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## Klipsun Magazine, 2006, Volume 37, Issue 01 - September

Kate M. Miller  
*Western Washington University*

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# KLIPSUN

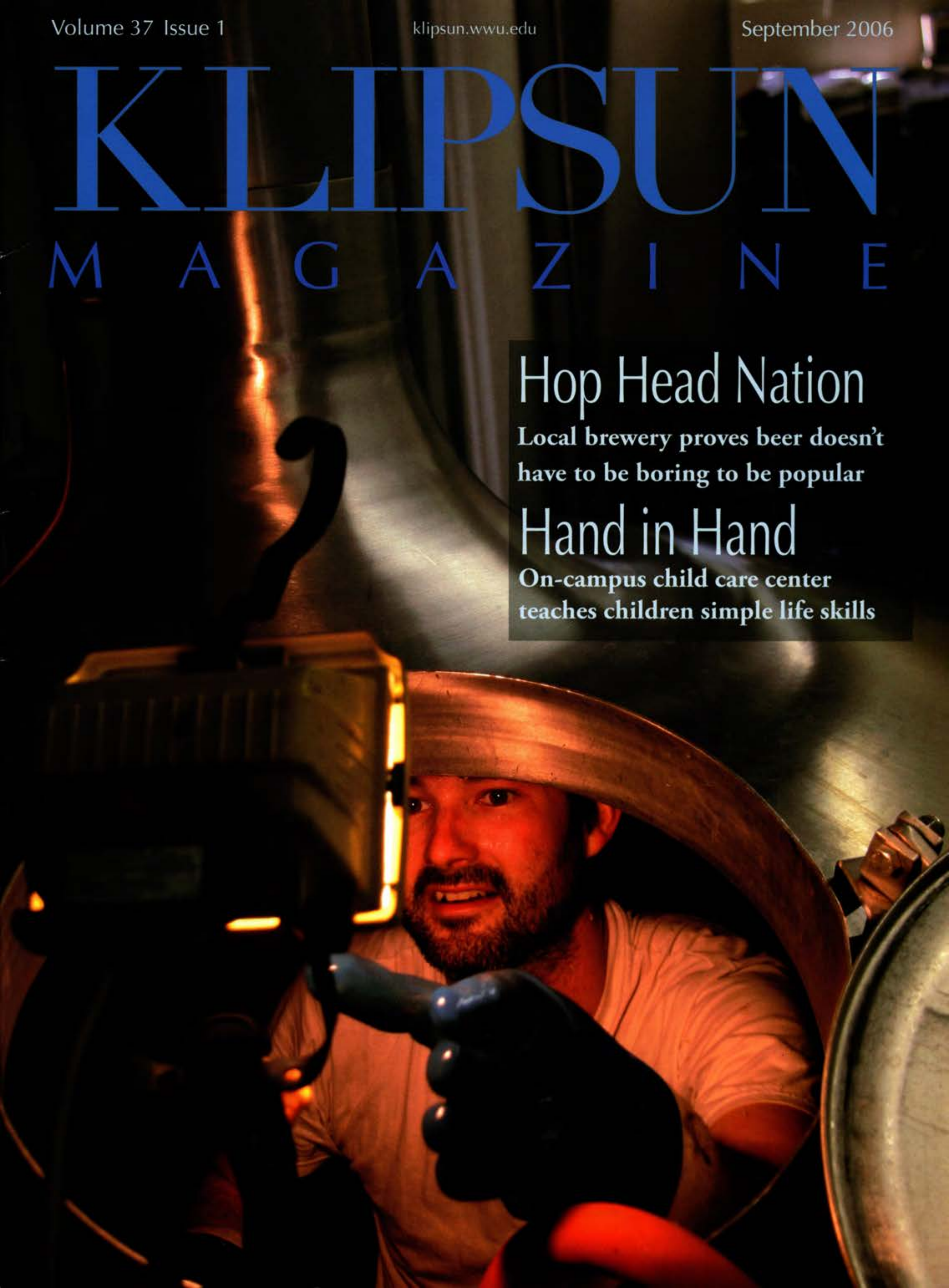
## MAGAZINE

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Local brewery proves beer doesn't have to be boring to be popular

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## Editor's note

I can still remember how eager I was to come to college my first quarter at Western four years ago. I don't think I slept more than a few hours the night before. Not because I was scared, and not because I was nervous. It was because I couldn't wait to explore life through the eyes of a college student.

I didn't believe people when they said it would go by fast. Four years seems like a long time to an 18-year-old. Well it isn't.

I can't help but feel excited when I think that the stories in this issue of Klipsun might help others live life a little more fully during their time in Bellingham.

Sneak a peak at Northwest culture in "Hop-Head Nation." Learn how some locals use Bellingham's natural structures as their own personal jungle-gyms in "Hard-Rock Getaway" or discover what those barefoot people balancing on an inch or so of rope at Boulevard Park are up to in "Walk the Slack Line."



If you can't find a story that grabs your attention in the magazine, then I encourage you to peruse the selection online at [klipsun.wvu.edu](http://klipsun.wvu.edu). There, you might find longboarding is the mode of transportation for you in "Kick, Push and Coast." Or you might decide that the multimedia presentation of one writer's experience in "Skydiving with Doctor Death" is an experience worth having.

I've graduated now, and I have one piece of advice for you. Live your life with no regrets. Appreciate the now and don't look back. I hope you find something that catches

your attention in this issue.

Thanks for reading,

Kate M. Miller  
Editor in Chief

Cover photo of Aaron Jacob Smith. By Chris Huber  
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Klipsun would like to thank Laurie Rossman, Bill Howatson and the rest of the staff at Western Washington University Publishing Services.

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# Sojo

## THE

### HOT

# Downtown

Story by **Megan Muldary**. Photos by **Jamie Badilla** and **Megan Muldary**.

**W**ith all the chaos of work, school and social activities, sometimes a woman just needs to have some “me” time. Downtown Bellingham can be just the getaway that any young woman wants. Railroad Avenue is close to the bus station, which makes for easy transportation, and has the right places to warrant spoiling for a few minutes or a few hours. Not only will your stomach be full, but so will your spirit as you find a fashionable outfit — including shoes — and a stylish new hairdo.

## Mi Shoes

Hours of operation:  
Monday - Saturday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.  
Sunday 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.



Whoever said diamonds are a girl's best friend was not living on a college budget. A more financially safe option, shoes, is where this day of pampering will begin.

Located at 1315 Railroad Ave., Mi Shoes has a plethora of beautiful shoes to choose from. Whether you are looking for something seasonal or something outrageous, owner Michelle Millar says her store has it all, including her favorite brand — Seychelles.

“I love the Seychelles,” Millar says. “They are all about comfort and style.”

The average price range of the sassy shoes found in the store is between \$60 and \$75. Millar says that during the spring and summer she has flip-flops available for \$15, and during the winter she carries short and tall boots that are just under \$200.

**A**fter finding the perfect shoes, the best thing to do next is splurge on that perfect outfit. Luckily, right next to Mi Shoes is Sojourn.

## Sojourn

Hours of operation:  
Monday - Saturday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.  
Sunday 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Sojourn has an eclectic blend of seasonal, trendy clothing that sales assistant Robyn Oyler says is aimed at customers ranging from teenagers to style-conscious middle-age women.

This hole-in-the-wall store offers brands such as !iT Jeans and Kenzie. With name brands like these, the prices are a little more than those at Bellis Fair Mall, but they are definitely worth it. Once you try on the clothes, it will become apparent why many young women pay \$60 to well over \$120 for a pair of jeans.

Besides clothing, Sojourn also has jewelry and accessories available starting at \$8 and going up to \$30.

**A**fter you finish buying a stylish outfit that even has matching shoes, it is time to grab a bite to eat. If you want a fulfilling lunch then the place to go is Avenue Bread & Deli.

Left: A view along Railroad Avenue in downtown Bellingham.  
Above: A light-blue wedge on display at Mi Shoes.

# On Indulgence

## Avenue Bread

### & Deli

Hours of operation:

Monday - Saturday 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Closed on Sundays



Conveniently located on the other side of Mi Shoes, Avenue is known regionally for its sandwiches. The restaurant has won the Bellingham Weekly's Best of Bellingham Sandwiches award for the past four years.

Owner and manager Wendy DeFreest says customers can get a sandwich and a drink for about \$7 or \$8. The most popular sandwich is anything with turkey, especially if the turkey is placed on Avenue's freshly-baked rosemary bread.

Bakers work during all hours of the night to make sure the artisan breads are available for local grocery stores. When they finish, the day bakers arrive to make the breads, scones and cookies that are offered in the deli.

