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Western Washington University

KLIPSUN

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TIMELESS

Photo by Danny Miller

editor's note.

I flip through the yellow pages of a navy blue hardcover book titled Klipsun; with each page turn, a musty smell fills my nose. My eyes land on a black and white photo of a tall, dark-haired man in a blazer and I read his name — Dingeman Bajema — my great grandfather. Here, I knew I had found something timeless.

From a yearbook that displayed the life of my great grandfather in 1924, to a features magazine that depicts the lives of people in 2015, Klipsun has maintained a storytelling tradition that captures life in the way it is at that moment in time.

In an effort to improve your reading experience, Klipsun has received an extensive makeover. The previously 20 page biquarterly magazine will now be printed once each quarter and will feature 40 pages of the faces and stories of our time. Stand-alone photos are used in this edition to capture life as it was in the 1960's and 1970's.

This edition of Klipsun is a time capsule, gathering the stories of today. By turning this page, you can delve into the life of a traveling vintage shop owner, experience past life regression therapy, witness the art of drag, celebrate merging cultures and be at different phases in the circle of life.

The human experience is ever-changing. Through Timeless, we're aiming to celebrate the past while aligning Klipsun with the modern world.

Sigourney Gundy

on the cover.

Sukhmanii Kahlon teaches a class to Sikh elders focused on navigating American culture while maintaining their Sikh practices. The class is held every Sunday at a temple in Lynden. (back cover) Manjit Kaur has been attending Kahlon's class for one year. See the full story on page 20.

Cover photos by Nick Danielson

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Photos courtesy of Elizabeth Engle

VINTAGE ON THE MOVE

Traveling clothing store gives shopping a new look

▲ *Murrieta, California, the last stop on The Living Room's trip. This photo was taken moments before Hogrebe (left) and Engle (right) said their final goodbye in January 2015.*

SCROLLING THROUGH ASHLEY HOGREBE'S Instagram account, hundreds of pictures of a little white-and-yellow-trimmed trailer cover the page. Woven handbags hang on metal racks. Plaid, leather and jean jackets line the bottom of the trailer's window. Business owner Ashley Hogrebe and professional photographer and "co-pilot" Elizabeth Engle stand back-to-back in front of the freshly painted "rolling vintage shop" called The Living Room.

Growing up, Western Alumna Ashley Hogrebe was a collector and had an eye for vintage fashion.

"I just started collecting all these clothes that I couldn't really wear, but enjoyed," Hogrebe says.

While in college at Western, Hogrebe dreamed of combining her love of vintage fashion and desire to travel. She wanted to create a business that she could take on the road, but the road needed to provide her with a sustainable lifestyle, she says.

In 2014, her dream came true.

Hogrebe purchased a trailer during her senior year of college and spent nine months repairing and fixing it up.

"My mom is awesome. She is like a Renaissance woman," Hogrebe says. "She would come up on weekends and if I gave her a pack of beer then she would help me."

Hogrebe decided to name her business The Living Room after brainstorming names with her friends.

(top) Parked right before The Bixby Bridge in Big Sur, California in November 2014. (bottom) The Livining Room's second pop-up event parked in front of the Rare Bird in Oakland, California in November 2014.

"We wanted it to feel like a community space," Hogrebe says. "It's not just a store to me, it's also literally my home."

After graduating from Western in spring 2014, Hogrebe decided it was finally time to take her business on the road.

Her first day as a business owner of a mobile vintage clothing company was filled with raised voices, frustration and tears. The tiny trailer that Hogrebe bought off Craigslist was more difficult to back up than anticipated and Hogrebe and Engle had to drive much further than a few feet out of a parking spot.

They had spent the past three days before leaving on their journey tirelessly painting the outside of the trailer, cleaning and pricing all their clothing and making business decisions. Now they felt completely helpless as they realized they never learned how to maneuver the trailer in or out of a parking spot.

"We thought we weren't going to make it. We almost quit, because backing up a trailer is so difficult if you have never done it before," Hogrebe says, laughing as she recounts her first day on the road. "My mom was driving, and she was yelling at me, and I was yelling at Liz. Liz had nobody to yell at, so she was just crying."

After several attempts at getting out of the parking spot, Hogrebe and Engle finally made it on the road. They successfully arrived at the first stop on their 1,400-mile journey at Make Shift, a music and art venue in Bellingham.

"WE WANTED IT TO FEEL LIKE A COMMUNITY SPACE. IT'S NOT JUST A STORE TO ME, IT'S ALSO LITERALLY MY HOME."

Hogrebe drove, slept and ran her business out of her trailer for three months while traveling from Bellingham to San Diego with Engle.

Most vintage clothing is found at secondhand stores, which have become popular shopping destinations in recent years due to the economic climate and an increasing push for eco-sustainability, according to Fashion Practice: The Journal of Design, Creative Process, and the Fashion Industry.

Resale and secondhand stores in the U.S. have yearly revenue that is now approximately $13 billion and growing, according to The Association of Resale Professionals.

The popularity of vintage clothing from secondhand stores may be a rising fashion trend, but Hogrebe had her eye on vintage fashion well before the economy took a downhill turn.

After successfully launching The Living Room, Hogrebe opened a vintage shop online, set up her vintage clothing in flea markets and partnered with existing retailers whose brands aligned well with her product while on the road. She learned to run a business, drive a trailer and live in close quarters with another person all at one time, she says.

A lot of people see what we have done and say "I wish I could do that," "I wish I had the guts to do that," or "I wish I had the money to do that," Hogrebe says.

▲ *Here the Living Room's little kitchenette turned store front is at its second event parked behind Black Market Boutique in Bellingham in October 2014.*

"I bought my trailer for $50 on Craigslist, so literally anyone else could do this," Hogrebe says laughing. "It's been fun to be able to talk to those people and show them that their dreams are possible."

As for backing up and parking the trailer, Hogrebe and Engle have come a long way.

"Now three months later, I can back up a trailer, no problem!" Hogrebe says proudly.

Hogrebe and her little trailer are rooted in Oakland, California for now, but she has big plans for The Living Room to hit the road again. K

◀ *The Living Room, parked in front of Paul Bunyan and Babe the ox in California in November 2014.*

DANDELIONS FOR DINNER

Keeping traditions alive through food

STORY BY SAYAKA IIDA

Photo by Grace Schrater

▲ *Maria Stavrakas, owner of Dandelion Organic Delivery, measures out the appropriate amount of rainbow carrots for each delivery box.*

They're a flower, they're a weed, they're edible. Most Americans think of dandelions as a nuisance to be chased from their gardens, but to Maria Stavrakas and her family, dandelions are prized vegetables that make a delicious meal.

Maria wants to raise awareness about the health benefits of dandelions and educate people about eating wild greens through her business, Dandelion Organic Delivery, which she owns with her husband Jonny Stavrakas.

Dandelion Organic Delivery delivers local organic produce to customers once a week. There are four delivery options that include potatoes, carrots, apples and many other fruits and vegetables. The delivery plans are priced from $28 to $36 and are customizable to include the produce an individual customer wants to eat. The options range from 10 to 15 different vegetables per package, so they can feed a single person or an entire family, Maria says.

Although dandelions themselves are not in the produce bins, the business aims to educate their customers about them, while providing them with other delicious produce.

In the past, Maria has held cooking classes at the Community Food Co-op and at Fairhaven Village, where she taught how to prepare dandelions. Her favorite way to eat dandelions is with a drizzle of olive oil, lemon juice and feta cheese.

Maria has lived in Bellingham for eight years, and has enjoyed eating dandelions since she was a child. She learned how to cook and eat dandelions from her family who immigrated from Greece. After moving to the U.S. Maria's parents started a traditional Greek restaurant called Taverna Athena in Baltimore.

"I grew up being a business owner in a way with my family, and I felt that I could do that," Maria says, "That definitely inspired my love for food."

When Maria was a child, she would pick dandelions with her family on Sundays. They went to the edges of farms where the dandelions grew undisturbed and dug the dandelions out of the ground with a knife. They took them home, roots and all, and boiled the dandelions all day, putting them in the freezer for later after they were done.

"Dandelion is one of the most nutritious vegetables on the planet, but generally is only considered a weed," Maria says.

Dandelions are filled with iron, potassium, vitamin A and vitamin C. Eating dandelions can also help with inflamed tonsils, can help prevent urinary tract infections, soothe an upset stomach and help with other ailments, according to the National Institute of Health's website.

Customers have told Maria and Jonny that they have found some of their favorite produce items through the delivery. Maria and Jonny are very happy to introduce people to new vegetables and fruits, they say. Jonny is also glad to connect customers with local farmers by delivering local produce, he says.

Maria dreams of having a dandelion celebration in the future to celebrate and educate the community about the amazing plant, she says. She looks forward to springtime to see the dandelions first bloom and enjoy eating them with her friends and family. K

STORY BY PALOMA PIROTTE
Photo by Nick Danielson
Infographic by Evan Donnelly

THE FORGOTTEN SELF

How past life regression therapy helps solve modern problems

"ALL OF A SUDDEN MY BODY MOVED, it turned and I looked at this light … a lighted building, and I pointed and said what's that? And this chill ran through me," Jeni Miller says when explaining her first experience with past life regression.

Miller's short white hair frames the mysterious energy behind her blue eyes. Her voice is soothing, a contrast to her bubbly demeanor. The pensive look on her face makes her hard to read.

Miller, a trained hypnotherapist, was traveling in Vienna when she first saw the opera house that resonated in her gut. Years later, she traveled back to Vienna with a friend to tour the opera house.

"My body started to shake and I started to cry. My girl friend looked at me and she said 'are you all right?' And I said, 'I've been here before. I know I've been here before'," Miller says.

Miller proceeded to receive past life regression therapy from a hypnotherapist. The therapy unveiled a memory of her past life being a well-off woman around age 40 attending performances at an opera house in Vienna during the 1700s.

Past life regression therapy derives from the belief in reincarnation and the concept of the human soul having past lives. A reported 24 percent of the U.S. public and 22 percent of Christians in the U.S. believe in reincarnation, according to a 2009 study by the Pew Center for Religion and Public Life.

From a therapeutic standpoint, Miller explains that past life regression can be a helpful form of healing because the client can view a limitation in their past life and transform the limiting belief or situation that created the obstacle in this lifetime.

▲ *Miller holds her hand to client Fanny Boileau's head, helping her to visualize a place of relaxation while in a standard therapy session.*

"GOING THROUGH THE PROCESS YOUR BODY STARTS TO DE-WEIGHT AND YOU GET SENSATIONS ALL OVER YOUR BODY. THOUGHTS AND BELIEFS ARE KIND OF RELEASED AND YOU FEEL A PURE FORM OF HAPPINESS."

Miller has a degree in both psychology and anthropology. She pursued further specialized education at the Hypnotherapy Academy of America in New Mexico. Miller has obtained over 500 hours of training in clinical hypnotherapy, medical support hypnotherapy and past life/ natal hypnotherapy. She has two offices, one in Bellingham and one in Seattle, where she does group and individual therapy sessions.

When one of Miller's clients, Michael James sits for a session he explains going through a process of viewing the events of his past, whether it be from that day or his childhood. All those thoughts begin to slow down and the focus narrows to one thought at a time.

"Going through the process your body starts to de-weight and you get sensations all over your body," James says. "Thoughts and beliefs are kind of released and you feel a pure form of happiness."

James was previously a skeptic to the idea of hypnotherapy, he says.

"If you go and say … 'I'm going to go hang out with a hypnotherapist for an hour,' people probably think you are crazy and that is just the assumption I had in my mind," James says while chuckling.

His previous skepticism is a natural reaction that Miller explains is a result of people associating stage-hypnosis with hypnotherapy.

"Hypnosis is portrayed that you are relinquishing control, or you are gonna be made to do things you don't want to do, like bark like a dog," Miller says.

Hypnotherapy differs in the sense that the client actually has more control because they are accessing the part of them that controls thoughts, beliefs, emotions, behavior patterns and physiological responses, Miller says.

During a past life regression therapy session, a client must undergo hypnosis to expose the subconscious mind. Hypnosis is a natural yet altered state of awareness, it requires being in a deep relaxation both physically and mentally.

"Usually it is me speaking and guiding them," Miller says. "I choose to have people focus on their heart and breathe."

About 65 percent of adults in the U.S. have had, or believe in, diverse supernatural experiences such as reincarnation, according to the same Pew Research study.

