

2024

## Winona State University Improving Our World Blog: 2013-2022

Winona State University

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# 2024-ImprovingOurWorld- Blog

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# Habitat for Humanity Volunteer Day

February 7, 2022  
Improving Our World



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Housing and Residence Life halls knew Halloween was a time to give out candy, but these students gave up their time instead. On Saturday, Oct 30, 2021 from 8:30am- 11:30am, residents of Housing and Residence Life halls got up early to give back to their community. Housing and Residence life partnered with Habitat for Humanity during their annual yard clean-up day. However, because the group was So big, they were instructed to help at the Habitat for Humanity Restore and offices yard. Volunteers cleared debris such as lumber, ladders and other building materials from the yard. While other volunteers cut brush and shrubs from the fence that surrounds their property. Still other volunteers worked in their garden and around their building cutting plants for winter. A total of 33 students came to help out that day. Residents Assistants came with their floors, National Residence Hall Honorary members for a service program, some other students came to fulfill a service requirement. For whatever reason they came, these students came together to help the Winona Community that has given them so much.

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# WSU Grad Nursing Holds Virtual Food and Fund Drive

November 23, 2020

Community,Feature Post,Homepage Slider,Improving Our World,Student News



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Many holiday traditions may be disrupted this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but the generous spirit of the Winona State University community will continue to improve our world throughout the season and beyond.

Every holiday season the Department of Graduate Nursing collects donations of food and clothing for local service organizations. This year, arranging to collect and deliver physical donations would pose barriers to allowing participation from our entire campus.

To overcome these obstacles our students and faculty have worked together to find creative and inclusive solutions to move forward with learning and service opportunities.

Natalie Bauman, a graduate nursing student at WSU, was inspired to help continue the department's tradition of holiday giving that allowed everyone to safely participate.

Bauman created a virtual fund drive to raise money for the Second Harvest Heartland, the Upper Midwest's largest hunger-relief organization.

"Our community's working families, children and seniors are in need like never before," she explains. "Visits to the food shelves, soup kitchens and shelters that make up the distribution network for Second Harvest Heartland have doubled in just the past five years. The rising need means that food & fund drives are more important than ever."

Those willing and able to contribute to this virtual fund drive can feel good knowing that every five dollars raised will allow Second Harvest Heartland to deliver 15 meals to hungry neighbors in the region.

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## Join our Virtual Drive

Please consider donating to the Second Harvest Heartland to help secure food for Minnesotans.

One in eight people – including one in five kids – living in Minnesota and western Wisconsin do not know where their next meal is coming from.

Within the last year, 63% of Second Harvest Heartland clients have been forced to choose between paying for housing or food. 67% of clients have had to choose between paying for medication or food.

Your support helps connect our neighbors to the food they need to thrive.

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# Taking Action to Create Change: The Power of the People United

November 16, 2020  
Community, Student News, Uncategorized, WSU Magazine



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WSU student and Winona community activist Tova Raylan Strange '23 found her platform and her voice this summer amid the outrage following the murder of George Floyd, and she has been taking action ever since as an outspoken advocate and grass roots organizer for all the marginalized populations in her hometown of Winona.

A sophomore majoring in psychology and double minoring in communications and criminal justice, Strange is no stranger to social justice issues or taking practical steps to build social equity. She remembers always questioning authority and pre-existing ideals, even as a child, when she was known to be "fairly assertive and independent in [her] my thinking."

Calling out the bullies in middle school, Strange confronted them with angry words, such as the time when a classmate was verbally abusing another boy who had autism, calling him the "r" word. Tova's loud voice of protest brought multiple teachers out of their classrooms and into the halls, suspecting an altercation. That bullying ceased permanently. In 8<sup>th</sup> grade, one of her friends was "smacked on the butt" in a sexual way, which elicited Tova pinning the perpetrator up against the locker in verbal confrontation. It never happened again. Standing up for the victims of social injustice, she recalls, "I have always caused trouble for the troublemakers."

Adopted, Strange grew up knowing that her birth mother was "mixed race (black presenting)" and her father was white, rendering the tag 'French-Creole'. She shares that she also grew up second guessing her place; the lightness of her skin caused a disconnect from her black roots. Although she possessed the social skills to hang out with students across the arching spectrum of skin pigments, she never experienced feeling a true belonging anywhere (amid black, white, or brown students). She explains this as "internalized colorism", something she says she is still working through. Her insecurity during her teen years may have kept her from "being a better version of [herself] myself", it also served as a catalyst to rise up and



strive to create an equal playing-field for all persons in her community.

Just before the heightened activism exploded across America this summer, Strange learned more about her biological roots, another springboard to her next steps. Her birth mother's father was "a black man and a Black Panther Party member, a consistent rule bender." His cultural roots lay in France and Puerto Rico.

With an ever-heightening sense of connection to the Black Lives Matter Movement, Tova attended and spoke at a protest organized in Winona for justice for George Floyd and was surprised and delighted to see so many Winona community members turn out for the event. Unable to attend protests in the Twin Cities, Strange realized "there is a lot that needs to be done right here in Winona." She got to work, raising funds for a short-lived BLM Facebook page and then joining the WAPS Diversity and Equity Committee.

She is currently engaging with community adults in a prison abolition study group and attending/speaking at meetings with the city manager, council members, and community sheriffs to "shift how we utilize policing in Winona." In addition, Strange is collaborating with a community network that includes professors and local philanthropists to create "a paid internship program for people in Winona to sit on non-profit boards to get experience and encourage community involvement." This program is in its infancy.

Undaunted by the sometimes "vicious and belittling name calling" she encounters on her social media platforms pertaining to her community work, Strange says she is learning a lot about herself even as her life's work has shifted towards something larger than herself, something of even more importance, "I have seen and experienced the power of community mobilization. I feel empowered to continue on." Realizing the power of willingness to be wrong and grow from it, Tova's BLM message provokes deep consideration,

"Good intent does not change a negative impact. Be mindful of how you are asserting your whiteness in everyday life. We were all raised in a racist society within institutions normalizing white supremacy-we must unlearn this. We need to listen to and amplify black and brown voices to express what they want and need right now while avoiding white saviorism."

Looking to the immediate future, Strange encourages young people to become involved, hopes for people of all ages to embrace feeling uncomfortable about social change and social equality, and calls for holistic organization to move beyond majority silent knowing.

"The power of the people united is far stronger than that of the people in power."

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# Taking Action to Create Change: Worth 1000 Words

November 16, 2020  
Community,HP Feature 1,Student News,Uncategorized,WSU Magazine



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This summer, Winona State University senior Akpos Eyafe became a prominent face on social media coverage of the Black Lives Matter movement across the United States.

While paying her respects at the George Floyd memorial in Minneapolis, someone asked to take her picture. Never wanting the spotlight, she cautiously agreed.

Little did she know what would happen next. She says her entire life has led up to and prepared her for the current public outcry for justice in today's social and political climate.

Born in Andover, MN, Akpos attended WPI's (all/white public institutions) throughout K-12. She remembers never feeling seen, but rather unseen, which for her means unheard, not considered, not looked at for anything of substantial contribution.

Around third grade, she stopped answering teachers' questions and stopped fully engaging in peer conversation. She felt she did not belong, did not have a place at the table, and did not have an ally that fully understood her experiences as the only black girl in school.

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Looking back at high school, she can now identify micro-aggressions, words that were spoken and words that were left unsaid. She also recognizes social profit made by white peers through use of black culture.

One particular instance involved a popular, white female classmate donning box braids (connected extensions) which is a traditionally and culturally black hair style. Shrieks of enthusiastic approval were heard for days, all focus and attention on the exact same kinds of braids Akpos had worn since 2nd grade without any comment whatsoever. The disparity spoke volumes and left an indelible mark.

Akpos also witnessed her father's struggle to find work after a lay-off at his company where he served as an engineer. With successful career experience, a master's degree from St. Thomas University, and an undergrad from his home country of Nigeria, her father, a world-traveler and U.S. immigrant with a thick accent, was repeatedly told "no".

They were looking for someone who grew up locally, who possessed "strong communication skills". Someone with an undergrad degree from America, someone not "overqualified". Someone like themselves.

While she did not understand the systematic racism taking place at the time, her father sat her down two years ago to explain it in detail. She felt overwhelmed by what he had gone through and protective of him, of everyone of color in similar situations.

In college, Akpos says "I have grown into my blackness" and has found black friends/peers and a black adult support system that builds upon her family support system. She still stays mostly quiet in class, though, as she can feel the uncertainty of her white classmates as it relates to conversation, group work, or classroom discussion.

She served as an RA for two years, as well, which she says was an excellent, positive experience, but she knew going in that many of her white residents would not have diverse backgrounds and would need some time and encouragement before they would feel comfortable opening up to her about their needs.

Her instincts were 100% accurate. And she understood why, although it was stressful at times.

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This summer, the day after George Floyd was murdered by police 30 minutes from her hometown, Akpos knew she needed to be on the site in solidarity with others who had also been adversely affected due to the color of their skin. She said there was a calm presence there, almost like sacred ground, eerie and deeply sad at the same time.

It was there that a black photographer (who ironically admired her braids) asked permission to take her picture for the BLM movement. Akpos said yes and posed with a wide smile under her mask.

Within 48 hours, she started seeing her picture attached to media posts about GF and BLM. A few days after that, Akpos was contacted by an artist in L.A. asking permission to use her picture for a country-wide campaign for BLM.

Again, she agreed, feeling more and more called to something greater than her own experiences, a collective movement towards racial justice. Now, she is being "seen" across the national social justice movement.

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Since that time, Akpos has been attending multiple rallies and marches throughout the Twin Cities and engaging in critical conversations on her social media accounts, getting the messages of BLM out there and talked about by a widely diverse group of participants.

She says she has only gotten a few negative messages but mostly encouraging responses of gratitude for speaking her own story, which has encouraged others to do the same.

Majoring in Criminal Justice and minoring in cultural studies at WSU, Akpos envisions being a victim advocate within the prison system. She knows she will pull from every life experience, perhaps especially those resulting in recent months as social change coming from another tragic and senseless death.

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She looks forward to the day when all people can fully understand what it is like to be overlooked, unseen, unconsidered, and make the personal, professional, and political shifts necessary to create an equal lens and opportunity for ALL people.

She is grateful to be on the forefront in this generation of social change agents.

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I think change comes from individual movements which turn into collective movements.

If we can get the right leaders in office and have the right people hearing our cry for change then things can begin to turn around.

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*The goal of WSU Magazine is to tell the stories of our students, faculty and staff; our alumni and alumnae; and our university as a whole. We endeavor to promote a broad spectrum of views in our coverage, and the views and opinions expressed in the magazine may not necessarily reflect an official policy or position of Winona State University.*

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# Discovering & Defining Who I Am: A Polish Cultural Educator & Data Analyst

September 24, 2020  
Feature Post, Improving Our World



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Every year, Winona State has a University Theme that promotes partnerships and conversations between faculty, staff, students, and community members about important issues.

For the 2020-21 academic year, the theme is “My Global Identity, Our Global Community.” This year’s theme is all about acknowledging, reflecting, and celebrating our rich global history and opportunities.

“My Global Identity, Our Global Community” also builds awareness of the plurality of global identities through experiential learning opportunities in our community.

In honor of this year’s theme, WSU alumni are sharing their stories about how they discovered and defined who they were. Meet our second volunteer writer, Nina Horabik:

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Growing up in a family of Polish immigrants, I found myself curious about other countries and cultures from a young age. I often heard stories from my mother’s and father’s families about life back in Poland, as well as the obstacles they faced while trying to build a new life in America. This sparked the beginning of what became my life path.

I was drawn to the idea of working with individuals from other countries, and I thought the way to do so would be through immigration law. My family members and other immigrants told me how they faced many challenges while gaining American citizenship to provide better opportunities to their families. Because of this, I felt compelled to help those aspiring to do the same.

As a high school student, I took Spanish and Chinese language courses, self-studied a little of Korean, and volunteered at the McHenry County Courthouse as a peer juror to learn early on about other languages, cultures, and American legal proceedings.

I began my journey to become an immigration lawyer at Winona State University in August of 2016 by majoring in Legal Studies and minoring in Data Science. I instantly got involved in many of WSU's student organizations, including Society of Young Legal Professionals and International Club. This start made me feel confident I was on my way toward my true path.

My connection with WSU's International Club is what intensified my passion for working with diverse individuals and becoming educated on what it means to be a global citizen.

I found myself making some of my first international friends while adding Japanese Studies as a minor. I even got scouted out to join the English Language Center's (ELC) team while on the International Club's annual ski trip! Joining this international community inspired me to dive headfirst into what really brings me fulfillment.

I was elected as International Club Vice President at the end of my freshman year, and I worked on running the club alongside my other board members from May 2017 to May 2018. Simultaneously, I was the office assistant, activities assistant and tutor for ELC, which helped me get closer to the international student body as a whole.

**Being a fundamental piece of one of the biggest student organizations on WSU's campus and WSU's English language learning community gave me a sense of importance and helped me feel like I could make a difference outside of law.**

I found that my true path wasn't tied to law or being in the U.S. for that matter—I itched to go out and explore. That's when I changed my major to my at-the-time minor halfway through my sophomore year.

As a bilingual speaker, growing up and being an avid language learner since high school made it feel natural when learning different coding languages and telling a story through data. It was meaningful to me that the Data Science major was more diverse and had many career opportunities globally for me to pursue.

I experienced an unfortunate event as well at this time that brought me closer to my club members. In February 2018, I had an apartment fire that resulted in unlivable conditions and emergency relocation. This happened the same day we were meant to have our weekly International Club meeting.

I was immediately welcomed into the homes of many of my board and club members. I was so touched to have the love and support from my club community, and I found myself starting to live with international students.

**I instantly fell in love with the dynamics and exchange opportunities that came with living with international students, and I continued doing so for the rest of my undergraduate career.**

While at WSU, I worked hard to understand data science within various cultural contexts. After finishing my year of being International Club Vice President, I continued being a member of the club, joining more of WSU's student-lead cultural organizations like Japan Club and Korea Club, and maintaining my employment at the ELC, which later became English Language Programs (ELP).

Due to my involvement in WSU's international community as a student and student worker, I expanded my cultural awareness and began networking with WSU's Center for Global Education. Creating connections with Susan Pham, Director of Study Abroad, and Renee Stowell, Center of Global Education's scholarship advisor, I began self-reflecting on not only what I wanted my undergraduate career to look like, but also the rest of my life.

Ever since I first learned about Korea's turbulent history in high school, the parallels between Korea and Poland's challenges to national sovereignty instantly drew me in. Although they are very different countries, both have a history of overcoming occupation and maintaining proud and prominent cultures.

Because there were no opportunities to formally learn Korean at my high school or at WSU, I never thought I'd be able to pursue this interest. However, the persuasion and support from my global connections helped me open my eyes to the options that did exist at the university.

The friendships I made through the international student body and Susan Pham's encouragement gave me courage to actively participate in the Korean culture and go on a short-term program to Chung-Ang University (CAU) the summer of 2018. There, I was finally able to formally study the language I fell in love with and personally integrate into Korean society.

Upon my return to the U.S., I immediately planned for another exchange to Korea. I continued immersing myself in Korean culture by living with Korean international students, being an active member of the student cultural organizations at WSU, and engaging with ELP's students and staff.

Also, during the year leading up to my next exchange program at CAU, I began working closely with Renee Stowell on multiple scholarship applications to explore studying and working in Korea outside of study abroad programs.

Through her help and assistance, I was able to be a semi-finalist in the 2018-2019 Critical Language Scholarship, an alternate for the 2019-2020 Boren Awards, and worked on my application for the English Teaching Assistant Fulbright Scholarship during my time abroad.

During my second exchange to Korea for the Fall 2019 semester, I took advantage of my extended stay to gain a deeper understanding of English language education and effective teaching strategies from the Korean point of view. I also expanded my experience teaching English to Korean students.

I joined CAU's Korea Club to meet Korean and international students at my exchange university, and I was granted the Global Student Internship by CAU's Office of International Affairs, which specifically dealt with aiding English language learners.

When I returned to WSU for my final semester, I wanted to finish my time as an undergraduate student strong. Although the COVID-19 pandemic started and all my expectations had to be modified, I was lucky enough to be nominated by Katie Subra, Director of ELP, and selected by WSU's Learning & Community Engagement Committee, as an awardee of the 2020 WSU President's Student Leadership Award.

This final honor made me feel so heart-warmed—my dedication to WSU was recognized!

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Through the tools that WSU instilled in me and Renee Stowell's guidance, I have an exciting journey ahead of me. In April of 2020, I was awarded as a finalist for the 2020 – 2021 Fulbright Scholarship – South Korea Elementary English Teaching Assistantship.

In addition to teaching English at an elementary school, I proposed to get involved in a national women's organization in South Korea as part of my grant.

I intend to gain a deeper understanding of the culture of working women in Korea, but I'm particularly interested in the atmosphere for women in STEM fields.

Given the global pandemic, my award year will be drastically different than expected, but I intend to have a meaningful impact.

Through my Fulbright experience, I hope to walk away with insight about the unbreakable Korean spirit, expand my understanding of cultural context through engaging with my community, and learn more about the Korean perspective through teaching and learning from my students.

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# Discovering & Defining Who I Am: A Latina Advocate

September 2, 2020  
Feature Post, Improving Our World



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Every year, Winona State has a University Theme that promotes partnerships and conversations between faculty, staff, students, and community members about important issues.

For the 2020-21 academic year, the theme is “My Global Identity, Our Global Community.” This year’s theme is all about acknowledging, reflecting, and celebrating our rich global history and opportunities.

“My Global Identity, Our Global Community” also builds awareness of the plurality of global identities through experiential learning opportunities in our community.

In honor of this year’s theme, WSU alumni are sharing their stories about how they discovered and defined who they were. Meet our second volunteer writer, Andrea Guerrero Leon:

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I moved to Winona in 2014 after graduating high school from my home country Venezuela. I began my journey at WSU as an English Language Center (ELC) student. Although my English wasn’t perfect, my professors, classmates and friends helped me become fluent through conversations.

I had the opportunity to meet and build friendships with people from many different countries. We learned a lot from each other’s cultures while also learning English.



After graduating from the ELC, I started my higher education journey as a nursing candidate. But even though I enjoyed taking science classes, I had a feeling the profession wasn't for me. So, I decided to change my major to Mass Communication out of my interest in visual communication.

During my undergraduate studies, I developed a strong passion for social justice. I was confident this was the field I wanted to grow in as a professional.

In 2016, I volunteered as a mentor for HOPE Academy, a residential program for underrepresented high school students to experience college life. I mentored students from a variety of ethnicities, religions, and sexual orientation.

I'm extremely grateful to have learned from their experiences as black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), as well as expand my own knowledge of social justice issues.

I also volunteered as an International Student Ambassador that same year. I connected with students with diverse cultures and languages I wasn't familiar with, while helping them navigate college life and a new culture.

My identity as a Latina has solidified through the years as I interacted and built relationships with members of the Latino community.

**Gaining a stronger sense of my identity has given me the strength to advocate not only for my community, but also for other underprivileged populations.**

After graduating with my B.A in 2018, I decided that I wanted to pursue a master's degree in counseling. I was awarded a Graduate Assistantship position in the Adult & Continuing Education department to finance my studies, which I'm still appreciative of to this day.

Because of the Counselors Education program, I was inspired to become more involved in social justice conversations, as well as those of advocacy. This program also motivated me to better understand the impact that these issues have on youth mental health.

I want to continue advocating for BIPOC as a mental health counselor. I especially want to work with children and adolescents of color and help them navigate obstacles in society. My journey at Winona State led me to my dream field, and I couldn't be more excited for what's to come.

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# We Are Here For You

May 29, 2020  
Improving Our World



There are many different ways to react as you process the tragic death of Mr. George Floyd as well as the aftermath unfolding in and around Minneapolis and St. Paul.

*You may be sad. You may be angry.*

*You may be scared. You may be ashamed.*

*You may want to take action. You may not know how.*

For me, I am both sad and angry, yet hopeful. As communities around our state come together to support one another, to grieve, and to protest, please know that we are with you in wanting to make this world a better place, a place where we can all feel safe, valued, and respected.

And please know that we are here for you and will continue to support you, wherever you are. The services of our Inclusion and Diversity team are available to all Winona State University students—for those who need to talk and to understand, and for those who need to share their concerns and their fears.

Our thoughts are with the family and friends of Mr. Floyd, and with those unduly impacted by the unrest. Please, if you choose to take action by joining a public demonstration, we ask that you do so peacefully and safely.





# 4 Reasons to Work for the 2020 Census

March 6, 2020  
Improving Our World



Hello Winona State students! Need a little extra money to get yourself through spring semester? Then do we have good news for you.

The United States Census Bureau is hiring part time census workers across the country to help count everybody in the 2020 Census.

Here's why you should consider working for the 2020 Census.

## 1. Make Nearly \$20 an Hour

Winona County Census takers make \$16.50 an hour, and you'll get paid for hours spent training and even get reimbursed for mileage too. That's a lot better than most part-time jobs for college students!





## 2. Work Flexible Hours

Most census takers choose their hours, so you only work when you want to. This makes it easy to work around your busy class schedule.

Plus, these jobs are temporary and many will end in July so you can have plenty of time to work in a summer internship.



## 3. Help Your Community

There are many people in the Winona community who may not know how or where to take the Census. You can help your community by helping those people complete the Census survey and making sure everybody gets counted.



#### 4. Be a Part of History & Impact the Future

The Census started in 1790 and it's a unique opportunity for civic engagement and getting involved in American politics. It only happens once every 10 years, but it has a huge impact on everyday life because the Census data helps decide how federal funds are spent and how communities are represented in the federal government.

The work you do today as a Census taker to get people counted will help improve roads, schools and healthcare in Winona County and so much more. You will help give Winona and Minnesota in general more of a voice in our government.

Sounds like the perfect job for a college student, right? Whether you are in it for the cash or to serve your community, apply for a Census job today!

#### How to Apply

Apply online in just 10-15 minutes. You will need to meet certain hiring criteria:

- At least 18 years old
- Have Social Security number
- Be a United States citizen
- Have a valid Driver's License
- Access to a computer
- English Speaking (Bilingual applicants encouraged)
- Complete criminal background check and fingerprinting

Once you apply, you can track your application status in your online account.

Job interviews will be conducted via phone call and job offers will be made around 60 days before training. Then you will complete a criminal background check and fingerprinting.

After you've hired, you'll have training, be assigned a posting and get started!

# How to Complete the Census

March 6, 2020  
Improving Our World



The 2020 Census is coming up, and that may sound intimidating if you've never done it before. (And if you've never heard of it, here's a quick overview of the Census).

I know I thought it was going to be like filing my taxes (before I found TurboTax #Bless).

But don't worry! It's easier than the Winona State Assessment Survey— so easy we don't even need a day off.

## **What Questions Are on the Census?**

The Census is only 9 simple questions, as compared to 700 questions across the WSU Assessment Surveys.

- Name
- Age
- Race
- Sex
- Hispanic origin
- Household relationships (This means who you live with: Roommates, Parents, Extended Family etc.)
- Housing questions

## **What if I Live On Campus?**

Are you like me and living in a residence hall? Well, we're already counted!

The school will take care of it whether you're in any of the residence halls on Main Campus as well as East Lake Apartments.

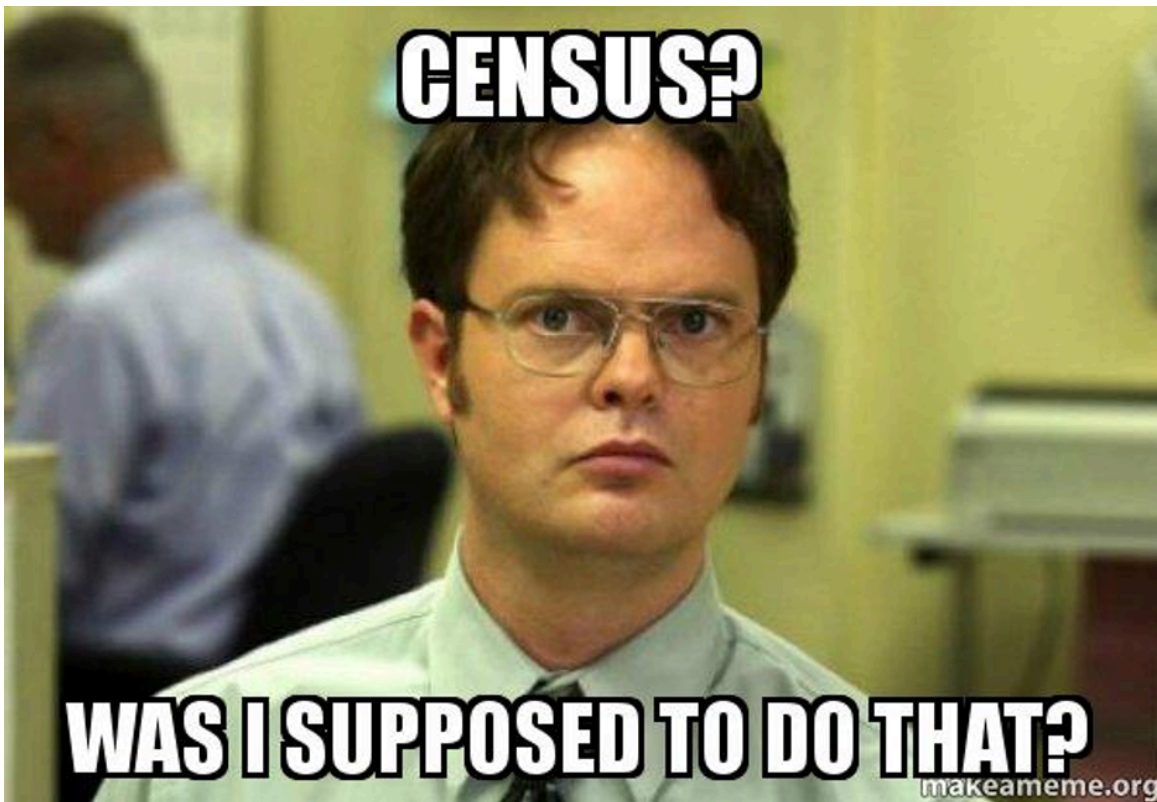
Make sure your parents know that WSU is counting you, and that they should NOT include you in their Census response.

## **What If I Live Off Campus?**

If you are living off-campus like my partner in crime, then filling out the Census is your responsibility.

If you have roommates (like so many of us broke college kids do), then only one person fills out the Census. But





EVERYONE in the apartment is counted, so communicating between each other is important.

Pick someone for household head (the mom-friend of the group, the one who's sitting at the computer, etc.) and count everyone living in your house as of 12pm on April 1, 2020.

**How Can I Take the Census?**

For the first time ever, the Census is available online! The Census begins on March 12 and, if you live off campus, you'll get a letter with information and instructions on how to complete the Census online. FOLLOW THEM!

And if you're not confident on how to complete the Census you can stop by a local library. The Darrell Krueger and Winona Public Library are offering to help you fill out the survey if you have any questions.

If you're unable to complete it online, it can be taken over the phone and by a mail-in. Learn more about the ways you can complete the 2020 Census.

If you still have not completed the Census by the end of April, then you will get a reminder in the mail to do so online.

The Census is not some scary monster of a form. It is just a survey, and we take plenty of those. The Census just happens to be a nation-wide survey that only comes around every 10 years.

If you still have questions about the Census, there are several resources available at [2020Census.gov](http://2020Census.gov) and you can always ask one of the WSU librarians.



# Future Organ Transplant Nurse Chasing Dream in Sister's Honor

December 13, 2019  
Academics, Feature Post, Improving Our World, More Than a Major



*Photo by Amy Nelson '20*

## It All Began with a Dream

Jamie Reynolds, a Fall 2019 graduate, was inspired to become a nurse after witnessing the impact care teams had on her late older sister Jessica.

Growing up in Apple Valley, MN, Jessica was constantly in and out of hospitals due to her autoimmune hepatitis. Jamie was just four years old when Jessica had her first of four total liver transplants.

**“With each transplant, I grew more involved in her care and became her personal nurse at home. I even used to leave a bell in her room for her to ring if she needed anything.”**

As Jamie's involvement in her sister's care increased, the greater she personally recognized and appreciated the impact nurses can have on people's lives. After Jessica passed away in 2013, Jamie was determined to turn her dream of studying nursing into a reality—and what better place to do so than Winona?



Photo by Amy Nelson '20

## Well-Equipped Training Goes a Long Way

While reflecting on her college education, Jamie described just how incredible a job WSU does with preparing students for their careers in nursing.

Students receive hands-on experience in their field through hospital clinical rotations each semester. Additionally, students in their third and fourth term of the nursing program complete their community health clinical.

Jamie completed her clinicals at a variety of institutions, including:

- Winona Health
- Gundersen Health System
- Children's Hospital and Clinics in Minneapolis
- Bridges Health Winona

These experiences have given Jamie the opportunity to work with people of all ages, from diverse cultures and with different levels of acuity. She believes her courses and clinicals have prepared her well to enter the nursing profession and achieve success.

## A Leader Making Connections on Her Downtime

During her time at WSU, Jamie was active in the nursing field in and out of the classroom. She has been a part of the Winona State Nursing Club for two years. She has also held a leadership position in the organization as MSNA Chair for one year.

Through this pre-professional club, Jamie had the opportunity to attend a conference hosted by the Minnesota Student Nurses' Association last year. The conference allowed her to network with other nursing students and nursing professionals—a moment that marked a significant milestone in her journey.

## Why Study Nursing, Anyway?

Beside her personal connection to nursing, Jamie believes studying and working in her field greatly improves our

world.

**“I am not only given the opportunity to individually help people in the hospital, but also positively impact them on a societal level.”**

Ultimately, nursing is a discipline that is constantly adapting to the world’s needs, so it is something that will keep Jamie on her toes and guessing what’s next.

## **On to the Next Chapter**

Jamie has accepted her dream job as an RN on the solid organ transplant floor at the University of Minnesota Clinical Center, which she will pursue following commencement and passing her boards exams.

**“I am incredibly excited to work alongside many of the nurses who provided care for my sister and ultimately inspired me to study nursing.”**

And to think it all began with a dream—follow yours at Winona State University!



# What It's Like to Live in Watkins Manor

December 6, 2019  
Improving Our World



I first heard about the Students in Residence program completely by accident. My cousin and I were walking around Winona in between apartment showings and happened upon this mansion.

We decided to do what anyone would do and go explore it.

When we got inside, Cheryl Krage, the Director of Assisted Living at Watkins Manor, asked us if we were there for the open house for student housing and offered to show us around. We'd happened to stop by at the exact time they were having an open house for the Students in Residence Program.

## An Opportunity to Give, Learn & Grow

Cheryl explained the program as she showed us around, and I was absolutely in love with the idea.

Deciding to participate in the program was pretty much a no-brainer for me. I love helping others, listening to peoples' stories, and volunteering. Being able to do all of those things on a daily basis was an opportunity that I couldn't pass up.

I spend my volunteer time eating meals with the residents, hosting a weekly knit and crochet group, going on outings with residents, and spending quality time with them. I enjoy being able to get closer with them and learn their stories. Most of the time, it doesn't even feel like volunteering so much as it feels like hanging out with some friends.

In a typical day, I chat with some residents before I head out to class. They like to hang out in the lobby of the building and will ask me how I am doing, how my classes are going, and ask me if I'm eating enough vegetables.

When I come back from work and class, I go to the dining hall and share a meal with some residents. We talk about all different kinds of things— what life was like for them growing up, how my studies are going, and share stories about our families. I truly value these interactions and learn so much from them.

Living at the Watkins manor has given me a chance to spend time learning from others and also allows for some personal growth. I've been able to address some of the cultural prejudice that people tend to have toward old people and have been reminded that aging is a wonderful and natural process.

The residents at Watkins have helped teach me that every day is a gift that should be appreciated and that we should



be thankful for all that we are blessed enough to have. Being able to have the opportunity for all of this learning was a huge factor in my decision to move to Watkins. The fact that rent is only \$400 a month with utilities included only made the offer more enticing.

## Home Sweet Mansion

Living at Watkins has been an incredible experience so far. This is probably the only time that I will be able to tell other people that I am living in a mansion, so I take full advantage of that.

We have free reign of the mansion and can use rooms for study groups or activities with the residents. The architecture is absolutely beautiful, and I am still discovering new details in the design.

Another benefit to living at Watkins is the fact that I've made so many new friends. Through my knit and crochet group, going on outings, and eating meals with the residents I have gotten to know so many amazing people whom I would not have met otherwise.

Because I have become so close to these residents, volunteering with them doesn't seem like a daunting task since it really is just an opportunity for me to enjoy the company of friends.

The residents will tell me all sorts of stories about what things were like while they were growing up and how things are similar and different today. They also give me all sorts of wisdom that they've gained throughout their years and remind me that we're all human and put on this earth to do good things for the world.

## Senior Citizens & School Children Are More Alike Than They Seem

This experience has also given me skills that I will use in my future career. I am currently in my first year at Winona state and am attending the School Counseling program in hopes of becoming an elementary school counselor after I graduate in the Spring 2021.

At first glance, it may seem like there isn't a lot in common between the elderly and elementary schoolers, but there's more than meets the eye.

Both groups have an amazing ability to see the world through a unique lens where they appreciate the beauty and the little things that the world has to offer. Both groups constantly remind me of how important it is to love and care for one another and help me to learn and grow personally and professionally.





This is the view from my living room window!

I have learned how important it is to be patient, caring and kind. I have also learned that having a positive outlook can change your life and the lives of others around you. These skills will help me in my future, both in my career as a school counselor and in my personal life.

**-Laura Jensen, '21**

# The Warrior Cupboard: What It Is & How You Can Get Involved

October 17, 2019  
Improving Our World



*Photo by Seth Thompson '21*

Let's be real: going to college can be expensive. Because it's likely the biggest investment you'll encounter as a young adult, you may be tempted to put other expenses on the back-burner—including food. If you're someone who's on a tight budget and ends up skipping meals, there's an incredible free resource at Winona State University that's just for you: the Warrior Cupboard.

The Warrior Cupboard is located in IWC 130 between the fitness studio and the WELL. It's a storage center that carries non-perishable foods and hygiene products. This stockpile of goods is available for WSU students who may be struggling with finances and affording healthy groceries while pursuing their education.

As an RA, I get to see first-hand what my residents are consuming whenever I hang out near our communal kitchen. I see a lot of pre-packaged and microwaveable meals. Many of these foods lack vegetables, which means they have low nutritional value. I greatly appreciate the Warrior Cupboard for the resources they provide to students who cannot afford to eat anything but highly processed snacks or meals.

I've had conversations with friends who are involved in other campus organizations and they're interested in learning more about the Warrior Cupboard. Some of them are even looking into volunteering or getting other club members to donate, so I thought this post would be helpful for others who are curious, too!

I think this is a great step toward the wellness of our school population. You don't have to be a genius to know that foods high in fat, sugar, and preservatives give limited energy, lead to obesity, and fail to keep you full for long. These negative effects of a low-quality diet also contribute to poorer grades, which is sad to see, especially as an RA.

I believe that the Warrior Cupboard is improving our world by allowing others to give back to the community. College students truly grow in the act of giving or serving.





Photo by Seth Thompson '21



Photo by Seth Thompson '21

**This is important to our students because society emphasizes a lifestyle of taking what's best for the self and coveting this when we all need to learn how to give what we have, even when we don't have much.**

I personally cannot wait to see how the Warrior Cupboard continues to improve the well-being of our campus as a whole!

The Warrior Cupboard is fully funded through student and faculty donations. Here's how you can show your support ASAP:





Photo by Seth Thompson '21

## Volunteer

The Warrior Cupboard is always looking for volunteers. You can help run food drives by partnering with Housing & Residence Life and the WSU Bookstore or planning fundraising events on campus, such as Go Fund Me campaigns.

Volunteer alongside your friends, teammates and club members or by yourself, but make sure to send the Warrior Cupboard an email for more information on available opportunities.

## Donate

Support the Warrior Cupboard today with monetary donations or dry goods.

### Make an electronic donation by credit card:

1. Visit the WSU Online Giving Portal
2. Enter the amount of your donation
3. Select "Other" from the drop-down menu
4. Enter "Warrior Cupboard-30312" in the "Other" field
5. Fill out the remainder of the form and submit by clicking the "Donate Now" button at the bottom

You can choose to make recurring or one-time donations—either is greatly appreciated by the Warrior Cupboard and WSU students who rely on it.

**The Warrior Cupboard also accepts shelf-stable, dry goods, such as canned items like beans, veggies, and soup; pasta and rice; and toiletries and cleaning products.**





Photo by Seth Thompson '21



Photo by Seth Thompson '21

If you yourself are struggling with finances to afford food, email the Warrior Cupboard your name, WSU email address, and StarID to see if you qualify for private access. You can also find more information about the Warrior Cupboard on the WSU website.

And remember, there is never any shame with seeking these types of resources—they are there for *you*!



# 7 Experienced Acts of Kindness on Campus

April 16, 2019  
Improving Our World



Sometimes it can seem like the world is moving in fast motion, especially when final exams roll around each semester. Because we are often in such a hurry during finals season, we tend to miss all the great gestures happening around us—and even to us.

To celebrate the efforts others make for our behalf, I was inspired to ask a few volunteer bloggers and other staff members in the Marketing, Communications & Creative Services Department here at Winona State about an act of kindness they personally experienced this past year that positively impacted their day.

**Gretchen Leif**

**Madison Warder**

**Brooke Powell**



During the winter, my friend Madi and I planned an outdoor photography session on campus. We met in the WELL, and she surprised me with a cup of hot tea (my favorite!) from Caribou Coffee in Somsen Hall. It put a smile on my face and is a fond memory in my mind of her everyday mantra “you’re valued” being shown rather than said aloud.

**Jake Leskovar**

**Brynn Artley**

**Kellen Brandt**



I was in a hurry to get to class one day and stopped to pick up some lunch from Zane's. There was a very long line, but a girl in front of me noticed that I looked like I was rushed. She let me go ahead of her—it made my day!

**Hailey Seipel**

As you can see, sometimes the simplest of gestures can make the biggest positive impact on someone's day. Take advantage of Random Acts of Kindness Week on campus and make a difference in another person's life, regardless if you know them!



## 7 Experienced Acts of Kindness on Campus



Dr. Grier in the Mass Communications Department has always been super helpful when it comes to my photography business. Along with giving me studio lighting tips, he once reviewed my 70-page bridal guide and critiqued the whole thing on his own time. The fact that he was so eager to help better my magazine made me feel like I was more than just a student.



Whenever I go to the Jack Kane Dining Center and see that Sandy is working at the entrance, I know it's going to be a good day. Not only does she always swipe in students with a smile on her face, but also she uses my first name when she greets me. Sandy exudes kindness and makes eating at the cafeteria an even more pleasant experience!



When I was really sick for a week, my fellow Sheehan Resident Assistant and friend Lauren brought me a mega-pack of saltine crackers and an assortment of liquids right to my door. It not only helped me get back on my feet, but also it helped ease my worries and made me feel less alone. I had never been sick on my own for more than a couple days before, and Lauren's kindness meant so much to me!





Working as a Desk Assistant in the Quad, I see hundreds of people walk by the desk every day. Although I know that it is my job to greet everyone who comes through the door, I oftentimes feel unacknowledged by a majority of the residents. However, I instantly get excited when a select handful of residents whom I have come to know take the extra couple of seconds to smile, wave and say hello—it means a lot to me and always boosts my mood!



Back in September, I'd just finished a long night of studying at the Darrell Krueger Library when it started to rain outside (correction: downpour). I hadn't brought either a hooded jacket or an umbrella. While I was waiting in the lobby for the perfect time to make my dash, a female student—whom I'd never met before—offered to walk me home under her umbrella. I will never forget that night and her incredible gesture as a complete stranger.

# 6 Acts of Kindness to Do Before the Semester Ends

April 11, 2019  
Improving Our World



As the semester wraps up, our lives become busier and busier. It's hard to fit anything into our already packed schedules, but by taking a few seconds out of our day, we can make someone else's a little bit better! Here are six acts of kindness you should do before the semester ends.

## 1. Compliment someone on their character rather than their physical appearance.

It's great to receive a compliment such as "I love your hair today" or "Those shoes are so cute!" However, what will really brighten someone's day is if you compliment them on something they've been working very hard on recently. Putting a twist on your compliments focuses on a person's character, which is much more rewarding to be praised for than their physical appearance.

## 2. Say hi to people even when you may feel uncomfortable.

Most of us have a hard time going out of our way to make conversation with strangers on campus. However, I think we can all agree that when someone we don't know says hi or wishes us a good day, we feel great! By going out of our own comfort zones, we can start conversations with people we likely wouldn't have had otherwise.





Photo by Amy Nelson '20



Photo by Amy Nelson '20

### 3. Hold the door for someone when it is inconvenient for you.

It's easy to hold the door for someone behind you when you're early for class. When you're late or stressed out, however, it's much harder to have the patience to hold the door open. If you do this act of kindness when it's inconvenient for you, though, it means all the more to a person who may be having a bad day themselves!



#### **4. Pay for a friend's meal at Kryzsko Commons.**

As the end of the year starts to come closer, you might have some extra meal swipes or Kryzsko Kash on your Warrior ID. Call up a friend and treat them after a long day of studying or pay for the person behind you! Whether or not they're someone you know, they're guaranteed to appreciate this gesture.

#### **5. Let someone cut in front of you in line if they're running late.**

As college students, we all have busy lives. Sometimes it's difficult to fit everything into the short 24 hours we get each day. If you notice someone is in a hurry, be empathetic and let them cut in front of you in line at Caribou Coffee in the library or at Zane's.

#### **6. Offer a classmate your notes if they miss class.**

Sometimes life gets in the way of us making it to every single class period. If you know that a friend missed class because of another responsibility they had, offer them your notes or fill them in on what they missed. Hopefully if you ever need it, they'll do the same for you!

Implementing a few of these acts of kindness into your days before this semester ends will allow you to leave this school year and continue into summer on a good note. Write them down on Post-Its and stick them to your mirror to serve as a daily reminder, or perhaps schedule them randomly on your calendar. Either way, look for ways to improve people's days as often as possible because you never know when you will want someone to do the same for you.



6 Acts of Kindness to Do Before the Semester Ends



Photo by Kelsa Katzfey '21



Photo by Kelsa Katzfey '21



Photo by Brooke Powell '21



# Changing the World One Plastic Bag at a Time

April 2, 2019

Campus Engagement, Green, Improving Our World



Photo by Kelsa Katzfey '21

Did you know that Americans use 100 billion plastic bags over the course of one year? If this number seems startling, think about all your quick late-night Target runs when the cashier puts your snacks in a plastic bag, or your weekly Hy-Vee trips when every few items get their own individual bag. According to Waste Management, only one percent of plastic bags are returned for recycling.

Because of this issue of excess plastic bags, a student-led campaign called *The Persuasion Project: Bag the Bag* from Dr. Kelly Herold's Persuasion and Advocacy course is taking on this environmental problem and allowing Winona State University students to get involved. *Bag the Bag's* goal is to eliminate plastic from the WSU bookstore as well as the entire campus.

Personally, I am so proud to be a part of this event and campaign. I myself am guilty of not using reusable bags, but this campus-wide project has shown me how important it is and how much damage even one bag can do to the environment.

Our goal is to bring awareness to the issue of excess plastic bags and make it easier to properly recycle them. I hope in the future reusable bags are the first choice for students at WSU!

On Friday, April 5, join the *Bag the Bag* team at the Gazebo from 11am – 1pm to have your single-use plastic bags properly recycled. Need an incentive? Earn yourself a free sticker by bringing in five or more single-use plastic bags.

Become a part of changing the world one plastic bag at a time by following the event's Facebook page at Bag the Bag WSU.

– Maddie Warder '21





Photo by Kelsa Katzfey '21

# 4 Reasons to Get Involved with the SEED Garden

February 14, 2019  
Feature Post, Green, Improving Our World



*Photo by Kelsa Katzfey '21*

The WSU SEED Garden is an initiative that adds to our university's rich culture, but at the same time, not many students know much about it.

## What is the WSU SEED Garden?

The WSU S.E.E.D. (Sustainable, Edible, Education, Discovery) Garden is a project that was created as a student-led project and is sponsored by the WSU Arboretum and Sustainability committees. The SEED Garden provides a way for students to learn how to grow foods in a sustainable way while also developing healthy habits.

The project was first proposed by student Alison Bettin with later help from students Jack Smyth and Jackson Ramsland. Through the help of faculty-advisor Jonathon Mauser, Jackson Ramsland applied for and received the inaugural "Student Green Fee" award to build and maintain the garden project.

The garden is currently located on 260 West 8<sup>th</sup> Street, situated behind the SLC and the Quad. You can look for the sign and the garden on the edge of the Central Lutheran Church parking lot.



Get involved with the SEED Garden and learn how to grow your own food! Photo by Kelsa Katzfey '21

## **Get Involved Today!**

The SEED Garden would love for you to join in on this student-led project. Here are four reasons why you should get involved with the SEED Garden while you're a student:

### **1. Spend time outdoors**

From planting delicious foods to helping take care of the garden, you are sure to get your fill of sunshine and the great outdoors.

### **2. Grow your own food**

At the SEED garden, you get to grow your own food and take it with you. This is great for hungry college students – free groceries!

### **3. Learn easy, healthy habits**

From growing your own food, you can easily learn healthy habits that will keep you on the right track for a good life. These habits can focus on filling your diet with healthy foods and discovering what foods are most beneficial for you personally.

### **4. Meet new people**

College is a time for meeting new people and making new connections. Getting involved with the SEED garden is one way to meet new people who share similar interests in gardening, the outdoors, or simply being eco-friendly.

The WSU SEED Garden is an opportunity to get involved on campus and has some healthy benefits too. Your



#### 4 Reasons to Get Involved with the SEED Garden

involvement could help you learn a lifelong hobby as well as healthy habits for living everyday life.

The SEED Garden is looking for more students to get involved this year. If you're interested in learning more about the S.E.E.D. Garden or how to get your hands in the dirt, contact faculty advisor, Jonathon Mauser ([jmauser@winona.edu](mailto:jmauser@winona.edu)), or Arboretum Committee Member, Logan Wescott ([wescott14@winona.edu](mailto:wescott14@winona.edu)).

# 10 Cheap Ways to Give Back This Holiday Season

December 8, 2018  
Improving Our World



*Photo by Kelsa Katzfey '21*

Often times we find ourselves wanting to do good over the holiday season, but our bank account tells us otherwise. However, there are so many ways that we can give back that doesn't cost us a penny! Here are ten ways that you can give back for little or no money this holiday season.

## **1. Spend some time at the animal shelter.**

The shelter in Winona has many volunteer opportunities! You can do anything from office work to taking care of the animals themselves. If you don't have the time to volunteer, you could simply drop off your old blankets!

## **2. Bake cookies for local police officers, firefighters, first responders, or even your neighbors!**

Everyone appreciates sweets around the holidays. It's also super inexpensive to buy cookies. My favorite are the premade Pillsbury cookies which you can purchase at Walmart for under \$3.



Photo by Kelsa Katzfey '21

### **3. Volunteer to spend time at a nursing home or assisted living facility.**

I know that I love the feeling of being home with my family on Christmas morning. However, not everyone gets that privilege. Whether it's someone you know or someone you don't, everyone deserves to know someone cares about them during the holidays.

### **4. Pay for someone's morning coffee.**

Someone did this for me last year and it made my week! My coffee was less than \$2 and I still think about that act of kindness to this day.

### **5. Leave a treat or note in the mailbox for your mailperson.**

The last thing your mailperson will be expecting is for you to remember them on the holidays. Remember to thank them for working long hours to make sure all of your Amazon orders arrive on time!

### **6. Participate in Operation Gratitude.**

This operation works to send care packages to soldiers who are deployed and won't be making it home for the holidays. You can donate money or even cheaper, write a letter to a deployed soldier to make their day a little brighter.



## **7. Say thank you.**

To the store cashier. To your professors. To your family. Spread thankfulness.

## **8. Call someone you haven't heard from lately and wish them Happy Holidays!**

Whether its family, relatives, or those hometown friends you haven't seen in a while, make sure to remind them that you're still thinking about them!

## **9. Donate outgrown clothes to Goodwill.**

There is a Goodwill located right here in Winona on Gilmore Ave. Many people can't afford to buy new clothes. You could be helping out a family in need and cleaning out your closet at the same time!

## **10. Help local families in Winona and take a tag off a local giving tree.**

St. Mary's Parish in Winona is one place you can find one of these trees. You don't have to be religious to participate, just willing to give.

You don't have to have money to make the world a better place. I hope you consider doing one or all of these things to give back this holiday season. Maybe someday someone will do the same for you.

# Make a Little Mean a Lot on Give to the Max Day

November 15, 2018  
Improving Our World



*Photo by Kelsa Katzfey '21*

As college students, it's universally accepted that we don't have much disposable income. We work jobs that pay minimum wage. We scrape underneath couch cushions, behind tables, and under parked cars in search of change. We inwardly weep every time we're forced to visit the bookstore for yet another textbook.

So, even though this is considered the season of giving, how can we be expected to make donations to charitable organizations? And even if we do, are our sparse contributions even worthwhile?

## Your Contributions Matter

GiveMN.org believes that they are. The website sponsors a number of different non-profit organizations within the state and gives these folks an online presence to both spread information about their missions and receive monetary donations. According to their homepage, the site has generated more than \$75,000,000 for the state of Minnesota alone. It was launched by the Minnesota Community Foundation in 2009 and, since then, has helped numerous schools and nonprofits.

## Today is the Day, Give to the Max

Today, November 15, 2018, GiveMN.org is sponsoring an event called "Give to the Max Day," and it's a chance for



Photo by Kelsa Katzfey '21

you to donate to some of your favorite causes. The Winona State Foundation is one of the organizations that you could donate to!

Maybe you're an animal lover and would love to support a cause working to provide humane care and treatment. The Winona Area Humane Society is participating in this event and accepting donations. There are other community non-profits participating too! Such as, the Friends of the Winona Public Library, the Winona Arts Center and Winona Health Foundation. Local high schools and middle schools are also represented, along with numerous churches, environmental organizations, and activist groups.

## Your Donation Can be Multiplied

All of these non-profits are promoting their mission for "Give to the Max Day" in the hopes that everyday people, like us college students, will donate. Throughout the day, sponsors of GiveMN.org will give grants and match donations, especially to those organizations with the most activity. That means that even a donation of ten dollars could become something huge.

## Make a Little Mean a Lot

"Give to the Max Day" is a reminder that even though you're giving from your own pocket, paycheck or couch cushion, your donation is part of a bigger movement. Even if you're only able to give a little, it can mean a lot to these organizations.

Although donations are always welcome for these non-profits, "Give to the Max Day" is the perfect opportunity for college students, who are usually starved of cash, to make a little mean a lot.

*– Updated on 11/15/18 by Erin Kloepping '19*



# What You Can Do to Reduce Water Pollution

October 26, 2018  
Campus Engagement, Feature Post, Improving Our World



Water pollution is more common now than ever and it is something that needs to be brought to the attention of more people. Here at WSU we pride ourselves in our beautiful campus and how we take care of it.

Here are a few things you should know about water pollution and how you, as a WSU student, can help.

## What is water pollution?

According to the Environmental Pollution Centers, water pollution is most commonly known as the presence of toxins in water that can be harmful to the environment.

## How do we cause water pollution?

There are fifteen known ways that humans cause water pollution:

1. Dumping
2. Industrial Runoff
3. Agricultural Runoff
4. Chemical Runoff
5. Landfills
6. Plastics
7. Construction Runoff
8. Batteries



9. Domestic City Sewage
10. Septic Systems
11. Too Many Nutrients
12. Hormones and Antibiotics
13. Leaks and Spills
14. Fossil Fuels
15. Mining

It is important to note that there are both direct and indirect causes of water pollution. Direct being causes that change the water instantly. Indirect are causes that have to go through various phases before they affect the water.

## What can I do?

As college students, we are lucky enough to be able to go to school in a location that provides us with a body of water to use recreationally and it is important that we keep it clean. While at the lake using your Lake Lodge Membership, make sure to always clean up after yourself and keep track of your belongings.

“Earth Eclipse” has a great list of twenty-five ways to prevent water pollution, here are a few from that list:

1. Keep out oils, fat, and grease from the sink.
2. Avoid direct dumping into water systems.
3. Resist from using the toilet as a trash bin.

WSU is a university that values its environment immensely, especially with Lake Winona at the entrance of campus. Be a part of the culture to care for the environment here at WSU. Together, we can improve our campus, our city, and our world.

# Why You Should Vote

October 22, 2018  
Improving Our World



Photo by Ka Vang '16

With the upcoming midterm elections, politics is once again thrust to the forefront of the minds of many. The 2018 Election is more than just folks nagging us to register on the way to classes or political advertisements interrupting our Hulu-binging. Voting is a hallmark of our democracy and every two years citizens of the United States have the opportunity to vote for our elected representatives.

## **We Get to Choose**

Many public officials, all with lasting influence, will be chosen on November 6<sup>th</sup> by *us*. Everything from representation in the United States Congress to the Governor's race to local county, city, and school board representatives are chosen *by us*.

These are not some sort of far-away, abstract titles. These are important decisionmakers that will impact all our lives.

## **Voting is Important, Especially for Students**

I often hear my friends and peers object that elections are inconsequential, and thus, voting is a waste of time. Voting is worthwhile; for students, it is especially so.