After a delectable lunch, the last stop to make this day and your outfit complete is a new hairstyle.

## Envy a Boutique Salon

Hours of operation:

Tuesday - Saturday 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Closed Sundays and Mondays

Tucked off of Commercial Street, Envy a Boutique Salon has all the style needed to give clients the cut and color they dream of.

Owner and stylist Patrick Bertels says a client can get a cut and style for a little over \$30 and a full foil for about \$80. As at most salons, the prices vary with the stylist's experience. An appointment with stylist Brittany Fagundes should be scheduled at least a week in advance, but if you would like Bertels to style your hair, expect a couple months before his first open appointment.

No matter whom you meet with, the stylist will start the appointment with a consultation to determine the cut, color and price of the appointment.

Besides a great haircut, Envy also offers jewelry and bags from local artists as well as name brands like Louis Vuitton and Gucci.

After a day full of spoiling, it would seem only right that you should go home, change into your new outfit and shoes and gather up the ladies for a night on the town.



Above: Wallets on display at Mi Shoes. Below: A necklace and purse on display at Envy.

Far Left: Cupcakes for sale at Avenue Bread & Deli.



# ACADEMI

at any



# CS age

Not every student at Western enrolled right after graduating from high school. **Devin Smart** asks nontraditional Western students what it's like to go to college at an older age. Photos by **Jamie Badilla** and courtesy of Cecilia Stevens. Design by **Megan Lum**.

**W**estern senior Cecilia Stevens participates in school functions, relies heavily on financial aid to pay for college and hopes all the late-night cram sessions will result in a promising career after graduation. However, there's one noticeable difference between Stevens and most other students on campus — she's 57.

Stevens, who started at Western in fall 2004, is one of approximately 150 nontraditional students who begin attending Western every fall. The school defines nontraditional as students who begin their education at Western after the age of 25.

While some come back to school for the noble pursuit of knowledge, most students past the age of 25 return to school because they've reached a point professionally where they've hit a wall, says Anna Carey, director of New-Student Services and Family Outreach at Western.

Stevens says that's the reason she came back. The sociology major says she wants to use her degree to work in a management position with veterans, and, more specifically, women veterans. But she says she is open to other areas of employment.

Stevens, who has short graying-hair and eyeglasses that wrap around her face, says she is comfortable with the age gap between herself and the other students at Western. She feels she can bring life experience to the classroom that can be a value to her younger peers.

Stevens says she remembers particularly the impact of the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and John F. Kennedy.

"When we cover those in classes," she says, "having those life experiences can be an asset."

She says there's a give and take that sometimes occurs between her and the younger students.

"Students teach me, and I can also teach them," she says. "I've had students help me with math, and then they'll come to me for motherly advice."

Carey says students who come back to school after a lengthy layoff from academia face a variety of challenges that a recent high school graduate may not.

Carey says that among the challenges older

students face is adapting to the infusion of modern technology into academics.

"You're away from school for 10 to 12 years," Carey says. "And then you come back and you have to do research on the Internet and use Blackboard for your classes."

## WORLD TRAVELER

Stevens left her home state of New York in 1967 at the age of 18 to join the Air Force during the Vietnam War. With what she describes as a blend of idealism and patriotism, she enlisted so she could see the world.

The Air Force first brought her to Wiesbaden, a small city off the Rhine River in Germany that had ties to World War II.

While in Wiesbaden, Stevens spent part of her time attending classes through an extension program from the University of Maryland — her first taste of college.

Stevens says she never saw combat during the Vietnam War. But her base in Germany was part of an expeditionary force, a force not in Vietnam but tied directly to the war effort. She says soldiers injured during the fighting in Vietnam were flown in and treated at her hospital.

Stevens says her life and the lives of the people she cared about were closely linked to the Vietnam War.

"I lost a lot of friends in Vietnam," she says. "My brother spent two tours in Da-nang and I had a cousin who was also in Vietnam.

I was part of that generation."

Stevens finished her European service in Ruislip, small town outside London, and returned home to the United States in 1972. She spent some time at Mesa Community College in Mesa, Ariz., and in 1975 began attending Arizona State University. She lasted there until 1976 but had to withdraw from school to care for her sister, who was in a near-fatal car accident.

"Life happens," Stevens says. She married Mark Stevens, a fighter pilot for the Air Force, in 1978 and quickly had two kids, Jake and Caroline. This put a hold on her plans for higher education, but she says she doesn't regret it.

You probably won't find these students on Facebook looking to see where the party on Indian Street is.

— Anna Carey, director of New-Student Services and Family Outreach





Western senior Cecilia Stevens sits at her desk at an Air Force hospital in Wiesbaden, Germany, in the late 1960s.

“They are the lights of my life,” Stevens says.

During the next 15 years, Stevens split her time between raising her two children and part-time work in the public schools after the family moved to California in 1979.

But her life took a change in 1993 when she — and, as she likes to point out, Princess Diana — got divorced.

To support herself, Stevens says, she began working full-time. She moved into administrative work in the schools and became involved in end-of-life care for terminally ill patients.

Stevens arrived in Bellingham in 2000 to help her daughter and son-in-law, who were attending Western, care for their newborn child. She hasn't left since.

Stevens says she appreciates the opportunity she has to pursue her educational goals and has a bright view of the future.

“I consider it an honor to be going to school with young people who have given me a positive outlook on the future because of their motivation and excitement,” she says.

## TRANSITIONS

Carey, who works with first-year students to help ease their transition into college life, says the social aspect of college can present a variety of challenges for older students. She says it can be difficult for them to find a social network.

“Never discount the value of a group,” Carey says. “Not having one can be alienating and frustrating.”

Additionally, she says, older students who come to Western often are focused exclusively on school and can be frustrated when placed in classroom groups with younger students who don't share the same goals.

“You probably won't find these students on Facebook looking to see where the party on Indian Street is going to be,” she says.

## 'I CAN DO THIS'

Western junior Tina Stallings, 38, says her education is her No. 1 priority when she's on campus.

Stevens stands by an aid car at Williams Air Force Base in Chandler, Ariz., in the early 1970s.

She says she came to Western to give herself financial independence and the ability to support her three children.

Stallings, vying for a double major in psychology and sociology, says she finally found the strength to go back to school full-time after escaping an abusive marriage in 2000 from her second husband.

“Even though it was abusive and had a lot of negative aspects to it,” Stallings says, “it gave me the strength to not be dependant on a spouse for survival. It gave me the eternal strength to say, ‘I don't need these crappy jobs. I don't need to be in a marriage to be a person. And I can do this as a woman.’”

Stallings says she tried to go to Whatcom Community College while she was married, but interference

from her second husband prevented her from reaching her goals. After she left him, however, she started to attend Whatcom full time in 2000 and transferred to Western in fall 2003.

The mother of three balances her full class load with caring for her two sons, Chris, 18, and Kevin, 16, and her 12-year-old daughter, Hanah.

Stallings says her responsibilities can take her attention from her children at times, but she says she knows they're glad about what she's doing.

“They have vocalized to me that it's not fair that my teachers expect me to do homework on the weekends and, ‘We have no fun because it's homework, homework, homework,’” she says. “But I know they're proud of me. I'm doing this for them as well as myself.”

She says she wants to go into a school counseling position after she graduates. But she says she's learned to keep her options open, and she could also fall into a general counseling position or become a social worker.

Neither Stevens nor Stallings follow the stereotypical script for the college experience. But in reality, their goals of financial security and independence mirror those of most students. The different routes that students follow to college are more numerous than the number of majors Western offers, but in the end, the aspirations for most are to leave with a sharpened intellect and a clearer path to follow in life. ♣



# Hand in hand

The sun is just barely peeking over the tops of the trees in the Fairhaven Complex when the daily parade of preschoolers and their parents begins marching into the Associated Students Child Development Center in Stacks 11 and 12. One parent says the activity of the morning does not peak until 8:30. The teachers and parents around him look up briefly from their supervisory duties to nod earnestly in agreement.

The center, which opened in 1972, provides care to the children of Western students, faculty and staff. The center offers approximately 57 spaces for children ages 2 to 5, with 70 percent reserved for Western students and 30 percent for faculty and staff. The center fills to capacity each year, center director Jules McLeland says.

As they arrive, the children make a beeline for the knee-high, preschooler-size sinks to wash their hands before playing. McLeland says hand-washing significantly reduces the children's chances of becoming sick. They wash their hands before every meal and after each use of the restroom, in addition to learning other simple life skills. If the children fail to wash their hands, if they wipe their noses on a shirt sleeve rather than a tissue or if they forget to say "thank you," one of the adults gently reminds them of the routine.