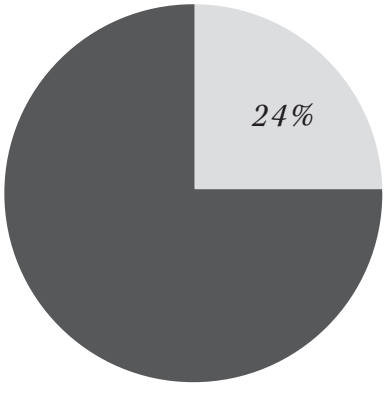
Miller's expertise in medical support drives her to perform past life regression for clients that are about to undergo surgery or have a consistent health issue.

One client had seen a doctor, had acupuncture and tried a variety of other therapies before trying hypnotherapy. About three sessions in, Miller decided to perform a past life regression. The client thought of a time when she was a Roman soldier at war and she received a wound to her hip.

As she was dying she recalls saying "She realized that she misused her power in that lifetime and she would prevent herself from ever doing it again," Miller says. "That was the karma if you will, which had been created from that lifetime."

In the noisy cafe, Miller's gaze breaks as she explains the numerous damages the opera house in Vienna faced throughout the wars. The image of the building wasn't something Miller recollects from another life, but rather the inherent feeling of connection in this life.

For the confidentiality of Miller's clients, no names were used without consent.



A reported 24 percent of people in the U.S. believe in reincarnation.

Source: Pew Center for Religion and Public Life

PUTTING DOWN ROOTS

A love story planted in Bellingham

STORY BY
HALEE HASTAD

Photo illustration by Tommy Calderon

▲ *Historic Cork Bark Elm trees are illuminated by passing cars and a flashlight on North State Street in Bellingham.*

It is April 15, 1896 and Arbor Day celebrations are in full swing. Mayor Eli Wilkins has commissioned the planting of hundreds of trees as a way to beautify Fairhaven, a neighborhood south of Bellingham, that had been logged out for development only seven years before.

Fast-forward to 2015 — Bellingham is now a Tree City USA community. It is recognized nationally as having a citizen-based effort to sustain the urban forest and has honored Arbor Day annually for 119 years.

But, the Arbor Day trees are not the ones with historic value in the area.

There are two trees, white as marble, that stand at the gate of a red home with white trim in Fairhaven.

The house was built in 1917, and the trees were planted in 1924 as an endowment for a newly engaged Swedish couple hoping to start a prosperous life in the United States.

A young man had arrived in Fairhaven from Sweden to search for work that would allow him to support his wife-to-be and the hopes of a family. It wasn't long before he found a job as a fisherman on Bellingham Bay and sent for his love.

Back in Sweden, his fiancée was packing to board a ship that would take her away from a home she knew she would never see again.

"I DIDN'T BUY THE HOUSE," KELLER SAYS WITH A SMILE. "I BOUGHT THE TWO TREES IN FRONT OF IT."

Her mother and grandmother wanted to send her off with something that she could always remember them by, a piece of familiarity to take with her to a place that seemed worlds away.

They gave her two Northern Birch Bark saplings wrapped in a dampened cloth. She was to keep the young trees with her on the journey and plant them deep in the soil of a new land.

When she arrived she buried the roots of the small trees next to each other, a symbol of her and her lover, where they still stand today.

Bob Keller and Pat Karlberg now live in the red home with white trim and have the pleasure of owning the nearly 100-year-old trees.

They tell the story of the young couple and the trees as if it was their own, with passion and an occasional disagreement on the facts.

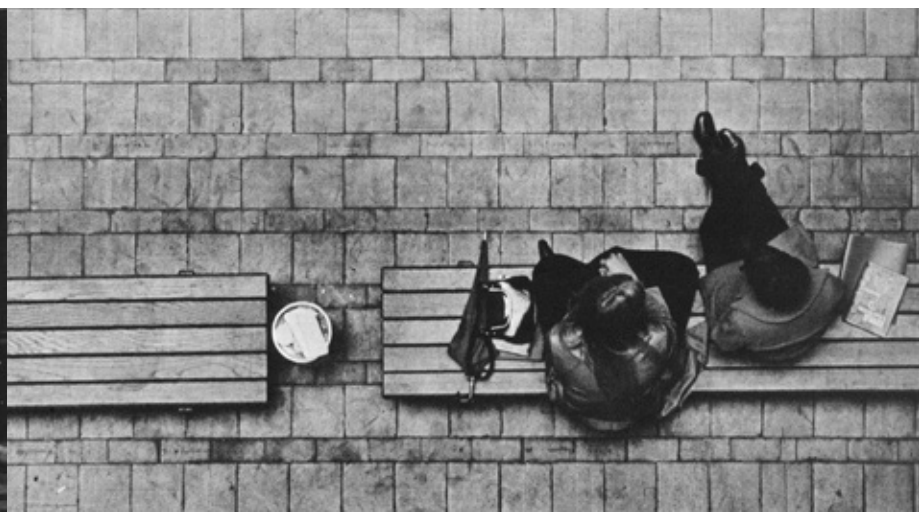
The birches rest watchfully at either side of a gate, now accompanied by a hand-made Swedish bell to welcome guests. One of them still stands tall while the other is a modest 10-foot stump, the casualty of a windstorm.

Keller and Karlberg value the presence and history of the trees, they say. In a way, they feel connected to the Swedish lovers that first planted them and appreciate being able to find a connection to the past through the trees' existence.

"I didn't buy the house," Keller says with a smile. "I bought the two trees in front of it."

The Arbor Day celebrations may have been the beginning of a tree-conscious community, but fundamentally they possess deeper meaning. Trees hold the earth together, just as personal connections bind one human to another. They are the silent curators of days gone by and noble markers of history. K

FROM OUR ARCHIVE.



(left) Klipsun 1956. (above) Klipsun 1970, photo by Jeoffre Clarke

CRAFTING CREATIVE BREWS

Sustainable brewing practices cultivate unique beers

STORY & PHOTOS BY JAKE PARRISH

▲ *Eric Jorgenson, left, is the only brewer at North Fork Brewery, where he brews dynamic, unique beers year-round. He tries to source as many local ingredients as he can, such as the barley pictured at right.*

The yeasty, musty smell of milled barley thickens the air of a concrete-floored room. A milling machine is crushing barley, churning it over and over, before spitting it out into two floor-to-ceiling stainless steel containers. Eric Jorgenson grabs another 50-pound bag of the grain and dumps it into the milling machine; just the right amount for tomorrow's batch of Berliner Weisse beer.

Jorgenson, 38, has brewed at North Fork Brewery, located on Mt. Baker Highway, for the past 15 years. He is currently the only brewer crafting beer for both the brewery and the restaurant.

"I started home brewing when I was 19," Jorgenson says, laughing. "I got into it because I was fascinated by baking with yeast."

North Fork uses a number of sustainable practices in its brewery and gathers almost all the ingredients for its brews from local, organic sources. The used grain and hops from brewing are then given to cattle farmers in Acme to be fed to livestock.

All of the large brewing equipment in the brewery, such as the holding tanks and milling machine, is secondhand, Jorgenson says. Most of the metal tanks used to hold fermenting beer are more than 50 years old.

"They're old as hell," Jorgenson says. "They get the job done though."

Jorgenson is known for his unique sour beers. The beers are stored in old whiskey barrels from a Seattle distillery, as well as in red wine barrels from Mt. Baker Vineyards. Some of these sour beers sit in the barrels for two to three years, Jorgenson says. Sour beers differ from regular beers because bacteria and wild yeast strains are added during the fermentation process in order to produce lactic acid, making it bitter.

"That's your acidity, your sourness in the taste of the beer," Jorgenson says. "You're using a plethora of bacteria cultures and wild yeast to create these delicate lactic flavors."

In addition to recycling old brewing equipment and using locally-sourced ingredients, North Fork uses 40 solar panels that generate most of the electricity for the restaurant and brewery.

Sandy and Vicky Savage own the North Fork Restaurant and Brewery and give Jorgenson creative freedom over what he brews.

This experimentation first came around when Jorgenson introduced Sandy to a batch of sour beer three years ago.

"Sandy goes, 'Holy crap, what is this? You need to go get some wine barrels,'" Jorgenson says. "So that day I went to Mt. Baker Vineyards and got some and after that it was on."

Jorgenson's experimentation is fueled by his passion for learning, he says. He always tries to take input from the people who drink his beer.

Jorgenson is grateful for the freedom he has with his job and for the sustainable practices he is a part of, he says. When it comes down to it, it's all about the pursuit of that perfect brew.

STORY & PHOTOS
BY JAKE PARRISH

QUEEN *of the* COURT

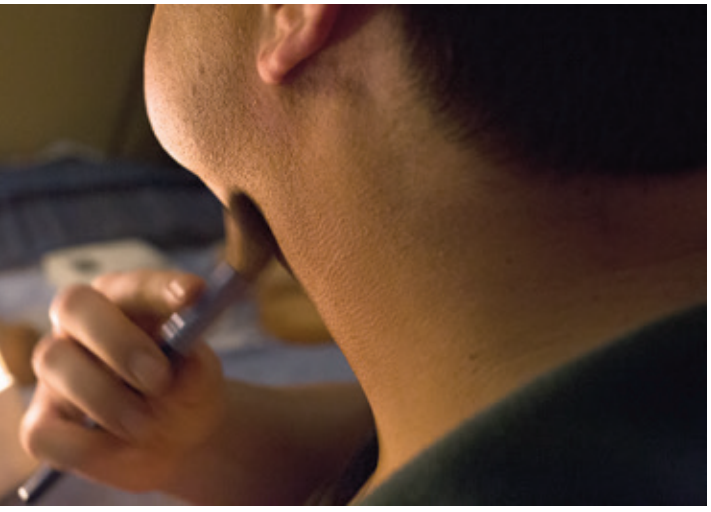
Finding inclusion through drag

Drag allows a certain sense of freedom to be released from those who are seeking an outlet for self-expression and for giving back to the community. Drag, or "Dressed As Girl," is becoming more prevalent as the gay community becomes more accepted, although it has been practiced since the time of Shakespeare. The wig and eyeshadow give the person beneath a chance to reveal their inner-selves without judgement.

Drag queen Madison Lane Weston lip syncs and dances as she performs at the Imperial Sovereign Court of the Evergreen Empire's Coronation 2015 on Jan. 17, 2015 at the Mount Baker Theater.

▼ *Drag queens Victoria Eyesil, left, and Diamond Tyde apply makeup in their hotel room in preparation for the Imperial Sovereign Court of the Evergreen Empire's Coronation 2015. Eyesil has been in the drag community for 23 years, while Tyde recently became a part of the culture. "Our biggest goal in the drag world is to foster, raise awareness in, and support our community, and raise funds for charity," Eyesil says.*

A queen looks over her nails before the start of the Seattle Coronation at the Renaissance Hotel in Seattle. More than 200 people attended the event, making it the largest coronation in Washington State. Events leading up to the coronation are held to fundraise for charities and scholarships, as well as promote support of LGBTQ communities. Noteworthy achievements by courts in the U.S. are also celebrated at coronations. "At the end of the day, the queen wants to put community first, and be loving and kind," Victoria Eyesil says. ▶



