

Comm2610 News Reporting & Writing

Final Portfolio

IN DEPTH STORY

Apple airtags become a safety concern on App State campus

By Sophia Hughes

Camille drives down what she had considered to be an unknown path to App State each morning, beginning forty-five minutes outside of Boone at her secluded home on a ranch. In April, she was horrified to discover that her exact route, and current location had been tracked by an Airtag that someone had zip-tied beneath her car while she was in class.

On April 16, at 10 p.m., Camille reported the Airtag to App PD. According to the App State crime and fire log, the offender has not yet been incarcerated. This was after an alert popped up on her iPhone stating that an Airtag was pinging near her device, which turned out to be underneath her vehicle while she was in class. Camille, who requested her last name not to be used as a victim of stalking, has not experienced any further issues regarding the incident, and said that she does not personally know anyone who she believes would have a motive against her. She began using her parents' car and shared her

experience and warned others on social media, but others shared their own stories and concerns over public Snapchat posts.

Airtags have been recognized by several national news services as a common tool used by stalkers or traffickers. North Carolina law enforcement have stated in a comment provided by WPDE news that the planting of Airtags onto another person's property legally fall under the category of unlawful electronic use; "In North Carolina, it is illegal to use any sort of electronic device to track someone without their knowledge, and this includes air tags."

"What makes them so scary, along with AirPods even too, is that they can connect so easily, at extreme distances as well," said Camille in reference to the Apple products.

Like WPDE stated, the tactic involves a person planting an Airtag or any other bluetooth connecting device which possesses the ability to be tracked on the victim's personal belongings and then connects the device to their own phone or computer, thus revealing the live location of the victim.

"I feel confident that I won't be targeted again after I started driving my mother's car from back home, but I hope that others will seek immediate help like I did if they see red flags like this," said Camille during an interview.

With Airtags being recognized as a tactic for both stalking as well as human trafficking, several other students have expressed fear after being notified about these devices being

used nefariously on campus. Campus safety concerns often surround stalking when it comes to domestic abuse situations.

Another App State student, Kylie O'Connor, made a late night drive to the police station after her jog, when she received a notification on her iPhone informing her that an unknown Airtag was seeking connection to her phone while sitting in her idle truck parked in the Rivers Street parking deck around 2 a.m. in April of 2023. Her parents had told her parents that Airtags were often used for nefarious purposes, and often targeted college women. After further search of her vehicle by an officer, nothing was found, and she was told to return if any other issues arose. After seeing Camille's story come to light, O'Connor feels relieved that nothing ever came of her own situation, and also encourages others to act on warning signs.

"I felt crazy at the time, but after hearing the same thing happen to another girl on the App State story I'm glad I at least got it checked out and I was safe." said O'Connor, in reference to Camille's public post to Snapchat.

This issue is not only present at App State, but also at college campuses and general public spaces worldwide. However, there are people who are dedicated to helping fight against this issue here in the Boone area.

In January of 2024, The Boone Town Council announced that January would be an awareness month for national human trafficking prevention.

Last year, sexual violence case management center, OASIS , recognized two days in which members would wear blue and yellow to show awareness for the issue of stalking. OASIS is a non-profit organization which, according to their website is; “serving survivors of domestic and sexual violence in Watauga and Avery Counties, North Carolina.” In light of the recent incident, App State’s Panhellenic Council who partners with OASIS sent out a warning to its members over email last month, including other resources regarding sexual assault.

Officers with the App State police department often patrol the lower levels of the Rivers Street Parking deck near where the incident occurred.

“App State Police have not received any reports of any incidents like the one you have described, but encourage everyone to report safety concerns and suspicious activity right away...” said Emily Autry with App State PD in an email after being asked to provide a comment about the incident in the Rivers Street parking deck. “Rumors regarding zip ties applied to vehicle doors as a means to lure or "mark" victims of trafficking have been circulated on social media in many areas of the country.”

An employee of the Police department provided a statement as well.

“As far as we know, it’s sort of a non-issue. We know of one incidence, but the App State police would be more well informed.” said Jane Shook, director of planning and inspections who was present at the Boone Police department office.