McLeland says the adults, who include teachers, parents and Western student employees, mediate situations for the children. The center offers parents a cooperative option of volunteering in the center four hours each week in lieu of paying for those four hours. The additional help from parents provides children at the center with more individual attention. Volunteers focus on providing the children with decision-making skills by asking guiding questions rather than giving direct instructions.

"These kids are like little adults," Western junior Gracie Myrick says. Myrick, who has worked at the center in a work-study position

for more than two years, says the children interact with one another and with adults on a level much higher than many would expect of a preschooler.

The children's maturity is in part due to the center's commitment to provide stimulating activities, interactions and skills designed to encourage a child's personal development.

Sherry Haynes and her husband Garth Haynes, a Western post-baccalaureate student working toward his teaching certificate, enrolled their 3-year-old daughter in September 2005. While Garth Haynes does his student teaching, Sherry volunteers in the center four hours each week.

"It's probably one of the best child care centers in Bellingham,"

Sherry Haynes says. "It's the co-op base that makes this a nice place for families — the kids know all of the parent volunteers."

## These kids are like little adults.

— Western junior Gracie Myrick

Other practical skills taught at the center include table manners. After the children arrive and ease into the morning with play time, they separate into groups according to their ages and go to their respective classrooms for breakfast. By this time, nearly all 57 children have arrived at the center, and the volume inside is like that of a playground in the summer.

Breakfast is served just after 9 a.m., and the children learn to sit around the table and pass dishes family style, always remembering to share and say "please" and "thank you." One 4-year-old boy holds a tray and patiently waits for his neighbor to serve herself before he takes his own food. Across the table, a girl pours a glass of milk for herself and then pours one for the boy to her left.

"Stuff hits the floor sometimes, and milk is spilled, but oh well," teacher Carolyn Mulder says.

Mulder, who teaches the 4-year-olds, says all meals are prepared on-site and meet U.S. Food and Drug Administration guidelines as well as the center's own guidelines.

"Meals are low in sugar, highly nutritious and things kids like — which is kind of an oxymoron," Mulder says.

On this morning, the wheat-tortilla-and-cheese quesadillas elicit a dance from two 4-year-old girls and applause and cheers from the rest of the group.

After breakfast, activities vary among age groups and from day to day. Fridays are field-trip days. Some days include swimming at the Wade King Student Recreation Center, and some days include walks around campus. The center utilizes the myriad resources available to them on Western's campus and in the surrounding Bellingham community to expose the children to a variety of engaging activities, Mulder says. No matter what the activity, though, the atmosphere of orderly chaos is preserved every day at the center.

— Kira Freed

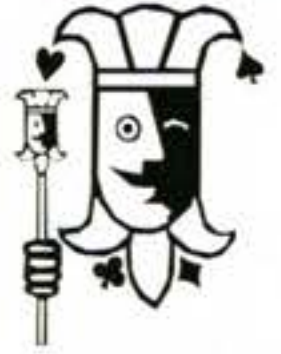
Western alumna Gina Lynch helps Cora Schultz and Fiona Dent, both 4, make "ants on a log" for a morning snack.

PHOTO BY JARED YOAKUM



# KNOWING WW

Poker's explosion in popularity wasn't limited to more tables in Las Vegas and celebrity television shows. **Andrew Irvine** visits with Western students who find themselves entrenched in the addictive world of online poker. Photos by **Chris Huber**. Design by **Megan Lum** and **Elana Bean**.



**A**n appealing ring floats through the afternoon air as two yellow Chinese stress balls circulate in Doug Kramer's right palm. The sounds are intended to invoke a calm feeling, but Kramer has just lost \$20 to an invisible opponent and the mood in the room is anything but tranquil.

Kramer, who graduated from Western in 2005, is one of many Americans enthralled with online poker. Gambling has always been a part of American society, but Internet growth and the recent popularity rise of Texas Hold 'Em has taken poker to another level.

As opposed to the lure of an actual casino, the danger from online poker stems from the fact that for 24 hours a day and seven days a week gamblers can feed their addiction in the comfort of their own home.

"It is definitely more addicting than any other kind of poker because it is right at your fingertips," Kramer says.

## MAKING THE DEPOSIT

In a matter of minutes, Kramer can type in the Web site address, and a screen pops up placing him around a table with seven strangers. All the player needs is a credit card and a

deposit. Once the money is in the account, it is hard to look back, Kramer says with a sigh.

Kramer, 23, began playing in 2005 by putting \$25 in his account and has never dipped below that level.

"It's tough to get up big," he says. "I will be up, and then I will drop down and get pissed. Once I am mad I will keep playing, and it turns into a roller coaster ride."

With an initial deposit of \$25 or \$50, many online gamblers find the risk equal to the possible rewards.

"I was down to my last \$10," says Jason Cocking, a freshman at Western who began



Western freshman Coire McCabe holds a pair of queens in a Texas Hold 'Em style pick-up poker game in the Sigma residence hall lounge.

# WHEN TO FOLD

playing this past winter. "I entered a \$6 tournament and ended up winning \$400."

The skilled or lucky players may never dip below their beginning deposit, but many are not as fortunate.

Western freshman Brian Sims was watching television one evening when a commercial for online poker came on. He decided to give it a try.

Since then, he estimates he has lost \$200 to \$300.

"It's dangerous because it can become so addicting," Sims says of the gambling habit.

## THE ADDICTION

Once a player gets into the habit of logging on and playing a couple hands, it can become a vicious downward cycle, Kramer says.

"When I first started betting online, I was playing for four or five hours straight," he says. "I would just sit there and play tournament after tournament. I know people who are addicted to the sensation of losing just because it makes them feel alive."

Western freshman Tyler Marley says he was up to about \$1,000 playing at partypoker.com before he lost most of the money.

"I started out playing small cash games and kept getting better," Marley says. "I started paying bigger and bigger entry fees until I was up big."

Marley says he was paying \$20 to enter a tournament and coming away with about \$350.

"I was playing five hours a day for a week straight until I was up almost \$1,000," Marley says. "I bought an X-Box 360 and then lost all the rest of the money gambling."

Kramer says the addiction stems from the fact that online gamblers can win large amounts of money in their own bedroom.

"It's a rush for sure," Kramer says with a smile. "It's almost like a high. You can win money just sitting there."

Kramer says he thinks about quitting, but when he convinces himself that he could be do-



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY JAMIE BADILLA

ing something more productive, he wins big.

"Every time I lose, I feel like I am wasting my time," he says. "I will play for hours and get nothing, but then I will play again for an hour and win 20 or 30 bucks and it brings me back."

## BREAKING THE HABIT

After Sims lost more than \$200, he says, it wasn't difficult to ditch the addictive pastime.

"I was playing every day for a couple hours, but I felt like I could be doing better

things," Sims says. "I realized I could improve my grades. It's too time-consuming. I came here to go to school, not to play poker."

For others, it's not as easy to replace the rush that gambling brings. Marley says that if he had a steady income and enough time he would still be playing more than four hours per day.

Kramer says he has toned down the intensity from when he began playing online.

"I was playing four to five hours every night at the beginning," Kramer says with regret of his lost time. "I didn't even stop to eat."

My eyes began to blur and I couldn't sleep at night. My meals became beer."

Although he has cut back on the amount he plays, Kramer says he will probably never quit.

"I could stop, but what's the point?" he says. "I only put \$25 in, and it's fun."

### NOT JUST FUN AND GAMES

Lawmakers in Washington state have also taken notice of the growth in online gambling and have decided to do something about it. The Washington State Legislature amended an already existing law to make online gambling a Class C felony. The amendment went into effect June 7, 2006. Although the law carries a five-year prison sentence and a \$10,000 fine, it will be very difficult to enforce.

Kramer says he thinks the law is aimed more at the big-time gamblers who could be involved in money laundering rather than the average online poker player.

"I think the law is more of a scare tactic," he says. "But it could be enough reason to quit."

There are also other reasons to quit. Players often do not realize the effects of the addiction until it's too late, says Elva Giddings, coordinator for Prevention and Wellness Services at Western.

"It's when you stop paying attention and you get caught up in the playing that it starts to spiral out of control," Giddings says.

Many online-poker players fail to realize that the addictive habit can have a physical effect on the body, she says.

"You really feel it when you win or when you lose, and that produces an emotional reaction that affects your body," Giddings says. "So you do get a real physical impact from what happens on that screen."