Think about where the "state" in Winona State comes from. The cost for all of us to attend this school is dependent on the state legislature's funding of higher education. This funding has plummeted in the ten years since the Great Recession, with tuition costs skyrocketing to match the difference.

Congress funds Pell Grants and low-interest student loans. We as students already have a foot in the game. Higher education policy is a product of those we send to Washington D.C. and Saint Paul.

Young Americans, *such as ourselves*, have continually failed to establish a strong presence at the polls for years. If we care about the cost of our education, if we want politicians to listen to us, if we want to see the change that our generation expects, *then we must vote*.

## **How to Vote in Minnesota**

Here in Minnesota, we have some of the most open and accessible voter laws in the entire country. If you did not register by the October 16<sup>th</sup> deadline, you still have the opportunity to register on Election Day. All you will need is proof of your place of residence, the easiest of which would be a photo ID (Driver's License or a WSU Student ID) and a billing statement with your address on it. Even an electric copy on your phone is acceptable!





Photo by Ka Vang '16

You can find all of the information regarding how to vote and who is running for each office on the Minnesota Secretary of State's website: [mnvotes.org](http://mnvotes.org). Using this website, you can also check if you're already registered or not.

### **Exercise Your Right to Vote**

Election Day is Tuesday November 6<sup>th</sup>. Classes and other university activities are not held after 6:00pm this day so that we all have the time to vote.

I encourage all of my peers at Winona State University to vote on November 6<sup>th</sup>. Research the candidates who are seeking to represent you and make an educated decision. Regardless of policy preference or even personal motivation, we owe it to ourselves to express the power of students by exercising our right to vote.

– Ben Ellgen '20

# How to Get Involved with the Winona Warming Shelter

October 16, 2018  
Improving Our World



*The Winona Warming Shelter is located right downtown, not far from campus. Photo by Kelsa Katzfey '21*

I was around 12 years old when I first started volunteering at a Humane Society in my home town. I would go in once a week for two hours and help clean, walk dogs and feed the animals. Along with me, there were about 10 other volunteers that made a small time commitment.

## Better Together

Together, the difference we made in the shelter was astounding. This showed me that giving a helping hand to your community can make a huge difference in the lives of others.

## Why You Should Volunteer

Whether it be something small or large, any contribution to your community is appreciated. Plus, volunteering doesn't only benefit the people in your community, it's a great opportunity for you too!

Volunteering is a great way to:

- Increase your confidence by stepping outside of your comfort zone and trying something new
- Learn new skills and how to work well with other people
- Meet new people and make connections
- And most importantly, have fun!





The Winona Warming Shelter is located right downtown, not far from campus. Photo by Kelsa Katzfey '21

## The Winona Warming Shelter

The Winona Warming Shelter is a great opportunity to get out into the community and make a difference!

With the temperatures quickly dropping here in Winona, the struggle for some local residents to stay warm may be more common than you think. Imagine having nowhere to go to get out of a cold Minnesota winter. This is a reality for some locals.

Fortunately, organizations like Winona Police Department, Winona County Community Services and Winona Health have partnered with the Winona Warming Shelter to ensure a temporary, safe overnight stay for those individuals.

The Warming Shelter provides:

- A safe and warm place to sleep
- Food, water and coffee
- Personal care items such as socks, toothbrushes, and blankets
- A clean bathroom with a warm shower
- Referral resources from other agencies in Winona County

## How You Can Get Involved

Starting November 1st, the Winona Warming Shelter will be looking for individuals to volunteer November through March for one night per month. All WSU faculty, staff, students, alumni and friends are welcome.

If this opportunity is something that interests you, please come to the volunteer orientation on Monday, October 29th at Community Bible Church, 69 E 3rd St, Winona, MN. Orientation starts at 6:30pm and should last about 2 hours.

If you have any other questions about how to get involved with the Winona Warming Shelter, email Anne Vande Berg (AVandeBerg@winona.edu) or Larry Shrenk (LSchrenk@winona.edu).



# Bringing Passion, Patience and a Personal Touch to Sales

October 9, 2018

Academics,Feature Post,Improving Our World,More Than a Major



Will Thompson, a WSU senior, knows that you don't have to be diagnosing illnesses, performing surgery or inserting IVs to help people. Sometimes all it takes is a passion for others and a drive to succeed through hard work.

When people think "healthcare" immediately jobs like doctor and nurse come to mind. But there are so many other positions that support the company like human resources, marketing and sales. These teams all work together to provide people with the care they need—even if it isn't one-on-one with a patient.

"At first I wanted to go into some sort of healthcare field, but I just didn't find passion in that. My motivation is now to go into some sort of medical device sales for cancer patients," Will said.

So how does a Business Administration major navigate their way through a career in the healthcare system to help patients get healthier?

Although the connection may not be obvious, Will's backstory helps connect the dots.

## Connecting the Dots

When Will was four years old, he was diagnosed with childhood acute lymphoblastic (ALL) leukemia. While in the hospital, he saw the effects that cancer treatment has on people. Yes, treatment helps patients get better but the process can be long and painful.

For one of his treatments, doctors placed a port in Will's chest to quickly disperse cancer-fighting medicine throughout his body. Will plans on using his degree to get medical devices, like his port, to the people that need them to overcome their illnesses.

Will said, "I was lucky because they caught it really early on." He was declared cancer-free at age eight.

Even though his battle happened so long ago, the experience has motivated him to improve the world by touching



lives affected by similar hardships.

## Friendships, Role Models and Support

Having leukemia led Will to meet some people who greatly influenced his life and continue to do so.

One example was a boy on his hometown football team who also beat cancer a few years earlier. Will hung out with him at “Make-A-Wish” events, enthralled by the chance to be around the football star. Will looked up to him as a role model of courage and strength as he fought through his own battle with cancer.

The second person was a childhood friend who had the exact same kind of leukemia and battled alongside Will in the hospital for four years. They shared an incredible bond, so when she passed away eight months after Will was declared cancer-free, Will felt her loss deeply. Their families are still close to this day and spend time together.

“Even if you’re at that crummy spot in your life where you don’t see a whole lot of hope, having people speak to you and talk to you about their experiences helps a lot,” Will said.

These people inspired him to strive towards his career choice. From role models to old friends, they have all shaped and influenced his passion of supporting those experiencing hardships, illnesses or loss.

## WSU has His Back

WSU has also been a strong motivator and support system for his future career. His close relationship with the Dean of the College of Business, Dr. Hamid Akbari, is what kept Will going when school got difficult. Dr. Akbari encouraged him to work hard and achieve his goals. Because of this support, Will has become heavily involved in the WSU Sales Team, AMA and the John Latsch Leadership Academy to develop skills he will later use in consultative sales.

## Inspired to Inspire Others

Will is motivated to help people and inspire others the way he was. For Will, it’s not the most important thing to directly treat the patients because he knows the products he will sell can help save a life. After all, he has been on the other end of the medical devices like those he will be selling in his career.

“Just being around kids who are currently going through this stuff, I can see the processes they use and the devices are getting better and better,” he said about professionals in the industry.

## More Than a Major

Will's major means more to him than just finding any entry-level business degree. He plans to bring a personal level of care and understanding to the medical device sales world.

Although some sales people can come across pushy, cold and uninformed about the challenges patients face, Will is quite the opposite.

Due to his personal experience, he understands how important it is to use the correct device for medical treatments and can educate buyers to make the best choices.

His degree is more than just a major, it is his way to bring better healthcare technology to the doctors and patients who need it.



# A Professional Problem Solver Caring for Others

April 24, 2018  
More Than a Major



*Photo by Kelsa Katzfey '21*

Think of what you'd like a social worker to be—someone who serves with integrity and compassion, who understands the importance of human relationships, who values the dignity and worth of every person. For Jacob Stock, the value of looking out for others instilled in him at a young age has been built upon through the WSU Social Work program.

*Photo by Kelsa Katzfey '21*

Jacob is a senior at WSU pursuing a major in social work with a Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies (WGSS) minor. In the social work program, Jacob is learning how to turn his empathy for people into constructive support and assistance for solving problems.

As Jacob described the aspirations for his future career as a social worker, it was evident that he is excited to apply the values of caring for others – for those left behind and left out.

## **Why Social Work?**

When picking a major, the variety in career options for social workers seemed fitting for Jacob's passion for people. Some social workers plan and administer social justice programs as a community social worker. Others work with abuse and neglect cases as Child Protective Services (CPS) social workers.

Jacob knows he would like to gear more towards community level intervention to support groups organizing around social justice. However, there isn't a specific population or group of people that Jacob wants to work with. That comes partly with the understanding that many of the problems social workers encounter are interconnected.

"Social work is both an art and a science," Jacob stated. "We have evidence based practices that stem from psychology, sociology and political science, but at the end of the day, you are also working with people – each with unique situations and problems."

Jacob continued to explain, "What I really like about social work is that it's not me going in and saving people, it's really more about building on the strengths that are already in the communities, groups, families and people I am working



with.”

#### **Why WSU?**

Being a native of Decorah, Iowa, the Winona scenery made WSU feel like home from the very beginning. But it wasn't just the breath-taking bluffs and winding river that had Jacob sold.

When touring WSU, Jacob decided to meet with a few professors to learn more about the social work program. The professors stressed the idea that social workers are professional problem solvers. They explained that the WSU Social Work program offers students a wide knowledge base for addressing a variety of problems and the ability to offer diverse solutions.

#### **Life in the Social Work Program at WSU**

Although helping people has its rewards, working with people struggling with difficult issues day in and day out can really take a toll on a social worker. That is why the WSU social work program warns students of compassion fatigue and burnout.

“The professors do a really good job of making themselves available and stressing the importance of having a support system and having activities that you enjoy outside of work to take your mind off of it every now and again.”

Jacob used the analogy that social workers are “the tool.” They don't use hammers or maps to help solve problems, they use themselves. They use their own counselling skills to help clients. Therefore, it is important to take care of your tools and instruments. For Jacob, that can be as simple as taking a nap or reading a good book from time to time.

When preparing for a career of working with people, there is only so much you can learn from a few textbooks. Jacob has taken his education beyond the classroom walls in a variety of ways. He has had social work internships, participated in clubs such as the Re-Initiative, and even studied abroad in Mexico for a semester to learn about the experiences of social workers in a different culture.

Jacob is eager to take what he has learned and the education he has received and go out and do something with it.

#### **More Than a Major**

Jacob knows the cost of compassion for people can bear a heavy burden. Although some days it might feel impossible to create change in this world, his determination to make a difference in the lives of others is inspirational.

“At the end of the day I tell myself, “Well, I can either do something about it or I can do nothing about it.” And I would rather do something.”

Choosing to do something means taking action on someone else's behalf even when it's challenging. For Jacob, the social work program is more than just a major, is about meeting people where they are and helping them solve problems themselves.

Liked Jacob's story? Meet more awesome students in the More Than a Major Series!



# Creating a Valuable Experience for Students with Disabilities

March 21, 2018  
Improving Our World, More Than a Major



Sometimes our greatest motivations in life stem from the people most dear to us. For Tyler Maroushek, that was his older sister, Kylie. His sister lived with a genetic disorder called Noonan Syndrome, until she unexpectedly passed away at age 22 in 2015.

Photo by Kelsa Katzfey '21

Tyler's older sister, Kylie, at age 19.

"It happened the week before my freshman Welcome Week so it was really tough. But at the same time, it has also pushed me to become a good teacher, which is the field I am now going into," Tyler said.

Tyler is a junior at WSU pursuing a double Special Education (SPED) major in Developmental Disability and Learning Disability. With the learning disability program, Tyler is learning how to help kids acquire knowledge while the developmental disability curriculum is preparing Tyler to help his students build language, mobility and independent living skills

As he spoke of why he is pursuing a degree in the College of Education, Tyler emanated positivity and enthusiasm about where his education and his passion for working with students with disabilities will take him after graduation.

## **Why SPED?**

Tyler's motivation for becoming a Special Education teacher comes not only from his sister but also his love for working with kids.

"I want to be a positive role model in their lives to help them experience a better education. A teacher that cares about helping them reach their goals and giving them a valuable and positive experience," Tyler explained.

Tyler specifically wants to work with students with developmental disabilities because he has had much experience with it. Growing up with his older sister helped make the skills necessary for a Special Education teacher come naturally for Tyler. His patience and genuine interest in understanding students' backgrounds, how they learn and go about their day will





serve Tyler well in his future career.

Students and staff Tyler worked with his junior and senior year of high school.

“The cool thing about students with disabilities is that you don’t know what they have to offer until you get to know them. That is what I am looking forward to most –getting to know all of my students, addressing their needs and pulling out the unique characteristics each one has to offer in the classroom,” Tyler said.

In high school, Tyler had many opportunities to work with students with disabilities from taking a service learning



class to helping run the Special Athletic Competition in Winona. Tyler's involvement in the lives of many students already has reinforced his decision of going into this profession.



Tyler hanging out with a student participant at the Special Athletic Competition.

#### **Why WSU?**

Tyler chose to pursue his bachelor's degree at WSU for two reasons. Since he's from Winona, WSU is close to his home and family. Tyler also knew that WSU is known for having a great SPED program.



“I know a bunch of people that have gone through the education program at WSU and it is known to produce great teachers, has a lot of information, and many great professors,” Tyler said.

**Life in the SPED program at WSU**

Although the WSU SPED program certifies students to teach K-12<sup>th</sup> grades, Tyler has decided he would enjoy working with elementary schoolers most.



Because his sister was several years older, Tyler hadn't had much experience with younger students until he started working at the WSU Children's Center. This is a little girl that Tyler has been able to work with at the Center!

“It is a critical stage in their life where they are learning how to talk, use their body and their mind. It is a big jump in their lives and it is really cool to be such an important factor in their development,” Tyler said.

Due to his double major, Tyler has a full year of student teaching ahead of him next year. Tyler expressed great excitement to jump into this next part of the program and begin working with students on a daily basis.

**A Teacher Who Cares**

Tyler knows that being a Special Education teacher won't always be the most glamorous or easy job. However, the opportunity to be the reason that a student gets out of bed in the morning and is excited to go to school is more than worth it for Tyler.

That desire to ensure all students know they belong is evident in all he does to prepare for his future career. For Tyler, the SPED program is more than just a major, it is about being a teacher that sees each student as an individual with something unique to offer.

Liked Tyler's story? Meet more awesome students in the More Than a Major Series!



# Getting Your Green-Thumb On: Three Tips for Living Plastic-Free

February 20, 2018  
Feature Post, Green, Improving Our World



*Photo by Kelsa Katzfey '21*

I have been seeing many videos on Facebook lately about living a plastic-free lifestyle and it seems to be a new trend. People are becoming much more eco-conscious about trying to reduce their waste and I too have been on board with this movement.

Unfortunately, living completely plastic-free sounds like an unattainable task for most, let alone college students that are finally figuring out how to live on their own for the first time. As a result of this challenge, I am offering you three of my favorite, easy and affordable ways to keep your community green and even save yourself a few bucks:

*Photo by Kelsa Katzfey '21*

## 1. Invest in reusable coffee cups

My brother and I have been doing this for years. Our favorite Starbucks shop back home would always give us discounts if we brought in our reusable Starbucks coffee mugs and tea containers. Thankfully for everyone, this behavior is encouraged at all Starbucks and Caribou coffee shops – even the ones here on campus!

Think about all the plastic cups and cardboard containers we throw away after our morning caffeine fix. Doing this small act of investing in a reusable container not only saves you some money but contributes less waste in landfills. It's a win for the environment and a win for you!

## 2. Keep those plastic Wal-Mart bags

Studies have shown that when you throw away a plastic bag, it will take almost 1,000 years to fully decompose once it hits the landfill. By saving your bags after a grocery run, you can bring them back on your next trip and drop them in one of the plastic bag bins most grocery stores offer.



These bag drops allow for the unwanted bags to get recycled back into the system to be used all over again. If you're okay with reusing them, you can do what I like to do and throw your lunch in one for those long days on campus.

### 3. Re-grow your vegetables

One of my favorite things to do to save money and reduce my food waste is growing some of my own food. Now, this sounds like yet another challenge for some but I promise it's as easy as can be.

Whole Foods has created my favorite vegetable re-grow direction chart. It tells you the quick ways to save the ends of your fruits and veggies and regrow them into more food in a short time. Most of these tricks only involve water and a glass or a small cup and a bit of dirt. Plus, you won't have to spend more money on food!

If you think you aren't ready to start growing vegetables on your own yet, begin by checking out the Sustainable, Edible, Education Discovery (SEED) Garden on campus!

*"The Winona State University SEED Garden is a place where anyone can come and work, relax, or plunge their hands in the dirt."* – The SEED Garden Facebook Page

With our community being located in the beautiful Mississippi River Valley, us Warriors should feel extra inspired to preserve the beauty of our planet and keep our community in pristine condition. It is my hope that these quick tricks help you jumpstart your greener lifestyle with ease.

## FOOD THAT MAGICALLY REGROWS ITSELF...

Growing anything from a seed is impressive but also difficult, unless you're blessed with a green thumb. Don't worry on money but there has to be an easier way... and there is! You can actually grow food from kitchen scraps. There is something very MacGyver about that, isn't it? It's cool! You can regrow everything from celery scraps to onion hair with a great chance of success. Use organic fruits and vegetables for the best results.

**Green onions, Lemongrass, Basil, Fenugreek, & Spring onions**

- 1 Cut the ends of the green onions, lemongrass, basil, fenugreek, or spring onions into 2-3 inch pieces.
- 2 Place the pieces in a glass of water. Change the water every 2-3 days.
- 3 After a few days, you'll see roots growing from the bottom. Once the roots are about 1-2 inches long, you can plant them in a pot of soil.

**Celery, cabbage, romaine lettuce, & bok choy**

- 1 Wash the vegetable thoroughly. Cut the stalks into 2-3 inch pieces.
- 2 Place the pieces in a glass of water. Change the water every 2-3 days.
- 3 After a few days, you'll see roots growing from the bottom. Once the roots are about 1-2 inches long, you can plant them in a pot of soil.

**Ginger**

- 1 Cut the ends of the ginger root into 2-3 inch pieces.
- 2 Place the pieces in a glass of water. Change the water every 2-3 days.
- 3 After a few days, you'll see roots growing from the bottom. Once the roots are about 1-2 inches long, you can plant them in a pot of soil.

**Onion**

- 1 Cut the ends of the onion into 2-3 inch pieces.
- 2 Place the pieces in a glass of water. Change the water every 2-3 days.
- 3 After a few days, you'll see roots growing from the bottom. Once the roots are about 1-2 inches long, you can plant them in a pot of soil.

**Garlic**

- 1 Cut the ends of the garlic bulb into 2-3 inch pieces.
- 2 Place the pieces in a glass of water. Change the water every 2-3 days.
- 3 After a few days, you'll see roots growing from the bottom. Once the roots are about 1-2 inches long, you can plant them in a pot of soil.

**Mushroom**

- 1 Cut the ends of the mushroom stem into 2-3 inch pieces.
- 2 Place the pieces in a glass of water. Change the water every 2-3 days.
- 3 After a few days, you'll see roots growing from the bottom. Once the roots are about 1-2 inches long, you can plant them in a pot of soil.

**Potatoes & Sweet Potatoes**

- 1 Cut the ends of the potato or sweet potato into 2-3 inch pieces.
- 2 Place the pieces in a glass of water. Change the water every 2-3 days.
- 3 After a few days, you'll see roots growing from the bottom. Once the roots are about 1-2 inches long, you can plant them in a pot of soil.

**Pineapple**

- 1 Cut the ends of the pineapple stem into 2-3 inch pieces.
- 2 Place the pieces in a glass of water. Change the water every 2-3 days.
- 3 After a few days, you'll see roots growing from the bottom. Once the roots are about 1-2 inches long, you can plant them in a pot of soil.



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# Chasing An Unconventional Dream: My Story as a Communications Major

February 16, 2018  
Feature Post, More Than a Major



*Photo by Ka Vang '17*

Growing up in a small town surrounded by corn fields often made it difficult to dream outside of my surroundings. It wasn't until my youth leader in high school started asking me questions like, "What is your purpose? What is the calling that has been placed on your life? What are the gifts that you have been given to help others?" that I began to dream outside of my own little world and pursue a purpose greater than myself.

*Photo by Ka Vang '17*

## Learning to Dream

Learning to dream was a challenging process for me. As I started seeking my "purpose in life," I felt my heart beginning to break for people groups and countries around the world that I had never met or been to before. Imagining an entire world outside of a small town of roughly 3,200 people was overwhelming and almost incomprehensible.

Despite the unknowns that lied outside of the confines of my small community, I continued to explore the passions that were forming in my heart. I quickly developed a passion for stories; the stories of people. It was in this time of exploration that I learned of the influential power stories have. I realized that no one can deny someone's personal experience.

However, as my passion for reading the stories of people from different countries, cultures, and backgrounds grew, I became more and more confused. I didn't understand how I could have a heart for someone I had never actually met. I didn't understand how I could long to be in a country that I had never been to before.

I was lost in a time of uncertainty. I was feeling a call on my heart to pursue a purpose greater than myself but the pressure to figure out what I was going to do with my life as a junior in high school was real. It was in this time of confusion that the people around me began to chime in.



“Go chase your dreams,” they said.

## Chasing the Dream

Most often a dream is not limited to financial stability, practicality, or sustainability. As I began dreaming about a career of sharing the stories of people all around the world, I began to ignore the price tag on college tuition. Sharing my dream of traveling around the world as a filmmaker to share the stories of others and raise my own income caused the people that told me, “Go chase your dreams,” to chime in once again.

“Except for that dream,” they said.

## Choosing to Continue the Pursuit

In today’s society, we are told as juniors and seniors in high school to figure out what we are going to do with our lives. We are told to go to college so that we can get a good job and make a lot of money. Is that all?

Making money is a great thing and we need to make money to have stability in our lives, support organizations and causes around the world, and provide for our families. But is making money all that we are after?

I want my mission in life to be greater than just making a bunch of money. Even if it means living unconventionally, I want to live out a purpose greater than myself. Today I am pursuing more than just a bachelor’s degree. Today I am pursuing the call on my life to share the stories of people all around the world.

Despite the negative reactions I often get from people when I tell them my dream is focused more on people and less on money, I have chosen to continue the pursuit of my dream. Additionally, I have chosen to get an education that will help make my dreams become a reality.

## Watching My Dreams Become Reality

Since making the choice to chase my dream, even if it means not having a full bank account, it has been incredible to watch my dream unfold and become more of a reality. Today I am pursuing a degree in Communications and a minor in Mass Communications and Training & Development here at WSU.

After graduation I hope to use what I have learned at WSU and work for a small business that uses filmmaking and other forms of digital media to help share the stories of missionaries and non-profit organizations all over the world. I hope to provide services to help these missionaries share the incredible work they are doing as well as help equip the missionaries to eventually do it themselves.

Doing so will hopefully boost their fundraising efforts so the missionaries and non-profits can continue to focus on the work they were called to do. This is how I plan to use my major for a greater purpose, to serve others, and to make a difference in this world.

What are you called to do in this world? What is your greater purpose? How are you able to use your gifts and talents to serve others? I encourage you to ask yourself these questions even if it means going against the norms of our society. Dreams aren't meant to be ordinary or conventional. They are unique and have the power to lead you somewhere extraordinary.

Liked my story? Learn about more students in the More Than a Major Series!



# From El Salvador to Winona: A Nursing Major Pursuing Her Calling

February 7, 2018  
More Than a Major



Ever since she was a little girl, Kelsa Katzfey, a freshman at WSU, has had a heart for kids. She has always dreamt of going into a career where she could invest in the lives of children. It wasn't until she ventured to the country of El Salvador that this dream started to become a reality. Today, Kelsa is pursuing a degree in nursing to fulfill the dream that has been laid on her heart for years.

Kelsa Katzfey '21

Dating back to some of her earliest memories, Kelsa has always been eager to find ways to serve those around her. From volunteering in the nursery at her church to working with people with special needs at a summer camp called Special Touch, her passion for serving those in need led her on a mission trip to El Salvador.

### **A Trip to Remember**

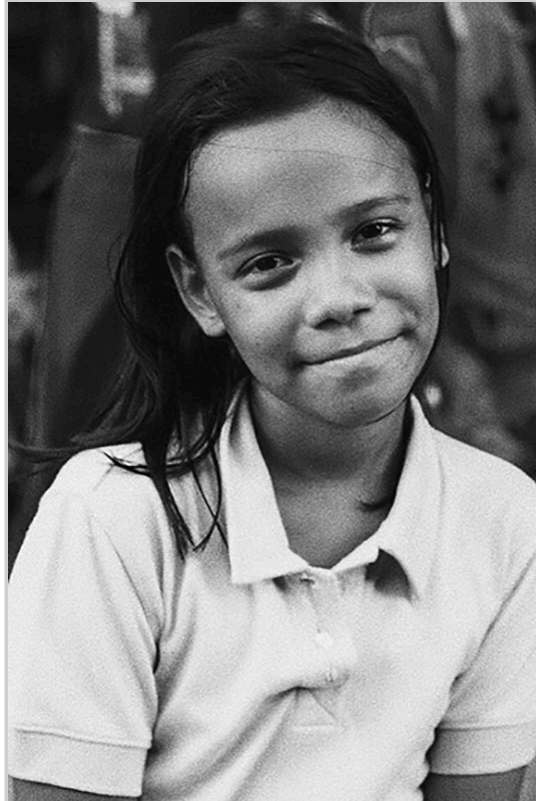
In the summer of 2015, Kelsa felt a call on her heart to embark on a journey to El Salvador for a missions trip led by her youth group at Oak Creek Assembly of God church. On this trip Kelsa's heart was greatly moved, if not shaken, by her experiences. The most impactful experience that she can recall so clearly to this day is the day she met an eleven year old girl named Reina.

"I met Reina on the fourth day in El Salvador in a small district where I was stationed for the day. She saw that I had a big camera with me and asked to take photos with it."

Reina, 11 years old

Despite the language barrier between them, Kelsa and Reina formed a divine bond on that day over a passion they both shared – capturing beautiful life moments through the lens of a camera.

It wasn't until later that a translator explained Reina's story to Kelsa. She found out that Reina had been diagnosed with cancer only a week before they had met. Reina's family was very poor and they were unsure if they could afford the medical expenses of her treatment.



“I have no way on contacting [Reina], so I don’t know what happened to her. I can only pray that she got the medical help she needed.”

Despite being heartbroken by the terrible news she received from the translator about her little friend, Reina, Kelsa chose not to let her heartache hold her back. Instead, she saw a major need in this world that she could help fill.

“[Reina’s] story is what made me want to come back to the US, get my degree in nursing, and go back to countries like El Salvador to help little kids who have stories similar to Reina’s. El Salvador is where I knew that I wanted to serve others as an occupation for the rest of my life.”

### **Pursuing Her Calling**

The call on her heart to pursue a nursing degree is what eventually led her to WSU. Kelsa was originally drawn to the nursing program here at WSU because we have been recognized as being one of the best nursing programs in the midwest. However, that was not the only characteristic that caught her eye when looking at WSU. The beautiful scenery around Winona as well as the opportunities WSU offers to nursing students outside of the classroom are what stole Kelsa's heart and convinced her that WSU was the place for her.

"WSU offers an opportunity for you to travel for a clinical experience in a different state or even country. They also have clubs or organizations such as FIMRC or Medlife where you can travel to third world countries that allow you to see what the health care is like in other parts of the world."

These opportunities are a perfect fit for Kelsa because upon receiving her nursing degree, she hopes to get involved with Nurses Without Borders to help care for children in third world countries who have cancer.

"This organization recruits doctors, nurses, nurse anesthetologists, and other medical staff to serve in other countries for 9-12 months, caring for/treating populations in other countries and providing medical care that might not be readily available in their community."

When asked why this specific organization and career choice has been laid on her heart, Kelsa explained, "It allows me to go where not many people want to go and love on and care for kids who may have never been cared for before. Whether I make money or not is definitely not of concern but having a job where I can help those who need it most is much more fulfilling than any amount of money."

### **More Than An Education**

Kelsa's willingness to use her degree to help others and set aside her own financial abundance is not only contrary to the standards and norms of our society but also greatly inspiring. It is my hope that the lives of children with stories similar to Reina's will be touched by Kelsa's faithfulness to pursue the call that has been placed on her own life.

"I have been called to set aside my own wants and needs and go out into the world to pursue others. I love people. I couldn't imagine having a job where I couldn't care for others."

This story has touched my heart greatly and I hope it has inspired you as well. For Kelsa, her education is more than just getting an A on every Anatomy exam. Rather, it is a stepping stone in the journey of pursuing the call on her life to serve a purpose greater than herself. It is about the people that she will impact and the lives she will change upon receiving her degree.

Liked Kelsa's story? Meet more awesome students in the More Than a Major Series!  
SaveSave



# Doing for Others What Was Done for Her: One Biology Major's Story

February 2, 2018  
Improving Our World, More Than a Major



*WSU sophomore, Grace Jacobs. PC: Holly Rauch '19*

My roommate, Grace Jacobs, is one of the kindest, most beautiful people I know. Most importantly, Grace loves to help others. Instead of choosing to pursue a career in order to make a lot of money, she wants to use her career to serve others.

Grace is a sophomore in the College of Science and Engineering (COSE) who is majoring in Biology: Allied Health. After college, she wants to go onto Physician's Assistant (PA) school. Grace wants to use her major to help others because she understands what it feels like to suffer through medical hardships after watching her mother's battle against brain cancer.

"One of my greatest desires is to comfort others and assure them that their loved ones are receiving the most professional and passionate care that is possible," she said.

*WSU sophomore, Grace Jacobs. PC: Holly Rauch '19*

## **Choosing a Path**

Grace knew that she wanted to go into the medical field, but wasn't yet sure which profession. She realized she wanted to be a Physician's Assistant after her mother was in the hospital for a long period of time battling cancer during Grace's senior year of high school.

"During our stay at Gundersen La Crosse, you could really tell the difference between the PA's who cared about my mother and were passionate about what they were doing, and the PA's who were just going through the motions and didn't genuinely care about the patient," she said.

"There was one PA specifically, her name was Molly, who had a huge impact on my family and I's stay at the hospital and my life personally. She took the time to relate to us on a personal level and tell us her similar experience with her father who had passed away from brain cancer as well."

Grace said that Molly explained their options and possible future circumstances and cried along with Grace and her sisters.



“I want to be able to reach out to patients and their families when they are going through difficult situations. I want to do as much as I possibly can to comfort families and be there for them in hopes of making a difficult and heart-breaking situation even just slightly less painful than it already is.”

#### **Life in the Science Department**

Now that Grace is in the midst of pursuing her bachelor’s degree in Biology: Applied Health, she has expressed her favorite part about her major is everyone she has met in the Science Department.

“Seriously, I have learned how to work with my peers and help each other out an insane amount to help each other succeed,” she said. “It’s like a family.”

On a normal day, Grace has two to three classes, usually held in the SLC. She says that some classes can be challenging, but the professors are very helpful. Many professors and upperclassmen are happy to help through tutoring and extra study sessions.

“There are many resources available on campus for science majors that I definitely take advantage of. Tutoring is a weekly occurrence, and study sessions happen daily,” Grace said.

When she’s not in class, she can be found studying all around campus, whether it’s in the library, Zane’s, or Baldwin Lounge. Her favorite spot to study is outside in the grass, especially while wearing her red polka-dot socks.

PC: Holly Rauch ‘19

Since being a biology major can be challenging at times, Grace said that she has considered changing her major before. However, she knows it is worth it at the end of the day.

“Those chemistry courses really get you (cough cough, Organic Chemistry),” she said, “but I am positive that it will be 100% worth it when I reach my end goal and begin my career as a PA.”

As a biology major on the Physician’s Assistant track, Grace was encouraged to become involved in different communities and clubs on campus. She volunteers at local long-term care facilities and recently became a volunteer as a Donor Ambassador for the American Red Cross. At American Red Cross blood drives, she will comfort first-time blood donors, help with paperwork, and provide other assistance.

“Along with being a donor ambassador, I’m especially excited to get involved with the Pillowcase Project. I’m hoping to reach out to local schools in Winona and coordinate presentations for 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> graders about how to be prepared in the event of a disaster.”

#### **A Life of Passion**

The most remarkable quality Grace has is her passion for other people. She loves to care for others, whether it’s through offering me a ride home from campus or using her major for a cause larger than herself.

“My patients will not just be patients to me, they are people,” Grace said. “They are people with families and children and friends and loved ones, who have lived amazing lives and accomplished remarkable things. Their lives are respected and valued and matter to me on a deeper level than just a medical provider to patient.”

Liked Grace’s story? Meet more awesome students in the More Than a Major Series!







# Understanding the Importance of Tolerance for a Peaceful Super Bowl Experience

February 1, 2018  
Improving Our World, Social Justice



PC: Ka Vang '16

Are you a die-hard Vikings fan eager to throw shade towards the arriving band of Eagles fans? Are there times when you find yourself surrounded amongst other die-hard Vikings fans and all you can discuss is how annoying, intolerable, and toxic Eagles fans can be?

If you are shaking your head “yes” to the questions above, by understanding the benefits of tolerance, the different practices of tolerance, and the importance of tolerance, you will be one step closer to ensuring an eventful, yet peaceful Super Bowl experience for all.

PC: Ka Vang '16

As the Vikings met a devastating defeat against the glorified Eagles last Sunday evening, several Vikings fans are bracing for the worst as hordes of Eagles fans swarm into the state of Minnesota. In an article from the New York Post, author Joshua Miller discovered a 2015 poll through Sports Illustrated that “The Eagles had the ‘Most Hated Fan Base’ in the entire NFL.”

My parents once told me that one should not judge another based on a single incident. For example, if you are walking to class and a person brushes past you as they’re running, knocks down the books you are carrying, and doesn’t stop to help you pick them up, maybe stop and think about how that person’s day is going. For all you know, they could be late to a class, first date, or special event.

In her article, “The Positive Benefits of Being More Tolerant”, Susan Leigh explains how tolerance “is about respect” and how all individuals should practice showing respect to others as they would show respect to themselves (Leigh).

Looking back at the previous scenario, by utilizing the practice of tolerance, the overall situation can be dealt with in a calm manner. At WSU, the presence of tolerance and respect is frequently noticeable by faculty, staff, and students. WSU practices a significant amount of inclusion and respect for a variety of individuals regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, and economic status.



One way to practice inclusion on our campus would be starting a wholesome conversation with an international student who is sitting by themselves at lunch, for example. Not only are you being a kind individual but you will most likely find out intriguing facts about their home life, culture, and personal interests.

I remember in my English 111 class my freshman year of college, I sat next to an international student from Japan. At first, I felt skeptical of being next to them since I held the notion that international students ignored American students. After a few weeks passed by in the class, I decided one day to extend a welcoming handshake and introduce myself. To this day, I am still friends with the international student.

While some may view tolerance as “a waste of time” or “fake façade”, the practice of tolerance as well as inclusion is crucial to our developing society. In his article, “Importance of Tolerance”, Laiq Atif states how the extinction of tolerance will bring episodes of hatred (Atif). In his own words, “Without tolerance and harmony the lasting peace of societies cannot be maintained, and loyalty for each other cannot be established.”

Taking Latif’s quote and tying it into the Super Bowl, if Viking’s and Eagle’s fans can’t set aside their differences and simply enjoy an entertaining game of football, then the atmosphere at U.S. Bank Stadium could become hostile, resulting in a dismal experience for all.

So, the next time you are around your posse of Vikings fans and you hear them bad mouthing Eagles fans or hear them expressing their fear of the monstrosities they will bring, take that as a teaching moment and remind your friends that they are just a group of human beings who have a taste for football. By practicing acts of tolerance and inclusion, we can build a stronger community for our campus, as well as, a fun and eventful community for fans of football at Super Bowl LII.



# Goal-Setting: The Key to Spring Semester Motivation

January 18, 2018  
Improving Our World



Spring semester is always a challenge for me to get into the swing of things. The winter months usually leave me feeling sluggish.

polar bear

Without enough stimulation during the day I end up feeling unfulfilled, restless and unproductive. When I don't believe I have accomplished enough during the day, pessimistic thoughts start to roll around in my head and the negative cycle continues.

## **Goal Setting**

### **Gives purpose**

Goal setting gives you something to look forward to. The CEO of mindtools.com states "Many people feel as if they're adrift in the world. They work hard, but they don't seem to get anywhere worthwhile." This causes people to feel stuck in their heads, like they can't focus on anything but how little they've accomplished in their life.

An easy fix to feel a sense of accomplishment is to set reachable long term and short-term goals. This will give you long-term vision and short-term motivation to get there.

### **How to set goals**

Many people have a hard time thinking of goals. I have found that using a vision board to see what you want your life to look like long term can be an extremely helpful aid. Once you know your long-term goal, you can set smaller, more specific goals to help you get there. I have seen other people's vision boards compared to pictures in their real life and they are surprisingly synonymous.

Put up your vision board in your room so you have a daily reminder of where your hard work will take you. You may even inspire your roommate to do the same! Setting goals in all aspects of your life such as career, financial, education, family, personal attitude, physical, relaxing activities and public service, can help to fill your mind with positive, worthwhile thoughts.

### **The people around you**



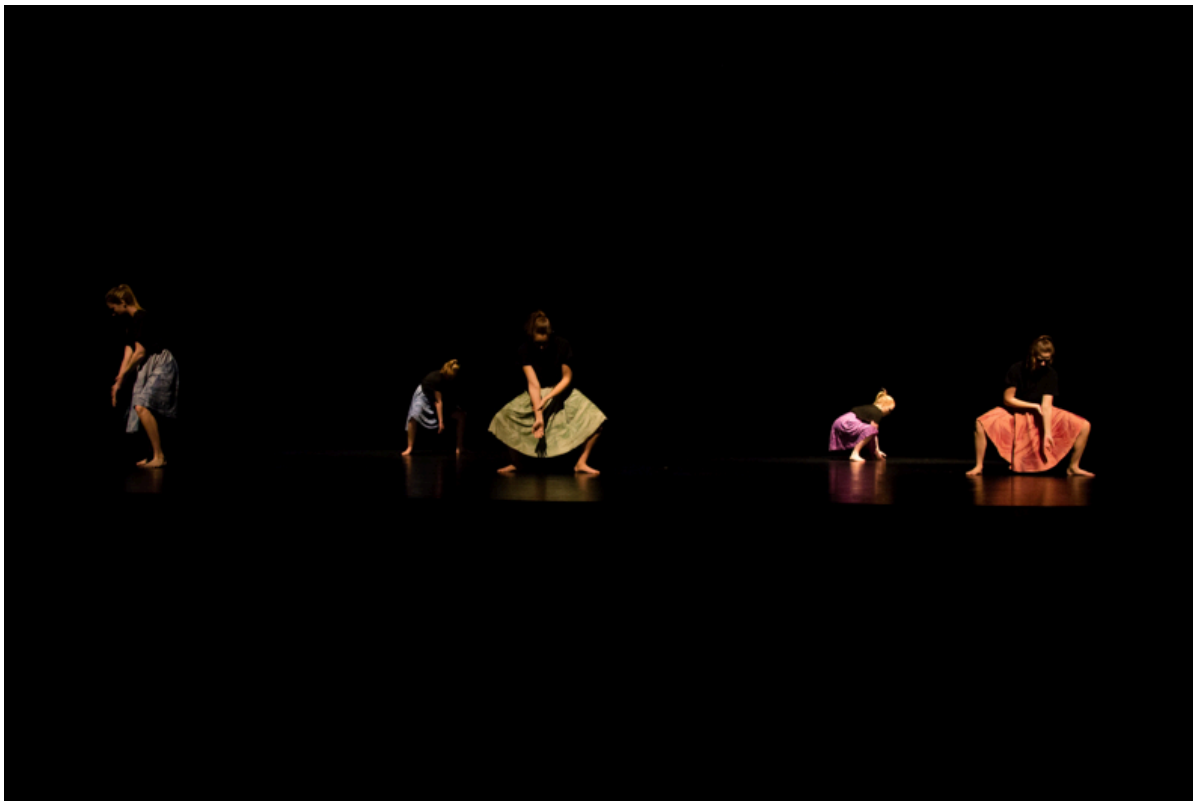


Goal setting doesn't just affect your life. When you're feeling driven, accomplished, and satisfied with your life, those are the kind of people you will attract. Having other people around you that want to make their life better – and the world a better place – is uplifting in itself. Set some goals and create good karma for yourself. What you put out in the world will come back to you.

It is easy to see that goal setting can lead to feeling better and more accomplished. It's a win-win!

# Stepping Out of Comfort and Into Innovation

December 6, 2017  
Improving Our World



*Photo taken by Taylor Nyman from Dancescape 2017*

There are many opportunities around you to try and be innovative. Whether that's in the classroom, in the workplace, or just in a hobby of yours. A personal example in my life is with dance. I always strive to be innovative with my dance choreography and pick songs that no one would expect.

*Photos I took of my piece from the WSU Senior Dance Show my freshman year.*

As I went through several years of dance, I felt like I was always watching the same dance just with different music and a different order of moves. Once I pursued my passion for dance choreography, I knew that I wanted to try my best to be creative with my artistic choices.

The more dances I began to make for the performance stage, the more I wanted to get out of my comfort zone and try new things. Continually choosing to step outside of my comfort zones has changed my "go to" style of movement throughout the years. I went from frequently choreographing sassy jazz pieces to just choreographing modern dances for the performance stage.

*Photo taken by Taylor Nyman from Dancescape 2017*

I grew a lot from trying new ideas on the stage. I believe if my styles of choreography didn't evolve and change then I wouldn't have truly grown as a choreographer. Instead, I would have just stuck with what I knew and what I was comfortable with.

Trying something new can sometimes result in a different outcome than I had originally wished for. However, I never fail to get something out of the choreography process when I choose to step outside of my comfort zones.

Maybe it's not with dance, but there are many ways for you stretch your mind and be innovative. One of my friends once told me, "Growth and comfort do not coexist." If you want to experience growth, I encourage you to pursue your passion, step outside of your comfort zones, and try something new.

Stepping Out of Comfort and Into Innovation







# Rachel Schromen '10 | Alumni

November 29, 2017



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## Rachel Schromen '10 | An Empowering Voice for Women

Alumna from St. Paul, MN

**Owner and Managing Attorney of Schromen Law, LLC and co-founder and Executive Director of Domestic Abuse Legal Advocacy Center, PSC**

**“The Women’s Studies program gave me a voice of my own. I took Women’s Studies 101 and it completely changed my path – I didn’t really have a passion until after I took that class.”**

When asked where she finds motivation for her career as an attorney and executive director of a non-profit she co-founded, Rachel revealed immense inner strength that stemmed from her deep-rooted passion for helping other women.

There's a clear thread that ties Rachel's work providing pro bono legal advocacy to victims and survivors of domestic violence back to her own past, as a survivor of sexual assault and domestic violence. Finding the strength and courage to talk about her experience has been therapeutic and healing for Rachel. It was through Speak Out events, the support of professors and the Women's Studies program at WSU that Rachel learned how powerful it was for her to share her story.

Today, Rachel is using her voice in a professional context as an attorney to advocate for domestic violence survivors, veterans, senior citizens and others whose voices might not otherwise be heard. She also pays homage to her mentors by helping empower the next generation of women as her mentors empowered her. Given Rachel's compassion, openness, and courage to be vulnerable, it's easy to imagine her advocating for her clients and mentoring other women with her empathetic, encouraging, and empowering voice.

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***What attracted you to volunteering with Wills for Heroes and Cancer Legal Care that offer services to veterans, first responders, and terminal cancer patients?***

I started volunteering early in my law practice to gain experience and to give back. It is really beneficial for young attorneys because you can volunteer at free legal clinics even while you're in law school. It's incredibly beneficial because you have an attorney mentoring you and the community is getting free legal services.

I like giving back. My dad was a veteran and I have family members who served that are police officers so I felt passionate about serving that community. Also, I represent numerous cancer patients and people on hospice through Cancer Legal Care and in my private practice. Estate planning for these families help to provide so much peace of mind. One time I prepared a will for a gentleman in hospice and as I was leaving, he took my hand, thanked me and said, "I can really focus on the time with my daughters in the last few days." He died four days later. That moment reconfirmed my dedication to helping others achieve peace of mind.

***Why did you pursue a career as a lawyer?***

When I was in high school, my teachers always encouraged me to become a lawyer. I think it had to do with the fact that I questioned a lot of things, and I could form arguments to make my point well. Law practice includes a lot of things that I was naturally good at such as writing and communication skills.

When I came to Winona, I said that I was pre-law but I really wasn't sure. One day I was talking to Dr. April Herndon in her office and I told her that I was thinking about going into social work because I really wanted to help people. She said I would make a really good social worker for about a year but that she could tell I would burn out quick. Dr. Herndon pointed out all the ways that I could still help people and then some by being an attorney, plus she said that I had the drive, the intelligence, and the family support to go to law school. She was really the professor that convinced me to go to law school while I was teetering back and forth about what I wanted to do with my life.

***Where do you think your drive to help people came from?***

My parents—my mom in particular—really pushed me to volunteer when I was young. In high school, I would get awards every year because I'd volunteer at least 100 hours of volunteer service a year at the nursing home, the humane society, the arboretum, and so on. There has always been a give-back component for me. In Winona, I luckily got involved my freshman year in Women's Studies and the perspective based on empathy and understanding about the world I gained through the Women's Studies program made me want to help others and the community even more.

***What led you to co-found Domestic Abuse Legal Advocacy Center, PSC?***

My passion for working with victims of domestic violence and sexual assault comes back to Winona. I am a survivor of sexual assault and domestic violence. While at WSU, I worked with FORGE and the WILL Program to revive the Take Back the Night March in 2009. WSU hadn't held a Take Back the Night March in a long time, and I worked on the Speak Out Committee with about six women. Two of us were going to speak out about our experiences and the other four committee members had printed poems or song lyrics. However, when these individuals were supposed read the poems, every single person got up and said, "I was going to read this, but..." and then spoke out about their own experiences.

That was hugely impactful to me because here were a group of women who were on the Speak Out Committee, were Women's Studies minors, were loud and out-there feminists. Yet it wasn't until that event that they were moved to share. I just stood there, absolutely floored by how silencing domestic violence and sexual assault can be. That was really what started my passion for working with victims and survivors because that experience was so powerful.

I went to law school wanting to prosecute sex crimes and it takes a very special type of attorney who can be very passionate, but also able to disconnect, to a certain extent, to that type of work. I wasn't then, nor am I now, at a point in my life where I could prosecute a criminal sex offense and separate myself from it. I still have healing from my experiences in my journey ahead of me. Instead, I got involved early on with a sexual assault and domestic violence clinic sponsored by Minnesota Women Lawyers, which is how I met Evon Spangler, my co-founder of our non-profit Domestic Abuse Legal Advocacy Center, PSC.

***How did you and Evon decide to collaborate on the Domestic Abuse Legal Advocacy Center?***



I met Evon in 2012 at a legal clinic put on by Minnesota Women Lawyers that offered free legal services for survivors of sexual assault. At this clinic, we realized we had a lot of similar interests. She has become one of my closest friends. It all started with our shared passion for working with domestic violence victims and survivors, a commitment to philanthropy and pro bono work, and running our own businesses. But this clinic we were doing together wasn't very successful. Often clients would call, schedule an appointment but then none would show up. Eventually, the legal clinic stopped being held.

In 2016, Evon and I got to talking about different ways to approach holding legal clinics for victims and survivors of domestic violence that would accommodate the unique factors and challenges presented in this type of work. We decided to start our own non-profit that December. We collaborate really well together in that we get things done very quickly. By January 4, 2016, we were formally a nonprofit and the IRS granted us 501(c)(3) status as of the date of our incorporation. We held our first legal clinic in February. Now we have 29 volunteer attorneys with a presence at domestic violence shelters in three counties—Women's Advocates in Ramsey County; Home Free in Hennepin County; and Headwaters Intervention Inc. in Hubbard County. We hold monthly legal clinics in our Twin Cities locations and provide pro bono in court representation for orders for protection and eviction expungements. Clinics are provided to Hubbard County location several times a year.

***Has that resolved the issue of clients not showing up?***

Yes, it removed the barrier because we've started going into women's shelters rather than making women come to us at a clinic. The best time to reach a woman and offer free legal services to escape a domestic violence relationship is when she has left the relationship. Studies have shown that women have the most success at leaving violent relationships for good if they can get free legal help. So, when our attorneys go into the shelter, we already know the woman has left the relationship and that they are open to receiving that help and information. We know there isn't going to be any sort of transportation issue. We know if a boyfriend or husband is waiting outside, the woman has resources and support and is in a safe space. It's very convenient, it's very comfortable, they're in a safe space, and we make sure every shelter we work with has childcare available. As far as we know, we are the only non-profit in the nation that implements this model for providing legal services.

***What are your hopes for the future?***

Through the non-profit, we would like to see it grow to a point where it has its own building that functions as a "one-stop" resource center, providing legal services, medical and dental services, and child care. I would also love to see it expand to more rural communities.

On a different note, I give a lot of my time to mentor women because I am where I am because of generous women reaching out to pull me up. The story I always tell involves a former WSU student, Ashleigh Raso. She is now a very successful personal injury attorney, but she was a year ahead of me at WSU and at William Mitchell College of Law (now Hamline Mitchell). I didn't know her very well, but when I went to Mitchell, I was nervous, of course, so I called her to ask if she'd meet with me before classes started and just tell me what to expect.

When we met for lunch, she brought along a bag of books. They were all the books I needed for my first year—worth maybe \$1,000 or more—and she just gave them to me. I said, "Thanks! Do you want me to write you a check or something?" Her response was, "Oh gosh, no! Just pay it forward." She made me a finals care basket my first semester and really was just always there for me as a mentor. And so, I try to pass that on as much as I can. I've had a lot of women ahead of me reaching out to pull me up and I try to do the same, hoping it will continue with the next woman and so on.

***Who has been the biggest influence in your life?***

I have to say my Mom because she honestly believes I can do anything and always supports me. If I told her tomorrow that I think I want to go on the first mission to Mars, she would be all for it. She truly believes I can do anything. She also instilled a very hard work ethic in me.

Tamara Berg had a huge impact on my life as well. The Women's Studies program at WSU teaches you a lot, but I think it really prepared me for life as a woman. I healed so much in so many ways from sitting in those classes. Women's Studies 101 sometimes felt like group therapy because there are all these women realizing why things haven't felt right their whole lives. So, Tamara Berg and her role in the Women's Studies program has impacted me greatly as well.

Also, Evon Spangler. She is my closest friend. My mentor. My role model. My colleague. She was maid of honor in my wedding. She is like everything wrapped in one person. Starting my own practice was a goal of mine for a long time. But I was (and still am from time to time) plagued with a lot of self-doubt and fear. One day Evon called me up and said, "Give me every reason why you haven't started your own law practice." So, I gave her every reason and she said, "Most of those are personal fears and the other ones can be solved by hiring other professionals. Come over this weekend, we are setting up your own practice." She has continued to support me along the way. Evon is someone I call when something happens and I don't know what to do.

***Do you have any pro tips or words of advice for people who may be inspired by your path?***

Build relationships and make connections. Before I started my law practice, I met with about 15 estate

planning attorneys who had their own practices. And when I was a law student, I went on the Minnesota Women Lawyer's website and emailed almost every female attorney who did estate planning on there to ask if they would meet with me and give me some advice. Every single one of them said yes. I even had an attorney show up one time with an outline of all the things I needed to do to start my practice and a list of all the things they had done wrong. I didn't think people would be that receptive to helping. But, there are lots of women who are willing to help and do help, other women. You just have to ask and they respond.

*If you could invite anyone to sit on this bench and have a conversation, who would it be and what would you talk about?*

Catharine Mackinnon. I wrote my 70-page senior thesis on her anti-pornography ordinance work in the Twin Cities. She is an attorney, a feminist, and she teaches at Michigan Law School. She did a lot of work regarding pornography and how it perpetuates violence against women. She did extensive research on a culture that accepts rape and how pornography, advertising, and the media contribute to violence against women. I would like to have a conversation with her about these ideas because every day I feel like it is a struggle to be a woman and live in this culture.

**Interviewed and Edited by Erin Kloepping '19 and photographed by Brian Waldbillig '18**

To nominate someone in the WSU community — faculty, staff, student, alumni or friend of WSU — for *Warrior Way*, or if you have other feedback to share, please email Mollee Sheehan, director of web communications: [msheehan@winona.edu](mailto:msheehan@winona.edu)

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# Five Tips to Push Your Creativity

November 21, 2017  
Improving Our World



*Photo Credit: The Blue Diamond Gallery*

Thinking outside the box is easier said than done sometimes. Often it can be tough to be innovative and push yourself to try new things. But, I encourage you to use these tips below to help challenge yourself to think in new and creative ways.

*Photo Credit: The Blue Diamond Gallery*

## 1. Don't do what is expected

It's simple to jump to the ideas we know that work and the ones we're comfortable with. But I promise you'll stand out more if you do the things that are unpredictable. When I'm trying to be creative with a class assignment or with my dance choreography, I try to move away from the ideas that are expected and use the ideas that might be something people have never seen before.

## 2. Push yourself to think in new ways

There are not many things in this world that can only be done in one way. There are many situations in life that are opportunities to do something in a new way if you try to think outside the box. Expect to get the same results and reactions when you go with what's comfortable. But if you try something different than what you have done before, then that's a chance for you to get new and possibly exciting results.





