyone too young to be vaccinated, at risk for these preventable, potentially life-threatening diseases. Students should take a close look at the mediums from which they’re receiving information before deciding whether or not to be vaccinated—for the greater good.
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The ferry’s rocky ride from Battery Park in Manhattan to St. George Terminal on Staten Island was a long and humid one, overflowing with people standing solemnly. My destination was about three blocks from the docks, the site of a protest for Eric Garner, who was killed by a police chokehold in a scuffle with four officers on July 17, 2014. The protest was organized by his daughter, Erica Garner.

I can’t tell you why I wanted to see this protest. Because of its lack of publicity, it did not seem like it was going to attract many people (and it didn’t), but I had this tingling feeling in my bones telling me I had to go.

As I exited the ferry, I stood in the freezing rain staring at a black woman taking deep drags on a cigarette wearing a “Black Lives Matter” hoodie that did little against the rain. I figured we were headed to the same place, so I followed her. Our paces matched, and she looked at me and asked if I was headed to the protest. As our conversation would reveal, she was Erica Garner.

I didn’t know what to say to her—I was dumbstruck in the presence of someone who had lost so much.

This photograph is important because it manages to capture something very personal to Erica Garner in a very public setting. Between screaming “I can’t breathe” (her father’s last words) and “black lives matter,” she fought back emotions that only those who have lost a loved one can attempt to understand.

For 1/125 of a second, Erica Garner was just a twenty-something standing in the pouring rain, thinking about her father who had been taken from her.
NATIONAL AWARDS

2014 ASSOCIATION FOR EDUCATION IN JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION STUDENT MAGAZINE CONTEST

FIRST PLACE,
First-Person
Consumer Magazine Article
Christina Bucciere, “My Upright Life” (Dec. 2013)

SECOND PLACE,
First-Person
Consumer Magazine Article
Nick Shook, “Head Games” (May 2014)

ASSOCIATED COLLEGIATE PRESS 2014 DESIGN OF THE YEAR AWARD

SECOND PLACE,
Yearbook/Magazine Page Spread
Rachel Mullenax, “Kent’s Flashiest Cocktails” (April 2014)

REGIONAL AWARDS

SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS REGION 4 MARK OF EXCELLENCE AWARDS

FINALIST,
Feature Photography
Leah Klafczynski, “Unbreakable Bond” (May 2014)

FINALIST,
Non-fiction Magazine Article
Carley Hull, “Don’t Sweat the Small Things” (May 2014)
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