As the afternoon creeps toward the night, Kramer double-clicks the mouse button and leans back, hoping the chips on the computer screen will slide his way. Somewhere around the world, seven strangers are rooting against him. Kramer just keeps rotating his Chinese stress balls trying to decide whether to bet or fold. ♣



Western freshman Brian Sims says playing poker online is easier than with real chips, but online poker is more addicting.

# Click to fold



fig. 1. As the game progresses, the moves are tracked in a dialogue box in the lower right corner.



fig. 2. The shared cards are displayed in the center of the table.



fig. 3. Each player's name and bet are indicated above the character.



Left and below: Western junior Ryan Olson slacklines at Boulevard Park.

PHOTOS BY KYRA LOW



# Walk the <sup>slack</sup> Line

Balance. Place one foot on the rope. Now lean forward; weight must be above the foot. Careful now, and when ready, jump up.

Slacklining is a growing sport, but one that is catching on quickly. Just look around Bellingham's Boulevard Park on a sunny day. There are usually one or two slackliners walking that thin line between two trees.

That's where Western junior Ryan Olson says he gets in most of his practices, traversing a flat, olive-green nylon rope less than an inch wide. But make no mistake; this isn't tightrope walking. This line moves.

Two years ago, in the spring of Olson's freshman year, he was hanging out at Boulevard, having a barbecue with some friends, when he saw a slackline set up between the trees. Olson says he and his friends tried it, but none of them could walk it or even stand on it. However, his buddy bought a slackline the next day and once again they tried it. After a few more tries and a successful walk, Olson bought his own line.

Now, the sport has him hooked.

"It works everything, your core muscles, too. All you need is a couple of trees and the sun and a slackline. And it impresses people," Olson says.

When it's sunny and classes aren't too overwhelming, Olson is out every other day.

Pick a spot, focus on it. Don't fall.

The aspect that makes slacklining so

difficult is that the rope is springy and gives, bouncing to and fro with the walker. It is this facet that slackline pioneer Scott Balcom, 42, says he enjoys so much. He's been slacklining for more than 20 years now and still practices outside his Ashland, Ore., home.

Balcom says he first encountered a primitive version of slacklining in 1983 in Yosemite Valley, located in Yosemite National Park, Calif. There, Adam Grolkowski and Jeff Elington walked a thin, flat rope. They were walking and swinging, juggling clubs and tossing them back and forth, each on his own rope, set up parallel to each other.

Inspired by this, Balcom says he began perfecting his technique and equipment. Then he set out for a new challenge. The highline.

In the fall of '83, Balcom and some friends set up the world's first highline, which is a slackline set at a high height, under a bridge in California. Balcom estimates the line was about 120 to 140 feet above the ground.

"I lowered a 100-foot tape from the rope, and it didn't touch the ground. There was still quite a bit of space left," Balcom recalls. Protected only by a piece of rope, called a leash, that attached his harness to the slackline, Balcom walked the line.

Yet, Balcom says walking the first highline wasn't his most memorable walk. That honor goes to the Lost Arrow Spire in Yosemite

Valley. He was the first person ever to cross it.

"The topographic map puts it at about 2,890 feet," Balcom says. The spire has nothing else around it, nothing for him to look at or focus on except empty space below. "It is psychologically daunting. With the bridge, there was something close by and that helps. But the spire, it's really high. It was scary. I couldn't believe how scary it was."

That was 1985, and since then Balcom says he has walked it again, on the 10-year anniversary of that first crossing. Along with him that day crossing the spire was Darrin Carter, who later went back and did the walk without a leash to catch him if he had fallen.

Olson's lines aren't anywhere near as high as Balcom's. He says his tallest line has still been less than 10 feet high. But that doesn't stop his excitement for the sport. With his lines usually between 3 to 7 feet high, he practices moves: turns, sit starts, even sitting cross-legged on the rope. Olson repeats the moves, sunlight dappling the tree branches. On the higher rope, Olson is almost among the branches as he sways back and forth along the rope.

"After you take your first step, it's all over," Olson says. "It's an addiction."

Concentrate. Steady. Don't look down. Just put one foot in front of the other. There it is, one step.

—Kyra Low



# Hop Head Nation



The hops-heavy brews at Boundary Bay Brewery & Bistro are changing the definition of good beer. **Zach Kyle** discovers this perennial's recipe to the success of microbrewing. Photos by **Chris Huber**. Design by **Elana Bean**.

**A**fter ducking between buildings holding newspaper umbrellas and hanging sopping Gore-Tex jackets by heater vents, the denizens of the Northwest aren't in the mood for beer that tastes like drizzle.

Choosing between the Budweisers and Millers of the world is like choosing between loaves of white bread — their subtly different flavors are variations on the same drab theme. These domestic breweries battle to produce the most nondescript and least offensive beer.

The philosophy at Boundary Bay Brewery & Bistro in Bellingham is that bigger beer is better. In beer-speak, big means the brew has an intense flavor, a higher-than-average alcohol percentage and a color somewhere between that of honey and oil.

Boundary Bay constructs snappy brews by using lots of hops, which lends a sharp bite and usually corresponds with higher alcohol content. Head brewer Aaron Jacob Smith says his instinct is to add more hops than is prescribed by the recipe until he toes the line where any more would make the brew too bitter.

India Pale Ales are the flagship style for hop-heavy beer. The long trip from England to colonial India was tough on sailors, but it was brutal for beer, rendering it flat and sour. In the 18th century, enterprising brewers discovered the acidic property of hops works as a preservative. Thus, by adding extra hopps, Her Majesty's troops had fresh beer to stave off the beating India heat, and the IPA was born.

Perched at the bar, Smith says Bridgeport Brewing Company's IPA has long been the industry standard. At 5 percent alcohol and 45-50 IBUs (international bitterness units, a measure of hops content), he says, the Bridgeport's IPA became the model for others to follow. For Boundary Bay, it was a point of departure.

"We had the hoppiest IPA five years ago," Smith says. "Our IPA was maybe 90 IBUs and approximately 7 percent alcohol. I think a lot of people thought it was too hoppy. But slowly they learned to like it. They became what we call hop heads."

Deschutes Brewery in Bend, Ore., jumped on the hop-head bandwagon in April by replacing its Quail Springs IPA with a stronger and hop-heavier product, Inversion IPA. Deschutes marketing coordinator Jason Randles says tepid sales prompted the switch from Quail Springs, a traditional English-style IPA with 40 to 50 IBUs and 6 percent alcohol, to Inversion, "A true Northwest-style IPA." That means swapping English for full-flower American hops, ratcheting the IBUs up to 80 and boosting the alcohol content to just under 7 percent.

"Quail Springs sales were down." Randles says. "We wanted

**Left: Boundary Bay's most hoppy to least hoppy beers, left to right: IPA, extra special bitter, amber, scotch and stout. The lightness and darkness of the beer depends on the temperature at which the malts are roasted.**

**Inset: Boundary Bay head brewer Aaron Jacob Smith chomps on a chunk of soaked hops that he cleaned out of a brew tank.**





Above: Assistant brewer Steve Ellison pours a bucket of Saaz hops into a batch of pilsner in one of the brewing tanks at Boundary Bay Brewery & Bistro.

to give drinkers what they wanted. Inversion is more the style people want right now. We can't brew enough of it. Inversion is flying off the shelves."

Dave Morales knows a thing or two about beer. A former brewer at Boundary Bay and Pike and Pyramid breweries in Seattle, Morales now sits at ease behind the counter at his Bellingham specialty beer store, The Bottle Shoppe, and chats with customers about spring seasonals and fruit-infused Belgian lambics. The Northwest, he says, is the hop-head capital of the world, the place where beer drinkers aren't afraid to take on a challenge.

"I think the general public here is adventurous," Morales says. "They are willing to try anything once or twice."

At Boundary Bay, Smith glances at the brewing tanks in the adjacent room. He talks about complex beer as giddily as a schoolgirl reciting gossip.

"Breweries like Stone [Brewing Co. in San Diego] have done a lot to make huge, huge beers," Smith says. "Just intentionally making them ridiculous and calling them Arrogant Bastard, with all the jargon on the labels saying 'You're not worthy.' Or their Ruination ale, meaning it's just going to ruin your palate. I think that's great. I

love to see that."

Just like food, taste in beer develops regionally, Morales says. Seattle micro-brewery Pyramid Alehouse established itself in the mid-80s with lighter English styles such as pale ales and ESBs (extra special bitters). Northwest beer drinkers have evolved, and they like their hops sodas to pack a wallop.