### **3. It's okay to fail**

Don't let the fear of failing keep you from trying something new. If you have an idea then take it and run with it. You never know, that creative idea you come up with could bring you success and/or joy. I urge you to try a new way of doing a project or approaching something that is routine and see what can come from it.

### **4. Be original**

People expect to see what they know and what they're used to. Challenge yourself to think beyond what is expected. Think, what could I do to provide something different than what other people normally do?

### **5. Write down your ideas**

Sometimes ideas come to me while I am walking to class or exercising. It's important to write down different ideas you have so you never lose a good one. Not all of them will be realistic or even the best of ideas, but when you write them all out it can help you process them and decide what to do next with them.

I challenge you to think outside the box, be original and do something unexpected. You never know the good that can come from an innovative idea. Plus, your idea could go beyond impacting your own world – it could have the potential to improve the rest of the world around you!

To learn more about creativity and innovation, be sure to check out this year's university theme website.

# Add Some Light to Your Life

November 15, 2017  
Campus Engagement, Improving Our World



*Photo Credit: Digital Trends*

Are you feeling like there is no light in this world since daylight savings time cuts away the hours of the day? Do you need to brighten up that amazing personality of yours and get it into the holiday spirit? Before you think about reaching for the collection of holiday movies, take a minute to learn about the benefit of “You Light Up My Life!”

*Photo Credit: Digital Trends*

While this is my first year participating in “You Light Up My Life,” I have had several friends take part in this event in the past and they have really enjoyed it. Starting on November 8<sup>th</sup> until November 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Housing and Residence Life sends out information to all the front desks located in the residence halls explaining how students can participate and make a difference in the Winona community.

Along with making a difference in the community, students will get a chance to jump into the holiday season. For only \$3, students can sign up for one pair of holiday lights by putting their name down, their email, how much money they are donating, and write down if they want to receive holiday lights. The desk assistant will have a yellow envelope sitting at the front desk for students to submit their donations.

While getting a set of holiday lights may seem “lit,” overall, there is a greater gift emanating from the event. Each time a student buys a pair of holiday lights, the money goes toward “Toys for Kids” located in Winona.

By students investing only \$3, they can brighten up a child’s whole world with a new toy in comparison to the holiday lights brightening up the student’s room or floor lounge. The best part of “You Light Up My Life” takes place after the week of Thanksgiving when a mass email is sent out to the participants in the event telling them to turn on their holiday lights at a specific time, creating an in-sync light show across campus. If students want more than one pair of holiday lights, they are more than welcome to make a second donation.

I am looking forward to engaging in this year’s “You Light Up My Life” event because I want to go the extra mile this holiday season and ensure that all experience blissfulness and peacefulness as the cold begins to seep into our environment. If you or your friends are interested in this jolly holiday event on campus, please visit your front desk or any front desk in a residence hall on campus, fill out the form provided, and place a cash donation. If you have any further questions on the event, feel free to contact the President of the National Residency Hall Honorary Society, Megan Sticha, at



msticha13@winona.edu

As the best time of the year settles into our society, let us seek to light up the world of those in need before centering on our own desires and dreams. Happy Holidays to all of you Warriors out there!



# Using Your Imagination for a Greater Purpose

November 2, 2017  
Improving Our World



As children, we were encouraged to use our imagination daily. How often are we putting our imaginary minds to work today? In a world where the majority of our ideas come from Google or Pinterest, is using our imagination even necessary anymore?

Robert & Michele Root-Bernstein, the presenters at the Creativity & Innovation Workshop that took place on campus a few weeks ago, explained that we live in a “creative age” that “requires curiosity, imagination, originality, and inventiveness.” Imaginative thinking and play are not meant to be bound within our childhood years. Rather, imagination and inventiveness is the recipe for entrepreneurial success in today’s society.

“Most creative people say that play is a critical part of their everyday lives.” – Robert Root-Bernstein

## **So, what do play and creativity have to do with one another?**

The speakers at this event addressed this question head-on. They began by defining both creativity and play:

**Creativity** – The invention, recognition or reformulation of a problem or challenge in such a way that makes it amenable to resolution in a new and effective manner.

**Play** – A natural behavior that explores ideas, materials, environments all “for the fun of it.”

What I learned from this comparison is that imaginative play is a foundation for creativity. The speakers discussed many different kinds of play that exist in our world: scientist play, writers play, artists play, and so on. What kind of play did you often resort to as a child? Did you enjoy painting? Writing poems? Creating imaginary worlds?

The type of play used for creating imaginary worlds is also known as Worldplay, which is a more complex form of pretend play. More specifically, Worldplay is “the invention of an imaginary place, often inhabited by imagining beings, for purposes of play.” The famous works of C.S. Lewis like *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, and The Brontes’ *Jane Eyre* are both examples of Worldplay. Worldplay is a result of creativity and play working together harmoniously.

“Most of us, I suppose, have a secret country.” – C.S. Lewis



### **How does play help us create?**

During this presentation, I began to reflect on my childhood years and the days I would spend playing make-believe games with my friends for hours on end. As I was reflecting on this time in my life, I viewed it as only a distant memory.

This confused me greatly because the speakers standing before me were stressing the importance of using imagination in my everyday life, but I thought that part of growing up was leaving my childish imaginations behind. False.

The speakers gave many examples of famous creatives, artists, mathematicians, and scientists using their childhood imaginations and applying them to their work in their professional careers.







“You don’t have to be highly skilled to take knowledge from one field and apply it to another.” – Robert Root-Bernstein

Worldplay is “self-motivated learning that can be used for solving problems in life.” A great example of this is the work of biologist, Alexander Fleming. In his free time, Alexander loved to draw and paint pictures. Although he wasn’t the best artist, his creative eye is what discovered penicillin even after many other scientists had been doing the same research for years.

Carving time out of our busy schedules to play is not an act of immaturity. Rather, taking time to embrace our creativity and utilize our imaginative minds could help us be more innovative. Ultimately, our innovativeness could be used to make the world around us a little bit better. Or maybe even a lot better if you are like Alexander Fleming.

Take this opportunity to have fun, release the creative ideas that are being held captive in your minds, and improve your world while you are at it. As Mike Vance always says, “You cannot learn from experiences you are not having.” Do not rob yourself of an experience to play like you did as a child. You never know what greater purpose it could serve.

# Get Out: More Than Just Another Horror Movie

October 26, 2017

Campus Engagement, Improving Our World, Social Justice

Over the last few weeks, there has been a Creativity and Innovation Film Series being shown on campus. The Creativity and Innovation Film Series continues Halloween night with a screening of *Get Out*. There will be door prizes of copies of the film and Halloween candy for those who join us at 7pm in Miller Auditorium- Stark Hall.

## About the *Get Out* Film

Well-known for being a social commentary on the experience of the black community, *Get Out* is one of the most talked about films of 2017. Something that you might not have guessed from the tremendous quality of filmmaking, *Get Out* was the directorial debut of Jordan Peele who may be better known for his work in comedy on the show: *Key and Peele*.



Peele was interviewed by <https://youtube.com/watch?v=jGs4vH1Qj1A> where he said, "I am my wanting to contribute to the genre of thriller and horror that is unique to my voice." Any person who is a fan of the horror genre knows that it comes with a laundry list of well-known tropes and clichés that pervade the majority of horror films we see today. This is not the case with *Get Out*.

## Socially Relevant Themes can Spark Conversations

As producer Jason Blum says, "It gives you all the thrills and scares of a classic horror movie but there is more to it than that." The horror in *Get Out* lies with issues that are very real in the world we live in today, such as race relations and the experiences of the black community. These issues are based on fears and situations that Jordan Peele feels and has dealt with in his own life. The fear in the film comes from masterfully crafted suspense and twists in the plot that come at the exact right time.

These innovations to the horror genre truly reflect the University Theme of Creativity and Innovation. Peele uses his experiences to create a film that no doubt will be used for years to come as a talking point when it comes to conversations about race relations and what can be done to assist the black community in any ongoing struggles. As students and citizens of the world, it is important that we are all aware of world events and be aware of how we contribute to this.

More and more we see films that comment on socially relevant themes. Examples of this include, *50 Feet from Syria*, *Spotlight*, and *The Hunting Ground* among others. These films push the limits of creativity and innovation within the film industry and how you can tell a story with relevant themes. The popularity of blockbuster films often over-shadows the fact that film is a medium that can create works of art that are not only gorgeously shot but can also be a strong commentary on the world.

*Get Out* is a tremendous example of the ever-growing relevance of film studies and how it can be applied in the real world to not only create a product that is entertaining but that also promotes relevant social messages.

## The Filmmaking Process is for Everyone

In the end, a film is collaborative and involves the work of people outside of just the film industry. Any person involved in fields such as writing, business, music, engineering, and much more can all be a part of the filmmaking process and can contribute to projects such as *Get Out* that masterfully comment on social and political issues.

For a full list of the upcoming films being shown on campus, view the schedule below:

– Lindsey Brezinski '18

2017  
**CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION**  
 RETHINK THE BOX  
**FILM SERIES**  
 PRESENTS

TOWER	TUESDAY, OCT. 10, 2017 @ 7PM
THE GREAT DICTATOR	SUNDAY, OCT. 15, 2017 @ 3PM
THE SOCIAL NETWORK	TUESDAY, OCT. 17, 2017 @ 7PM
HUGO A TRIP TO THE MOON	SUNDAY, OCT. 29, 2017 @ 3PM
GET OUT	TUESDAY, OCT. 31, 2017 @ 7PM
GHOST IN THE SHELL GARDEN OF WORDS	SUNDAY, NOV. 5, 2017 @ 3PM

**FREE ADMISSION**  
**STARK 103**

SERIES FUNDED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND THE OFFICE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, WITH SUPPORT FROM THE COLLEGE OF BUSINESS, THE COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS, THE DEPARTMENTS OF HISTORY, MUSIC, PHILOSOPHY, MASS COMMUNICATION, AND THE WSU RETIREE CENTER. SERIES CURATED BY FILM STUDIES MAJORS AND MINORS ENROLLED IN FILM 490, PROJECTS: CURATING FILMS & SERIES.



# Being a Good Neighbor

October 19, 2017  
Campus Engagement, Green, Improving Our World



*Students participating in the Clean Sweep event last year. Photo Credit: Winona State University*

2017 WSU Homecoming! The statement itself gets me pumped up, and if you've ever attended a WSU's homecoming, I know you're excited too. One thing most students agree on is how fun our homecoming is. With people galore and purple everywhere, homecoming weekend is one of the most looked forward to events of Fall semester.

A sea of purple. This is the Club Fair during Homecoming Week 2016. Photo Credit: Ka Vang '16

The Winona community gets in on the fun too! I like to think that the Winona community members appreciate that WSU students clean up the homecoming mess afterwards. Wait. What's that you say, Sami? WSU students clean up parts of town after homecoming? YES!

I first heard about the Homecoming "Clean Sweep" my sophomore year, when my roommate came home after being gone for an hour or so. I asked what she had been up to and she told me about this clean-up project and how easy it was; not to mention the free T-shirt she got for her good deed. I knew I wanted to join the 'sweep' the next time around and that's exactly what I'm doing this year.

2016 Homecoming Clean Sweep participants. Photo Credit: Winona State University

The Homecoming "Clean Sweep" is Sunday, October 22nd from 3:00-4:30 p.m. Walking around to pick up litter will be a good, light exercise to recover after your day of fun.

Sign up for your chance to be a good neighbor to the Winona community and if you're one of the first 50 to sign up, you get a free T-shirt. Unfortunately the free t-shirts are already gone for this year, but be sure to sign up earlier next year for your chance to win a free shirt! I am genuinely excited to give my time to do something so easy and give back to this place we call home.

Students participating in the Clean Sweep event last year. Photo Credit: Winona State University

Do you want in on more volunteer opportunities? Similar to the "clean sweep," WSU will host the "Good Neighbors" program each weekend during fall semester. Student clubs and organizations can sign up for a weekend to improve various





designated areas of town.

I hope to see you all showing your purple pride this #WSUHoCo17. And remember, being a good neighbor, even if it is simply picking up trash along the sidewalk, can make a huge impact in improving our world; the Winona community.



Being a Good Neighbor





# What “Creativity and Innovation” Means to Me

September 27, 2017  
Campus Engagement, Improving Our World



*What does "Creativity and Innovation" mean to you?*

When you hear the words “creativity” and “innovation,” what do you think of?

Do you think of artists painting a mural? Maybe you think of engineers working together to solve a problem? Perhaps your brain takes you back to a time when you were most creative, whether that was writing a short-story, creating an entire dance routine, or playing make-believe games on the playground.

For me, creativity and innovation are one in the same; they go hand in hand. When I think of creativity, I think of imaginative innovation. Likewise, when I think of how I would define innovation, courageous creativity is what first comes to mind.

Dictionary.com defines creativity as, “the ability to transcend traditional ideas, rules, patterns, relationships, or the like, and to create meaningful new ideas, forms, methods, interpretations.” Similarly, Dictionary.com defines innovation as the, “introduction of new things or methods.”

As you can see, expressing creativity can be done in a variety of ways. However, I most often associate creativity with the ability to be original and unique; the ability to dig deep into your imagination and bring forth new ideas and visuals. Innovation is almost exactly the same thing in that it is the ability to creativity come up with new ways of doing things.

Both creativity and innovation take a great deal of courage, in my opinion. As human beings, we were created to be creative. We were designed to be purposeful thinkers. We were meant to be imaginative. We were not intended to bottle up our ideas and keep them to ourselves out of fear of being too ‘out there,’ or being called ‘crazy,’ or ‘weird.’ Instead, we are supposed to courageously embrace our creativity and innovativeness and use it for a purpose greater than ourselves.

This year, WSU’s university theme is “Creativity & Innovation.” So, what does that mean and how does this theme pertain to your personal experience at WSU? What roles do creativity and innovation play in your life today? Do they even play a role?

*What does “Creativity and Innovation” mean to you?*

Thinking about this year’s university theme got me thinking about how often I embrace my own creativity and ability to be innovative. Honestly, this left me feeling a little disappointed. I would definitely consider myself to be a creative person, but how often do I actually take time out of my day to express my creativity?

To be creative and innovative, there must be some time and thought put forth. Therefore, I think that in order to fully embrace the creativeness and innovativeness within us, we must intentionally schedule time throughout our week to do so. Whether it is five hours, an hour, or simply fifteen minutes, I believe that there is an incredible amount of value in setting time aside for creative brainstorming and innovative planning.



I would strongly encourage you to try this for yourself and block out a time in your planner each week or once a month to be creative; whatever creativity may look like in your life. Personally, I love to be purposefully creative. Creating just to create doesn't excite me.

I relish in creating, designing, and generating content for purposes that I am passionate about. For example, I love setting aside time to use my creativity in the role of a volunteer for a non-profit organization that I have been partnering with in Ecuador for the last couple of years. Taking time to put my creativity and innovativeness to work to help this organization is fulfilling because I can express myself in ways that my homework doesn't allow me to. Also, using my creativity for a purpose greater than myself is extremely rewarding.

I believe that everyone has been given different and unique gifts, talents, and abilities. It is through these gifts that we are able to find our 'sweet spots' in life. A sweet spot is a position in which you thrive because you are in a place that allows you to combine your unique talents and abilities with your greatest passions.

Think about if everyone was able to take time each week to be seated in their 'sweet spot' and use their gifts and talents to be purposefully creative and intentionally innovative. Imagine the effect that could have in our lives, in the lives of those on our campus, and in the lives of those all around the world.

I challenge you to take some time this week, find your sweet spot, and use your beautiful creativity for a purpose greater than yourself. Doing so has the power to impact and improve the world around you; maybe more than you may think!

# Thank You, Donors

September 21, 2017  
Campus Engagement



*The Gazebo on campus was the place to be during the I Love WSU Rally, thanks to our generous donors! Photo Credit: Brian Waldbillig '18*

Last week, September 11<sup>th</sup> through the 18<sup>th</sup>, was I Love WSU Week. It was a time to celebrate donors for the way they enhance the student and faculty experience here at WSU. Throughout the week, Alumni Relations and SOAR covered the campus with numerous tags on the things that have been given to our university from generous donors. I personally love this tagging event because it gives a visual for students, faculty, and the community to see how much we have to be thankful for.

You couldn't look anywhere on campus last week without seeing one of these tags. We are so grateful! Photo Credit: Taylor Nyman '17

Also in celebration of I LOVE WSU Week, there was a rally with live music, free ice-cream, and student athlete representatives. During this time, anyone who stopped by the gazebo in the middle of campus was encouraged to write a personalized thank you note to a donor.

Live music on campus by the band Karate Chop, Silence. Photo Credit: Brian Waldbillig '18

Free ice cream for all! Photo Credit: Brian Waldbillig '18

Students writing thank you notes to donors in the Gazebo. Photo Credit: Brian Waldbillig '18

I can only hope all the donors felt our genuine appreciation, but just in case, I wanted to thank you all one more time. Thank you, donors, for improving our campus. WSU would not look or feel the way it does without you. I can't imagine what the IWC would look like with no treadmills or ellipticals. What would the center of campus look like without the Gazebo? WSU Warriors are lucky to live in such a gorgeous place on such a wonderful campus, and it's because of you. Thank you, donors, for improving my college experience. I was one of many to receive a small academic scholarship



## Thank You, Donors



from WSU to start off my freshman year. Every little bit helps when it comes to tackling the cost of attendance for being here, so it truly made a huge impact on me to receive such a gift. You have directly impacted my experience here at WSU and for that, I am overwhelmingly thankful.

I am here because of a scholarship I received from a very generous donor. Photo Credit: Erin Kloepping '19

Giving to WSU has the potential to make a bigger impact than just improving our campus or improving our individual college experiences. Rather collectively, your donations are helping to support and encourage WSU students as they prepare





to go out and work to improve our world. I want to encourage people to continue donating to WSU because it makes a bigger impact than you may know; it is making a difference in our nation and in our world.

Thank you, donors. I hope you know that you are always appreciated, not just during this donor recognition week.



Thank You, Donors



It would surely be different to not have treadmills and other workout equipment in the IWC. Photo Credit: Taylor Nyman '17



The Gazebo on campus was the place to be during the I Love WSU Rally, thanks to our generous donors! Photo Credit: Brian Waldbillig '18





# I Love WSU Week | Small Gifts Make A Positive Impact

September 11, 2017  
Admissions Blog



Alumni Relations and SOAR (Student Organization of Alumni Relations) are hosting the third-annual I Love WSU Week, sponsored by the WSU Foundation, on Sept 11-18. The festivities were established to spark awareness, inspire philanthropy among students and young alumni, all while reveling in the ways that donors already show their love for WSU.

Festivities kick off with Monday's Tag Day. Students and staff will be covering campus in tags, putting on display everything that is made possible by donors. Running on the treadmills in the IWC, strolling through campus amidst the trees, benches, and gazebo, rushing to class past the photos hanging in Somsen, studying for a big exam in the library—wherever you are on campus, take note of tags around you, and observe that they represent donors' gifts.

Also in celebration of I Love WSU Week will be a rally at the Gazebo on Thursday, September 14th from 1-2 p.m. At the rally, there will be free ice cream, music and other entertainment. Those who attend the rally will be invited to write thank you post cards to WSU's donors. This is an awesome opportunity to give thanks where it is due for the donations that make our campus beautiful and unique.

Throughout the rest of the week, the celebrations continue as the campaign highlights all the ways that donors love WSU, emphasizing the over 900 Foundation scholarships affecting 1 in 8 students every year, athletic programs and student-athlete support across many sports, Foundation Special Projects like the Warriors Innovate Challenge and Success Coaching, the future Laird Norton Center for Art & Design, among many others.

Alumni and others are encouraged to share their love for WSU by visiting [www.wsu.mn/give2wsu](http://www.wsu.mn/give2wsu) to make a gift—and an impact—of their own, talking about their favorite things at the university, and sharing these with friends and family. Many small gifts make an immense positive impact, and help us to reach our goal of \$15,000 for scholarships and Foundation special projects.

I love WSU for many reasons—I love the music and RTTR departments' faculty and staff, I really love my dad (class of 1989) and that my younger sister has found a home here, I love my fantastic four-year education by professors that genuinely took an interest in getting to know me and enhancing my skills and knowledge, and I love the opportunity to be





engaged in the university as an employee now. I benefit from an incredible experience here at WSU—one that is still underway—and much of it all was made possible and enhanced by donors.

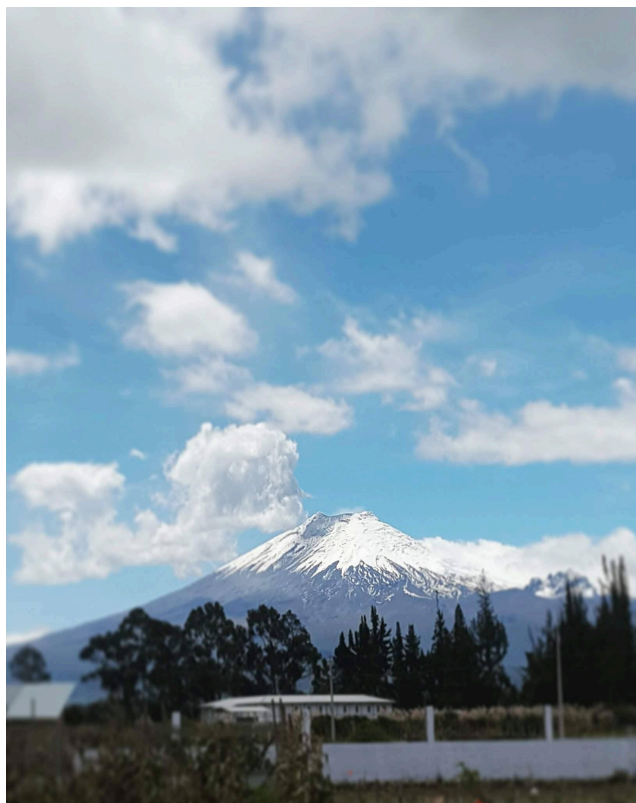
It is an honor to be an alumna of Winona State—I am eager to show my love for WSU by contributing to reach that \$15,000 goal, and I encourage you to do the same! Every little bit makes a big difference!

— Kayleen Berwick '17 | Phonathon Coordinator



# An Ecuadorian Experience

September 6, 2017  
Improving Our World



*The CC Training Center is positioned at the base of the gigantic and active volcano, Mnt. Cotopaxi.*

This summer I had the privilege of serving in the beautiful country of Ecuador under missionaries, Steve & Sandi Youngren, as their Communications Intern.

The Youngrens have founded a non-profit organization in Ecuador called, Compassion Connection (CC). The mission of their organization is to train, equip, and encourage Ecuadorian church-plant pastors. CC has a training center located in the mountains of Ecuador near a small, rural village called Lasso.

In addition to their non-profit organization, Sandi Youngren has started her own jewelry business called Encantadora. She takes handmade, tagua jewelry made by Ecuadorian artisans and sells the beautiful pieces here in the United States. Tagua is a type of nut with an inside that is similar to ivory and can be shaped and dyed to make beautiful pieces of jewelry.

Sandi is also a talented artist. She creates breathtakingly beautiful headpieces for special occasions such as weddings, dinner parties, or other big events. This summer, Sandi and I worked hard to launch a wedding line for Encantadora!

To prepare for this launch, Sandi and I were busy creating the Encantadora Wedding brand, designing promotional materials, doing photoshoots, creating videos, and much more. Here are a few pictures I took this summer to showcase Sandi's stunning creations.

Although Sandi and I were having a blast taking pretty pictures and designing flowery promotional materials, we weren't doing all this work just for fun but rather for a greater purpose. All the proceeds that Encantadora brings in go towards supporting a home for girls called Casa Adalia.

Casa Adalia is home to Ecuadorian women and children that have been rescued from sex trafficking, prostitution, or other abusive situations. Just like everywhere else in the world, sex trafficking is very prevalent in Ecuador. Casa Adalia is working to provide a safe space for women who need protection, healing, and guidance.

This summer was truly an amazing experience. Not only was I doing what I love each day by being behind a camera and putting my creative mind to work, but I was also doing meaningful work. It was the meaning behind my work that motivated and pushed me to work hard and diligently despite the long hours and never ending to-do list each day.

I truly believe that missionaries like Steve and Sandi Youngren as well as the staff at Casa Adalia are working hard to serve a purpose greater than themselves. I hope one day I am given the opportunity to serve alongside these organizations in Ecuador and work towards improving our world; even if that is just improving the world for one Ecuadorian. For one woman. For one person.

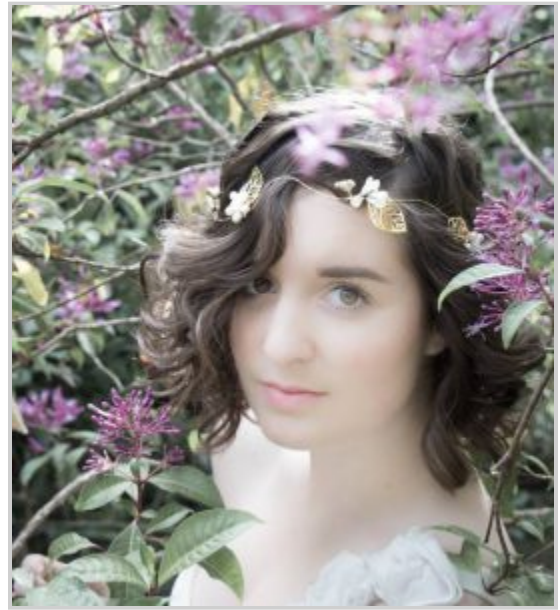


Steve & Sandi Youngren have been serving in Ecuador for about 15 years!



The CC Training Center is positioned at the base of the gigantic and active volcano, Mnt. Cotopaxi.





# Creating Community with a SEED

August 30, 2017  
Green, Improving Our World



*The SEED Garden. Photo Credit: Kenzie Sloan '18*

WSU did something new and exciting this past spring by planting a Sustainable, Edible, Education Discovery (SEED) Garden!

Beginning construction of the SEED Garden. Photo Credit: Jackson Ramsland '18

Here is a picture of the garden after the very first seeds were planted. Photo Credit: Jackson Ramsland '18

This is what the SEED Garden looks like today. Quite the transition! Photo Credit: Jackson Ramsland '18

“The Winona State University SEED Garden is a place where anyone can come and work, relax, or plunge their hands in the dirt.” – The SEED Garden Facebook Page

A couple of students working hard to plant the first round of seeds. Photo Credit: Jackson Ramsland '18

This project was funded through the university’s Green Fee Project. One of the objectives of this project is to teach students how to grow and maintain a garden using sustainable methods.

“In addition to building community, the garden is also intended to support educational initiatives like elementary education students learning how to plant gardens at their own schools to math and statistics students using the garden to study variables on plant growth.” – Brian Waldbilig (For more information, check out Brian’s article about the SEED Garden)





The cabbage grown in the SEED Garden was quite successful. Photo Credit: Jackson Ramsland '18

Some of the first crops that were planted this summer include: lettuce, cabbage, kale, carrots, zucchini, peppers, cucumbers, tomatoes, fresh herbs, etc. In fact, the SEED garden had their first harvest last week. Last Wednesday, they had a produce distribution on campus where they simply gave away free veggies to students who wanted them. Yum!





If you are as bummed as I am about missing out on the veggie distribution last week, know that the harvest is ongoing. Lots of tomatoes, cucumbers, and peppers are coming soon! Be sure to follow the SEED Garden Facebook page for when the next harvest distribution will be.

If you have always wanted to try gardening then this is the perfect opportunity for you to expand your knowledge while also learning a great life skill. The SEED Garden is located at 260 West 8th Street, feel free to go check it out!

Although the WSU Environmental club is heavily involved in caring for the SEED Garden, all students are welcome





to get involved and volunteer this year! In fact, here are three ways that you can get involved with the SEED Garden community:

1. **LIKE** the SEED Garden Facebook page to stay tuned for opportunities to help in the garden as well as planting and harvesting produce.
2. If you have artistic talent or carpentry skills, they are looking for volunteers who want to help build and paint signs, paint murals, and so on for the garden.
3. If you are unable to give much time to helping with this project, you can bring in donations such as seeds, gardening supplies, etc.

If you want to get involved or if you have any questions or comments, you can contact the leader of the project, Jackson Ramsland at [Jramslan14@winona.edu](mailto:Jramslan14@winona.edu).

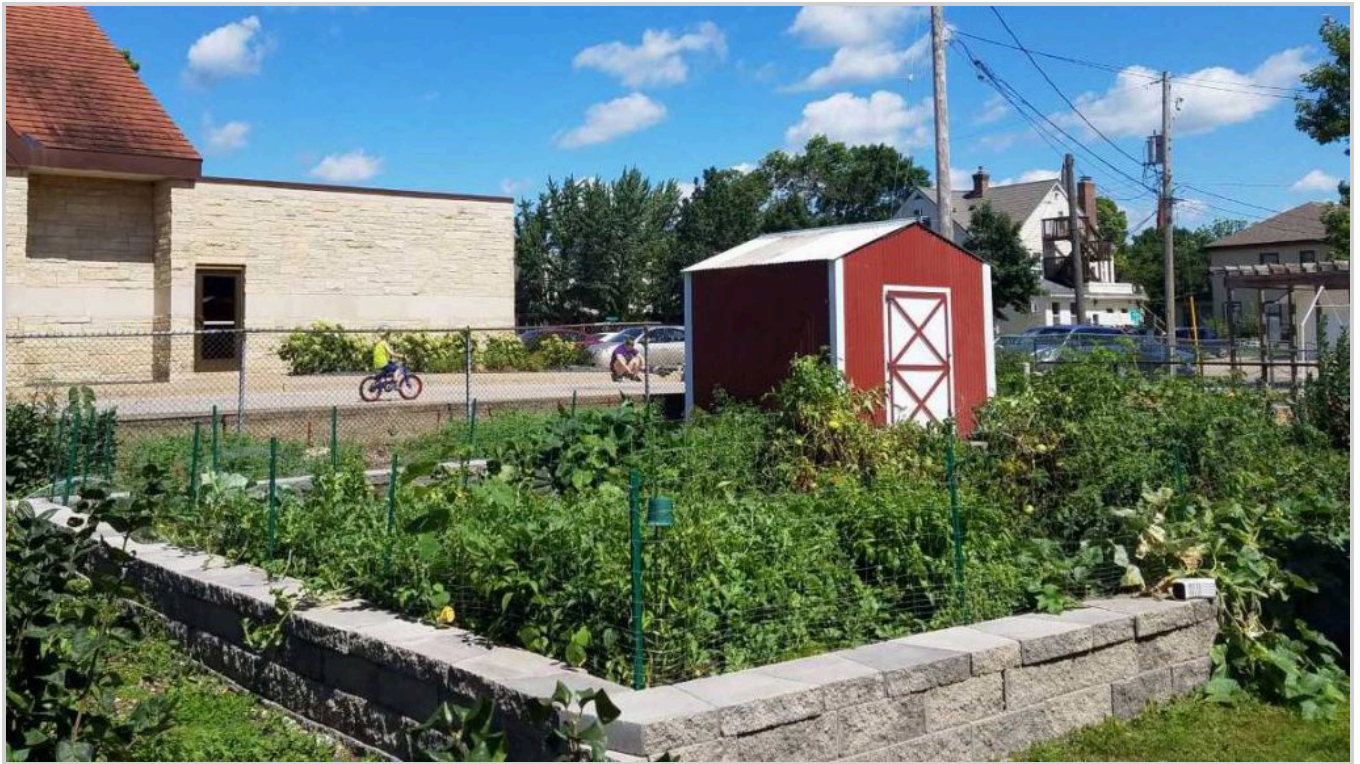
Gardening can be a great escape from the stress of studying for classes and the business of our schedules. I encourage you to try it out and to be a part of the gardening community at WSU.

The SEED Garden. Photo Credit: Kenzie Sloan '18



A picture from the free veggie distribution on campus last week. Photo Credit: Jackson Ramsland '18







## Recognizing Professor Olasee Davis: Part 2

July 7, 2017  
Improving Our World

*This is a continuation of the post Recognizing Professor Olasee Davis: How His Partnership Offers WSU Students Learning Opportunities in the U.S. Virgin Islands (see page 132)*

Alongside Ranger Benito Vegas from the National Park Service, at the Christiansted National Historic Site (CHRI), Davis educates us all on the history of Fort Christiansted with a focus on this particular place being a hub of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. Professor Davis explains how the Danish West India and Guinea Company capitalized through exploitation and occupation to become the primary tool for Danish colonization in the West Indies.

Davis also makes it clear that the skilled labor of enslaved people built the town of Christiansted, as is true throughout the Caribbean and in the U.S.: “The Company obtained captive laborers from trading outposts that they maintained on the west coast of Africa to boost their ambitious business plan for their colonies... Where did the labors come from to build the town? Of course, African laborers were imported to St. Croix to build it... Let us never forget that Christiansted wouldn’t have been a town without the free labors of enslaved blacks.”

Perhaps the most enlightening and moving hike is the one to Maroon Ridge. Maroon is the term used to describe enslaved people who escaped their captors to form a community of resistance. According to Davis:

“This land is sacred; it is where runaway slaves paid the ultimate sacrifice for freedom. There is no area in the entire Virgin Islands [like] St. Croix’s northwest corner. During the colonial period of the Danish West Indies, the Danish government recognized the resistance and stronghold of runaway enslaved Africans in that northwest side of St. Croix. There are other sites documented as locations of Maroon activities on the island, but the northwest was known for its sizable Maroon community because of its rugged mountainous terrain.

If you are in tune with nature, you can feel the spirits of Maroons who once used the area as their sanctuary. It is a place for spiritual revival as you hike on dirt roads, follow the paths of runaway slaves, and rock climb to tide pools of unspeakable beauty.

It is a place where you return and return again. It was the runaway slaves who led to our freedom.” Professor Davis leads us up a steep path to a breathtaking overlook. At the ridge, Davis shares the “Slave Code” issued by a Denmark Royal Council. It is brutal, barbaric, and violent. He asks for volunteers to read from the Code. Article 5 reads “A slave who runs away for eight days, shall be given one hundred and fifty lashes; twelve weeks, shall lose a leg; and for six months shall forfeit life, unless the owner pardons him, in which case he shall suffer the loss of one leg.” Professor Davis tells us that the Slave Code was vigorously enforced.

Professor Davis asks for volunteers to read from Council Proceedings from the late 1700s that detail reports of people who had run away from those who enslaved them. We hold hands and have a moment of silence.

Olasee Davis goes on to explain that Maroon Ridge is sacred land because it is a site of resistance to colonial power and slavery. There, Davis shares, runaway enslaved people found sanctuary. They planned revolts that threatened the lives of those who enslaved them in order to escape servitude through the use of force. Some fled to Puerto Rico. Olasee shares with us that some chose to jump off the cliffs in the area to certain death below rather than be returned to slavery.

Professor Davis then shared his thoughts on reparations of a sort. He calls on Denmark, on the 100th anniversary of the sale of the U.S. Virgin islands to the U.S., to “protect this corner of St. Croix and establish a Sanctuary Territorial Park in remembrance of those who lost their lives or escaped to Puerto Rico for freedom.” His passionate framing of this request





adds much to our discussion of reparations later in the trip.

Another site of resistance comes during the baobab walk. We visit two former plantation sites and view the baobabs there before arriving at the incredible tree in Grove Place. It is estimated to be about 300 years old and the oldest baobab in the U.S. and British Virgin Islands. Professor Davis tells us that the baobab is native to West Africa and seeds were transported to the Virgin Islands by enslaved Africans.



As 20 women from Winona State University and Olasee Davis get out of two large vans, a few kids run up to us as we approach the enormous baobab and shout “people died there!” The WSU students have read about this tree in *The Grove* when they read Davis’ article “The Baobab: A Community Hub,” and they know the history of this tree in connection with the 1878 “Fireburn” labor riots where sugarcane workers on St. Croix used fire as a weapon to destroy 53 sugarcane estates. But the children’s words are a moving reminder of the cultural significance of this incredible baobab.

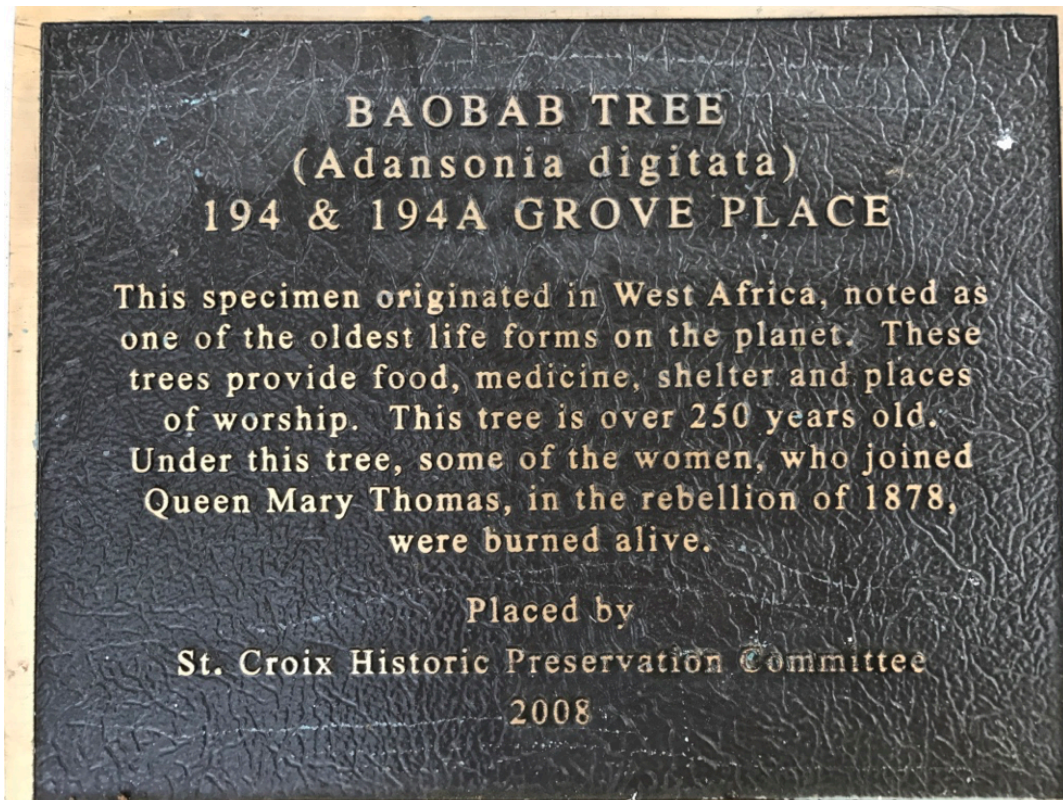
Fireburn followed emancipation, which took place in 1848 as enslaved people revolted and demanded their freedom. Davis’ article, “St. Croix Slaves Freed Themselves,” tells of the incredible acts of resistance that ended slavery in the Danish West Indies.

The Grove baobab was a rallying place for laborers and union activity while St. Croix was a Danish colony, and Fireburn was a powerful act of resistance in the face of colonialism. Davis explains that during Fireburn, “three Whites were killed. Hundreds of Black laborers were arrested. After 18 months of trials, 60 laborers were shot to death in sugarcane fields, while 67 were imprisoned.

Meanwhile, 12 men were executed by firing squad.” And, “near the baobab tree in Estate Grove, some 14 women were burned at the stake

while others were hanged from the tree.” Olasee Davis reminds us all that “The baobab tree in Estate Grove Place is a monument to the people of these islands.” While Fireburn forced the Danes to enter into less horrible labor agreements with free Blacks, those agreements came at an unfathomable cost, an atrocity memorialized by a bronze plaque next to the tree.





We hold hands and surround the baobab in a moment of silence.

In Part 3 (see page 134), Professor Davis accompanies the travel study group to The Village work-site and on a special trip to watch the sunrise.

**-Dr. Tamara Berg, Professor and Director  
Women's, Gender, & Sexuality Studies at Winona State University**

# Recognizing Professor Olasee Davis: How His Partnership Offers WSU Students Learning Opportunities in the U.S. Virgin Islands

July 7, 2017  
Improving Our World



Ecologist. Ethno-botanist. Naturalist. Agriculturalist. Historian. Scholar. Writer. Teacher. Environmental activist. Bushman.

Professor Olasee Davis is a man who wears many hats. He is a native Virgin Islander who lives and works on the island of St. Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands. He is known throughout the world in his field of cultural and natural history and as an environmental activist. He is an Assistant Professor/Extension Specialist in the Natural Resources Program of the Cooperative Extension Service at the University of the Virgin islands St. Croix campus.

Since 2008, Davis has lead Winona State University travel study students on walks and hikes over sacred land as he shares historic events that shaped the island, the Caribbean and beyond. The theme of the WSU St. Croix travel study is “acts of resistance in the face of colonialism,” and students have the unique opportunity to learn about the complex history of the island through a number of interactions with Professor Davis.

Olasee Davis has hiked with WSU travel study students along pristine beaches at Sandy Point National Wildlife Refuge where endangered sea turtles nest. He has joined us on turtle watches to educate students about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Leatherback Sea Turtle Research Project (PDF) and to observe adult female leatherbacks emerge from the ocean to lay eggs on the beach they were likely born on some 20+ years ago. If they are lucky, WSU students may get to hold and release hatchlings that emerged earlier in the day or that were excavated from an emerged nest.

Professor Davis accompanies our WSU travel study group to Buck Island Reef National Monument where he teaches us about the Slave Wrecks Project, which seeks to learn more about the global slave trade through historical and archeological work. The project conducted underwater resource documentation and terrestrial excavations related to the



history of the slave trade on St. Croix, and Davis shares the findings as he hikes with students along the shore of Buck Island.

Learn more about Professor Davis and his knowledge of the history of St. Croix and the trans-Atlantic slave trade in Part 2 (see page 129).

**–Dr. Tamara Berg, Professor and Director  
Women’s, Gender, & Sexuality Studies at Winona State University**



# Recognizing Professor Olasee Davis: Part 3

July 7, 2017  
Improving Our World

*This is a continuation of the post Recognizing Professor Olasee Davis: Part 2*

On one of the last days working with our community partners, Professor Davis joins us at The Village (Virgin Islands Partners in Recovery) where a group of WSU students has been participating in the morning activities with women in the recovery program. Olasee Davis regularly hikes with people on their path to recovery, and he introduced me to The Village as a potential partner a few years ago. This has turned out to be a very successful work-site where our students have benefited tremendously. In 2016, Davis wrote an article about our travel study that was published in the *Virgin Islands Daily News*.

Of The Village, Professor Davis writes: “[It] is on a historic site at Sion Hill Estate, at over 300 feet above sea level. As you enter the historic pillars, it’s like you are going back in time in Virgin Islands history. You can’t help but feel the spirits of enslaved Africans who once worked on the estate along with their overseers and masters at Sion Hill.” He tells the group about Sion Hill plantation’s historical structures, and we take in the incredible view of the surrounding countryside of St. Croix. And he tells us about the enslaved Africans who labored here for decades. Davis describes this beautifully in his article:

Next was the moment of history. In the living room of the Great House, we gathered in silence as I began to lecture. We could hear and feel the wind blowing on our bodies as I spoke and unfolded the history of the Sion Hill enslaved Africans. I gave one of the students a list of names of slaves who lived on the plantation to read out loud. A moment of silence, please, then, the student proceeded to read the names: “Lucy, bought for 500; Maria, 700; Piggy, 400; Dorothy for 700” ... the long list of names included men, women, and children.

The estate came alive when the audience heard the names of slaves. We all got emotional. It was a healing experience that day. The students and patients expressed themselves, some with tears running down their faces. The students walked away with a new understanding. The patients promised themselves to do all what they could to better themselves.

Believe me, Sion Hill estate is a living history of all of us.

I am thankful for the partnership and friendship Olasee Davis and I have formed over the years. His work with our students enriches their learning in ways that I could never replicate.

The final interaction with Professor Davis takes place at Point Udall, the easternmost point in the U.S. All who choose to do so gather at 4:15 am on their last day on St. Croix to fill coffee mugs and settle in for a 45-minute van ride across the island to watch the sunrise. Olasee Davis and Ranger Benito Vegas from the National Park Service join us. It is an incredible experience, and the students reflect on what they’ve learned over the last 18 days.



We thank Professor Davis for the time he’s spent with us. Winona State University students have been very fortunate

to learn from an expert who has lectured to thousands of people throughout the Caribbean, North, South and Central America on topics including heritage tourism, eco-tourism, the environment, marine resources, agriculture, Virgin Islands natural and cultural history, and related sustainable life sciences.

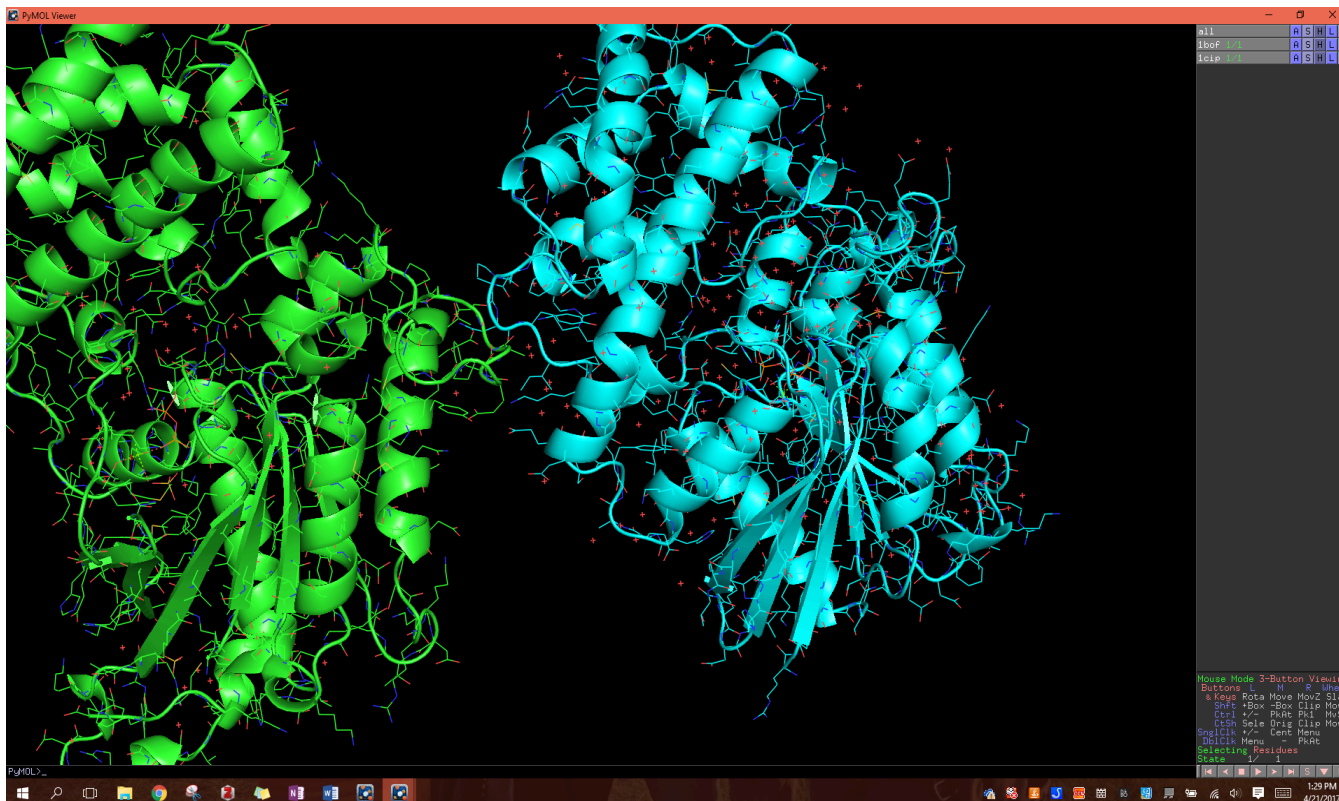
Professor Davis has written over 6,000 articles for the *Virgin Islands Daily News* and the *St. Croix Avis* newspaper. He has co-authored several books on medicinal plants and other topics such as the colonial history of the Virgin Islands, and he has published scientific papers with universities in the U.S. mainland and in Denmark. Professor was honored as the “Environmentalist of the year” of the Virgin Islands in 1992 and University of the Virgin Islands “Employee of the Year” in 2007. In all, he had received over 300 awards for his work. He is an outspoken activist on environmental issues relating to the protection and preservation of the cultural, natural, and agricultural resources throughout the Caribbean region. He has helped protect and preserve historic and natural sites in the Virgin Islands by publishing articles in national magazines and local newspapers, appearing on radio talk shows and television programs, and testifying at court and public hearings, and testifying before the U.S. Congress.

Over the years, hundreds of WSU students have had the opportunity to learn about the natural, cultural, and environmental history of St. Croix from Professor Olasee Davis. WSU students and faculty are very grateful for the partnership we have formed with Davis and the University of the Virgin Islands. Professor Davis has enriched our understanding of St. Croix in profound and important ways.

**-Dr. Tamara Berg, Professor and Director  
Women’s, Gender, & Sexuality Studies at Winona State University**

# Fighting Against Disease: A Class Reflection

May 2, 2017  
Improving Our World



*Cymbalta - a drug used to treat fibromyalgia pain. PyMol can be used to visualize the structure of pathogenic proteins, medicines and human proteins in order to best visualize mechanisms of disease.*

There are enemies in this world that outnumber human beings and have the potential to end everything that we hold dear. We can't see them coming and soon we may have no way to stop them. These microscopic armies are knocking at our front doors every second waiting for the perfect time to attack. Every day we come into contact with millions of bacteria and viruses and don't even think twice about it. How can something so small (that does not even have a brain!) even phase creatures as intelligent as humans? How long will they wait before killing us all? Can we do anything to stop them? How are they able to do all of this right under our noses (literally and figuratively)? These are the types of questions that were answered for me in Dr. Jon Mauser's Molecular Basis of Disease at WSU.

For the history of *Homo sapiens*, exposure to disease has been a huge aspect of our humanity. Disease has upended social orders that have lasted for millennia, has killed some of the best and brightest among us, and has shaped us into the species we are today. In this class, I learned that many of us are not as informed as we think we are about disease. While bacteria and viruses are not intelligent like us, they know exactly where to hit us. Each disease has its own specific plan of action and they have the unique ability to find and exploit weaknesses of our bodies' biology and chemistry.

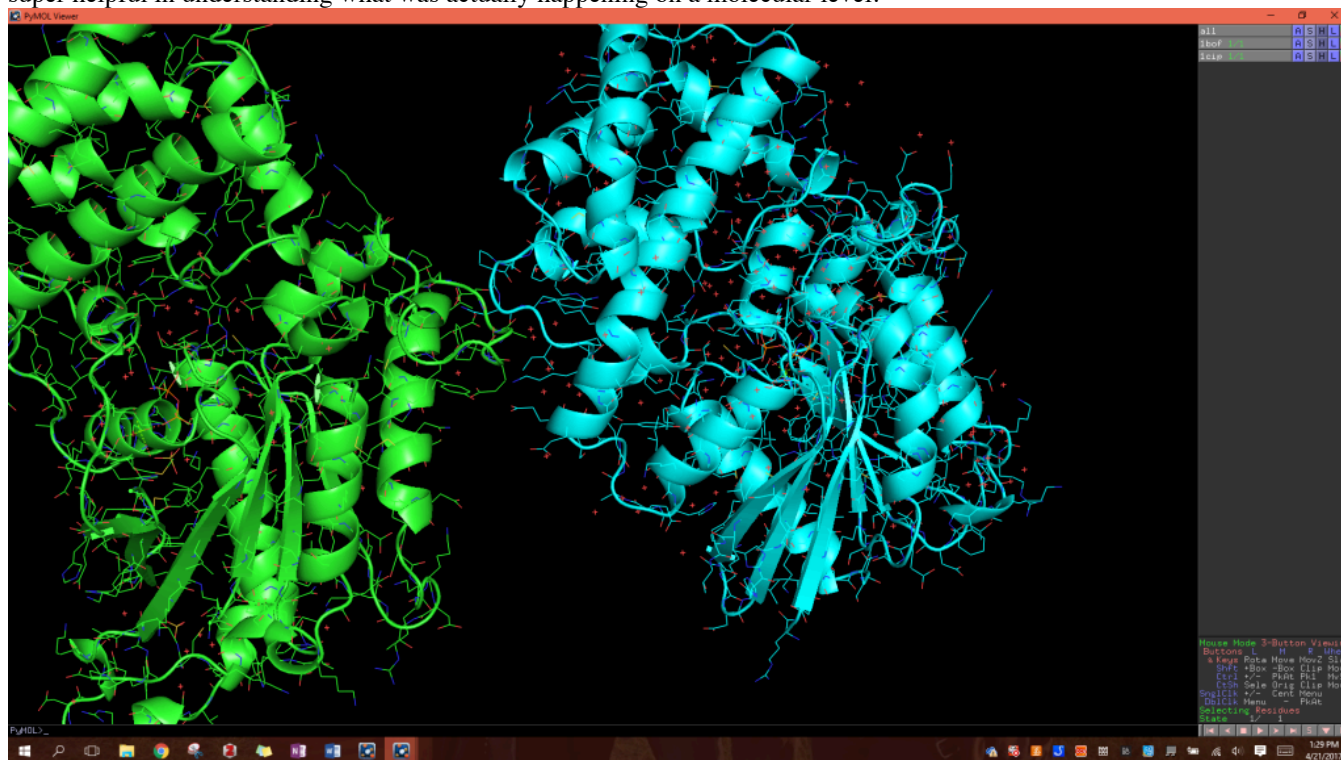
One key aspect of being human is finding creative solutions to problems that might seem impossible. Due to our creativity and intelligence, we have the ability to fight disease with more than just our immune systems. We can create medicines and drugs that help give us an edge. Vaccines can help to patch the weak points in our armor and antimicrobial and antiviral drugs can serve as new weapons to fight off the hordes of pathogens we are exposed to every day. However, just like any worthy enemy, bacteria have the ability to find creative counters to our weapons. It truly is a tug-of-war. Only for about the last 100 years have we had the edge over the pathogens. Will we keep it? Bacteria can go through thousands of generations and rounds of mutation during a single human lifespan. Are we quick enough and agile enough to keep up with them?