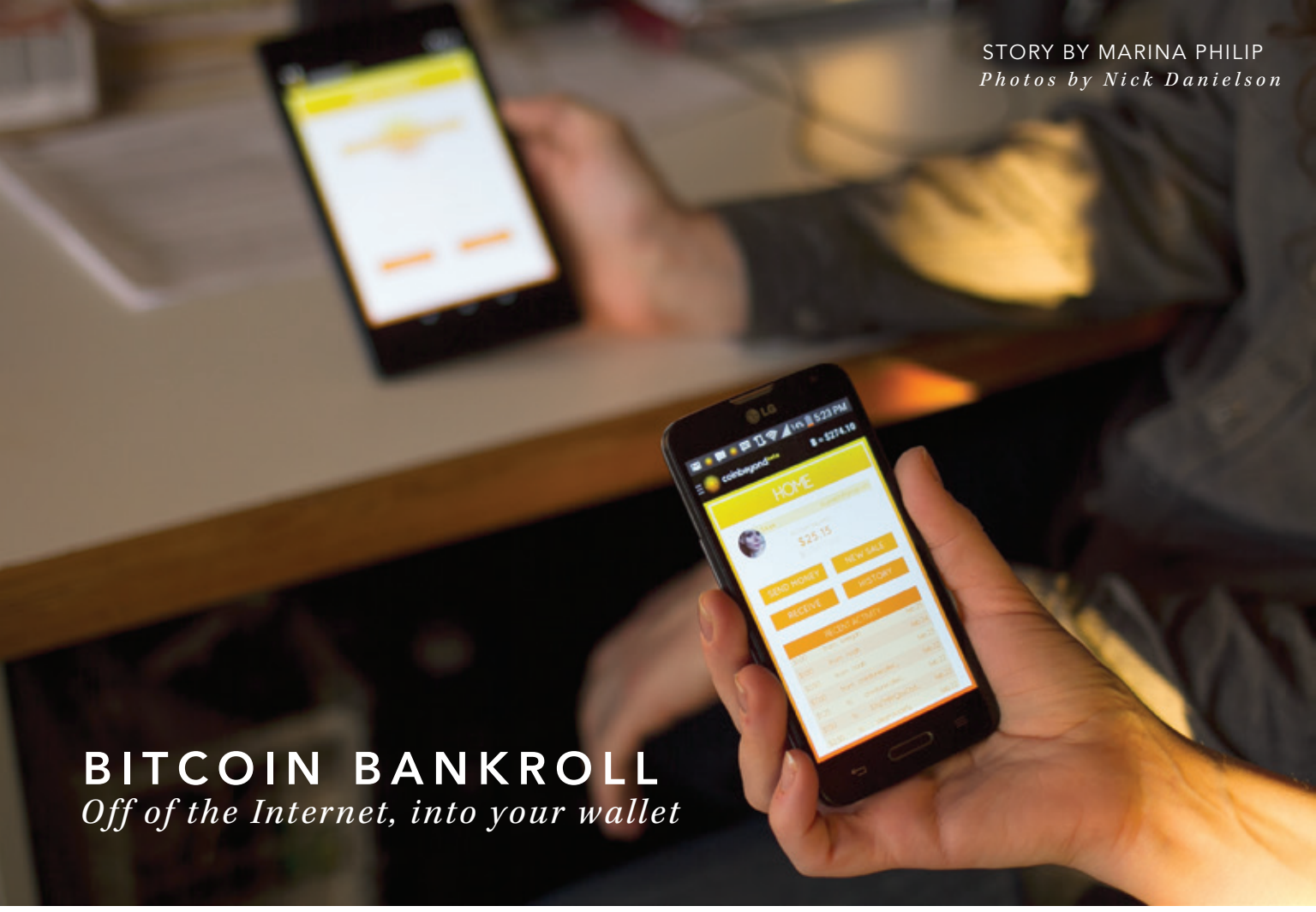
◀ *Diamond Tyde brushes on makeup to give her skin a smoother look.*

◀ *(below left) Mulan Rouge inspects a silicon breast in her hotel room before she places it in her bodysuit. Queens, such as Rouge, who do female impersonation typically wear body suits underneath their drag clothes to define a more feminine form, although drag is practiced by people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. "It doesn't matter how old you are or what you look like — you are still loved," Rouge says. "I sometimes lack self-love, and by being a drag queen I can feed self-love to other people."*

Drag queen Mink Marche is silhouetted by a stage light while performing at the Seattle Coronation at the Renaissance Hotel in Seattle. The high-energy drag shows are performed in a range of small-bar shows to large-scale productions, with dancing, skits, lip syncing and monologues. Cash donations from audience members are gathered during the performance for the queens' charities of choice. "It started as a party," Mulan Rouge says. "People getting dressed up to have fun. Then the AIDS epidemic hit and [the queens] wanted to make the events to raise money for those affected." ▶

A queen rests her hand on the back of a fellow queen. Hand-made dresses are not a rarity in drag shows, as queens often take dress making into their own hands to give their appearance a more unique look. In conjunction with community, drag culture celebrates individuality by means of appearances and persona, and the dresses and elaborate make-up are methods of dignified self-expression. ▶

STORY BY MARINA PHILIP
Photos by Nick Danielson



BITCOIN BANKROLL

Off of the Internet, into your wallet

IT SOUNDS LIKE MONOPOLY MONEY, made up by a Hackers-style computer nerd in his basement. It's anonymous and secure, the dream for drug and arms dealers who want to take business online, but this currency is emerging as a popular alternative to modern banking among technology enthusiasts who see the potential of Bitcoin.

CoinBeyond, a Bellingham startup, hopes to make buying with Bitcoin as easy as swiping a debit or credit card with their app.

The idea is to make users forget they're even using Bitcoin, says Rhys Faler, 41, co-founder and vice president for strategic partnerships of CoinBeyond.

VIRTUAL MONEY

Bitcoin is a decentralized currency, which means no bank or government controls it. Instead of basing its value in gold or silver, like conventional currency, Bitcoin's value is based in mathematics. Bitcoins are "mined" by individual computers, which simultaneously process and verify transactions made between Bitcoin users.

Bitcoins can be exchanged for U.S. dollars, or USD, like other foreign currency.

Exchanging USD for Bitcoin simply requires creating an account with a wallet service. A "wallet" is the Bitcoin equivalent of a bank account.

Some people invest money in Bitcoin hoping its value will increase. More often, people use Bitcoin for online payments.

In 2011, the FBI shut down an online black market called Silk Road, which accepted only Bitcoin. Though Bitcoin can make illegal transactions easier, it is not illegal itself.

A 2013 U.S. Senate hearing confirmed the legality of Bitcoin, while assessing and acknowledging the risk of increased illegal activity.

Bitcoin is gaining popularity in the legal sphere, despite its shady history. Small businesses accept Bitcoin and major retailers, such as Microsoft, Overstock and Newegg, have recently started accepting Bitcoin.

EVERYDAY USE

The challenge is in making Bitcoin easy for daily use by regular people and not just criminals and enthusiasts.

Faler founded CoinBeyond with two other Bitcoin enthusiasts in December 2013.

Faler, a software developer turned business executive, says he became interested in Bitcoin in 2011, when the value of a Bitcoin jumped from $2 to about $32.

"I started mining," he says. "[I] basically set my computer up and it processed away. It worked for about two years. You have to have a more powerful

▲ *CoinBeyond Lead Developer, Noah Judson, demonstrates a Bitcoin transfer from his tablet to CEO Skye Elijah using the CoinBeyond app. In an attempt to make Bitcoin easier to use, the CoinBeyond team also offers a debit card and a point-of-service card reader for phones and tablets.*

computer to do the work as time goes on."

After he stopped mining, he started looking for other ways to stay involved with Bitcoin, and started working on CoinBeyond to create an easy and cheap way for merchants to accept Bitcoin.

"Bitcoin works really well on the Internet," Faler says, "But with person to person interaction, offline transactions are much more difficult to achieve. So we set out to solve that problem."

The CoinBeyond app allows users to exchange Bitcoin like a debit or credit transaction.

A merchant can sell an item by creating a QR code using the app, which is recognized by the customer's phone. Or the merchant can take a more traditional route and purchase a card reader, similar to the popular Square device, which reads a debit card-like Bitcoin card created by CoinBeyond.

Kellen Fox, 22, is a computer science major at Western and has been an intern at CoinBeyond for about six months.

"We're trying to make it similar to a credit or debit card purchase," he says, "instead of having to have an app set up on your phone to spend your Bitcoin. It's a little bit of a hassle."

The full package allows the merchant to accept any payment type, including debit and credit, for much cheaper than the Square app.

The app can even allow the merchant to exchange the incoming Bitcoin for USD automatically, so they will hardly have to touch the Bitcoin side at all.

The startup, just over a year old, is growing at an incredible pace. The company is in its first stages of gathering investors. Faler says they hope to collect upwards of $500,000 in investments before the end of March. In the meantime they are expanding their user base of both consumers and merchants.

The goal is to make a mini ecosystem of Bitcoin use by working with merchants, consumers and by collaborating with other Bitcoin startups. Recently, CoinBeyond has developed a partnership with Bitwage, a California startup, that allows employers to pay their employees with both Bitcoin and USD.

WHY BITCOIN?

There are many reasons why people should use Bitcoin, Faler says. International travel, for instance, is much cheaper without international exchange and transaction fees.

The team of cofounders recognized Bitcoin as a potential solution to some of the problems with modern banking.

The prevailing currency system of bank transactions is outdated and flawed, Faler says.

"It's full of holes," he says. "Security for it is terrible."

Instead of having one giant server that processes all transaction fees through a bank system, the computing power is distributed among millions of individual computers, Faler says.

"When you swipe your VISA card, information gets sent to their servers, processed and sent back," Faler says. "It's a very energy intensive process, that's why you get high transaction fees."

It takes about 45 days to process a transaction through a service like VISA, he says. Even though the transaction is shown on your account, the currency isn't transferred between accounts until more than a month later.

A Bitcoin transaction, on the other hand, takes only 10 minutes because the power required is distributed over hundreds of different computers. During that 10 minutes the Bitcoin will be processed four or five times. Eventually every mining computer will verify the transaction.

Having multiple computers verify the transaction makes the exchange more secure as well, Faler says.

"With VISA, let's say you hack into their computer system, you can say 'give me a million dollars', and maybe take it away from someone else," he says, "With Bitcoin that's not possible, because you have all the records of every transaction that ever occurred. You'd have to hack all those computers at the same time, which is impossible."

Bitcoin may be the solution to many flaws in modern banking, Faler says, but even if Bitcoin doesn't become the next universal currency, it could forge a path for another currency system that is better.

"Is it the perfect answer for every single financial thing? No," Faler says. "Will it replace the USD? I don't believe so. Within our nation, [U.S. currency] works fine but for international purposes it is an easy answer. Why would you not use Bitcoin?" K

▼ *CoinBeyond VP of strategic partnerships, Rhys Faler, works at his laptop in the Invent Startup Lab. The CoinBeyond team stays in the office well past the average 5 p.m. work day, often working until midnight.*

STORY BY ELANA PIDGEON

Photo by Nick Danielson

A PLACE TO REST

Bellingham nonprofit strives to end homelessness

AROUND 10 A.M. ONE MORNING, Rachael Brown, 21, woke up to sunlight streaming through her living room windows, exhausted from a night awake with her one-month-old baby. She sat up slowly on the couch, still in pain from a complicated cesarean section. She checked to make sure her son was sleeping peacefully in the makeshift crib next to her. That's when she noticed her purse was missing. Panicked, she got up and checked the house. Her purse, her car, her money and almost all the food left in the house were missing — and so was her husband.

"That was the lowest point of my life: sitting there, finding all my stuff was gone and I had this new baby," she says. "I tried to think about who I could call and I realized I didn't have anybody."

Brown is one of many women with children who have found themselves homeless, out of money and out of options. She and her son eventually found themselves at Lydia Place, a Bellingham nonprofit that serves homeless families. Children in homeless families face a different set of problems growing up and sometimes find themselves in the same situation years later.

Every year Whatcom County does a "point-in-time" count when, in one day, they go out and try to identify how many people in the county are homeless. In 2014, they counted 553 homeless people and 27 percent of those counted were children.

"That number got under my skin," says Emily O'Connor, Executive Director at Lydia Place. "That's one in four homeless people, we're talking on the streets, in cars, in tents."

After a year of planning, Lydia Place started a new program at the end of January 2015 called the Family Intervention Initiative. To provide flexible in-home support, therapy and resources for parents and children, they've contracted a child therapist as well has hired a family intervention specialist/parenting educator.

Lydia Place serves about 150 households at any given time. All of those households have children.

The Family Intervention Initiative service is offered in a few different programs. One in particular is the Family Services Program, which has a focus on homeless households with young children. The new program staff will cost Lydia Place an additional $90,000 a year. Starting the initiative was important to them because the case managers who work with homeless families don't have the time they wish they had to focus on young children.

Young children need extra attention to get a jump out of poverty and have long-term successes, O'Connor says. Lydia Place wanted to find a way to do more for the kids in a preventative way.

"Kids are a big motivator for me. We want the children in our programs not to end up being our clients when they're older," O'Connor says. "We see that happen once in a while — this intergenerational cycle of poverty — and it's just really heartbreaking."

In 2008, Whatcom County streamlined access to homeless services, so instead of being on a waiting list for every housing program in the county, people can sign up for one central list, O'Connor says. Lydia Place is one of the practicing providers on that list.

O'Connor estimates there's an average of 300 to 400 people at a time on the waitlist.