"Just like in cuisine, certain things will be big," Morales says. "Chilean sea bass was huge for a while. Now, nobody eats it. It's the same thing with beer. Brewers get bored making the same thing day in and day out and think, 'Well, let's push the boundary and do this or try this.' And that's where imperial IPAs came from, somebody saying, 'Wow, let's throw in three times as many hops and make it stronger and see what happens.'"

Smith sips Boundary Bay's IPA from a sampler glass, when he's nudged by a fellow pointing to a May 9 Bellingham Herald headline, "Boundary Bay wins awards for best bitter, strong ale." Smith smiles but hardly seems elated. The silver and bronze medals from the World Beer Cup are just the latest for Boundary Bay, which has taken home six international awards and 32 regional and national prizes since

# A beast is born ...

In 2001, Boundary Bay head brewer Skip Madsen covertly brewed a single batch of imperial IPA without the owners' green-lighting the project. Usually, such cloak-and-dagger activities on the clock land folks in the unemployment line. Madsen's effort earned Boundary Bay an international award.

Current Boundary Bay head brewer Aaron Jacob Smith helped Madsen with the illicit batch. He tells the story.

"Breweries don't like to change their recipes. Brewers do. When Skip and I made the regular IPA hoppier and hoppier, we didn't ask the owner. We just started doing it. Skip would always add more hops than he had on the recipe, just to do it. Then, he'd taste it to see if he liked it. He was always adding more. I had to keep him from making it ridiculously hoppy.

"We just kind of wanted to make an imperial IPA. We wanted to make the regular IPA stronger and more bitter because we'd never had one that was bigger and hoppier than ours. So we made a runoff

batch because we wanted to try it. And it was a hit. Instead of being 7 percent, it was eight and a half. And instead of being 90 IBUs, it was 200 IBUs. It had ridiculous amounts of malt and hops, and it was a huge success. It won a gold medal in the World Beer Cup, which is a very prestigious competition.



The Boundary Bay Imperial IPA.

"That's the medal I was most proud of because if we hadn't of won a medal with the very first batch we brewed of the imperial IPA, then we wouldn't have got to keep making it. The batch is very small. It makes fewer kegs and it costs five to six times more in hops to make. Your average batch of beer has maybe 10 pounds of hops at five bucks a pound for a cost of 50 bucks. Our imperial IPA has fucking \$400 worth of hops in it. So the owner is going to say, 'Whoa, whoa! That's not economically viable.' But the owner couldn't tell us not to brew the imperial IPA because it won a fucking gold medal."

The imperial IPA is available every day in a small glass at Boundary Bay.



Left: Boundary Bay offers 22 types of beer, including 10 from the tap.

Below: Boundary Bay head brewer Aaron Jacob Smith climbs into the brewing tanks to scrub any leftover residue from the inside walls.

opening in 1995. He returns to his sampler and says that Northwest beer drinkers have developed a tolerance for burly beer.

“Drinking beer is like eating Thai food,” Smith says. “It’s really hot, but when you eat Thai food a lot, you build up a tolerance for it. The next thing you know, you work your way up from one star to three stars. You keep eating Thai, and you might work up to five stars.”

Smith says leaving the Northwest reminds him how gaga the area is for hops.

“When I come back to Bellingham from a vacation, I have a Boundary IPA, and I think, ‘Holy shit! This is so bitter!’,” Smith says. “And for a moment, I think, ‘God, it’s too bitter,’ because I haven’t had anything that bitter for two weeks. When I’m on vacation, I’ll go out and find the best IPA I can find, and when I come back, ours is so much more bitter that it doesn’t taste that way when I drink it every day like I do.”

As more beer drinkers eschew watery domestics for zesty micros, the industry juggernauts, the influence of microbreweries is making a splash.

“The craft brew sales have reached between 6 and 9 percent of all beer sold,” Morales says. “And that includes the big ones like Sierra Nevada and Red Hook and Pyramid. Nine percent, a pretty small chunk. But considering 15 years ago that was 3 percent, that’s a big jump. And that’s why you see Michelob AmberBock and other new takes on light beer. Budweiser Select is a direct result of the success of the little guys who can be big.”

Smirking mad scientists like Smith cultivated the small-town militias that grew into the army of the Hop Head Nation. Once dismissed as a novelty or a passing fad, overzealous brewers in podunk towns are changing the good-beer paradigm. Their battle cry: brew it bolder, brew it hoppier. Brew it more like Boundary Bay has done it for years.

Cheers, hop heads. 🍺





# RESTORING EDEN

A Western student club combines Christianity and the environment to encourage people's relationship with nature. **Erica Ham** investigates Restoring Eden's contributions to political, environmental and religious discourse on campus. Photo by **Chris Huber**. Design by **Shannon Barney**.

"God's original plan was to hang out in a garden with some naked vegetarians," reads a brightly colored poster of Adam and Eve in a garden dotted with streams, plants and animals. The poster, sponsored by the Christian environmental group Restoring Eden, was created to inspire new ways of thinking about people's relationship with the environment, says Western senior Alexis Illyn, 22, who was president of the Restoring Eden club at Western during the 2005-2006 school year.

Restoring Eden is among the 14 Christian clubs and nine environmental clubs at Western, but it is the school's only club that combines Christianity and the environment.

"It's fun to have people come up, and we

start talking, and they're like, 'Is this a joke? A Christian environmental club?'" Illyn says. "There's a lot of environmental groups that have been so frustrated with the Christian community because they had often ignored environmental issues, so it's really good to talk to people and have them go, 'Oh Christians do care.'"

Western alumnae Katie Frankhauser and Kristi Lentz, created Restoring Eden in 2000. They borrowed the name from the nonprofit Christian environmental organization run by Alexis Illyn's father, Peter Illyn, in La Center, which is 20 miles north of Vancouver, Wash. Although the two groups share the same name, the club at Western is not a chapter of the

national Restoring Eden, Alexis Illyn says.

Alexis Illyn, who has been part of Restoring Eden at Western for two years, says that although many people think of environmentalists and Christians as being at opposite ends of the political spectrum, Christians have recently begun to support environmental issues.

Within the past decade, dozens of Christian environmental organizations have sprung up throughout the country, including the Evangelical Christian Network, which recently promoted its "What Would Jesus Drive?" campaign about the environmental toll of cars. Alexis Illyn says one Christian environmental organization, Creation Care,



has made environmental issues a pro-life concern, stating that due to high levels of mercury in the water, one in six babies is born with harmful levels of mercury in his or her blood.

The Ray C. Bliss Institute of Applied Politics, a program within the University of Akron, Ohio, that collects applied and scholarly research, conducted a study in May 2004 on religious and environmental beliefs. The study showed that 52 percent of evangelical Protestants and 61 percent of mainline Protestants support stricter environmental regulations, a higher percentage than in previous years.

Although more Christians have begun to embrace environmental issues within recent years, Western is one of the few secular campuses that has a Christian environmental group, Alexis Illyn says. Many Christian schools, such as Seattle Pacific University and Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, have Christian environmental clubs similar to Western's Restoring Eden.

"The problem at secular schools is there is a strong environmental presence and a strong Christian presence, but the two hardly ever overlap," says Peter Illyn. "There has been this false dichotomy that if you're a Christian, you don't care about the environment."

Restoring Eden seeks to encourage Christians to think about their environmental responsibilities. Although members do trail restorations and clear invasive ivy on campus, Restoring Eden's main goal is to facilitate conversations. They have Bible studies underneath the stars, hold fair-trade coffee nights and organize forums.

"I've grown up in this weird kind of liberal, Christian and environmental [home]. You couldn't fit it in a box," says Alexis Illyn.

When Alexis Illyn was in middle school, her father took a sabbatical from a Foursquare Church in Portland, Ore., where he served as pastor, got two llamas and went on a thousand-mile hike down the Pacific Crest Trail. He came back inspired by what he had experienced and established a group called Christians for Environmental Stewardship, which he renamed Restoring Eden in 2001.

Alexis Illyn made environmentalism her own issue in high school after spending a week in Washington, D.C., lobbying against federal plans to drill in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Western junior Jubilee Pfeifer,

22, who is now an active member in Restoring Eden, went to high school with Alexis Illyn in La Center and heard about her trip when she came back from Washington, D.C.

"When she came back, I was like, 'Can she not talk about anything but boys and the Arctic Refuge?'" Pfeifer says.

One of Restoring Eden's 10 active members, Western senior Isaac Bonnell, 21, got involved in projects such as the Access Fund, Adopt-a-Crag and trail cleanups through the people with whom he rock climbed and snowboarded.