Camille and O'Connor feel fortunate after their incidents, but continue to wonder what could have happened if a tracking device remained unnoticed on their vehicles.

"Someone should have thought this through a little more," said O'Connor, in reference to Airtags. "If you think about it, it's so easy for people to snag your location like that. It was already easy with Snapchat maps and social media posts in general but with this thing they could really walk right up to my door. I hope they figure out a tougher security wall."

Sources:

Camille
@cami_skittles (SnapChat username)

Kylie O'Connor
(609) 608-8471

Emily Autry with App State PD
autryec@appstate.edu

Graphic ideas:
Photo of the underneath of a car in the parking deck,
Photo of airtag

TOWN COUNCIL COVERAGE

82

Boone's Board of Alcoholic Beverage Control meets to discuss financial aim

Sophie Hughes

BOONE– The state-owned local ABC store reported increasing alcohol sales over the past six months by more than 14 percent from the year before, according to board chairman Ronnie Holste, who attributed the increase to good work within the local store.

At the meeting which took place on Feb. 23, the Town of Boone's Alcoholic Beverage Control board discussed their finances for the year of 2023, and presented company growth and community contribution. Board members also shared some of their loss prevention and security strategies for ABC.

Chairman Ronny Holste said that the total sales of the ABC store on Blowing Rock road from July to January came out to \$128,330, showing an increase of 14.17 percent from last year. Remarkably, sales were raised by 20 percent over the past 7 months. According to board members the store makes around \$9 million a year in sales, and 17 percent of profits were given to law enforcement as well as towards alcohol safety education. The board said that they had made a recent contribution of \$600,000, and sent a check of \$600 to the town of Boone for law enforcement. Board chairmen did not directly disclose during the meeting that a 5 percent of profit donation towards law enforcement is legally required, as well as a 12 percent donation required for alcohol education and rehabilitation. This information is stated in the meeting's supporting documents.

Aside from going towards law enforcement and alcohol education, the profits will also go back into the store itself. According to the four chairmen, the Blowing Rock location just paid off its building and will be undergoing some store renovations in the coming year. They are currently discussing expansion, and the addition of a loading dock for shipping improvements.

According to the board, good profits and community contribution can be attributed to the “great work happening inside the Blowing Rock location”. The store has strategies for loss prevention in place such as a two-way mirror and video surveillance, to ensure that the store’s profit margin stays high.

Employees are not specifically trained to spot false identification. A council member said that she understood why students would come in with false IDs as she; “was in college once too”. Holste gave further information about the store’s successes as far as loss prevention; “We are one of the lowest loss stores in the state,” said Holste. “And the No. 1 store in the state as far as single selling stores”.

Sources: Attendance in person to meeting on 2/23/24

Ronny Holste- 828 397 3811

Charles L. Wallin- 828-773-1382

Jaqueline Dunbar- 828-262-0714

Ronnie Hayes- 828-262-3616

Photo ideas:

The ABC Logo

A photo of an ABC Store

A photo of an aisle at the store

SPOT STORY

What new renovations of the App State expression tunnel means for students

By Sophia Hughes

Edited by: Lorelei Roberts

App State's Chancellor, Sheri Everts announced through a newsletter sent out on March 4, 2024 that construction would begin on the tunnels which run underneath Rivers street the week following the newsletter. Everts said in her letter that the main reason for these renovations was safety, however many students believe that her use of language implied that she had a dislike for the students' spray paintings which covered the inside of the tunnel. Everts described the tunnel as being dark and graffiti covered in need of a revamp;

"The tunnels, which for many years have been dark and covered in graffiti, are on their way to becoming bright, secure pathways that reflect school spirit." Everts said.

Sophomore Jenni Serrato is one of the students who believed Everts' word choices held disdain;

"I do feel like it's the way she described the tunnels as they are now that made the students upset. I feel like that word choice held some implications." Serrato said.

