

Spring 2003

The Planet, 2003, Spring

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the planet [spring 2003]

too much



DEAR READER:

You wouldn't believe how difficult it is to determine how many acres of Whatcom County are covered with mini-storage facilities. So difficult in fact, I couldn't figure it out. I think I called every imaginable department in county government. I talked to planners, assessors and the operator countless times.

I posed the question to friends, acquaintances and people in coffee shops but nobody seemed to have any idea. Guesses ranged from 50 acres to 5,000 acres.

Most of the time people just looked at me funny and asked why I wanted to know. Well, the concept of mini-storage fascinates me. Think about it. People pay money every month for space to store the stuff they buy.

Virtually everyone I talked to had either thought about getting or knew someone who had a mini-storage unit. One woman even mentioned mini-storage condos. Instead of renting monthly, users buy the whole space for a couple thousand dollars and use it until they sell it off to the next guy with too much stuff.

As you will hear repeatedly in this issue, Americans work longer hours than citizens of any other industrialized nation in the world. As a result of longer work hours, the middle and upper level wage earners have the ability to buy more. So much stuff, in fact, that the size of garages in this nation has increased from the typical one or two stalls to three, four, even five or more car garages. And, still people rent mini-storage.

As Americans work longer hours to buy more stuff, everything else in their lives begins to deteriorate.

Collectively, our nation makes more money today than it did in the 1950s but Americans have more debt today. Parents are working longer hours and allowing their children to grow up in day care.

In an effort to achieve the American dream of a house, yard and three-car garage (to put their stuff in), people are moving in record numbers to areas on the urban fringe — suburbs — causing cities to sprawl uncontrollably, eating up farmland at unprecedented rates.

Pets are being ignored, dream-vacation plans abandoned and human health overlooked. It's time for a change. This is why we are covering this topic.

The impacts of overwork and over-consumption on the environment were brought to our attention by a small group of environmental and social activists who are working on launching a new holiday — Take Back Your Time Day. The day's planners are asking people to take the day off of work to attend lectures and teach-ins that will be held on campuses across the nation. Check out www.timeday.org for more information.

While this new Time Day isn't the solution to overwork, it is the beginning step in solving a huge problem. Education about these issues is essential to helping a nation of overworkers and over-spenders climb out from under their bills and products, hug their families and begin a new life.

So, sit down, put your feet up and take a look at this issue.



Kate Koch

Special thanks to: our moms and Levi (for everything); John Harris, Lyle Harris, Jim Napoli, Floyd McKay, Carol Brach, Joel Hall, Alethea Macomber and the rest of the journalism faculty and staff; Michael Frome who inspired many of us to be here in the first place.

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This issue is dedicated to our adviser, Scott Brennan. Through the hard times and the good times, Scott has been a teacher, a cheerleader and a friend. We just want to say, "thanks."

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CLARIFICATIONS:

The potential effects of global climate change were incorrectly cited on pages 14 and 15 of The Planet's Winter 2003 issue. It is impossible to predict the exact local effects of global climate change. While average warming might indicate a 1,500-foot elevation increase of freezing levels, local anomalies are bound to occur.

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The Planet is an dedicated to environmental advocacy and awareness through responsible journalism. It is written, designed and edited by students through Huxley College of the Environment.

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NINE TO FIVE

BY DAVID STONE PHOTO BY BRANDON SAWAYA



Hang gliders launch from Blanchard Mountain, sometimes staying airborne for 15 minutes or longer.

"I HAVE BEEN SO CLOSE to an eagle in the air I could hear the wind in his wings as he went by, and his eyes were like polished black onyx," said James Fieser, an avid hang glider. "The hair on my body stood on end. When I fly with eagles I do so with their permission. My wings are fast but they are the masters. They're just amazing."

Fieser, an equipment operator at the Anacortes Shell Refinery, said hang gliding is religion, work is life. He has been hang gliding for 15 years. Seeing eagles is a large part of the experience, he said.

"You cannot get anywhere near an eagle, it chooses to get near you, and when it does, you realize that no matter how much technology you have, nature chooses how close it comes to you," Fieser said.

He said he started hang gliding after he realized work should not consume his life.

In his first year of hang gliding Fieser flew 162 times. Now he said he works at the refinery so he can afford to hang glide. Fieser usually works 40 hours a week, but has worked up to 84 hours a week for eight straight weeks when machines at the refinery were broken. Despite the hours, Fieser finds time to fly.

Many people don't have the same opportunity. American workers put in more time on the job than any other industrialized country according to a 1999 report by the International Labour Organization, a United Nations agency.

In a survey conducted from 2000 to 2003 by the National Survey on Recreation and the Environment, 72 percent of people said long hours at work constrained their recreation. The survey revealed the

growing trend that Americans are feeling pressured to work more and recreate less.

"The main reason people don't recreate is because they are forced into making money," Fieser said. "Most of the world has given up."

THE AMERICAN WORK ETHIC

"Work is very much the core of what we would define (as) success in our lives today," said Charles Sylvester, a professor of recreation at Western Washington University. "I think in a lot of peoples' lives their recreation and leisure are their priority. Still, the prevailing message in our society is work is what counts first and foremost. I think a lot of people see work as an end in itself rather than a means to an end."

Sylvester said the work ethic goes back to the Protestant reformation. Protestants believed God called all people to participate in his plan, and one of the main ways to do this was to serve God in a job. Protestants believed people were predestined for heaven or hell, so many tried to answer their calling diligently.

"There was a tendency to put into two camps the people who were industrious in their calling and the slackers," Sylvester said. "That was a convenient way for folks to say, 'Well, they're the ones who are destined for hell in a hand basket.'"

As the Protestant work ethic became more secularized, people continued to look to work for answers and meaning in their lives. Many

continued to distrust leisure as “the devil’s workshop,” Sylvester said.

This work ethic has affected the way we view work today, he said.

“Who do we frown upon in our society?” Sylvester said. “Who are the useless folks? Well, first of all the unemployed, the bums. Somehow it’s a reflection of their moral character.”

SHIFTING PRIORITIES

Edgar Jackson, a professor at the University of Alberta and co-author of “Leisure Studies: Prospects for the Twenty-First Century,” said people are putting off their leisure for longer periods of time, hoping to work now and play later.

Jackson said the trend is for people to defer their leisure, trading time for money, hoping to be able to take more time off in the future. Some people wait for several months so they can take a vacation, while others postpone recreation until retirement, he said.

“Some people are being much more conscious of balance,” Jackson said. “Others are making choices that may leave them off balance for 40 years.”

Deferring leisure until retirement has its own problems, Jackson said. When people get older they lose much of their physical ability and are more isolated from facilities and people. They have the time and the money from years of work but they also have new constraints, blocking their leisure, he said.

Matt Durand, a teacher at Horizon Middle School in Ferndale, Wash., said people often feel when they start a family, go into retirement or start a career, they have to give up recreation.

“I see a lot of families and a lot of kids I grew up with whose parents were active before they had kids, and then (when) you have kids you have to give that part of your life up,” Durand said. “I think it is values that get instilled that you have phases in your life that you have to keep changing.”

Changes in life bring on changes in constraints, Jackson said.

CONSUMPTION

Geoffrey Godbey, professor of leisure studies at Pennsylvania State University, said his research has shown people have enough time, but busy schedules and consumption prevent recreation.

He said people have an average of 35 hours of leisure time a week but time is wasted on television, surfing the web and other activities that require little time and effort.

“The majority of (leisure) comes on weekdays rather than weekends and comes in short periods,” Godbey said. “There is time to do it if you add up all the chunks.”

A couple hours is not enough time for people to go on a hike, ride a bike or get into the outdoors, he said.

Even if people do have the time, Godbey said, consumption limits what they can do. People can continue consuming indefinitely and not feel fulfilled; they always want more things. The objects they consume take time at work to afford and free time to maintain.

“Whatever we own, owns us,” he said.

Godbey said people pick consumption over leisure because they are not limited in the amount they can consume.

“Consumption is open-ended so there can never be enough time, never enough anything,” Godbey said.

Chester Zeller, a co-owner of reSport Consignments, LLC, a sport equipment consignment store in downtown Bellingham, runs his business trying to help people regain their leisure time and money.

“For the exercise equipment it’s the standard, ‘I use it for six months and I find I do not have time to use it anymore,’” Zeller said. “Someone gets a new snowboard so they want to get rid of their old snowboard. It is still good but they do not want it in their closets anymore.”

People have closets and garages full of sporting equipment because Americans live in a hoarding culture, Zeller said. People purchase new products when the old ones are still usable, he said.

“Our society is built on style and what’s in,” he said. “I mean, how much more technology can you get into a snowboard. It’s the look, the style, it’s always the bottom line, so we live in a society of over-consumption when it comes to style.”

OTHER OPTIONS

Some wonder if the solution to overwork and over-consumption lies overseas.

“We need a European model, there is no question,” Durand said. “I am a firm believer in the four-day work week, maybe the eight-hour day. It’s almost like school schedules; having summers off. I think the European model would be a good move for us.”

According to the ILO, after France put through legislation limiting the workweek to 35 hours, they reduced their time at work to an average of 1,656 hours yearly. This is compared to the U.S. average of 1,966 hours yearly, a difference of 310 hours.

“There is nothing holy or sacrosanct about a 40 hour work week,” Sylvester said. “I am convinced it can be reduced.”

He said for people to work less they need institutional support much like many European countries. In some European countries, the law guarantees six weeks of paid vacation.

There are other solutions for people before America has an institutionalized system, Sylvester said. Education is important so people can see the difference between the United States and other countries. It is also important so they can critique their own time on the job and make a decision, he said.

Fieser has his own solution to the problem.

“The sun is the author of all life and creation on earth, and sun is a metaphor, but not just a metaphor, it is the light of the world,” Fieser said. “It makes the air move. It makes the trees grow. It makes the water rise and fall. My advice to everybody would be to get out in the sun.”



Junior David Stone studies environmental journalism at Huxley College. He has previously been published in *The Western Front*.

PAVING

FROM A FAIRWAY on the North Bellingham Golf Course, anyone can get a feel for life in Whatcom County. Mount Baker dominates the skyline and the area's rolling pastures and fertile agricultural lands fill the foreground. But, just north of the same fairway, the sprawling subdivisions of Lynden offer a look at the possible future of Whatcom County. The development serves as a reminder that the rural character of this area is on the brink of change.

The home of Donna and Harold Macomber sits immediately south of the golf course. Although they used to run cattle on their five acre lot, they now grow a small, prized patch of rhubarb — earning them a photo and mention in *Country Home Magazine*.

"The rhubarb is bigger than your arm and we don't do anything to it," Donna Macomber said. "No spray — no nothing, it's just humongous."

A real estate agent contacted the Macomers on Oct. 27, 2001 with an offer to purchase their property for twice its assessed value. When the Macomers refused, the real estate agent wrote them a letter stating that selling their property, financially, would be like winning the lottery.

"This is not about money, it's a matter of principle," Donna Macomber said.

Caitac USA, which owns the golf course, is currently planning Larrabee Springs — a new residential development encompassing 580 acres. Although exact development plans are unclear, any residential development would require an extension of Bellingham's Urban Growth Area north to Smith Road. UGAs are areas of land located on the outskirts of cities in the county where new development is encouraged, while rural land outside the UGA is intended to be preserved.

County and city officials are mandated under Washington's Growth Management Act to review available land and plan for new growth.

"Think about it," said Mike Rosen, spokesperson for Caitac USA, which owns the property. "When has a community had the chance to plan a neighborhood and not screw it up?"

Trillium Corp. proposed Larrabee Springs in the late 1990s. At the time the development was called Cordata North. In 1997, after the Macomers formed a 500-member group opposing the rezoning, the Whatcom County Council dismissed the Cordata North project but allowed a future review of the project.

The County Council will review the project this fall when they

vote on changes to the urban growth area. In 1997, Caitac USA obtained the development rights to the project and the Macomers were at square one again.

"Well, we have fought it off before, and we will fight it off again," Donna Macomber said.

The debate over Larrabee Springs is an example of the pressure on city and county officials who are conducting a seven-year review of the county's plans for managing new development.

The new development, because it is on the edge of Bellingham, would require most workers to drive to work.

Eben Fodor, author of "Better Not Bigger: How to take Control of Urban Growth and Improve Your Community," said the impact of working more and expanding development is people spend more time commuting to work, which leads to a decline in the sense of community within neighborhoods.

"The primary feature of the homes being built is the garage," Fodor said. "Typically it comes with a remote control that is activated once you drive near the house and as you pull in you are never seen by your neighbor. Your neighbor doesn't even know what you look like, let alone have a chance to meet you."

Barbara Kitchens, vice president of government affairs for the Association of Washington Realtors, said working more has led to a decline in the sense of community in neighborhoods.

"I think it started to happen when both people in the family started to go to work, and moms couldn't stay at home and get to know their neighbor," Kitchens said. "You don't see block parties or neighborhood parties."

Whatcom County officials predict 42,000 people will move into the county in the next 20 years. The city's officials are concerned about the impact these newcomers will have on the environment and the sense of community.

"Fundamentally, it is a shift for a small city to stop its pattern of growing out and to think about growing up and consider the consequences if we don't do that," said Bellingham City Planner Chris Spens.

These consequences include urban sprawl — development that extends in all directions at the cost of rural areas.

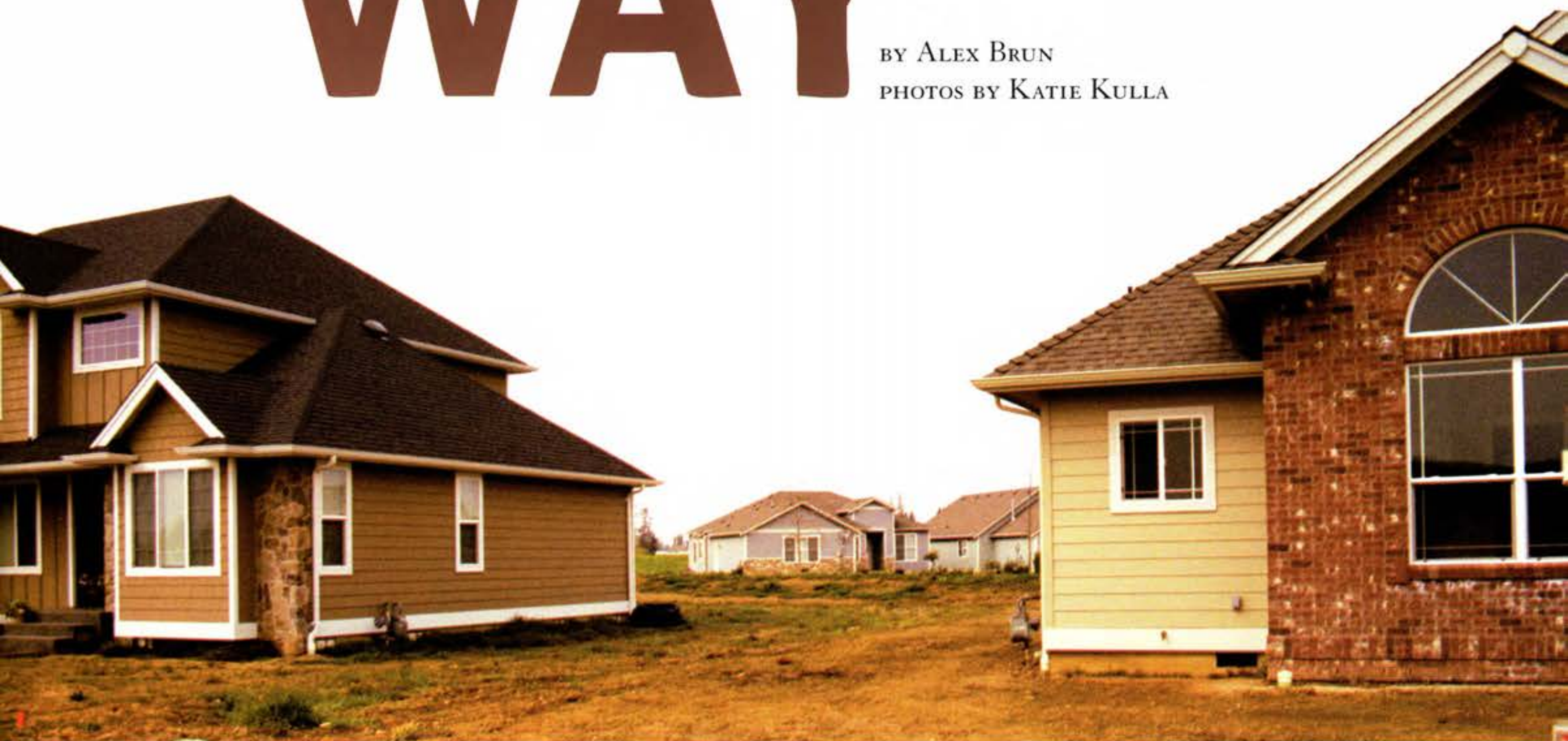
"What is on my mind every waking moment, my mission, my reason to come to work, the reason I still live in Bellingham is to keep as much of this area as green and blue as possible," Spens said.