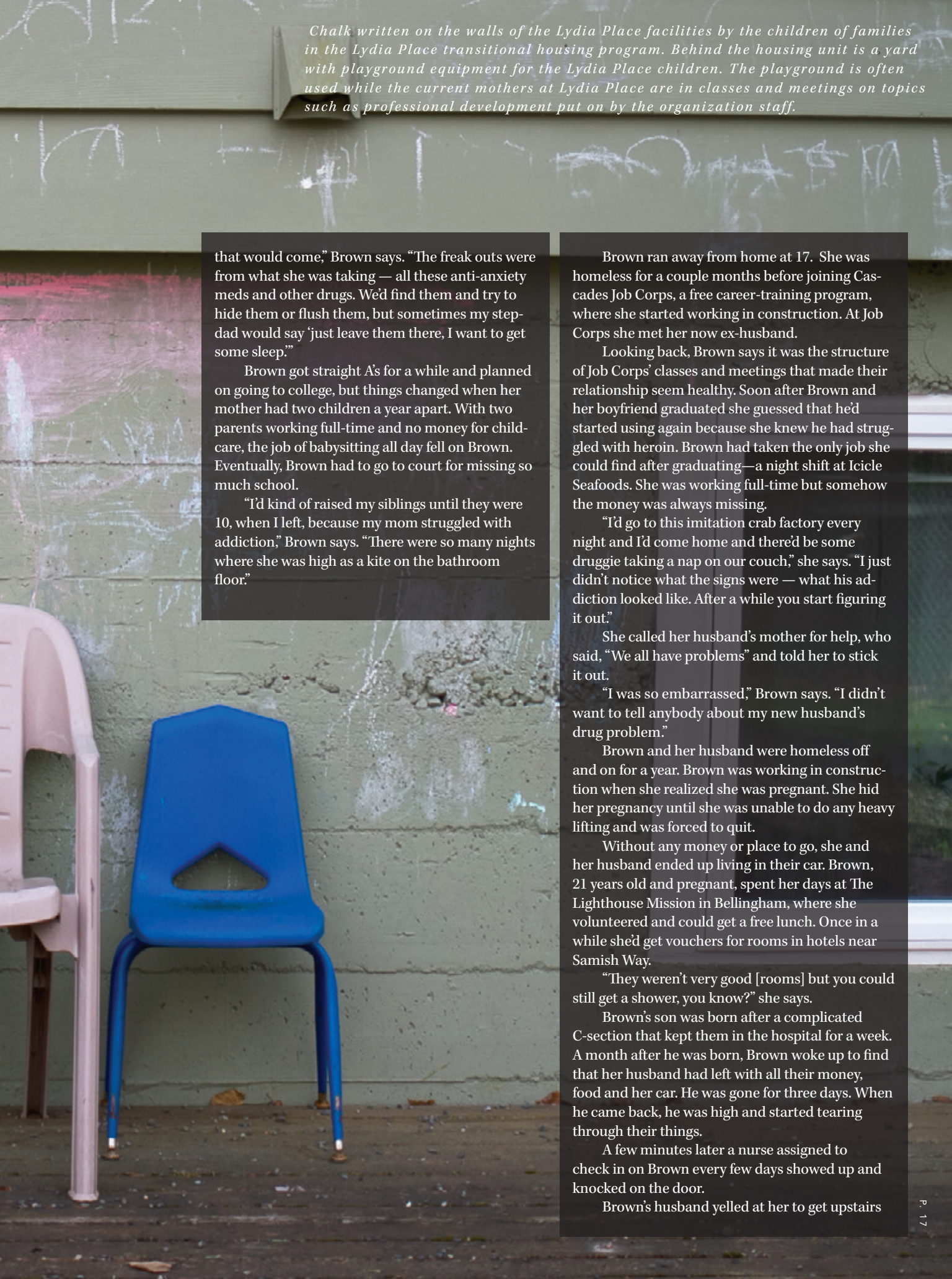
A big problem is the lack of housing in Bellingham, O'Connor says. The vacancy rate is less than two percent so there's not enough space and what's left is too expensive for clients with little to no income.

"Even though we're getting them housed stably, we're not getting them out of poverty," O'Connor says.

Brown grew up with her mother and twin brother in a trailer park in Southern California. They moved to Washington in search of better job prospects when she was 15 years old.

Brown's mother struggled with drinking and, off and on, with heroin and meth.

"We'd deal with her stuff to avoid the craziness



Chalk written on the walls of the Lydia Place facilities by the children of families in the Lydia Place transitional housing program. Behind the housing unit is a yard with playground equipment for the Lydia Place children. The playground is often used while the current mothers at Lydia Place are in classes and meetings on topics such as professional development put on by the organization staff.

that would come," Brown says. "The freak outs were from what she was taking — all these anti-anxiety meds and other drugs. We'd find them and try to hide them or flush them, but sometimes my step-dad would say 'just leave them there, I want to get some sleep.'"

Brown got straight A's for a while and planned on going to college, but things changed when her mother had two children a year apart. With two parents working full-time and no money for child-care, the job of babysitting all day fell on Brown. Eventually, Brown had to go to court for missing so much school.

"I'd kind of raised my siblings until they were 10, when I left, because my mom struggled with addiction," Brown says. "There were so many nights where she was high as a kite on the bathroom floor."

Brown ran away from home at 17. She was homeless for a couple months before joining Cascades Job Corps, a free career-training program, where she started working in construction. At Job Corps she met her now ex-husband.

Looking back, Brown says it was the structure of Job Corps' classes and meetings that made their relationship seem healthy. Soon after Brown and her boyfriend graduated she guessed that he'd started using again because she knew he had struggled with heroin. Brown had taken the only job she could find after graduating—a night shift at Icicle Seafoods. She was working full-time but somehow the money was always missing.

"I'd go to this imitation crab factory every night and I'd come home and there'd be some druggie taking a nap on our couch," she says. "I just didn't notice what the signs were — what his addiction looked like. After a while you start figuring it out."

She called her husband's mother for help, who said, "We all have problems" and told her to stick it out.

"I was so embarrassed," Brown says. "I didn't want to tell anybody about my new husband's drug problem."

Brown and her husband were homeless off and on for a year. Brown was working in construction when she realized she was pregnant. She hid her pregnancy until she was unable to do any heavy lifting and was forced to quit.

Without any money or place to go, she and her husband ended up living in their car. Brown, 21 years old and pregnant, spent her days at The Lighthouse Mission in Bellingham, where she volunteered and could get a free lunch. Once in a while she'd get vouchers for rooms in hotels near Samish Way.

"They weren't very good [rooms] but you could still get a shower, you know?" she says.

Brown's son was born after a complicated C-section that kept them in the hospital for a week. A month after he was born, Brown woke up to find that her husband had left with all their money, food and her car. He was gone for three days. When he came back, he was high and started tearing through their things.

A few minutes later a nurse assigned to check in on Brown every few days showed up and knocked on the door.

Brown's husband yelled at her to get upstairs

and Brown, still weak from surgery, half-crawled up the stairs to her bedroom she hadn't been in since before her son was born. The room was trashed — covered in burnt tinfoil with clothes and purses she didn't recognize scattered on the floor.

Her husband followed her upstairs and started yelling, "You're doing this on purpose," and dragged her back down the stairs.

Brown blacked out and woke up in the hospital next to her son. The nurse, who had been outside the whole time, had called the police.

"She heard the baby crying upstairs and heard me getting dragged down — she was right outside on the phone with the police department," Brown says.

Brown's husband was taken to jail for a year. Brown and her son were released from the hospital to the Womencare Shelter in Bellingham. She was given about a month to find a place to go and, after calling every shelter around, was told that Lydia Place just had a room open up in their transitional housing facility.

The building that houses Lydia Place's offices is also home to their transitional housing program for women with children. There's usually about eight women plus their children living there at any given time, O'Connor says.

When Brown first got to Lydia Place she was struggling with post-partum depression and recovering from surgery. She was scared for months after she got there that she'd run into her husband any time she left the house.

"There were some days that I didn't want to wake up at all," she says. "I didn't know what was going on with [my husband]," she says. "My fear was always there. "I didn't know if I'd get on the bus and he'd be there," she says.

The people at Lydia Place gave her the push she needed to go to a rehab program, file for divorce and work out a parenting plan, she says. A volunteer there helped her study for the math placement test at Bellingham Technical College, where she later graduated with an associate's degree in welding.

A few months later, Brown left the transitional housing facility and Lydia Place set her up in an apartment right by the Farmer's Market in Bellingham.

"It had big beautiful windows — it was the nicest place I've ever lived in in my life because I grew up in trailers," she says. "I had all these new things people had donated to Lydia Place and it was a real home."

The rooms in Lydia Place's transitional housing are fine in terms of paint and flooring, but some of them need new furniture, lighting, window coverings and art, says Shultzie Willows, Lydia Place's development and outreach director. This year they plan on asking people to "Adopt a Room" and partner with them to renovate the eight rooms there to make them feel more like a home.

"THERE WERE SOME DAYS THAT I DIDN'T WANT TO WAKE UP AT ALL. I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT WAS GOING ON WITH (MY HUSBAND). MY FEAR WAS ALWAYS THERE. I DIDN'T KNOW IF I'D GET ON THE BUS AND HE'D BE THERE."

Lydia Place has partnered with the Bellingham Housing Authority to offer 79 apartment units to homeless families as well as case management to them in their homes.

They also have a community re-housing program where their clients' case managers advocate for them to private landlords. Once they've found a home, Lydia Place helps them with a rental subsidy. With this they serve about 60 households at a time.

"We want to work ourselves out of a job," O'Connor says.

Lydia Place hosts two major events annually, Hearts for Housing in the winter and Handbags for Housing in the spring, as well as several smaller ones throughout the year. They take hundreds of volunteers a year.

"In everything we do we have to partner up with people — it's essential," Willows says.

The volunteers' jobs range from fundraising for Lydia Place events to watching kids living at the house for a few hours so their mom can take a break. Their thrift store, Wise Buys, is completely volunteer-run except for one full-time store manager.

"We are committed to seeing an end to homelessness," O'Connor says. "That doesn't mean that nobody will ever be homeless again. It means we want to build a system that has enough capacity so that when someone finds that they have a housing crisis, they don't have to wait weeks, months or years to get services. We can help them right away."

Brown, now 30, lives in Everett with her son. She's been in a healthy relationship for two years, and she, her boyfriend and her son like to go four-wheeling together and go to her son's ice hockey games. She's forgiven her mom.

"I wouldn't be where I am today if it wasn't for these ladies [at Lydia Place]," she says. "They pointed me in the right direction. They saw something in me that I didn't see." K

LIGHTS, CAMERA, BELLINGHAM

Behind the scenes of public access television

STORY BY
KATIE HEATH

Photo illustration by Tommy Calderon

▲ *Photo illustration of Douglas Ogg posing in Whatcom Falls Park. He produces, directs and stars in all the films he makes.*

The video opens with melodic, haunting music. It fades to black and the title, "Proof of Jesus" displays across the screen. Then it cuts to a man in a cowboy hat sitting in front of a camera, and he begins to speak. "Hello. I'm Pat Rogerson. And I'm here to present the first actual photographic proof, actually video of Jesus."

The man in the cowboy hat is Bellingham resident Douglas Ogg, 54, and the video is one of the many he submitted to Access Bellingham, Bellingham's public access channel. "Proof of Jesus" is a satirical look at one man's encounter with Jesus. Other videos from Ogg include "Imagination," a film about the creative process and "The Shopper," which takes place in an empty Target parking lot.

Ogg, an instructor at Whatcom Community College, is one of the few people who have submitted videos to Access Bellingham, a program on BTV10, the city's public access channel that brings six hours of community-created content to television every Sunday.

It's a place where people can create their own video, their own art and it's shown," says Brian Heinrich, the deputy administrator to the city, who is involved in Access Bellingham's implementation.

In July, the City Council approved the one-year pilot project, and in late September videos were able to be submitted.

Ogg saw public access as a way to showcase the short films he had been making.

"I think it enriches the community when people look around and say, 'gosh these are our neighbors that are producing these things'," he says.

Ogg has been interested in movies long before he began making them. Growing up, his family would take trips to famous movie locations around their home in the Bay Area. They Traveled to Bodega Bay to see where Alfred Hitchcock filmed "The Birds," to San Francisco to see where he filmed "Vertigo," and even a section of highway where "Psycho" was shot. Ogg would then grab the family's Super 8 video camera and make his own movies.

It wasn't until recent years, when the cost of filming began to drop, that Ogg found his way back to the camera. Suddenly, he could use royalty free music to score his films. Then, he could edit them on his own computer. Eventually, he was able to see his visions come alive.

While Ogg's submissions have filled some time, Heinrich admits that the push to get more of the community submissions has not been easy.

"Right now we only have about 20 videos, which doesn't fill the entire six hours like we had hoped," he says. Other videos include a tour of Bellingham and its many "quirks," and one simply titled "Rodney Raccoon Goes Green."

While the project is only set for one year, they will evaluate it and the city council will decide the future of Access Bellingham, Heinrich says.

Ogg isn't phased by the slow start of Access Bellingham. He continues to produce, write and act in his own short films, rarely needing a second hand to help him. If "Proof of Jesus" is any indication, Access Bellingham will see many more Douglas Ogg originals. K

STORY BY PALOMA PIROTTE
Photos by Nick Danielson

ANOTHER AMERICAN LIFE

Helping Sikhs practice old beliefs in a new country

THE EVENT WAS OVER AND ALL THAT remained was the maid washing dishes. Her wrinkled hands were pale from cleaning pots and pans with cold hose water because they were too big for the sink. The tattered Punjabi suit and sweater that masked her body didn't stand a chance in the cold weather. She was trying to restart her life as a Sikh in America at the age of 70.