## HOW DOES FAIR-TRADE COFFEE IMPACT THE ENVIRONMENT?

One of Restoring Eden's focuses is telling others about the environmental and social benefits of drinking fair-trade coffee. According to Global Exchange, an international human-rights group, about 85 percent of fair-trade coffee is organic and shade-grown. Many small farmers do not have the money to cut down the forests around the coffee plantations or to purchase large amounts of chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

For more information, see [www.globalexchange.org](http://www.globalexchange.org).

He joined Restoring Eden in fall 2005.

"The stereotypical Christian issues are not environmental. It's been abortion, gay rights and all that other stuff," Bonnell says. "So I find that in the political arena, there is a very small Christian voice for environmental issues."

The Bush administration, which won a large percentage of the Christian vote in 2004, has received criticism from environmental groups because of its hesitance to set stricter environmental regulations and its attempts to drill in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Western senior Joel Shreve, 21, who was president of the College Republicans during the 2005-2006 school year at Western, says approximately one-third of the students who were part of the College Republicans on campus last year were Christian.

Shreve said he believes that as science and research bring environmental issues to light, there will probably be more Republicans who advocate these issues. He says that because Republicans are more conservative than Democrats, they tend to wait until they have more research before they advocate a plan.

"A lot of the Republicans, and probably more of the Democrats, started out much more skeptical on the side of should we protect the environment," Shreve says. "I think that as we see the effects more and more, the people who are more conservative will be like, 'Yeah, it's real.'"

Alexis Illyn says she believes that if there is an emerging Christian environmental movement, then Christians, who have traditionally been at the politically right, may move to a more moderate position when it comes to environmental issues.

Locally and nationally, Christianity and environmentalism are starting to converge into clubs and organizations like Restoring Eden. The nondenominational church that Alexis Illyn attends when she's in Portland, Imago Dei, has its own environmental ministry. Churches across the country have begun switching to fair-trade and organic coffee, says Pfeifer, who attends a church in her hometown with its own barista.

Bellingham residents Mike Massey, 43, and Kate Massey, 44, have prepared presentations on the relationship between Christianity and environmentalism and have used them to lead Christian environmental Bible studies in Bellingham. They did their first environmental Bible study at Birchwood Presbyterian Church and were asked to come back twice after their presentation, Mike



Massey says.

"The response has been almost uniformly positive," Mike Massey says. "But of course, the people that usually go are the ones who would say that Jesus wouldn't pollute this planet that he gave us."

There is, however, a population within the Christian community that has not embraced these environmental issues. Peter Illyn says he finds that most of the people who disagree with Restoring Eden's environmental message are the ones who believe in manifest destiny — that God endowed America to Christians as a gift. He says people who believe in manifest destiny often ignore America's environmental tolls because they believe God gave America natural resources to use for its own gain. They also tend to think that humans are above nature, Peter Illyn says.

"What's strange is oftentimes the groups we're fighting are those founded in the political right who see themselves as the religious right," Peter Illyn says. "We challenge that Christian thinking that says that humanity is separate from nature. We are nature."

Alexis Illyn, Pfeifer and Bonnell sit in Pfeifer's apartment, eating chocolate-covered peanuts and talking about their plans to go stargazing at Samish Overlook with other members of Restoring Eden this weekend.

Saturday evening, they will gather flashlights, binoculars, telescopes and Bibles and drive to Samish Overlook. They will watch the sun set pinks and blues over the silhouette-like semblance of mountains fading in the evening sky. They will see the profile of Mount Constitution as it towers like a giant over Douglas firs, dandelion and pink and white rhododendrons that blossom like cherry bonbons every spring. Then, they will view the stars as they surface, and talk about God underneath the night sky.

"There are two views: one of Christians having dominion over the earth," Alexis Illyn says. "And then on the other hand, people are saying that dominion comes with a higher purpose — that we need to protect [the earth]."

A new movement is gathering among the vine maple, red alders and firewood. Followers of this movement believe that one cannot love God while destroying what God called good. ♣

**Alexis Illyn stands at the base of Mount Hood.**  
PHOTO COURTESY OF ALEXIS ILLYN



My dad, Doug Harrey, and I went to a life-celebration party his co-workers put on in April 2005. The chemotherapy treatments made my dad lose his hair.

# My Personal Loss

The first week of my last fall quarter in college was not immediately unique. The excitement of graduation already was welling within me. I meticulously calculated credits to ensure I would graduate.

Classes started Wednesday, Sept. 21, 2005. Sunday, I found out the colon cancer my dad had been battling for three years had moved to his brain. Before, the cancer moved from his colon into his liver. Doctors removed two-thirds of his liver. We hiked Zion National Park in Utah six months later. The cancer moved into his lungs. We hiked Glacier National Park in Montana three months later.

So was this different? Cancer in the brain sounds more serious. But, let's be honest — it's my senior year. I'm in capstone classes and trying to graduate in nine months.

Calls poured in from family members explaining how important it was for me to be there in his last days — but what makes those days now? His last days were also before the liver surgery and the lung surgery. I was about

to graduate; I couldn't up and leave.

I told my professors. Each of them understood and told me to take as much time as

## Everyone left the room. I said goodbye to my dad for the last time.”

I needed. I left the following Thursday, having no idea how long I'd be gone. He was in intensive care at Tacoma General Hospital. He had been there before. The nurses knew our names.

In most ways, he was still the dad I grew up with. He was going to get better, like always.

Sunday we met the hospice nurses. They give in-home care to terminally ill patients with six months or less to live. He was coming home from the hospital the next day. It

was no different than other complications. It was still cancer. I had only missed two days of school. I could go back.

After we got home, the nurses explained what would happen next. First, he would stop being able to eat. Then he would lose the use of his arms and legs. He would lose his ability to speak and open his eyes. They promised he would be able to hear us even if he couldn't respond.

This would take weeks, they said. But on Monday, things got worse. This was the end. No one slept, no one left. We sat in silence. Holding our breath with every breath he took. They said weeks.

Tuesday: I was in contact with my professors. I looked at graduate schools. At age 21, I bathed my father. We had been feeding him for days. We never left his side. We held his hands and always talked to him. He had stopped responding.

Thursday: Did I want to be there to see his last breaths? When I think of my dad, I don't see a hospital gown or pill bottles. I see a man who loves baseball and the outdoors. The man who taught me how to fish. The reason I watch 162 Mariners games a season.

Thursday night came and I knew I couldn't stay. I told my grandma I couldn't watch. I called my mom. Everyone left the room. I said goodbye to my dad for the last time.

He died a few hours later. People told me I'd know when. They were right. Almost instantly, I felt sick to my stomach.

I went back to Bellingham on Monday. I cried only twice that day. No one saw me either time. I dropped one class. I tried counseling. It's

hard to talk about death with people who haven't experienced it.

Slowly, I opened up to my friends. Most of them didn't even know he was sick. Apparently, I'd forgotten to mention it. We'd hiked Glacier

the previous summer.

I know people like me are out there. I wish I would have known them a year ago. But I survived. I finished fall quarter and got through Christmas. I graduated in June just like I'd planned.

On the first day of fall quarter, I hadn't anticipated most of my year would turn out how it did. Yes, June looked the same. But getting there was more of a struggle than I could have ever imagined.

—Stefani Harrey

While he is suspended against the wall hoping not to plummet, his

# Rock-Hard

**A**s the sun sets with bright pink and violet tones and the ocean tide floats out toward the deep sea, the sandstone rock faces at Larrabee State Park begin to glow. One rock climber, working against gravity, reaches up for his next hold nuzzled in the surface of the wall. After a deep breath, he taps his foot along the crevasses created by the blasting ocean waves, looking for a safe spot to wedge his shoe. While he is suspended against the wall hoping not to plummet, his senses urge him to turn around and look at what lies behind him.

Sometimes, a relaxing getaway is only five minutes away. Many Bellingham residents take their minds away from the busy routines of school and work by scuttling up the rock walls in Bellingham's hot spots. To some local adventure-seekers, rock climbing is a ticket to freedom and relaxation. To others, it is the adrenaline rush of a lifetime.

Western junior Tim Werwie looks to rock climbing for physical and mental fitness while he is chasing hidden climbing destinations on the Chuckanut ridge, where house-sized rocks are rumored to be, or practicing techniques on the indoor rock wall at the Wade King Student Recreation Center.

"It helps you focus your mind," Werwie says. "You cannot really afford to be thinking elsewhere. It is a safety thing, so you have to be focused. It helps people get out and realize what they can do on their own."

The majority of outdoor rock climbing in

This page: Western senior John Stiles climbs in Squamish, B.C. PHOTOS COURTESY OF JOHN STILES

senses urge him to turn around and look at what lies behind him.