Spens, a 10-year veteran in Bellingham's city planning depart-

THE WAY

BY ALEX BRUN

PHOTOS BY KATIE KULLA



Paved roads and single-family homes have replaced large tracts of arable farmland north of Lynden.

ment, said he sees the role of city planning as crucial in managing the influx of new residents.

“There are six million people in Washington, 2 percent of whom live in Whatcom County,” Spens said. “More people are coming here every six ways to Sunday and they won’t stop — ever.”

The average population growth rate for Whatcom County during the 1990s hovered around 2.85 percent, which is more than twice the national average of 1.02 percent, according to the Whatcom County government Web site.

Whatcom County Planning Commission member Rabel Burdge said the county is planning for growth by increasing density within cities because they already have roads and other infrastructure.

“The Planning Commission is trying the popsicle theory, which is that a 10-year-old (child) should be able to walk to the store to buy a popsicle without having to cross heavy traffic,” Burdge said.

The Planning Commission is working under the mandates of the GMA, a legislative act that has changed the way counties plan, but Whatcom County Councilmember Seth Fleetwood said it has one fundamental flaw.

“In a broad time frame of 100 years, the GMA allows for the prospect of ever expanding concentric circles,” Fleetwood said. “This means we have a county just like King County, where cities bounce up against each other.”

Fleetwood said the key to preventing sprawl into the rural, forested and agricultural lands of Whatcom County is to “grow up not out,” meaning residents will eventually have to live in the city to keep the rest of the county green.

“In the future, if we are going to preserve the countryside people are going to have to live in the fourth floor of a condominium somewhere in the confines of Bellingham,” he said. “That’s a notion that

some people really don't like. I don't like it myself, but it's reality if everyone is coming here."

Living in a condominium or a smaller home are alternatives to the traditional single family subdivision, but the perception of housing is difficult for builders to change, said Bill Quehrn, the executive vice president of the Building Industry Association of Whatcom County.



ABOVE: Donna and Harold Macomber have lived on their five-acre property north of Bellingham for more than 30 years. If the City of Bellingham extends the urban growth boundary, they will be surrounded by a dense housing development. BELOW: Farms and fairways currently cover the 580 acre potential site for the future Larrabee Springs housing development.

"People aren't interested in raising families in a 20 story high-rise in downtown Bellingham on Railroad Avenue," Quehrn said. "That's not a good place to grow up. There needs to be a mix, a nice balanced mix."

Rick Dubrow, owner of A1 Builders, agreed communities need a mixture of housing. But, he said the problem with the GMA is it doesn't control growth, it just controls where people are placed.

"Everything about the GMA makes good sense if we stop development at some truly agreed upon size," Dubrow said. "Without that last piece, the GMA still makes some sense, because it makes our cities look prettier, tighter, more thoughtful, but it definitely doesn't address the core problem."

Dubrow, who describes himself as an environmentalist in business, said it's time for builders to account for the true costs of development.

"Growth needs to pay for itself," Dubrow said. "If housing costs more, people will think differently about having a third or fourth child and instead of a 2,400-square-foot home, maybe they can use an 1,800-square-foot home."

Quehrn said the effect of limiting new residential development pushes people farther away to communities like Lynden where there are fewer restrictions on growth.

"When you move out into what you can afford, it increases congestion on I-5 and promotes sprawl, which is the exact opposite of what the GMA was supposed to do," Kitchens said.

Kitchens said affordable housing in Whatcom County is nearly extinct.

Quehrn said the BIA works to keep development regulations reasonable, so homes remain as affordable as possible.

"Builders can't do a whole lot to foster affordable housing," Quehrn said. "Builders aren't in control of anything, builders are responding to a market need just like anyone else is. Why doesn't Haggen's have a particular kind of grapefruit? Because the market doesn't want it."

As people seek out scarce affordable housing, they have to leave Bellingham and are being replaced by an older, retired population, Kitchens said.


"They come with retirement plans, savings accounts and buy houses," Kitchens said. "They offer a lot to a community, but they don't offer economic stability."

The Macomers are retired, and said being on a fixed income makes them more resistant to new growth. They said services and new development mean higher taxes.

"Our taxes have gone from under \$600 a year to \$3,000 a year with the building of the Meridian School district," Harold Macomber said.

In addition, traffic along the Guide Meridian has increased significantly in the years they have lived on the road. A trip from the Macomers home to the freeway, which is three miles away, can take up to an hour on a holiday weekend, Harold Macomber said.

As the debate over growth in Bellingham continues, Fodor said he encourages citizens, like the Macomers, to protect their quality of life.

"Independent of the fact that these communities can't control what goes on in the rest of the world," Fodor said. "There is no law that says you have to allow your community to be destroyed and that's the premise for taking action." 

Senior Alex Brun studies geography at Huxley College. He has previously been published in *The Planet Magazine* and the *Mazamas Annual*.

**More people are coming here every six ways
to Sunday and they won't stop — ever.**

Chris Spens
Bellingham city planner

NEGLECTED COMPANIONS

BY KATIE SCAIEF
PHOTOS BY JAMIE CLARK



Angela Lenz is a co-owner of Tails-A-Wagging Doggie Day Care, where dogs get the attention they need while their owners are away at work. At the day care, dogs are in constant interaction with other animals and people.

PHIL JOYNER CAME HOME FROM WORK to discover potted plants, loose dirt and leaves strewn across his living room floor. His Venetian blinds lay shredded. A wire kennel large enough for an 80-pound mutt sat next to the wall, but Houdini wasn't in it. The cage door bent upwards at the bottom of the kennel where an anxiety-driven dog had pounded out.

"When I saw that I thought to myself, 'I don't know how we can keep him. We have jobs to go to,'" Joyner said.

Americans work more hours per year than any other industrialized nation. When people spend little time at home, their pets might experience an anxiety disorder and destroy human possessions. Some owners surrender misbehaving pets to shelters. As animal shelters run out of space, many unwanted pets are euthanized. New solutions like anti-anxiety medication can change animal behavior, but some veterinarians say lifestyle and environment changes are crucial to ease anxiety disorders in pets.

In 2002, the Whatcom Humane Society euthanized more than 600 cats and nearly 200 dogs, according to the WHS animal intake statistics. The shelter's records show the number one reason for euthanizing dogs is behavior issues and aggression. The Humane Society of the United States estimates 3 million to 4 million cats and dogs are euthanized each year in the United States.

Janet Hanan is a dog adoption coordinator at the Alternative Humane Society in Bellingham. She said many people want to have a well-behaved pet without putting a lot of effort into behavior modification.

"I think a portion of people only want a pet until it becomes an inconvenience," Hanan said. "Someone called me last week to tell me they had a lifestyle change and could no longer take care of their 17-month-old dog. I wanted to ask them what they would do if it was a 17-month-old baby."

Instead of surrendering pets to shelters, owners whose pets display behavior problems can seek help from veterinarians.

Dan Hall has practiced at the Fairhaven Veterinary Hospital in Bellingham since 1979. He said

many animal behavior problems arise because animals are living with people rather than in their natural environment. Dogs, as pack animals, develop crucial social skills in their first six to 12 weeks, he said. If dogs don't learn to spend time alone in this prime period, they might develop separation anxiety disorder later in life.

Distinguishing characteristics of separation anxiety disorder help veterinarians make appropriate diagnoses, Hall said. A dog experiencing separation anxiety will destroy property in the home in an effort to reconnect with a person. He said in one case a dog saw its owner on the other side of a window and jumped through.

Dogs with the disorder will also bark or whine for about the first 15 minutes they are left alone. In many cases, a dog begins to learn its owner's routine. When the animal observes its owner putting on a jacket or picking up a purse or keys, it will begin to show signs of anxiety.

In extreme cases, veterinarians refer clients to board-certified veterinary behaviorists. Lynne Seibert is one of 32 such behaviorists in the world.

"Behavior problems are probably the most important factor in mortality rates for animals," Seibert said.

Seibert practices animal therapy at the Animal Emergency and Referral Center in Lynnwood, Wash. She said solving many behavior cases require the owners to spend quality time with their pets. Three key approaches work together to help modify an animal's anxiety: environmental modification, behavior modification and pharmacology.

Joyner's wife, Vicki, a social worker, said Houdini's symptoms of anxiety disorder were obvious. He could not handle being alone, not even for short periods of time. He followed her around the house. She said she could not even go to the garage without him barking. His needs did not match the Joyner's lifestyle, but they did not want to give up on him.

"Dogs are pack creatures," said Angela Lenz owner of Tails-A-Wagging Doggie Day Care. "Forcing nonsocial activity causes them to freak out."

Someone called me last week to tell me they had a lifestyle change and could no longer take care of their 17-month-old dog. I wanted to ask them what they would do if it was a 17-month-old baby.

Janet Hanan
Alternative Humane Society

Lenz is a licensed animal health technician and certified small animal behaviorist. In 2001, she and her husband, Jason, started Tails-A-Wagging Doggie Day Care in Bellingham for people who typically have to leave their dogs home while they are at work.

The Joyner's decided to send Houdini to Tails-A-Wagging. The staff at the day care practiced putting him in a time-out room for a few minutes at a time to try to decrease his separation anxiety.

"Dogs are just the way they have always been for hundreds of years, but our lifestyles have changed," Lenz said. "It is unreasonable for us to expect that they can just adapt. We are their whole life."

She said Americans have changed their lifestyles since the 1970s and 1980s — many families rely on dual incomes just to make ends

meet. When people leave their pets at home all day without attention, the animals might show signs of stress, she said. These signs include physical destruction of property, self mutilation and chewing of human possessions like furniture.

"People need to spend time with each other," Lenz said. "Dogs have to be with each other, too. When they don't do that, you get destructive behavior."

Vicki Joyner searched for additional methods of separation anxiety disorder treatment. She learned about Clomicalm, an anti-anxiety medication the Food and Drug Administration approved for canine use in December 1998. Houdini's veterinarian prescribed the medication and Houdini took it for about five months, Phil Joyner said.

Novartis Animal Health produces Clomicalm for reduction of separation anxiety disorder in dogs older than six months. It inhibits the uptake of serotonin and norepinephrine neurotransmitters in the brain. This reduces fear and might increase learning ability in some dogs. The use of drugs in animals for mental purposes is often debated since people cannot directly communicate with an animal.

"My personal perspective is that as a vet it's my mandate to try to decrease suffering," Seibert said. "And when I see pets suffering from anxiety I feel I should help. If I suffered then I would want my doctor to prescribe the appropriate medication."

In combination with behavior modification Clomicalm helps to decrease anxiety disorder in animals, Seibert said.

"Most veterinary behaviorists would say that medication alone almost never solves the problem," Seibert said.

Hall said he encourages owners to practice confidence-building exercises with their dogs before he prescribes any medication. Obedience training in a classroom environment can be effective, he said. Owners can also practice extending the distance between themselves and their dogs, then increase the time spent apart.

In severe cases, medication might ease transition, Hall said.

The Fairhaven Veterinary Hospital receives canine separation

anxiety related cases a few times a month, Hall said. Last year, they put two dogs on medication.

"Here we try to discourage drugs, because our society has a mentality that if you have a problem you should take a pill," Hall said. "That doesn't work for a lot of behavior problems."

Houdini began to mellow out after a month of the combined influences of day care and anti-depressants, Vicki Joyner said. After five months the staff at Tails-A-Wagging got Houdini to spend one hour alone in time out, when previously he could not last a few minutes. Then Houdini got into a fight and was expelled.

Phil and Vicki Joyner had to reevaluate their lives again to make room for Houdini. They decided he needed a companion.

Hannah, a small golden retriever, gets along well with Houdini, Vicki Joyner said, because their personalities are opposite of each other. The Joyner's leave the dogs together without supervision. Sometimes



Vicki Joyner changed her life to accommodate her dog, Houdini, when he suffered from separation anxiety disorder.

they leave the television on the Animal Planet TV Network, or the radio on a talk show for background human conversation.

The Joyners changed their work schedules to accommodate the dogs. Vicki Joyner has mornings and every other Friday off. Sometimes Phil Joyner has days off at the beginning of the week. Because the Joyners stagger their work schedules, Houdini and Hannah don't spend too much time at home alone. When the Joyners aren't at work they spend a lot of time outside with their dogs.

"Our society is the most dramatic example of separation from nature, especially in the bigger cities where there is less nature around," Phil Joyner said. "Pets are a connection to that."

After about five or six months, the Joyners eased Houdini off of Clomicalm. He still shows signs of anxiety, and he probably always will, Phil Joyner said, but the signs are less dramatic. Houdini and Hannah can stay at home unsupervised for eight to 12 hours at a

time, as long as the Tails-A-Wagging pet sitters visit to take them to the bathroom.

To cater to the needs of their dogs, the Joyners completely redid their living room floor with large-square tiles. They don't work as many overtime hours, they can't go on as many vacations and have spent a lot on vet bills. These dogs aren't convenient at all, Vicki Joyner said, but their companionship makes it worthwhile.

"People want the all-American dream," she said. "Part of that is having a pet and a car. And they treat the car and the pet the same. If it is too much trouble, if there is hair everywhere, they get rid of the animal. It comes from our consumer society; if it doesn't work, throw it away."



Junior Katie Scaief studies environmental journalism at Huxley College. This is her first published piece.



INSTANT GRATIFICATION

BY CARRIE MEREDITH

PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY JAMIE CLARK

"I SPENT \$1,355.72 ON MY CREDIT CARD in two weeks and all I have to show for it is some bar tabs and new clothes," University of Washington graduate Megan Hubner said.

Hubner said she spent money because it alleviated her depression and stress.

"When you have money, you are never alone," she said. "You always have something to do. What makes a person feel better than spending a lot of money when they are feeling down? With a credit card you get immediate gratification. You don't have to save up money to buy what you want, it all gets charged."