"I sat next to [the woman] to help her finish washing the pots and pans," says Sukhmanii Kahlon, 22, Western student and founder of the organization American Sikhs.

The elderly woman, like many Sikhs, had come to the U.S. to support her child in his aspirations. Her son, however, wound up in jail and remained there for eight years. She began working as a maid to provide food for herself and without healthcare, citizenship or being able to speak English, it is impossible to live in this country, Kahlon says.

"Her eyeglasses had cracks on them which made it difficult for me to see her eyes, but I didn't need to see her eyes to be able to see the helplessness in them," Kahlon says.

Kahlon sat in a silent campus building dressed in professional clothing. Her words were as sharp as her appearance. She smiled slightly as she explained how her organization began.

Kahlon and the elderly woman met up again to pick up new glasses as a replacement for the cracked ones. The woman put them on and began to cry.

"She said her tears were not for sorrow for once," Kahlon says. "That moment was everything for me."

The Sikh woman Kahlon met that night inspired her to support other Sikh elders restarting their lives in America. From that moment her organization — American Sikhs — was born.

"I want them to know and be educated about the land they are living in currently, while still preserving their cultural norms," Kahlon says.

Kahlon's sessions began with her approaching elder Sikhs and offering her phone number if they wanted help. In the past year, American Sikhs has been approved as a registered organization by Washington State. The classes are branching out from Bellingham to Renton and Bothell, with the potential of going national, Kahlon says.

Her two-hour teaching sessions consist of English language practice and talking about citizenship. Each lesson has a theme such as health or transportation. Currently, there are 32 students ranging from ages 60 and older. The American Sikh organization is funded by donations from members of the Sikh temple.

In 2012, immigrants made up 13 percent of the U.S. population, according to a study by the Migration Policy Institute. A roughly estimated 200,000 Americans are Sikh out of the 25 million Sikhs worldwide, according to the Pew Research Center.

Most Sikh families who choose to live in Whatcom County do so because they have extended family in Vancouver, British Columbia, says Manjit Singh Dhaliwal, a member of the Sikh temple in Lynden. The long white beard he had grown out framed his smile.

"India has strong family values and ties. [We don't do] Facetime, we sit in the family room," Dhaliwal says laughing.

Kahlon considers herself an American, but

▲ *Western student, Sukhmanii Kahlon, teaches the meaning of english words "previous" and "sore" to Sikh elders during her weekly class at Guru Nanak Gursikh Gurudwara.*

noticeably lost a piece of herself upon leaving India when she was seven.

"I have been living kind of two lives my whole life," she says.

For older Sikhs the feeling is worse. They spend their time cooking or watching television because they can't communicate with the outside world. They have no self-esteem or confidence, Kahlon says.

Kahlon's student, Jagdish Kaur, 63, helps take care of her grandchildren while her son and daughter-in-law are at work. Her main problem after moving from India was finding a job due to her language barrier, she says in Punjabi as Kahlon translates.

Sikhism was founded in Punjab during the sixteenth century by Guru Nanak. He based his doctrine on simplicity of living, monotheism, piety and equality of both men and women who choose to follow Sikhism, according to the Hartford Institute for Religion Research.

Honest work, sharing with others as well as prayer and meditation are our three guiding principles, Dhaliwal says.

Sikhism is the belief in Seva, which translates to "selfless service," Kahlon says proudly. It is tradition that people of Sikh faith perform service to all without thinking of self-benefit.

Her family was never rich, Kahlon says. As an example of Seva, Kahlon's parents would send 20 percent of each paycheck they received to families in India for children's education, food and other needs.

Kahlon is majoring in communications and minoring in psychology. She is currently studying for the Medical College Admissions Test in hopes of becoming a doctor.

Kahlon's goal is to end the older generation of Sikhs' language isolation and help them restart their lives as American citizens.

The elderly woman in the Punjabi suit had not spoken with another person in a long time. The woman's tears and the hope she was given from a pair of eyeglasses was unforgettable, Kahlon says.

"She said she never thought the world would be so clear," she says, when reminiscing about the old woman washing dishes that night. "The look in her eyes was priceless."

Class attendees Paramjit Singh Dhindsa (top left) and Surinder Kaur Sekhon (top right)

(middle) Kahlon talks with Gurbaksh Singh, an elder Sikh of Guru Nanak Gursikh Gurudwara after the weekly Sunday prayer service.

Class attendees Sukh dev Singh Gill (bottom left) and Paramjit Kaur (bottom right)

STORY BY LIBBY KELLER

Photo illustration by Tommy Calderon

Infographic by Evan Donnelly

NON-LINEAR

Navigating the undulating path to recovery from eating disorders

I walk into the bathroom and carefully close the door so I don't wake up my roommate. I look at the scale on the floor and a jolt of anxiety pulses in my gut.

What did I eat yesterday? Was it too much? I strip off my clothes and step on the scale. It was definitely too much. I'm going to have to skip breakfast today.

I count to 10 and look down.

Today is going to be a bad day.

RESPONSIBILITY

Chloe Roberts is a recent Western graduate who has struggled with bulimia since her senior year of high school.

At the time, her first serious boyfriend had left for college, and the emotional strain of trying to keep in touch while also looking for new relationships began taking its toll on Roberts and her self-esteem.

"All the pressure, and all the emotions just flew out in a really strong, bad way," Roberts says.

The inability to detach from the relationship made Roberts feel like she needed to improve her looks to eliminate possible competition for whenever her boyfriend visited.

Her depression culminated during the last six months of her senior year before finally Roberts reached her breaking point.

The solution she found was purging.

It began small, Roberts says, as she was only throwing up every other day or so. But after a brief time in therapy, she faced the challenge of moving to Chicago and attending college at the same university as her ex-boyfriend.

It was there that Roberts says she began vomiting after every meal, abusing laxatives and restricting her intake.

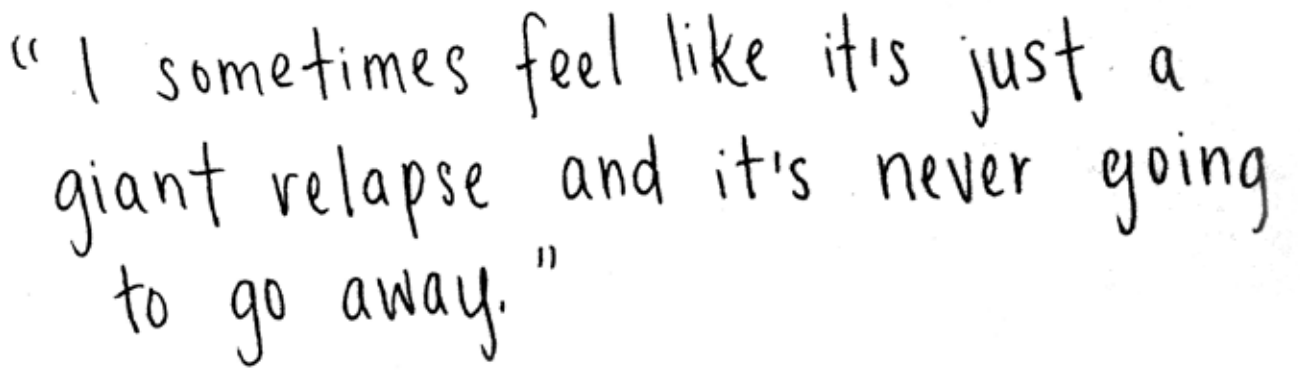
But after a family vacation, Roberts received an ultimatum from her parents; seek professional treatment, or be taken out of college. Roberts chose to go through a treatment program at the Insight Eating Disorder facility in Chicago.

Three months later, on June 16, 2012, Roberts returned to Washington and began what she describes as her first active push toward recovery. She transferred to Western to stay close to the support system she'd built with her friends and family.

However, the struggle didn't end there.

"I sometimes feel like it's just a giant relapse

▲ *Photo illustration depicting a woman on a scale, a morning ritual that can determine a good or bad day for those affected by eating disorders.*



and it's never going to go away," Roberts says as she recounted her first major slip back into bulimic tendencies during fall 2014.

For two months, Roberts hid her return to bulimia before thoughts of her deteriorating body resurfaced and she sought help from Western's dietitian. Since then, she has come to realize that her thoughts of disordered eating may never completely leave her. There may always be days when thoughts of food make her anxious, or when the desire to exercise seems to trump all else. If she'd been asked a year ago, she'd have said she was fully recovered. Now, she's not so sure there is such a thing, she says.

Recovery is a tricky thing to define. At what point is someone considered to be recovered?

SUPPORT

The science of eating disorders is young and inexact at best, according to Dr. Anna Ciao, a professor of abnormal psychology at Western.

Ciao arrived at Western in fall 2014, and has been researching eating disorders since she was first introduced to the concept as an undergraduate.

There is a large variation between the number of people who suffer from eating disorders and the number who seek treatment, Ciao says.

"There is a lot of shame about eating disorders, a lot of resistance to treatment because people are proud of symptoms or feel like they're culturally pretty normal," Ciao says.

Beginning at the University of Chicago, Ciao began examining the narratives of people's individual experiences with eating disorders. By doing so, she hopes to identify trigger sources and work toward improving methods of detection and treatment, she says.

However, when it comes to hard data, Ciao says there just isn't much about eating disorders that is understood definitively at this point.

Recovery is an especially gray area, Ciao says.

"It seems like the best predictor of being recovered in the long term is the motivation to not have the eating disorder anymore," Ciao says. "That construct is variable between people in treatment — whether or not they're ready to let go of the eating disorder or they feel like it still is something that they value."

Ciao likens the recovery process somewhat to that of an Alcoholics Anonymous program—in that a vulnerability to relapse always exists with a person after they've experienced an eating disorder. That said, Ciao believes many people look at their recoveries as an ongoing process that needs to be protected and nurtured, she says.

In addition, one of the 10 fundamental components and characteristics of recovery defined by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration describes recovery as a non-linear process. The rates of improvement and setbacks are indeterminable, and vary for each person.

Among Western's student population, this is no different.

EMPOWERMENT

Claire Poulos was raised in the microclimate of the San Francisco area where sun remains part of the forecast 66 percent of the year. But when she moved to Bellingham to attend Western, the city's annual average of 201 cloudy days took its toll on her, Poulos says.

Poulos says she began to suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder and struggled against a dampened mood. This, combined with a bit of weight gain Poulos says, is what she experienced as a result of her transition to the college lifestyle.

One day before class, Poulos says the unhappiness and discomfort she felt with food in her stomach finally pushed her to purge. She says the relief was immediate, and from there the eating disorder only got worse.

"I remember laying in bed sometimes and just staring down at myself, and I would watch my body get bigger and bigger and bigger," Poulos says. "When you're at that point, you just kind of lose control of yourself."

Poulos began the destructive cycle of restricting and purging what she did manage to eat. She developed terrible anxiety and symptoms of nausea around food, her throat was raw and every ounce of food in her stomach felt painful, Poulos says.

It was after two years away from home when Poulos first returned to California for the summer. It was there that she says the support of friends and family spurred her forward into recovery.

"When you're told that you're beautiful every day, and that you're worth something, that's really a big step," Poulos says. "When you have a disorder like this you don't see that in yourself."

Poulos says she has since grown accustomed to the climate of the Pacific Northwest and has found a relief from her anxiety about food through the adoption of a vegan diet. It's a practice she says puts her more in touch with the process of nourishing her body and giving it what it needs.

But even so, she still struggles with purging and other anxieties around food, Poulos says.

"It's a constant process, it's a struggle. When you view yourself in a negative light, it can change every day," Poulos says, adding that the difficult part about recovery is breaking the initial cycle of eating disorders.

When that cycle is broken, she can recognize that she is thankful her health has not been compromised and she is still able to walk and breathe and make the most of her life, Poulos says.

DIRECTION

There is no "right" way to go through an eating disorder. The varying ways Roberts and Poulos have found to pursue their recoveries demonstrate this easily.

Along with the support of family and friends, professional counseling and nutrition advising were helpful for Roberts as she traversed her path through bulimia.

While positive relationships are a common theme between the women, Poulos has enlisted more informal tools in her recovery process. Meditation, yoga and a vegan diet have kept her focused on maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Neither approach is better than the other. Motivation seems to be the vital key to overcoming a disordered eating condition, says Ciao.

Both Roberts and Poulos have found their motivation and will continue to work toward futures not defined by their eating disorders.