The expression tunnels have for a long time made a statement on App State's passion for freedom of expression and drive towards cultivating uniqueness, whether this was the original intentions of the tunnels or not. On tours for incoming students, the tunnels would garner attention. This is a general sentiment of many students on campus who oppose the renovations. Other students believe that renovations have been long overdue, as the darkness brought to the tunnel by the heavy coats of dark color made the path more difficult to see. Some students oppose renovations due to the inconvenience surrounding the tunnels' temporary closure. Kyla Duggell, who is a transfer student this year, says that the initial use of the expression tunnels drew her in to App State, but later found out that they seemed to come with some issues;

"It really made the feel of campus appealing and unique during my tour" she said. She then expressed her dilemma.

"...but when I became a student here I never liked how people would crowd in the tunnels and stand around blowing spray paint in the air. I'm easily irritated with things like that but it did hinder me. I'm conflicted now because I think the reconstruction hinders me even more." she said.

Other students had similar concerns. Freshman Mia Fenn said that what is least ideal for her about the tunnels' renovation is weighing her safety concerns regarding crossing the street against her timeliness concerns. She stated that the tunnels' closure resulted in her being "late to class", and she found herself "playing *Crossy Road*" trying to avoid cars.

Sophomore Kylie O'Connor said that she found the blockage of the tunnel annoying, but the renovations exciting;

“As far as the tunnels go, I’d just like them to finish them as quickly as they can. I’m excited to see what they’ll look like but i’m already fed up with waiting at the crosswalk signs.” she said.

A student who opposes the renovations due to the ‘expression’ aspect being removed from the tunnels is Lucy Jacobowitz, who says that a decision like this is “slightly disappointing, but typical of App”.

“As much as I am one for school spirit, the new design takes creativity out of the student’s hands which I hate about it. We can clearly see how much the school values the promotion of the football team, which I think is a motive of the new design. It’s slightly disappointing, but typical of App.” Jacobowitz said.

She also expressed her opinion regarding the safety concerns Everts addressed.

“Though the conditions of the tunnels did pose a few safety concerns, it’s nothing some better lighting couldn’t have fixed.” Jacobowitz said.

Freshman Grace Champlin agreed with Jacobowitz, saying; “I loved seeing new art from other students every day, and now I feel like a charming little piece of App was replaced for the sake of football.”

Despite the differences of opinion, students can expect renovations to finish up in April 2024.

Sources

Kyla Dugdell-spoken interview
(919) 815-2760

Mia Fenn-spoken interview
(561) 303-6714

Grace Champlin-spoken interview
(919) 886-3054

Lucy Jacobowitz--spoken interview
(973) 220-3784

Kylie O'Connor-spoken interview
(609) 608-8471

Jenni Serrato -spoken interview
(910) 859-2220

Graphic Ideas:

Photos of the closed tunnel

Photos of graffiti in tunnel prior to closing

Photos of students at crosswalk

SPOT STORY

84

Boone Art Crawl brings together community of student artists and art enthusiasts

By Sophia Hughes

Facing rain and whipping winds, a small but passionate group of students, faculty, and volunteers gathered at the Turchin Center Friday for the monthly celebration of art, ranging from the refined works in the gallery to the novice works at the children's coloring table.

For this event, the Turchin Center volunteers offered a display of art through a gallery featuring photography works of ethereal landscapes, accompanied by miniature caprese salad hors d'oeuvres and a recording of light classical music.

The event is presented by the Downtown Boone Development Association. The venues vary each week, but the event has kicked off at the Turchin center. Art enthusiasts who may have missed the Art crawl on February 1st shouldn't fear, as there is more to come for the art community. Camden Dejohn, a student volunteer at the Turchin Center said this about what can be expected for future events.

"Every first Friday, there's an event across town on King Street which is art related. I recommend everyone go check them out, whether you're super into art or just want to appreciate it." said Dejohn.

Kristi Liezert is an art management major and president of the art management organization.

Like Dejohn, Liezert works behind the scenes for these types of events, and believes that the art crawls are great for a fun day on a budget.