Fear of the unknown and anxiety about the looming possibility of disease has long been part of the human experience, and I was no exception to that. I was already a huge germophobe coming into this class and you would think that I would be even more of a germophobe coming out of it. This class made me change my perspective on how I think about germs. I don't see them as gross microscopic green blobs like they are often portrayed as in those handwashing diagrams in the bathroom. I see them as strategic, efficient, and thriving microscopic organisms just trying to scrape out their place in the world. Oddly,



this was comforting to me. Knowing that there is a worthy adversary out there can be scary, but knowing that humanity is creative and well-armed enough to put up a fight is calming and empowering.

In CHEM 444, we utilized a professional program called PyMol to digitally explore the structures of the proteins that pathogenic organisms use against us, and the mechanisms of the drugs and medicines humans use to fight back. We made short animations of these proteins and used them to present stories about the human experience: the diseases we encounter and our creative strategies to fighting them. PyMol is a useful learning tool that really helped me visualize how these diseases work in our bodies. Being able to have the different mechanisms of the disease literally playing out in front of my face was super helpful in understanding what was actually happening on a molecular level.



Cymbalta – a drug used to treat fibromyalgia pain.

PyMol can be used to visualize the structure of pathogenic proteins, medicines and human proteins in order to best visualize mechanisms of disease.

Bacteria and viruses are not the only enemy we have to fight – often our own worst enemy can be ourselves. Autoimmune diseases can result from our body's immune system being too ambitious and anxious to fight disease. In so doing, we have great potential to hurt ourselves. In our final presentation, we studied the condition known as Fibromyalgia – a chronic pain condition caused by stress, fatigue, and inflammation. We used PyMol to investigate how the drug Cymbalta (the red structure in the picture below) binds to the receptor proteins in order to change the protein conformation and stop fibromyalgia pain. We shared our presentations and animations with Winona Health and they will help them in creating materials that patients can use to understand their own diseases. We also posted our animations to YouTube so the greater community can benefit. I work as a pharmacy technician and seeing the structure of the drugs and studying its mechanism made the countless pills I have distributed have more meaning to me. These pills are weapons against disease, not just little tablets I put in bottles. Today we have vaccines and antibiotics (and proper waste management systems) that keep us feeling in tip-top shape.

This was my last semester at WSU, as I will be graduating in May with a B.S. degree in Biochemistry. Taking this class just before graduation was a real treat for me. This class draws from many of the lower-mid level classes that I have already taken such as cell biology, biochemistry and microbiology. It was a good way for me to remember everything that I have learned these past 3 years at Winona and apply it to something that was very fun and interesting to learn about. This class will be super helpful if I ever decide to do volunteer work in countries where these diseases are still problem. We looked all the way down to the molecular mechanisms used to combat these foreign invaders. We know what the pathogens want, what they can do to us and how they do it. Now we just need to design new weapons. I would recommend this class to anyone who is interested in disease, history, or even just someone who really likes biochemistry! I feel like I have a firm grasp now on what disease is and how I will be able to treat it going into the medical world.

**-Taylor Brownlow**

# Improving The Arts: WarriorsINNOVATE Winner

April 26, 2017  
Improving Our World



Over the last six months, my colleagues and I at Treedome worked together to compete in WSU's WarriorsINNOVATE Challenge. The challenge was an entrepreneurial competition where students work to create a concept, outline, and business plan for a potential company. Over the course of three rounds, each group of students competes with one another to be chosen as one of the final winners of a \$5,000 grant.

To get everyone up to speed, Treedome is an art and music collective based in downtown Winona. We offer a large swath of services for local artists who otherwise wouldn't have the options, including recording, practice space, show booking, production, videography, photography and others. We also have a group of individual musicians and artists who collaborate and create new pieces for the Winona area and beyond.

The main goal for our company is to foster growth in the local music industry, and try to connect all the various artistic threads scattered throughout the region. With the WarriorsINNOVATE Challenge, we had hoped to build our reputation and get some funding to push our resources to the next level.

Luckily, we pulled it off.

Treedome was chosen as the winner for the product/service venture option, and the winner for nonprofit was an organization for Children of Incarcerated Parents. All of our fellow competitors did spectacularly, whether they won or not, and we're excited to see what they all do next.

It took months, but myself and a group of fellow students worked ourselves to the bone creating and perfecting a wide-reaching plan to invigorate the community and start bringing new tunes to town.

That \$5,000 grant will be going directly toward our infrastructure. We'll be upgrading our video gear and our recording studio, creating shirts for fans, starting an ad campaign, and bringing in a few new designers.

Our hope for these upgrades isn't just to increase the quality of our work, but also to open up new opportunities for Winona artists. In any other community, this level of production is either non-existent or completely out of reach. What we're trying to do here is to be approachable and give the artistic community the opportunity to do things they would've never been able to.

For artists and by artists, we hope that this win will put us, and the Winona music and art community, on the road to



Right to left: Michael Pelley, me, Ben Strand and Vice President of University Advancement Ron Dempsey at the reveal of the WarriorsINNOVATE Challenge winners. (Photo by Brian Waldbillig)  
success. Here's to Winona's artistic future!



# Get Acquainted With Arbor Day And Earth Day

April 21, 2017  
Green, Improving Our World



First off, let's make sure we know the difference between the Arbor Day and Earth Day. Arbor Day's purpose is to plant more trees in the community, while Earth Day's purpose is to pay attention to the condition the environment is in and what we can do to help it. Arbor Day actually came way before Earth Day, but it eventually lost popularity as Earth Day became more and more popular.

WSU feels strongly about celebrating both of these days that improve the environment. WSU is celebrating the fifth annual Arbor Day Celebration, which started with a kick off on April 19 featuring a free tree give-away and a campus presentation by horticulturist and author, Heather Holm. The theme for WSU's 2017 Arbor Day Celebration is "Trees Supporting Bees (and their friends)!"

Next, WSU will partner with the City of Winona and participate in the 2017 combined Earth Day/Arbor Day Celebration from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, April 22, at the East End Recreation Center. The event will feature a speaker and author talk, free tree giveaways, poetry, a book signing, tree plantings, food and craft vendors, advice on gardening and tree selection, demonstrations and activities for children and adults.

Each year WSU partners with local schools to celebrate Earth Day and Arbor Day. This year's partnership between WSU's Landscape Arboretum and students will take place from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Friday, April 28. Children will be taught how to plant trees properly, the science behind trees and why they matter. An important point for this year's celebration is informing people why selecting trees that support pollinators will benefit the environment.

There are many ways you can help the environment, Warriors, if you explore the options! A great first step is to try out and attend the outdoor education opportunities offered at WSU this year.

*Written in part by Allison Mueller*



Get Acquainted With Arbor Day And Earth Day





# International Dinner Review: One World, One Community

April 10, 2017  
Improving Our World



Diverse culture, beautiful fashion, delicious food, engaging entertainment and wonderful people.

The 30th Annual International Dinner was the place to be Saturday night. A mirage of culture and colors mixed with the intoxicating aroma of curry-based foods makes for a great night, in my opinion at least!

I want to give a shout out to WSU's International Services and the International Club for putting on a spectacular event and outdoing themselves year after year. The International Dinner is by far my favorite on-campus event throughout the whole year. I just love the welcoming environment filled with fashion, entertainment, food, and a diverse group of wonderful people. I love that a group of people with many diverse backgrounds and cultures can come together to enjoy an evening of celebrating our differences that bring so much beauty to this campus and community.

Have you ever attended the WSU International Dinner? If not, here is a little run down of what happened at the dinner this year!

Once everyone was ushered in and seated at a table, the night began with a fashion show. International students wore garbs from their home country representing the cultures they come from. Many different countries were represented in the fashion show. I loved this part of the evening because I am amazed by all of the beautiful colors and intricate designs worked into each piece of clothing.

The fashion show was followed by a few performances by international students who presented their artistic work through song, dance, poem, etc. The skills and talents of the students who performed were nothing short of impressive. I found the dancing to be particularly beautiful because I was a dancer for 10 years, so I really enjoyed watching the different styles of dance presented throughout the night.

Halfway through the line of performances, dinner was served! Students in the international club prepare all of the food for the evening. On the menu was a variety of cuisine from many different nations. To list a few, there were curry-based foods such as chole (chickpea curry) and a chicken and olive curry stew. In addition, there was rice (of course), borek (from the country of Turkey), a quinoa salad, iced lemon tea and flan for dessert. The food was absolutely delicious, to say the least. I was particularly proud of myself for eating all of the curry this year! I LOVE curry but I am such a baby when it comes to spicy food. Fortunately for me, I am becoming more tolerant of the spice.





People waiting in line for the start of the International Dinner. The event was sold out! This photo was taken by Ussama Baradia, as well as the photos following this one.

After dinner, there were a few more performances to finish out the night. I loved all of the performances this year, but if I had to pick, I would say that my absolute favorite one was a poem/song performed by a student from South Africa. His





The International Dinner fashion show started the night off. His voice was remarkable! The poem/song was about his love for his country, Africa, and it was done beautifully. His performance truly represented his heart for his country and the pride he takes in his nation.

All in all, this is by far my favorite event of the year. I have a feeling that many others feel the same way as the event was completely sold out this year! With close to 400 people in attendance, East Hall was vibrant and lively. If you were unable to attend this year's International Dinner, I would highly recommend that you buy a ticket next year.



I feel that it is important to attend this event as well as other on-campus events put on by WSU International Services and the International Club because they provide great opportunities for you to educate and immerse yourself in other cultures. Although it is awesome to travel all the way across the globe to experience different cultures, I think we are very lucky as WSU students to be able to experience a slice of many different cultures, at one time, in one place! After all, the theme of the International Dinner this year was "One World, One Community." Join us, as we continue to come together as one world and one community right here on the campus of WSU!



Serving dinner!



Borek from Turkey.



Flan.



Quinoa salad.



# Erin Kloeping '19 | Student

April 6, 2017



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## Erin Kloeping '19 | Called to Serve Nonprofits and Missions

Student from Brodhead, WI  
Communications Major, Leadership & Advocacy Option; Plans to Minor in Mass Communications and Training & Development

**“I have a heart for nonprofits. I say a heart for nonprofits, but really it’s a heart for people.”**

Since elementary school, Erin Kloeping has been searching for ways to give back to her community and make a difference in the lives of others. From running nursing home bake sales, to raising more than \$1,100 for One Meal One Day, to passing out food and drinks to people in hospital lines, Erin’s passions for nonprofits have taken her as far as Ecuador – twice.

In her most recent trip to Ecuador, Erin and her best friend McKenna Cook filmed videos, took photos and launched social media sites for a woman’s jewelry business whose sales bring hope and dignity to Ecuadorian women in need. McKenna and Erin met through WSU Chi Alpha, a campus ministry where Erin now serves as the media ministry team leader, allowing her to continue developing her videography skills.

When Erin speaks of her nonprofit and mission work, she does so without showmanship or self-congratulation. On the contrary, she views her work as a calling and emphasizes the importance of those she serves. This ambitious sophomore plans to continue this work beyond her college years as she hopes to work for a nonprofit organization and eventually start

McKenna Cook (left) and Erin Kloopping (right) in Quito, Ecuador. Here they worked to promote Sandy Youngren's jewelry business that benefits Ecuadorian women in need.

McKenna Cook (left) and Erin Kloopping (right) in Quito, Ecuador. Here they worked to promote Sandy Youngren's jewelry business that benefits Ecuadorian women in need. She already has plans to return to Ecuador for two months this summer working with Compassion Connection as their communications intern.

The impact her experience serving others has had on her shines through her storytelling, as she finds blessings in everything she has done and where she is today. Erin continues to put others' needs before her own, and this selfless path will lead her to more nonprofit and mission work that will continue to change others' lives and her own.

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***What drew you to Winona State?***

I was a three-sport athlete in high school, and what originally drew me to Winona State was the softball team here. However, I just felt like sports were something that would keep me from pursuing the passions that I have now. I decided to give up sports, but my eyes were already on Winona. I got very excited when I started looking at the majors here and saw the Leadership & Advocacy option within Communications – a unique combination that I couldn't find at any other schools I was looking at.

Once I started looking more into Winona, I loved how many campus ministries were connected with Winona State. My first day on campus, I met McKenna Cook – who is still my best friend today – and she was already involved with Chi Alpha, a Christian campus ministry at WSU. Today I am very involved in Chi Alpha and I would go as far to say that the community and people within Chi Alpha have become my second family.

***When and how did you first get involved in giving back to others?***

In fifth grade my best friend's mom and my mom realized there was a need in our community when they visited a nursing home during Christmas and saw that residents rarely receive presents or visitors. Because of this, we started an annual bake sale fundraiser to purchase the residents Christmas gifts. Over eight years we raised \$8,950 total. It grew a ton which was really exciting to see, and not only did our project grow, but our hearts were completely changed by it. We became so passionate about helping others and giving back, especially in our own community. Four of those nursing homes were in our hometown, and then it spread to other communities. It was truly an amazing experience, and now my little sister and her best friend are carrying it on.

***What did you do on your first trip to Ecuador?***

In the summer of 2014, I went on a 12-day mission trip with my youth group. We went to three different locations: capitol city of Quito, then in the mountains near Lasso and then to a village in the jungle. In Lasso, we stayed with two missionaries, Steve and Sandi Youngren, who are from the United States and run a non-profit organization called Compassion Connection that puts on events for Ecuadorian pastors to train and encourage them. The Youngrens were living in the mountains at that time so we built a house for them in the mountains on that trip. Then we went to the jungle for three days, two nights and stayed in a two-story hut and helped build a church there.

After that, we spent a few days in Quito and did a hospital outreach at a government-run hospital. People from all over the city would take the bus to this hospital early in the morning and wait in long lines to receive medical care. This was an extremely heart-wrenching sight to see. We made 400 sandwiches the night before, and took jugs of juice to pass out to the people who had been standing in line all day. Almost all of the people waiting were either sick or injured, but they couldn't get out of line to get food because they would lose their spot. That trip forever changed me. It opened my eyes to so many things, and made me extremely grateful for the things I so often take for granted here in the United States.

### ***Why did you go to Ecuador a second time in December 2015?***

McKenna and I felt a strong calling to Ecuador, although we weren't sure why. Steve and Sandi were my only connections in Ecuador, so I decided to message Sandi quick and it turned out they needed some videographers to come down and film for their nonprofit. Coincidence? I think not. Sandi has a jewelry business that she runs on the side to benefit Ecuadorian women, and so promoting her work was our area of emphasis this time. My first trip was more so serving Steve and Sandi's organization, Compassion Connection, but this trip was more about partnering with Sandi and her jewelry business.

### ***What did you do during this eight-day trip?***

McKenna and I left the U.S. with really no itinerary for what we were going to be doing for the eight days. Although that was a little crazy, the whole intent of the trip was to follow the missionaries around for a week and whenever they needed help, we were there for them. McKenna and I are both on the media team at Chi Alpha and while on this trip, we were able to put to use many of the skills we have acquired. We were able to film for almost the entire trip, acquiring enough footage for about six videos altogether. We also were able to teach Sandi how to use Instagram and Facebook to better promote her jewelry business and we did photo shoots of her jewelry for her Etsy site. When we returned home, we brought back a bunch of her jewelry and sent her the profits.

### ***How has all of the nonprofit work you have done influenced your choice in major and career?***

I believe that using my creative skill sets to promote nonprofit causes is what I am supposed to do. While I plan to work for a nonprofit organization after graduation, I really want to start my own. My dream is to start a nonprofit that offers communication services to other organizations and missionaries. The hope is that my organization would help missionaries share and communicate their amazing stories more effectively and to larger audiences, and in return, gain more support. Another dream job of mine is to work as a communications advocate. This job could include an array of things from speaking in front of church congregations to developing social media content to leading short-term mission trips.

### ***If you could invite anyone to sit on this bench and have a conversation, who would it be and what would you talk about?***

I would sit and have a conversation with Sandi Youngren. I have a lot of respect for Sandi and the way she lives out her faith in her everyday life. I value many of the conversations we have had in the past, many of which I will never forget. I would love to ask her more about her experience in starting a nonprofit organization, faith and life in general, relationships and raising a family, and choosing a career path that requires you to raise support instead of earning a steady income.

### ***Interviewed and Edited by Allison Mueller '17 and photographed by Ka Vang '16***

To nominate someone in the WSU community — faculty, staff, student, alumni or friend of WSU — for *Warrior Way*, or if you have other feedback to share, please email Mollie Sheehan, director of web communications: [msheehan@winona.edu](mailto:msheehan@winona.edu)

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# The 5 Ws to Volunteering

April 4, 2017  
Improving Our World



I remember in high school I was always told by teachers that volunteering and getting involved will help you get into your desired college. Being able to add extra experience to your college application and show you are motivated and responsible might serve as the extra push towards your acceptance letter. But, does that mean you should stop volunteering once you're in college? Definitely not!

There are plenty of volunteer opportunities in Winona, and even more reasons why you should get involved. You might be asking yourself, "Where can I find these opportunities? What can I do? How do I get in touch with places? I have a lot on my plate already, will this suck up what's left of my free time?" Don't worry – Here are the 5 Ws to volunteering in Winona that will answer all of your questions and convince you that volunteering should still be part of your life:

## Who?

You will obviously be the one volunteering, but who will you be benefitting and helping through this action? Well, it depends on what volunteer opportunity you pursue. Certain positions allow you to work with children such as with the Winona Public Library or Winona Family YMCA, with Project FINE you could work with ethnically diverse individuals, you could serve seniors through Elder Network or spend your time with furry friends at the Winona Area Human Society – just to name a few. The local opportunities are endless!



## What?

What can you do while you volunteer? Volunteering should be fun, and after you find what you're interested in, you will work with that organization and learn what they need from you. I suggest calling the place you're interested in volunteering at and ask what opportunities are currently available and when during the week they need volunteers. There might be an application process, so learning what you will be doing before you take the time to drive or walk to the organization and fill out an application is smart; it's best to do your research first. Also, if you know of anyone on campus who volunteers, ask them what they do and what they like best about it.

## Where?

Where can you look for volunteer opportunities? In addition to Winona State's list of local job and volunteer organizations that includes specific places you can contact, Live Well Winona can match you up with a volunteer opportunity if you're not sure what would be the best fit for you and what is currently available. On this website, the volunteer opportunities are separated into specific categories in which you can search, or you can email Live Well Winona ([info@livewellwinona.org](mailto:info@livewellwinona.org)) or call 507-457-9825 to find the perfect match for you.

## When?

With classes, homework, clubs and jobs, it may seem impossible to find a time to volunteer. But, you'd be surprised at how flexible organizations are at when you can volunteer. Most places are always in need of volunteers, and any time you can devote will be appreciated. Some volunteer opportunities are at a one-time event, which might be perfect for you if you're on a tight schedule. Weekends are always when I find myself with the most free time, and taking a few hours out of your Saturday or Sunday to volunteer is a weekend well spent!

## Why?

Giving back to the community in which you reside is so important. Many people don't have the opportunity or ability to volunteer in certain positions, and if you are able-bodied and willing to help others around you, you will help build a stronger and healthier community. In addition, there are SO many reasons why you should keep volunteering throughout your college career that will benefit you! Here's to name a few:

- **You'll continue to learn important skills** – Volunteering can teach you leadership and teamwork, which you might not continue to develop in a classroom on campus. You have the opportunity to take lead on projects and work with a diverse group of individuals. Communication is also a skill that always can be improved upon, and volunteering requires this and will help you develop this skill as well.
- **You can add to your resumé** – When you apply for a job after graduating from WSU, being a volunteer and including the skills you developed through these opportunities will set you apart from another applicant. Just as in high school, building experience is still important, and going above and beyond classwork is what it will take to stand out and land your dream job.
- **You will build important relationships** – There's no doubt you will make friends through volunteering, but you will also be able to network and build a list of references. Building a relationship with a leader of an organization might benefit you in the long run when you apply for a job and you need a reference. Being able to include an important or influential community member as a reference will, once again, set you apart from everyone else.
- **You can amp up your grad school applications** – If you're thinking about pursuing school beyond your undergrad, volunteering will allow you to add to your application and can even score you some scholarships!

Hopefully these answers to the 5 Ws will push you towards volunteering in college! There are great opportunities out there and many relationships and skills you can build that will benefit you as a growing young adult, student and graduate. Not to mention the impact on the community you will have!





# Learn Sustainability at Kinstone!

March 17, 2017  
Improving Our World



*Kristine Beck talks to visitors in the stone circle at Kinstone. Photo by Linda Kihslinger.*

There are plenty of sustainable practices on and off campus in winona. One off-campus source that can specifically be useful for students is Kinstone, located in the bluffs in Fountain City – only a few minutes outside of Winona. Kristine Beck, the founder of Kinstone, encourages students to get involved in sustainability practices that are offered through her company that focuses on Permaculture (ecological human habitats and food production systems).

Kinstone offers a variety of sustainable practices including weekly walking tours starting in May to learn about the alignment of the sun and equinox, and many courses and workshops (working with native plants, fermenting healthy food, etc). The courses and workshops are taught by certified experts of Permaculture to create sustainability as a necessity in life.

In an upcoming April course, two cordwood experts will conduct a hands on workshop as a way to immerse participants in sustainable practices offered in the area. There are also other workshops offered throughout the summer, including ones on herbalism, the art of fermentation and whole house agriculture.

Students can also find sustainable practices offered at Kinstone on the streets of Winona. Kinstone has a food truck that promotes local and fresh foods, and you can find it on the streets as soon as May 6 with the Kinstone Spring Family Permaculture Day and Labyrinth Celebration from 12-5pm. It will also be present at other events.

Educate yourself on sustainability practices and take advantage of these great opportunities near WSU!



Photo of the chapel at Kinstone by Kristine Beck.



Kristine Beck talks to visitors in the stone circle at Kinstone. Photo by Linda Kihslinger.



# Improve WSU One Assessment at a Time

February 21, 2017  
Improving Our World



Assessment Day is something that happens every year that most students get pretty excited about. Why, do you ask? Well, mainly because it's a chance to sleep in since classes before 3:30pm are canceled that day. But this day is very important, and WSU students should get excited about getting the chance to have their opinions heard and improve their university.

In 1998, WSU Faculty Senate established this day and instead of attending classes, students, faculty and staff engage in different assessments in an effort to improve curricular and co-curricular programs and student services. So, this is not just a day to relax, catch up on homework, or hang out with friends – it's a day to improve aspects of campus through your feedback, which will aid in having a successful and fulfilling WSU experience both in academics and extracurriculars.

We are students attending WSU, experiencing what campus has to offer, and of course paying tuition. Why wouldn't you want to have your voice heard on what you like or would like to see changed on campus and in the classroom?

When you participate in surveys through the Assessment Day Survey Invitation sent to you via email, you get the chance to win a prize with every one you complete! Most of the surveys take less than five minutes to complete, and all of

the information gathered will help improve your overall experiences at WSU. Here are the prizes offered:

- **On schedule prizes:** Students who complete all the surveys on Assessment Day will be entered into a drawing for one of three Amazon.com **\$50 gift cards**.
- **Procrastinator prizes:** Students who complete all of the surveys before Spring Break (11:59pm on Friday, March 5) will be entered into a drawing for one of five Amazon.com **\$25 gift cards**.

It seems like a no-brainer to me: participate in surveys, get the chance to win money and ultimately reap the benefits of an improved campus from the feedback given. WSU is “a community of learners improving our world,” and the first step to improving our world is improving our learning environment.

# It's I Love WSU Week | Year 2

February 13, 2017  
Improving Our World

The graphic is a purple and blue event schedule for 'I Love WSU Week' from February 13-20, 2017. It features the WSU Foundation logo and the hashtag #ILoveWSUWeek. The main title 'I ♥ WSU WEEK' is prominently displayed. The schedule is organized into columns for each day of the week, with specific event names, descriptions, and locations. A section at the bottom highlights 'ALL WEEK LONG' events: a crowdfunding campaign, student penny wars, and a Rochester event.

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY
<b>TAG DAY</b> TAGS WILL MARK ITEMS ALL OVER CAMPUS THAT WERE MADE POSSIBLE BY GENEROUS GIFTS TO WSU.	<b>I ♥ WSU DAY</b> SHARE WHAT YOU LOVE ABOUT WSU FOR A CHANCE TO WIN PRIZES! @ <b>LOWER HYPHEN KRYZSKO COMMONS</b> 11 a.m.-2 p.m.	<b>GET THE SCOOP ON PHILANTHROPY</b> THANK WSU DONORS AND GET A FREE SCOOP OF ICE CREAM! @ <b>LOWER HYPHEN KRYZSKO COMMONS</b> 11 a.m.-2 p.m.	<b>ALL-U CAMPAIGN KICK-OFF</b> FOOD, PRIZES, MUSIC <b>WINONA</b> @ <b>STUDENT ACTIVITY CENTER</b> 1-2 p.m.
<b>ALL WEEK LONG</b>	<b>I ♥ WSU CROWDFUNDING CAMPAIGN</b> WSU.MN/GIVE2WSU	<b>STUDENT PENNY WARS</b> @ <b>LOWER HYPHEN KRYZSKO COMMONS</b> 11 a.m.-2 p.m.	<b>MONDAY ROCHESTER</b> @ <b>CF206-208</b> 1-2 p.m.

I Love WSU Week is hosted by Alumni Relations and SOAR (Student Organization of Alumni Relations) and sponsored by the WSU Foundation. This week was created as a way to bring awareness, encourage philanthropy among students, and highlight what our current donors have already done. Not only is this week for students, but there are also ways for faculty, staff, alumni and friends to take part in the events. Throughout the week, there are many opportunities to share and show your love for WSU.

The week starts with Tag Day on Monday, when the campus will be covered with tags showing everything that was made possible because of donors. Inside and outside of buildings will be hundreds of tags showing off the possibilities of generous gifts. From the beautifully framed photography showcased in Somsen Hall, to that tree near the center of campus that turns bright yellow every fall, these things are here all because of donors. Take a stroll through campus to see all of the other items that are here because of donors— some may surprise you.

Day 2 is I Love WSU Day— which is very fitting because it is also Valentine's Day! Stop by the Lower Hyphen between 11am – 2pm to share what you love about WSU, play trivia and possibly win some prizes. We have various items, including gifts cards, which were all donated by local businesses. Everyone who comes and takes a photo will also be entered to win a grand prize.

Wednesday is Get the Scoop Day, which is exactly what it sounds like— **free ice cream**. Students who come to the Lower Hyphen between 11am – 2pm and write a personalized thank you to first time donors will receive a scoop of ice cream.

Thursday kicks off the All University Campaign, which encourages faculty and staff to become donors and say thank you to those who are already. President Olson will be speaking as well as a student scholarship recipient and Morey the robot! There will also be a special performance by the WSU Choir.

Throughout the entire week, there will be an opportunity for alumni and students to be involved with this week of giving. Alumni and friends will be able to give through the first ever I Love WSU Week Crowdfunding Campaign. During the week long campaign there will be challenges to encourage donations and double the impact of giving thanks to an anonymous donor who will match certain gifts dollar for dollar.

In addition, students can become involved with giving by participating through the penny wars. All week there will be



## I Heart WSU Week Calendar Graphic

canisters representing each academic college—Liberal Arts, Business, Education, Science and Engineering, Nursing and Health Sciences— and the college with the most points will receive all of the money raised. Pennies and paper bills are positive points, silver coins are negative points. Students can support their college or go against other colleges in this friendly competition.

This week holds a special place in my heart because without the generous support of donors, WSU would not be where it is today. I have been extremely fortunate to call WSU my home for almost six years, four as a student and two as an employee. I personally love WSU because of the support from the entire community— the campus and Winona community. They truly know how to make you feel at home and proud to call it home for however long you are here.

We set the bar high last year with our first I Love WSU Week. Nearly 5,000 people made a gift to the Foundation (this is anyone from staff to alumni and includes multiple gifts of all sizes to various funds.)

Because of this support, the Foundation was able to award over 900 scholarships this year. I personally benefited from a scholarship while I was a student and without it, I would not be where I am today. It only makes sense to return the favor for future generations.

Let's try to set a new record this year!

**—Katie Gottstein '15**



Photo Credit: Ka Vang '16



Photo Credit: Andrew Thoreson





Photo Credit: Ka Vang '16



I love WSU Donor Buttons on black background

Photo Credit: Ka Vang '16

I Love WSU Week Button

Katie Gottstein wearing an I Love WSU Week Button and holding her hands in the shape of a heart

Photo Credit: Lauren Haya Photography



# Tamara Berg | Faculty

February 6, 2017



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## Tamara Berg | Supporting Survivors Above and Beyond

Faculty member from Rochester, MN

**Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies (WGSS) professor at WSU for 20 years (PhD in English Literature and PhD minor in Women's & Gender Studies)**

**Director of Women's Studies and Grant Project Coordinator**

**“I’m happy to listen and help, and I know it’s not necessarily a faculty role, but when students are coming to me for resources and I am able to provide them, I will.”**

When talking to Professor Tamara Berg, it’s hard not to feel the sense of approachability and openness she emanates. This allows many students to turn to her in their greatest time of distress. Studies show 1 in 5 students will experience some sort of unwanted sexual contact, and Tamara is someone survivors on campus often turn to. She knows this situation all too well, as she was assaulted during her own college career. That’s why she goes above and beyond her duties as a professor to be a resource and advocate for students.

Many have heard the 1 in 5 statistic, but it’s hard for students to realize that out of their group of friends or

roommates, one will likely be sexually assaulted. Enduring something like this is unimaginable, but knowing the work Tamara does on campus and the resources that are available can reassure students they will be given the appropriate support, and it creates hope that these numbers will eventually change. Change is what Tamara continues to work toward, and the \$600,000 awarded through a federal Gender-Based Violence Grant moves WSU closer to a safer campus.

The first grant, received in 2013, funded the RE Initiative, a 24/7 GBV Confidential Helpline in partnership with the Women's Resource Center, the PACT Program and employee trainings. The continuation grant allowed the creation of a Coordinator for GBV Prevention and Intervention, now held by Heather Gerdes, an expansion of the bystander intervention program and it includes funding for student positions.

Each year since the awarding of the first grant in 2013, WSU has seen an increase in the reporting of sexual assaults on campus, as the number of assaults is unchanging. This is the first step toward the safer campus Tamara advocates for, and what we should all work towards.

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***Where do your passions come from and what has moved you to pursue this type of work on campus?***

I was sexually assaulted by a stranger in a ski mask in the shower of my dorm when I was a freshman. It was obviously a really horrible experience, but in retrospect how it was handled made it even worse. I reported it right away and the investigating officers asked me questions like why was I showering at night and did I scream. I internalized this victim blaming, but it was unintentional – the officers didn't understand the effect of their questions. As I became more aware of that and found myself on a college campus, I wanted to work to change that kind of culture and de-stigmatize reporting.

***Why do you make yourself a resource for students who experience sexual assault, even though it's not part of your professional role on campus?***

Because I'm openly active in this work and I'm a WGGGS professor, students have come to see me as a resource. I teach an intro class on women's and gender studies, and we talk a lot about sexual violence in the classroom where I talk about being a survivor. Whether students come to me with their own problems or on behalf of a friend, I think they see me as more approachable because I am more open. I listen to them and tell them what resources are available, and because of all of the training I've received through the grant, I know a lot more about Title IX regulations. I'm happy to listen and help, and I know it's not necessarily a faculty role, but when students are coming to me for resources and I am able to provide them, I will.

***What allows you to cope and remain motivated when you hear stories of sexual assault on campus?***

We have a great team that is growing and includes student advocates, Heather Gerdes as GBV Coordinator and Lori Mikl as Title IX Coordinator. I am not alone. It's also so rewarding when you know you've made a difference for a student. I think back to when I was a student and what limited resources there were, and seeing how far we've come at WSU continues to motivate me.

***Tell us more about the Gender-Based Violence Grant. What inspired you to write the grant (along with Connie Kamara, Diana Müller and Lori Mikl)?***

I wrote the grant with them because I saw an opportunity to combine my interest in gender-based violence on college campuses, teaching and the service that I do for students. \$300,000 is a lot of money to a university our size, and it really pushed us forward in productive ways that we could not have done without the grant. Even though the grant is really just helping us comply with federal and state laws, it put power behind creating the Coordinated Community Response Team, engaging the right people and bringing everyone to the table.

***Where would you like to see WSU five years from now regarding gender-based violence prevention?***

I'd like to see us with a student-centered and welcoming resource center that students could feel comfortable walking into, whether they needed to talk to a confidential advocate, ask questions for a friend or just write a report on sexual assault on campus. It's important to have that physical space because it's another way to de-stigmatize GBV; it's a way to disrupt culture saying survivors should be silent. It's hard for me to believe right now that we still don't have an actual resource center for GBV survivors. This is something that I'm pushing for, and I hope we hear from students because they can apply pressure and urgency to a situation.

***Why do you think resources are scarce at universities for sexual assault victims, and what is being done at WSU to improve this?***

A lot of the time universities don't want to admit that sexual violence is an issue on their campus. However, it really means we understand that there is a nation-wide problem, and we're committed to being a leader to solving that problem. But, I understand the hesitancy to see it that way, as people don't know how to frame sexual assault. They're afraid it will reflect poorly on the university, when I think it's the opposite. President Scott Olson has been a leader in understanding this. He will actually be attending our training in February, and, of 28 grantee campuses that are going to be at the training, he is the only college president



Tamara Berg with GBV Coordinator Heather Gerdes and the RE Initiative team attending.

***What is one thing people on campus and in the community can do to be part of the solution?***

Commit to the “It’s on us” idea. We are the ones who create the campus we want to be a part of. It’s thinking about the university and advocating for a place that is safe, a place where we respond appropriately if someone is hurt.

***If you could invite anyone to sit on this bench and have a conversation, who would it be and what would you talk about?***

At this moment, because I just returned back from the March on Washington, I would love to sit and talk with the young woman who was part of the organizing team, Tamika Mallory. The speech she gave at the march was absolutely amazing, and I think she’s going to be a huge leader. I would ask her about what she sees as the key issues facing young people today, what she sees as possible strategies to work productively on those issues and what she thinks about GBV on college campuses.

**Interviewed and edited by Allison Mueller '17 and photographed by Brian Waldbillig '18**

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# The Power of Positivity: Making the World a Better Place

January 26, 2017  
Feature Post, Improving Our World



Positive thinking is often overlooked as a way to make the world a better place. People get so caught up in something that goes wrong or how to be better they forget to see the good. I know I am guilty of this. However, we can all learn from taking a step back and thinking about the positive side of a situation. Positivity can improve your life as well as the world in these 4 ways:

**1) Productivity will increase**

Studies show that if a person feels valued by others and believe they are doing a good job, their productivity increases. They also treat those around them the same way, which leads to even more productivity. Instead of dreading working on a project, people begin to enjoy it and want to work on it.

**2) People become happier**

Similar to productivity, people tend to be happier when they feel valued and appreciated. This also makes people more likely to go out of their way to help another person. Happiness is kind of like a chain reaction – when someone around you is happy it is hard not to be happy too.

**3) Stress levels decrease**

Going back to what was mentioned earlier, people often worry about the negative side of a situation or how to constantly improve. If we take a step back and look at what went well, stress levels will decrease, and the less stressed we are the better the world can be.

**4) People become healthier**

With decreased stress and people being more productive and happier, people become healthier. When you are overstressed and frustrated you can make yourself sick. I have definitely done this to myself in the past. No one wants to be sick all the time or around someone who is sick. Being healthy not only improves your life, but the world around you.

Overall, there are many ways positivity can lead to improving the world. The happier, healthier, more productive and stress free we are the more others around us will begin to be too.

# What You Can Take Away From Obama's Farewell Address

January 20, 2017  
Improving Our World



Photo from ABC News.

Barack Obama's Farewell Address was an emotional and inspiring final message to America delivered on Jan. 10, 2017. Obama has enabled huge changes for America in the last eight years, which can qualify him as one of the most inspiring figures today. This is why we should carefully listen to his Farewell Address and act on a few of his important points as young individuals, as we move forward with Donald Trump's inauguration today.

Obama's words pertain to everyone regardless of their political views and opinions. As students, Obama's speech provides guidance through its motivational, inspiring and positive direction for America's future. There are two different words of advice Obama addresses in his speech that will allow us to enable positive change in our country.

**We must talk and listen to each other.** Obama tells us when we tend to confine ourselves in our own bubbles and create our own thoughts in them; we keep what we believe and what we want to hear in our own bubbles, whether or not it's true. The point of this metaphor is not to display fear and uncertainty that we seem to have openly expressed from our bubbles to our voices over the last few years, his point is to simply communicate and listen. Obama wishes for America to grow strong by creating compromises and listening with patience to what each other has to say. Obama reminds us of the power we have when we can come together, especially as young, educated Americans, and we must demand the change we



wish to see.

**We must be passionate and positive.** Obama encourages protecting the American lifestyle in the same passionate way as the military officials who fight for our country. He tells us our identity is something to be aware of and guard. Being passionate and positive will contribute to the change we wish to see, as he explains that if something needs fixing, become motivated and organize this change through teamwork and passion.

The young are who define the future and it's important to understand how our actions, mindsets and hearts will shape the years to come. As students, we must believe in ourselves and in this country, and use our positivity and drive to shape the future – our future. As Obama said, "I'm asking you to believe. Not in my ability to bring about change – but in yours."

# Our Time at Healing Adventures Camp

January 11, 2017  
Improving Our World

Grief is something that impacts everyone at some point in their lives. It's a topic that is especially hard for children and teens to grasp. Research says that 4% of children experience grief. Childhood bereavement is associated with psychiatric problems in the first two year after a death of a loved one.

There are limited resources in the Rochester and Winona area for children who are experiencing grief. As graduate students in Counseling Program, we recognize will be helping children through grief in various settings. Children need access to counselors, art therapy, music therapy and trauma-and-grief based therapy. They need a safe place to be able to process through the grief and so three of us, Shannon, Stephanie, and Meghan, decided to volunteer our time at Healing Adventures Camp, which is a day camp for children from ages 5-18 who's loved one has died. The camp is sponsored by Mayo Clinic Hospice and offers various activities for children throughout the day.

Shannon was a co-facilitator of the fourth and fifth-grade group. She had six youth of fourth and fifth-graders in her group. She was a support for children to share about their loved one who had died, she helped students with rock climbing and processing through emotions, she answered questions about death, and was a leader to help children process through their grief and loss through different activities. Stephanie helped with music therapy. The children shared special memories of their loved one they lost and the special memories were put into a song that was sung at the end of camp for all children and their parents. Meghan was an activity helper and floated between activities with all age groups which included creating memory stones, forget me not flowers, key chains, memory pillows, a climbing wall and petting zoo.

Through our project, we recognized the lack of resources for people working with grieving children and created a brochure for school counselors, school social workers and parents. The brochure includes a list of resources such as camp in the area and in the twin cities area. It also provides information about books that are helpful for children who are grieving along with ideas to help grieving children, such as making a memory stone or making a picture frame.

**-Stephanie Emanuel**



## Our Digital Humanity Film Series Part 5: “Videodrome”

December 9, 2016  
Improving Our World

Along with several colleagues, I helped put on the “Our Digital Humanity: The Film Series” last month. Based on the university theme, we chose films that connected and supplied new ideas for viewers. While the other films typically took a more direct look at technology, like “Lo and Behold: Reveries of the Connected World”’s documentation of technology’s effects on humanity, and “Her”’s romanticism in regards to technological interaction, “Videodrome,” the film I chose, was the obvious outlier.

David Cronenberg’s “Videodrome” is easily the most unique of the films in the series due in no small part to its content and style. It’s a hallmark of the visceral horror genre, focusing on a fusion of psychological and physical horror. It tells the story of Canadian TV executive Max Renn (James Woods) who stumbles upon a pirate broadcast titled Videodrome. Initially drawn to the hyperrealistic torture and violence in the show, Renn begins to search out the origins of the broadcast, and falls into a web of hallucinations, mind-control, ultra-violence and corruption. Unlike the other films like “Lo and Behold” and “Her,” “Videodrome” is deeply rooted in surrealistic symbolism and allegorical commentary. Utilizing his trademark visceral horror style, Cronenberg crafts an uncomfortable and dark take on the future of media consumption.

There are two lines in the film which are of particular importance. The first is spoken by Brian O’Blivion, which ends up becoming the backbone for the majority of the plot: “The television screen is the retina of the mind’s eye. Therefore, the television screen is part of the physical structure of the brain. Therefore, whatever appears on the television screen emerges as raw experience for those who watch it. Therefore, television is reality, and reality is less than television.” In “Videodrome,” this is shown literally. The tapes that Max Renn and others watch cause visual and physical hallucinations, quickly increasing in prevalence and complexity to a point where reality and fantasy coexist. However, Cronenberg’s point wasn’t meant to be taken so literally. The real focus here is on our internal changes due to media consumption, specifically the violent ones.

“Videodrome” sets up the argument that what we watch on television or other formats changes who we are on the inside. Today, the vast majority of these shows are riddled with violence, tragedy, and scandal. If you were to turn on the news, I guarantee there would be something about a violent or offensive act in some form. The most watched TV show on air today, “The Walking Dead,” is also one of the most consistently gruesome. We, as humans, are drawn to violence by our base curiosities. To many of us, it’s something that we’ll never see in actuality, so to fulfill those inclinations we turn to television. In essence, violent television is nothing more than a form of masochistic voyeurism via technological means.

As far as its effect on us, “Videodrome” keeps it purposely vague and open-ended. Though Max Renn’s life seemingly ends in tragedy, the consistency of his hallucinations allows for doubt to seep in. This uncertainty is crucial to “Videodrome” thematic ties to the university theme. Technology is an ever changing and ever evolving field, and as such, our understanding and ties to it change with remarkable frequency. However, by using it to fulfill our darkest fantasies, we can unintentionally allow it to change our thoughts and our minds. In essence, it creates disillusionment and disconnection with the actual tragedy and effects of violence in society.

However, I would not say that “Videodrome” is arguing that violent media needs to disappear completely. The film itself is riddled with grotesque body horror and twisted, violent permutations, which is the exact violence that the film is seemingly arguing against. Instead, the film is arguing a more simple and approachable message: If we are to continue on





with our connection to violent media, we must learn to adapt and separate ourselves from what we are viewing. Letting the violence take hold will change us as individuals, and in an increasingly visual and connected society, this idea is imperative to our development.

The second quote from the film is a repeated one: “Long Live the New Flesh.” Often used by people affected by the “*Videodrome*,” the quote implies a direct correlation between technology and the changing nature of humanity. This ties back to an older point, but instead of looking at a more specific medium (i.e. television), this quote is more open-ended. The film seems to make the argument that technology is, in a sense, the next form of humanity.

Evolution has existed as long as life has existed on the planet. As Charles Darwin initially stated, species change over time to adapt to changes in their environment and lifestyle. Now, while this is predominantly in a natural sense, technology as it exists today hasn’t been around long enough to be considered an evolutionary trigger. But looking around you, isn’t it already changing us as a species? “Long Live the New Flesh” can be considered a call to the future of humanity, as we take advantage of technology in its various forms to help us survive. Limb and organ creation, information sharing, visual editing and changes...any and all of these concepts could help change the development of mankind, and set us on a path toward the ultimate technological singularity.



## Our Digital Humanity Film Series Part 4: “Cyber Seniors”

December 8, 2016  
Improving Our World

This semester, several Film Studies students and myself hosted a film series titled “Our Digital Humanity: The Film Series.” The series was related to the university theme exploring digital tools and their impact on our society. With many of our films exploring the uncertainty associated with the increase of digital tools and their place in our daily lives, the other students and myself wanted to include a film that focuses solely on the optimistic portrayals of these very tools. It is for this reason that we chose to show Saffron Cassaday’s “Cyber Seniors.” This documentary differs from the other films in how it focuses entirely on digital tools’ ability to help us connect and communicate with one another.

The filming for “Cyber Seniors” began in 2009, when Saffron’s sisters, Maucaulee and Kascha, were inspired to start the Cyber Seniors program after seeing the impact learning to use the internet had on their own grandparents. The two high school students started the after-school program and invited other teenage volunteers to a local retirement residence in Toronto where they tutored the residents on how to use internet tools such as Facebook, YouTube, and Skype. The seniors also have a competition for who can gain the most likes on their YouTube video. This inspires the seniors and their mentors to try new and creative means for attracting views and likes such as a rap music video, a cooking tutorial, and a video about friendship.

With an overwhelmingly optimistic and heartfelt approach, “Cyber Seniors” focuses on the internet’s potential to not only bring people closer together, but also help them explore new things on and off the computer. In the film, the audience has an intimate view of the seniors as they learn how to Skype their grandchildren, watch cooking tutorials and listen to music. The film does not offer other perspectives concerning technology, it only demonstrates the internet’s ability to reconnect us to family and friends that we are not able to see otherwise. Cassaday also portrays the Cyber Seniors program as a way to bridge the ever-widening technology gap through teenage mentors working with senior citizens. “Cyber Seniors” demonstrates the internet’s power to connect us and expose us to new perspectives and possibilities that we may have never experienced otherwise.

The small after-school Cyber Seniors program started by Maucalee and Kascha did not end after the documentary was finished; it is now an international campaign. After our screening of “Cyber Seniors,” Cyber Seniors’ Communications Director, Tess Finlay, answered questions concerning the program. Their website provides resources and training opportunities for individuals and communities interested in starting their own Cyber Seniors program to teach senior citizens how to use different technology tools and to bridge the technology gap between generations.

**-Aubrey Giammarco**





# Friendship Place: Where Everyone Has a Companion

December 8, 2016  
Improving Our World

I want to share a few quick facts with you:

- 51% of America's public school students are ranked at or below poverty level.
- 50% of high-income students will receive a college degree. 10% of low-income students will receive a college degree.
- Poverty is ranked as one of the top five most dangerous threats.

While these statistics are both staggering and sickening, I am sure they did not shock you. Unfortunately, low-income and poverty are not new issues of concern. In fact, we have become so accustomed to these realities that it would be incredibly easy to read these few stats, close the browser and not give them another thought throughout the day. However, I encourage you to take a moment to pause and allow the enormity of what low-income is going to look and feel like for a 6-year-old, 13-year-old, 17-year-old.

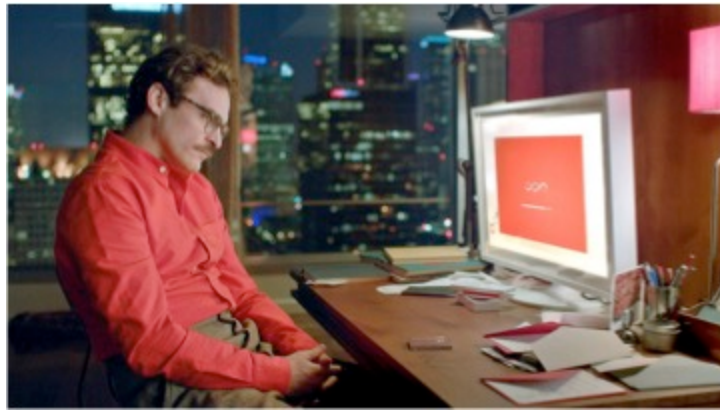


Photo from Laura Nickel on vimeo.com.

There is a little oasis located in SE Rochester called Friendship Place. Over the past semester, I have had the great honor of volunteering weekly at Friendship Place. Friendship Place offers a safe and positive environment for elementary, middle and highschool students to study, receive homework help and participate in other fun activities. Poverty is a hard-to-break cycle so often because, although there are resources available to low-income families, the families may be unaware of these resources or have difficulty accessing them. As it is run solely on volunteers, the programming at Friendship Place is free and meets the students in their own neighborhood. Friendship Place is located across from an apartment complex and most students walk over every day after school. The children who participate in the programs offered are typically low-income. While their parents are hard at work, striving to create a better life for their children, Friendship Place can offer the academic assistance to kids so that they might find success in school.

The bottom line is kids are kids. Whether they have had college funds set aside since conception or they will be the first in their family to graduate high school, all children strive for the same kind of love and acceptance. And this can come from you! Take a moment – just a moment – to speak truth and love into a child's life TODAY. I know that we are all busy and have crazy schedules. However, if this is pulling at your heartstrings, find a place to volunteer and show the kids who must fight harder than their peers to succeed, that they *can* succeed and *you* are willing to stick with them through it. A great place to start is at Kids First here in Winona!

**-Sarah Pease**



## Our Digital Humanity Film Series Part 3: “Her”

December 7, 2016  
Improving Our World

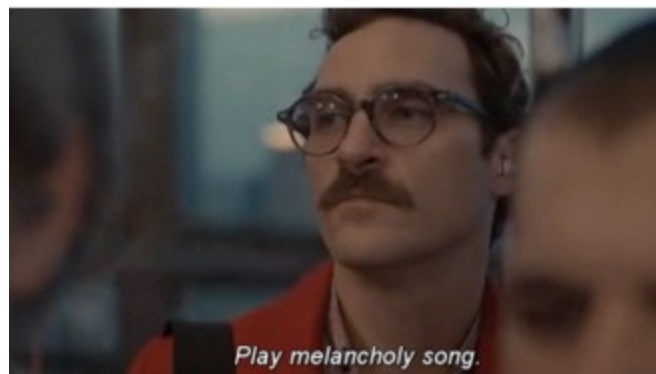
Over the course of the Fall 2016 semester, me and four other film studies students at WSU collaborated and curated films that best represent our university theme, “Our Digital Humanity.” We all worked together to organize a student film festival in order to present “Modern Times” (dir. Charlie Chaplin), “Lo and Behold: Reveries of the Connected World” (dir. Werner Herzog), “Her” (dir. Spike Jonze), “Cyber Seniors” (dir. Saffron Cassaday) and “Videodrome” (dir. David Cronenberg). Film curation and organizing a film festival was a busy but rewarding experience. It was a challenge to introduce the film “Her” knowing that, as the host, I have only so much information and thoughts to share before I play the feature film.

Spike Jonze’s 2013 science fiction drama film “Her” involves a lonely, middle-aged writer, Theodore, who forms a relationship with his IOS (Intelligent Operating System). This film explores and enhances our awareness that we depend on technology to meet not only our emotional needs but also our social needs, thus defining what “our digital humanity” entails.

Opening the film, Theodore uses technology to write letters to someone as if they were to a lover. He does not hand write the letters but simply verbalizes his words in front of the computer. Keeping in mind this film takes place in the not-too-distant future, what if reality did come down to people throwing out the pen and paper? We do this now by typing on our laptops or smartphones through voice command but by eliminating the very act of physically writing in a journal is, to me, frightening.

Not only does he have the will to talk to technology, but technology is able to communicate with him as a human would. His phone’s email operator is able to read off received emails and who they were from. Throughout the film, Theodore is seen walking around the city while hearing these messages, showing his high dependence on daily technology that goes everywhere with him. Although the modern world of technology has not advanced our phones to read and comprehend every word that is sent to us, it has continued to advance our need to purchase the latest version of the iPad or a gaming system.

I believe one of the key points to take away from this film is that technology has affected our ability to communicate and socialize with others. Theodore is an introvert and has gone through a prolonged divorce, all the while hiding in his home playing an interactive video game and responding to requests for sex over the phone. Samantha, his IOS, is able to meet





Theodore's emotional needs in human conversation (through her voice) but his childhood friend, Amy, is the one that fills his social need through physical and verbal communication. I think there is a lot to consider here. The idea that technology acts as a medium for us to communicate with others socially, whether it's through Facebook or phone, limits us to how socially capable we are; technology is a medium in which people can escape from the pressures of the physical world.

Our digital humanity has been defined by what "Her" reveals – how and why the world is driven daily by technology. It shows that technology has become central to our daily lives. Advances will change the way we communicate socially, whether it's through electronic letters or video messages. It shows our high dependence on multiple forms of technology, from daily emails to voice mails to listen to later. It gives us a way to escape from the physical world and reality. I often forget how much I depend on technology to communicate with others in my daily life.

**-Brittney Bluhm**



# Mohamed Elhindi & Carol Daul-Elhindi '99 | Alumni and Staff

December 2, 2016



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## Mohamed Elhindi '96 & Carol Daul-Elhindi '99 | Ending Suicide With Solomon's Song

Mohamed Elhindi is a '96 alumnus

**Management Information Systems (College of Science & Engineering)**

Carol Daul-Elhindi is a '99 alumna

**WSU Assistant Professor Librarian**

**Library Liaison for WSU's College of Business**

## **“When you experience a loss like that you have two options: you can fold and call it quits, or you can do something good.”**

Friends and family who knew Solomon Elhindi can share endless stories about his kindness, empathy for others and goofy personality. But behind his smile, Solomon was struggling with mental health issues and was 14 years old when he took his life in January. This immense loss sent friends and family into a very dark place, and as his parents Carol and Mohamed dealt with this tragedy, they found a light that continues to guide them through Solomon’s passing. This light is called Solomon’s Song, a nonprofit organization they founded that fosters community connections and promotes healthy minds and bodies. The idea that we are more alike than we are different drives this organization to join individuals and reduce mental health stigma.