Four years after finding a credit application at the bottom of her bag while buying books from the University of Washington bookstore, Hubner found herself \$9,600 in debt.

Since overcoming her debt, Hubner is very conscious about how she spends her money. Her checkbook is balanced and she knows where she spends each penny. She said having such a negative experience with credit cards made her realize how easy it is to slip into an unmanageable amount of debt. She said since she overcame her debt she is much happier and more in control of her life.

Robert Rylander, executive vice president of Alaska USA Federal Credit Union, attributes the extreme amount of debt in America to the change in technology during the last 50 years and American's need for material wealth. Because of access to credit, material possessions are easier to obtain than they were decades ago. The increased consumption leads to environmental degradation while debt places strain on lower-middle-class Americans, he said.

"We abandon traditional family values in favor of consumption," said Kenneth Gould, sociology professor at St. Lawrence University and co-author of "Environment and Society: The Enduring Conflict." "Spending quality time at home with your family, or playing softball, or going to a town meeting or church is bad for the

economy. Folks used to spend a lot more time doing those things, partly because wages were higher so less work was required, but also because those activities were considered important and fulfilling."

Gould said Americans are working more and spending more, which affects their family lives and their health.

"Americans work longer hours, spend less time with their families and in their communities, and they stick with a job they don't like, or look for jobs they'll like even less if they think they can pay down the MasterCard faster," Gould said. "When people are economically desperate they will do almost anything to get cash quickly. After working two lousy jobs for low wages, people rightly feel that they deserve a little reward, a little pleasure in life."

He said the media has made the words "reward" and "pleasure" synonymous with material consumption. Because of this, when workers head to the mall they use credit to buy possessions when their bank account can't cover the bill.

"There was a time in this country when people saved for years to buy themselves things like a new car," Gould said. "People didn't consume now and pay later, they saved now and consumed later."

Today credit is available to anyone.

"Credit cards are everywhere," said Erica Fleming, a former Mervyn's California employee. "I remember getting credit card offers in the mail as young as 15. Now I get at least one per week in the mail."

Fleming said she saw flyers for credit cards at Bellevue Community College and a credit card table offering incentives such as free shirts and Frisbees to students who opened a new credit account at the beginning of the school year. She said when she worked at Mervyn's she had to ask every customer if they would like to open a Mervyn's credit account. As an incentive, employees would receive \$1 for each account they opened.

Fleming said one of the reasons she quit working at Mervyn's was because she felt uncomfortable pushing credit cards on customers. Mervyn's offers a 15 percent discount on the first purchase made on a new credit account and an additional 10 percent off after \$250 in purchases.

"Inequality, advertising and the corporate ideology that debt is 'normal' is what makes people go into debt," Gould said. "People in the U.S. are saturated with media images portraying elite lifestyles that the economy will simply never make available to them. As a result, we all feel relatively deprived, even folks in the top 10 percent. We are bombarded with advertisements that essentially tear down our self-esteem. The result is consumption becomes a form of self medication."

In 2000, Western Washington University's Prevention and Wellness Services conducted the National College Health Assessment. The survey found nearly 15 percent of Western students have more than \$1,000 in credit card debt.

Rylander said debt at a young age is a problem because students are not educated enough to make the decisions necessary to own a credit card. For example, Hubner spent her money on alcohol and new clothes.

College students are not the only people acquiring debt. According to the Federal Reserve's bi-annual consumer survey, 44 percent of families in 2001 had credit card debt. Most debt — 70 percent — was attributed to buying a home and 16 percent of all debt was due to consumer loans and credit cards.

Gould said consumption associated with debt is also affecting the environment at many levels.

"All consumption requires natural resource depletion and waste production, from buying an SUV to buying medical care," he said. "If you want to reduce your impact on the environment, don't buy."

Gould said while reducing purchases is the answer to preserving the environment, many people are not willing to give up their material wealth. He said not everyone holds the same views he does on the issue of debt being a contributor to harsh environmental impacts.

"Without the ability to borrow money, few families would be able to acquire the necessities of modern life, which include a decent place to live, appliances for cooking, machines to clean their clothes and houses, reliable transportation to get to work, go shopping and visit their families, fix their teeth, have an operation, take a vacation, go to college or buy a toy," Rylander said. "Without debt, the world economy would collapse and the human condition would materially suffer."

Rylander said debt is one of the repercussions Americans must deal with to be able to live the way they do.

Alaska USA has 250,000 members and \$1.2 billion in consumer loans, Rylander said. The credit union is currently making \$65 million to \$75 million per month from these loans. Among the 250,000 members, 46,000 have credit cards and 96,000 have consumer loans.

Rylander argues debt is good and is inevitable in a consumer-based society. He said he looks at debt in a positive and logical manner. His company is one of many that make acquiring debt possible.

Without debt, the world economy would collapse and the human condition would materially suffer.

Robert Rylander

executive vice president of Alaska USA Federal Credit Union

"The question is, are we and the environment better off with debt and the lifestyle of the first world, or without debt and the lifestyle of the third world?" Rylander said. "I think I would rather deal with our problems than theirs."

Gould said some debt is inevitable but Americans consume material goods at the cost of the environment and natural resources. The instant gratification from credit obscures people's ability to see the end result of damaging the environment and their financial future, he said.

"People carry a larger debt load now than 50 years ago," Rylander said. "Their expectations for acquisition of material wealth are higher, things cost more, credit qualification is easier, bankruptcy laws are much more forgiving and the stigma of failure to pay has dissipated."



Junior Carrie Meredith studies public relations at Western. This is her first published piece.



ON A SUNNY TABLE-TOP in Tony's Fairhaven coffee shop, a large digital stopwatch sits conspicuously close to a cellular phone. Their owner, Fiona Cohen, a reporter for the Bellingham Herald, sips her frothy hot chocolate and waits expectantly. When the phone suddenly rings, she grabs it with one hand and seizes the stopwatch with the other. Then, at the word of the caller, she presses the stopwatch's bright yellow start/stop button. Immediately, numbers begin flashing in the watch's face, counting the passing seconds and minutes.

One bicyclist and one driver race against the flashing numbers. Departing from the Herald's newsroom at the same time, each will seek to navigate the quickest route to Tony's while obeying all traffic laws and speed limits. The purpose of the race is to determine how long it takes to travel the same distance in a car versus a bike. The racers are not, however, obligated to take the same route.

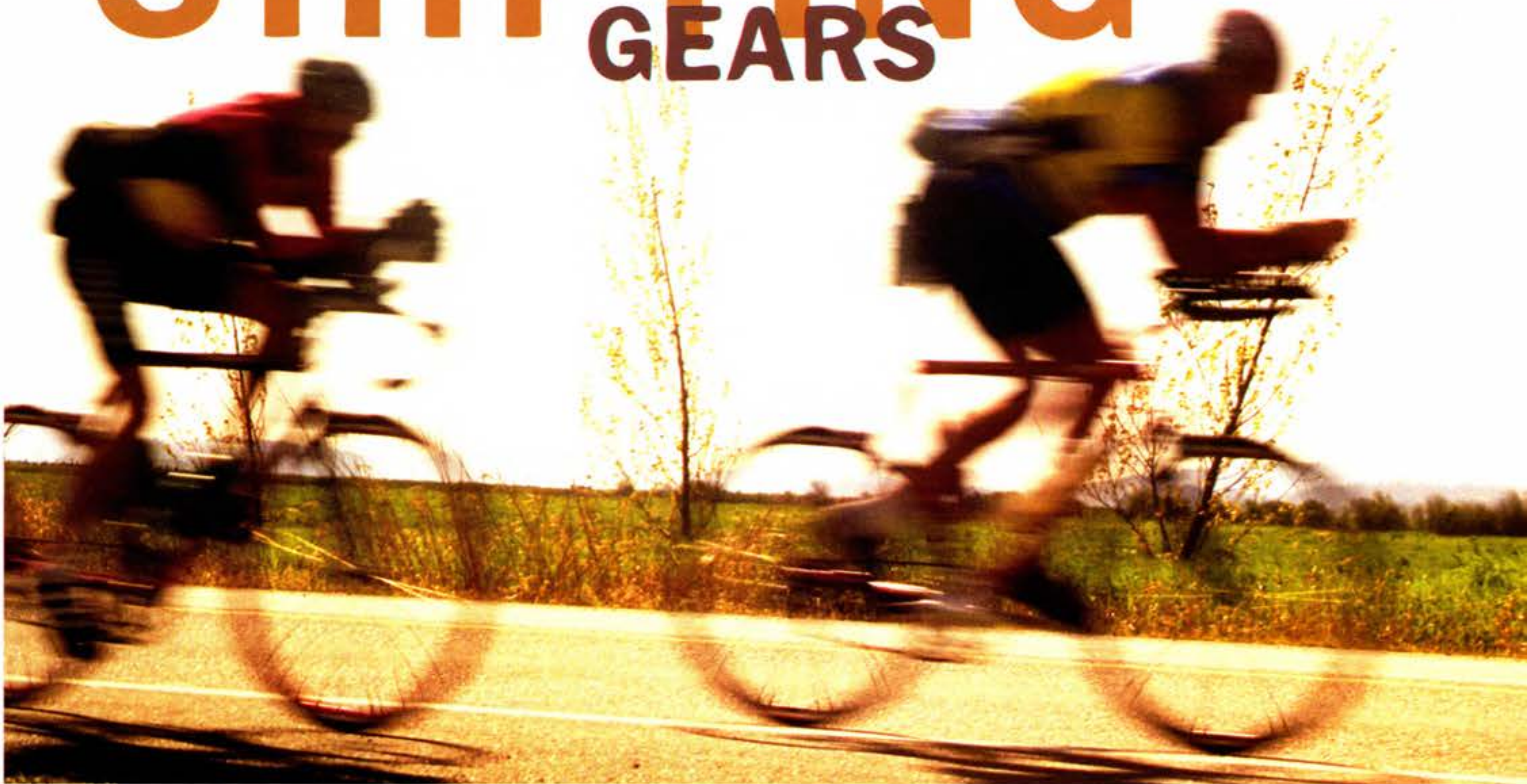
"I think that providing accurate information regarding the real time difference might influence people's (transportation) decisions," Cohen said. "At least they'll have real information to make the decision with instead of just guessing. This is about real commuting; not how fast you can possibly go."

Decisions about transportation have far-reaching effects, encompassing health, the environment and personal time. Time is a precious commodity for Americans, who — according to the Take Back Your Time Day Web site — average 350 more hours of work per year than Western Europeans. Thus, there is concern that changing modes of transportation will only add to an already over-scheduled life. Studies show, however, that bicycling has the potential to add time to the day, not subtract from it, while also benefiting human health and the environment.

SHIFTING GEARS

BY JESSICA STAHL

PHOTOS BY ANYA TRAISMAN



Studies by New York City's Transportation Alternatives found trips of fewer than three miles are often quicker by bike. Urban trips of five to seven miles usually take about the same time as they would by car. The Federal Highway Administration estimates 60 percent of all automobile trips are shorter than five miles in length.

"There are often times when there is a race between a car, bus and bike to illustrate that people can get to work just as fast (on a bike) as in a car," said Barbara Culp, executive director of the Bicycle Alliance of Washington. "People say, 'oh — it's so much faster to drive,' but don't take into consideration circling the block, looking for parking and walking back to (their destination)."

Cameron Burnes, an employee of Fairhaven Bike and Mountain Sports, said commuting by bike improves his schedule.

"Bicycling keeps me in shape, and forces me to plan ahead," Burnes said. "It regiments my life a bit. I think it's positive because it forces me to organize my life."

Burnes said traveling by bike requires deciding ahead of time what needs to be done during the day. Spontaneous errands require more effort by bike than they would by car. By planning ahead, it's possible to condense numerous trips into one.

In addition, every bicycle ride — regardless of length — has the bonus of improved fitness.

"It really doesn't make sense to me why people will pay for a gym membership but won't bike for free," said Eric Bortel, Western senior and staff member at the University's Outdoor Center bicycle shop.

It really doesn't make sense to me why people will pay for a gym membership but won't bike for free.

Eric Bortel, *Western Outdoor Center bicycle shop*

By riding to work, people can navigate their commute while working out at the same time. This can potentially eliminate scheduling time at the gym and add to time available for home, family and personal development.

"I don't have to go to a friggin' gym everyday to work out," said Michael Smith, a Bellingham resident who works two jobs and commutes between 10 miles and 30 miles a day. "I can eat anything I want and I don't have to worry about it. I'll never weigh more than 140 pounds."

Smith also said he thinks of commuting by bike as a form of campaigning.

"Not to get political," Smith said, "but every time I get in my car and fuel up I feel like I'm giving money to George W. Bush's next political campaign."

Culp, who lives in Seattle, commutes by bicycle about eight miles a day.

"The other thing about time and bicycling is that when you incorporate biking into your life, it's so freeing," Culp said. "You can use it for transportation, but it's also great for recreation. The health and emotional benefits are not quantifiable, but they are tremendous."

According to statistics from Transportation Alternatives, an advocacy group, 80 percent of people who switch from driving to bike commuting improve the function and health of their heart, lungs and blood vessels in eight weeks. Improved health increases productivity at work and results in less absenteeism.

"Anybody would have a better life by riding a bike," said Lee Becker, a construction worker and avid bicyclist. "It puts oxygen into the brain, which is going to be beneficial."

Choosing to bike improves other people's health as well.

Air pollutants from cars are a serious health threat. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, air pollution from highways caused a significant number of health effects in 1991, including 20,000 to 46,000 cases of chronic respiratory illness, 530 cases of cancer, 852 million headaches from motor vehicle carbon monoxide and an estimated 40,000 premature deaths in the United States.

Reducing motor vehicle traffic can lessen these adverse health effects. The 1996 Summer Olympic Games in Atlanta provide evidence of this.

According to *Pulmonary Reviews*, a news magazine for physicians who specialize in pulmonary and critical care medicine, Atlanta improved the city's air quality while hosting the Olympics. Atlanta added 1,000 buses to the city's existing fleet for round-the-clock public transportation, closed downtown streets to private cars and encouraged telecommuting or alternate-hour commuting.

Aside from alleviating traffic congestion, the changes provided researchers at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention with the opportunity to observe the impact decreased traffic can have on pediatric asthma.

The result was a 40 percent decrease in the number of asthma-related acute care visits recorded for Atlanta children ages 1 year to 16 years during the Olympics. The decrease in morning traffic improved air quality by lowering levels of particulate matter, ozone and carbon monoxide — all are known respiratory system irritants.

Bicycling can also improve health by helping to combat the average American's increasing weight.

"The fastest-growing cause of illness and death in America today is being overweight or obese," U.S. Surgeon General Richard Carmona said in remarks to the Health Industry Council in January 2003. "300,000 Americans die a year from its complications, nearly 1,000 everyday, one every 90 seconds."

"We are killing ourselves through our growing culture of excess and complacency," he said. "In this country, people take better care of their cars than they do of their bodies. Why is it, then, that people are more concerned with getting regular, routine check-ups on their car than they are on their own bodies?"

Bortel said concern with personal image contributes to the level of priority people give their cars.

"It's just not cool to ride a bike," Bortel said. "Cars are what you see in rap videos. Cars are what you see on television. I look at parking lots and think 'Everybody's driving a new car.'"

By shifting focus from the socio-economic status gained by driving a new car to the health benefits of bicycling, people can help prevent premature death. In terms of reclaiming personal time, this could be considered the ultimate performance enhancer.