For Roberts, this equates to a major in sociology and a minor in psychology, which she says also contributes to her position working at a domestic violence shelter.

"I want to help people who are in these horrible experiences that they can't help," Roberts says.

Poulos has chosen to dedicate her studies to a major in communications and a minor in sociology—fields she says are fascinating because it deals with actions people do every single day whether they realize it or not. She hopes to contribute to a world of effective communication and positivity by working in mediation and conflict resolution.

Poulos says she works to channel that positivity into her own life by keeping in mind her daily mantra.

"You are beautiful, you are bountiful, you are blissful."

It is a message of hope anybody struggling with an eating disorder can keep close to their hearts. The process is difficult and unpredictable, but no one ever has to go through it alone.

In the end, everyone is beautiful, everyone is bountiful and everyone is blissful.

HOPE

I walk into the bathroom and close the door.

My eyes don't leave the scale as I undress. I take a deep breath and lift a foot to step on. But before my skin finds the cold metal, I pause.

I remember laughing, loving and living my life. This thing beneath your feet never gave you any of that.

Then I remember the hospital bed where I almost lost everything. I remember the promise I made to myself to never go back.

I let my foot fall to the floor and get dressed. I don't look back when I leave the bathroom. K

HEALTH CONSEQUENCES OF COMMON EATING DISORDERS

Anorexia Nervosa

- Slow heart rate and low blood pressure, which increase risk for heart failure
- Loss of bone density
- Loss of muscle
- Severe dehydration and kidney failure
- Overall weakness, symptoms of fatigue and fainting spells
- Hair loss

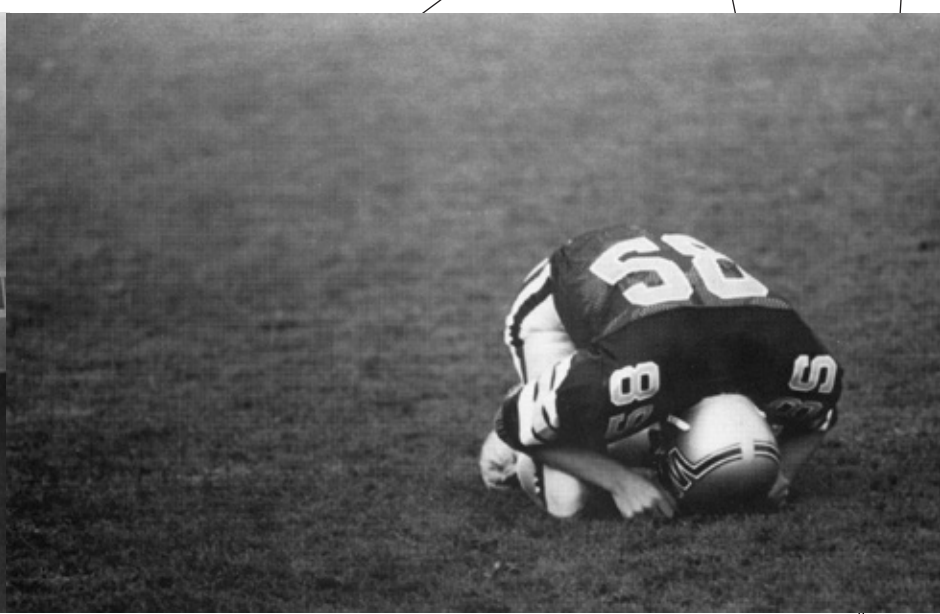
Bulimia Nervosa

- Electrolyte imbalances which can lead to irregular heartbeats, heart failure and death
- Gastric rupture
- Inflammation and potential rupture of the esophagus
- Tooth decay
- Chronic irregular bowl movements
- Peptic ulcers and pancreatitis

Binge Eating Disorder

- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Heart disease
- Type II diabetes mellitus
- Gallbladder disease

FROM OUR ARCHIVE.



(left) Klipsun 1974, photo by Gary Johnson. (above) Klipsun September 1985, photo by John Klicker

STORY BY KATIE HEATH
Photos by Grace Schrater

LABOR OF LOVE

An alternative to hospital births

IT WAS HOUR 25, AND THE transition phase — the most challenging phase of delivery, the crest of the wave, the climax of the movie, the last hill to climb — when Shayna Wilson, in labor with her first child, felt like she couldn't keep going. There, in the secluded room of a birthing center, she felt like she would succumb to the pain that was raging throughout her entire body and never see the life she had nurtured for nine months.

So she began to beg for drugs, any kind of drugs that would stop the pain, to be taken to a hospital, for it to be over and done with. Her midwife, and multiple midwife assistants, didn't give her drugs however. Instead, they told Wilson that it was hour 25, the crest of wave, the climax of the movie, the last hill to climb, and that she could do it.

Across the U.S., more and more scenes like Wilson's are occurring as the number of out-of-hospital births rise. Up to 1.36 percent of babies in 2012 were born in places such as a birthing center or at home, a rise from the 1.26 percent of 2011, according to the Center for Disease Control. Although the movement is small, it's gaining traction in places like Bellingham, with the presence of the Bellingham Birthing Center.

Established in 2004 by licensed midwives Catriona Munro and Christine Gibbs, the Bellingham Birth Center has seen over 1,000 births take place in its three birthing rooms. The center "facilitates a woman's innate ability to give birth without intrusive interventions while providing an appropriate amount of technology to insure safety," according to Bellingham Birth Center's website. This means women in labor are not given drugs to induce or dull the pain of delivery. The center offers seven different midwives, which clients can choose from to guide them in their pre-natal, delivery and post-partum care of themselves and their child. It is one of the two birth centers in Bellingham, along with Birthroots Birth Center.

CONCEPTION

Munro's interest in midwifery came from her experience witnessing a friend's home birth.

"It just totally blew my mind," she says. She got her pre-requisites for midwifery school at Fairhaven College, then completed three years of midwifery training and got her license at Bastyr University in Seattle. It was after that she realized she wanted to bring her skills to a larger group of people, leading her to co-found the birth center.

"A lot of people don't like the idea of home birth, they think it feels dangerous or too uncontrolled," says Munro.

Although Wilson, who gave birth at the Puget Sound Birth Center in Seattle, wants her next child to be delivered at home, she wanted a birthing center because of the extra security it gave. "You'll always have some fears," she says.

Munro sees many different women come through the center, from attorneys to women who would be homeless if they weren't pregnant. Yet together, across the three rooms that make up the birthing center, these women share a moment of birth that connects them all.

"So many people come to us with a history of sexual abuse or needle phobia or we get a lot of folks who have had traumatic hospital experiences as a child. They might not want a natural childbirth, but they don't want a hospital," she says.

Munro's voice is everything one would want in a birthing coach — soft, controlled and caring — a voice of strength and encouragement that countless women have heard as they move through the stages of labor. She has walked through the three rooms offered by the center as "birthing suites" many times. Each have a bed, a bathtub and a bathroom. The only clues to what exactly goes on in the rooms are sparse. In one, a birthing sling hangs from the wall, a soft, padded piece of fabric that women can hang on to release tension that gravity may bring during labor. In another, tucked neatly in the corner next to an oxygen tank is a birthing stool, which helps women.

A look into a center in Bellingham that offers an alternative to hospital births maintain a squatting position as they push. In the third, an exercise ball for sitting and moving on. What looks like a TV cupboard holds various tools for birthing, including everything from official medical supplies to a jar labeled "Olive Oil."

CASCADE OF INTERVENTIONS

It doesn't seem like a place to have a baby, but for an increasing number of women, it's the

Russell Warren Engell hangs out on his mom's lap after being breastfed. Brownell often stops in at Birthroot when she is in town running errands, because they offer a warm and inviting place to breastfeed, as opposed to having to do it in the car, Brownell says.

place they would pick over a hospital. Munro says that many clients come to the Birth Center after having negative hospital experience. At hospitals, she says, there's often what is called the "cascade of interventions."

"In the hospital, one intervention leads to another, so you're laying in bed and they can't cope, because it's hard to cope with labor when you're just laying in bed," she says. Hospitals usually discourage women from walking around, she says, so the pain becomes enough to where women are administered pain medication, which makes it even harder to move around.

"Then it's harder to push, so when it comes time to push sometimes you need forceps or a C-section," she says. "Each 'thing' increases the chance of a next 'thing'."

During Wilson's delivery, she was able to walk around as much as she wanted, and take whatever position felt comfortable for her to birth in.

"I could take a shower five times a row if I wanted," she laughs.

The Birth Center also chooses to protect the immediate newborn post-partum bonding experience, giving clients more time with the infant, something Munro says is uncommon in hospitals.

"People feel like birth just kind of happened to them and there were all these tubes and wires coming out of their body. They feel like they didn't have a sense of autonomy over the process," she says.

While the Birth Center may be different from a hospital room, the preparedness for any emergency is just as strong. As a midwife, Munro carries a variety of medications, including one that can stop post-partum hemorrhages, three different emergency medications that hospitals also carry, a drug that stops labor, oxygen, magnesium sulfate for blood pressure, a catheter and an IV, even a local aesthetic. The Birthing Center is exactly five minutes away from St. Joseph Medical Center.

The Birth Center does not deal with high-risk births, which is what many people don't realize, says Munro.

"So people are thinking about the scary things that happen during childbirth and not differentiating between high risk and low risk." High-risk births include births like twins, a delivery that can often require medical interventions. The use of modern technology has undoubtedly helped in the birthing process says Munro. The U.S. has a mortality rate of six babies for every one thousand born, while in places like Afghanistan 117 babies are lost, according to a CIA Factbook. But many midwifes still use techniques that have helped women give birth for hundreds of years, combining the new and old. From simply standing or squatting — an ancient technique that helps with delivery — to using a rebozo, a practice coming from midwifes in Central America where a scarf is wrapped around the mother's belly and used to jiggle her abdomen and possibly shift a baby so it can be ready for birth, Munro says.

STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS

But for midwifes, birth is just one part of the process. Munro spends much of her client's pregnancy getting to know them on a personal level. Pre-natal visits usually last 30-45 minutes, while the medical stuff probably takes about five minutes, Munro says. The rest is nutrition and exercise counseling, or even just talking about what's going on in the patients' lives. In their practice, says Munro, people get to know each other "pretty well," a phrase she says with a smile.

And while Munro has had her own experience with birth, she and her husband have two children together — both births out of the hospital — she doesn't feel like her experience changed her as a midwife as much as people think it did. Munro stresses that while parts of her experience were similar to those that she helps, every labor she sees is ultimately different than hers in many ways.

So when it comes time to help a woman through a two-day labor, believing what people say is the key factor in helping her, says Munro.

"Trusting that people have reasons for their experiences," she says, and this sentence hangs importantly in the air, resonating. If someone's scared, they're scared. If they're in pain, they're in pain.

If they don't want to be touched, don't touch. This is what helps her understand experiences that don't match her own.

Although each birth is unique, different, challenging in its own way for Munro, there is one thing that never looses its effect.

"That moment when the baby comes out — it's amazing and it doesn't stop being amazing even though I've seen it many, many times," she says with a smile. "It's ridiculous really. That a baby would come out of someone's vagina and breathe and cry and nurse. It's a miracle."

It's hour 26, Shayna has climbed the hill. She has a baby girl, Lyla, who breathes and cries and nurses.

Her miracle. K

◀ *Sarah Brownell burps her two-month-old son, Russell Warren Engell in the cozy room at Birthroot Midwives and Birth Center. Brownell gave birth to her son on Jan. 9, 2015.*

STORY BY TYLER CREBAR
Photos by Nick Danielson
Infographic by Rachel Simons

FINDING A SAFE SPACE IN SPORTS

Overcoming gender inequality in athletics

"LADIES!" A COACH YELLS OUT TO THE women's rowing team to get everyone's attention. But the attention of the athletes did not turn to the coach. Instead, it fell on the one person who does not like to be called a woman. This happened almost every morning before practice, a constant reminder that someone did not belong.

Logan Brouelette, 22, is a recent Western graduate and former student-athlete. Brouelette is transmasculine, a term used for individuals who are assigned female at birth, but identify as more male than female. Brouelette will not respond to she, her, hers, or even he, him and his, but rather prefers the neutral they, them and theirs gender pronouns.

Brouelette was a member of the women's rowing team at Western during their freshmen and sophomore years, and then joined the women's rugby team during their junior year. What is typically a positive experience for most student-athletes was the opposite for Brouelette. They faced transphobia from teammates and coaches.

Brouelette came out as transgender during their sophomore year in the winter of 2013. The reaction they received from teammates and coaches was disappointing.

"It was a deer in the headlights kind of thing," Brouelette says. "My coaches didn't know anything about what being transgender meant."