What originated as a healing process for the Elhindi family has turned into an organization that has educated and brought the Winona community together. The main goal of Solomon’s Song is to end suicide, and that begins with creating awareness of mental health issues and conversations around this. From Solomon’s Super Soaker Fun Fest and the John McCutcheon Concert to Youth Mental Health First Aid courses and training, the organization is reducing stigma one event at a time. Next on the agenda, Solomon’s Song is hosting an interfaith conversation at WSU in early February.

With the passing of their son, the Elhindi family chose to channel their energy into something positive. When interviewing Carol and Mohamed, I could feel the weight of their recent loss as they shared their story of tragedy, healing and community action. While some days are darker than others for friends and family, Solomon’s Song allows Solomon’s caring soul to continue to shine and make a difference in the lives of others.

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### ***What is the story behind how and why you started Solomon’s Song?***

**Carol:** We lost our son to suicide, and when it happens, you feel so lost. You don’t know where to turn and we decided we needed to do something to make a difference and funnel our energy into something positive. It started with the Super Soaker Fun Fest because we wanted to reduce stigma and wanted a way for Solomon’s friends to have fun and remember him. We came home one night and my husband was really down and I was really down and I said, “This is it. We need to move our energy into something positive.” Then we thought about the idea of the Fun Fest and then the concert. We really wanted to reduce stigma, because one of the things Solomon said was, “I don’t want anybody to know that I’m struggling.” We know of six kids who’ve passed from suicide in the public schools, so we wanted to get training and professional development out there for teachers, students, parents and families to normalize conversations about mental health. That’s when we started coming up with these ideas and started a nonprofit. We started this as a way to channel, but I think Solomon’s been guiding us. It still hurts a lot, but it feels like we’re making a difference and people have been touched by it.

**Mohamed:** The whole idea behind Solomon’s Song is to honor something that Solomon would want to do himself. When I look at his picture, I say, “Your story’s not done yet.” So, Solomon’s Song is Solomon’s story. This is what Solomon’s all about: bridging the gap, equality and helping people. What Solomon’s Song provided to me was healing. When you experience a loss like that you have two options: you can fold and call it quits, or

you can do something good. For a while I thought I was folding. Now, Solomon's Song has become a way to heal not just for us, but for other families experiencing the same loss like us.

*As Solomon's Song's first event, what was the community response to the Super Soaker Fun Fest in August?*

**Carol:** It was amazing. Before the event, we had 450 people registered and 250 people showed up the day of. The most rewarding part was how many people said, "Thank you, thank you for doing this," because they had either been touched by suicide, struggled with mental illness themselves or has a family member who struggles. Everybody seems to be struggling alone, and this was an opportunity for us to build community and allow people to come together for a common cause. It was a huge success, and people had a lot of fun that day. It was worth all of the hard work putting it together.

**Mohamed:** This community's been a phenomenal support. Winona is all about building community, and the people here care about building this city to be a place everybody wants to live. The kindness we've experienced from this community for the last 26 years, I don't think you'll see it anywhere. The support has been something that's hard to describe – it's been real, and they've been there for us and other people, too.

*On the Solomon's Song website, it says, "We are all more alike than we are different." Can you explain this key phrase?*

**Carol:** In so many ways we are all more alike than we are different, and so many people are struggling with things they keep hidden because they don't want anybody else to know and that gives power to the stigma. After he passed, there were people who came up to us and said their mother, father, brother, or sister passed from suicide. Did we know any of that before he passed? No. We have so many commonalities that we don't even know about. When you look at religions, there are so many more things that are common in religions, but we all dwell on the things that are different. We want to let people know that we are more alike, we can talk, build community, and in that community it gives us strength and it gives us hope.

*What are the barriers people face when dealing with mental illness, and how does Solomon's Song help people overcome these barriers?*

**Carol:** I think some of the barriers are that people don't know where to go to get help. Who do I call? Where do I go? What do I do? That's why at the Super Soaker Fun Fest we had therapists there with green shirts on because we thought it was a very comfortable setting and a fun day, so if anybody had questions they could ask. I think that's one of the biggest hurdles for people; letting other people know you have a problem and being seen as weak rather than having an illness. It's an illness like any other thing – it just affects us in a very different way, and it's hidden for the most part.

*Where do you see Solomon's Song in five years? What's the vision for its future in the community?*

**Carol:** Our ultimate goal is to have a teen center and not just a hang out area, but a teen center that supports kids who are struggling with mental illness. Our next steps involve getting our programming into the public schools and the community, but then we're going to work on focus groups to see what teens in Winona really need and what can we do to work with that.

**Mohamed:** The biggest thing we'd like to see is the day people can talk about mental health just like they talk about a headache. Over five years, our ultimate goal is to normalize the conversation. That's mission accomplished. The day people know how to get the help they need is mission accomplished. The day we build what I call the "Solomon Youth Center" is mission accomplished.

*If you could invite anyone to sit on this bench and have a conversation, who would it be and what would you talk about?*

**Carol:** I lost my mom, my dad and my son all within six months of each other. I'd give anything to have one more conversation with them because after someone passes, there's clarity of things that you didn't see or understand before they passed. I'd thank them for everything they've done for me.

**Interviewed and edited by Allison Mueller '17 and photographed by Ka Vang '16**

If you know someone in our community — faculty, staff, student, alumni or friend of WSU — who we could feature, or if you have other Warrior Way feedback to share, please contact us.

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# Our Digital Humanity Film Series Part 2: “Lo and Behold: Reveries of the Connected World”

December 2, 2016  
Improving Our World



This year, I had the opportunity to be a member of a group of Winona State students tasked with creating a film series based off of the University’s theme for the year, “Our Digital Humanity.” With this series, we hoped as a group that we could underscore the university’s theme as well as illustrate it through the use of film.

The film that I presented on, Werner Herzog’s 2016’s documentary “Lo and Behold: Reveries of the Connected World,” was a great fit for illustrating the theme and worked as a perfect in-between between Charlie Chaplin’s 1936 film “Modern Times” (see page 188) (a film that examined society’s response to the integration of technology into their daily culture) and Spike Jonze’s 2014 film “Her” (a film that looks at the impact technology has made in our society, and how it could influence us in the near-future) by examining the pros and cons of technology’s past, present and future.

Interestingly enough, the film’s creator, Werner Herzog, is very much an outsider to the technological boom that has grasped our culture. Herzog grew up in Sachrang, a small village, where he had no access to a flushing toilet, telephone, or even running water — he wasn’t even aware of the presence of film until a traveling projectionist came to his school. After living in Sachrang for 12 years, Herzog moved back to Munich, the city he was born, and began to prepare to be a director. Since then, Herzog has been at the forefront of the New German Cinematic Movement and directed over 60 films, most of which are documentaries.

“Lo and Behold” portrays this digitalization of society as a multi-faceted and complex issue: one that has a lot of good, as well as a lot of bad. At the very beginning, we see an enthusiastic professor describing the first use of the Internet: to send a message between two separate computers on opposite ends – an incredible advancement in communication. Yet, Herzog shows us that with advances like that, we must also accept the consequences. As shown later, that same communication model was used to spread the image of a woman’s disfigured corpse after being in a car crash, an image that later ended up being sent to her still-grieving father.

Even though the film shows this darkness, it still ends on a positive note by looking to the future. We are still a culture that is determined to use the advances we make for good: whether it is creating controllable prosthetic appendages for those in need, or working to create artificial intelligence, leading minds are striving to move forward in a way that benefits our digital humanity.

**-Jake Nielsen**



"Lo and Behold" documents the history of the internet, including its origins with Leonard Kleinrock.





# My Advocacy Project: Student Parents at WSU

December 1, 2016  
Improving Our World

Advocacy can be tricky; sometimes we just have to dive in, take chances and learn from our mistakes.

Diving in, I decided to target a population that is very near and dear to my heart: student parents at WSU. The Student Parent Program offers pregnant and parenting students direction and resources, along with a peer lunch each week and a family dinner each month that offers students a place to connect with other student parents. This is huge for a population who is struggling to find an identity in a college atmosphere seemingly absent of this atmosphere.

My advocacy project was very personal to me. As a student and single parent of three kiddos under the age of four, this group of individuals attributed to how I made it through my undergraduate years. I chose to explore the struggles and hardships of student parents, however, I realized this population was experiencing even more struggles than I was aware of; being away from the group for so long, I didn't realize what all was going on. In addition to the unfair circumstances placed on this population, the funding aspect of the program has recently placed this group into crisis mode.

I took some time to identify the main issues with previous work in my multicultural class, so this semester I decided to try and advocate for the cause with an action plan. I approached the topic both on the individual level as well as the administrative level. I met with the student parents three times. The first encounter was to identify barriers and strengths along with strategies of proposed self-sufficiency. Empowering the population through counseling was a way to advocate for them in their own socioeconomic environment (Newsome & Gladding, 2014). The second and third visit was based around a hashtag and letter writing campaign I designed to allow the student parents to use their own photographs and narratives to self-advocate. I let the students write whatever they wanted, and came up with some pretty cool results!

“As a single parent, I get totally caught up worrying about finances and how to get everything done. I feel great to be able to stop in the middle of the day and join others who understand what I am going through; so I come for the lunches and sometimes don't want to leave to go to class. It is so nice knowing that I am not alone.”

“I used to walk around campus when I was pregnant and I would get people staring at me like they had never seen a pregnant person before. Kids in my classes would make comments like they were surprised I was in school. It felt as though they were looking at me with some moral judgment.”

“Our lunch group has provided me a nice break; to come in and talk with and relate to other parents on so many different topics. One day a week, I don't have to worry about lunch which is a huge treat as a single mother.”

“At times, I've started out my day, being down for whatever reason...then when I remember it's Tuesday (our lunch day), I smile and perk up and make it to our group. I think this is so valuable for so many reasons and the ones I noted, I feel, are probably the most important reasons. I feel this way because this type of support contributes to positive mental health and for so long as a single mother I have really struggled in this area.





Parenting groups like this are such a crutch and I truly appreciate them so thank you for all that you do; thank you for your support.”



After compiling this information, I met with some key players of the organization and advocated for the cause, offering copies of the letters and videos to give to current and potential donors. Next, I reached out to past donors thanking them for what they have done for us. These letters strategically and intentionally were absent of requests for funding. However, I was able to invite them to a weekly lunch and to the student parent center on campus.

This whole process taught me first that there is no one way to advocate, it could be on the local level, it could incorporate stakeholders from different parts of the state, or it could be global. However, the path chosen must be strategic and intentional. I learned that giving information to powerful people isn't always the right strategy. Instead of giving it to powerful people blindly, I had to do my homework and give it to the right, powerful people.

I will take my experiences from this class and add them to the plethora of experiences I have already acquired with this population, and continue to be mindful that any of this could be helpful to a future client someday. Even though the assignment is over, I have continued to advocate for the student parent support initiative on campus. The next stage of my plan is to begin to record oral narratives to give potential grant funders, and other donors to give them a view of what it's like to be a student parent and how important it is to continue this program. Like my efforts with this group, I will continue to spread my efforts elsewhere as time and resources become available. Advocacy isn't easy, sometimes it's tricky, but I dove in, learned some lessons and hopefully helped some folks along the way... AND SO CAN YOU!

**-Kathryn Tibbs**

# What Homelessness Taught Me

November 30, 2016  
Improving Our World



A homeless camp in Duluth, MN. Photo taken from minnpost.com.

To whomever may be reading this, I challenge you to take a moment and imagine yourself without a home, bed, job, family, healthcare, place to shower or groceries in a nice, cold refrigerator. This might be hard for you to wrap your head around, but hundreds of thousands of people experience this reality every single day. These things are just a tiny piece of homelessness.

If you're like some, you have never really thought much about being homeless yourself or gave any thought to the homeless community. This isn't because you didn't care, but perhaps because you simply did not know how severe and real the problem was. Up until this semester, I was one of those people. Thankfully, I was able to perform an advocacy study to bring awareness to homelessness in Minnesota and Wisconsin, and it has genuinely changed the way I view my life and the lives of people in need forever.

To begin my project, I decided that I needed to start from the bottom and learn much more about the homeless community. In an effort to fulfill that need, I attended the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless Annual Conference in Rochester, MN this past October. There, I learned about the daily life of a homeless person, the challenges they face and was able to listen to some incredible speakers. I also was taught how to be an advocate for the homeless by talking to our law

# Minnesota Coalition *for the* Homeless

makers and letting them know what we want. This includes making phone calls and writing letters to get our point across to those who make the big decisions.

From there, I continued to learn more and began to volunteer for a couple different organizations. I chose to work with organizations that strive to help those who need it, such as a free clothing shop for struggling teens and food banks in my home town. By bringing the reality of homelessness closer to my own “back yard,” it helped to put into perspective for me just how prevalent this is. Unfortunately, problems like this are easy to overlook if they don’t affect you directly... but what if one day they did? Would you want others to overlook it then?

Overall, this project opened my eyes more than I ever imagined that it would. It has shown me how privileged and lucky I am and has given me a new perspective on other people. I no longer look at others; I try to see them. See what they might be dealing with secretly or openly, and be aware that they may be afraid of things that I cannot understand personally. As a future counselor, it has given me insight into a population that I could work with one day. Along with that, it has driven home this idea: Never assume, never judge. We have no idea what people are going through at first glance and we definitely have no idea what their stories are. If you take anything away from this post, please take that. Do not judge others, smug others, or assume you know what another person is or is not. Take the time to listen and learn, with an open, helpful heart.

**-Molly Serum**





# Our Digital Humanity Film Series Part 1: “Modern Times”

November 29, 2016  
Improving Our World

I was lucky enough to be one of the film studies students who curated Our Digital Humanity: The Film Series, a series that supports Winona State University’s theme, “Our Digital Humanity.” The event was spread out into five days that included five feature films and a few short films along with audience discussion. Overall, it was a success and a big learning experience.

The event began with five Winona State film studies students who were tasked with curating a film series that supported the university theme, “Our Digital Humanity.” Our first task was to draft a list that we thought would complement the theme, then narrowing down our choices to the absolute best ones while being aware of the budget we were given for licenses. After our list was complete, we each individually contacted production companies to obtain public performance licenses. Our next step was to try and promote our series to both the university and general public. We completed this task by press releases, word-of-mouth, digital signage, and physical poster prints.

I presented on the film “Modern Times” directed by Charlie Chaplin, the first film to be screened in our series line-up. This was the first time I was introduced to one of Chaplin’s films. As I watched the film I made sure to note how exactly the film tied to the University theme. Doing so, to gather material for the screening I was going to be hosting. In order for my audience to understand the film and the context it was being presented in, I had to connect the film with the university theme. I did so, by thinking how the film plays as a stepping stone in understanding today’s society in the digital age.

Chaplin used the film as sort of a critique of the effects the industrial revolution had on society and the individual. In the film, Chaplin’s character, The Tramp, finds himself working at a factory in a production line. As he continues to work along others they each make a contribution, following a workflow pattern. This is when I noticed this was one of Chaplin’s critiques on the idea of conformity in society as we attached ourselves to machines to produce content. This idea can be traced back to the present day where our society has driven digital technology to be tied with our everyday lives. Today, we depend on digital technology to provide many different services such as jobs, education, and communication. We have depended on the digital machines, much like in Chaplin’s world, to provide content/services for ourselves.

In a different scene Chaplin is a guinea pig for a new invention that feeds factory workers during lunch time. The objective of the invention is to provide workers with a cycle of different lunch foods in a timely manner in order to have a quicker and efficient lunch hour. The theory is that it will open up some time for the factory to continue production. This sense of time efficient technology has made its way into our current society. We have introduced a wide range of mobile devices that provide quick and fast service in order for us to have more time in the day. Of course, this is not only done in our personal lives but also our professional lives. Every company tries to find the best way to produce more, for less, and do it faster.

One interesting note on the film, was the context it was set in. At the time of the release, 1936, “talkies” have been well established in the film industry, yet “Modern Times” was mostly a silent film. Chaplin was very resistant on the transition to sound as he thought adding dialogue would change the comedic persona of his iconic character, “The Tramp.” However, Chaplin did write a whole script for the film that he later ditched.

Instead, he decided to put some dialogue into the film but presented it in a very interesting way. While watching the film, you can see that whenever a character speaks, it’s done through some sort of device (a video call, radio.) This is one of the many other reasons we chose “Modern Times” to be presented in the series as the kick-off film. It is a stepping stone in understanding our university theme, “Our Digital Humanity” as well as introducing the other films in the line-up.

**-Gilberto Hidalgo**



# ThanksGIVING Done Right: 7 Ways to Celebrate the Holiday

November 22, 2016  
Improving Our World



On Sunday, Nov. 20 Dream Closet Winona held a clothing drive in which community members came to campus and picked out clothes for free. Just one awesome way Warriors are giving back this season!

It's Thanksgiving time! That means endless turkey, stuffing, gravy and the expected food coma to follow. We all love our traditions with family and friends at this time, but what about those who are unable to participate in their much-loved traditions this holiday season, or don't have any at all? I encourage you to celebrate Thanksgiving a little different this year by focusing on the giving part of the holiday. Beyond simply donating money to a cause (which is also a great way to give back!), here are 7 other ways you can give back this week:

#### **1) Visit a nursing home**

Imagine the impact you can make on someone's day at a nursing home if you visited for even an hour or two with Thanksgiving treats. Often times the families of those in nursing homes live out of town or are not in touch with their family member in the nursing home. You might be the only visitor someone has that day.

#### **2) Volunteer at a shelter, pantry or soup kitchen**

A common way to give back to your community during Thanksgiving is to volunteer at a homeless shelter or soup kitchen. You can find a shelter near you and make a tradition out of this act of kindness. Maybe you'll even be inspired to continue volunteering on a regular basis, since hunger is a year-round issue.

#### **3) Donate canned goods**

While you consume a delicious meal this holiday, think about people who don't have the money, resources or assistance to do the same. Give to those less fortunate and donate some of your canned goods to a local food bank.

#### **4) Reach out to a military family**

Express your thanks to those who have served and continue to serve in the military for all they sacrifice for our freedom. This includes military families, as they also make sacrifices for this country. Reach out to a service member and their family in your community this Thanksgiving; this could be as simple as delivering a pie or even inviting them to your home to share a meal. Little acts of gratitude can mean the world to a service member and their family.



**5) Become a community partner**

Get involved as an individual or as a group, organization or business with Soldiers' Angels. The efforts of this organization ensure that no soldier goes unloved. There are many ways to get involved as a community partner of Soldiers' Angels, including hosting a collection drive, collecting monetary donations, donating meals on a regular basis (which is great if you are part of a business in the restaurant industry) and simply volunteering your time to stuff care packages.

**6) Participate in the Turkey Trot**

Get moving on Thanksgiving day and participate in the Festival Foods Turkey Trot! I've participated in three trots and I love it. It's a great way to support the Boys & Girls Club and YMCA in communities Festival Foods serves. You can participate in a 5-mile run, 2-mile walk or the 2-mile dog jog (yes, your dogs can participate too!). After you find a location near you, you can sign up beforehand or the morning of the event.

**7) Give and receive love from four-legged friends**

If you're a pet owner or lover, give thanks for the joys animals bring to your life and volunteer at an animal shelter. Find your local animal shelter or Humane Society and sign up to volunteer!

In addition to these 7 suggestions, there are endless opportunities out there for you to get involved in your community. No matter what you do this Thanksgiving, try to embody the idea of giving thanks this time of year and break your traditions. Who knows, maybe you'll start a new one!

# Giving Back, One Fundraiser at a Time

November 17, 2016  
Improving Our World



I currently work at the Mayo Clinic in the cancer unit. Every year, Mayo does a clinic-wide giving campaign with the United Way, and I helped collect contributions and sort them out into piles that would then be distributed to families in need. We spent two long Saturday shifts collecting, cleaning and organizing donations from people in the area to get them ready to distribute back out. It was a truly rewarding experience to see all the same people again as we donated what we as a work unit raised on behalf of those in need. After this campaign with Mayo Clinic, I realized how large the need was for many, many more donations, and I took volunteering one step further to make even more of a difference.

I am currently enrolled in the Counseling Education Masters program through WSU. This year we were assigned to pick a foundation to do an advocacy project for and do a few hours of community service with the organization before conducting the project itself. My experience with Mayo Clinic led me to put together fundraising opportunities at my daily work place for co-workers to donate money, children's books and non-perishable food items that would go directly towards the United Way. Currently, I have raised over \$250, 27 children's books and over 75 food items and counting. I enjoyed this experience and getting my work unit involved as well. It is nice to take time out of my busy life and help people that are in need and can't always help themselves. I could see myself doing this same experience yearly with my work group around the holiday season.

**-Danielle Sommerfeldt**

# Stomping Out Mental Health Stigma in Winona

November 15, 2016  
Improving Our World



There is a lot of mystery that surrounds mental illness. A group of four graduate students set out to tackle the stigma of mental illness in Winona County. While looking at resources available, we came across the National Alliance of Mental Health (NAMI) and Winona Occupational Rehabilitation Center (ORC). These two organizations provide training, information, and helpful resources for people who live with a mental illness. In our journey to volunteer and participate in events to raise awareness in our area we were able to experience the NAMI Color Dash and the ORC Starlight Stroll.



Starlight Stroll for Winona ORC.



Color Dash for NAMI Winona.

we felt fortunate to be able to advocate for persons who cannot always advocate for themselves. It gave us a new perspective on how mental health is viewed and, our hope is that in the future more resources will be easily accessible to students besides the resources offered at Winona State.

**-Hanna Niccum, Emily Norton, Therese Odden, Kelsey Plese**



# An Evening at the Ronald McDonald House

November 8, 2016  
Improving Our World

As the end of the semester approaches and we feel the stress of finals, students in WSU's campus organization SOAR took time out of their busy schedules to serve a community in need. On November 2, SOAR made a trip over to Rochester to spend their evening volunteering at the Ronald McDonald House (RMH). The students arrived to RMH at 4pm, with groceries in hand, ready to prepare a nice, home-cooked meal for the families living in the RMH.



The families there have a child receiving treatment from hospitals in Rochester. These children suffer from a wide variety of conditions, from pre-mature babies, to those battling cancer, each with their own unique story. Their days consist of many hours spent in the hospital, and some who are from across the country or world. They rely on the RMH to provide a place to stay, basic necessities such as toilet paper, towels, and food. In turn, the house relies on outside groups to provide meals for their residents. Also, many donations from the communities, such as food, blankets, and toiletries.

The SOAR students prepared a Mexican feast for the residents, which consisted of tacos, nachos, toppings, fruit, dessert and beverages. SOAR ended up serving 30-40 residents, and packaged leftovers for remaining residents who were still at the hospital that night. Families were very grateful and enjoyed hearing about Winona State and gaining an understanding of the work that SOAR does on campus.

The students also were able to tour the facility after serving the meal. The facility houses 42 families, in apartment-





# Someone's Identity is NOT Your Halloween Costume

October 25, 2016  
Improving Our World



Every year, kids in the community are invited to trick-or-treat around the residence halls on campus. Make sure you are wearing an appropriate and non-offensive costume this year!

As we get closer to Halloween weekend, time is running out to find the perfect costume and the outfit possibilities seem endless. Can't seem to narrow down and pick one? Well, I'll help you in your decision process and fill you in on what you absolutely should not dress up as. This will help choose a costume and increase your social and cultural awareness.

If your costume idea is something someone else would identify with/as, including religion, race, ethnicity, culture, gender, sex, or sexual orientation, then it's time to go back to the drawing board and start brainstorming new ideas.

If you're wondering why these aren't okay, don't worry! I am going to explain the issues surrounding them. Costumes like these are cultural appropriation. What is cultural appropriation you ask? It is the use or adoption of elements of a culture by members of another culture. For example, a Caucasian person dressing up as a "Native American" or "Mexican" for Halloween. According to an article in the NY Times about costume correctness on campus, "It is dangerous to pretend."

These qualities in which people identify with are used as characters or jokes during Halloween people can take on and off as they wish; but, that's not how it works. People who truly identify with these cultures, religions, ethnicities etc. do not take them on and off as they please, it is who they are as people every day. Dressing up as a stereotype of these identifiers is very offensive.

To increase awareness, Ohio University's S\*T\*A\*R\*S (Students Teaching About Racism in Society) released the campaign "We're A Culture, Not A Costume" campaign. It features students holding photos of people dressed up as stereotypes of their culture next to the slogan "This is not who I am, and this is not okay."

If you are still wondering what is acceptable and what is not, here is a quick list of costumes you should **not** wear or dress up as:

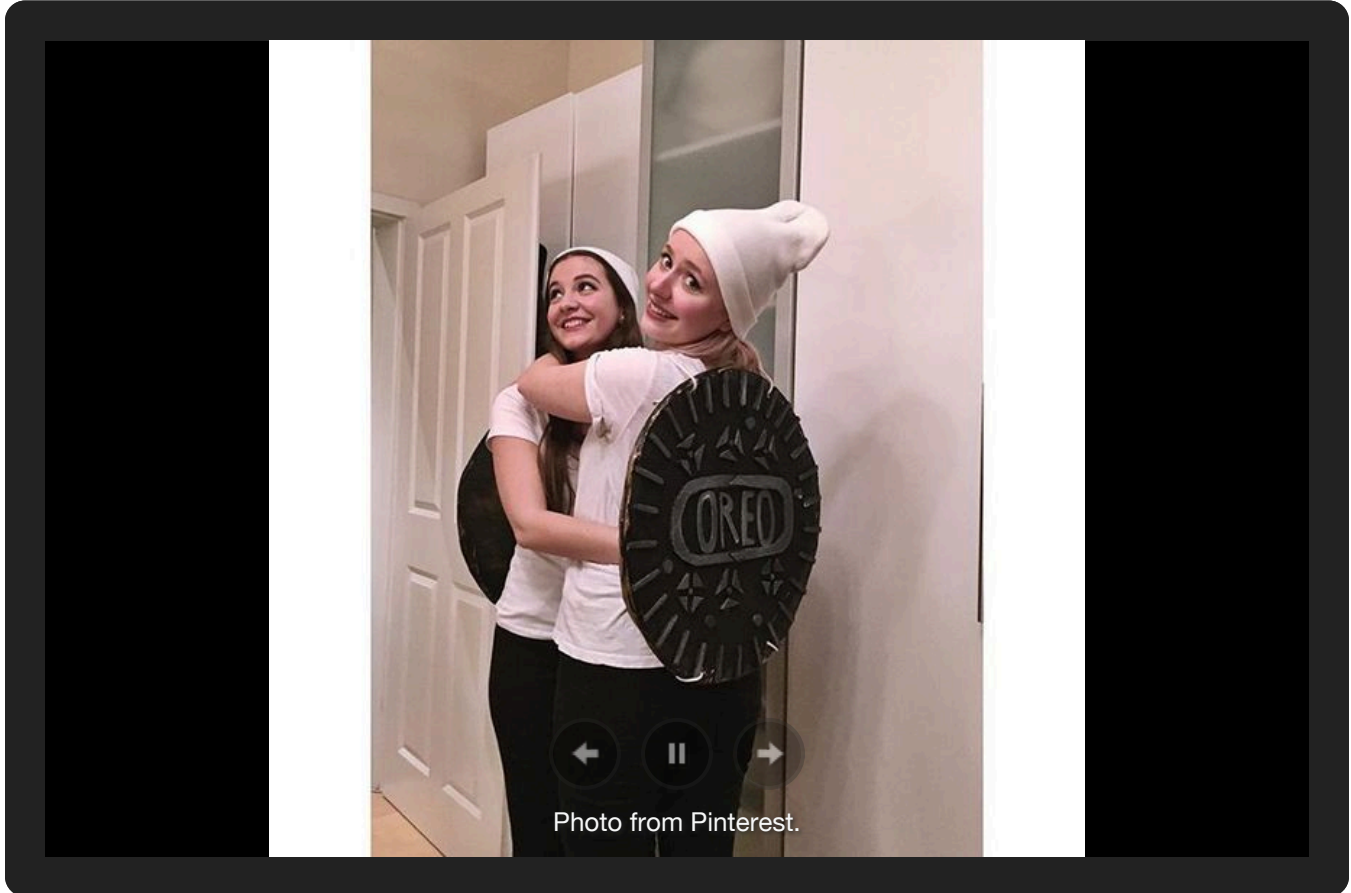
1. Native American
2. Religious garb, such as a hijab



## Someone's Identity is NOT Your Halloween Costume

3. Inuit, Yupik or Eskimo
4. Offensive figures such as Nazis or Adolf Hitler
5. Geisha or samurai
6. Mexican costume with a poncho and sombrero
7. Terrorist
8. Jamaican or Rastafari
9. Prisoner jumpsuit

These are just a few examples to help you pick an acceptable Halloween costume. If you are still unsure of what to be for Halloween after reading this, I suggest heading to Pinterest for some creative ideas that are easy and non-offensive. Here are a few easy ideas of what you **can** dress up as this year:



1. Your favorite fruit like a pineapple or strawberry
2. If you're not a fruit person, then maybe your favorite veggie or food in general
3. An animal
4. A character from a TV show, movie or book (superheroes, Harry Potter, etc.)
5. Portray a time period – Wear a poodle skirt from the 50s or be hippie from the 70s

Seriously, there are TONS of ideas out there. Just spend some time researching things that interest you and are not offensive.

Have a fun, safe and culturally aware Halloween!

# Older Posts

October 19, 2016

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## Older Posts

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# University Improvement Day: Time to Make a Difference

October 11, 2016  
Improving Our World



Today, October 11, is University Improvement Day at WSU, and that means classes meeting before 3:30pm are canceled!

Immediately, most college students rejoice in a day to sleep in, get extra hours at work or catch up on homework. But, do you fully understand what this day is all about?

University Improvement Day has been part of the campus culture for many years. In the past, Vicki English served as the Community Liaison at WSU and organized volunteer opportunities for students on this day. After English's retirement, the day was viewed as a day for staff and faculty development more than students volunteering to improve the community. Then, Kendra Weber was hired as the new Director of Community Engagement in the fall of 2014. Since Weber has been in the position, there have been events such as "Good Neighbors," "Clean Sweep" and "Spruce up Winona" as volunteer options for students. Other activities include a sexual violence training workshop hosted by Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies and National Coming Out Day events.

Furthermore, University Improvement Day is as straightforward as it sounds; it is a day for members of the WSU community to work together to improve the university and community we are apart of – a community of learners improving our world.

Recently, I blogged about the importance of improving yourself with 10 self-care tips. Then I shared 10 steps to improve how you treat others (see page 200). Now that you have begun the process of improving yourself and others around you, it's time to start improving the community you are part of, and today is that time!

If you want to improve the community or volunteer but don't know how, look into Winona Volunteer Services, Live Well Winona and sign up for the Homecoming Clean Sweep that begins at 2 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 16 at the Gazebo. You can also like WSU's Improving Our World Facebook page to keep up on the latest opportunities.

Regardless of what you choose to improve today, whether it's yourself, the community or WSU, do something your future self will be proud of and others will thank you for.



# 10 Easy Steps to Improve How You Treat Others

October 6, 2016  
Improving Our World



We all learn the Golden Rule in kindergarten: treat others how you want to be treated. Despite this, we find ourselves living in a time where people have become extremely desensitized to other human beings and the fact that EVERYONE has thoughts and feelings.

Whether this comes from a defense mechanism, selfishness, lack of caring or lack of realization of what you are doing is offensive and insensitive, we need to change this. We can start improving the world by improving how we treat each other, so here are 10 steps to help you improve the way you treat others:

**1) Learn to be more empathetic** – Try to understand what others are dealing with and the motives behind their actions. One of the things people crave the most is to be understood by others.

**2) Don't belittle others** – Don't try to make yourself look better by making someone else look worse or pointing out their flaws or failures.

**3) Do not look down on anyone** – For example, if you label those in poverty as “lazy” or “unintelligent,” instead of looking down on them you should educate yourself on the causes of poverty and change your mindset.

**4) Treat everyone and every situation with fairness** – For this, it is important to understand the differences between equity and equality. Equality aims to treat everyone the same, however equity aims at giving everyone what they need to be successful because some people might need more or less than others for everyone to receive the same outcome in a situation.

**5) Acknowledge the value of every person you meet** – Every human has value and must be treated with respect, whether they are a cashier, server, professor, or your mom; they deserve respect and should not feel like they have to earn it.



**6) Do not manipulate or deceive anyone for any reason, especially for your own self-gain** – Do not lie or withhold the truth just to get something from them, especially if they get nothing in return. Also, do not pressure anyone into something they do not want to do or that is not in their best interest. Realize that everyone is entitled to their own opinion and it just might differ from your own and that is okay. Just because someone's opinions, thoughts or beliefs are different does not mean they are wrong and it is rude and disrespectful to assume your views are right or that they make you a better person than others.

**8) Think before you speak, type or post** – This can be as simple as word choice used to describe a person. For example using words similar to “girl” or “chick” to describe a woman can be viewed as disrespectful and demeaning.

**9) Do not comment on a person's physical appearance** – Even if you intend the comment as a compliment the receiver of the message may not take it this way, and may even find it offensive. Instead, it is much more meaningful to comment on something non-physical; it shows you truly know and appreciate this person. If you must compliment someone on his, her, or their appearance make it something that person has control over and reflects them as a person, like their outfit, the style of their hair, or their makeup.

**10) Always acknowledge everyone as a whole person** – NEVER treat another person as an object or a prize. Now you can go out into the world and make your kindergarten teacher proud by how you treat others!

# 11 Tips to Improving Yourself Before Improving the World

September 28, 2016  
Improving Our World



Attending Winona State means you are part of a community of learners improving our world. However, not many people realize or know that you need to improve yourself before you can improve anything else, let alone the world!

Here are 11 tips to help you improve yourself so you can go out and improve the world!

**1) Move on.** Let the past stay in the past; don't get hung up on things and don't dwell on the past. Look towards improving the future!

**2) Embrace change.** Change is one of life's only guarantees so just learn to embrace it! Be aware when you see big changes in your life ahead and take time to think about it and move on.

**3) Control what you can, accept what you can't.** Take control of what you can in your own life and learn to accept what you don't have control over. Put your life in your own hands but don't stress when things are out of your hands and don't waste energy trying to gain control over something

**4) Have a positive attitude.** Positivity can do wonders!

**5) Be here now.** Be present in the moment, acknowledge what is happening around you and listen to what people have to say.

**6) Evaluate your beliefs, goals, and why you are doing what you are doing.** Make sure you are 100% sure of your intentions and that they line up with your values. If these do not match, you may have to reevaluate your priorities.

**7) Be grateful.** Complain less, appreciate more! Start a journal of gratitude if you need help with this.





## 11 Tips to Improving Yourself Before Improving the World

**8) Build your self-confidence.** Get to a point where you do not search for self-worth and validation from anything or anyone outside of yourself.

**9) Push yourself.** Whether it is out of your comfort zone to try new things or to push yourself at a task. This is how true growth takes place

**10) Practice what you preach.** Avoid hypocrisy and lead by example. Follow the Golden Rule and treat others how you want to be treated.

**11) Accept your mistakes.** Most importantly, view your mistakes as an opportunity for growth. Take responsibility for your actions, admit when you are wrong, apologize, be the bigger person etc.

If you found these tips helpful, read 10 more self-care tips you should practice in my recent blog post.

# What the Tech is This Year's Theme all About?

September 13, 2016  
Improving Our World



I know every student at Winona State uses technology at some point every day. Maybe even each hour of your day includes the use of some kind of technology. I can definitely say I wouldn't be a successful student without using technology. Whether it's using my laptop for D2L, to write a paper, conduct research for a project, or to take a much-needed Netflix break. I'd be lost.

The University Theme Kick-Off Digital Interaction Fair took place on Monday, Sept. 12 between the Science Lab Center Atrium and Watkins, as well as at the Gazebo. (Photo taken by Kassidy Jackson)

The University Theme Kick-Off Digital Interaction Fair took place on Monday, Sept. 12 between the Science Lab Center Atrium and Watkins, as well as at the Gazebo. (Photo taken by Kassidy Jackson)

Winona State's theme for this year is "Our Digital Humanity." This theme examines human life in the digital age, and the university's goal is for us to think deeply about the different technology we use in our lives and challenge ourselves to view the changes it has made in the way we relate and learn. Also, we should challenge ourself to think of the implications

## What the Tech is This Year's Theme all About?

digital tools have for our futures.

There were a lot of cool technologies students, staff and the community members were able to explore at the Theme Kickoff! (Photo taken by Jacob Striker)

There were a lot of cool technologies students, staff and community members were able to explore at the University Theme Kick-Off! (Photo taken by Jacob Striker)

I think this theme is important to students, our professors, staff and the community. We use these tools to do many things in our everyday lives; not only for school, but to check keep up with the news, for entertainment purposes, to video-chat people hundreds of miles of way, etc. So many amazing things can come from using technology. We should fully understand the capabilities of these outlets and advance our thinking in this digital world we live in. This is key to understanding the technology we use, the impact it makes on us as people and the countless things you can do with it. You can use technology to express your voice, to be creative and to educate yourself.

Robots and other futuristic digital tools were featured at the Kick-Off. (Photo taken by Jacob Striker)

Robots and other futuristic digital tools were featured at the Kick-Off. (Photo taken by Jacob Striker)

Immersing yourself in the knowledge of all the things technology has to offer is beneficial to yourself, and we can better our community with this exploration. Don't think technology has just one purpose; think deeper and learn more about what you can do in this digital world with the tools given to us.



So, as we continue the school year, ask yourself: In this digital age, what kind of future do you want to create?

# A Little Kindness Goes a Long Way

August 3, 2016  
Improving Our World



Over the last year, I have noticed a false belief that many college students have. You see, many students think they are not capable of helping others in college because they are lacking financially. However, the truth is that whether you are broke or not, you possess the ability to make someone's day. No, you may not be able to give large sums of money to someone in need, but at the end of the day, money is not what brings joy to people who are hurting. Rather, a perfect stranger, who went out of their way to make their day, just might bring a genuine smile to their face. Moreover, your financial status cannot stop you from performing random acts of kindness. Besides, as Aesop once said, "No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted."

As the beginning of a new school year is quickly approaching, it can be a stressful and scary time for incoming freshmen and new students at WSU. It is my challenge to you to consider doing some of the random acts I have listed below as you move back to Winona and begin classes. Or, you can even come up with your own ideas to brighten someone's day! There are endless ideas when it comes to random acts of kindness. My goal in presenting this challenge to you is to ultimately create a more positive and welcoming atmosphere for each person who walks onto the Winona State campus. WSU should feel like home to all of the students and staff who walk its sidewalks each day. By simply performing random acts of kindness around our campus, I believe we can take a huge step forward in becoming a campus that is a shining

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example of a united and positive community.

Are you up for the challenge? If so, try doing a few of the 10 random acts of kindness I have listed below to get you started, and remember to have fun while doing them.

**Acts of Kindness at NO COST**

1. Leave encouraging sticky notes on the mirrors in the bathrooms of your dorm
2. Pick wildflowers and give them to a stranger (Only pick in appropriate areas of course – NO trespassing, people!)
3. Say thank you to a faculty member for their hard work on campus
4. Simply give a compliment to someone
5. Hold the door open for someone trailing behind you

**Acts of Kindness For Less Than \$5**

1. Tape change to a pop machine for the next person who comes along
2. Put change in the washing machines at the laundry mat
3. Tape \$5.00 to the gas pump for the next person
4. Take cold water or Gatorade to city, county, or campus facility workers on a hot day
5. Pay for the food of the person behind you in line at a drive thru restaurant



# I Just Graduated, What Next?

May 3, 2016  
Improving Our World

Photo by Ka Vang '16.

Photo by Ka Vang '16.

As we're nearing graduation, if you're graduating like me, you're probably wondering: well, what am I doing next? That's a good question, and I know I can't answer that for you, but I can tell you what I'll be doing next in order to improve the community (and world) of Winona, Minnesota!

During the next academic year, I'll be working with Minnesota Reading Corps, which is a non-profit organization that aims to help all Minnesota children become proficient readers by the end of third grade. I'll be doing this in Winona itself to help the Winona elementary children become better, passionate readers! In addition, I'll be volunteering in the Winona community as much as possible!

If this is something you might be interested in, but you're not comfortable with reading and you're better at math, there's also the Minnesota Math Corps, too!

There are plenty of other organizations that are good candidates for "gap years." People often get involved with Peace Corps to go overseas and help people in need. The Peace Corps is aimed to help the people of interested countries meet their need for trained men and women, to help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the people served, and to help promote a better understanding of other countries and people.

If you don't want to travel overseas and want to stay in the United States, consider AmeriCorps!

Why consider organizations like this? Well, they usually offer some kind of loan forgiveness and typically put your student loans on hold while you're serving the community you're in! All the organizations mentioned above do offer loan forgiveness and freeze at the end of your service. Not only that, you get to serve in areas of need on both a local and global level, and improve living conditions for everyone you come across. Besides, if you're unsure of where you want to work in the future, or if you're considering grad school, taking a year off to serve is a good way to do extra research on your next step! Giving back is one of the many ways that we can best serve our communities. You don't need to have money to volunteer and serve!

Wherever you go, Warriors, think about how you can serve the communities that you'll be in for either a few months or even years! You will make an impact in every area you'll be in, so make sure it's a positive one!

—John Otis

Photo provided by PopSugar's post "61 Creative Ways to Decorate Your Graduation Cap."

Photo provided by PopSugar's post "61 Creative Ways to Decorate Your Graduation Cap."

# 8 Steps to Intercultural Communication

April 15, 2016  
Improving Our World

In the university setting, we're exposed to a lot of new people, ideas, values and beliefs. It's ever so more important to be aware of all these and be able to respect them. We're lucky to have a diverse population in Winona where we can safely learn about different people. So, you may be wondering, how do I communicate with people of different cultures? Well, from my own personal experience of working with international and diverse students for the past four years, I have made up a little guide that usually helps me better communicate with other people:

## 1) **Make time to get acquainted with people**

This goes without saying. It's hard to communicate with someone you really don't know. Take some time to get beyond introductions and surface-level interactions.

## 2) **Do your research**

If you don't know about the cultural norms of a country, use your resources to learn about them! We have Google for a reason, right? Take advantage of our plethora of online information!

## 3) **Communicate**

The first step of talking to someone is actually to talk to them. Say "hi," ask them how they are doing, and ask specific questions about their country. When I was an international student, when people tried speaking my language it made me really happy. Try learning how to say "hello" and repeat it back to them. Even if you mess up, trying is greatly appreciated!

## 4) **Practice patience**

I think with any encounter with another human being, especially initially, patience is crucial. Patience goes a long way, and it shows a lot about your character if you can wait and try to invest in someone.

## 5) **Writing helps mediate communication**

If you can't understand what someone is saying, try have them write out what they are intending to say. You may also do the same too!

## 6) **Don't be worried about making mistakes**

College is the perfect time to make mistakes. As long as you're making an attempt at fixing mistakes and reflecting on them, then you're doing it right in the aspects of intercultural communication.

## 7) **Include them in activities**

People come to America to experience American culture. What if you wanted to go to Spain, but no one ever reached out to you to include you in what people in Spain did? You'd feel really left out and lost. Don't be that person to someone else! If you're doing something that can include another person, feel free to invite them!

## 8) **Learn from each other**

As mentioned, college is the perfect time to make mistakes. We're interacting daily with people from around the world. For example, we don't have to go to China to experience China! We can learn from the Chinese students here!

-John Otis



# The Month of April: Call Your Siblings and Recognize Autism

April 8, 2016  
Improving Our World

April is a fantastic month for a variety of reasons, including that it finally feels like spring in Winona. Another reason to look forward to April is the celebration of National Sibling Day. National Sibling Day falls on April 10, so make sure to call your brother or sister if you're lucky enough to have a sibling. In addition to National Sibling Day, April is also Autism Awareness Month. Autism may not impact you personally, but it's becoming more prevalent in society. My brother has a form of autism called Asperger's Syndrome, and he's also the coolest person I know.

My brother is someone I miss the most when I'm at school.

My brother is someone I miss the most when I'm at school.

My brother was diagnosed with asperger's before he entered kindergarten. He struggles with socializing including giving eye contact. However, he also knows how to intelligently debate about politics, religion and social rights. He may use filler words frequently, but he has the biggest heart. My brother is so much more than the disorder he has been diagnosed with. When my brother is stressed sometimes he can get angry and blame himself. He also happens to know every rule in every board game we have ever played. He's the Snoopy to my Woodstock and he's someone who has taught me a lot about maintaining friendships.

The biggest lesson I have learned with my brother is patience. My brother can aggravate me sometimes like any other sibling, but I have to realize that he has his own struggles. He can be unorganized at times and sometimes he forgets things that you tell him. Patience allows me to be the best sister I can be, but also to help him when he needs it. I have also realized tolerance goes a long way. I have witnessed bullying first hand to kids with Aspergers and it's terrible. Tolerance and having a non judgemental attitude is crucial for interacting with someone that falls on the autism spectrum. The stereotypes of autistic kids as stupid or mentally ill are old and inaccurate. Also, banishing that infamous R word that I won't mention

Christmas is a great time to catch up with my brother.

Christmas is a great time to catch up with my brother.

because I don't want to say it is really important. I'm sure all of you know what this word is and please don't use it. It's incredibly offensive and it shouldn't be used in daily speech. Patience, tolerance and banishing the R word are necessary when interacting socially with someone on the autism spectrum.

So don't forget about National Sibling Day! Take a break from studying at the library and snap, call or text your sibling. They will surely appreciate it, because it's great to have someone who will stick by your side throughout your college experience. Also, take this time to become aware of the people around you. Autism is something we should all be aware of, because autistic kids are the sweetest people I know. They will brighten your day and teach you a thing or two about living and enjoying life.

# Chi Alpha Takes on Mexico City

March 28, 2016  
Improving Our World

Eight Chi Alpha students served people in Mexico City.

Eight Chi Alpha students served people in Mexico City during spring break.

Like many Winona State students, eight Chi Alpha students went on a trip over spring break. However, on March 5, they embarked on a mission that has set their trip apart from many others. Instead of lying on a beach over spring break, these eight students chose to spend their “break” serving and enjoying the people of Mexico City. Having wished I had gone on the trip myself, I decided to interview one of my friends who went to get an inside scoop of what his personal experience was like. Travis Salo, a sophomore at WSU, described his experience in Mexico so well that I could not have worded it better myself. Here is a Q & A with Travis...

Travis and a child he worked with in Mexico City.

Travis and a child he worked with in Mexico City.

**Q:** What did you do in Mexico?

**A:** We went on a missions trip and got to help the local church. That included putting on a VBS for the younger kids as well as playing street hockey, soccer, and football with the kids. We also did puppet shows, arts and crafts, and songs with the kids.

**Q:** What was your favorite memory?

**A:** My favorite memory of the trip was definitely meeting Jesus. He was a young kid who had a ton of energy, but he



had the best attitude and always enjoyed playing street hockey.

**Q:** What was a shock to you (culture wise)?

**A:** One of the biggest shocks to me was how polite everybody was. People would listen to what you had to say and then tell you to have a good day. Here [in the United States], most people will just ignore you if you do not know them.

**Q:** What challenged you the most?

**A:** The most challenging thing for me was the language barrier. I wanted to communicate with the people, but there was not always a translator nearby.

**Q:** How was the food?

**A:** The food was amazing! We had a family in the church make us home cooked meals for dinner each meal. You cannot get more authentic than that. It is amazing how they do not waste any part of the animal as they do in the United States. They made us a different meal each night that reflected what a typical family would eat. Random side note, I 'out spiced' some of the Mexicans. [In other words] I could eat hotter food than some of them were comfortable with.

**Q:** What impacted you the most on this trip?

**A:** The thing that impacted me the most was probably the relationships we were able to form with the kids even though there was a language barrier between us. We still keep in contact with many of them over Facebook!

By sharing this interview between Travis and I, it is my hope that you, the readers, realize and appreciate the sacrifice these WSU students made over spring break to improve our world. It is inspiring to hear about the difference they made in many lives in Mexico City, as well as the change it brought to their own lives. It is certain that the students who went on this trip will never be the same again. Their eyes were opened and their hearts were broken as they experienced a different and new way of life. Thanks, Travis Salo, for sharing your experience in Mexico City with the WSU community.

# Jamaica Travel Study: Opening Eyes and Hearts

March 18, 2016  
Improving Our World

The kids of Seaview Primary School pose with our travel study group doing Usain Bolt's sign.

The kids of Seaview Primary School with our travel study group doing Usain Bolt's pose.

During spring break, seven travel leaders and 18 students (including myself) embarked on a travel study through SPED to Treasure Beach St. Elizabeth, Jamaica that turned out to be one of the most rewarding and humbling experiences of my life.

Our group took with us \$4,000 and 2,000 pounds of donations that we gave among five schools (the primary schools of St. Mary's, Seaview, Sandy Bank, Epping Forest and Pedro Plains), the Treasure Beach Women's Group, student scholarships and the Project Jamaica fund. Through out the week we visited the schools and the women's group, and finished mixing and pouring cement for a netball court at Pedro Plains for four of the days. We also conducted music lessons there as well as bird passage readings, and we painted two classrooms.

All of us and the four Jamaican men hired to assist us with the cement project at Pedro Plains. We finished the netball court!

All of us and the four Jamaican men hired to assist us with the cement project at Pedro Plains. We finished the netball court!

Rather than explaining the specifics of our days and how beautiful the hotel and area was, I want to share what I've learned and gained from this experience. This service-learning project introduced me to amazing people, both from Winona State and in Jamaica, and for that I am so thankful. At first we barely knew each other, and by the end of the trip we felt like a

family and worked together like a well-oiled machine. It's amazing the amount of work we did and it was extremely empowering, especially since 24 of us were women.

We could definitely feel and see the impact we left on the kids at Pedro Plains and the school itself. The kids were so outgoing and loving, always wanting pictures with us and running up to us to play and ask us a thousand questions. Many of the kids cried when we left, as did we. The bonds that we formed with them in the few days we were there were incredible, and it was difficult to leave them. In addition, we accomplished our goal of finishing the netball court, bucket by bucket, and when we were leaving the children were already playing on the dry portion of it. That alone really struck me, to think that what we did there will last and serve many kids for years to come.

Courtney, a fifth-grader at Pedro Plains Primary School, and I. We especially bonded during our volunteer work at the school.

Courtney, a fifth-grader at Pedro Plains Primary School, and I. We especially bonded during our volunteer work at the school.

Even though we gave our time, money and effort towards this trip, I don't feel like I really "gave" anything at all, and we all feel this way after holding a post-trip discussion. We all definitely gained from this trip. We gained an appreciation for the Jamaican culture, a knowledge for the tremendous need and poverty that is in Jamaica, a huge amount of love for the kids we met, as well as new friendships in the process. I would do this travel study 100 times over, if I could.

To read more about our trip and view my photos, visit my Jamaica 2016 blog.



# My Journey to Ecuador: A Thank You

January 22, 2016  
Improving Our World

Over winter break my friend, McKenna Cook, and I embarked on a journey to Ecuador that we will never forget. Prior to our departure, we were overwhelmed by the love and support from our fellow friends and family. Therefore, upon our arrival from Ecuador, I wrote a thank you note to my supporters expressing my gratitude for their generosity as well as filling them in on all that God did through McKenna and I on the trip.

I am sharing this letter to not only share part of my experience with you, but also to encourage you. I want to encourage you to find what it is that you are truly passionate about and then pursue it whole-heartedly. Nothing in this world can make you feel more satisfied than when you are pursuing what you love most. So, today I encourage you to find what it is you are passionate about (maybe even write it down) and start thinking about how you might pursue it. In my case I went to a foreign country. However, that might not be what you feel lead to do, and that is okay. You can make an impact in the world right here in Winona; even the things that seem small can make the biggest difference. My hope is that you feel encouraged by this, go on to pursue your unique passions, and in the end you can sit down to write a note of all that was done through you. But not just that, I hope you feel overwhelmed by how your unique passion was used to bless someone else.

Erin Kloopping (right) and McKenna Cook (left) climbing the bell towers of a Basilica in Quito, Ecuador.

Dear Friends and Family,

On December 11, 2015, my best friend and I embarked on an adventure to pursue our passions in videography, ministry, travel, and non-profit organizations. I am writing you to express my gratitude for your support of my most recent trip to the beautiful country of Ecuador. Without your prayers and monetary support this trip would not have been possible.

On this trip God used my friend, McKenna, and I to bless the people of Ecuador in ways we never thought possible. To be honest, we did not actually have an itinerary describing what exactly we were going to be doing on this trip before we left the country. In fact, that was actually our plan in itself. On this trip McKenna and I learned a lot about what it looks like to live a life outside of ourselves; being selfless. We wanted to demonstrate that kind of life on this trip by being the hands and feet of Jesus in whatever way we could. It was amazing how full our week quickly became when we just laid down our own plans and offered a hand wherever one was needed.

Our focus on this trip was to capture God's work in Ecuador through the use of videography. We were blown away by how much of an impact our cameras made in the lives of many missionaries in Ecuador. Currently we are working on editing six videos that we gathered footage for on our trip, and once they are finished they will be shared across many social media platforms to raise support for the missionaries and their organizations there.