In addition to harming human health, motor vehicles are detrimental to the environment.

According to the EPA, motor vehicles are a significant threat to wildlife. Noise pollution affects habitats of species near roads and traffic kills an estimated one million animals per day in the United States.

Travel by motor vehicles also consumes large amounts of time and money. The 2002 annual roadway congestion survey, conducted by the Texas Transportation Institute, reported the average American driver sits in rush hour traffic for more than 60 hours each year. These hours are spent idling in traffic, not driving. Overall, in 2002, \$68 billion worth of gasoline burned in idling engines.

The emissions from these idling engines, and from moving cars, contribute significantly to global climate change. Leaving your car at home just two days a week will reduce your carbon dioxide emissions by 1,590 pounds per year, according to the EPA's global warming Web site.

"Everybody should be riding their bike unless they have a physical disability," Bortel said, "(but) people are unwilling to expend the effort."



You've just got to take off your clothes and ride.

Lee Becker,
local bicyclist

According to the National Bicycling and Walking Study conducted by the U.S. Department of Transportation, bicycling and walking account for 7.9 percent of all travel trips. Of these, bicycling accounts for 0.7 percent.

Linda Schwartz, the Commuting Program Director for the Bicycle Alliance of Washington, said fear is largely responsible for people's reluctance to bike.

"It comes down to (being) afraid of traffic ... of the elements," Schwartz said.

She also said people are afraid of their fitness level. People worry they won't be physically able to make it where they're going.

To deal with fitness concerns, the May 2003 issue of Bicycling magazine suggests initially cutting the mileage in half. On the first day, drive to work with your bike, then bicycle home that night, leaving the car at the office. The next morning, ride to work, and then drive home. A "bike commuter in training" can repeat this pattern until the full, round-trip commute feels doable.

In terms of the weather, neither Burnes nor Becker considers it a real obstacle.

"With gear now, even in the harshest conditions you can stay comfortable," Burnes said.

Burnes emphasized correct clothing is especially important. Becker, who opts to go shirtless regardless of weather conditions, has another philosophy.

"You've just got to take off your clothes and ride," Becker said.

Becker has learned from experience that creating a visible presence on the roads is one way of dealing with traffic. Assistance from more experienced riders is also helpful.

The Bicycle Alliance of Washington has developed a program that pairs would-be bike commuters with experienced riders. In the program's first year of operation, more than one hundred representatives of each group signed up. Between 60 percent and 70 percent of the inexperienced riders reported that they ended up bicycling more than they would have without help.

"(The program) allows people to demonstrate to themselves: 'Oh! I can do it!'" Schwartz said. "It boosts their confidence."

Schwartz said people report a sense of empowerment when they are able to get up and over a hill on their own.

"Sometimes it's hard to get motivated initially, but I'm happy once I'm on my bike," Burnes said. "I'm revitalized. There's a sense of accomplishment at the end of the week when you know you've ridden to and from some place. It wakes me up so I'm fresh when I get to where I need to be."

Ed Arthur, archaeologist and Bellingham resident, rides his bicycle nearly everyday but does not bike to work. For Arthur, his transportation choice is a matter of feasibility.

"It's not practical for my job," Arthur said. "I spend a lot of time out in the field. In theory it would be great. If I worked in an office everyday ..."

For others, a combination of factors, including physical ability, contribute to their decision not to bike.

"I used to bike to work in Seattle despite the traffic, but after four surgeries on my neck my doctor recommended I stop biking," said Bruce Boyle, a Bellingham real estate agent. "I walk to work occasionally, but by the time I get here I'm all sweaty and I don't have a car to carry customers around in."

For Fiona Cohen, commuting by bike became difficult following the arrival of her first child. Cohen said as a new mom balancing a baby and a job, she became obsessed with scheduling. This led her to question the time difference of commuting by bike versus car.

We are killing ourselves through our growing culture of excess and complacency. In this country, people take better care of their cars than they do of their bodies.

Richard Carmona
U.S. Surgeon General



Howard Muhlberg, representative for Bike West commuter club, bikes to and from work every week.



What you need to get started

**All prices are for new items. Gear can be found second-hand for less.*

- **A bike.** Check out classified ads for a used one, or start new at a local bike shop. Fairhaven Bike and Mountain Sports recommends a commuter bike that retails at \$275
- **A messenger-style bag** helps prevent back injury and allows free range of movement for the head. The bags are available in several sizes, styles and prices, \$40-\$130
- **Helmet,** \$35 - \$160
- **Lights,** LED styles available for \$15-\$20
- **Waterproof-breathable pants and jacket** Look for a jacket with a long back to help keep your rear dry, \$80-\$200 for each piece. Shop the Internet for bargains, or use the simpler, and cheaper, waterproof only option.

Extras to increase comfort

- **Padded cycling shorts,** \$20-\$50
- **Gloves,** \$20- \$40
- **Synthetic socks for quick drying** \$10-\$15
- **Synthetic shoes to decrease water absorption,** starting at \$60

Going completely car-free with ease

- **Bike trailer.** The "Nomad" is collapsible, attaches to any bike and doesn't affect handling of the bike: \$269.

Totals:

This gear, purchased new, would cost between \$555 and \$824, more if the trailer is included.

For comparison, a new, base model compact car starts at around \$9,500.

"The stopwatch is relevant now because I don't have much time," Cohen said.

As the stopwatch flashes 8:31.15, the winner of the commute race strolls into Tony's. The victor is the driver, but only 1 minute and 9 seconds later the bicyclist enters the coffee shop. The driver, Kie Relyea, a features writer for the Bellingham Herald, reports that she feels a little sleepy, and envied the bicyclist's beautiful view of the bay.

"I wished I was outside as I passed her," Relyea said.

The bicyclist, Becky Rowland, a Western student, said she feels a little winded, but energized.

Regardless of the time involved to travel by bike, however, Becker said he loves riding because it has taught him to live a fuller life.

"When I go for a ride I am awake at the end of the ride," Becker said. "That makes me more focused and more alert. One of the things I love about being on a bicycle is that I'm in touch with the world. The hills are telling me something, the flats are telling me something, the weather is telling me something. I'm having a conversation with the world."



Senior Jessica Stahl studies biology at Western. She has previously been published in The Planet Magazine.

DONATED TIME

BY ETHAN BROWN PHOTOS BY BRANDON SAWAYA



Western Washington University students set out to clear overgrown blackberry bushes from an area on Squalicum Creek Parkway. Their work is part of a restoration project to enhance the habitat of the creek.

WHERE BLACKBERRY VINES once choked off all other plant life, newly planted Indian plum, twinberry and willow plants are beginning to take root. Mangled trunks of saplings, freed of the oppressive vines, see sunlight for the first time. On this small piece of land sandwiched between Squalicum Creek and Squalicum Parkway in Bellingham a change is taking place. As the dripping, gray skies begin to clear, volunteers oblivious to the pervading dampness arrive to continue the transformation.

Whatcom County enjoys a higher rate of volunteerism than the rest of the United States, according to the Whatcom Coalition for Healthy Communities. The 2000 U.S. Census Bureau survey found that 44 percent of adults volunteer in the United States. In an increasingly busy society, 64 percent of Whatcom County residents take the time to volunteer.

Jeremy Brown, a local commercial fisherman, volunteer and fish advocate, is part of this volunteer effort. "There is a hell of a lot to do," Brown said.

Brown is a volunteer with the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association, a nonprofit organization dedicated to restoring salmon runs in Whatcom County through habitat restoration, education and community participation.

Squalicum Creek, one of the highest salmon producing streams in Bellingham, is a NSEA project.

"NSEA is a win-win situation," said Tina Mirabile, a member of NSEA's volunteer board of directors. "NSEA gives the little man a chance to do the right thing."

NSEA is one of the more than 1,200 Whatcom County nonprofit organizations that are flourishing because of the work of its volunteers. Cathy Lehman is program director for the Whatcom Volunteer Center, an organization that coordinates volunteers for more than 350 organizations. She said there is no shortage of dedicated volunteers in the Whatcom community.

"People feel attached to the community," Lehman said. "We have volunteers anywhere from 6 years to 96 years old."

While volunteerism is strong in Whatcom County, Brown is worried about what he sees as negative attitudes elsewhere in Washington state toward community volunteer programs and their support and funding — citing recent anti-tax initiatives.

"They say, 'screw that, someone else can pay for that,'" Brown said.

Brown is comforted, however, by actions of the residents he sees around him.

"This community has said, 'hey no, we want to live a little differently,'" Brown said.

Lehman said she and her colleagues at the Whatcom Volunteer Center have tried to figure out why Whatcom County has so many dedicated volunteers.

Mirabile said the strong volunteer numbers are not only because of the community, but also because of the Whatcom Volunteer Center. She said that the center provides a way for volunteers to be placed with organizations that need their skills and expertise without having to find the organizations themselves.

Instead of searching for volunteers, Brad Lystra, volunteer coordinator for NSEA, said he must turn away requests for independent service-learning projects, due to the high demand from teachers hoping to pass on the importance of NSEA's work to their students.

Saturday community work parties, Lystra said, have had record numbers this year. He said approximately 1,000 people have attended Saturday work parties since the fall. On average, 40 to 50 people attend work parties.

Volunteers vary from Boy Scouts and retirees to parents introducing their children to the work that needs to be done in the community.

"We do have a great sense of community," Brown said about Bellingham and Whatcom County.

Brown said people who volunteer for groups such as NSEA are more likely to get involved with other causes.

Before coming to Bellingham, Mirabile worked at various hostels on the East and West coasts. She decided to settle in Bellingham after seeing the community support for the hostel on Padden Creek where she worked until it closed its doors five years ago.

"I felt a lot of support from the community," Mirabile said. "They had an interest in sharing with the travelers."

Mirabile became involved with NSEA through her connection to Padden Creek, where NSEA was working at the time.

Currently, Mirabile runs her own wetlands and wildlife consultation company.

Between NSEA, where she spends one to four hours a week, and her own company, Mirabile finds time to volunteer for the Bellingham Parks and Recreation's Greenways Volunteer Program,

a program that focuses on maintaining Bellingham's trail systems and restoring wildlife habitat. She also helps the Northwest Ecosystem Alliance, an organization working to protect and restore the Pacific Northwest's wildlands.

"I understand the value of volunteering," Mirabile said. "I am already in over my head, so I don't sleep."

Not everyone has the time to volunteer to the extent that Brown and Mirabile do.

"It takes so much time," said Jim Swinburnson, owner of Swinburnson Enterprises, a local drywall contracting company. "Everybody gets so busy."

Ten years ago, Swinburnson volunteered extensively during the creation of the Lynden Pioneer Museum.

"My business was suffering so I had to stop," he said.

Currently, Swinburnson said he works 60 to 70 hours a week, leaving no time for volunteering. He hopes to be able to return to volunteering in the near future however.

In order to spend three to four hours a week volunteering for NSEA, Brown must juggle saving fish and catching fish. As a commercial fisherman, he is not tied to a desk job and he doesn't answer to a boss, but he must be ready to go out when the fish are there.

"You gotta do what you gotta do," Brown said. "If the fish are there, you gotta go."

Brown quit fishing for salmon eight years ago, shortly after the formation of NSEA. Brown said he had his best season in 1994 and felt it was time for a change.

"It was little too much to be helping salmon half the year and killing salmon the other half," he said.

Now Brown said he trolls for albacore tuna and long lines for halibut and black cod.

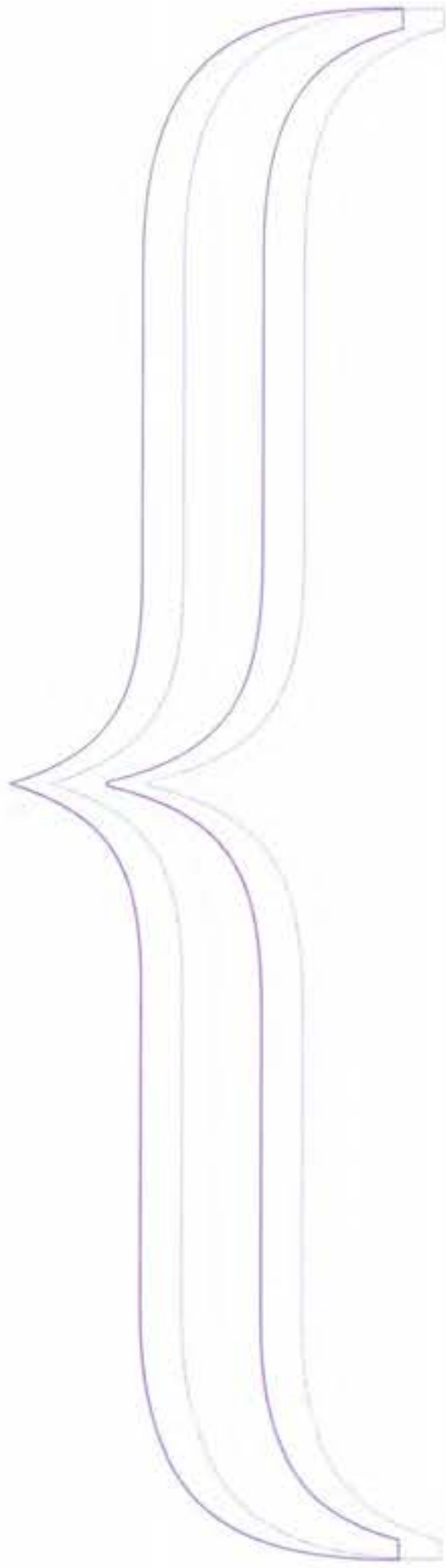
"There isn't a clear demarcation between caring about fish and catching fish," Brown said. "I like the kind of things salmon like; clean water and healthy ecosystems and such."

As the rest of Bellingham begins to awaken, Lystra excitedly shows the volunteers the Squalicum Creek site, his pet project. He takes them first to the area already freed of blackberries and planted with various native trees. Volunteers finger their work gloves as they watch and listen to Lystra describe the day's tasks, consisting of digging up any remnants of the blackberry patch, clearing the same area and planting more Indian plum, twinberry, ninebark, crab apple and willow.

Pausing on the creek bank, Lystra spends a moment describing what the stream looks like after the first big rain in the fall, filled with spawning salmon. As he advises everyone to return to witness this yearly phenomenon, it is evident why Lystra, Brown, Mirabile and the volunteers present choose to volunteer with NSEA.

"The salmon is a proud symbol of this part of the world," Brown said. "If we can sustain salmon, we're sustaining what the area is."

Freshman Ethan Brown studies Spanish and International Relations at Western. This is his first published piece.



AS LONG AS I didn't stand directly in front of it, it didn't look like much. Framed in fake wood paneling, the 20-inch television screen stood on a nondescript table, dedicated solely to the purpose of aiming the Hitachi's images straight into the eyes of a group of mesmerized girls seated on a blue L-shaped couch across the room. From its unassuming position in the corner, stacked with remote controls and appliances with cryptic acronyms like VCR and DVD, the screen bathed the faces of 19-year-old Chelsea Fimia-Moe and three of her roommates in a ghostly white light and filled their ears with the steady hum of theme music and inane dialogue.

The constant barrage of charismatic product-hawkers coupled with the inhuman pallor splashed across the girls' faces filled me with apprehension. Unfamiliar with the surreal fantasy world of television, I hunkered down for what promised to be a long hour — silently wondering what I had gotten myself into.

Fimia-Moe explained Boston Public's previous episode: kids cheating on tests, baffled teachers and Mini Me stuffed in a locker. I commented that it didn't seem very realistic.