John Fuchs, Western's head rowing coach, says as he talked to Brouelette he was able to better understand the situation.

"We did research regarding transgender athletes and the NCAA," Fuchs says. "We respected Logan's rights as a transgender athlete."

Brouelette's rowing coaches were most curious if they were still able to compete on a women's team. Brouelette told them they were not going to transition because taking testosterone is illegal under NCAA rules.

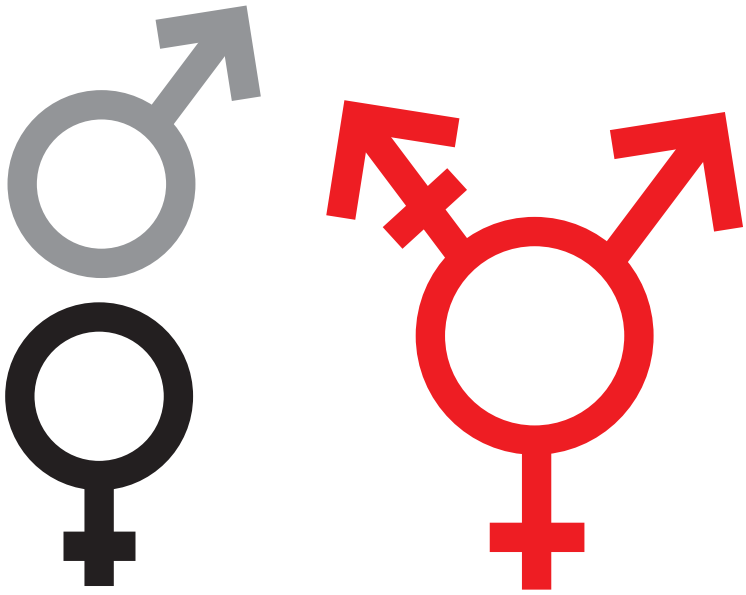
Kate Newby, 22, a former teammate of Brouelette's, says she felt the team was supportive of their decision, but the change in pronoun took some getting used to.

"I would have so many awkward moments where I would say the wrong name and think ' Oh shoot, I just said the wrong thing'." Newby says. "It was hard readjusting, but that comes with change."

Butch Kamena, Western's assistant athletic director of compliance and academics, helped Brouelette with how they should come out to the team and was always open to talking about issues they were having.

"I try to get across to our athletes that I'm available to discuss almost any concern they may have," Kamena said. "If I can't find one, I try to find

▲ *Since graduating from Western in 2014, Logan Brouelette has started working in the Equal Opportunities Office helping to address gender equality on campus.*



CISGENDER

Denoting or relating to a person whose self-identity conforms with the gender that corresponds to their biological sex.

TRANSGENDER

Denoting or relating to a person whose self-identity does not conform to conventional notions of male or female gender. The red symbol (right) is a commonly used alternative to male- and female-specific gender symbols. It does not represent all identities on the gender spectrum.

Source: International Foundation for Gender Education

resources on campus that can provide one."

Kamena did research for Brouelette about what the NCAA says about transgender athletes, but didn't offer any personal counseling about gender transitioning, he says.

Brouelette ultimately decided to continue to compete on the women's rowing team, but the transphobia had just begun.

Brouelette did not feel the same camaraderie as they once did before coming out as transgender to the team.

"There was this awkward tension of 'lets not talk about this,'" Brouelette says. "It was an abrasive atmosphere."

Newby agrees there was not much open talk about the situation, especially with the coaches.

"I think not addressing it was not the best way to go about it," Newby says. "Individually we addressed it with Logan, but not as a team."

Brouelette says the apprehension was especially difficult because in rowing trust is key. Everyone in the boat, whether it's behind you or in front of you, relies on one another to be on the same page, or else something can easily go wrong.

Brouelette ended their sophomore year emotionally drained. The build-up of being misgendered and called the wrong name got to Brouelette.

"One coach called me Bob when he couldn't remember to use Logan," Brouelette says. "It's one of those moments you get so uncomfortable that all you can do is laugh, but you're crumbling inside."

Brouelette says you have to be flexible when talking about someone's gender identity, but they were not in an atmosphere where they felt supported.

Fuchs says it's important to him, the University and the NCAA that all athletes feel respected.

About a month after the season ended, Fuchs talked to Brouelette who had already made up their mind at the end of their sophomore season that they were not coming back to the team. They wanted to focus on their goals and transition hormonally.

Brouelette shared the transphobic experiences they had encountered to staff members in Western's Equal Opportunities Office. Their unique experience led to an internship with the office. It lasted from the spring of 2014 through the fall and entailed Brouelette creating a transgender guiding document for Western's athletic department.

Newby says guidelines for coaches and athletes would be helpful after seeing how uncomfortable Brouelette was.

The transgender guiding document includes common gender pronouns, as well as how to use them in a sentence. It also includes other basic information that coaches and athletes should know to make a more inclusive environment in each respective sport.

Brouelette modeled this document after one that already exists from Mills College. Mills College has a transgender guiding document for the entire campus, but the one Brouelette is making would be just for Western's athletic department. They are hoping their document will be approved by Western and posted online so everyone can have easy access to it, Brouelette says. They also hope Western will eventually have an inclusion document that is more extensive like the one Mills

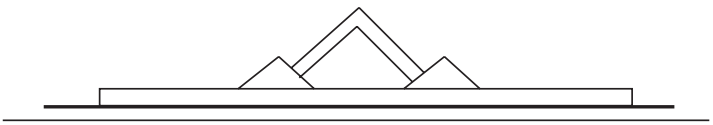
College has.

The Equal Opportunities Office does Title IX presentations for student-athletes and coaches. Title IX is the federal law that has existed for over 40 years that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in schools that receive federal funding, including athletics. Brouelette is hopeful that these Title IX presentations will include a segment on not discriminating against gender. They believe there is no reason these resources should not be easily available to everyone.

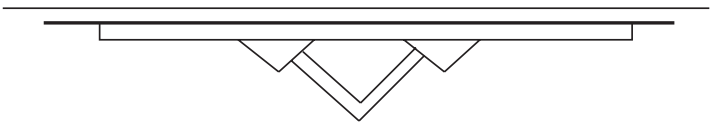
"These guiding documents for transgender students for colleges is a relatively new thing," Brouelette says. "This stuff should just be in your face."

Brouelette believes that women's sports are still not regarded as highly as men's sports. One of the reasons Brouelette came to Western was because there is no football team and they did not want that masculine mentality present. However, they believe Western is taking the right steps to being more inclusive to all student-athletes, Brouelette says.

Brouelette says there is an increasing amount of people transitioning and believes the university needs to prepare for those individuals now. Carver Gym has the option in the renovation plan to include a gender inclusive locker room. Providing this option to athletes will make for a more inclusive environment for everyone, Brouelette says.



"IT'S ONE OF THOSE MOMENTS YOU GET SO UNCOMFORTABLE THAT ALL YOU CAN DO IS LAUGH, BUT YOU'RE CRUMBLING INSIDE."



The NCAA has an Office of Inclusion that oversees the NCAA's policies regarding gender and sexuality. The NCAA is putting forth an honest effort to establish a fair set of policies for inclusion, but more needs to be done because transgender inclusion has been evolving so rapidly, Kamena says.

Brouelette graduated in fall 2014 with a bachelor's degree in creative writing. They are currently working in the Equal Opportunities Office and continue to push for positive changes in gender equality. They have recently been accepted to graduate school at Lewis and Clark University and eventually want to work in higher administration with students issues.

Though this is a step in the right direction, much more needs to be done to help those transitioning, whether they are athletes or not, to feel more included across all college campuses. For now, Brouelette just hopes to not be called a female again.

STORY BY HALEE HASTAD
Photos by Tommy Calderon

WHEEL OF MINDFULNESS

Putting a new spin on an ancient tradition

CHRIS MOENCH SITS AT THE POTTER'S wheel he has owned since he was in high school. His head bows and with one smooth kick his foot sets the wheel in motion. Spinning, spinning, spinning, a piece of clay slowly takes shape with each movement of his hands.

Moench, 56, from the front yard workshop he built by hand, is crafting the lid for a prayer wheel.

Prayer wheels are ritual objects that originate from Buddhist practices in Tibet and Nepal. Some are as large as a two-story building while others are no bigger than a yo-yo. All of them are believed to possess spiritual forces.

Traditional wheels revolve clockwise to follow the rotation of the sun and are believed to cleanse energies of users or the wider world. Owning a prayer wheel is part of a mindfulness practice. Most wheels show an inscription or illustration of a prayer scene and contain rolled verses on the inside.

They are honored as symbols of enlightenment and believed to increase the mind's capacity for wisdom. Just as a potter's wheel spins clay into art, a prayer wheel spins blessings into the universe.

Moench says his wheels are not necessarily Buddhist, but share a similar concept as well as intent. Being meaningful storytellers, he says the hand-made vessels remind people of the transformations that led them to the present moment.

His intention was never to make a prayer wheel though. It was an accident.

In 1999, the Olympic Pipeline explosion in Whatcom Creek killed one young man and two boys, as well as destroyed a fragile habitat. It was this tragedy that inspired Moench to construct something for the grieving community of Bellingham.

"I was afraid [the explosion] would become just another story and that people would forget about the transformative impact it had on our community," he says. "My thought was to create an intentional acknowledgement of the collective economy we live in and on."

Following a year of post-explosion reflection and meditation, Moench got to work on a hollow, three-foot-tall clay cylinder with an illustration of the creek depicted on the outside. He didn't know then that he had made a prayer wheel, but learned about the concept afterwards while travelling in Southeast Asia.

◀ *Moench trims some clay off of a lid in his studio in Bellingham, Washington.*

▲ *Moench stands next to a prayer wheel that is currently a work in progress The prayer wheel features imagery of the Pacific Northwest.*

Fourteen years later, Moench's one-man company, Axis of Hope, has produced more than 1,000 of these unique ritual objects.

His wheels range in price from $400 to $10,000 and can be found all over the country. They spin in hospital rooms, personal offices and entryways of homes. The wheels differ in design and almost all of them depict a nature-related scene on the outer surface. For Moench, who has always loved the environment, honoring life-giving resources provided by the planet is central in his creation.

Most of the vessels are gifts for those who are going through any sort of remarkable life experience, such as a marriage, birth, divorce, retirement, illness or death, he says.

One of Moench's first wheels spins at Bellingham Physical Therapy owners Marcia and John McWilliams honor its presence in their practice.

"Our wheel has become part of who we are and who our patients are here," the McWilliams say.

Remove the lid of their wheel and find a once hollow space filled to the brim with pieces of paper.

Patients and their families write their expressions on the pieces of paper, place them in the wheel and give it a spin — a way to release their thoughts, struggles and wishes into the universe, Marcia says.

Tibetan tradition teaches that each time the vessel makes one spinning rotation the prayers inside are activated and released into the universe.

The McWilliams believe the wheel is a calming force in the space because it allows users to connect with a spiritual sense that is both unexplainable and often hard to grasp, they say.

"It's very difficult to explain an experience [with the wheel], much like it is very difficult to explain the taste of an orange without using the word orange'," John says.

For Moench, the wheels are a way for people to connect with their inner-selves, to cultivate mindfulness and to remember the things that matter most to them.

As a personal touch, he stamps the words "love," "peace," "compassion" and "gratitude" into the base of each wheel as a way to personalize every piece and send it off with a part of his personal intention.

Sitting in his workshop, he lifts the lid he is crafting and carefully places it atop the almost finished prayer wheel. A nearly perfect fit. K

STORY & PHOTOS BY
DANNY MILLER

▲ *Don rests his hand on his head at Staying Connected, which is organized by the Alzheimer Society of Washington. The class focuses around facilitating a conversation with Alzheimer's patients about their relatable experiences.*

STAYING CONNECTED

Retaining love amidst the loss of memory

DON STANDS IMPATIENTLY GAZING out his living room window toward the street in front of his house. His leather coat, folded over once, rests on the arm of the couch closest to the door. A lunch sack hangs on the door handle so Don is sure to not forget it. Don doesn't drive anymore. As a white shuttle pulls up, Don grabs his coat and exits the house to board the WTA bus headed for The Alzheimer Society of Washington office. The lunch remains on the door handle.

Don and Chandra Jansen have always known Bellingham as their home. The couple faced a new challenge in their 60-year-long marriage when Don was diagnosed with Alzheimer's six years ago.

One in nine Americans 65 years and older have Alzheimer's disease, and many more experience other forms of dementia, according to the Alzheimer's Association 2014 facts and figures. Additionally, as the average American lifespan increases with medical advances, so does the growing number of people diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. In coming years, an increase of Alzheimer's diagnoses among the elderly is predicted, due to the influx of the baby boom generation nearing elderly status.