McKenna and I did more than just videography work on this trip. We did many different jobs ranging from a product photo shoot of the jewelry that was made by Sandi Youngren, to teaching her how to use Instagram. Sandi Youngren sells beautiful, handcrafted jewelry to bring hope and support to Ecuadorian women in need. Encantadora Jewelry is the name of her business and she has an Etsy site where you can find all of her stunning jewelry for sale. I would encourage you to check out her site at <https://www.etsy.com/shop/QueEncantadora> or like her Facebook page called Encantadora Jewelry.

I am incredibly grateful for the love and support you gifted me with on this adventure. I definitely left my heart in Ecuador and I cannot wait to return again soon to see all of the wonderful people that I have created lifelong friendships with. Please know that your investment in my experience has been a huge blessing and an answer to prayer in my life, and for that I could never thank you enough.

# Giggles, Singing and Playtime: Volunteering for Interfaith Hospitality Network

December 11, 2015  
Improving Our World



ZLC Logo

Zumbro Lutheran Church's logo.

I was pretty excited to volunteer at Zumbro Lutheran Church for the Interfaith Hospitality Network in Rochester (IHN). After learning about IHN through a guest lecturer, I was interested in seeing first-hand how they run their homeless shelters. The night started off with Sarah and I looking through the large church for someone to direct us to the nighttime homeless shelter. The staff at Zumbro was very welcoming and more than happy to lead us in the right direction. The evening volunteers for IHN gave us a quick rundown of our responsibilities and showed us our sleeping quarters for the night.

After the other volunteers left, Sarah and I walked around the basement of the church to get a feel for the layout. While we were walking around we met a mother and her three children in the gymnasium. The youngest child came up to Sarah and me and asked us to play catch and basketball with him and his small, purple blowup ball. It was refreshing to see him smile and hear him giggle as we were playing. It was as if we were playing in his backyard, just trying to get those last precious minutes of playtime in before mom yells that it's time to come in for bed (she didn't yell).

There were four families staying at the church on this night, all single parent households trying to figure things out. The children and parents go to school and work during the day, and then come to IHN for their evening meals and to sleep. All of the parents looked extremely tired, yet they took the time to make sure their children had everything they needed and wanted.

Sarah and I spent some time with a mother and her daughter during their bedtime snack. While we were chatting the young girl began singing a song she made up. It made absolutely no sense, at least to the adults in the room, yet she didn't care. She kept signing and smiling until the song was over. The young girl then picked up IHN's cordless phone and said "I'm calling you," so her and I played phone for a few moments before she went to bed.

It was a great experience, especially seeing the young children enjoying themselves despite their current circumstances. It was a great reminder of how people can remain happy and positive no matter what life throws at them.

**-Josh Hardy**

# My Experience With Interfaith Hospitality Networks

December 4, 2015  
Improving Our World



The Interfaith Hospitality Network logo.

## The Interfaith Hospitality Network

logo.

On Oct. 26, 2015, my classmate Josh and I volunteered at a church shelter for those without a home in Rochester. Robin Saner's foundations of counseling class in the Graduate Studies of Counselor Education Program is working with IHN (Interfaith Hospitality Networks) as part of an advocacy project. This project is helping us to be more active in our community in understanding poverty and its affects, and overall, we are learning how we can better the negative outcomes of poverty. I think it is easy for many of us to place judgment upon those without a home, and those living in poverty. I think poverty is viewed at a superficial level, instead of being viewed as a structural problem in our society. Which, in actuality, anyone could lose what he or she has worked hard for at any moment.

Joshua and I volunteered as overnight help, staying at the shelter during the nighttime hours. IHN and the different churches involved serve as a warm, welcoming, safe space for those without a home. I was not concerned about staying overnight because I usually can sleep in any environment, and in general I did not have any concerns. But, I needed to remind myself that families would most likely want their space. When Joshua and I arrived, the volunteers working before us explained our duties, where our bedrooms were, and some information about the families who were staying. It seemed to me these volunteers have helped for a while, which internally motivated me, and made me want to contribute more time in the future.

We all stayed downstairs which held the sleeping rooms, a gym, a movie lounge and a kitchen. When we arrived, only



## My Experience With Interfaith Hospitality Networks

two of the families were there, and the other two were expected to arrive around 9pm. One family relaxed in the gym for a while; this family consisted of a mother, and her two teenage daughters who were interested in their phones the majority of the evening, and her son who I estimate to be about four years old. He enjoyed my company playing basketball in the gym- lots of giggles. The other family consisted of a mother and her three children; the children were in their room already upon our arrival, but their mom was awake working on school work. Josh was in charge of answering the telephone, and letting the expected families in upon their arrival. A mother and her cute little daughter arrived around 9pm, and they joined Josh and me in the kitchen. When in the kitchen, her daughter was singing a little tune- Joshua and I chuckled, and mom replied, "I don't know what she is singing, maybe something from school?"- it was a minor connection, but we all thought it was funny.

The last family, a father and his son arrived a little later. They also joined the kitchen for some food. I wanted to hear some stories, and/or make a deeper connection. But, I could tell families were just living their lives as they would regardless if we were there or not. The families then went to their rooms. After this, everyone seemed settled, so Josh and I went to our rooms.

My sleeping space during my  
volunteer work.

My sleeping space during my  
volunteer work.

As for sleeping, surprisingly, I DID NOT SLEEP! I usually can sleep anywhere; at any time. But, I achieved maybe two hours of sleep total. I do not know if it was the environment or if I was uncomfortable on the air mattress. I could not relax to get some shuteye. So with this, I was thinking and reflecting. I could not imagine- firstly, not having my own space. Then not being able to sleep, then getting up for work or school the next day and restless. Then in turn feeling exhausted, and then over exerting myself at any job, and then trying to find a place to stay in the evening. I am a single person without children; I could not imagine being a mother, and single mother at that...it has to be a vicious cycle. Personal health, mental and physical, would not be a priority. Needless to say, this one restless night was eye opening.

Josh had his alarm set for 6:30am- a mother wanted to make sure someone would wake her if her alarm did not go off. I woke up around 6:45 am. The end cap of my two-ish hours of sleep.

The gentleman and his son were gone when I awoke, Josh shared he was getting his vehicle. Josh woke up earlier than 6:30am due to to this gentleman's son crying because he was not certain where his dad was. His dad was in the shower! I did not hear this commotion- my room was a little further away from everyone. But, I wonder if he woke others. After this conversation, I joined everyone in the kitchen. The single mother and her cute daughter were ready to go and eating breakfast, along with the student mother and her children. Which, I would like to share that both mothers, by appearance, are hard working individuals. One had her work clothes on, and the other a student. I know there are many stereotypes about people without a home. I feel there is an association of laziness with homelessness, and this is an example, and proof that this is not the case.

At this time the kiddos from these families were eating breakfast- IHN had a food supply for the families. Cereal was the main thing consumed. The bus driver arrived around 7! The bigger (gym) family- mother, two daughters, and son, were scrambling to get ready. Joshua offered the toddler boy from this family some cereal for breakfast, but he did not want any. I am interested in the eating styles of the families. The single father and his son the night before consumed soda right before bed. The little son part of the bigger family, ate only a few gold fish before his family left in the morning. I wonder if there is any way we could better help families prepare food for their day? Food and nutrition is one component that could help better anyone's day.

All families left 5 minutes before 7:30am. At the end of volunteering, doors were made sure to be locked and keys were put away. I will say this night volunteering put some things into perspective, and motivates me to do more in the community.

-Sarah Jackson

# An Experience With the Interfaith Hospitality Network

November 27, 2015  
Improving Our World

The Interfaith Hospitality Network logo.

The Interfaith Hospitality Network  
logo.

About a month ago, I spent the evening at a homeless shelter through Interfaith Hospitality Network out of Rochester. Typically families spend the night in various churches in the area that donate their space to the organization. Each week the families move to a different location on Sunday. When I went, I stayed in an actual house that the church in Eyota owned.

I was extremely nervous about staying there. However, I was not nervous for the reasons I think most people would be such as concern for their safety, I was just nervous and anxious because of the unknown. Whenever I am forced to put myself in unknown situations I am worried that things will be awkward or uncomfortable which causes anxiety for myself. For these reasons I asked my sister to come with me for this experience. I also thought it would be something new for her and maybe an eye opening experience. The evening went well, and looking back I should not have been so nervous for the experience! I definitely think going with someone else made things a lot easier.

The organization supports four families at a time, and I was able to observe the families' interactions. They didn't communicate much with me, but it was interesting just to see their interactions with each other. I could tell the families appreciated being able to stay in a home vs. a church for a few nights. I arrived around 8pm so I got to see the families coming in from work. They all ate a snack and let the children play with toys before going to bed. It was obvious that the parents were all exhausted. My sister and I were responsible for making sure the house was locked up when everyone arrived.

We slept on an air mattress in the living room, and each family had their own room. At 7:30 the next morning, another volunteer arrived to cook a hot breakfast for the families, which is done on the weekends. Although they were staying in a home, the things they had to use/play with were limited and used. Games were missing pieces; movies were very old and outdated. There were limited options for toys for the children. They also could use new bedding (blankets, pillows, etc.).

Something important that I think that our general society doesn't understand is that anyone can become homeless. There is such a stigma attached with homeless people that they are lazy or use drugs. This experience just totally proved those stigmas wrong. At Interfaith Hospitality Network all parents are drug tested before being able to be a part of the organization. On top of that, the four families that were staying when I volunteered were all working as well. It's unfortunate that that negative stigma is what so many people believe. I think if more people understood that it could happen to anyone, there might be more support and help for those in need.

–Ashley Martin

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# About

November 23, 2015

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## About the Improving Our World Blog

At Winona State University, we pride ourselves on being “a community of learners improving our world” and this blog is intended to be a record of student experiences and activities as they make a difference in the local community and around the world. Whether they volunteer with Winona’s Habitat for Humanity program, help out at a Jamaican orphanage on a travel study with the Special Education department, or gain global awareness and experience a new culture by studying abroad, WSU students positively impact the community around them. These are their stories.

If you participated in a service event or have an experience that you would like to share, let us know! Leave a comment or contact us at [webcomm@winona.edu](mailto:webcomm@winona.edu). We’d love to hear from you!

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## Community

Looking to surround yourself with people who want to make the world a better place? The Improving Our World blog highlights groups on campus doing just that.

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## Volunteer

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# Perspective

The Improving Our World blog helps to give perspective about issues in the world and our community that need support.

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# Alumni Do It Best

November 10, 2015  
Admissions Blog



*Photo by Brooke Powell '21*

*Photo by Brooke Powell '21*

When I graduate from this institution, I will be proud to call myself a Winona State Warrior.

I'm proud and completely devoted to the school that provided me an education, friendships and plenty of memories that will last a lifetime. Winona State puts on many various alumni events to keep our alumni connected to this university.

Just because graduation is arriving for me in a year or so does that mean I have to cut off all ties with the school. I will always try and help future students by donating back to Winona State.

Many students on campus don't realize how crucial donations are to WSU. I hear students casually conversing and I always hear complaints about being called and asked for money after graduation.

The most common statements I hear include, "Winona State doesn't need anymore money" and "I already pay tuition, isn't that enough?" I fully understand why students are saying this around campus, but hear me out. The Integrated Wellness Complex, the gym and my home as an exercise science student, was funded by donations. That building wouldn't exist if we didn't have alumni who cared about the future of Winona State University.

It's crazy to think that past alumni, who love this school as much as I do, fund one of my favorite buildings on campus. Also, our state only gives 18% to WSU alone. That's really not a lot.

Plus if WSU wants to expand and create new programs to attract upcoming students, that budget will be depleted rather quickly. Donations are really key in the success of any university. WSU isn't the only university that asks its students to give back.

Let's take tuition for example. Sure, you pay a lot each semester, but let's think of some basic expenses. There are the professors' salaries, utilities bills and upkeep for all the buildings, the laptop program in which you receive a laptop, room and board, and more.

Tuition goes to a variety of things, but not to building renovations or to scholarships. The presence of alumni on campus allows for the existence of scholarships. Past alumni and local businesses in the Winona area fund scholarships.

Any scholarship amount really makes a difference, even if it only pays for books for a semester. If alumni never gave back to WSU, scholarships would be nonexistent and that would make paying for school that much more difficult.





If and when a caller calls you for donations after graduation, don't just shut them down. Even giving \$20 can make a difference. Many people will have student loans, car payments and other bills to pay off, but everyone can make a difference.

This university is growing rapidly and it needs as much support as it can get. If donating money isn't something you're interested in, donate your time. Connect at different alumni events when you're invited to them and connect with future students, too.

Once a warrior, always a warrior.



## Nominate a Warrior

November 6, 2015

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## Nominate a Warrior

If you know someone in our community — faculty, staff, student, alumni or friend of WSU — who we could feature, or if you have other Warrior Way feedback to share, please contact us.

To nominate someone, please enter your name & email address. In the message section, include your nominee's name, why you think they should be featured and any contact information you have for that person.

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# How to Save a Life

November 6, 2015  
Improving Our World

Everyone has that one cause that they hold near and dear to their hearts. For some it may be spending time at animal shelters or volunteering at soup kitchens but for me, its donating blood. Ever since I can remember I would go with my mom to the local blood drive and watch her donate blood. It seemed like a no-brainer that as soon as I was old enough, I would donate as well. The youngest you can start donating is at the age of 16 with your parent's permission as long as you meet all the requirements. Unfortunately, I didn't meet the weight requirements until I was 17, but I wanted to find a way to help out. I started volunteering through our student government and by my senior year I had worked my way up to coordinating the events.

Did you know that donating 1 pint of blood can save up to 3 lives and that every 2 seconds someone needs a blood transfusion? According to the American Red Cross, there are 5 million patients in need of blood every year, but only 38% of the population is eligible to donate blood.

American Red Cross Volunteering

Grab a few friends and volunteer with the American Red Cross! My friends and I enjoy helping out at local blood drives.

Less and less young people are donating blood these days. It is understandable to be nervous, especially if you are afraid of needles! The process is quite simple though, and you even get snacks and juice after. The American Red Cross hosts over 200,000 blood drives a year and its simple to find one near you. Winona State hosts blood drives about twice a year, as one just happened a few weeks ago. Signing up is easy and they accept walk-ins if the drive is not too busy. After registration the donor will go through a health history questionnaire and mini physical. After this, you are ready to donate blood! The actual donation process takes about 8-15 minutes or until a pint of blood has been collected, and the needle insertion is just a quick pinch. After donating, it is important to have a snack and something to drink. After about 15 minutes of relaxing, you are free to resume your daily activities and enjoy the fact that you just helped save lives!

Recently, I read an article about the need for bone marrow donors and felt compelled to become a part of Be The Match. Every three minutes, one person is diagnosed with a blood cancer and every 10 minutes someone dies from a blood cancer. Be The Match has become a global leader in bone marrow transplants with over 12.5 million selfless volunteers on the registry. The registry is for patients who need a bone marrow transplant but don't have a matched donor in their family. The need for new members on the registry is constant because there are still patients who do not have a match.

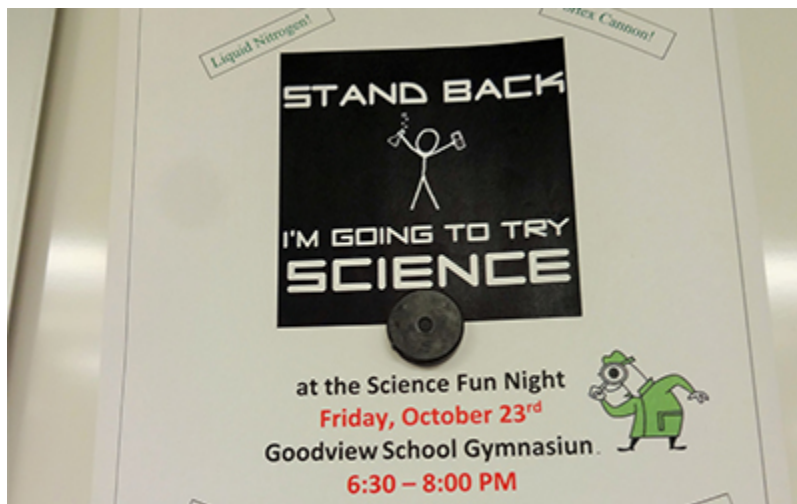
To get involved with this organization is very simple. Just like blood drives, there are Be The Match drives. The organization recruits new registry members between the ages of 18 to 44. There are a few medical guidelines that have to be met but the process is a simple cheek swab. The cheek swab is analyzed for tissue type to hopefully be matched with a patient. Only about 1 and 540 members of the registry are matched with a patient in need and go on to donate. But every new donor that joins gives new hope a patient searching for a correct match.

I had the privilege of getting to participate in Winona State's recent Be The Match Drive a few weeks ago. It lasted 3 days and simply took 15 minutes. It was as simple as walking into the East Hall in Kryzsko Commons and hopefully becoming the hope for a patient battling.



# Winona State University Teaches Kids How Science Rocks

October 30, 2015  
Improving Our World



WSU science clubs held interactive/informational tables at the Elementary Science Fun Night.

Science has always been my favorite subject because it's so fascinating how the world works. Being involved with Astronomy Club has its perks including trips to the science museum and volunteering for Elementary Science Fun Night. Elementary Science Fun Night is a volunteer opportunity with different science clubs on campus including Astronomy Club, Physics Club and Geology Club. The clubs come together and go to an elementary school in the area to teach kids about science in a fun, hands-on learning environment.

This year, the clubs traveled to Goodview Elementary. From 6:30-8:00pm kids visited various stations taught by the clubs. The Geology Club brought a volcano demonstration, rocks, minerals, fossils and toy dinosaurs to the event. Kids colored various species of dinosaurs, which kept them occupied for a while.

The Geology Club used toy dinosaurs to inform kids about the different types of dinosaurs and facts about them.

The Physics Club brought beads that glow different colors under UV light. Liquid Nitrogen was also a popular demonstration to showcase physics to kids. Dr. Ferstl, a physics professor on campus always brings liquid nitrogen. Liquid nitrogen provides plenty of fun experiences for kids. The most common experiment is dipping a bouncy ball into liquid nitrogen then dropping it on the floor so it shatters. As a bonus, ice cream can be made with liquid nitrogen and it's delicious.

Gravity is a scientific concept that was well represented at this event. The activity was called a gravity well, which consisted of fabric, a dense ball and a marble. The dense ball was at the center of the fabric. Kids rolled a marble around on the fabric, which represents how gravity impacts the planets and the solar system.

Astronomy Club also brings its fair share of experiments. Impact cratering is a very popular activity that Astronomy Club provides. Kids throw various spherical objects in sand to determine the size and shape of craters that would be created by each variation. Craters are collisions between an asteroid, comet or the meteorite with the moon. So basically this station simulates how the moon is impacted by various objects in space.

My hair, and the kids, loved the static electricity at the Elementary Science Fun Night!

The station I was responsible for was about static electricity. As I turned on the machine, I put both of my hands on the big silver globe. The conveyor belt in the machine would pick up speed generating electricity that would get transferred to me. Kids were amazed and a little freaked out because my hair reacted really well. If anybody came near me, they could feel the electricity that I radiated. My station was super interactive because kids would poke my arm and get shocked. Some kids laughed and thought it was the coolest concept ever.

Joining a science club was one of the best decisions I made at WSU. I'm not a physics major, but I still love participating and being an officer of the Astronomy Club. Participating in fun volunteer events like these make for a great weekend. Don't be afraid to join a science club! You will learn a lot and meet great people in the process.

# Volunteering: Get Your Animal Fix!

October 2, 2015  
Improving Our World

Volunteer experience is always a positive addition to any resume. My volunteer experience started at the Winona Area Humane Society with cat care. Being raised with cats, I really adore them as pets and I'm destined to become a crazy cat lady. My first pet I ever took care of is my beautiful calico kitty named Jasmine. So when I found out my sophomore year of college that Winona has a Humane Society, I was dead set on becoming a volunteer. I have been volunteering for two years and it's honestly one of the best decisions I made while attending school.

Crazy Cat Lady

Me and my first cat, Jasmine, back  
in the day!

The steps to becoming a volunteer are pretty simple and the application process is quick. Once the application has been filled, you go through an orientation with other volunteers to get the full tour of the humane society and the responsibilities of volunteering. There are mostly cats at the humane society, which is fine by me, but you can also sign up to be a dog walker if you really despise cats. Another way to volunteer is to work at the office, which includes filling out paperwork and working with the faculty staff members.

Volunteering has been rewarding and stress free. I volunteer with cats on Fridays usually because, after a long week, I just need to snuggle some kitties. My favorite part about volunteering is after cleaning, being able to sit down on a chair with a cat on my lap and just relax. Petting cats is really therapeutic and I can focus on the cats and not my homework or stress from school.

When meeting cats, it's impossible not to pick favorites. Flirt is an adorable calico cat that loves to bite your phone when you're not paying attention to her. Thanks to my Otterbox, my phone is not harmed when volunteering. Flirt is definitely a chubbier cat, which I find super adorable, and she's currently waiting adoption right now.

Volunteering is something that gets lost among college students, especially when classes and homework get in the way. Volunteering with something you're passionate about brings happiness and relaxation to everyday life. Being involved in the humane society is really rewarding and I only wish I found out about it sooner.

Flirt

Flirt, the calico cat at the  
Humane Society.



# 7 Ways to Give Back to Your Winona Community

September 24, 2015  
Improving Our World

Looking for a way to make a difference here in Winona? Take a look at these 9 fun and easy things you can do!

## 1. Volunteer at the local Humane Society



Winona Area Humane Society

Get your animal fix and help out with things like dog walking, cat care and special events! Volunteer on a regular basis or whenever it works with your schedule.

## 2. Become a big brother/big sister mentor



Big Brothers Big Sisters 7 Rivers Region

Make a difference in the life of a child while having fun. Become a big and spend time with your little!

## 3. Join Habitat for Humanity



Habitat for Humanity Winona Mn

Join in on Saturday construction projects to help build homes for the less fortunate, or spend some time volunteering at the Restore! Whether you're looking to get your hands dirty or want to help costumers, you'll be making a difference at Habitat for Humanity.

#### 4. Get involved with YMCA programs



Winona Family YMCA

Your local YMCA is always looking for volunteers to help with coaching, childcare, summer camp and office hours. No matter what your interest may be, you can find a volunteer option that's right for you.

#### 5. Check out Winona Volunteer Services



Winona Volunteer Services

Winona Volunteer Services provides many opportunities for students in the community. Whether you're looking to participate in a day project or volunteer throughout the year, Winona Volunteer Services offers positions involving food, clothing and packaging to help you make a difference.

#### 6. Work with elders at St. Anne's



Saint Anne of Winona

St. Anne of Winona welcomes volunteer bingo callers, mail sorters, water passers and newspaper readers.

#### 7. Donate Blood to the American Red Cross

There are always those in need of blood transfusions and the Southeast Minnesota American Red Cross visits Winona State twice a year to give you an opportunity to save a life. Just don't look at the needle and think about all the free cookies you'll get once you're done!



American Red Cross



# The Warrior Way

August 6, 2015



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True to Midwestern ethos, our Winona State community is a modest lot. The Warrior Way brings to light those among us who are working in creative, diverse ways to improve our campus, our community and our world.

The Warrior Way takes a deeper look at the people who make WSU an exceptional community. We think it's worth



getting to know them a little better. Often, their life stories are as inspiring as their actions and impact.

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community who are creatively and passionately living WSU's mission, "A Community of Learners Improving our World."
Their stories inspire us all to contribute our own time and talent to help create a better world.
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is unrivaled and impossible to convey in words alone. Each Warrior Way portrait setting is on or near one of WSU's
trademark "W" benches across campus, highlighting the stunning place in which we live, learn, give and grow.
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If you know someone in our community — faculty, staff, student, alumni or friend of WSU — who we could feature,
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msheehan@winona.edu.
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## The “W” Bench Theme

Each portrait is set with a backdrop that includes one of the many iconic “W” benches on campus, showcasing the picturesque place in which we live, learn, give and grow.

Each featured Warrior is also asked the question, “If you could invite anyone living or dead to sit on this bench and have a conversation, who would it be and what would you talk about?” This gives you a chance to get to know our featured Warriors, as their answers invariably provide a window into what motivates them.

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## Student Creators

The Warrior Way is not just about those we profile. It also highlights WSU’s most talented creative students.

The portraits are photographed by select student photographers, and the interviews are conducted by a student writer. The Warrior Way logo and Facebook template were both designed by a student graphic designer. The Warrior Way truly represents our remarkable community of learners.

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# Sam Bach '15 | Student

July 1, 2015



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## Sam Bach '15 | Taking Civic Action

Student from Browndeer, WI  
Political Science & Public Administration Majors

**“I’ve seen a lot of problems go unchanged, and I want to be in a position both now and in the future where I can do something to fix those problems.”**

Compassion, strength of character, humility, kindness, sincerity, authenticity, selflessness—all qualities you’d want in a leader, and upon meeting Sam and talking to him, it’s clear he has them. It’s no wonder he was elected to Student Senate three years in a row, and was named the political science honor society president of Pi Sigma Alpha and, last but not least, was chosen for an internship at the White House working under Michelle Obama herself.

Sam thought he'd have a career serving the community as a police officer rather than a politician. But I think the world can be glad he changed his major from criminal justice to political science and public administration. We need more people like Sam who believe government can improve society and who want to be in a position to make real changes in people's lives.

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***How did you get involved in civic action and what are some of the experiences you've had?***

It started when I met my advisor, Dr. Kara Lindaman, who got me involved in campus organizations like the American Democracy Project, an organization that focuses on getting students civically engaged and working with the community. For example, we worked with high school students in Winona to put together a forum on public education and were able to get people involved in a discussion rather than a shouting match. Additionally, my experiences in Student Senate got me thinking about going into public service so I applied to several internships in government.

In the summer of 2012, I interned at Senator Herb Kohl's office in Milwaukee and did everything from delivering mail to assisting the staff to answering the phone. This gave me a good opportunity to work with constituents and people on all different issues like social security and veterans' affairs. That same summer I also worked on President Obama's re-election campaign in Milwaukee and organized a campaign team in my hometown. But the most exciting thing I've done is my internship at the White House with the First Lady in Summer 2013. I basically worked in her correspondence office as the liaison to her Let's Move Office and Joining Forces Office as well as a sort of the agency liaison. It was a really good experience that opened my eyes because one of the criteria for the White House internship is a record of public service and civic engagement and when you are interning there you have to go out into D.C. and volunteer at a food bank, a nature preserve or somewhere else.

***When did you get involved in WSU Student Senate?***

It feels like forever ago, but it was about three years ago when I was elected senator for the College of Liberal Arts, a position which I currently hold. On Student Senate, I've served as the chair of Services Committee, and last semester I was the chair of the Public Relations Committee. Since Student Senate is responsible for funding many club activities, it's cool to see what all the organizations are doing but I think the most rewarding part is taking issues that affect many students on campus to the University administration.

Recently we passed a motion about the Americans with Disabilities Act and brought that forward to President Olson because there are many areas on campus that are not compliant with the act. Now they are hiring someone to come to campus and suggest fixes for all the problem areas.

***Why are you drawn to civic action and public service?***

A lot of it is because my mom works for Gathering of Southeast Wisconsin, an organization that works to feed the homeless and hungry in Milwaukee—and when I was younger I volunteered there a lot. I would help prep and serve the meals and talk to guests, who were really nice. A lot of them were struggling with mental illness and they couldn't control their situation; the system has failed them. In all my experiences I've seen a lot of problems go unchanged, and I want to be in a position both now and in the future where I can do something to fix those problems. I want to make sure that I'm working for the overall betterment of society in my career, and I think that politics—even with the partisanship—can contribute to good because usually that back and forth comes to a compromise.

***What do you want to do after graduation?***

I would like to go to law school and eventually work in the public sector. Thanks to listening to lectures by Dr. Bosworth, who focuses a lot on law and court cases, I am fascinated by the field so I think that becoming an attorney would be the best way for to give back and also for me to stay happy. It's important to give back and help people but also to be happy with your life.

I've thought about going into civil rights law, environmental law and even about intellectual property/business law a bit but I always come back to civil rights. I think it's because that is an area where you are always going to advocate for someone—not always on the same issue—but that there are always going to be people who need someone to fight for them in that area whether those cases produce visible results or just that someone feels safe when they are walking the streets or feels comfortable to be who they are. I also want to stay involved doing volunteer work like at the Gathering and the Food for Thought program. I have volunteered with Food for Thought before and helped pack lunches along with other members of Pi Sigma Alpha for kids who are on free/reduced lunch program at Jefferson Elementary so they'll have something to eat over the weekend.

***Who has influenced you the most?***

Throughout my life, I would say my parents have been most influential because seeing them volunteer at different school events and at work at the Gathering made me want to do good things in the world. On campus, Dr. Lindaman is a really good advisor who made me feel like I found my place. After my first semester I wanted to leave, but it's because of her and how she helped me get involved in Student Senate, the American Democracy

Project and in the Political Science Department that I am still here and got all those internships. She goes above and beyond to make sure that you are doing what you want to do and help find ways to get involved so you are helping yourself for the future and helping others as a public servant.

***If you could invite anyone to sit on this bench and have a conversation, who would it be and what would you talk about?***

I think it would be interesting to talk to Elizabeth Warren about what made her want to fight for consumer protection and college student loans and why she continues to run for senate and dedicate her life to helping in those areas.

I also think it would be great to talk to Franklin Delano Roosevelt, because he was the president during the Great Depression and WWII who enacted the New Deal and all these pretty liberal policies. The FDR administration wasn't really that long ago, but a lot has changed within our government and our politics. I'd ask him what he thinks of the Republican and Democratic parties today and our role in the world because it wasn't until his presidency when the U.S. started to grow a massive military and become a world power.

**Interviewed and Edited by Elizabeth Meinders '15 and photographed by Anna Rae Butler '15**

To nominate someone in the WSU community — faculty, staff, student, alumni or friend of WSU — for *Warrior Way*, or if you have other feedback to share, please email Mollee Sheehan, director of web communications: [msheehan@winona.edu](mailto:msheehan@winona.edu)

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# Home Page

June 26, 2015

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# Tasha Schuh '03 | Alumni

June 1, 2015



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## Tasha Schuh '03 | Inspirational Speaker & Author

Alumni from Ellsworth, WI  
B.A. in Communication Studies

**“Everyone has something, some struggles in their life, and it’s so rewarding at the end of the day to hear how my story has impacted people’s lives.”**

Alumna Tasha Schuh has come a long way from her high school self, but she developed and matured while also



overcoming physical disabilities and emotional struggles resulting from a traumatic accident. As Tasha told her story, it was hard to imagine the depressed teenager who wanted to die rather than be in a wheelchair, when the young woman she is now, is so effervescent and in love with her life and people in general. But that's why her story of overcoming obstacles and making a full life for herself is so inspiring— she *has* been through dark times and despair. And Tasha believes we all have the capacity in ourselves to press through, remain hopeful and make a difference in our lives and the lives of others.

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***What were the circumstances of your accident?***

I was really involved with my high school theater program and I was standing on stage helping with a scene change when they removed the cover off a trap door directly behind me without me knowing it. I took a step backward and fell 16 feet onto a cement floor, breaking my neck and nearly severing my spinal cord. It was the last place I would have ever thought to get injured—I was kind of a wild teenager and there were lots of places where I could have easily gotten hurt—and it was a very freak accident. But so many wonderful things have come from it that I wouldn't change it.

***So you wouldn't consider this accident a tragedy?***

At the time, it was a horrible tragedy. I thought my life was over; I wanted to die. I was one month away from turning 17, a time in your life when you are dreaming of all the possibilities and all the good things that are going to come to you. Ellsworth is a small town of about 3,000 people and it was a very shocking thing for our whole community. And I'm sure everybody thought my life was over. What would I be able to accomplish? It's been fun proving myself and others wrong, though it was never single day when I was suddenly ok with it; it was a roller coaster up and down.

The first thing that happened was in the week after my accident I had several surgeries and developed double pneumonia, septic shock and a fever of 108 degrees. My body crashed and I actually went into a coma for eight days. The doctors told my family there was no way I was going to survive. And when I did, I was mad at first because I had been ready to die—I did not want a life limited by disabilities—so when I woke up I felt like I'd missed my way out. But then I thought, "Wait a minute; that must mean that I'm supposed to be here." On the really tough days, that idea kept coming back to me, that if I wasn't supposed to be here I would've died either from the fall itself or the medical complications. I just never would have imagined that my life would have turned around so much, that someday I would come back here to get the Distinguished Young Alumni award. I am so thankful that I held on and pressed through the dark times because I would have missed the best time of my life. I would have never known all that I have on the inside of me or how my stubbornness would someday pay off.

***Why did you pursue a career as a speaker?***

I lived at the Ronald McDonald House for a month before moving back to Ellsworth and that was so eye-opening. I know it's normal in those circumstances, but I was very depressed, and seeing these kids with terminal illnesses smiling and laughing just shook my world. I realized that life is what you make it. My lifespan is the same as any other average human being, and if these kids who were going to die could be happy, then I could be depressed about my situation or I could move on and make a difference. I decided to do something with my life.

I started speaking here at Winona State in a special education class taught by Dr. Rocko. Since I have a disability, it was very appropriate that I should speak there, but that was in my sophomore year and my story was not all that inspiring. I came to WSU just two years after the accident, so it was still new to me and I hadn't really accomplished anything yet, but people were so touched and moved by my story. I was really nervous and had no idea what I was going to say, but I loved speaking in front of the class. I'd always wanted to help people and I've accomplished so much since then, including figuring out a way to share all the things that I have overcome. Speaking and sharing my story is now my greatest passion.

***What is your favorite part about being a public speaker?***

Everyone has something, some struggles in their life, and it's so rewarding at the end of the day to hear how my story has impacted people's lives. I get messages on Facebook from kids who were cutting and contemplating suicide or they have abuse at home and now they see that it's worth it to hold on. There are so many devastating stories. These kids have gone through so much and feel so purposeless, so hopeless, and to hear them say at the end, "I'm going to hold on because you held on"—there is nothing better than that.

Of course, I would never have imagined that my life could have turned around so much, but that allows me to share my story with other people because there's just so much hopelessness in the world. You turn on the TV and everything is so negative and fearful that you just forget that there is so much good going on. I learned last week that the suicide rate is about 3,000 people committing suicide per day and that just breaks my heart because I know what that feels like, how dark it can get that you feel like that would be the best option. It's really up to us to change the negativity in the world and to press through in our lives. That's why I do what I do; it fuels the passion in me all the more to continue speaking out. There's nothing that I would rather be doing and it's been so awesome.

***What do you want people to gain from your presentation?***

My greatest passion now and the idea I want people to take away is that there is always hope because it's so easy to get caught up in how negative the present is. I just want to help them realize they have so much to be looking forward to and have so much excitement of what is yet to come. I always speak about purpose, attitude and hope but I always close with hope, and I always say that the best is yet to come. I held onto that through some very difficult things—and not just at the beginning, even in recent years. I'd gotten my heart broken, I had some medical issues and I was just feeling hopeless, almost back to square one. I was like, "Ok, you tell people to hold on and tell people to have a positive attitude so you've got to practice it even when it's difficult." And I began to say "The best is yet to come." Every time I had a hopeless thought. I even wrote it on my mirrors with erasable marker and still have it there to this day to remind me to keep putting one foot in front of the other.

Now, I have an amazing husband who makes married life easy, my book came out, and I was crowned Miss Wheelchair USA— all these things happened within the following year of wanting to give up. And I just think, "Wow, if I had given up, if I hadn't believed the best was yet to come, where would I be today?" So whatever group it is— I speak from prisons to high schools to organizations to churches—my message is still the same: "Have hope because the best is yet to come."

### ***Who has influenced you most in your life?***

I've had so many people who have influenced me, so this is a very difficult question, but I guess I would have to say my parents. Both of my parents came from dysfunctional homes, yet instead of falling into that same cycle they were determined to raise me and my siblings differently. My parents owned a grocery store for 23 years and were the hardest workers I've ever known. They taught us to be hard workers too, instilling in us a foundation to be successful in life. Not only did they teach me the value of hard work, but they also taught me the power of my actions.

My parents were quite strict, especially my mom, but today I am so thankful as they stopped me from making many poor choices when I was not smart enough to see the consequences. They also taught my siblings and I that we were not quitters; once we started something we had to finish it, even though things weren't always easy. For example, I had gone out for my high school basketball team and ended up sitting the bench. I wanted to quit because I was not getting playtime, but my parents wouldn't let me. They told me that I did not have to go out next year, but because I had started the season I was going to finish it. This really helped me when I had my accident, because I really wanted to quit on life. I wanted to give up and not press through, but because my parents instilled this into my life for years, I knew that quitting was not an option. Now, I am so glad because I absolutely love my life and am so glad that I persevered and overcame my obstacles!

### ***If you could invite anyone to sit on this bench and have a conversation, who would it be and what would you talk about?***

There are so many, but my first response is Jesus because I look at his life and what a difference he made in the world. Of course, we all have so many questions about this life and for me, in the beginning I so often asked "Why?" Now I don't because I am so thankful that this did happen, but there's still all these other questions we have about life that don't just fit the way they should. I feel like Jesus has had the greatest impact even though he lived 2,000 years ago and he was out talking, essentially being a public speaker, for only three years. I've learned so much from his leadership and I love people who made a difference in this world.

### **Interviewed and Edited by Elizabeth Meinders '15 and photographed by Anna Rae Butler '15**

To nominate someone in the WSU community — faculty, staff, student, alumni or friend of WSU — for *Warrior Way*, or if you have other feedback to share, please email Mollee Sheehan, director of web communications: msheehan@winona.edu[/et\_pb\_text][et\_pb\_column][et\_pb\_row][et\_pb\_section][et\_pb\_section fb\_built="1" fullwidth="on" custom\_padding\_last\_edited="on/desktop" admin\_label="section" \_builder\_version="3.22" custom\_padding="0|||" custom\_padding\_tablet="50px|0|50px|0" transparent\_background="off" padding\_mobile="off" make\_fullwidth="off" use\_custom\_width="off" width\_unit="on"] [et\_pb\_fullwidth\_portfolio include\_categories="8,9,10,11" admin\_label="Fullwidth Portfolio" \_builder\_version="3.0.48" background\_size="initial" background\_position="top\_left" background\_repeat="repeat" auto="on" auto\_speed="4000"] [/et\_pb\_fullwidth\_portfolio][et\_pb\_section]

# Joshua Ploetz '15 | Student

May 19, 2015



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## Joshua Ploetz '15 | Raising Veteran's Mental Health Awareness

Student from St. Charles, MN  
RTTR Major, Veteran

**“I have a lot of friends who committed suicide partly because they felt like they couldn't talk about it... If we build a better support network, instead of 22 veterans killing themselves, every day we can lower that number.”**



Joshua Ploetz's story is as long and winding as the Mississippi River he traveled last summer to raise awareness for veterans with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). I started our interview with the all the usual questions, but as we talked, we jumped from his personal life, to inspirational people he's met, to his struggles with PTSD and reintegration to civilian life. Though we spoke of many topics, there was also a strong undercurrent as our conversation continually circled back to the need for openness about veterans' war experiences and the need for sympathy and acceptance from civilians and veterans alike. This is Joshua's mission in life, and like an ever-flowing river, he will keep working towards creating a network for veterans and ending the stigma of combat and PTSD, no matter how many more twists and turns his life takes.

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***What is "Paddle Off the War" and how did you decide to do it?***

"Paddle Off the War" was a 79-day solo canoe trip I took down the whole Mississippi, from Lake Itasca to the Gulf of Mexico, while carrying the Baton, a stretcher handle used in Helmand Province in Afghanistan—to raise awareness for veterans with PTSD. I decided to take this trip two years ago, but the last eight years really impacted how I got on the Mississippi River because I left the Marine Corp with combat injuries and PTSD, struggled to figure what career I wanted, got married and then divorced, went back to college twice and got involved with Team Semper Fi, which helps veterans get involved with physical activities. My combat casualty nurse also guided me toward an organization called Walk Off the War, which uses the focal point of the Appalachian Trail to help veterans deal with PTSD, and I read *Floating Down the Country* by Matt Mohlke, which is an account of Mohlke's own canoe trip down the Mississippi River. So all these things unfolded and I really needed to do something to take care of myself mentally. I kind of combined all these pieces of my life and that's how I ended up on the river.

***What message were you trying to convey?***

I wanted to bring veterans together to support each other through PTSD and also gain support from civilians who've never served. I want people to be able to talk about their war experiences. Veterans can open up and civilians can try to understand whether you agree about going to war or not. That barrier in between is hard to come through because when you do have PTSD, it's like being an alcoholic; you don't want to say you're an alcoholic because that's a negative thing. But PTSD's not a negative thing— it's just something that happened in your life. You went to war and saw some terrible things, and those things are still affecting you.

I have a lot of friends who committed suicide partly because they felt like they couldn't talk about it when really it's just a social norm not to talk about war. If we can build a better support network, instead of 22 veterans killing themselves, every day we can lower that number.

***Did you expect to gain the coverage that you did?***

I got on the river for myself, but "Paddle Off the War" became much bigger than I expected. The Facebook page has almost 2,000 likes and dozens of media outlets took an interest in this story. I think it was because the message opens the eyes of people who don't know what PTSD is or what a veteran goes through every day. The emotional ups and downs are not necessarily their personality, but it's the things they're reacting to and that's just PTSD.

PTSD is not only affecting US troops but the whole world. Media outlets from Germany, Italy and Canada also printed the story from the AP News and because war and PTSD impacts their lives too.

***What was your favorite part of "Paddle Off the War"?***

I had so much serenity on the river and I could really see that there was a reason for everything that happened, the meaning in life, because I was moving slowly. I was able to put the last eight years on the river and connect the dots. You get different vibes on the river, and you can really think about things and correct them. The war experiences are always going to be there but through this trip I was able to accept and deal with them.

***Has "Paddle Off the War" helped or influenced your career goals?***

Yeah, in a sense. My career goals have taken many turns, but I'd definitely like to work with veterans because I can relate and I have a passion for it. It's a lot easier to do something if you have a passion for it. There are organizations that take veterans on expeditions, like Into the Woods or Outward Bound, and I've looked at those because it would be a great opportunity to combine my interests in veterans and the outdoors.

***After graduation, will you still be involved with volunteering? How or with what organization?***

Next summer I'm doing the same kind of thing and biking the Continental Divide with my buddy Brandon, who served with me in Afghanistan. The Mississippi trip was for me and I know that Brandon needs this bike trip just as much as I needed the river. And when he called me about this bike trip, I thought "Screw it, what if I crisscross America eight different times?" I'd like to travel again—hiking the Appalachian Trail; biking the Pacific Crest and through the North and South states; paddling the Missouri, Ohio and Yukon Rivers; and sea kayaking around Hawaii— as an accomplishment for myself and to raise awareness for PTSD. This would be a

huge impact that one person has done consistently for one cause, and I think that it's a needed cause.

***Who has been the biggest influence in your life?***

I'd say the Marine Corp would be the biggest influence. It's not necessarily a person, but it has molded and shaped me into the person I have become. And still there are some negative things in me, but that's not necessarily the Marine Corps' fault—it's just what happens in the Marine Corp. There's just this bond and it doesn't matter what year you were in; it's a mentality of "You're a Marine so I'm with you." For example, I met this guy on the river who had been out of the Marine Corp since 1956 and he invited me to stay at his house even though I'd never met him before. That brotherhood is the thing I cherish most about the Marine Corp, and sometimes that is hard to deal with in civilian life because you're not around those friends anymore.

***If you could invite anyone to sit on this bench and have a conversation, who would it be and what would you talk about?***

The first person who came to my mind is my maternal grandma, who passed away right before I went into the Marine Corp. She had a huge impact in my life and I'd like to talk to her about what I'm doing now, just talk about life in general and my military things too. She's really knowledgeable and we always had good conversations; I felt like I could always talk to her. I'd ask for advice because she was always good at advice and you could take or leave it.

**Interviewed and Edited by Elizabeth Meinders '15 and photographed by Anna Rae Butler '15**

To nominate someone in the WSU community — faculty, staff, student, alumni or friend of WSU — for *Warrior Way*, or if you have other feedback to share, please email Mollee Sheehan, director of web communications: [msheehan@winona.edu](mailto:msheehan@winona.edu)

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# How an Earthquake in Nepal Affects Us All

April 30, 2015  
Improving Our World

Stop by Kryzsko Commons and show your support for those affected by the Nepal earthquake, like Sourab and his sister, Supriya.

Stop by Kryzsko Commons and show your support for those affected by the Nepal earthquake, like Sourab and his sister, Supriya.

On April 25, one of the most powerful earthquakes took place in Nepal. This 7.8 magnitude earthquake impacted the whole country of Nepal and it's neighboring countries too. It claimed the lives of over 5,000 people. While this earthquake happened close to eight thousand miles away from us, it has had an impact on people all over the world, including a few students from our very own Winona State University.

My friend Sourab Bhatta, a junior, is one of those students. He is from Kathmandu, Nepal and came to WSU three years ago to pursue a business degree. After the news headlines about the tragic earthquake, I talked to him about how he personally is handling the crisis back at home. Though the news was shocking and upsetting, Sourab is working through his



difficult emotions by taking steps to support his friends and family back in Nepal them even though he is far away.

**What was your first reaction when you heard about the earthquake?**

I was shocked at first, because I never expected the news. It totally came as a surprise. It was 6am when a friend texted me about the news.

**How has the earthquake affected you even though you are Winona, MN?**

It affected me because some of my relatives' houses collapsed in the earthquake. Also, people I'd known for a while had died in this event. It's really personal; it's really close to my heart.

**Have you been able to contact your family? How are your friends doing?**

I have been able to call my family and they've been calling me too. The first few days were tough because they didn't have telephone lines or electricity. But the next few days, it got better. My friends are doing okay. Most of them have been living outside in tents—even in the rain. It's wet, and they're all outside.

**Is that the reason for the tent and the fasting?**

Yes, I wanted to be able to experience what they are going through also. And along with living in tents, a lot of people don't have food back home. There's a scarcity and a lot of people are hungry. Fasting is my way of showing that I support them and let them know that I am praying for them.

**What would you suggest for those who want to be actively involved in helping out with this?**

A few ways people can be involved is by reaching out to the people in Nepal through working with an organization, donating, or even just praying about it or sending notes of support to families in Nepal.

His story also made me think about how this earthquake impacted myself. I was impacted because I knew someone who was directly affected, Sourab, but I also realized I was impacted because it affected India, the country where I was born, which received aftershocks that killed several dozen people. While it is harder for me to identify with my country of birth since I did not live there very long, it still hurt when I realized over 50 people from India died. Listening to Sourab talk about how this earthquake affected everyone in Nepal and himself personally was very moving, and made me want to support Nepal more than ever before.

Sourab and a few others will be hosting a vigil at the Winona State University gazebo on today from 6-7pm. This will be a way to remember those whose lives were claimed by the tragic event, and I encourage you all to attend. If you'd like to make a donation to relief efforts, WSU alumnus Amit Khanal has set up the Nepal Earthquake Relief Fund to assist relief efforts in Nepal.

**–Sharna Miller**

# Alexander Paulson '16 & Aaron Camacho '17 | Students

April 19, 2015



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## Alexander Paulson '16 & Aaron Camacho '17 | Integrating Past & Present

Alexander is a Student from Baraboo, WI  
TSEOL & Spanish Education Major and Sustainability Minor  
Aaron is a Student from Fountain City, WI  
Environmental Biology Major and Sustainability Minor

**“Where there’s no respect, there’s no understanding, and if that doesn’t**

## exist, there's no growth, no forward momentum as a society.”

If you have walked through campus you have likely seen The End of the Trail statue located in front of the PAC. Most people—myself included— walk right past it, oblivious to the contention surrounding that statue of a Native American man on a horse—not riding proudly but looking rather beaten and dejected. For this reason, some find it deeply offensive and want it destroyed or at least hidden away in the depths of the Library’s art archives while others argue it should stay on campus.



While the statue is clearly a piece of Native American art depicting Native American culture, it also has strong roots in Winona. It was donated to Winona State University by former professor Erv Bublitz and the artist, James Earle Fraser, was a Winona native as well. The duality of Native American culture and Winona heritage imbued in the statue is also found in Aaron and Alex themselves. Aaron, a self-proclaimed “melting pot in a body,” is part Yakui, Ho-Chunk, Prairie Band Potawatomie, German, Norwegian, Irish and Polish. Alex, meanwhile, claims WSU alumni parents and Winona-Polish heritage in addition to his Swedish and German ancestry.

In just a few minutes of conversation, it was obvious that Aaron and Alex share a tremendous amount of pride in their heritage and in WSU. They have both taken WSU’s mission of improving the world to heart with intensity and commitment that is rarely seen. I don’t know if I could sustain that sort of passion through the long process of researching the issue, developing a solution, getting approval, revising the concepts, getting funding and beginning construction. Perhaps I just haven’t found my project yet, but Aaron and Alex certainly have found theirs and will see the Indigenous Learning Garden Initiative through to the end.

If you would like to learn more about the Indigenous Learning Garden Initiative, you can email Aaron and Alex at [ilgi.wsu@gmail.com](mailto:ilgi.wsu@gmail.com) or connect with them on Facebook.

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### *Tell me about the indigenous Learning Garden. Where will it be, and what will be in it?*

**Alex:** The statue is still going to be in the courtyard, and the concept is “Coming Home” so the statue is an exhausted warrior at the end of the day coming home to the lodge. The artistic concepts show a small area that could work for a drum circle, the statue, and a lodge with images depicting Native American history from past to present because today there are Native American doctors, astronauts, lawyers and all kinds of professions. They’re not gone as the statue may imply, and they still engage in traditional lifestyles. The garden will also function as an outdoor classroom. We’ve been collaborating with faculty and departments to find out what they’d need to take a class to the Indigenous Learning Garden for a period.

**Aaron:** We’ve heard from the Sustainability department that it would be interesting to plant native plants, and the Biology department has said it would like to see medicinal herbs. The THAD department has said it would be really amazing to be able to perform tribal dances in the space around the lodge because they currently don’t have an outdoor space for that. Also, we’re calling it an *Indigenous* Learning Garden, so it’s a place to celebrate indigenous cultures from wherever they may be from and that includes our international students.

### *Why did you want to work on the Indigenous Learning Garden Initiative?*



**Aaron:** It started when I went to Dr. Ripley's CLASP presentation about whether the End of the Trail statue should be treated as artifact, so there isn't such a responsibility to teach about it, or if this is art and we should have curriculum to contextualize the sculpture. He made some very valid points, and the discussion got pretty heated. Now, I grew up with the statue—it was always on the shelf at my grandma's house, in my house—and it was not a negative thing for us. My grandma always said it's a reminder of how far we've come and that we're still here. Some people find it very offensive and want to chop it into a thousand pieces and throw it to the bottom of the Mississippi. Others wanted to put a sheet over it and keep it in storage, but I commented that if we put it in storage, then in 10-15 years they'll think "Oh why are we hiding this!?" and we'll start this problem all over again. To me, the other Native American artwork on campus is just as upsetting because different cultures are mashed together but not distinguished at all and the University could expand upon these gifts and develop a curriculum. People don't understand how difficult it is to see dominant society just take art or artifacts—there's just no respect. Where there's no respect, there's no understanding, and if that doesn't exist there's no growth, no forward momentum as a society. Our goal is to educate people about where this land comes from, how we've gotten to this point and where we can go in the future so we don't repeat mistakes from the past. That's why I feel this garden is important.

**Alex:** I do a lot of social justice work and I identify as queer. One of the things that makes me able to live my life as I am now is the work of allies. But I can't just expect people to be allies—I have to be an ally for them too because it's not a one-way street. This is my way for showing up for other marginalized groups. We can find solidarity within mutual oppression, meaning that all oppressed groups should be fighting to end each others' oppressions so we're less oppressed as an enormous oppressed group.

### *What is your favorite part of this project?*

**Alex:** For me, it's all the people I get to meet. It's an excellent way to meet people who aren't necessarily engaging in indigenous rights but are trying to improve the world in other ways and you can clearly see those intersectionalities. Everything's connected and that's why this garden is really important because it furthers others' goals too. For instance, we're both sustainability minors and environmentalists which is actually a really strong component of this project.

**Aaron:** I agree, and besides that it's amazing to hear how many people thank us for doing this. I've been calling the tribal nations—just to ask for guidance, not money—and they have been overwhelmingly thankful and supportive. We've gotten thanks even from professors on this campus and students too, and you don't realize how much that means until you start talking about it. I think it's huge to do something that means so much to someone else, and we didn't realize that it would.

### *Has the Indigenous Learning Garden Initiative influenced your career goals at all?*

**Alex:** Oh yes! My major is TESOL and there are many people who argue that the proliferation of English is a form of colonialism, but I am also coming at it from the teacher side where English has become a lingua franca as there are more second language speakers in the world than first language speakers. So I don't know exactly what I want to do with my life anymore because this project has brought into question whether a TESOL career really corresponds with my values. At the same time, this project has strengthened my belief that it's important to be supportive of cultural pride and culture practices—engaging and honoring students' heritage and encouraging them to speak their native tongue at home to retain that heritage—which is something I've read in some ESL literature that I think is really powerful. Basically the field is open again—everything was settled and then this project shook the pot.