"But that's the appeal," she said. "Isn't it?"

Earlier that week, Fimia-Moe sat barefoot on her front porch and explained why she enjoys watching television. Despite taking a full load of classes at Western Washington University and serving on the Student Senate, Western Student Political Action Club and the Facilities Services Council, Fimia-Moe still finds time to watch TV several hours a day. She said she watches television as an escape from her long hours at school and work.

"I think if I had less stuff to worry about I'd be able to dedicate more of my mind to doing the things I used to love doing in high school," she said. "Reading, writing, poetry. I miss it so much."

Fimia-Moe is typical of most Americans who, despite the fact that they work longer hours than the citizens of any other industrialized nation, still find time to squeeze in more television viewing than anyone else. The average American watches four hours of television per day according to a 2000 Nielsen Media Research report. With marketers cajoling viewers into buying more, and generations of TV-addicted Americans losing their sense of stewardship for the earth, researchers and watchdog groups claim that America's most devastating instruments of environmental degradation might be televisions.

Dennis O'Neill, a certified dependency counselor and Drug-Free Workplace manager for Boeing, said Fimia-Moe's explanation is strikingly similar to the language a drug addict or alcoholic would use to justify their behavior.

GLUED

BY BRENDAN McLAUGHLIN

PHOTOS BY BRANDON SAWAYA PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY BRANDON SAWAYA AND KATIE KULLA

"TV is an escape from reality," he said. "It's the same with dope or drinking. Even though you know you have this important stuff to do, like take care of your family, you watch TV instead."

On April 21, 2003 Fimia-Moe quit television for one week. Cold turkey.

April 21 to 27 was TV-Turnoff Week, a national event run by the nonprofit TV-Turnoff Network based in Washington, D.C. An estimated 6.4 million people participated in the event last year, and organizers estimate at least 7 million took part in 2003.

The TV-Turnoff Network's mission is to encourage children and adults to watch less television in order to promote healthier lives and communities. More than 70 national organizations, including the National Education Association and the American Medical Association supported the week-long event.

"The movement to reduce TV time is bubbling up all over," said Frank Vespe, executive director of the TV-Turnoff Network. "People are starting to realize it's really unhealthy to watch so much TV."

On the Sunday before her TV-free experiment, Fimia-Moe, while expressing some reservations, said she looked forward to a chance to break from her routine.

"I'm a little nervous," she said. "TV is what I use to relax. Hopefully, after this week that will change."

Fimia-Moe fits what Juliet Schor, a Boston College sociologist and author of "The Overworked American," calls the exhaustion model.

"Watching television becomes the default option," Schor said. "The longer hours of work leave people more tired and they come home and turn on the set."

Economist Giacomo Corneo from the University of Osnabrück in Germany has spent the past several years researching the connection between work and leisure time activities. In his paper, "Work and Television," Corneo documented that the average American works roughly 1,850 hours and watches 1,500 hours of television annually. In the Netherlands, where the average person works about 1,370 hours annually, TV-viewing is about two-thirds of what Americans watch.

Corneo said, however, this connection only exists at the national level. Time-budget surveys conducted by Pennsylvania State University, the Journal of Economic Literature and the National Bureau of Economic Research show that when a person's work hours increase, their TV viewing decreases.

He said the reason for the correlation at the national level was based on the country's cultural standards.



When you're having these real experiences you realize how trivial TV is. TV is about wishing I had life. With the wishing comes a longing for what TV has to offer, which is a temporary fix from some material good.

David Wann
*former EPA official and co-author of
"Affluenza: The All Consuming Epidemic"*

Americans, unlike citizens of most other countries, place little emphasis on socializing and community cohesiveness. In many European countries like Germany, for example, people spend a lot of time with their friends and family.

"In societies of this kind, social life takes much time," Corneo said. "Since the remaining time is relatively little, work hours and television viewing are short. In societies where you do not have those expectations, there is a lot of time left for working and TV."

Fimia-Moe started by making time for herself.

On Tuesday of TV-Turn Off Week, Fimia-Moe remained enthusiastic. She began riding her bike to school, reading "Pride and Prejudice" and said she was more relaxed and focused without TV.

"It's only Tuesday and I already feel so much better about my week," she said. "I get less distracted. It has helped having a well-defined goal of no television, but it's still hard. It's like trying to get over a boyfriend."

By Wednesday her enthusiasm had flagged a bit. Although she admitted to ordering a pizza that night, Fimia-Moe said that being TV-free had curbed her consumption of marketed products, particularly fast food.

"I definitely feel more satisfied with what I have," she said. "I'm more conscious of what I buy. But I've been watching TV for so long those messages are permanently in my head."

David Wann, former EPA official and co-author of "Affluenza: The All Consuming Epidemic," said he believes viewers take commercial messages literally — they do want it all, he said, including the things they don't need.

"In this passive state we are at the mercy of a marketing mechanism that easily manipulates our psyche," he said. "It sets us on the quest for more than what you need."

Network programming contains up to 21 minutes of advertising per hour according to the Association of National Advertisers. Schor and Wann said the more someone watches the more they think they need, and the more resources they consume.

"The lifestyles portrayed (on TV) suggest an affluent, consumptive ideal," Schor said. "It creates a very high perception of the typical Joneses."

Respondents to a survey Schor conducted for her book, "The Overspent American," spent an additional \$208 annually for each hour of TV they watched per week. Although Schor was leery of drawing a direct causal connection between watching and spending, the results show viewers are heavily influenced by television messages.

Many researchers are disconcerted by a relatively recent trend in advertising: companies targeting young children as potential customers. Gary Ruskin, executive director of Commercial Alert, an advertising watchdog group, said marketers appeal to children as young as possible, taking advantage of their vulnerable and trusting nature.

"They want us from cradle to grave," Ruskin said. "Get them early and have them for life."

According to the 1999 Kaiser Family Foundation study, "Kids and Media at the New Millennium," the average American child 2 years old to 18 years old watches just less than three hours of television daily. Twenty-four percent of children under 6 have a television in their bedroom.

Western marketing professor Linda Alvarado said marketing is

now so sophisticated that a child as young as one might have already established brand loyalty — preference for a specific brand or label based on the product's image.

As a mother of four children ages 3 to 18, she said she has to look at television from the dual perspectives of a marketer and a mother. While she appreciates an effective commercial, she is still protective and cautious about what her children see.

"As a mom, I'm very selective of what they get to watch because I know the pervasiveness of the advertising messages," she said. "Americans at all ages are being bombarded by the media."

Numerous studies have shown children who watch a lot of television tend to be more violent, obese, materialistic and have lower reading test scores, Ruskin said. According to a 1999 Senate Judiciary Committee Staff Report, by age 18 children have witnessed 16,000 TV murders and 10 percent of all youth violence is directly attributable to TV watching.

The American Academy of Pediatrics is highly critical of childhood television viewing, stating that children under 2 should not watch any television and older kids should watch no more than two hours a day, one third below the national average.

"Instead of teaching how to have a rewarding life, they teach us to value materialism, heathenism, violence," Ruskin said. "It's terrible parents have to contend with corporate ads and fight for the values of their children."

Wann said because Americans are so busy, they don't have as much time for their kids and inevitably use the television as a babysitter. The children watch TV characters instead of playing with their friends.

"The kid says, 'I'm lonely. Those kids are having fun while I sit here by myself. I want what they have,'" Wann said.

For many young students, even the classroom is no longer a refuge from the ubiquitous advertising messages.

According to Schor's paper, "Work, Family and Children's Consumer Culture," 40 percent of the nation's public school children grades six to 12 are subjected to mandatory viewing of Channel One News, a daily 12 minute commercial broadcast. The daily show includes 10 minutes of news and two minutes of ads for a captive audience of eight million children in 12,000 schools nationwide.

And, as with adults, more television equates to more spending. Expenditures by 4 to 12 year-olds increased six-fold to \$23.4 billion between 1980 and 1997, according to Schor's paper. Children were also indirectly responsible for \$550 billion in parental purchases in 2000, an increase from \$50 billion in 1984.

Wann recently returned from a trip to the rainforest near San Jose, Costa Rica. After three weeks without electricity, he returned to his home in Colorado and has remained television-free since. He recalled a period of walking through the Costa Rican forest, inundated with life — a bright red macaw, abundant flowers, buzzing insects and even a fur-de-lance, a snake with the most potent venom on the continent.

"When you're having these real experiences you realize how trivial TV is," he said. "TV is about wishing I had life. With the wishing comes a longing for what TV has to offer, which is a temporary fix from some material good."

Wann also said TV leads the viewer to believe that life should be fast-paced and thrilling — two adjectives missing from his description of Costa Rica.

"TV separates us from reality," he said. "In comparison to television, the environment is boring. Why protect it? We've lost our sense of stewardship."

Many people like Western sophomore Jaimie Laitinen have gone TV-free permanently and never looked back. Laitinen said she doesn't watch TV because she has so many other things she wants to do and believes TV instills materialistic and selfish values. She explained she doesn't make a distinction between work and leisure time because she enjoys all her various activities, including photography, printmaking, drawing, painting, reading and exercise.

"What's the use of TV when I have so many real activities I could be doing?" Laitinen said. "You're just throwing away a certain amount of your time. The clock goes around and you didn't do anything."

Barbara Brock, a recreation professor at Eastern Washington University, was the first to study the lifestyles of TV-free families. According to Brock, TV-free families are much more likely to be involved in community service projects, have strong parent-child relationships and children with high grades in school.

In one study, Brock found a typical television-watching family spends 38 minutes per week in meaningful dialogue, compared to 55 minutes per day for TV-free families.

"We're so caught up in the lives of people on television we don't have relationships with those around us," she said. "The TV-free families I've worked with simply wanted more time for marriage and family in the face of a busy life."

During each of my frequent and unannounced visits to Fimia-Moe's house throughout the week, I mounted the steps with a mild sense of dread. Would I open the door to the sound of the TV trumpeting its victory, gloating over its reclamation of the slack expressions of Fimia-Moe and her roommates? Would she make it to the end?

Sunday, April 27, the final day of TV-Turnoff Week, was a beautiful day in Bellingham. Fimia-Moe sat in the same spot on her porch that she had one week before, again shoeless, admiring the fading sun as it slid behind an old church across the street.

She had just returned from a weekend retreat to Lewis and Clark State Park, 621 acres situated on one of the state's stands of Old Growth Forest.

"The stars were really amazing," she said. "I hadn't seen them in so long."

She did it — TV free for one week.

Overall, she said, going a week without TV was a great experience, but she looked forward to being able to grab the remote again.

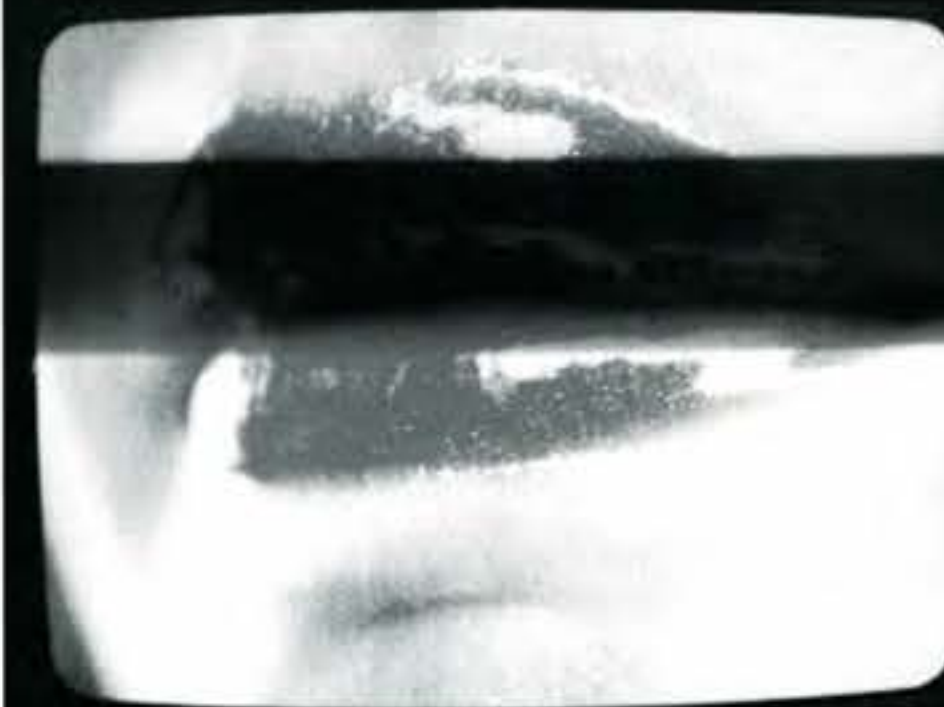
"I just realized there's so much more I can do with my brain," she said. "I'm now completely glued to 'Pride and Prejudice.'"

She planned on cutting back to no more than one hour of television per day except, of course, on Thursdays when all her favorite shows are on. Despite her positive response to a week of abstinence, endorsing it as something everyone should try, she couldn't commit to a lifetime without television. As she freely admitted, watching TV is addictive. You wean yourself off it a little at a time.

Still, for one week in April, the Hitachi sat dormant, forgotten in its corner except for the sheet of paper taped to the screen reading "Turn off your TV Week."



Senior Brendan McLaughlin studies environmental journalism at Huxley College. He has previously been published in *The Western Front*, *Whatcom Watch* and *The Planet Magazine*.



Chelsea Fimia-Moe, 19, enjoyed a week of no television after one of her roommates tacked a sign to the TV reading, "Turn off your TV week."

FULLTIME FAMILY

BY ANDREA BOYLE
PHOTOS BY ANYA TRAISMAN



Mother Courtney and daughter Hilary Imhoff have a short-lived argument before leaving the house for Hilary's horse riding lesson.

SHRIEKING LAUGHTER AND PLAYFUL CHATTER announce the presence of children. Hand-made crafts of bright yellow and orange paper hang lopsidedly — warming the beige walls and welcoming newcomers. The smell of apple juice and dirt permeate the rooms as a whistle blows for attention in the playground.

A petite 4-year-old girl yells “Hi big Michael,” from her classroom to Michael Waters, owner of Kid’s World, a privately owned day-care facility in Bellingham. The children rush to give high-fives to Waters as he walks by.

“Hello to you, too,” he shouts over the din of children playing.

Recess is almost over for the pre-schooler and soon lunch will be served, marking the midway point for a child who spends eight hours a day playing, learning, eating and napping at Kid’s World.

Kid’s World is the daytime home to roughly 400 children in Whatcom County, Waters said. With five facilities on three campuses and another facility opening in the coming months, Waters encounters children with a wide variety of home lives.

“We have every kind of family at Kid’s World,” he said. “I see single-moms working full-time, two parent families that are both working full-time or families with one parent working but pay the tuition to have the option to drop their children off a few hours at time.”

Day cares like Kid’s World expand because parents are spending a growing number of hours away from home in order to meet the demands of a career. Americans are working more than ever before; one third of Americans work more than 50 hours a week, according to the National Sleep Foundation.

“Across the economic scale families struggle to balance long hours with quality childcare,” said Robert Drago, a professor of labor studies and women studies at Pennsylvania State University. “While childcare helps socialize children and prepares them for school, the vast majority of child care has a direct affect on children’s cognitive development. They are more likely to display anti-social behavior, have health problems, including their diets, and are more likely to engage in at-risk behaviors.”

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families, 57.6 percent of children under the age of 6 live with working parents.