"I am getting better," says Don to his bus driver one day as he commutes to his weekly class, Staying Connected, at the Alzheimer Society of Washington's office.

"Don, you don't get better," responded the bus driver, "You are handling it better."

Don sits comfortably in his living room, sipping a warm mug of coffee with his wife Chandra. Photographs of their two kids, four grandchildren, and six great grand children surround them. Remembering the story from the bus, Don repeats, "I am not getting better, I am handling it better."

Don, 80, and Chandra, 79, both attended Bellingham High School but began dating while in college at Washington State University. The house where Don and Chandra have lived all of their married life is about a block away from where Don grew up. In his Staying Connected class, Don responds to a question about a place that he would like to visit. "I can't think of any other place I would love to be [other than Bellingham]," Don

Don and Chandra share a laugh in the their kitchen while preparing dinner. Chandra attends a support group for caregivers once a month that allows her to relate and express with others going through the same struggles.

Don keeps two pennies in his coat to remember which coat is his after mistakingly taking others' coats in the past.

Don speaks during Staying Connected class. The group of about 15 class members, all diagnosed with Alzheimer's and experiencing the first stages of memory loss, meet once a week at the Alzheimer Society of Washington office.

◀ *Don and George Chidester, left, share a laugh while commuting on the bus to the Staying Connected class. One of the hardest things for Don to give up was driving. After getting lost a few times Don realized it was important to give up his keys.*

says. Don taught mathematics for 30 years as well as coached cross-country, he ended his teaching career at Sehome High School.

THE GROUP

The Alzheimer Society of Washington is an independent nonprofit serving Whatcom and Skagit Counties by providing education and support services to diagnosed patients and caregivers. Don arrives at the Staying Connected class every Wednesday greeted with welcoming smiles and supportive energy. The organization wants everyone to feel accepted and welcome as soon as they step in the door, says Leslie Jackson, regional educational coordinator for the Alzheimer's Society of Washington.

The social connections are incredibly beneficial for those diagnosed, explains Kathy Sitker, executive director of Alzheimer's Society of Washington. "We need the sensory interactions—we need that as humans," she says. The disease is difficult, Sitker explains. "Your loved one is not the same person anymore," Sitker says, who dealt personally with her father's memory decline after an Alzheimer's diagnosis. As memories fade, relationships can change, but expression of emotion and connection in the support groups provides an outlet for navigating that change, Jackson explains.

Jackson leads the Staying Connected group every Wednesday. On this particular Wednesday, Jackson begins the meeting with a conversation starting question—what does this group mean to you?

"I was afraid of other people [after the Alzheimer's diagnosis], but these people will hold a spot in my life that's important," one woman responds. Another member chimes in, "It's the most important thing in my life—it's enormously helpful."

THE DIAGNOSIS

There were early warning signs, Chandra explains. Abrupt confusion and sudden silence were among the early signs that Don was not acting the same. "We have acknowledged it from day one," Chandra says. "A lot of people don't want to accept it — as we get older we all have a problem with our memory — so they don't want to get into it. They won't openly recognize it even if it is diagnosed," she says. The class, Staying Connected, as well as the caregiver's support group, were an important outlet for Don and Chandra to begin navigating the challenging path following Don's diagnosis.

For Don, certain tasks are becoming difficult. But, his optimism often triumphs the difficulty. There are certain ways Don helps himself to remember. "Two pennies in my coat," he says. Chandra chimes in to help Don explain. After mistakenly grabbing other people's coats, Don keeps two pennies in his coat to always identify it as his own.

"'DON, YOU DON'T GET BETTER,' RESPONDED THE BUS DRIVER, 'YOU ARE HANDLING IT BETTER'."

Chandra explains that Don used to worry about things in the future — and now he doesn't. Don lives in the moment, focusing on each day at a time. "I can't look too far in the future, and I can't worry about it — I know what's coming," Don says.

Don and Chandra go grocery shopping about once a week. "He used to hate shopping," Chandra says. Now, it is something Don will look forward to.

"F2," Don says to himself as they walk into the store. The "F" signifies "Fred Meyer" and the "2" signifies the second spot back in the parking lot. That is how Don remembers where they parked. Although Don does not drive anymore, he enjoys remembering where they parked after shopping with Chandra. Don grabs the cart as soon as he enters and tails Chandra down each aisle. Don will go to the flower section. There, he picks out flowers for Chandra.

"I am never surprised, because we always check out of the store together," Chandra laughs. After checking out, they depart to F2 and then Chandra drives them back home.

THE LOVE

"If that's the hand we are dealt, then we might as well accept it and live with it," Chandra says. But it is not an easy path, which is understood by both Sitker and Jackson, who have connected with and cared for the people that have attended their meetings and services.

"I know that these people I have grown to love and care for, they are not going to survive this disease — we lose friends," Sitker says.

Don is still able to handle everyday despite his declining memory. Like a math equation, Don focuses on each step at a time. He knows what is important right now.

"I know I cannot drive," he says. "I know my classes are important." One story Don likes to tell is about putting on his hip boots he uses for yard work.

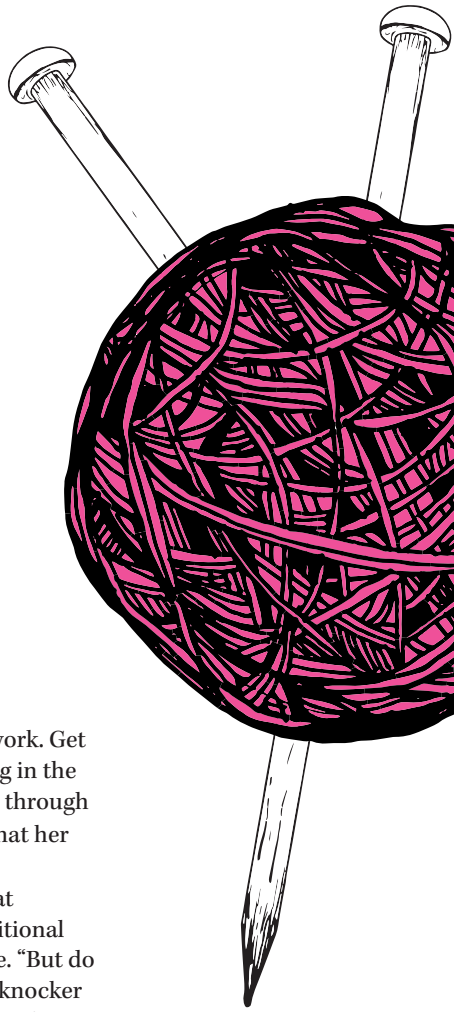
"One morning I couldn't figure out how to put the damn things on," he says. "Sometimes you just have to figure it out, so you can slip them on and walk out the door." K

▼ *Don waits, gazing out of his living room window for the bus to pick him up for his weekly class Staying Connected.*

STORY BY ISAAC SCHOENFELD
Photo by Nick Danielson
Infographic by Heather-Mariah Dixon

KNITTED KNOCKERS

Supporting breast cancer survivors



"Good morning wonderful knitters,

I had a mastectomy by Dr. Cary Kaufman on July 31.

When I asked him what I put in my bra cup after surgery, he brought a bag of knitted knockers. He said that most of the nude colors were gone, but I found the perfect one for me. It was a brighter diamond than the rest. It is hairy, bright orange, with colorful specks on it.

It works perfect for me, and when I show people they are amazed at the beauty and cleverness of the creation. And, of course, the name.

From the bottom of my heart and knocker, thank you so much for knitting these for us breast cancer survivors. It is truly a labor of love and prayers that we feel when we wear

Knocker on."

"That email just tickled me," Barbara Demorest says, reflecting on one of countless testimonies received over the past three years since founding Knitted Knockers.

The nonprofit has developed over the past three years. It is an organization that connects volunteer knitters with breast cancer survivors for a free, often temporary, alternative to breast prosthetics. The concept started with a small group of knitters in Whatcom County and now spans 20 volunteer groups in 13 states and nine countries.

In 2011, Demorest underwent her own mastectomy after being diagnosed with breast cancer. She hadn't told her friends she was going under the knife. It was too embarrassing. She didn't want them to worry.

"I figured I'd wake up like normal," she says. "But that didn't happen."

She wasn't able to have her breast reconstruction right away.

"That was the first time that I cried," she says. "I didn't have any of the resources or support from friends because I hadn't told anybody."

She can still hear the voice on the other end of the phone from the local cancer society.

"Oh, honey," they said. "You won't be able to put anything over that scar for at least six weeks."

Six weeks? She had to get back to work. Get back to life. It wasn't until she was sitting in the waiting room of her local clinic, reading through a brochure for breast prosthetics, that her answer came.

"Most women aren't happy with that solution," her doctor told her. Most traditional prosthetics are hot, heavy and expensive. "But do you knit?" Not healthy enough to knit a knocker herself, Demorest enlisted the help of her close friend and expert knitter, Phyllis Kramer. It was the following week when Kramer brought a pair of knitted breasts in a little Victoria's Secret bag and passed it on to Demorest's husband.

"Just give this to Barbara," she says. Demorest went to the bathroom and shed the heavy coat she wore to hide her chest.

"I put one in my bra and for the first time since my surgery I felt normal," she says. "I could get a hug without feeling awkward."

Bellingham's Apple Yarns is owned and ran by Andrea Evans, a long-time friend of Demorest and a member of the Knitted Knockers board.

Apple Yarns has become the host of Knitted Knocker events — including a weekly group, which meets on Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m. — and a major drop-off point for knitters to donate completed knockers. The act of giving a knocker has also become a great way for knitters who are indirectly affected by the disease to help, Demorest says. It's a way to cope by reaching out to loved ones, or even a stranger in need.

"It's something you can do without a huge investment," Evans says. "A lot of us can knit a knocker faster than we can make a dinner."

▶ *Knitted Knockers founder, Barbara Demorest, leads weekly meetings with women who volunteer to make knitted knockers for others. The meetings take place on Wednesdays in Apple Yarns a shop located in Bellingham. The shop has helped support Knitted Knockers through hosting events, supplying knocker kits, and donating to the organization.*

IN 2015, IT IS ESTIMATED THAT AMONG U.S. WOMEN THERE WILL BE *231,840* NEW CASES OF INVASIVE BREAST CANCER

Source: Susan G. Komen Foundation

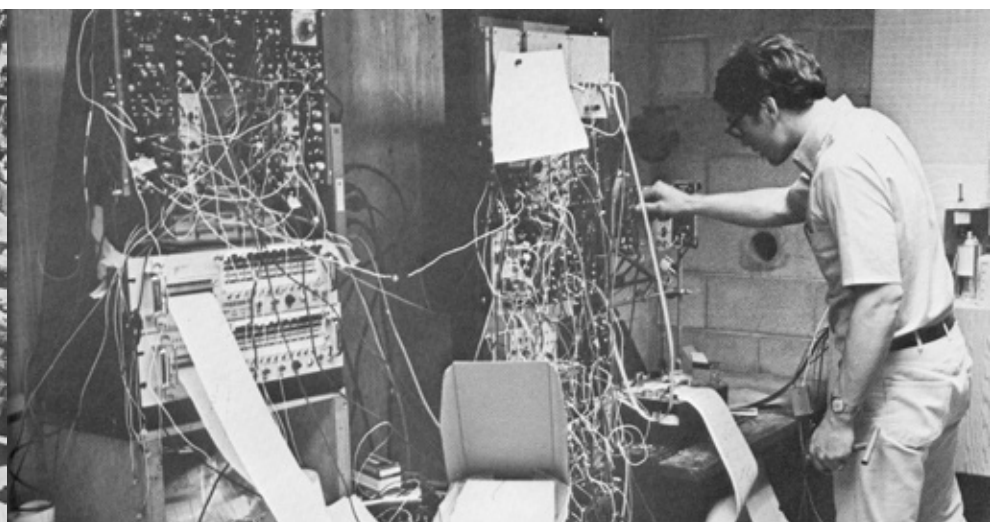
The proportion of women treated with mastectomies has decreased from 40.8 percent in 2000 to 37 percent in 2006, according to the American Society of Clinical Oncology, but Knitted Knockers is expanding to meet the huge demand for knockers that one group can't meet alone.

"My goal is to help develop a plan for other stores to reach out to their communities," Evans said. "To help other stores see that by doing good it comes back to you. I think that'll be a great way for Barb to expand."

Demorest's one-year plan is to expand Knitted Knockers into all 50 states, and to supply at least two clinics per state with knitted knockers within the next three years.

"[Knitting knockers] gives something to look forward to," Demorest says. "To look out and to help others. I think that's an important part of recovery." K

FROM OUR ARCHIVE.



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