**Aaron:** I am a non-traditional student, so in that break from UW-Milwaukee to enrolling at WSU, I decided to go into retail to give myself some time to figure out what I wanted to do when I grew up. In retail, everything comes in plastic—every t-shirt comes in its own plastic bag through the back door and they go out the front door in a different plastic bag. I was horrified by this, but needed the paycheck. However, when I started seeing those bags in the ditch outside the mall and in the waterways come spring, I figured out that I want to work in bioremediation of waterways because I know there are plants out there that can metabolize plastics, lipids and heavy metals. But since working on this project and paying more attention to the cultural side, I've started thinking about being a liaison between the DNR or Department of Interior and tribal nations because there are a lot of issues with treaty rights and waterways—things that I wanted to work with initially, but I might have a bigger impact this way. So my plans have changed a little bit, but I think whenever you take on something new it challenges you and you grow from it. How can your plans still be the same after that?

### *Who has influenced you the most?*

**Alex:** I've had so many people who have influenced me, but right now Mr. Alexander Hines in the Inclusion & Diversity Office is one of the most influential. He's always been there as a really strong mentor and role model for me personally. Sometimes I've found myself in situations where I was unsure how to conduct myself but went through it anyway and he'll tell me if I did something problematic or if I was spot on and he'd have done the same thing. There is also Jouapag Lee, a 2014 alum, who was a big influence on my college career. I was going in a different direction when I met her, but our friendship allowed me to grow and experience things I wouldn't have otherwise because I had a very narrow mindset when I arrived at WSU. For instance, I am heavily invested in the KEAP Center and Jouapag is the main reason because she was inspirational as she basically made

the KEAP council what it is now, and I would argue, she did it almost single-handedly. I'm often told that I drop maxims of wisdom, but those maxims are usually variations of things she said to me.

**Aaron:** Of course, I look up to my parents and family members, but there is also Mrs. Osmond, my high school advisor who helped me graduate early. She didn't just wave me through; she met with my parents and made sure that this was the right thing for me. I think that the reason that she was such a big influence is because it was a rare thing in my high school to have someone so invested in you and she wasn't somebody I was expecting to take an interest in me because for the first three years it had been "Yeah, ok grades are good." But that last year I needed a little extra help and she was really supportive. I think that she was really impactful because, like everyone is when graduating high school, I was unsure of myself and so to have someone else be so sure that you will succeed is really amazing.

*If you could invite anyone to sit on this bench and have a conversation, who would it be and what would you talk about?*

**Alex:** I would say my Grandma Joanie because she died before I got a chance to really know her like I've had the fortune of getting to know my other grandma. My grandma Joni was a very strong woman—a single mother of seven children living on a waitress's salary who owned a house here in Winona yet never learned how to drive. There's so many things that I feel she could have taught me, but I never asked because she died when I was in middle school and I was still very internally focused. I think it's important to have a strong foundation in your past and the people who brought you forward, and my heritage is something that I really value.

**Aaron:** Because of this project I've been asking my family more questions and it's making me more aware that if I don't take the time to learn or write it down I'm going to forget it. My Potawatomi name is Kewenkwe, which means "Returning Thunder Woman," and I was named after my great-great aunt. All I know is that she was this extraordinary lady who lived in Kansas and worked like a man and ran her own ranch, an uncommon profession for women at the time. To meet her and compare her stories to my life to see if there are any similarities or see if there are more ways I do my name justice is something I can't ever learn out a book.

**Interviewed and Edited by Elizabeth Meinders '15 and photographed by Anna Rae Butler '15**

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# Black Trans Lives Matter

March 20, 2015  
Improving Our World

Cece McDonald

“Don’t ever feel like what someone else says you are trumps who you are” – Cece McDonald.

On Tuesday, March 17, I had the opportunity to attend Cece McDonald’s presentation “Black Trans Lives Matter” in the Harriet Johnson Auditorium. Cece McDonald is a black trans woman and social activist from Minneapolis, MN. She came into the public eye after an incident in June 2012 where she was a victim of a violent hate crime while walking to the grocery store with some of her friends. She was verbally and physically abused and, while defending herself, ended up killing her attacker.

She accepted a plea bargain of 41 months for second-degree manslaughter. Even though she is a trans woman, she was housed in male prisons against her gender identity. This attracted the attention of many advocate groups and individuals, including actress and activist Laverne Cox who is currently producing a documentary called “Free Cece.” Today, Cece works towards education and equality for all people.

Cece discussed a plethora of information in her presentation, from the very real issue of violence towards women to the issues with the prison industrial complex and the goals of the prison abolition movement. One of the biggest things that stuck out to me from the discussions was the quote that acts as the title to this post. “Don’t ever feel like what someone says you are, trumps who you are.” I think that this is such a powerful message. Absolutely no one can tell you who you are other than yourself. You define your truth and no one has the right to change that. As Cece said, “You’re here. You’re existing. And you can’t let anyone take that away from you [even though] they will try.”

To share everything I learned would result in a blog post that kept scrolling forever, so I will share what I believe to be the main points that really stuck out to me:

- **There is a lack of people actually getting involved.** Many people want to say that they are allies to the LGBT—specifically trans—community, but they don’t actually do anything. To be an ally means to be actively fighting for equality. You can’t just throw the “ally” label on yourself to seem progressive.



- **Violence towards women is a serious issue.** Physical, verbal and sexual violence all occur in greater numbers against women, and this includes trans\* women. This fact is something people often forget when they are fighting against this violence.
- **Racism exists in every community.** This includes the LGBTQIA community. Too often people have the idea that because they are a marginalized group that they cannot be oppressive of other marginalized groups, and quite frankly that is an idiotic notion. **Failure to recognize this will result in no real change.**
- **The community of people of color isn't just black people.** To ignore all the other communities of color creates a divide, which will only make the struggle towards equality harder.
- **GET INVOLVED.** In the words of CeCe McDonald: "If you claim to be an ally, be a true ally. If you stand in solidarity, stand with us longer and stronger." Enough said.
- **We need to take a critical look at the prison industry.** The prison ideal was built upon inequality, and it is too corrupt and broken to be fixed. It needs to be abolished and evaluated.
- **You exist as a whole and not as parts of yourself.** "People either see me as Black or as Trans, and people never really see me as both...I am a Trans Woman of Color and I can't separate those things." – Cece McDonald.

Inequality, racism, transphobia and marginalization: these are all very real realities and it is our job as communities of people to work towards eradicating these ideals. Cece noted, "I'm always seen as the angry black woman and you know what? I have the right to be angry." We all do. We shouldn't be bystanders in this struggle. We all need to get angry and use that anger to work towards true equality for everyone in all aspects of who they are. Just because I'm an able-bodied cisgender white man doesn't mean I can't fight for the rights of my fellow people who don't receive the privileges I do from being of that status. We all need to work together to make sure that people can go about their lives being true to themselves and not receive any discrimination for doing so.

# Gretchen Haga '16 & Abbey Hammell '15 | Students

March 19, 2015



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## Gretchen Haga '16 & Abbey Hammell '15 | Raising Awareness

Gretchen is a Student from Fargo, ND  
**Spanish & English Education Majors**  
Abbey is a Student from Rochester, MN  
**Psychology & Spanish Majors**

## “People are not defined by their disorder – we want to get that across to the whole community. They are individuals who have so many different aspects to their lives.”

I have known Abbey and Gretchen for a while now—Abbey was my roommate freshman year and I’ve had classes with fellow English major Gretchen—but I had no idea of all they’ve been up to in raising awareness for mental wellness and reducing the stigma of mental illness on campus. After catching up with them in our interview, I was so impressed by their hard work and creativity to make a tough topic like mental health engaging and even entertaining. The Active Minds *Mental Health Monologues* combines performance and true life testimonials to pack a punch to your heartstrings and open your eyes to the reality of living with mental illness. With the help of other club members and advisors, they have not only created a unique space for mental health to be both personal and public, but also demonstrated their ambition to make the world a better place, beginning with our own campus.

If you’d like to get involved with Active Minds and learn more about promoting mental wellness, check the out the club’s Facebook page.

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### *What is the Active Minds Mental Health Monologues and how did that start?*

**Abbey:** I just happened upon the idea when Googling activities to promote mental health awareness for our club, Active Minds. I’ve been in the *Vagina Monologues*, which was a fun experience, so I thought why not focus on mental health in a way that can get a lot of people involved? In November, we proposed the event to Counseling and Wellness Services and our advisor Mick Lynch. Then, rather than have one person write all the monologues, we put out a call for submissions written by WSU students, faculty and staff. That way it will be a more personal experience, and show everyone within the WSU community that mental wellness is something worth talking about.

**Gretchen:** The monologues provide a nice format because people can anonymously submit their stories and somebody else—a trained actor in the theater department or interested volunteers—can be the one to tell their story. After reading a few of these stories, I can tell how cathartic it is for them to give their story. Thus the monologues become a collaborative event where we can understand each other’s experiences and actually make a difference on campus. Creating awareness is very important but causing people to change their behavior is what really counts so it’s our goal to make people aware but also that they connect with a story and get the help they need or find resources for a friend in need, and hopefully start a chain reaction of mental wellness.

### *What themes have you found in the monologue submissions?*

**Abbey:** We have mostly anxiety, depression and eating disorder stories—that seems to be a huge thing around our campus. Some of them are a little more “this is my life and I’m happy with who I am” and others are almost cursing at their mental illness about everything that has happened to them because of it while some are a mix of both. The main theme is really learning to live with a mental illness and getting the most you can out of life.

**Gretchen:** What I find really interesting is that each story in any particular disorder category is so different and even people with the same disorder deal with it so differently. Of course, these people are not defined by their disorder—that’s another thing that we want to get across to the whole community—but they are individuals who have so many different aspects of their lives. Another cool thing is that the writers are not just people with disorders, but they are siblings and friends of people with a mental illness and even counselors, which is great because counseling is also stigmatized. It’s interesting to get all these different perspectives.

### *Why did you want to join Active Minds?*

**Gretchen:** I became involved with Active Minds two years ago when my choir classmate Claire Stevens told me how she wanted establish a chapter at WSU. I just felt drawn to help because I’ve had family members and friends with mental health issues but it’s never talked about, and I think that silence is all too common.

**Abbey:** I was too busy to join when the club was forming, but it piqued my interest and I kept tabs on it. Then last semester I was invited to speak to the club members about my experience with mental illness. That was the first time I was able to have an open discussion about it with people I didn’t know very well. They were so curious and receptive to my experiences that I realized there are other people like me and there are other people like them who want to learn more and make a difference. So I became one of them too, even though I am graduating soon, because I can see the club’s full potential. That experience speaking to the club led me toward the *Mental Health Monologues* because I wanted to share others’ stories like I had shared mine.

### *Has this influenced your career goals?*

**Gretchen:** Definitely. A lot of the stories we’ve collected for the monologues show that peoples’ mental disorders usually start in middle or high school so, as a future English high school teacher, I realize that these are going to be my students. My experience in the *Mental Health Monologues* and Active Minds will help me be an advocate for my students, to be there for them when there’s no one who they feel they can trust, and encourage



kids to get help before it gets worse. I'd even like to talk about it in a classroom to help stop the stigma of having a mental illness and say it's okay to go to counseling. Granted there is only so much I can do, but I know it will make my career more fulfilling.

**Abbey:** I'm not sure if this has influence my career goals or if my career goals have pushed me to get involved but my first interest with psychology was when my first psych teacher explained how a neuron worked. It's just a signal on and off, and somehow those sequences create consciousness which really intrigued me. Throughout my academic career I've learned more about how the brain works and I find it fascinating that most the treatments for mental illnesses involve changing something biological in the brain, like a chemical imbalance. A lot of people—even people with mental illness— don't grasp that it's not their fault, that it's something they can't control and that it's not a defect in character at all. That's why I'd like to be a researcher or a clinical psychologist— I'm kind of in between right now.

### *Who has influenced you the most?*

**Gretchen:** The only person who is coming to my mind is my mom. She is a very strong, independent, fierce woman who just always did what was right—I guess that's kind of a mom thing. Even though we don't have a lot of similar interests, she is a strong role model for me and I really admire how she won't take no for answer.

**Abbey:** Similarly, the first person in mind was my mother for the drive and ambition that I have gotten from her. She's been there to push me through a lot of hard times but has also helped me realize that no one else defines me but me, and I should do what makes me happiest. She has shown me that I am more capable than I thought and also the value of being passionate about what you want to do in life and how far that passion can take you.

### *If you could invite anyone to sit on this bench and have a conversation, who would it be and what would you talk about?*

**Abbey:** I am not very familiar with all the history, but I would really like to meet Martin Luther King Jr. and hear from him all the things he went through to further civil rights. He persevered despite getting so much backlash, and that just takes a strong will and a strong personality. I think it would be amazing to talk to him, learn his secrets, and then apply those secrets to my own life and make change in this world. I've read his sermons and it seems like he gets it; he wants everyone to be at peace with each other because it's not an "us vs. them" thing but a "we're all in this together" thing. I'd like to see more of that in the world.

**Gretchen:** For some reason, I keep thinking of Amy Poehler. I'm absolutely obsessed with *Parks & Recreation*, and from what I've seen of her as an actual person, she seems to be this amazing feminist and amazing person. She created The Amy Poehler's Smart Girls which highlights how girls across the globe are improving the world, which I find so inspiring. Also, in her old comedy work, she is so about being herself and doing what you love and encouraging others to do the same which I really admire. So I'd just get to know Amy Poehler and talk about her life and what she's doing.

### **Interviewed and Edited by Elizabeth Meinders '15 and photographed by Anna Rae Butler '15**

To nominate someone in the WSU community — faculty, staff, student, alumni or friend of WSU — for *Warrior Way*, or if you have other feedback to share, please email Mollee Sheehan, director of web communications: [msheehan@winona.edu](mailto:msheehan@winona.edu)[/et\_pb\_text][et\_pb\_column][et\_pb\_row][et\_pb\_section][et\_pb\_section fb\_built="1" fullwidth="on" custom\_padding\_last\_edited="onldesktop" admin\_label="section" \_builder\_version="3.22" custom\_padding="0||" custom\_padding\_tablet="50px|0|50px|0" transparent\_background="off" padding\_mobile="off" make\_fullwidth="off" use\_custom\_width="off" width\_unit="on"] [et\_pb\_fullwidth\_portfolio include\_categories="8,9,10,11" admin\_label="Fullwidth Portfolio" \_builder\_version="3.0.48" background\_size="initial" background\_position="top\_left" background\_repeat="repeat" auto="on" auto\_speed="4000"] [/et\_pb\_fullwidth\_portfolio][et\_pb\_section]

# Jay Nelson '15 | Student

February 20, 2015



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## Jay Nelson '15 | Connecting with the Environment

Student from Hartland, WI  
Public Administration and Political Science majors, Spanish and Sustainability minors

**“Everyone likes to talk about the “doom and gloom” parts of society such as poverty, hunger and pollution. These problems are easy to highlight, but I’ve always found Environmental Club to be a positive way to address social issues instead of just talking about them.”**

Jay Nelson doesn’t look like the Hollywood stereotype of an environmentalist. There’s no dreadlocks, no tie-dye, no hemp jewelry. With his easy smile and charming demeanor, he looks like an average college student at WSU. But when we



visited the Greenhouse, his eyes lit up and he excitedly pointed out the little green shoots of squash, beans and tomatoes sprouting in their soil beds—just as you would expect from the leader of the Environmental Club. As we talked, Jay radiated positivity and optimism about where his degrees in public administration and political science, and his passion for sustainability will take him after graduation.

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***What do you do in Environmental Club?***

I've been involved in the club since my sophomore year when I declared a sustainability minor and went to all the events and just tried to help out in any way I could. I was elected president of the club my junior year. Now I do all the planning for club meetings and events and finalize our club goals for the year.

***What is your favorite part about Environmental Club?***

It's been really cool to see my friends and peers getting involved in projects that we've decided are important—not just to the University but to the community too. That's been really fun to see everybody getting excited about taking part in these projects that we all feel will make the world a better place. It really gives me a sense of purpose and meaning to what I'm doing in my life.

***What attracted you to this club?***

Everyone likes to talk about the “doom and gloom” parts of society such as poverty, hunger and pollution. These problems that are easy to highlight, but I've always found Environmental Club to be a positive way to address social issues instead of just talking about them. There are a lot of ways—for example for our Greenhouse Project and obviously projects like it on a larger scale— you can grow food anywhere, even in urban areas. By setting up an urban farm, you can provide food to people without access to healthy food sources, jobs for people who want to operate a greenhouse, cut down on food waste by utilizing compost systems, and reduce pollution from greenhouse gases produced by large-scale farming. To me, it's an answer to so many different problems and that has become clear over the past few years.

***Can you tell me more about the Greenhouse Project?***

The Greenhouse is my proudest achievement so far. A year ago it was a pretty desolate space—just some boxes, garbage cans and random facilities equipment was stored there—and we've been able to transform it into this cool place where there's plants growing and everyone can come take part and learn about growing food or flowers. And you don't have to be an expert on soil levels or agriculture in order to grow a plant. I'm no expert on growing things, but a year ago my roommates and I experimented growing food in our yard. Our landlord built us a planter and we planted flowers, kale, tomatoes, peppers, squash, lettuce, radishes and cabbage. It all went really well and all we did was stick seeds in the ground and water them. It just takes trial and error and not being afraid to fail because you learn as you go. The Greenhouse is place for others to try that experiment too, and learn about sustainable agriculture in the process.



***Has Environmental Club influenced your career goals?***



Definitely. I didn't have a major when I was a freshman, but now my career goals are to work for an environmental non-profit organization and promote environmental causes. Maybe I'll even operate greenhouses and work to develop the urban farm movement in some way. My public administration major, especially, has given me the tools to do this sort of work.

***After graduation, will you still be involved with volunteering?***

Yeah, I've looked into some different programs for after graduation and many are based in the non-profit sector. There's a cool one called GreenCorp where they hook you up with environmental organizations and you learn all about campaigning for environmental causes and educating people through community outreach. I've also looked into things like ConservationCorp where you're in the field doing environmental work.

***Who has been the biggest influence in your life?***

One of my big influencers now is my advisor Professor Kara Lindaman. She always helps me develop my ideas because I have all these ideas about projects but I can't ever really zero in on them. So she helps me apply what I've learned inside the classroom in the real world. Otherwise I have a friend from high school who has done a lot of work in sustainable agriculture at UW-Madison. I've always gone to him for advice or to share stories about how we are each working with sustainability.

***If you could invite anyone to sit on this bench and have a conversation, who would it be and what would you talk about?***

That's a tough question... I've always thought JFK was an inspiring leader, especially when the country faced really hard times. I've read books about him and seen a lot of documentaries and I think he would be someone with some insight about situations when you are faced with a lot of adversity. I would ask him what he does to stay calm under pressure or what he does to be sure to give the best answer when everyone is looking to him.

**Interviewed and Edited by Elizabeth Meinders '15 and photographed by Anna Rae Butler '15**

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# The MBLGTA College Conference and A New Normal

February 20, 2015  
Improving Our World

logo for the 2015 Midwest Bisexual, Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, and Ally  
College Conference

MLBCTACC is a mouthful of an acronym, but it is also a life changing  
experience!

I've done a lot in my journey toward being the best social justice activist I can be and I strive to make the world a better place for everyone, regardless of their identity. This past weekend, this journey took me once again with Full Spectrum: Winona State University's Gender & Sexuality Alliance as we ventured to Normal, Illinois for yet another year at The Midwest Bisexual, Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, and Ally College Conference (MBLGTACC).

This year, the conference was titled "Narrating a New Normal." Throughout the weekend attendees went to a variety of workshops, keynote speakers and networking events to expand their knowledge, professional circles and viewpoints on many issues surrounding the LGBTQIA community from intersectionalities (referring to social categorizations such as race, class, and gender that overlap for an individual or group and can lead to interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage) to acceptance in the dominant culture. There was also a discussion about how to navigate the workplace as a LGBTQIA person or as someone who stands in solidarity with the LGBTQIA community. If you are interested in learning more about the LGBTQIA community and their issues, It's Pronounced Metrosexual is an excellent resource that is fun and engaging without being preachy.

The weekend started on Friday evening with a welcome and keynote speaker who was none other than Laverne Cox, a black transgender woman, whom you probably recognize from her role on the Netflix Original series, *Orange is the New Black*. She spoke about her experiences growing up and how they shaped the woman she is today. Being able to see a person who continues to inspire me so much in my work speak was a life-changing experience.

Other speakers I got to see throughout the weekend included the self-identified "deliciously disabled" Andrew Morrison-Gurza, a Disability Awareness Consultant who works to highlight the lived experiences of people with disabilities to show that it is a universal experience that we should all embrace, and J Mase III, a black/trans/queer spoken word poet and educator, as well as many other people who work toward improving the world for all people no matter their differences. Each brought something to the conference and lent their expertise and stories to help those of us in attendance better understand

intersectionality and the lives that are different from our own.

Trying to summarize everything I learned this past weekend is near impossible. So I've decided to pull together some of the main points:

- **You can't talk about one marginalized group without talking about the others.** Intersectionalities are important to address, because only together do they give you a picture of a person's identity and therefore a picture of the lived experiences of those individuals.
- To those who like to refer to themselves as "allies" – know that **you can't just be present at the protest.** "Ally" isn't a label you hang around yourself; it's a verb, as in "I am *being* an ally". Being an ally means actually working towards equality for all people, and it's something that you have to constantly be doing as you stand in solidarity with minority groups.
- **Education is the key to change** – and we should always be open to that education.
- **It's okay to make mistakes.** As social justice advocates, we aren't always going to know everything and we are definitely going to make mistakes. The way to deal with those mistakes is to be open to being corrected!

These points merely scratch the surface of what my second MBLGTACC taught me and the experiences and memories it left me with. I can't even begin to describe how incredible it feels to learn so much and be surrounded by people who genuinely want the world to be a better place. Imagine if everyone took the time to get active and take a stance against structural and social inequalities in our society – the positive impact it would have would be absolutely incredible.

If you would like to hear more about my experiences at MBLGTACC or get involved with Full Spectrum, please contact me! My email is [GBowling09@winona.edu](mailto:GBowling09@winona.edu).



# Eunie Alsaker & Jamie Sanders '98 | Staff & Alumni

January 20, 2015



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## Eunie Alsaker & Jamie Sanders '98 | Working with Grief

Eunie is from Winona, MN  
WSU Counseling Services Counselor, 11 years  
Jamie is a '98 Alumni from Winona, MN  
Counselor for victims of crime or loss (BS in Social Work)

**“When we lose someone it changes everything: our relationships, our**

## community, who we are and how we see the world. Often there's not a lot of time spent talking about that change or exploring new ways of integrating the loss into your life.”

You might think that spending a Saturday thinking, speaking, writing and drawing about grief and death would be a very depressing event, but counsellors Eunie Alsaker and Jamie Sanders see it as way to heal from the loss of a loved one. That's why they called their day-long retreat for grieving Winona area high school students a Healing Retreat rather than a Grief Retreat—and I agree with them. As they told me more about the retreat and all their creative ways of working through painful emotions, I found myself wishing that a program like this was available during the times I'd lost loved ones. Fortunately, the Healing Retreat isn't a one-time deal. Thanks to a grant from the Elizabeth Callender King Foundation and assistance from LiveWell Winona, this Healing Retreat for teenagers was only the first in a series of retreats for people of all ages, a series that Eunie and Jamie hope will continue to grow and help those in the Winona community find peace and healing.

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### *Tell me about the Healing Retreat. What do you do to make it happen?*

**Eunie:** The idea began a year and a half ago when I had a conversation with a board member from the Hospice program about available support for teens after the deaths of two high school students. I knew that larger communities offer experiential one-day retreats for people who are grieving and, since I'm currently on sabbatical, I adopted this as my project for the year. Jamie and I co-facilitated the first event on Nov. 15. This day for teenagers that was very experiential in nature and provided a variety of ways for healing including artwork, journaling, yoga, physical relaxation and visualization as well as talking and listening to music.

**Jamie:** Right, we wanted to provide an opportunity for teens to fully experience their grief, learn some ways of integrating their grief in to their lives and be connected to others while doing it. Also, grieving has such a profound impact on our lives. When we lose someone it changes everything: our relationships, our community, who we are and how we see the world. Often there's not a lot of time spent talking about that change or exploring new ways of integrating the loss into your life, life, and this healing retreat offers that opportunity for people.

### *How did the Healing Retreat go?*

**Jamie:** Well, I saw seven heavily mourning teenagers who also had to maintain their grades to get into the college and work long hours in order afford what they or their families needed. They had lost parents, grandparents, siblings and dear friends and were stressed to the maximum in this very emotional time and not able to talk about it because as a culture we don't want to talk about death. But here they had this great free space to talk their grief and loss. I asked them the names of the people they had lost, the teenagers appeared relieved and even excited to say those names because so often people stop talking about the people close to you. They talked a lot feeling relaxed and there certainly were connections made between teens who didn't know each other previously. We were able to talk about other hard topics like suicide and pain but also able to laugh and find a lot of comfort and enjoyment in each other.

### *What is your favorite part about the Healing Retreat?*

**Jamie:** I love connecting with people, so my favorite part was the connections we made and the connections—which came in the form of laughing, talking, honoring loved ones and being vulnerable with their emotions—the teens made with each other.

**Eunie:** I would have to say the same thing. In all of the work that I do, it's the connection with another person that is the most rewarding.

### *What attracted you to this particular way of helping grieving teens?*

**Eunie:** One reason we wanted to do this is because there isn't anything like it in the community. There's one-on-one counseling and there's crisis-response immediately after a death, but that's really it for teens. And we wanted to do a day-long retreat because grief does impact us on all levels and we wanted to give teens tools on emotional, physical, spiritual, social dimensions in life and be able to address their grief. I personally was interested in the topic was that I have two sons and each lost a close friend to suicide while in high school. There was a lot of support for these teens immediately, but as a parent I really wanted more so I thought “Let's create something more.” Also, in my work at WSU, I have developed a passion over the years for young adults who have lost a family member or a close friend and are away at school. I find that that work is very inspiring for me and the connections are lasting.

### *How did you two decide to collaborate on this project?*

**Eunie:** When Jamie was in graduate school, she contacted me to do an interview on how I use creative arts in counseling, so I knew she had an interest in using creative arts and I also knew of her reputation for working well with groups and teens. So those were really the three things I thought were important in a partner for this project.

**Jamie:** Eunie was one of many professionals I interviewed while working on my master's thesis and we

discovered we had a great connection. So when she asked me “How are you willing to help with this project?” I said “I’ll do anything and everything!”

***Do you have any plans for future service projects?***

**Eunie:** Yeah, I want to expand the Healing Retreat program. We are going to have one in February for young adults and are planning another event for teenagers in the spring. We’d also like to do one for adults, but don’t have a date yet. Because we want to continue to offering retreats, we’re looking for grants or other funding-sources so that this can continue at no cost to the participants in the community for many years to come. I want to be involved in the foreseeable future, but I’d like the program to be sustainable even after I’m no longer part of it.

**Jamie:** The two areas I feel most passionate about is helping people when their lives have been affected by violence or by a death. I will continue figuring out creative ways to meet people where they’re at in those circumstance and supporting them through traumatic events and helping them live wholly and the best they can. I hope to stay involved in the Healing Retreat program because it was a really rewarding experience and the one-day retreat was a creative way of providing counseling.

***Who has been the biggest influence in your life?***

**Eunie:** My parents have been the greatest influence in my life. They were very generous people even though they didn’t have a lot of money, and they valued the right things in life like relationships, time, service, family, friends—not things or money. They also were very kind people who demonstrated working to improve your community. I grew up in a small community and you really could have an impact on it. While Winona is certainly bigger, I saw a gap that overlapped with my interests and skills and I knew it was the right thing to do something about it and create these Healing Retreats.

**Jamie:** I’ve been really lucky to have a lot of influential people in my life. My parents really encouraged that I could make a difference in the world and that I had the abilities and confidence to help others. Having that solid nurturing throughout my life has made me able to reach out to others. But I’ve also had great professors who modeled service and giving within their professional lives, both in undergraduate and graduate classes, and I have wonderful co-workers, who have had devastating things happen in their lives and now they give back to others in similar circumstances by being police officers, victim advocates and therapists. I’m influenced by these people all the time to make sure that I am providing the best care for others who are hurting.

***If you could invite anyone to sit on this bench and have a conversation, who would it be and what would you talk about?***

**Eunie:** If I thought about it longer I might have a different answer, but who came to my mind first was my Grandpa Alsaker, whom I’ve never met. He was born in the 1800s and when he was 14 he left home to work on a fishing boat in the North Seas. Then as a young adult, he came to the US and saw tremendous change until his death in the 1950s. I think it would be fascinating to hear his stories and I’d like for him to know all that’s happened in his family, who his great grandchildren are and what they are doing. I’d also show him some of the changes in our world now, though I’m sure that all the technological advances would be hard for him to understand.

**Gretchen:** It’s simple for me. I’d sit down with my sister Ali, she passed away a little over two years ago and it’s certainly another reason why grief is a topic close to my heart. She died tragically and unexpectedly, so I’d like to have one more hour to laugh with her and talk with her.

***Interviewed and Edited by Elizabeth Meinders ’15 and photographed by Anna Rae Butler ’15***

To nominate someone in the WSU community — faculty, staff, student, alumni or friend of WSU — for *Warrior Way*, or if you have other feedback to share, please email Mollie Sheehan, director of web communications: [msheehan@winona.edu](mailto:msheehan@winona.edu)[/et\_pb\_text][[/et\_pb\_column][[/et\_pb\_row][[/et\_pb\_section][et\_pb\_section fb\_built="1" fullwidth="on" custom\_padding\_last\_edited="on|desktop" admin\_label="section" \_builder\_version="3.22" custom\_padding="0||" custom\_padding\_tablet="50px|0|50px|0" transparent\_background="off" padding\_mobile="off" make\_fullwidth="off" use\_custom\_width="off" width\_unit="on"][/et\_pb\_fullwidth\_portfolio include\_categories="8,9,10,11" admin\_label="Fullwidth Portfolio" \_builder\_version="3.0.48" background\_size="initial" background\_position="top\_left" background\_repeat="repeat" auto="on" auto\_speed="4000"] [/et\_pb\_fullwidth\_portfolio][[/et\_pb\_section]

# Ending Gender Based Violence: It's on You, It's on Me, It's on Us

December 22, 2014  
Campus Engagement, Social Justice

GBV RE Initiative logo

Join the RE Initiative in changing campus culture to end GBV

One in every five women will experience gender-based violence (GBV) while in college. This statistic is seen in every university across the country including Winona State University. But the good news is that instead of sweeping this problem under the rug, we've chosen to expose GBV at Winona State. Exposure of GBV is necessary for creating change and transforming our campus culture into one of mutual respect and compassion for people of all genders is something to be proud of.

As compellingly stated in the recent "It's On Us" campaign, it takes the support of everyone to make a movement sustainable. From our president Dr. Scott Olson all the way down to our incoming undergraduate freshman, we are working towards a cohesive movement of exposing and eliminating GBV at WSU. We've also had unwavering support and guidance through a grant provided by the US Department of Justice. This grant has enabled us to not only employ faculty, but also gives students the opportunity to make meaningful changes through student-help positions at the RE Initiative.

Now, you might be asking, "How can I help?" This is a question we love to hear at the RE Initiative. RE stand for recognizing equality since most acts of GBV occur because of the perceived inequalities between genders. The RE Initiative program seeks to spread awareness about GBV to all sorts of audiences on campus as well as training people—mostly students—to become active bystanders both on campus and within the Winona community.



A bystander is an individual who witnesses emergencies, criminal events or situations that could lead to a negative outcome, and by their presence may have the opportunity to provide assistance, do nothing or contribute to the negative behavior. When we use the term active bystander, we are referring to a person who makes a positive contribution to the situation. Active bystanders can help in many ways, from correcting someone who is using offensive language to physically stepping in to protect someone who needs help.

By delivering peer-to-peer PACTivism trainings, we are creating and fostering a new culture here at Winona State University aimed at ending acts of GBV. PACT stands for Prevent, Act, Challenge and Teach, and these trainings focus on teaching people how to become active bystanders in situations that could lead to acts of GBV. There are currently three versions of PACT training:

- the 50 minute “Don’t Cancel That Class Training”
- the 2.5 hour training
- the 5.5 hour training

Currently 11 students are trained to give the PACT trainings, and about 2,000 WSU students have been to a PACT training, including people in athletics, the TKE and Sigma Tau Gamma fraternities, Tri Sigma Sorority, WSU Security, Residence Life, and numerous other groups. Of these students, around 280 became certified PACTivists. Bystander intervention is key to our peer education efforts because it works. By taking a wider community approach rather than targeting individuals as potential victims or perpetrators, the RE Initiative is creating a more effective and cohesive stance against GBV.

In addition to wanting to protect students, WSU needs the RE Initiative to comply with Title IX and The Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act (SaVE). Title IX was passed in 1972 and was originally formed to prohibit sex discrimination on college campuses. It was the campus SaVE Act, signed by President Obama in March of 2013, which brought about the mandated reporting of GBV by college campuses. The campus SaVE Act requires that any incident of GBV be disclosed in an annual campus crime report. One way the Re Initiative here at Winona State University complies with the Campus SaVE act is by providing information on our schools reporting system & disciplinary proceedings. This information can be attained by contacting the RE Initiative through the confidential helpline 507.457.5610.

Through the implementation of the RE Initiative, WSU has taken many steps toward making our campus a safer place for everyone while also addressing and complying with federal mandates of addressing GBV. We hope to eliminate the disturbing statistic of 1 in 5 women experiencing GBV in their young adult lives. Combating GBV is not an issue to be tackled by a small group of individuals. It takes us as an entire community to make the positive change we need.

Are YOU ready to take on that responsibility to end GBV?

**–MaryAnn Brannerman-Thompson, Michael Krug and Andrea White**

# Gary Kastello | Faculty

December 20, 2014



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## Gary Kastello | Helping Survivors Heal

Faculty member from La Crescent, MN  
Health Exercise & Rehabilitative Science Professor at WSU for 18 years  
Director of Winona Survivors Unite In Exercise program

**“All people are similar – we’re social beings, we want to communicate, we want to enjoy each other – and it becomes heightened with cancer survivors because their lives have been threatened and they tend to think a little differently about each and every day.”**

When HERS student Ashley Rundel came to him with the idea for the Winona Survivors Unite in Exercise Program, Professor Gary Kastello supported it on an intellectual level, but since his own cancer diagnosis the project has become much

more personal.

In our interview, he metaphorically referred to the WSUE as his “baby” and, like a real child, the program has kept growing over the years from 5 students and survivors in 2011 to nearly 20 students and survivors in each program session today. Gary has been there every step of the way, and it was clear to me that he couldn’t be prouder of his students and the participating cancer survivors if they were his own flesh and blood.

If you are a cancer survivor and would like to get involved with the Winona Survivors Unite in Exercise Program, contact Gary Castello at GKastello@winona.edu or 507.457.5219.

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***What is your role in the Winona Survivors Unite in Exercise program?***

I am the director of the WSUE program and as such I meet with our survivors and organize the movement science students to serve as personal trainers for their rehabilitation. The program is a course, so it involves me teaching the students about what cancer is, considerations and concerns for patients with cancer and safe, appropriate exercises for survivors because different types of exercise are prescribed for different types of cancer.

After 3-4 weeks of classroom education, we meet with the survivors for the rest of the semester in the IWC. Survivors are often referred to the WSUE program from Gunderson Lutheran and Winona Health, but some just hear about us through word of mouth and then they’ll call and I’ll get their physicians to sign off on their participation. Last semester we had 13 students and 17 survivors; next semester there’s 20 students signed up and I’m for hoping 20 survivors.

***What is your favorite part about this program***

My favorite part is having survivors share their stories and enjoy each other socially. We meet at 6:30am on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and NO ONE likes getting up that early. The students don’t like it, the survivors don’t like it and the director doesn’t like it, but it’s my favorite part of the week because I get to see the survivors and see how they’re doing. All people are similar— we’re social beings, we want to communicate, we want to enjoy each other—and it becomes heightened with cancer survivors because their lives have been threatened and they tend to think a little differently about each and every day.

One of the best things we do in the program is have cancer survivors share their story with the rest of the group and you get to understand what somebody else has gone through and try to come alongside them because you may have had similar experiences with chemotherapy or radiation etc. A question that I always ask the survivors is “Has it changed your life in any way?” and the majority of them say “Oddly enough, it has changed me for the better. I don’t take things for granted and I try to cherish every day.” For me, that’s a huge motivation for me and the heart of the program.

***Why did you decide to start the WSUE program?***

Now that’s a great question! I didn’t start this program; it was a student’s idea. Ashely Rundel was inspired by her mother who, after finishing treatment for breast cancer, wanted some sort of extended rehabilitation. There really wasn’t much out there, but she found a survivors exercise program at UW-Eau Claire and really enjoyed it. Ashley came to me and said, “Gosh, it seems very comparable. We’ve got a wellness center, we’ve got movement science students and we know safe exercises. Why don’t we have a program like that here?” And I said, “Well, there’s no reason we can’t have one, if you’re willing to do some of the legwork.” So she and I set up a plan to divide and conquer— and it took us about a year.

Ashely contacted a professional organization to train myself and several other students to be certified professional cancer exercise specialists while I took care of the paperwork. Now the interesting twist of fate is that we’re all excited that we’re going to start in Fall 2011 and just two months before it starts, I find out I have cancer. Because I was going through treatment, I couldn’t start the program, so Theresa Lee directed the program that first semester. I’ve been the director ever since and, while it’s never good to get cancer, it’s really helped me to understand what cancer survivors go through with surgeries, biopsies and chemo.

***What do you hope that the survivors and students gain from the WSUE program?***

In the HERS department, we attempt to get students some hands-on working experience with a patient population, so that is one of the things I hope they gain. They’ve spent three years studying exercise and exercise programming, and now they get to use it in a practical way while gaining confidence that they do have the necessary knowledge and social skills to be a good clinician. I also hope some become cancer exercise specialists because I think that certification will help them with future patients and help them gain entrance into graduate programs.

Part of what I hope survivors gain is support from others like them and opportunity return that support mentally or socially, which helps us all progress. The other thing I hope survivors get out of the program is that they have enhanced their quality of life by getting physically better and able to do activities of daily living more easily.

***Who has influenced you the most?***

I would have to answer that the most influential thing in my life has been a belief in Jesus Christ and his

most important command to love one another. Faith plays a role in who I am and how I make decisions on a daily basis. In every situation, I always try to go back and say “What’s the most important thing we have?” That’s to love one another, and we can all do a better job of loving one another.

***If you could invite anyone to sit on this bench and have a conversation, who would it be and what would you talk about?***

Oh my...if I get to choose anybody — anybody at all— I would choose God and ask about creation. I’d basically ask him “How did you pull it off?” and then my next question would be “Are you done?” I’d ask about creation because it would answer a lot of questions for mankind about chemistry, physics, geology and lots of other controversial topics. It would be great to have some definitive answers since we’re just poking and prodding and doing the best we can with the scientific method. We’re doing good work, but it would be nice just to know.

**Interviewed and Edited by Elizabeth Meinders ’15 and photographed by Anna Rae Butler ’15**

To nominate someone in the WSU community — faculty, staff, student, alumni or friend of WSU — for *Warrior Way*, or if you have other feedback to share, please email Mollie Sheehan, director of web communications: [msheehan@winona.edu](mailto:msheehan@winona.edu)

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# Be an Active Bystander

December 19, 2014  
Campus Engagement, Social Justice

As a final project in a Women and Gender Studies 150: Insights and Implications, we decided to make public service announcements about gender-based violence (GBV). There are similar projects directed towards this cause through the White House website. We wanted to add our voice to the cause because of the immense problem sexual harassment has become on college campuses. Everyone in our class has gone through Active Bystander Intervention Training, or PACT training, and believe it can make a huge impact on college campuses in preventing sexual assault.

The three public services announcements we created include persuasive information and steps the general population can take to prevent sexual assault. We wanted to change the mindsets of our current students and challenge them to break the silence against sexual assault by being active bystanders.

The first PSA, created by Natalie Volavka, features national statistics and statistics from Winona State University. While 1 in 5 college aged women are sexually assaulted nationally, only one person at Winona State University has reported being sexually assaulted. This shows just how few survivors choose to report their sexual assault. If someone you know has been sexually assaulted, call the GBV Confidential Helpline at 507.457.5610 for help and support.

The second PSA, created by Logan Wescott, focuses on the role of bystanders. It shows how individuals can make that produce a world of a change. The third PSA does this from a male's perspective and shows how important males are in this movement in becoming active bystanders.

Step up, and  
<https://youtube.com/watch?v=Rmh0twyLlAZk>  
<https://youtube.com/watch?v=ekfbKwcWPU>  
[https://youtube.com/watch?v=\\_hhoZDWidbs](https://youtube.com/watch?v=_hhoZDWidbs)  
-Emily Brandt, Natalie Volavka and Logan Wescott



# Traipsing Through Tinder

December 11, 2014  
Improving Our World

*This blog post contains some explicit material that some may find triggering.*

We have this friend, who for blogging purposes, we will call Betsy. Betsy is, quite frankly, a connoisseur of online dating. Now, we know what you are thinking, “Online Dating – isn’t that for weird dudes who smell vaguely of cheese and are obsessed with cartoon ponies?” That’s where you, dear reader, are wrong. Online dating has this stigma attached to it that it doesn’t necessarily deserve. Online dating can be fun for just about anyone. As long as respect and consent are involved, you can’t go wrong.

Anyway, back to Betsy. Betsy was well versed in the ways of web-based romance well before Tinder even entered the realm of online dating. Still, when her friends suggested the dating app, she was hesitant. Tinder was different from any dating site she had ever tried before. Tinder is an app for smartphones that is heavily image based with thousands of profiles at your fingertips. In seconds, you decide whether or not you’d like to get to know the user based purely on their profile picture. Sure, you can read their profile, but many users don’t.

(If you’re unfamiliar with Tinder, this article is a quick read that sums it up pretty well.)

Feeling brave, Betsy decided to go for it anyway. At first it was awesome, she met some great people, had some good conversations and generally felt respected. Then she met Fred. Fred spent weeks wooing her. Under the impression that he was a kind, funny person she agreed to meet him. Boy, was she wrong! The date was awkward, tense and genuinely unpleasant. Wait – it gets worse. Fred decided to tweet about Betsy’s body after the date. He wrote, “Never trust a girl who only posts pictures of her face on Tinder.” He later added, “Secret internet fatties are the worst.” No Fred, you are the worst.

When Betsy looked different than Fred had envisioned, the way he treated her drastically changed. He went from nice to nasty in seconds. Although we believe that the way a woman looks should in no way be correlated with the way people treat her, it got our group in WAGS class thinking. We wondered exactly how much the way a woman presents herself online could influence the type of message she receives, even before meeting that individual.

With inspiration from this blog, our group set out to determine how a woman’s identity influences her experience with online dating, especially on Tinder. We made three different profiles based on three different types of women –a goth (see page 277), a mainstream student (see page 276) and a party girl (see page 278)–to see how other users in the Winona area would respond. My group kept each profile up for four days and swiped yes to every user in order to collect responses from all walks of life.

In the next post (see page 276), we’ll tell you what we learned about being a mainstream student on Tinder.

**–Samantha Atkins, Clare Arvidson and Mike McArdle**

# Traipsing Through Tinder: Mainstream Student

December 11, 2014  
Improving Our World

*This blog post is a continuation of Traipsing Through Tinder (see page 275) and contains some explicit material that some may find triggering.*

**“Hello I’m Sam. I’m a nursing student at WSU. I love my friends, family, and music. Coffee is my lifeline. I spend way too much time watching Netflix. Shoot me a message if you’re looking for new people to talk to!”**

With a combination of common characteristics among our friends, our group created the “mainstream” college persona. We chose pictures of our friend, Andie Mattei, where she had minimal makeup and plain, casual clothing. The responses weren’t all that surprising. In exchange for a little of the “mainstream” profile’s time, many users offered up Netflix marathons and cuddling. The “mainstream” tinder profile received 116 messages. Of those messages, 3 were strange, but harmless:

11 of the messages were either explicit in nature or could be classified as obsessive:

51 of the messages were respectful and commented on the content of the profile and not just the user’s looks. These responders took the time to read the profile and offer a friendly attempt to become acquainted with the “mainstream college student” profile:

In the next post (see page 277), see what happened when we debuted the goth lolita profile.

**–Samantha Atkins, Clare Arvidson and Mike McArdle**

# Traipsing Through Tinder: Goth Lolita

December 11, 2014  
Improving Our World

*This blog post is a continuation of Traipsing Through Tinder (see page 275) and contains some explicit material that some may find triggering.*

**“I am a woman of mystery and creativity. I am a gothic Lolita with an edge of horror and whimsy. I have 20 piercings at the moment, but I’m sure I’ll add to the collection soon. I am not always serious and tend to joke around. I’m a psychology major at WSU. I love cats, vampires and all things dark. Don’t be shy; I don’t bite.”**

For the gothic profile, our group based the personality entirely on Andie Mattei and asked her to write the bio because she is heavily involved with the gothic subculture. We chose pictures where she is wearing her favorite gothic dresses and traditionally gothic make up. Because of the stigma surrounding the gothic community, the “gothic lolita” profile received many messages that were more sexually charged than the messages that were received on the other profiles. It seemed as though the responders saw her more as a caricature of a person rather than a real human who deserved respect. Out of the 65 replies, 15 were disturbingly explicit and referenced “dark sex.”

51 of the responses were a mix of typical greetings such as “hey” and “how are you,” and some went as far as to say she seemed interesting and they wanted to get to know her better. They were courteous and didn’t limit her to just her gothic lolita dress.

Now, let’s see how the party girl compares in the next post (see page 278).

–Samantha Atkins, Clare Arvidson and Mike McArdle



# Traipsing Through Tinder: Party Girl

December 11, 2014  
Improving Our World

*This blog post is a continuation of Traipsing Through Tinder (see page 275) and contains some explicit material that some may find triggering. “Psych major at WSU. I like to drink and smoke! Looking for new people to party with!!”*

We saved this profile for last. Andie didn’t have any photographs that really fit the stereotype of a “party girl,” so with her permission, we used Emily Kaluzny’s pictures. We chose images where it looks like she is out partying and wearing clothes that are more revealing. We kept the bio for this profile short and to the point as we wanted it to look like bios we saw from guys who like partying. 21 of the 224 responses were graphic in nature.

Although 21 of the messages were disrespectful, 203 were either simple greetings or genuine inquiries.

Looking at the types of responses each of these profiles received from different Tinder users was enlightening in an of itself. However, we gifted with a rare chance for comparison (see page 279) when a few people messaged the mainstream, goth lolita and party girl over the course of a few days.

–Samantha Atkins, Clare Arvidson and Mike McArdle

# Traipsing Through Tinder: Comparisons & Conclusions

December 11, 2014  
Improving Our World

*This blog post is a continuation of Traipsing Through Tinder (see page 275) and contains some explicit material that some may find triggering.*

At the end of the experiment, we went through the messages each profile received and we noticed something incredibly eye opening. In more than one case, the same user sent each profile a message that was completely different than what they had sent the other profiles. Instead of being authentic and trying to get to know the person behind the profile, they catered their message to characteristics they assumed based on false stereotypes.

For example, the same user who messaged the goth profile the chat on the left, sent the mainstream profile the chat on the right three days later:

When we created the party girl profile, he sent her this:

Another profile sent messages to the goth profile, the mainstream profile and the party girl profile. The three messages had very different tones:

## **The Survey**

Our group also decided to survey Winona State University students on their experiences with Tinder and had 82 responses. 80% of respondents had personally used Tinder before. When asked how their experience had been with the application, 23% reported it had been positive, 58% said it had been neutral, and 18% had a negative experience. Respondents gave several reasons for their experience ratings. Some enjoyed it for its entertainment value, some to find another person to hook up with while others had met their significant others on the app. There were also those who hadn't had the best experience with the application but said their experience also hadn't been awful.

The next question we asked participants was if they had ever received a message on Tinder that made them feel uncomfortable. 55% responded that they had received a message that made them uncomfortable, 41% reported that they had not received a message that made them uncomfortable and 3% reported that they were not sure. When asked how they responded to those messages, the most popular response was that they ignored the message and either unmatched or blocked the user that sent it to them. A small portion would tell their friends about it as well.

We also asked participants if their friends had received any messages that made them feel uncomfortable. 67% reported that their friends had received a message that made them uncomfortable, 8% said that their friends had not received a message like that, and 23% said that they were not sure. We asked them how their friends would respond to the messages and the responses were the same as before: ignore, block, unmatched and tell their friends about the messages they received.

## **Our Conclusions**

Don't get us wrong, we don't want to scare you away from online dating. It can be great. What became clear to us in this experiment is that when you take away respect and consent, what you get isn't so great. By putting people in boxes you not only deny them their humanity, you deny yourself the ability to get to know the person behind the profile. If we're going to end sexual harassment online, it's time we stop just blocking users who make us uncomfortable and start confronting them. First, inform them that what they did that made you feel uncomfortable or harassed. If that doesn't work (and it might not), here are some creative ways to get your message across:

- Submit your screenshot to [straightwhiteboystexting.tumblr.com](http://straightwhiteboystexting.tumblr.com)
- Submit your screenshot to [byefelipesubmissions@gmail.com](mailto:byefelipesubmissions@gmail.com) to be on the Instagram account Bye Felipe
- Draw them in a vulnerable position like [Instagrannypants](#)
- Or take a note from this Facebook user, who messaged the mother of account users who sent her objectifying messages.

If all else fails, then you can block them. Protect yourself. Your safety matters more than their feelings.

—Samantha Atkins, Clare Arvidson and Mike McArdle

# Remember, Remember Trans\* Rights & Cisgender Privilege

November 26, 2014  
Improving Our World

The Trans\* Day of Remembrance happens every year on November 20. It is a day to not only mourn and remember the loss of the hundreds of Trans\* and gender non-conforming people who have been murdered or taken their own lives due to the hatred and violence they face every day, but to also celebrate them and their lives. This year, Full Spectrum: Winona State University's Gender & Sexuality Alliance held a several events to honor this day including a viewing of Laverne Cox's documentary "The T Word" about the lives of trans\* youth, a cis-gender privilege/trans\* education workshop and the traditional candlelight vigil. This was my second time participating in the vigil and each time is just as powerful. Thinking about innocent people who lost their lives simply because they wanted to live in a way that was 100% true to themselves brings both sadness and a fire inside that urges me to do something about it.

One way I was able to take action was running the workshop and introducing people to Preferred Gender Pronouns (PGPs) and the Trans\* and gender non-conforming community through the use of the genderbread person. PGPs can include he/him/his and she/her/hers, which are the ones that most people know, but can also include they/them/their/theirs, ze/zir and many others. The genderbread provides us with information about the four aspects that help make up a person's identity:

- Gender Identity: who you think you are
- Gender Expression: how you show your gender to everyone else
- Sex Identity: based on biology and your chromosomes, organs, and hormones
- Sexual Orientation: who you are attracted to sexually

After this quick introduction to the trans\* community, we launched into a discussion about cisgender privilege. For those of you are unfamiliar with the term "cisgender," it refers people whose gender identity aligns with the gender and sex they were assigned at birth. For instance, I identify as cisgender male because I was born with male anatomy and have always thought of myself as male. The discussion about privilege covered a lot of different points including using bathrooms and school locker rooms. It was crazy for many of us there to realize how simply going to the bathroom can be an experience that most of us experience privilege in every day of our lives. For trans\* people going into the bathroom you were assigned at sex, or the one you identify with can result in harassment and for gender non-conforming people, they are simply not included in the discussion. The fact that our conversation consisted mostly of something as simple as having to use the restroom tells us the seriousness of the issue and how much work we have to do in order to create equal establishments and opportunities for trans\* and gender non-conforming people.

As I said earlier, I identify myself as cisgender male, and I take this status very seriously. Why? Because I know the privileges I have and I want to remind myself and other people of those privileges. For example, I can:

a diagram explaining different aspects of identity

- Go to the bathroom when I need to without fear of harassment
- Shop for clothes and not be questioned if I'm in the "right section"
- Be guaranteed that my gender identity will appear on a survey when asked to check a box for gender
- Be assured that my gender identity doesn't provide an excuse for my murder

This list could go on and on. That is why I don't just identify as male, because I would be ignoring those privileges that I am granted. When talking to other people, I try not to assume anything and ask for preferred gender pronouns. This is extremely important because I know people who get seriously hurt and offended when someone mis-genders them, and they have a right to get offended. There is more to PGPs than simply a word – they carry weight and they matter because they define a person and the world we all live in. If someone gives you their PGPs, it is your job to respect that person and use the pronouns they ask you to.

The events that Full Spectrum held were extremely successful and we were able to reach about 30-40 different members of the Winona community and to educate them about the issue at hand – trans\* and gender non-conforming people are losing their lives for no reason at all except that they are trying to be themselves in a world that tells them not to. That might seem like a low turn-out, but every person who attends these events gains knowledge and understanding about a community who is marginalized in most popular culture and mainstream media. And we believe that's better than doing nothing.

The thing that I personally want people to know about the trans\* and gender non-conforming community is that these individuals just want to be able to live as the rest of us do– without fear, without resentment and without violence. Nothing about them is in any way harming our cisgender existence or changing the way we live our cisgender lives–except to extend to them the same respect and safety we receive.

I was honored to be a part of the Full Spectrum team with these events and so thankful to all of those who helped us put it together. These things are important and we need to start bringing them into focus so that we can deal with them. Now is the time for active change.



# I Want You to Vote!

November 3, 2014  
Improving Our World

"Don't complain. Vote"

Seriously. You have to take action to make the world a better place.

"Do you know about this year's midterm election?" "Would you like to register to vote?" "Have you considered who you're voting for this year?"