Sixty percent of children enrolled in Kid’s World are from single-parent households, Waters said.

According to the National Center for Health Statistics, 50 percent of American marriages dissolve in divorce after ten years. More mothers are re-entering the workforce when their children are still too young to go to school.

Waters said he talked to a woman who wanted to return to work after having her third child.

“After crunching the numbers with her over the phone, we realized after all the costs were said and done with paying full time childcare for her three children, she would be netting \$30 a week,” Waters said. “She began to cry as she realized it was much more advantageous for her to stay at home with her children then it would be to leave the home and work full-time.”

Drago said some effects of overworked parents include seeking higher standards of living, which forces parents to work longer hours and keep their children in child care longer.

“Maintaining a standard of living is harder then ever,” Drago said. “Mom and Dad are forced to work full-time just to make the car payment.”

Courtney Imhoff, a full-time working mother of two, has to juggle motherhood and a career. Imhoff is a human resource manager and safety administrator for Imco Construction. She works from 6 a.m. to 3 p.m. leaving her 10-year-old daughter Hilary and her 6-year-old son Luke to be woken by a nanny and taken to school every morning.

“I didn’t work for a little while after Hilary was born,” Imhoff said. “I went to school for a while but then decided it was better to work.”

Hilary was in full-time day care when she was 1 year old and Luke was in full-time day care by the time he was 6 months old, she said.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, of the 3.7 million mothers with infants 1 year and younger, 36 percent of them are working full time and 17 percent are working part-time.

“I like to work and I like to work hard,” Imhoff said. “I admire

my friends and sisters that don’t work but I love to work and I love to own my own home. We have five acres and three horses, Hilary gets to ride horses and Luke does Tae Kwan Do, that is a great reason to work.”

Because Imhoff’s partner, Troy Dykstra, travels with his job three to four days a week, Imhoff is left as the sole caretaker of the children.

“I make an effort to be out of the office by 3 every day to pick Luke up from kindergarten and meet Hilary at the house by the time she gets off the bus,” she said.

“I feel like I am spending more time with them now than I ever have before because I am home with them after school.”

Parents are getting more creative with jobs and schedules, so they can have their children in child care less, Waters said.

“Hilary used to complain a lot about me not being able to be there 24/7, but now I make sure to be at the things I need to be at,” Imhoff said. “I’m not trying to say everything is perfect, Hilary used to cry everyday and wouldn’t want to go to school so she could be with me, but Hilary also has private horse lessons and her own horse.”

Every kind of family bring their children to day care: some live with grandparents, single parents, dual income families or young parents. They all need help, former Kid’s World Director Lisa Swank said.

“There is a drastic difference between kids who are picked up after work, fed dinner, read to and hugged and kissed than the kids that are picked up and set in front of the TV for the remainder of the evening,” Swank said.

Parents struggle to have more time with their children while still remaining financially mobile, Waters said.

“I see a lot of parents working really hard to be successful and continue to be consumers but also keep their kids out of full-time day care programming,” Waters said. “I have seen a real shift, not away from having nice things and nice cars, but in making time to spend with their kids.”

Children are resilient, Waters said. They are able to tread through incredible situations. Group care can be challenging for children; they sometimes learn how to deal with aggressive behavior where if they were at home they wouldn’t necessarily learn those traits.

“Everyone wants to blame child care, but child care is not where the problem is,” Swank said. “The kids who have stable lives thrive and do great, but kids who don’t have stable homes were the ones who tended to struggle more.”



Junior Andrea Boyle studies journalism at Western. She has previously been published in The Western Front.

LEFT: Hilary Imhoff, 10, makes herself Minute Rice for an after-school snack. CENTER: Hilary Imhoff watches a few minutes of television while she eats her rice. RIGHT: Courtney cleans the kitchen after Hilary made a snack.



'HOME

IN FALL 2002, DEVELOPERS dropped anchor in Bellingham's Roosevelt Neighborhood — a 165,000-square-foot Lowe's Home Improvement Warehouse.

The development replaced more than 20 homes and the Bellingham Covenant Church with Sunset Marketplace Shopping Center. When the development is finished, Lowe's will be surrounded by a new Walgreen's, Well's Fargo Bank, McDonald's and possibly a Kentucky Fried Chicken.

Roosevelt community members said they are wary of the ripple effect big chain stores like Lowe's might have on the local economy and quality of life.

As the number of corporate chain stores increases across the country, the livelihood of their local, independent counterpart, like Bellingham's Hardware Sales, Inc. is threatened.

While Lowe's and Hardware Sales differ in reception, layout, selection, employee welfare and community contributions, they do share one common trait — neither plans to leave town any time soon.

Lowe's officials refused to be interviewed. According to Lowe's Web site, the 57-year-old company set its sights on becoming the hardware and building supply destination for homeowners in the early 1980s. The company launched an aggressive expansion campaign in the 1990s and now employs roughly 130,000 people. In 2002 the company sold \$26.5 billion worth of merchandise at more than 850 stores in 45 states.

Identical bright signs and wide aisles characterize all Lowe's outlets. Hardware Sales is the antithesis of this formula layout.

The family-owned and operated store, a seemingly unorganized, narrow-aisled, jungle of roughly 100,000 different items, has weathered the rise and fall of other local hardware stores, as well as the more recent retail giants, for more than 40 years. Stocked from floor to ceiling with hose clamps next to towel bars and fish food next to hand torches, the store is bursting at the seams. The company plans to expand onto four additional city lots on top of the 25 it already spans.

Store President Jerry McClellan said Hardware Sales grosses nearly \$15 million each year and his employees are on a first name basis with as many as 50 percent of the customers who walk through the store's doors.

"Hardware Sales is rich in loyalty, life, family and friends," he said, "and we're rich on paper."

Tony Pflanzer, a sales representative for Hardware Sales, lives across the street from the new Lowe's development. He said the development wasn't the kind of "home improvement" he and his neighbors were looking for in their neighborhood.

Pflanzer said he fought the rezone at the Lowe's development because he didn't want to see acres of blacktop and deal with the associated noise and traffic.

Originally, another chain hardware store, Home Depot, wanted to build its store at the Lowe's site, but lost a zoning battle in the early 1990s.

In reaction to pressure from increasing commercial development along East Sunset Drive, the Bellingham City Council approved a new plan for the Roosevelt Neighborhood in 1997 that changed the site's zoning to commercial. The new plan also required developers to construct an extension of nearby Barkley Boulevard to relieve traffic congestion. It was a price — \$2 million — Lowe's developers were willing to pay.

Pflanzer said as a Hardware Sales employee he didn't feel threatened by the new store in town.

"Hardware Sales will still be standing," he said. "The big guys will focus on eating each other and whoever's still there will be left panting."

Jason Lind also lives on Orleans Street directly across from the new Lowe's. He said he fears if the store fails, the surrounding neighborhood would be left looking at an empty 165,000-square-foot box.

"I don't want to see what happened with Home Base happen here, too," he said. "When they left town they left a huge 'big box' behind that's an eyesore and waste of space and money."

He said although he didn't object to development in general or to Lowe's as a business, he took issue with the development across the street from his house because it violated the neighborhood plan governing zoning and development.

Between Lowes' parking lot and Lind's house sits an open green lot, known as Parcel D, where developers wanted to place a grocery store with a driveway exiting to Orleans Street.

"But the Roosevelt Neighborhood Plan said you can't have a really huge commercial building in Parcel D or an entrance point on Orleans," he said.

In a written response to Lind's concerns, the developer, Jeffrey Oliphant of California-based Sunset Drive Investors, L.L.C., offered Lind \$2,000 to "agree to withdraw any objections, and to not encourage others to object to the development as currently proposed."

Lind said he refused the money. He was able to stop the grocery store, but the rest of the shopping center was allowed to proceed.

He said the Bellingham City Council approved the developer's plans in spite of the violations to the neighborhood plan, which the council subsequently went back and revised when it passed a resolution.

The resolution also permitted the buffer between Lowe's south side and residents on Indiana Street to be 30 feet narrower than the neighborhood plan originally required.

"The developers proposed a 70-foot-wide buffer with two constructed wetlands, and we said that was OK," said Steve Sundin, a Bellingham city planner.

In November 2001, the city issued a stop-work order to develop-

IMPROVEMENT'

BY ALISON BICKERSTAFF PHOTOS BY KATIE KULLA



Jason Lind holds his 2-year-old daughter, Kacey, in their front garden. From the yard, they once looked at other homes and trees, but now the new Lowe's development and parking lot dominate the view.

ers after workers accidentally cleared mature trees from the intended buffer.

"We believe it was an honest mistake," Sundin said.

Lind said he didn't think the tree clearing on Indiana Street was accidental.

"They put some trees back in, but nothing like they could or should have done," he said. "I guess that's the power of money."

On Lowe's south side the two constructed wetlands are surrounded by the new, staked trees the developers had to plant. Many of the trees did not survive their first year. Cardboard boxes and plastic bags now litter the wetland's shores.

"The wetlands meet the minimum requirements," Sundin said. "If it clogs with garbage, though, the wetlands obviously won't function."

Beyond the troubles with the wetland, community members worry about the other effects the development could have on the community. Pflanzner said he doesn't like big box stores because their

profits leave the community and end up in the hands of absentee owners — people who don't call Bellingham home.

Michelle Long, executive director of Sustainable Connections, said local businesses act as better stewards of their place in a community than big box stores. Sustainable Connections is a network of local business owners that strive to promote a local living economy, quality of life and natural resource stewardship in Northwest Washington.

"In general, all such big box stores like Lowe's don't add to our community, our sense of place," she said. "We prefer people shop at Hardware Sales."

On McClellan's office walls hang pictures of three generations of his family, which owns and runs the business together. He started working at the store 42 years ago.

"Someday my sister, LaDonna (George), and I are going to sell out to our kids," he said.

McClellan said the store's diversity and willingness to go out of its

The Lowes and the Wal-Marts of the world are not evil, but by design, their loyalty is to an undifferentiated mass of somewhat faceless individuals and entities known as shareholders that can be scattered around the planet.

Mark Asmundson
Bellingham Mayor

way for customers has kept it in business for decades. Currently, the store is open six days a week, but McClellan said the store might have to open on Sundays.

"But we try to keep that day open for ourselves and our employees," McClellan said.

Lowe's, which McClellan said only affected his store's growth minutely, is open longer hours than Hardware Sales and every day of the year except Christmas and Thanksgiving.

McClellan said in addition to keeping his employees satisfied, supporting the surrounding community is a high priority for the store.

"We donate to a couple hundred local organizations each year, including the local Boys' and Girls' Clubs, little league teams and a women's care shelter in town," McClellan said. "The big chain stores don't sponsor in the community like that."

Rich Koss, a local general contractor and former Hardware Sales employee, said the owners of Hardware Sales have the power to help the community in times of need in ways that its larger competitors cannot.

"A couple of years ago we had a heat wave here," he said. "All of the other stores had to go through corporate headquarters to buy fans which takes a long time, but we went straight to the distributor and had pallet-loads full of fans that people were buying right off the truck. We were the only store in town that had fans."

George Mead, a customer of more than 30 years, came into Hardware Sales to buy a lawn mower blade. For 27 years, Whatcom

County has employed him as its purchasing agent. Mead said he will only buy supplies from Hardware Sales, which he said has saved the county countless times during emergencies.

"If we have emergencies like storms or floods, I can call (McClellan) and someone will go open up the store for me at 2 or 3 in the morning so I can grab what I need and go," Mead said. "You have people's lives in the balance, people's houses, people's farms."

He said when he buys items at Hardware Sales he's contributing to the local economy.

"And when the county courthouse makes out a check for Hardware Sales, that money stays right here in the county," he said.

Bellingham Mayor Mark Asmundson said the city encourages businesses that help sustain the local economy.

"You see, in America there will be multiple avenues through which business is pursued," he said. "The Lowes and the Wal-Marts of the world are not evil, but by design, their loyalty is to an undifferentiated mass of somewhat faceless individuals and entities known as shareholders that can be scattered around the planet."

Long said when big box stores move into town, they displace sales from existing local businesses.

"The pie doesn't get bigger," she said. "People are just moving their dollars to a business that doesn't have owners who make decisions around whether their actions are going to help families, kids or the natural environment."

Lind, while holding one of his daughters in his front yard, said he used to look at houses and a row of trees.

"My point is that if this can happen in (the Roosevelt) neighborhood, it could happen in any neighborhood," he said. "And Lowe's never comes to town alone."

Across the street from Lind's home, at the development, a construction worker took off his hard hat, wiped his brow with the back of a dirty glove, and got back to work. A Spec-Mix sat ready to pave the way for the cars that will come to visit the new Walgreens, Wells Fargo Bank and other stores slated for the development.

Signs staked into the earth advertised the other new stores were "coming soon."



The McClellan and George families have continued to own and operate Hardware Sales since 1962, including (clockwise from upper right) Jerry McClellan, his mother Alta McClellan, McClellan's sister LaDonna George and McClellan's son Ty McClellan.

Senior Alison Bickerstaff studies environmental science at Huxley College. She has previously been published in Whatcom Watch, the Every Other Weekly, Tidepool.org, Northwest Ecosystem Alliance's quarterly newsletter and The Planet Magazine.

RANDY GRUNHURD, co-owner of Blackburn Office Equipment, pulled out an executive chair with so many levers, twists and pneumatic swivels that it looked like it not only guaranteed a comfortable day at the desk, but could also do his taxes and run minor errands.

The evolution of the chair parallels the modern office. As work environments have become operated by mouse and keystrokes, chairs have changed to support workers' bodies. Experts have found, however, the advancement of chairs comfort and support has not been enough to offset the increasing amount of hours workers spend without moving.

People are no longer forced to move around the office as part of their jobs.

"Fewer people work in factories," said Richard Bulcroft, a sociology professor at Western Washington University. "The service sector economy has exploded since the second World War, and that includes office jobs."

Instead of moving around in the office, workers are wasting away in their chairs, said J.R. Rawitzer, president of Trico Office Interiors.

Although these adjustments might include anything from lumbar support to swivel arm rests, height and back adjustments are among the most important according to Occupational Health & Safety Magazine. Having sufficient back support as well as height adjustment for individual users are necessary features of an ergonomic chair.

Valerie Harding, a masseuse who speaks about productivity to local businesses, said the real problem is offices are becoming too ergonomic.

"Many offices have everything within reach," Harding said. "The person is just sitting there. The problem is not because they're with an incorrect setup, but rather because it makes the person too comfy and they don't move."

After 20 minutes doing one thing, in one position, the brain becomes bored and muscles start shutting down. Harding recommends workers schedule frequent breaks.

ATROPHY

BY TAYLOR ZAJONC

PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY JAMIE CLARK AND KATIE KULLA



"Technology has changed the office so much," he said. "People used to type on typewriters. They used to be reaching for paper, white-out. Now, things are done with a keystroke."

The transition from factory jobs to service and information sector jobs gave birth to the field of ergonomics, a science designed to increase the productivity and comfort of the office worker.

"Ergonomics, very basically, is the relationship between man and machine," Rawitzer said. "In our case, we have skewed that to mean between the person and their work environment."

Office chairs are the contact point in this science, the one place where the worker is in constant and direct connection with the workplace. Most chairs are specifically designed to maximize efficiency and minimize injury by having several adjustments that can be made for the individual user.

We're atrophying in our chairs.