# Getaway

Bellingham is bouldering, says John Stiles, Western senior and climbing coordinator at the Bellingham YMCA. When bouldering, the climber is not attached to a rope and usually traverses the rock at a maximum height of 15 feet.

Sehome Arboretum, near Western's campus, and Clayton Beach at Larrabee State Park are the most popular bouldering sites in Bellingham, Stiles says.

"It is pretty tough to beat the bouldering at Larrabee [during a] sunset on a nice day," Stiles says. "Over the water it is just beautiful. There is better bouldering out there in the world, but the whole package — the sunset, water and birds — make it a fantastic climb."

Stiles, 28, who once conquered a 1,000-foot rock face in Squamish, B.C., works with a range of rock climbers at the YMCA, from Western students to the elderly. He says Bellingham is a great place for beginners to learn how to climb because of the number of introductory services available through local organizations as well as the relative ease of the outdoor climbing routes. The rock climbing wall at the Bellingham YMCA, standing 65 feet tall, is the highest indoor climbing wall in Washington and attracts a diverse set of visitors, Stiles says.

"Our family climb is a time for non-climbers to get exposure to climbing," Stiles says. "We make it simple for people who have always wanted to try and have been intimi-

dated for whatever reason. We encourage them and help them build confidence with an inspiring introduction to the sport so they can pursue it on their own."

The American Alpine Institute is an international guide service with headquarters in Fairhaven. It helps new climbers improve their skills while providing an outlet to purchase gear and to network with climbing professionals, says John Scripps, administrative assistant at the institute.

It often can be hard to find partners to go climbing with, Scripps says. The institute and other networks, such as the YMCA, help new climbers meet other people in the industry, he says.

Rock climbing is not an elite industry that is only for the fit or strong individuals. Rock climbing is a diverse sport that is unique to every individual, Stiles says. Though he has had 12 years of rock-climbing experience, he is still fascinated to see how differently people approach the challenges the rock face presents.

"It is a great sport, and you can learn an awful lot about yourself," Stiles says. "You can learn the full gamut of emotions in a single pitch. It is scary. It is fun. It is frustrating, and it is rewarding."

Sweat sliding down his face, he holds himself above the sand against the smooth rocks at Larrabee State Park. He gives in to his senses and turns around to see the beauty of the world behind him. The water shining in the background with the birds flying above is what Stiles says makes the park the most beautiful climbing destination. Many climbers agree that one of Bellingham's greatest features is its convenient access to some of the best rock climbing in the world.

—Tera Randall

**Left:** Western senior John Stiles grabs a hold in the rock face.

**Right:** Stiles boulders at Larrabee State Park.

"It is scary. It is fun. It is frustrating, and it is rewarding."

—Western senior John Stiles





# ...with a side of BALLOON

**I**t starts out as a rubber nothing. Then, as warm air is blown into its round opening, color and shape come alive. Once the object is filled with air, the mastermind behind the trick twists and arranges the bright object while the audience respectfully cringes at the sound of latex rubbing against itself. As the anxiety builds, the blank stares turn to excitement when the once unrecognizable object transforms into the replica of a pale-pink poodle.

Many magicians use balloon animals to entertain audiences, but one entertainer, who prefers to be called "Thee Balloon Guy," is bringing the joy of balloon animals to the dinner table.

In seconds, Kevin Pinnell, 43, can make a genie coming out of a lamp, a daisy-shaped bracelet or a Star Wars light saber. Pinnell, a 34-year veteran entertainer, has made a career out of comedy and twisting balloons, whether

he is performing at birthday parties, weddings or restaurants.

He brings his talent to Billy McHale's family restaurant in Bellingham as its featured entertainer every Sunday and Wednesday nights. During his three-hour shift, Pinnell, often dressed in a tie-dye shirt and with a fanny pack, races to each table making balloon animals for every child in the restaurant.

"I promise to come back and make you a new balloon animal before you leave if you are good to your mom," Pinnell says to an eager young girl as she smiles anxiously at the sight of her new pink horse.

When Pinnell moved in February from North Bend to Bellingham to be closer to family, he decided to introduce himself to the community by making balloon animals at a restaurant.

"He came in, showed me his business card and started doing his balloon tricks,"

says Kristy Knopp, owner of the Bellingham Billy McHale's. "There were some guests waiting in the lobby when he first came in, and they were excited to see his balloon tricks. That was when I knew that I wanted him here."

Pinnell is not the only balloon man in town, but he has become a celebrity at Billy McHale's. After two weeks of his working at the restaurant, children were asking the front desk if "Thee Balloon Guy" was working, Knopp says.

Pinnell is a full-time balloon man, and since moving to Bellingham he has had four invitations to perform at parties. His passion for children, his ability to create strange and unusual animals and his comedic jokes have enabled Pinnell to have fun as a career.

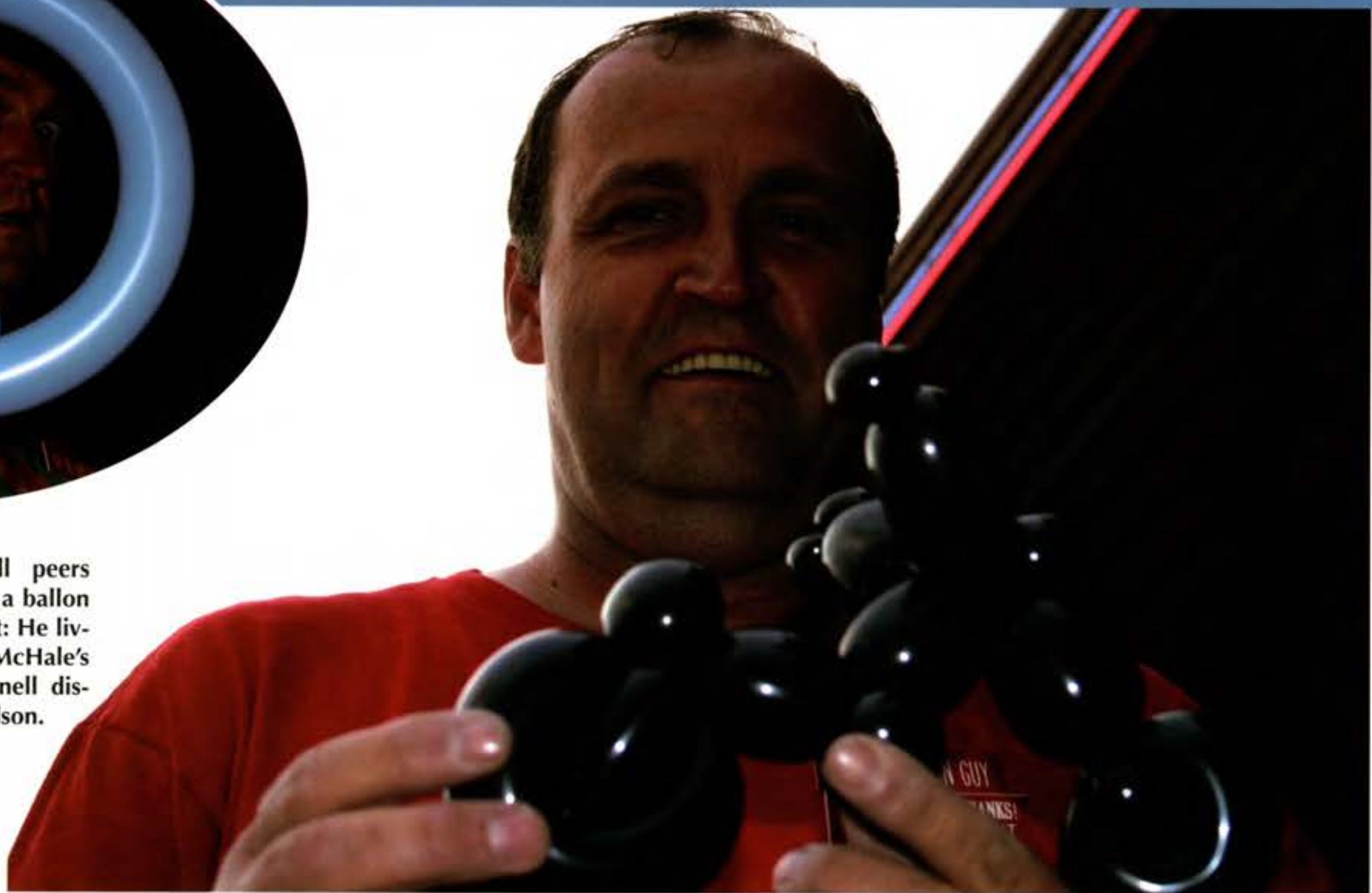
"What I like to tell the kids, when they ask if there is any kind of special school to go



# Balloons, please.



Above: Kevin Pinnell peers through the center of a balloon creation he made. Left: He livens the party at Billy McHale's restaurant. Right: Pinnell displays his Harley-Davidson. PHOTOS BY JAMIE BADILLA



to learn how to do this, is to stay in school, otherwise they will be doing this, too," Pinnell says. "I told a second grader this one time, and two nights later his parents came back into the restaurant and asked me to tell him I was only joking because he wanted to quit school and go do balloon animals."