These are just a few questions from my door-knocking script. That's right. I'm one of *those* people, knocking on your dorm room door when you're just trying to enjoy leftover pizza and watch *Grey's Anatomy*.

I apologize for my intrusion, but despite having loud mouths and big opinions on hot topic issues like abortion, gay marriage and student loans the so-called "youth vote" is weaker than ever. Less than 50% of eligible youth voters actually show up to vote. It's up to volunteers like myself to get students hyped about this year's upcoming election.

Volunteering for Winona's Democratic-Farmers-Labor (DFL) party was one of the best decisions I've made since I started school at WSU this past August. Through the volunteer program I've met a lot of likeminded people that share the same views I do and made some really great friends. Activities the volunteer program offer consist of going door to door asking people to register and helping them find their polling place, calling people to remind them of the upcoming election day, handing out flyers to students on campus, and helping set up for big events like the "Get out and Vote" bus tour. I was even given the opportunity to meet a few of the politicians running this year like Steve Simon and Gene Pelowski.

If you're not from Minnesota or don't know much about Minnesota politics, volunteering is a great way to find out more about the different politicians and policies. In fact, even if you're from out of state you are still eligible to vote in Minnesota's midterm and presidential election. I came to Winona from a small town in Illinois, but after just two months of volunteering I like to think I'm pretty savvy with MnSCU jargon and politicians running in this year's election.

One of the biggest things I've learned over the course of volunteering is the importance of a vote. While in presidential elect years nearly everyone turns out to vote, midterms are often overlooked. But think about it for minute—how can the president you helped put in office do anything without a cooperative congress? It's easy to vote for the president. There are endless ads and almost every history class you take will be talking about it at the time of the election. Midterm elections are just as important as presidential elections, but are not taken as seriously by voters. This needs to change.

Regardless of party lines, everyone should get educated and vote. As a citizen it's your right to vote and it's a right we're very lucky to have. If you don't like the way your student loans work, if you want more or less government involvement at a state level, if you think there should be more emphasis on equality rights, I've got great news! You get in a say in it this Tuesday. It doesn't matter if you didn't register. If you show up to your polling place (PDF) with a valid ID, you can vote.

Please, take the time out of your Tuesday this week to vote. No party has this election 'in the bag' there's no sure fire winner. Everything is close and everything is up in the air. Your voice matters and here is your chance to have it heard.

Hope to see you at the polls on Tuesday!

# How to Find Volunteer Opportunities at WSU

October 18, 2014  
Improving Our World

A WSU flag in the sunlight

The motto on our school flag says it all: “A Community of Learners Improving Our World.”

It’s about two months into my freshman year of college and one of the biggest things I’ve learned so far is that being as involved as possible at school is incredibly beneficial. Not only does it help you meet new people, it also helps you in the long-run as you build up your resume. Extracurricular sports and clubs are always a good idea, as well as eventually finding some sort of job whether on or off campus. But volunteering has a special significance and value all its own because you are helping others.

For me personally, I didn’t get a lot of job experience in high school, but I was involved in volunteering and this sticks out on my resume. If you can time can be found in your busy schedules during the week, or even a day on the weekend, you can change someone else’s life by just setting aside a few hours of your time.

Volunteer opportunities can be found all over campus. A great place to start is simply the Improving Our World – Winona State University Facebook page. This page is constantly posting information about service opportunities on and off campus. Just scroll through and you will find countless causes that need volunteers. Some of these causes are Winona-based such as the Sauer Health Care and the Winona County Historical Society and these are more casual and less of a commitment. But others need volunteers to travel around the world such as the International Volunteer Abroad Programs for Students. IVS would be an amazing life-changing opportunity for students interested in traveling abroad and you could potentially even get academic credit for it too. If you go on a service-based travel study through WSU you will definitely receive academic credit. For example my Women’s Gender and Sexuality Studies teacher offers a trip during the summer to the Virgin Islands where you can do volunteer work on the islands and take a class as at the same time.

Another tip for finding places to volunteer is to pay attention to posters and fliers in your residence halls and academic buildings. These colorful papers hanging in the common areas of offer so many different things for students to do. This is where I saw the information to join Hall Council and the Residence Housing Association of WSU. RHA is a group on campus and it is fantastic to put on resumes, to meet new people, and to work with a group of people to help with events and socials to make campus life the best it can possibly be for students. It has been one of the best choices I have made this year so far, and I found the information for it simply by looking at a poster by the Sheehan elevator and talking to my RA. RAs are another great resource to help you get involved with volunteering as well because they have been at the university longer and have more connections than we freshmen do.

These are just a few different ways to find volunteer opportunities. The internet is always a great source, but you don’t even have to search that hard if you pay attention next time you walk through the halls of Kryzsko as well. I strongly

recommend keeping on the lookout for amazing opportunities throughout the year!

# Conserving Our Stream Banks, One Cedar at a Time

October 10, 2014  
Green

Workers anchor cedar branches to the bank of the Riceford Creek to help stop soil erosion.

Workers anchor cedar branches to the bank of the Riceford Creek to help stop soil erosion. Photo Credit: Hometown Argus

Southeastern Minnesota is the home to many beautiful streams. However, these streams are becoming less beautiful as they are becoming more soil than water. Many stream banks are being exposed as the soil is transported downstream. This hurts the cleanliness of the streams, many of which are home to variety of species including frogs, water birds and trout.

To help preserve our streams and keep habitats for these animals clean, Winona State University, The Nature Conservancy and The Conservation Corps Minnesota have started a unique conservation effort called cedar revetment. I was lucky enough to get involved in this effort last summer and helped analyze the stream banks and transport cedar trees– which are an invasive species and bad for local prairies– to Riceford Creek located in Houston County in Minnesota.

My typical day meant pulling on my stream waders and driving down to Riceford Creek to make observations about this erosional problem. I would rate the stream banks on variables such as bank angle, bank height, amount of plants or rocks, plant root depth and density. I was then able to locate the sections of the stream that were at a crucial erosion stage and were eligible for the cedar tree placement.

After the evaluation, the cedar trees were then put into place along the bank. The cedar trees help slow down the water current and prevent material from being eroded. This will also promote the growth of trees and grasses.

This project will be monitored over a long period of time and then we'll know just how successful it has been. Hopefully, it will clean up our streams and promote the population growth of the trout, which has recreational and economic benefits for southeastern Minnesota.

This conservation project is a chance for me to improve our environment and get a hands-on educational experience about future stream bank restoration. Through an innovative and cost effective process, we can protect the health of our streams and control a tree species that is foreign to the grassland area. I will be presenting my results at the Geological Society of America Conference in Vancouver in a couple of weeks. It was an amazing opportunity for me to be involved in such a dynamic and educational experience while being a student at Winona State University.

**–Cole Tousignant**



# Give Back for a Sustainable Future

September 16, 2014  
Green

three potted plants

These carbon-absorbing beauties are one small way I give back to the environment.

In an industrialized world, it can seem near impossible to do everything you can to save the environment—sure you recycle and you walk when your destination is close by, but there are many other ways to adapt a sustainable lifestyle. That being said, you DON'T need to do anything drastic like permanently ditching your car and biking miles from place to place or going off the grid and covering your rooftop in solar panels (Your landlord might not appreciate that too much). Leading a sustainable lifestyle, as this year's University theme "Sustainable Futures" calls us to do, is all about giving back in little ways.

## **Give Back to the Earth**

For many years, humans have destroyed plants and habitats to make space for cities and farmland. By stripping the land, we have fewer plants to soak up all the carbon dioxide we put out through cars and other machines.

A simple way to combat this is to plant. This summer my roommate and I bought some pots at the Salvation Army and planted flowers in them. Not only are they good for the environment, but they also look so pretty on our stoop. You could also get vegetable seeds at Wal-Mart and plant them in a pot. At the Sustainability Fair last week, I planted a few pea seeds in a Dixie cup and recently transplanted them to a pot. They're growing steadily next to the cactus on my windowsill.

## **Give Back to the Local Economy**

As college students, we tend to buy anything cheap and easy—i.e. pasta, pasta and more pasta with some frozen pizza thrown in for good measure. However, buying from local food sources will help sustain the local economy as well as help you avoid all of those nasty pesticides found in grocery store produce and high-fructose corn syrup in pretty much everything else on the store shelves.

The Winona Farmer's Market runs 7:30am – 1pm every Saturday until October. On special days, the Winona Artisan Market is there as well. I went a couple times this summer and got really great food for cheap (an ear of corn was \$0.50 and four cucumbers cost \$1). The Bluff County Co-Op is a great place to buy local and organic food all year round. When you buy local, you support members in your community and you get great food out of it too!

## **Give Back to Your Wallet**

Drop your thermostat a few degrees lower. Turn off the lights when you're not in the room. Stop using paper towels. Quit buying bottled water and use a stainless steel or glass reusable bottle instead. Wash your clothes with cold water and line-dry them (at least during the summer anyway). These little things can help you save money on your energy and grocery bills. At the same time, you're making a positive impact on the environment.

# How Art Improves Our World

September 12, 2014  
Improving Our World

Monet 's "La Siene a Vetheuil"

“La Siene a Vetheuil” by Monet is one of my favorite pieces at MMAM. *Photo found at MMAM.org*

Bright lights, silky oil on canvas, gilded frames intricately carved—there is something so wonderfully magical about art. Earlier this summer, I decided I wanted to get more involved in the Winona community, so I ventured to the Minnesota Marine Art Museum to sign up to be a volunteer greeter. For two hours a month, I wander around a gallery in the museum and do whatever I must to make people feel more comfortable. However, my favorite part of the gig is definitely getting to spend time with all that beautiful art for free.

Growing up in the suburbs of the Twin Cities was a godsend for me. The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, The Walker Art Center and a few high school teachers exposed me to so much art, from the impressionist painters to Japanese pop art. Through all forms of art including music, poetry, dance and painting, I’ve learned so much about myself and about the world as well. Many people see different forms of art as self expression—and it is—but art is so much more than that.

I know it’s cliché to say but I really do believe that art dramatically improves our world.

**Art has the power to cross cultural, social, racial and economical boundaries.** Consider for a moment, the kinds of diversity we have here in our own homeland. America is a melting pot and art can be a common place where our many differences disappear. Art is like it’s own language that anyone can speak. Furthermore, **art provides an opportunity for authentic cultural experiences.** From the traditional dances of an African tribe to impressionistic European paintings, each is a lens for a view into another culture.

**Art is also a window into the past.** It’s a visual record of what people in the past thought and experienced. While written and oral histories can provide a fully story, artists like Van Gogh and William Turner put a picture of the past directly into your mind. And that’s much more exciting than history textbooks, eh?

**Not only that, but art is great for the local economy.** Just like buying local food at the farmers market, supporting local arts is healthy for the community. Events like Winona’s monthly Downtown Art Project bring a lot of people to local businesses. It’s also a great opportunity for people in the community to get to know each other. During orientation week my freshmen year, I went to a music night at Some Sum Studio and ended up chatting with the artist and the owner of the studio. As a result of that night, I decided to volunteer for Midwest Music Fest in the Spring and I’ve met so many wonderful people

through that event.

**Art fosters community** and, while one person can make a difference, an active and engaged community can really change the world.

# The Importance of Preserving Artifacts

June 25, 2014  
Improving Our World, Travel

When I was young, I used to think that museums were boring and I suppose a lot of other kids my age did too. But as I got older, I started to appreciate the preservation of artifacts that were part of history.

We visited the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute and the its on-site museum. The exhibits were very realistic instead of just using pictures or only one or two actual pieces from the time period. It was like immersing yourself into a 1950s classroom. I think this is a good way to bring history to life. They also had the piece of brick that embedded itself into church-goer Denise McNair's head during the bombing at the 16th Street Baptist Church.

Museums can be really interactive. The Birmingham Civil Rights Institute was limited on interaction but right next to the museum was Kelly Ingram Park and the 16th Street Baptist Church, which are essentially museums themselves even though the church is still in use today and people use the park for various activities. I think those provided enough interaction just because of the history that happened there.

The 16th Street Baptist Church was the site of a bombing in 1963 and killed four young ladies and one boy and injured another boy and girl. Kelly Ingram Park is the sight of many protests, the largest and most notable one being on the 5th day of the Children's March in Birmingham. Eugene "Bull" Connor ordered police to spray high-pressure water hoses on people, including children, and to make dogs attack people.

It's also hard to believe that we were walking in the same places as Martin Luther King, Jr., Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth and every important person in the movement, including the children who marched there (well, they didn't walk in the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute of course since it was built in 1992).

We visited Meridian, Miss. and went to the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO) and the Freedom School, but all we had to look at was the overgrown grass lots where the buildings once stood. COFO was a coalition of organizations that encouraged blacks to vote and ensured that no one stopped them from voting. The city of Meridian decided to take the buildings down because they were not well kept and stood empty.

Our tour guide, Roscoe Jones, said that a few a people tried to save the buildings by registering them on the National Historical Society list but they were too late. Jones was a civil rights worker during the movement and still is for issues in the Meridian school system. Meridian schools are placing young kids under arrest for insignificant things like the wrong color socks with their uniforms.

It's important that we preserve artifacts from history so that future generations learn how movements, laws and social change affect them and how they can go about changing things.



# Women's Books to Prison Project

May 5, 2014  
Improving Our World

A quote by Angela Davis: "We have to talk about liberating minds as well as liberating society"

Photo borrowed from: <https://sphotos-a.xx.fbcdn.net>

This semester in our Women and Gender Studies class: Power, Privilege and Gender Studies, we learned about the prison industrial complex, the increase in the U.S. prison population over the last twenty years across the United States and the disproportionate incarceration of people of lower socio-economic status and people of color. The United States is about 5% of the world's total population and yet we have 25% of the world's prison population.

During the semester, a supervisor of the Books to Prisoners Project "spoke" to our class via Skype to teach us about the efforts that her organization is making to send high quality, educational and empowering books to prisoners who may not otherwise have access to the reading material due to cuts in prison library budgets. The Seattle-based project inspired our small group to get into contact with the Women's Prison Book Project in Minneapolis, an organization that has worked to donate books to women and transgender individuals in prisons in Minnesota since 1994.

According to the Women's Prison Book Project's website, of the 2 million people in prison in America, 150 thousand of them are women. Of those 150 thousand, 80 percent of women are locked up for non-violent crimes like prostitution, shoplifting, fraud and drug-related convictions. The majority of women that are in prison for violent crimes, were convicted for defending themselves or their children against abuse.

This week we are working to collect high quality books for the Women's Prison Book Project to send to prisoners who need them. We have collected books with an educational purpose— specifically dictionaries, technical skills books, self-help and women's health books. The Women's Prison Book Project spends roughly \$300 to \$400 per week on postage to send books to the prisons where they will be used. Our group will have a table from 11am-4pm on Tuesday, May 6 in the Kryzsko Lower Hyphen if you would like to donate your textbooks or any money for postage.

—Lauren Koch

# It's Time to Take Back The Night

April 11, 2014  
Improving Our World

You might not believe it, but you know someone who has been sexually assaulted. In fact, you probably know more than one person that has been sexually assaulted. These statistics from the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN) may convince you that sexual assault is a serious issue:

- 1 in 6 women will be assaulted during her lifetime.
- 1 in 33 men will be sexually assaulted in his lifetime.
- 80% of victims are under 30 years old
- 2/3 of all those raped knew their attacker.
- Sexual assault is one of the most under reported crimes. 60% of sexual assaults go unreported.

These unfortunate facts expose the prevalence of sexual assault at a national level, but Winona State is not immune. Assaults happen here, as at all other universities. You might find these facts surprising, and that is due to the lack of dialogue about the realities of sexual assault and rape. Many sexual assault victims do not talk about what has happened to them partly because we live in a rape culture. In America, we are surrounded with everyday phenomena such as images, language and even laws that validate and perpetuate rape. For example, rape and sexual violence is eroticized in film and rape is a joke punch line in adult cartoon comedies on TV. This type of culture makes it difficult for victims to speak up for fear of being blamed, for fear being an object of gossip and rumors, for fear of no one believing them.

Survivors of sexual assault should not be silenced. They should not be blamed, stigmatized, marginalized or ignored. Survivors should demand that their voices and their stories are heard. Winona State University is ensuring that this happens. On Tuesday, April 22 at 6:00 pm in the Student Activities Center, FORGE, the Women's Resource Center and WSU's Gender-Violence Hotline will be hosting Winona's annual Take Back The Night, a national event for sexual assault victims and people who know them to speak out against sexual assault by telling their own stories.

This is the fourth Take Back the Night that I have planned and attended, and each time it is equally as powerful and emotional. The speak out is pretty informal, beginning with the sponsors speaking about the resources they provide to help the community face this social epidemic. Then the floor is opened for anyone in the audience to approach the podium and speak about anything concerning sexual assault and rape. Some people tell their stories, other people offer their support, some point out the strength and inspiration they have felt by witnessing speaker's vulnerability, strength and honesty. Some people don't speak at all, but rather watch, witnessing and offering their presence in support of recovery and ending rape culture.

There will be many advocates in attendance to assist if someone is triggered, feels they need help or has a question. Take Back The Night is a Safe Space where all are welcome and expected to attend with respect of others. There is no right or wrong way to participate at Take Back the Night. I read original poems at last year's Take Back the Night. You can read something you found or wrote, say how you feel, tell your story or sing a song. There are no rules for expression.

If you choose not to speak in front of the crowd, your presence and thoughts are still very valuable. There will be an integrative art project at the entrance of Take Back the Night, where people have other opportunities and mediums to express themselves and their stories. It is important that all voices are heard, all stories are told. The event is about not accepting the silence that is expected of a rape culture. It is a stand against silence and darkness that our culture casts on sexual violence. After the speak out, the Take Back The Night event takes it to the Winona streets. There will be a march around Winona with chants, signs and verbal affirmations of a commitment to end gender violence. It takes the event out into the community to generate attention, as well as the refusal to stay silent about sexual violence.

Take Back The Night gives a voice back to victims. It ensures that victims will be heard. It shows victims and survivors that there is a community of people who demand justice for all. Coming together for this cause, no matter if you have a personal experience or not generates momentum of addressing sexual assault on our campus and across our nation.

Sexual assault is not simply a local issue; it's a global issue. If you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem. Help end sexual violence.

P.S. If you are still not convinced that this is an issue, here is a recent poem making rounds on the internet that speaks to why we need to continue speaking up about rape.

# Not Your Average Spring Break

March 24, 2014  
Improving Our World

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three college students and a banner for Feed My Starving Children

My friends and I had a great time volunteering over break!

While some people may have been wearing flip-flops and shorts over spring break, I was donning a hair cap and some plastic gloves. And even if I wasn't laying on a beach towel soaking up the sun, I was standing on my feet, hands deep in rice and loving every minute of it.

During the past week, I spent some of my time volunteering at Feed My Starving Children. FMSC is a Christian organization dedicated to feeding the hungry in both "body and spirit." In just this past year, FMSC packed over 162 million meals and feed 446,000 children every day. Volunteers donate their time to this non-profit organization to pack meals for an hour or so. The meals are packed into plastic bags and consist of soy protein, dried vegetables, and 20 vitamins/minerals. Each meal only costs 22 cents, meaning that \$80 can feed a child for a full year!

I volunteered at my home church, where a FMSC mobile truck had set up a meal-packing site. The tables were organized so each person had a different responsibility. One person filled the bags, another weighed and sealed each bag and then a third packed the bags into boxes. While this may sound pretty mundane to some, the volunteers kept the experience lively by screaming out team chants every time they filled a box and keeping score of how many bags could be packed every minute. The bustling energy and encouragement from all the packers made the time fly by so quickly and I was even disappointed when the shift was up.

To me, this was a much more rewarding experience than lounging on a sandy beach or spending hours watching Netflix on my couch. While there is a place for relaxation, I am so glad I was able to spend some of my free time making a life-changing difference in a child's life somewhere in the world. In the one hour I volunteered, over 14,000 meals were packed which means 39 children are going to be fed every day for a full year!

I write this post not as a full-blown bragathon, but as an encouragement to WSU (and other college) students to think about volunteering their own time to non-profits like FMSC. It's mind-boggling that while we have all the time in the world

## Not Your Average Spring Break

right now, there are others who won't even last the day due to lack of food and essential vitamins. My heart breaks that life looks so different for those across the world, while I worry about which cereal to buy at Wal-Mart or what fast food place I should choose for dinner.

So, my fellow Warriors, please consider these volunteering options by next spring break, summer vacation or even this upcoming weekend. Let's live up to WSU's mission statement and "serve generously, lead responsibly and respond imaginatively and creatively to the challenges" of our work, lives and community.

Because if we don't, who will?

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# Inclusion and Diversity Student Senate Committee

February 28, 2014  
Improving Our World

Ever wonder what your Winona State Student Senate actually does?

Well, Senate is a group of elected students from the Winona State student body that meet once a week to discuss university issues, from department fees to club funding to general issues we think students might be facing. As a recently elected Senator representing the senior class, I have realized that I had no idea what Senate really did. The Student Senate actually has a lot of power to change not only this university, but also the whole MNSCU system by presenting and discussing our ideas with other universities. Meetings are filled with student voices trying to decipher student opinions as best as they can.

To help organize these various opinions, Senate divides itself into committees to address all student issues such as Public Relations, Student Services and Academic Affairs. A new addition to this list of committees is the Inclusion and Diversity Committee, which started this semester.

Senator Christopher Veeder started the Inclusion and Diversity Committee to help students feel safe and valued.

“The goal of this committee is to find ways to make sure all students feel that their values and ideas contribute to the universities community,” Veeder said. “And to make sure all students feel safe to be who they are on campus.”

Veeder started the committee because he and other students felt that diversity issues were not being addressed on campus and that these issues could be better solved in a committee setting, where issues could be discussed and given success plans.

“It is important for Winona Student Senate to have this committee because far too many students are not feeling welcome and some are even being harassed for who they are,” Veeder said. “It is time for Student Senate as well as for the university to respond to make WSU a welcoming and safe space for all.”

The Diversity Committee is currently trying to help the KEAP Diversity Resource Center receive sustainable funding that will help the KEAP Center hire employees and provide them with the resources they need to help students. The KEAP Center has currently been moved on campus in the old Winonan room (the room that is now the temporary Book Store) and has funding for the rest of the semester, but not for the coming years.

If you would like to address any issues to the Inclusion and Diversity Committee, you can contact Veeder at [CVeeder12@winona.edu](mailto:CVeeder12@winona.edu). The committee also meets Mondays at 5 p.m in the Student Senate office, which is in Kryzsko Commons. To bring any other issues to Senate in general, please contact [studentsenate@winona.edu](mailto:studentsenate@winona.edu) or drop by the Student Senate Office at any time!

# Help Your Community One Can at a Time

February 6, 2014  
Improving Our World

Andy Warhol's "100 Cans" painting

Donating canned and other non-perishable foods is an easy way to help your community.

The month of February is National Canned Food Month! So, why canned food? Well, I don't know about you, but when I think of canned food I think of the mushy peas and creamed corn my grandparents used to make me eat. But, it turns out that canned food is much more than that; they are also a donation staple for food shelves.

Canned foods are often inexpensive and have a very long shelf-life, which makes it perfect to donate. Canned food remains safe if the container remains intact, regardless of the expiration date.

Canned foods are also surprisingly nutritious.

"Canned foods – and dishes made with canned ingredients – are nutritionally similar to cooked fresh, according to research, and perhaps more so if fresh foods aren't handled properly," according to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics website. Canned fruits and vegetables can be great sides and can be added to salad, soups, pasta and even pizza.

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics site also said that are also "convenient, portable, quick." Canned foods already cooked, often only needing to be heated, which means they're quick and easy for a meal on the go.

Since these foods are surprisingly healthy and long lasting, it's a great idea to donate them. Food shelves throughout Minnesota are struggling to serve their communities' needs as hunger has doubled over the last five years. In 2012, Winona area food shelves had 28,273 visits.

The Winona Volunteer Services' Supplemental Food Shelf is one place that supplies food to "residents with limited

resources” and is always in need of donations of food, money and time. This month, consider what you can give to help make your community more full and satisfied.

# A is for Advocacy

January 29, 2014  
Improving Our World

advocatebackpack

This student wears advocacy with pride.  
You may be shocked to learn

- 1 in 4 women will be sexually assaulted in her lifetime
- 1 out of every 33 American men has been the victim of an attempted or completed rape in his lifetime
- Approximately 50% of transgender people experience sexual violence at some point in their lifetime
- 83% of all sexual assaults are by people who know the victim
- Less than 5% of college students who are assaulted report the crime to the police
- Every 2 minutes, someone in the U.S. is sexually assaulted

These unfortunate facts, among others, do not discriminate geographically. They are nation-wide as well as in our own community. Reading these statistics, its hard not to feel anger and sadness when looking around campus. 1 in 4 of your female classmates, teachers, faculty and workers will experience this atrocity in their lifetimes. But as the statics show, women are not the only victims. Statistics continue to show Trans\* individuals experience and are in danger of assault and harassment. Men are also not immune to sexual and domestic violence. The statistics continue to show that many humans will experience sexual violence in their lifetime. This is unacceptable.

Luckily, there are services in Winona that help assist anyone in need. If you feel moved to help people devastated by rape, sexual assault, intimate partner violence and domestic violence, there is an opportunity to reach out and help people heal. Winona State University, in partnership with the Women's Resource Center of Winona, offers advocacy training and certification as University credit, but more importantly, a volunteer opportunity to assist the community.

The course through WSU is a 45- hour advocacy training course, where employees from the Women's Resource



Center, Winona Police Department, Winona Courthouse and Winona Health collaborate to train students how to function in the community as an advocate. Advocates have lots of responsibilities, including manning a 24-hour hotline, physically going to the hospital, police station or court with victims, and providing timely support and resources to victims. The Women's Resource Center of Winona takes very seriously the tasks of an advocate. They provide

- Short-term, emergency, and confidential housing for individuals escaping violence
- Legal, financial, shelter, and other resource referrals
- Assistance with preparing and filing Orders for Protection and Harassment Restraining Orders

In my own life, I have had close friends as well as strangers approach me online, on campus, at bars, in bathrooms and in the library with their stories of assault. Each person is unique—some are looking for resources, some are looking for comfort, some are looking for what to do next. As an advocate, I am trained with the proper responses that address each individual's needs. I have seen the devastation and dark places left by assaults, but I have also experienced their inspirational journey of healing.

It is possible to help someone move from victimhood and despair to a place of hope and healing. It takes a lot of courage, compassion and strength to be an advocate, but the rewards of helping a community is priceless.

On Tuesday, April 22nd, Winona State University and the Women's Resource Center will be hosting its annual Take Back the Night, a public speaking-out against sexual violence where victims, survivors and those who love them have the opportunity to tell their story, express their feelings, and be amongst a community of people who desire justice and healing. I will be posting a blog post in early April with more details.

Here you can read more about the application and responsibilities of an advocate.

To enroll in the class, please contact Tamara Berg, head of Women's and Gender studies at [tberg@winona.edu](mailto:tberg@winona.edu)

To talk with an advocate, please call:

- 507-452-4440 (8am to 4:30pm)
- 507-452-4453 (after 4:30pm)

The WRC is located at 77 E 5th St, Winona, MN 55987-3517.

# (Un)Fashioning Power

December 12, 2013  
Improving Our World

Several students present their discoveries about the issue of slut-shaming.

Several students present their discoveries about the issue of slut-shaming.

“Style is Political” –Cynthia Enloe in *Globalization and Militarism*

On December 4<sup>th</sup> the Women’s and Gender Studies 220: Power, Privilege and Gender class presented their final projects in the Kryzsko Student Activities Center. These projects examined the role of privilege and oppression in individual fashion choices. Overall, the intent of educating peers was successful, with approximately 30 visitors. Here is what each group had to say about their projects.

## **Examining Cultural Appropriation**

For our class action, we put on an (Un)Fashioning Power fair, in which we addressed the issue of cultural appropriation. We attempted to raise awareness and educate our peers on the issues with cultural appropriation. Cultural appropriation is taking elements such as clothing, designs and accessories from oppressed cultures and using them to make profits and as fashion statements without fully recognizing the complex history behind the people who really own these elements. On a micro-level, we taught people about the issue and made them aware of how these things occur in our everyday lives, even within our own community. On a macro-level, we informed people of the main issues occurring throughout the country, including examples from every day fashion, sports mascots, pop culture and Halloween costumes. A lot of people had never heard of cultural appropriation before and weren’t sure why it was an issue, so we told them it was an issue because it enforces negative stereotypes of specific cultures, and it also devalues the experiences of the people whose culture we are appropriating.

## **Addressing Slut-Shaming**

What does a “slut” wear? What is a “slut”? Is “slut” a gendered term? Should “sluts” be ashamed of themselves?

Our feminist curiosity motivated us to ask our peers and community to answer these questions about “slut-shaming,” a term coined by contemporary feminist authors to describe the various ways culture shames sexually active women. In our group, we defined “slut-shaming” as **presumed or real sexual activity; women behaving in ways which do not conform with unspoken expectations of women’s purity; can include access to birth control, sexual activity, social interactions/associations, being raped/sexually assaulted, choices for clothing and fashion.**

In our presentation, our goal was to ask our audience to define “slut” on a sticky note and compare the answers. We discovered that there was not one clear definition of “slut”, rather as many definitions as there were people. Some common themes we found in the definitions included “promiscuity,” and “the way a woman dresses”, which clearly fit the definition of slut-shaming; this also allowed us to explain how “slut-shaming” leads to dehumanization of women and the justification of a “rape culture.” On the bright side, we were able to share activism taken against “slut-shaming” and help each individual re-evaluate their own definition (and use) of the word “slut.”

#### **Demilitarizing Fashion**

The action we educated our peers about was militarism in fashion. Enloe states in *Globalization and Militarism* that “Style is political.” We branched off that and showed our peers how fashion is political. We talked about the origins of khaki, camouflage and the bikini. This ties with how our society follows the path of least resistance by normalizing militarism, in this case the history behind our clothes.

We also discussed and challenged our peers on their awareness of government spending and how tax-paying citizens are affected. After posing questions to our peers, we were able to give them a peek into how much money goes towards military funds. On a micro level, our peers were able to see the amount of dollars spent in tax dollars toward past wars. On top of that, we had a resource available for peers to see past war costs across the United States, on a macro level. 57% of the 2014 fiscal year discretionary spending will be towards the military, and only 6% towards education systems. Out of the thirty people who attended our presentations, the majority of our peers were shocked!

#### **Globalization: Consumption and Production**

We chose to make a power point and a poster board explaining how globalization is tied to sweatshops. We showed popular brand names such as Nike, Adidas, Old Navy and Walmart to get people’s attention. We chose to take the “Path of Greater Resistance” to make people aware of how we can attempt to improve working conditions and low wages that go behind the making of clothing (Allan Johnson, *Power, Privilege, and Difference*). We were able to connect with our audience by being able to show where some of the clothing they were wearing was produced and consumed. We hope by taking part in this action that we were able to make people aware of the many sweatshops around the world.

# Cooperating for the Community

December 4, 2013  
Improving Our World

A button with a picture of the world that says "co-ops unite"

A co-op is coming to WSU. Will you join the club?

A new club will be sprouting up on Winona State University come spring semester. The WSU Cooperative Club is currently developing in hopes of improving the world for many students. Cooperatives, or co-ops, are business that offers products and services like any other but the members of the co-op are also the owners and focus on working together rather than making a profit. The emerging co-op club welcomes the Winona State community to join in order to "instill a deeply entrenched sense of community, responsibility, and humanism."

The club wants to share resources in a non-hierarchical manner in order to address economic injustice. Ideas for the club include a co-op fee (about \$3) that would fund a community cupboard.

According to the first draft of the co-op constitution, "The Community Cupboard shall be a system of goods available to all club members who pay the Co-op fee. The community Cupboard will be readily available on-campus with a lock that all members who have paid the Co-op Fee will have the combination to. Members from within the Winona State University community who have not paid the fee may be granted temporary access to the Community Cupboard if they ask permission of a paying member of Community Organizer."

The purpose of the community cupboard is to provide essentials or school performance objects that some may struggle to regularly buy or afford. This could include things like toothbrushes, toothpaste, deodorant, socks, hats, mittens, pencils, paper, markers, notebooks, calculators, clothes, and non-perishable foods. Donations will always be welcome.

Other things the Co-op Club would like to do are potentially host potlucks and provide sustainability education. The club will be organized non-hierarchically, where leadership roles can be rotated so that all will have an equal opportunity to host meetings and organize events. The long term vision for the Co-op club is to eventually create a Co-op housing unit where people can live together sharing resources, space, talents and perspectives.

There is a heavy emphasis of improving the community together, no matter of one's identity. It is open to all those who want to be in it, and will always welcome ideas for events, club activities, educational experiences and helping the community.

For more information or to be on the email list, please email Kaylee Jakubowski at [KJakubowski11@winona.edu](mailto:KJakubowski11@winona.edu).



# ACE in the Hole

November 22, 2013  
Green

An ACE volunteer works on a mountain side

This could be me—or you!

I have found something that combines my passion for conservation with the opportunity to make a difference in my country...now if only I got paid for it!

American Conservation Experience, or ACE, is a conservation program through AmeriCorps that trains volunteers to, according to their official site, “undertake practical environmental restoration projects in America’s national parks, forests, wildlife refuges and other public lands.”

Starting in mid-May, I will be travelling to Flagstaff, AZ to work in either Flagstaff or in Hurricane, Utah for three months and will be doing an internship that entails hard labor conservation work. I will have to adjust from my cozy life as a Winona State English major, where the most adventure I seem to have these days is translating Shakespeare into an English that I can actually understand, to living, breathing, and being outside 24/7.

According to ACE’s website, “ACE is grounded in the philosophy that cooperative labor on meaningful conservation projects fosters cross-cultural understanding and operates on the belief that challenging volunteer service unites people of all backgrounds in common cause.”

Their goal is to take public wildlife areas throughout the United States and put people to work on them in order to create bonds and life skills. I will have the opportunity to work with people from around the world and create networks with others that are passionate about non-profits and conservation.

AmeriCorps has loads of programs with different purposes and directions for the large variety of people in America.

According to AmeriCorp’s main website, “AmeriCorps engages more than 80,000 Americans in intensive service each year at nonprofits, schools, public agencies, and community and faith-based groups across the country,” and, “Members have contributed more than 1 billion hours in service across America while tackling pressing problems and mobilizing millions of volunteers for the organizations they serve.”

If you want to get involved with either of these programs or learn more information, see: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/amerikorps> and <http://usaconservation.org/>.

# A Day to Remember

November 21, 2013  
Improving Our World

People gathered in the Smaug on Tuesday for Full Spectrum's Trans\* Panel.

People gathered in the Smaug on Tuesday for Full Spectrum's Trans\* Panel.

People encircled the Smaug stage. Some were seated directly in front of it, listening intently and asking questions. Others milled along the side and back walls, eating sandwiches and glancing up occasionally from their laptops. Though some people were gathered in the Smaug for the explicit purpose of listening to Tuesday's Trans\* Awareness Panel, others just happened to be nearby. Regardless of how they got there, however, everyone had the opportunity to hear the stories from transgendered or gender non-conforming individuals, all of whom had their own unique perspectives to share.

This event was sponsored by Full Spectrum: Winona State University's Gender and Sexuality Alliance, and was one of three events in support of Trans\* Day of Remembrance on November 20. The purpose of the events was to raise awareness and understanding of trans\* issues. Tuesday's panel allowed audience members to ask questions of trans\* individuals, which encompassed everything from "passing" as cisgender to familial relationships.

One of the panelist's fathers even stepped forward to tell his daughter's story through his own perspective. One of his main points was the importance of language. Although he had done extensive research about the history of transgendered or gender non-conforming individuals, he still struggled to navigate the territory of pronouns and proper labels. There are resources, such as these panels and websites like this one, that can help.

When I asked Jax Pugh, a member of Full Spectrum, what to do if I misuse these terms, Jax simply said, "Apologize and move on." The most important thing, according to club members and panelists, is to simply be kind.

Trans\* Day of Remembrance continued through Wednesday, which included another panel discussing the relationship between cisgender privilege and trans\* issues. Later in the evening, a candlelight vigil was held in Windom Park to honor transwomen killed because of gender based violence. Though the purpose of these two days was to honor these transwomen, it was also an important opportunity to spread awareness of trans\* issues.

As people sat around the Smaug on Tuesday afternoon, whether listening intently or peering over laptops, each of us learned something. Personally, I realized there's still a lot for me to learn. Although it's important to understand the multiple perspectives within the trans\* community, and although I want to learn more about topics regarding gender and identity, I think the most important advice really is just to be kind to all people.

For more information about Trans\* Day of Remembrance or Full Spectrum, please contact Jax Pugh at

jpugh09@winona.edu.

# One in 16 Can't Read This

November 8, 2013  
Improving Our World

Truer words were never written.

Truer words were never written.

It's crazy for me to think that there are people out there who can't read this blog post.

According to a 2003 survey done by the Institute of Education Sciences, 6% of people in Winona County lack basic literacy skills. That might not seem like a lot, but that's roughly 2,250 people out of 37,493, which is the population the survey gave Winona County. Put another way, 1 out of every 16 people is illiterate, so if the average class size 30 students, two of your classmates wouldn't be able to read at an age-appropriate level.

the results of a study on Winona County literacy rates

This is the graph provided by the Institute of Education Sciences for Winona County literacy rates. For more information, see the estimates from National Education Center Statistic.

And this is in Minnesota. Other states, like Alabama, Georgia, New Mexico, and Texas had numbers in the 30%



range, and even a few in the 40% range. Many states have counties in the 20% range, while the highest percent in Minnesota is 12% illiteracy.

Though this survey is a bit outdated, there is still a surprising amount of illiterate people in the United States. So, what can one do about this epidemic of illiterate peoples in the United States?

Winona State's English Club YAWP is hoping to bring attention to the epidemic this year with Literacy Week events. YAWP will be celebrating Literacy Week during the week of November 11-15 and all are welcome to come and participate.

Secretary Alex Paulson will be giving a presentation on the literacy epidemic. He is also hoping to get a couple of guest speakers in to give a variety of presentations to YAWP members and hopefully other students around campus.

Posters will be put up around campus giving specific dates, times, and locations of the speakers.

YAWP also wanted to go and read to elementary students in the Winona area, but unfortunately won't be able to during Literacy Week this year. Volunteering to read to youth or elderly is always a great way to promote literacy.

YAWP is hoping to make Literacy Week an annual event on campus, though, to help bring awareness to the issue. As students at a public university, it's important to remember how lucky we are to have had the education opportunities we've been given and to, in turn, reach out to others in our community and try to give them the same gifts we've been given.

# Campus Camp Wellstone at WSU

October 30, 2013  
Improving Our World

What We Learned	Campus Camp Wellstone Participants	My Notes	The Wellstone Triangle!	The Ground Rules
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Campus Camp Wellstone, a set on Flickr.

Last week on University Improvement day, a group of 50 enthusiastic students gathered at 8:30 am to learn how to improve their communities and, in turn, improve their world. The students were enrolled in a program called Campus Camp Wellstone, an organization that trains groups to create effective political grassroots movements. There was a diverse turnout of students from many social clubs on campus, all representing different goals, social issues and leadership styles.

Campus Camp Wellstone is a training program that helps students, groups or organizations organize and plan successful political grassroots movements. As a non-partisan organization, Campus Camp Wellstone wants to help all people with their progressive goals and visions. The organization and blueprint for this success is based on the now deceased Paul and Sheila Wellstone's personal and effective strategy, which has been called the "Wellstone Triangle." The Wellstone Triangle has three basic elements: "progressive public policy, which lays out an agenda for action; grassroots community organizing, which builds a constituency to fight for change; and grassroots electoral politics, which provides tools for influencing policymakers and holding them accountable."

Campus Camp Wellstone was organized and planned by several Winona State University Students including Oksana Carlier, Hunger Schepper, Jax Pugh, Karl Fluegel and myself, and overseen by faculty member and head of Women and Gender Studies, Tamara Berg. The success of our planning proved fruitful as the turnout was completely full. We were also mentored along the way by Meredith Hicks, the representative and trainer of Camp Wellstone, who told us the success of a good turnout was based on having a personal connection with the individuals who have registered. In order to do this, we each made a personal call to 5-7 students to make sure they were going to attend Tuesday's training. To our surprise, it worked!

Campus Camp Wellstone taught us all how through public policy, electoral politics and grassroots community organizing, to make lasting progressive political change in a community. The planning group, who decided on the content of the seminar, specifically tailored skills to be focused on. We decided to focus on Political Mapping, communicating with the community on a personal level and leadership styles. Although complex and tedious at times, the skills learned in each of these lessons will be extremely useful in creating the social changes desired by many campus clubs.

Through this training, I now feel personally responsible and obligated to effect social change. Campus Camp Wellstone gave us the tools and skills necessary for making things happen. Before the seminar, we were asked to consider how "powerful" we feel. For the most part, people identified feeling empowered in their own personal sphere, but often feel powerless when it comes to the political or worldview. Campus Camp Wellstone encouraged each of us to take charge of progress and change in our communities, showing how an organized grassroots movement can develop momentum and power to establish lasting change. I can confidently say that everyone left the seminar empowered and fired up to improve the world.

As Mahatma Gandhi once said, "We must be the change we wish to see in the world." Now, with the help of Campus Camp Wellstone, we have no excuse not to be that change.

# National Being Yourself Day

October 18, 2013  
Improving Our World

I feel like it's a fairly universal truth in our culture that at some point in our youth someone told us to "just be yourself!" While it's a fabulous notion in theory, it's basically meaningless in execution. I've always known a few basic facts about myself: I'm sorta Jewish, kinda Polish, and if I went to Hogwarts I would definitely be a Ravenclaw. Beyond that the details get fuzzy. All I know is that when I figure something out about myself, and I mean really figure it out, I like to tell people about it. Endlessly.

It blows my mind (in a bad way) that countless people in our world don't get to do that, but it blows my mind (in a good way) that we've dedicated a day to letting our friends, classmates, and fellow humans come out and say who they are.

National Coming Out Day was this last Friday and I'm always pretty excited to see what campus clubs have planned for the occasion. NCOD has been a pretty big deal in my life since high school. I was the leader of the GLBTA alliance in my school and have been an Ally since I found out that was a thing you could be. Some of my best friends in the world now and since high school have had to struggle with coming out and though I haven't experienced that struggle first hand, I've seen how much stress it can put on a person.

My running theme in my blog posts always seems to be "little things you can do to contribute" whether it's to giving aid local fire victims or expanding your cultural knowledge, and this post is no different; showing support for your friends doesn't need to be a grand gesture (though grand gestures can be fantastic, especially if they include balloons) it can be as easy as reading a book!

I got a chance to visit a few clubs around campus that were participating in acknowledgment of the day including WSU's very own English Club (YAWP) where two students (Alex Paulson and Meg Pelletiere) gave a joint presentation on GLBTA literature. They discussed a multitude of authors, their historical significance, and how they contributed to the genre while including some awesome recommendations including *Rubyfruit Jungle* by Rita Mae Brown, *Giovanni's Room* by James Baldwin, and *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* by Audre Lorde.

So even if you missed out on National Coming Out Day this year you can still get your support on by checking out some recommended literature! If you're looking for a new perspective or a new genre then all three books are a great place to start. So go forth and read! And don't forget to always be yourself, whatever the heck that entails!

Meg and Alex model "Rubyfruit Jungle" by Rita Mae Brown

Meg and Alex model "Rubyfruit Jungle" by Rita Mae Brown



# WSU Sustainability Theme House Hosts Renewable Energy Tour

October 1, 2013  
Improving Our World

WSU's Sustainability House

WSU's Sustainability House is one of 18 buildings featured on the Renewable Energy Tour Bike Route.

WSU's Sustainability House, located at 377 E. Main St., will be open to everyone for free tours from 10am-3pm on October 5 as part of the Winona Renewable Energy Tour.

The Winona Renewable Energy Tour is a special opportunity to discover how homes, schools and businesses are adopting and adapting solar (pv and passive), wind turbines, geothermal heat pumps, conservation and efficiency measures to reduce dependence on fossil fuels that cause greenhouse gas emissions and climate disruption.

Tour developer and coordinator Chris Meyer, a retired software engineer, sees this as an opportunity to hear objective evaluations of what works and what doesn't. "These people are the innovators and testers of emerging renewable energy systems and they will tell you about both pros and cons – they're not selling anything. This might be the only chance this year to get inside and see how things work," she said.

Chris Meyer and Paul Schollmeier, who teaches at the Winona Middle School, have been experimenting with and demonstrating renewable energy options at their home over the past several years. Their house is featured on the tour route, along with 17 others, scattered from Winona to Rochester. The five locations on the Winona Area Energy Tour Bike Route include schools and businesses, as well as homes – all sites demonstrate how innovative and individualized energy conservation and renewable energy strategies can be.

Tour organizers and participants were delighted to have WSU's Sustainability House and its students open their doors for this year's event. Sustainability House senior resident leader Thomas Gorycki noted some important features that will be highlighted during the tour. "Here, we have a roof-mounted photovoltaic array that offsets our electrical bills. We have energy efficient appliances, motion sensor lights, Solatubes for natural inside light, a living green roof, and other innovations that help cut costs while contributing to our overall quality of life. The students here are committed to learning about and demonstrating how we all can live better sustainably."

The Sustainability House will be open to everyone for free tours from 10am-3pm on October 5. Everyone is invited, so don't miss out on this opportunity to see renewable energy driven lifestyles for yourself.

**-Tex Hawkins**



# An Average American's Guide to the Supreme Court

September 24, 2013  
Improving Our World

After travelling to London this summer, I have solidified my interest in propaganda and political action. Now back in Winona, I often wonder what can I do to fulfill my desire for activism and political analysis? Well, it just so happens that the CLASP series at WSU presented political science Prof. Matthew Bosworth this past Wednesday to talk about the Supreme Court and political activism as a part of Constitution Day. This caught my attention and I went eagerly to Stark Auditorium to hear what he had to say.

Political Science Prof.  
Matthew Bosworth

Political Science Prof.  
Matthew Bosworth came to  
WSU on Wednesday.

Bosworth started his presentation with the history of the Supreme Court. Apparently, the Supreme Court was the weakest branch pre-Civil War. Bosworth described it as "being bullied into doing what the other branches wanted it to do." The Supreme Court would only meet about once a year in the basement of the Capitol and it usually did very little good; they didn't have a unified voice and therefore didn't have an opinion that mattered. Over time, several Chief Justices were able to seize powers for the court and ultimately make it into what it is today: the most influential and popular branch of government. "The overall theme here is if we look historically at the Supreme Court as a whole, it responds to social change. If we want something long enough and hard enough the Supreme Court will go along with it," explained Bosworth.

And this is what really impressed me; Bosworth used multitudes of examples for court cases in the last 15-20 years whose outcome was based on popular vote. "If you don't like things, the answer is political," said Bosworth. Bosworth used the example of last year's Marriage Bill and how many students on campus shared personal stories to help influence voters and made interest groups on campus. This is just a small step towards what Bosworth says is possible for Americans. Basically, if you form a special interest group and spend enough time marching around Capitol Hill, the Supreme Court will notice. And remember, just because the Supreme Court rules something does not make it permanent, "Even more significant than forming interest groups is reacting to Supreme Court decisions. The Supreme Court almost never rules completely; there's always wiggle room and unanswered questions," said Bosworth.

Even though all this sounds kind of cool, it made me wonder, is it actually ok for the Supreme Court to have that much power in government? How did Congress and our presidents let them gain so much power? Bosworth explained it as the Supreme Court being the more popular of the branches and also that the president and Congress are often divided. This happens because the president is usually either Republican or Democrat and Congress is usually just the opposite party. Because of this, the two often have a hard time reaching a unified decision. This makes it easy for the Supreme Court to push them both aside. Another interesting point that Bosworth raised was that the current justices in the Supreme Court didn't have any previous experience and were not, therefore, politically sympathetic to one party and are more likely to listen to public opinion.

Overall, I was reminded of how complicated our government is, but also encouraged that one group of people, unified under one idea, can really make a difference in the national government by simply being involved.

Vote Yes and No signs seen during last year's GLBT\* Marriage Debate.

These "Vote Yes" and "Vote No" signs were seen all over Winona during last year's GLBT\* Marriage Debate.



# Praise for Produce Peddlers

September 19, 2013  
Green

At the beginning of the semester I, like many WSU students, relocated to a new apartment and got settled in a slightly different part of town. Since then, I've discovered new neighbors, new shortcuts to campus and a new set of Winona locations that I like to visit regularly. Among these discoveries came a love for the local (and suddenly conveniently located) Farmer's Market downtown.

I visited the market on a whim one Wednesday after class and walked away with a purse full of tomatoes and a bag of locally grown apples. They were gone by Saturday (I actually ate the tomatoes over the course of about 3 hours) so of course I had to return. The Saturday market was even larger. I restocked on what I'd eaten earlier in the week and returned home with an array of cheap, healthy food that put my previous diet of cereal and mac & cheese to shame. After that second visit, I made it a habit to visit the market weekly. This last Saturday was especially festive as the Humane Society was hosting a bake sale. I bought 20 cookies for a dollar. I couldn't help it, I'm weak against sprinkles. I almost bought a few cupcakes as well but I resisted. Barely. I asked to take pictures of the sale and The Humane Society said of course, so long as I reminded readers to help the community by spaying and neutering their pets. So here is your reminder, readers: spay and neuter your pets!

There's a huge array of variety at the weekend market that includes anything from multicolored peppers to plants you can purchase and replant at home. The market has this pleasant buzz of energy all around as locals shop and converse, plus on most Saturdays there is often some sort of live music being played in a central tent. It's like a carnival. I love the Farmer's Market largely for this atmosphere; everyone is working toward a single goal of promoting local organizations and local individuals. It's a very concentrated sense of community.

I know many friends that say that they would eat better if healthy food were more affordable, and I know I've said the same. If you've ever looked at your pantry and felt an acute sense of dread about the state of your diet (again, guilty) it is definitely worth checking out. The market is set up twice a week, Wednesdays from 4pm to 7pm and Saturdays from 7:30am to 12pm. It's on 2<sup>nd</sup> and Main Street, to the immediate left of the Winona 7 Theater if that helps any of you. This weekend may be a great time to go if you haven't had a chance before since this Saturday is College Day! Farmer's Market and WSU's Sustainability Committee are teaming up to show college students what foods the market offers, how to stretch your dollar at the market and the advantages of buying locally grown food. There will be information packets with easy healthy recipes, an artisan market, and a tasting contest with prizes, all set to a soundtrack provided by local musician Mike Munsen. Oh, and did I mention that there will also be special discounts for students and a Blooming Grounds gift card giveaway?!

College Day at the Farmer's Market is just one of the events planned for WSU's Family Weekend, and I expect the market to be bustling students, their families and Farmer's Market regulars. I encourage you all to get yourselves downtown early on Saturday morning and check it out. If you really can't make it (darn those pesky work schedules!), send a roommate to check it out for you! That's why you have a roommate right? Put them to work and get some delicious and healthy fruit and veggies!

# If You Provide Passion, WSU Provides Skills

September 13, 2013  
Improving Our World

Klecker-Sailor reads her first book, *Patient Leaf*, to children in RedWing, MN.

Klecker-Sailor reads her first book, *Patient Leaf*, to children in Red Wing, MN.

Being an English major, I have often wondered if I'd be able to write and publish a book. I could write for children, young adults, maybe even special elderly novels, whatever that would entail (heck, I could create the genre). But I've always found the stigma of self-publishing one that is hard to overcome, and the fact that WSU is not known for producing a large line of famous authors.

Luckily, there is hope. Children's book author Michele Klecker-Sailor has just published a second book. A second one. A self-published second book.

*Max* is focused on how, according to Klecker-Sailor, "friendship trumps all social barriers: sexual orientation, age, sex, economic class, education etc."

Klecker-Sailor describes *Max* as, "A children's book about a bunny who gets befriended by Junk Yard Dog when he is left alone in a community garden. Because nobody has ever told Max that bunnies and dogs do not make good friends, Max and Junk Yard Dog become best friends."

Klecker-Sailor wants to inspire her readers to branch out, break stereotypes and make friends with a variety of people they like, instead of feeling socially pressured to stay in one friend circle.

Klecker-Sailor graduated from WSU in 1994 and was, interestingly enough, a Mass Communications Advertising Emphasis major with a Sociology minor. And according to her, that Mass Communications major is what really helped her in the world of publishing, "I use the skills that I obtained at WSU to write press releases, get television, radio and newspaper interviews."

Writing was always a passion of Klecker-Sailor though. She described a moment in elementary school when she wrote a 'get better' note to one of her teachers who was out sick. Her teacher was brought to tears by the kind gesture. Klecker-Sailor then understood the power of words, "I knew right there that's what I wanted to do, write. The knowledge that I had the power to evoke emotion from the reader just confirmed it for me."

The key to becoming successful, then, is knowing how to market yourself. "I have many people come up to me and say, 'I have written a book, but I haven't sold any copies, how do I do that?' The difference is marketing yourself and your product," she says.

Klecker-Sailor's story has reminded me that your major should not stop you from pursuing something you'd like to do. If you have a passion for something and get into the right circles and know how to market yourself, you can graduate from WSU with the ability to do what you love!

P.S. You can get a copy of *Max* by emailing Klecker-Sailor at [kleckermklecker@aol.com](mailto:kleckermklecker@aol.com). The book cost \$8,

including tax. The book will also be available soon on Amazon.

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