J.R. Rawitzer
president, Trico Office Interiors

"Even if they just stand up and walk around a bit, and sit down again, it's enough to reset the brain. No work is lost, in fact, it makes things more productive," Harding said.

Michael Karlberg, a professor of communications at Western, said he has struggled with back pain for many years. Despite buying different types of chairs, reading books by experts and experimenting with different office setups, he has found the best approach is to keep moving.

"There have been studies that show that people who sit on hard, wooden chairs actually can do better than people who sit on soft, comfortable ergonomic chairs because people in the hard chairs squirm and move, and they don't sit perfectly still," Karlberg said.

The direction ergonomics has taken is to make a workers' space as comfortable as possible. This comfort, however, has not necessarily promoted good health.



Senior Taylor Zajonc studies psychology at Western. This is his first published piece.

WORKETHIC

DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN ENVIRONMENTALIST AND A CEO

BY HELEN HOLLISTER

PHOTOS BY ANYA TRAISMAN



David Syre opens the door to the main entrance of the Trillium Corp. headquarters.



Jeffrey Utter walks along a path leading through River Farm, his community and home near the South Fork of the Nooksack River.

DAVID SYRE RISES at 6:30 or 7:30 a.m. every morning to run.

He runs to be alone.

He runs to think.

He runs to set priorities for the day.

Syre has been running for 25 years, 30 to 60 minutes a day, five days a week. It gives him a sense of achievement, he said.

"It's really important to accomplish something each day," he said. "I think a lot of people could benefit from that sense of accomplishment."

As founder, chairman and CEO of the Trillium Corp., an international investment company based in Bellingham, Syre has more than his share of accomplishments.

He attributes his success to an insatiable intellectual curiosity, flexing his creative side in the form of complex business strategy. He has devoted a substantial portion of his life to building his business from the ground up. It is what he lives for. Syre's life has more or less been defined by Trillium. And he wouldn't have it any other way. His work is his life, and he loves his work.

JEFFREY UTTER NEVER THOUGHT he would envy a convenience store cashier.

"But there it is," he said. "I fantasize about working for someone. Nine to five, paid vacation, sick pay — my time is my time."

Utter, however, doesn't spend too much of his time longing for a more cut-and-dry occupation. As program director for Next Generation Energy Co-op in Bellingham, Utter, 42, has almost completely engrossed himself in his passion for renewable energy.

In both his work life and his home life, Utter strives to create a lifestyle full of integrity and environmental sustainability. Following his passion does have its downfalls, though. Often Utter's high ideals and expectations contrast sharply with his somewhat relentless career and many of his personal choices.

As he describes his job, his gaze is piercing. His eyes sparkle as he discusses the benefits of renewable energy. Although his eyes are kind and gentle, the strain of the day weighs heavily upon his face.

"I'm currently trying to bring some powerful organizations and

"If you measure the physical hours I am in the office, that's less than 40 hours," he said.

In addition to the typical workweek, Syre puts in between five and 10 hours of work-related reading, including five to seven newspapers each day as well as several business periodicals. Social and dinner meetings on the weekends add an average of five more hours to Syre's workweek.

"I probably do another 10 to 20 hours thinking and trying to solve problems," he said. "A lot of that time is creative time."

With Syre's relentless work ethic, one would think he is deserving of the "work-aholic" label.

"I had a friend tell me that just the other day," he said. "I just smiled. He's the only one who's said that. He just came back from six weeks in Hawaii."

Syre admits his workload has been a little out of control during the past few months.

"Just a lot of things to do and not a lot of time to get them done, things that aren't easily assigned to someone else," he said.

For the past few years, Syre has not taken any vacation time.

"That's something I want to change," he said. "I think the last two years I've worked more than I should, but I don't know if I'm a work-aholic."

For many years, he was very disciplined and would always reserve four to six weeks for vacation time annually. He has, however, done a tremendous amount of work-related traveling.

"I think it's important for renewal of spirit to take time away from whatever it is you're doing and do something different," he said. "It's very energizing to do — have change."

While he hasn't been able to leave for a vacation recently, when he is able to get away, he has no problem leaving his work behind.

"I don't think I'm addicted to going to my office everyday and needing to be there to satisfy that addiction," he said.

Syre does feel a certain responsibility as the leader of his company to serve as an example for others.

"That means I must be the model that figures out the right balance," he said. "If I was a model who played golf three or four afternoons a week, that probably wouldn't serve our business well."

Syre's work ethic has inspired his son, Jonathan, 28, who serves as Trillium's chief operating officer.

"Family balance when I was younger was excellent," Jonathan said. "He's always made me and my sisters feel welcome in the room. Whether as children or today — he always makes time for us."

Despite his rigorous schedule, Syre manages to stay flexible, Jonathan said.

"By working as hard as he has, he's been able to own his own business which has afforded him a flexible schedule to be with me while I was growing up and to be with my sisters," Jonathan said.

With his ability to balance family and work, Syre is a man almost entirely free from the plague of stress. He doesn't even consider himself a busy person.

"I consider people who are busy out of control," he said. "I can

programs around renewable energy in Whatcom County while at the same time trying to hold together a family and maintain two households," he said. "I guess I find myself often living out of my car."

For the past 12 1/2 years, Utter has lived on River Farm, a communal environment near the South Fork of the Nooksack River. Utter lives with 11 other adults, eight children and several chickens, sheep and dogs on 83 acres of agricultural and forestland. Residents of River Farm incorporate environmentally sound practices, like composting and organic gardening, into their daily lives. Hydroelectric and solar systems provide energy for the farm.

While Utter said he finds the lifestyle he leads on the farm to be satisfying, his career sometimes limits him financially.

"In the process of creating programs that are being effective, I've gone through times of very little income, which means I live on very little, go into debt or take on other work," he said.

In addition to its economic impact, Utter's career choice has brought a strain on his personal life as well.

The difficulties inherent in his job have taken a toll on his family, which includes his 8-year-old daughter, Rosie. He has been separated from his wife for two years.

Utter finds himself getting caught in the middle of his commitment to his work and his family.

"Sometimes neither one gives me an immense sense of satisfaction because of the intense competition between the two of them," he said.

Right now he works an average of 30 billable hours each week for the energy co-op.

"But a good 20 percent on top of that I can't really charge for because there's really no way to pay for it," Utter said.

He spends many evenings in the office catching up on projects and fielding phone calls.

"With this work, there's really no clear delineation between when my work begins and when my work ends," he said.

Part of that lack of clarity is a result of Utter's enthusiasm for his work. Renewable energy fuels his desire for change.

"I love what I do and it's a vital thing and I'm very lucky to have this opportunity to serve my community," he said. "I'm extraordinarily lucky to be doing what I'm doing."

While he said he isn't necessarily overworked, he does consider himself "underplayed."

"If I could change something in my life, I would do more recreation," he said. "My best day is being outside in places where there are no signs of human presence; the only footprints are those of bunnies and squirrels."

He said factors like time and money limit his chances to get out into nature as much as he would like.

"I wouldn't mind more personal time," he said. "It's been a long time since I've read a novel."

Ken Wilcox, who serves on the board of directors of the energy co-op, described Utter's work ethic as amazing.

"He breathes and sleeps energy transformation for our region," Wilcox said. "He has such a good grasp of the big picture as well as



David Syre discusses the master plan for the Semiahmoo Peninsula development with an associate.

have what I call 'intense-scheduled' days where I have a lot of meetings. I have a lot going on. I have a lot of stuff in my head, but it's all in order. I think someone who is really busy has a cluttered mind."

Carolyn Yatsu, Syre's executive assistant for the past five years, said his near-photographic memory helps him to stay organized and clutter-free.

"He doesn't need to carry a lot of stuff around," Yatsu said. "He keeps very organized. He has a very minimal amount of paper because everything is in his head."

Syre's office décor is beyond minimal. A phone, and nothing else, sits on his desk. A few chairs surround the desk and the only other objects in the room are a group of red, green and yellow model tractors on a shelf against the wall. Syre has no computer. He does not use e-mail or voice mail. He carries a medium-sized briefcase, which contains only his most important and current files.

Yatsu spends most of her time managing Syre's schedule, which can get fairly hectic. Meetings are set and reset. Schedules are juggled. The frantic pace of the office shifts between almost chaotic and borderline-overwhelming, she said. But Syre's work ethic and spirit keep the office atmosphere positive and motivating.

Yatsu said Syre is a classic optimist.

"There's no box for him," she said. "He worries a lot less than most people. It's good to have someone like that as your leader."

Jonathan estimates that approximately 80 percent of his father's time involves work at Trillium.

"I think he is in the high end of Americans with that particular workload," Jonathan said. "However, I think he is average in being someone who owns his own business.

the technical side of things and the passion to move the cause forward and the personality to dialog with everybody."

Wilcox said every time he sees Utter, he is involved in some aspect of the energy transformation effort.

"He's on his way from one job to another, one meeting to another," Wilcox said. "He's busy at the computer. He's on the phone. Jeffrey tends to be totally committed to renewable energy."

Utter definitely works harder than the average American, Wilcox said. He works harder because he cares.

"I don't know," he said. "He's just got a big fat altruism gene, I guess. Must be some sort of mutation. I think most Americans work for somebody else. But Jeffrey just looks out there and sees what needs to be done and does it."

Results of Utter's efforts are evident across Bellingham. One of the energy co-op's endeavors has involved getting solar electric systems installed on the rooftops of Bellingham buildings. Locations currently using solar power include the Bellingham Community Food Co-op, the Municipal Court Building, the Whatcom Children's Museum and the Bellingham Senior Activity Center.

Serving as program director does have its advantages. Utter can take as much vacation leave as he wants. None of that time away, however, is paid. His time off hinges on how much work he can afford to miss.

Also, Utter's work schedule does not permit him to respect all of his commitments to his family and other facets of his life. For instance, he has some reports from October that he hasn't completed yet.

"That kind of stuff keeps me awake at night," he said. "I look at my life right now and it's not sustainable for long term. I have one child



Jeffrey Utter uses solar panels at River Farm for demonstrational purposes.

“Trillium is his business, it’s my mom’s business and it’s our family business, and so it is us,” Jonathan said. “We spend a lot of time on it.”

Currently David Syre is working on the acquisition of two major sawmill companies. This process involves negotiating complex purchase agreements, dealing with legal concerns, taxes, human resource issues and eventually, merging the two companies.

Syre is fascinated by the creativity involved with seeing the end product.

“Like a puzzle that has a thousand pieces — the satisfaction of putting it all together,” he said.

Executing duties like these is what Syre lives for.

“That’s very stimulating to me,” he said. “I’d much prefer to do that than playing golf, fly-fishing or shooting some poor duck.”



Senior Helen Hollister studies Spanish and journalism at Western. She has previously been published in Seattle Central Community College’s newspaper, the City Collegian, The Western Front and The Planet Magazine.

and she’s growing up quickly and I want to spend more time with her.”

Establishing a functional relationship between his home life and his career is a goal that Utter said he knows is difficult to achieve.

“There are some balance points in that equation that are sometimes excruciating,” he said. “The biggest paradox is that working toward a sustainable future sometimes lends itself to unsustainable personal practices.”

For now, Utter focuses on his priority of making Whatcom County a community where his child, his grandchildren and his great grandchildren can enjoy the same quality of life that he does.

“It’s been said that I do and think differently, which is the essence of change,” Utter said.

On a Thursday afternoon, Utter strolled over to the Fairhaven Red Apple Market to buy lunch. He grabbed a rosemary roll and an Odwalla juice and plunked the items onto the counter.

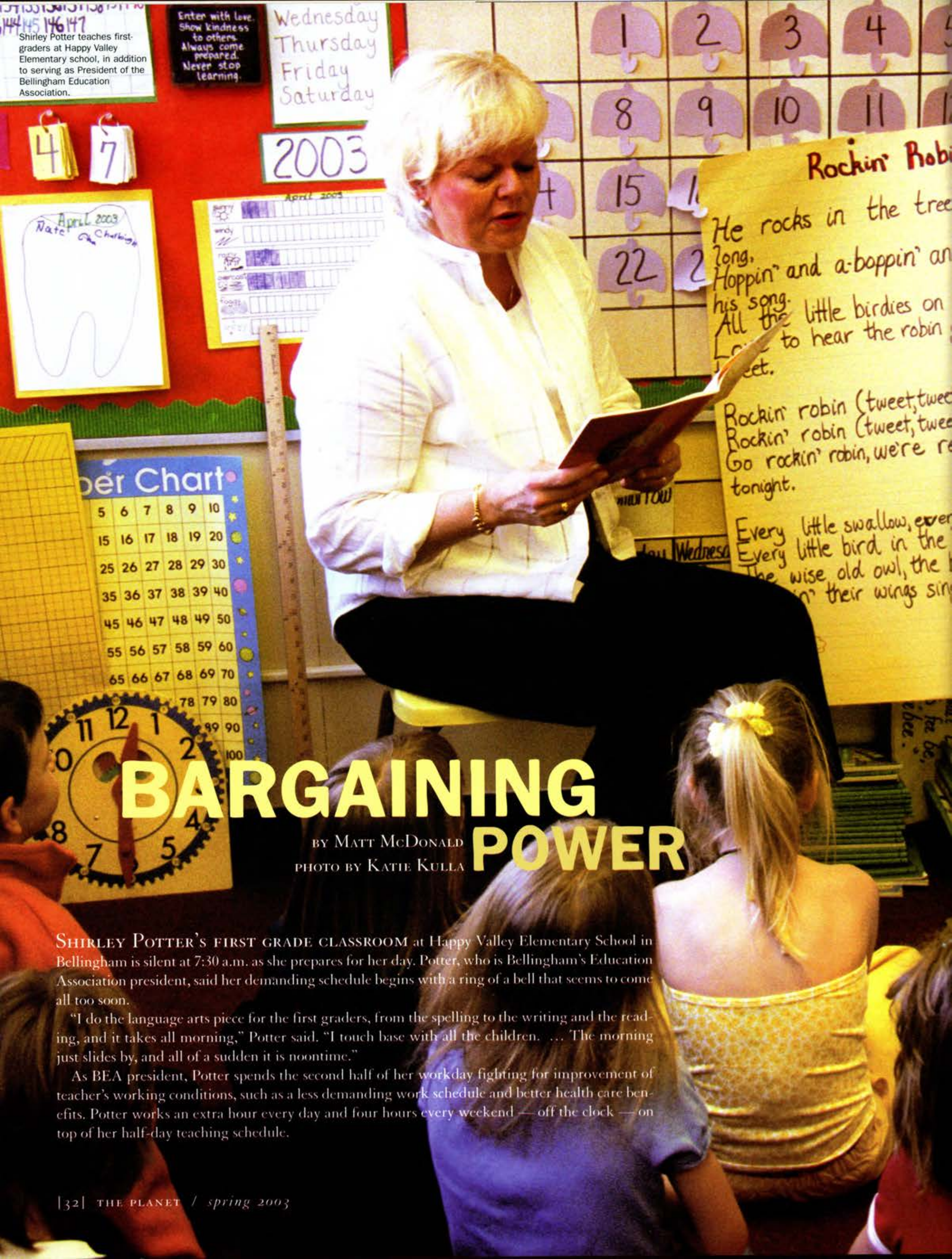
The cashier handed him the receipt. He paused and looked down at it.

“Do you recycle these?” he asked.

No, the woman replied.

Utter stuffed the receipt in his pocket.

“OK, I’ll recycle it,” he said.