One contributor to his success is his ability to reach children and adults with his comedy.

"Right when he walked in, he had me, Kristy and the hostesses cracking up, and I did not even know who he was," Billy McHale's server Ayla Taylor says.

Pinnell uses adult humor to capture parents' attention.

"I am Thee Ballon Guy, you know, like

my country tis of ..." Pinnell says to the adults at the tables as he introduces himself. "My humor is so dry it makes Charles Groden appear to be slapstick."

Pinnell has not always performed in restaurants. He spent most of his career in California, where he often performed at celebrity functions.

"Twisting balloons, that was all that I was doing," Pinnell says. "I got to do some bizarre things like come up with a genie coming out of a lamp for Robin Williams."

While Pinnell was working at Disneyland Resort in California, celebrities such as Ted Danson, Whoopi Goldberg and Tom Selleck would ask him to make balloon animals for 20

minutes to three hours at a time, Pinnell says.

"The one person I did meet who I liked the most was Dan Aykroyd," Pinnell says. "His humor and my humor really co-mingle, which is kind of scary."

Pinnell takes his balloon humor everywhere he goes. He says he always has a balloon ready in case a child is having a bad day.

Whether he is in Toontown entertaining celebrities or cracking a joke at a dinner table in Bellingham, Pinnell says the true magic of making balloon animals is bringing joy to a child's life, even if just for a moment.

"My goal when I am doing what I do is to make that person who I am making the balloon for feel like they are the only person in the world at that moment," he says. "Everybody with me gets their 15 seconds of fame."

— Tera Randall

# HOW TO LAND A JOB

**A**s graduation looms in the heads of college seniors each quarter, so does the fear and anticipation of what post-graduation life will bring.

Here are a few tips to assist college graduates in landing their dream job in the competitive job market.

## 1. POLISH YOUR RESUME

Make sure your résumé is easy to read and simple to understand. Try to keep it to one page, but add an additional page with references as needed. Employers often are filtering through hundreds of résumés and have little time to see each one. Simplicity is the key. Make a unique layout and avoid using a template from Microsoft Word. Use bullets such as education, specialized skills and work experience to help the employer navigate the résumé efficiently. Dr. Tara Perry, professor of communication at Western, suggests having an extra pair of eyes read the résumé once it's complete, to look for grammatical errors.

Perry, who teaches a communication class in professional development, suggests tailoring each résumé to the particular organization in which you are applying, rather than photocopying one. She says job hunters must demonstrate they are qualified to fit a particular job's mission.

## 2. DO AN INTERNSHIP

For students in any major, internships are the key to getting real-world experience and making connections. Internships help job seekers get a foot in the door.

Perry says internships provide a preview of the company and help you decide if you would like to work in that environment.

"Internships give you the ability to take what you are learning in class and apply it to real-life situations," she says.

## 3. ATTEND A CAREER FAIR

Each quarter, Western sponsors a career fair during which employers from around the state hunt for new employees. These employers are actively seeking college graduates and are eager to hire enthusiastic seniors. The career fair can be an opportunity to network with future employers. Don't forget to dress professionally and bring plenty of résumés.

## 4. VISIT WESTERN'S CAREER CENTER

Western offers a great on-campus resource located in Old Main 280. The Career Services Center organizes afternoon workshops on topics such as résumé writing and interview techniques. Taking some of these workshops gives you an edge among other job seekers.

The center offers a candidate-referral service, in which job hunters may be matched with jobs in their specified area. The center also has a counseling service, which helps seniors who need direction and career-planning help.

Take advantage of the opportunity to join a listserver with the center, which sends weekly e-mails of jobs available in each field.

## 5. PREPARE FOR THE JOB INTERVIEW

For any job interview, doing the homework is important. Don't go in blind. Know about the company, its mission and what it stands for. This will show you really want the job.

Western career center counselor Kergie Garcia encourages all students to stop by the center and do a mock interview. Peer advisers lead and videotape real-life interview situations with students, then go over their performance. Students can participate in the mock interview anytime during the quarter.

Garcia suggests rehearsing your interview with a friend and going over possible interview questions. This is how you can get first-hand experience in interviewing and possible questions you may face. You will be able to sell yourself in your interview if you can discuss your strengths and weaknesses.

"Be prepared for the behavioral interview questions, where they may give you a situation and ask you how you may handle it," Garcia says. "How you handled situations in the past is a good indicator for the employer about how you will handle them in the future."

Garcia suggests having three or four questions to ask the employer at the end of the interview. This shows you are prepared and really want to work for the company.

These are all elements that are important in today's job market. So, be bold and stand out. Good luck getting the job of your dreams.

—Lorean Serko

# They take my money ...



**R**emember back in the day when all a cell phone could do was make and receive a phone call? What happened? The little bells and whistles have perverted something so simple and elegant.

I walked through Red Square recently and suddenly heard,

"She take my money, when I'm in need." And I thought to myself, "Holy crap, Kanye West and Jamie Foxx here? On campus?"

But no, it's just some fool who paid up to \$2.99 for 15 seconds of the song for a ring tone.

Let's do the math. A song on iTunes costs 99 cents. A 15-second clip of a song costs \$1.99 for T-Mobile users, \$2.49 for Cingular Wireless and \$2.99 for Verizon Wireless customers. If iTunes went by Cingular's pricing, a four-minute song would cost about \$40. Oh yeah, that's a wonderful deal all right. Sign me up.

Personalized ring tones are nothing but a cry for attention. The phone rings, and everybody turns and looks at the person who has a singing pocket. They might as well be holding a neon sign that says, "Everybody! Look at me! I'm special!" Cell phones have become a competition on campus. It's a contest for whose cell phone can do the most useless stuff.

My current cell phone, the free phone I got when I signed away two years of my life to Cingular, has all sorts of features that I can't fathom why anybody would find useful.

First, there is the photo camera/video camera/voice recorder. This wonderful 0.3-megapixel digital camera can take only small pictures the size of my tiny screen that if blown up to a larger size would resemble the original Super Mario Bros. game for a Nin-

tendo game console. This feature would be incredibly useful if I felt the need to take useless photos to view on my phone's tiny screen. The plus side of this feature is I don't have to worry about any pesky phone calls because this drains the battery like no other.

Who could forget the wonderful little feature that makes us all feel as important as a doctor whenever our phone beeps: text messages. I can just picture it now — the executives at a cell phone company sitting around a table.

"Hey, I've got this great idea," one would say. "How about we let people send little e-mails to each other over the phone. But here's the catch, we'll charge them 10 cents for sending and receiving them, even if they didn't want to receive them. It will add up quickly."

It seems like an expensive proposition for a novelty such as text messages.

Then there is the voice-command feature. This allows me to tell my phone what to do, even dictate my text messages. I have

tried this. It is a nice little toy, nothing else. I open my phone and say, "Phone, call Mom." And, in theory, it would call my mom. But no, instead it decides to repeat back to me, "You said, 'Call James.'" So I have three options at this point: hang up and actually dial my mother's phone number, talk to James or get into an argument with my phone.

"Phone, call Mom!" I shout.

"I'm sorry. I did not understand your command," the voice says.

"Call Mom, call Mom, call Mom!"

## It's a contest for whose cell phone can do the most useless stuff.

PHOTO OF DAN GROHL BY JAMIE BADILLA  
PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY SHANNON BARNEY

"Calling Stephen."

It's utterly pointless to continue. It seems like an interesting idea, but voice recognition never works the way you expect it to.

The only chance I have to get away from these complicated phones is to use a pay-as-you-go phone. These phones are much more toned down on the

bells and whistles, but they still have text-messaging charges and expensive ring tones. There is also the threat of running out of prepaid minutes and not having a phone to use.

Cell phones have gone the way of Starbucks. They offer the most extravagant products and services and get their clients hooked. Why can't I just have a phone that will only make simple phone calls? That shouldn't be too much to ask for.

— Dan Grohl