BARGAINING POWER

BY MATT McDONALD
PHOTO BY KATIE KULLA

SHIRLEY POTTER'S FIRST GRADE CLASSROOM at Happy Valley Elementary School in Bellingham is silent at 7:30 a.m. as she prepares for her day. Potter, who is Bellingham's Education Association president, said her demanding schedule begins with a ring of a bell that seems to come all too soon.

"I do the language arts piece for the first graders, from the spelling to the writing and the reading, and it takes all morning," Potter said. "I touch base with all the children. ... The morning just slides by, and all of a sudden it is noontime."

As BEA president, Potter spends the second half of her workday fighting for improvement of teacher's working conditions, such as a less demanding work schedule and better health care benefits. Potter works an extra hour every day and four hours every weekend — off the clock — on top of her half-day teaching schedule.

To meet the increasing demand, many teachers are working off the clock more than ever before, Potter said. She said teachers have less time to accomplish their tasks with more expectations from the federal government's "No Child Left Behind Initiative."

The initiative, signed by President George W. Bush in 2002, requires teachers to educate children regardless of family income or special needs. The initiative has received criticism because teachers spend more time with problem students and less time with the class as a whole.

Some people believe public school teachers are overworked, and lack good benefits and pay because of the teacher unions, Potter said. But she doesn't agree.

"(Unions) are the balance and check for school districts in that they would work us 12 hours a day if they could," Potter said. "If there were no labor unions for teachers it would be even worse."

Overwork is a problem for Americans, and labor unions are the only protection a worker has in the United States, said Karen Nussbaum, assistant to the AFL-CIO president.

According to "Key Indicators of the Labor Market 2001-2002," a study conducted by the International Labour Organization, American workers spend nearly one week more on the job per year than they did a decade ago. Now Americans work the longest hours in the industrialized world.

Labor unions provide members with a voice to protect themselves from overwork, while ensuring they have higher wages, protection from being fired without proper cause, formal grievance procedures and paid vacation.

According to the AFL-CIO, 16.1 million Americans were labor union members in 2002. Union members in the United States receive protection from overworking, but many American workers are without the union protection guaranteed in the National Labor Relations Act of 1935.

"Without a union, there is no right to bargain collectively, so you are at the mercy of what the employer is or is not willing to do," said Dave Warren, president of the Northwest Washington Central Labor Council.

Employees without labor unions, such as fast food workers, have no protection from overworking.

"When you are talking about fast food restaurants, it is very hard to organize them because turnover rates in fast food are high and frequent and you are dealing with a national chain that has an interest to keep the unions out," Warren said.

Attempts for fast-food workers to form unions in the United States and Canada have failed in the past. According to Eric Schlosser, author of "Fast Food Nation: the Dark Side of the All-American Meal," workers at a McDonald's restaurant in Montreal signed union cards for their local Teamsters Union in 1997. They did so hoping to start the first unionized McDonald's in North America.

The McDonald's owners hired attorneys to slow down the process of union certification. Weeks before the union was to be certified the owners shut down the McDonald's because they said it was losing money.

According to the Commission on the Future of Worker-

Management Relations, half of employers in the United States threaten to shut down operations if employees attempt to form a union.

Former Arby's employee Jordan Wintermute worked in the fast food industry for eight months to pay his bills. He received minimal benefits, such as a free meal every once in a while and going home early for doing tasks like cleaning out the freezer.

"It would be better if they valued their employees and didn't treat you like you are a fast-food worker," Wintermute said.

While some employees try to form labor unions to prevent exploitation, overworking problems still exist within current American labor unions, said Tom Kingshott secretary treasurer of Local Union 44, which represents service workers in Bellingham.

"In a grocery store meat department, instead of having three or four meat cutters that would have been working five years ago, now there is one meat cutter doing the same amount of work the three or four meat cutters did back then," Kingshott said. "It used to be that sales dictate the amount of hours scheduled, but nowadays it is not the case; it is all driven by costs."

For union construction workers, long hours are part of the job, said Rick Poitras, Field Representative for the Carpenters and Joiners Local No. 756 in Bellingham.

"Jobs like building a bridge for the state make it so you need to get the job done by the deadline, so the bridge can be used," Poitras said. "You need to work harder and perhaps do some overtime, but typically carpenters don't like sitting around anyways because the faster and harder you work makes the day go by quicker, so working hard is not a problem."

Even though some union members work hard at their jobs, they gain certain rights because of the collective bargaining by the union on their behalf.

In Bellingham and Whatcom County, the Central Labor Union is collectively bargaining with a broad range of employers to help union members frustrated with the increasing amount of work, Warren said. Essentially, if new tasks are being introduced to union members, then workers need to know which task is most important, so they will not try to do everything at once and become overwhelmed.

"We would like to believe that through a strong collective bargaining agreement with unions in different areas of the community it will also help those that are non-union members of the community by helping the employers see what an average wage in the community looks like and see what they pay," Warren said.

In the United States, unions address overwork through bargaining to increase benefits and decrease overworking related problems, Potter said.

She said employees forming unions ensure workers have a fair and balanced workplace.

"In the United States it is an expectation no matter where you are employed — people want to squeeze more out of you," she said. "Everyone wants more, and we are not machinery. We are going to break down."



Junior Matt McDonald studies journalism at Western. He has previously been published in The Western Front.

A CHANGE

AS THE SMELL OF FRESH FUDGE and grilled salmon filled the air and the members of a bluegrass band tuned their instruments, a crowd gathered at the Bellingham Farmer's Market. Groups of families and friends wandered from tent to tent, exchanging pleasant greetings and laughs with the local farmers and artisans who set up shop here every Saturday during the spring and summer. The crowd — which ranged from young, modern-day dreadlocked hippies in Birkenstocks to older, married couples in warm-up suits — braved the possibility of rain, to purchase fresh, locally grown fruits, vegetables and herbs straight from the growers.

"At this farmer's market, two years ago, we didn't have that element of the county," said Mike Nevroth, one of 10 co-founders of Bellingham's Fourth Corner Slow Food Convivium and organic farmer who vends at the market. "Retired people from the rural part of the county rarely came to the market."

Beginning two years ago, a more diverse group of shoppers began to appear at the market.

"It was amazing," he said. "People who would have never come to this market before, who have an image of it being kind of a little hippie thing, all the sudden they were here seriously buying food."

Across town at the King Street McDonald's just off Interstate 5, a scene radically different from the Farmer's Market plays out as people who view food somewhat differently line up in front of a counter to get their lunch.

Harsh white lights wash over the impatient and hurried customers who stand on a hard tile floor and gaze absent-mindedly at the colorful, back-lit menu board that shines brightly with oversized pictures of popular combo meals. Workers standing motionless behind cash registers encourage customers to super size their drinks and fries. The sound of kids screaming in the playland drowns out the bland Top 40 music trickling from the ceiling-mounted speakers.

At this McDonald's, as well as the more than 20 other fast food restaurants in Bellingham, a crew of mostly unskilled teen-aged employees assemble food from processed, pre-cooked and frozen ingredients. The food is calorie-laden, quick and convenient — designed to be consumed anytime, anywhere. Although it sounds unappetizing, its appeal is strong. Worldwide, McDonald's feeds more than 22 million people per day.

While fast food and the fast-paced culture it thrives in seem to be taking over America, Slow Food, an international movement that seeks to reverse that trend, is steadily gaining popularity and notoriety in cities across the United States.



Tomato plants grow in Joe's Garden greenhouses. Members of the Slow Food Convivia purchase much of their produce here.

OF PACE

BY ANDY ALEY

PHOTOS BY BRANDON SAWAYA AND KATIE KULLA



Jessica and Mataio Gillis and Kristen and Mike Nevroth are co-founders of the Slow Food Convivia and spend time at Farmer's Market selling goods and promoting local farms.

The idea of Slow Food is to eat local food, support artisan techniques and preserve regional tastes, said Mataio Gillis, another co-founder of Fourth Corner Slow Food and co-owner of Ciao Time Catering. The focus in American food production has become growing and producing food that is bigger, better and grown faster, he said. Everything has to look the same and be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The international Slow Food movement, which began in Italy in 1986, currently has more than 60,000 members in 45 countries organized into groups called convivia. Italian journalist Carlo Petrini reportedly created Slow Food as a response to a McDonald's that

opened in Piazza Spagna in Rome, said Mary Ellen Carter, another co-founder of Fourth Corner Slow Food, cookbook author and cooking instructor.

Petrini wrote the original Slow Food manifesto which states, "We are enslaved by speed and have all succumbed to the same insidious virus: Fast Life, which disrupts our habits, pervades the privacy of our homes and forces us to eat Fast Foods."

"I guess that's just the way American culture has developed throughout the years, which is in a way unfortunate," said Yuri Asano, who helps run the nonprofit organization's main office in New York. "Our take is 'Well, let's go the other way. Let's slow

There's just something kind of basic and kind of friendly about taking time to prepare and to eat a meal and to make an event out of it, rather than just something you've got to kind of check off your list so you can get on to the next thing.

Kevin Murphy
Bellingham Food Co-Op



Maryellen Carter helped start Fourth Corner Slow Food, and also teaches cooking classes at Whatcom Community College. She said teaching provides her opportunities to share Slow Food.

down and see what's really available here.' So it's not like we're bashing (fast food restaurants). They're doing their own thing. What we're trying to get across is the message that there is an alternative to that type of food, and it is available in the United States."

Slow Food USA started in late 1999 and currently has 10,000 members, Asano said. Money from membership dues funds publication of newsletters, magazines and educational programs that advocate sustainable agriculture and encourage the appreciation of regional and seasonal foods.

While the name Slow Food seems logically associated with food that is time consuming to prepare, that is not the case nor the point of the movement, Carter said.

"It's not an anti-fast food movement and it doesn't mean you have to be in the kitchen all day long," she said. "It means that you realize where your food is coming from, treat it with respect and share it with somebody. One of the things about Slow Food is that if you get real food at the very beginning, it doesn't take a lot of time or a lot of energy to cook it because all the taste is there already."

Jessica Gillis, another co-founder of Fourth Corner Slow Food, said she thinks educating people about where food comes from, how it grows and who grows it will increase the demand for products that are grown in a sustainable manner and traceable to the farmers who grew them.

Being aware of the entire process of growing food — from sowing a seed in the ground to harvesting a crop for sale at a market — and knowing the people who are dedicated to that process enhances

a person's appreciation for what they eat, Gillis said.

"Maybe through events or education, we can convince people to go home and cook again," Mataio Gillis said. "I think we have an opportunity to educate in a manner that doesn't make us look like eco-organic anarchists."

Fast and processed foods, however, are a convenient reality for many Americans. While the convenience-related benefits of fast food are not inherently harmful, the health effects of eating high-calorie processed foods on a regular basis can be devastating.

According to a recent study released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 62 percent of Americans were overweight in 2000, up from 46 percent in 1980, and 27 percent of adults were classified as obese, or more than 30 pounds overweight. According to the study, the primary cause of weight gain is the consumption of more calories than are expended as energy.

The average American's daily caloric intake increased approximately 24.5 percent, or 530 calories, between 1970 and 2000. The study associates the change with the increased popularity of eating out and an increased tendency to eat larger quantities of food, higher calorie foods — or both — when eating out.

People tend to order full, large meals and desserts at restaurants because eating out has the connotation of being a special occasion, said Kristine Duncan, a registered dietician at St. Joseph Hospital. That mindset works if a person eats out once or twice a month, but people who eat out all the time need to treat meals at restaurants like meals at home, she said.

Obesity, high cholesterol, vitamin and mineral deficiencies and high blood pressure caused by too much sodium and a lack of fruits and vegetables are among the health problems that can result from a diet based around fast and processed food, Duncan said.

“On a basic level, the sooner you eat a food after it’s been picked, the better just because the nutrients are at their peak at that time,” Duncan said. “And one of the things we’ve moved towards is making all foods available all-year round. We can get strawberries in December because we get them from Chile.

“We can get apples all year round because they’re picked in the fall, and they’re kept in cold storage all year round. So it’s something that we have come to expect.”

Duncan said these expectations, which affect the flavor of food as well, are a major reason why excess salt and fat are added to otherwise healthy foods.

“If we went out and picked a tomato right now and we ate it, it would have so many amazing flavors because it was fresh,” she said. “But when we wait to eat it for six months or we pick it early so that it will ripen on the truck so that it will be red in the store, it doesn’t taste the same, and I think in doing that, that’s why we have to add so much salt and fat to things — to make them taste good.”

While eating healthy food is a large part of the solution to obesity and other diet-related health problems, convincing people to give up fast and processed foods as a staple in their diet is difficult, Duncan said.

“They have some type of lifestyle that’s supporting (an unhealthy diet), like they have kids and they don’t have time to cook so it’s just easier to take the kids to the drive-through,” she said. “Or they work some ridiculous job that they might have to work 12 hours a day at, and there just truly is no time to cook at home.”

While fast food is often a quick and easy dinner for many “on the go” families, Asano said she hopes Slow Food will encourage busy people to occasionally slow down and enjoy time with their food, families and friends.

“Come back to the table,” she said. “Take one day a week and do a slow food dinner. Sit down, make pasta, make something from scratch. Go to the farmer’s market on Saturday or Sunday and see who is producing these foods.”

Giuseppe Mauro, who owns Giuseppe’s Italian Restaurant in Bellingham, said a large difference exists between the enjoyment of food in America and Italy, where he used to live.

“In Italy, dining — all food, all wine — is a big thing,” Mauro said. “That’s when (people) get together and when they spend time

together to talk to each other and visit, and it’s a big thing. Anything we do in Italy is with pleasure. When we drink a glass of wine, we enjoy it; we spend time with it. I hope soon in the United States it will happen as well because here people are just always in a rush. They really don’t appreciate or get the pleasure out of eating lunch or dinner and giving it some time.”

Slow Food is as much about bringing families and friends together to appreciate each other as it is about enjoying good food, Carter said.

“It says revival of the kitchen and the table as the center of pleasure, culture and community,” she said, referring to Slow Food USA’s mission statement. “I think that’s one of the nicest things you can do is to share something with someone like that. Conversation, food, something you’ve grown out of your garden, something you’ve baked in your oven.”

As Slow Food chapters spring up around the country, food co-ops and health food stores also offer classes that focus on preparing healthy and fresh food. Kevin Murphy, education outreach coordinator for the Bellingham Food Co-Op, said people who attend classes tend to be progressive and conscious of the pace of their lives.

“It’s a group that does kind of hearken back to a more traditional way of living, a slower pace certainly,” Murphy said. “There’s just something kind of basic and kind of friendly about taking time to prepare and to eat a meal and to make an event out of it, rather than just something you’ve got to kind of check off your list so you can get on to the next thing.”

While millions of Americans continue to treat meals as an item on their daily list, which in turn compromises their health for the sake of convenience, hope is found in the growing number of Slow Food convivias, food co-ops and farmer’s markets.

As the bluegrass band began to play and the smell of salmon became increasingly appetizing, a convivial atmosphere was readily apparent in the crowd that had gathered at the Bellingham Farmer’s Market. Despite the group’s differences in age, cultural background and lifestyle, they were brought together and unified at a common time for a common purpose: the pursuit of healthy, fresh and local food.



Senior Andy Aley studies environmental journalism at Huxley College. He has previously been published in *The Western Front*.

It’s not an anti-fast food movement and it doesn’t mean you have to be in the kitchen all day long. It means that you realize where your food is coming from, treat it with respect and share it with somebody.

Maryellen Carter
Fourth Corner Slow Food

THIS WEEKEND ONLY