“The best part about First Friday Art Crawls is that everything is free for the most part. Aside from the Turchin Center, the North Gallery is also a favorite, their exhibitions are always super cool and it’s a fun space.” says Liezert.

Liezert also shared some other opportunities for student artists, and would like to share her love for art all across the student body;

“The looking glass in the student union is always open to students as well as the Smith Gallery in the Schaefer center. I’m also always looking to hear from people about ways that we as art students can build community or to hear from non-majors about ways to make the arts more accessible to all students.”

Wren Foreman is a part of App State’s art selling community and shop called Student Made, and is one of the students who will have their work featured in the venues for the art crawl. He has been enthusiastic about crocheting for about ten years now and produces some beautiful pieces which often follow a nature inspired theme. He says this about the event and opportunities for students to purchase or learn about crochet;

“There are opportunities to purchase crochet products at the art crawl through my table, and there are many other tables from different vendors that have other crafts aside from crochet. I would say if people wanted opportunities to learn about crochet, the Knitters and Crocheters club would be a great place.” said Foreman.

He also said this about other events that shed light on App State’s student artists;

“There are tons of pop-ups and art markets that happen each month that have student artists at them whether they are part of ‘Student-Made’ or independent sellers. For instance in March alone we have a few events that Student-Made have joined in places like the Plemmons Student Union and the Boone Mall”.

Katelyn Bush is another artist on campus who attended the art crawl. She is also associated with Student Made. Katelyn loved the art crawl and saw it as a wonderful opportunity to speak with fellow artists.

“I’m not an art major myself, but events involving art help me stay connected with my passion”, she said. “I think events like this, even for people who don’t even make their own art, can be worthwhile.”

Art student or art novice, the passionate artists at the Turchin Center this past Friday showed that they welcome visitors with open arms. They hope to see another great turnout at their next event.

Graphics Suggestions:

A photo from the Art Crawl

A photo of some student artists

A photo collection of people eating and observing art as well as the student artists presenting work

Sources:

Camden (Samantha) Dejohn- in person interview (3/1/24)

dejohmsp@appstate.edu

Kristi Liezert- in person interview followed up by text (3/1/24)

(407) 717-1516

Wren Foreman- in person interview followed up by email (3/1/24)

foremane@appstate.edu

Katelyn Bush- in person interview followed up by text (3/1/24)

(706) 607-8584

PROFILE STORY

From Africa to Appalachia- Sherone Price
By Sophia Hughes

When App State dance instructor, Sherone Price arrived in Boone, North Carolina, App State students were gifted a special cultural experience hailing from Guinea, Africa, through the new class Price offered: African Dance.

“Anyone is welcome to learn African dance” said Price. “I never knew I would teach it, especially not here, until I really began falling in love with the culture and realized that others were interested, and that there was even a small African community at App which was already developing”.

Price, originally from Chapel Hill, North Carolina has been interested in teaching since college, and has had a lifelong interest in dance. He fell in love with African culture upon visiting an African drumming show at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. He had no former connection to Africa. Unbeknownst to Price, he would meet a lifelong friend and mentor at this show, named Muhammad Dacosta.

Dacosta went on to form his own dance studio which Price became a student at, and the two became so enthralled in their dance experience that they took a trip to Guinea, Africa. This is where Price would gain a whole new perspective of not only dance, but the world, and would eventually bring a piece of his experience back to Appalachian State University.

"I love to see the variety of students who take my class, both here and at the one I taught at UNCG," said Price. "I knew when I was going to Boone I would be coming to a predominantly white community who typically have a different background from myself, so it's nice to share a piece of myself with them, and it means the world to me for them to really take off running with interest in this culture [West Africa] that I've in a way devoted my life to."

Caitlyn Rogers is a math major at App State. She said she was hesitant to join Price's class, but rejoiced after finding a new passion.

"As a math major it was a little awkward for me to dance. Especially with the style being African which I was completely unfamiliar with. That being said I'm so glad I joined. I've learned things about African culture I otherwise would've never known," Rogers said.

At App State, Price works alongside his friend from Guinea, Jeff Dickens, who Price said is engaged with the small African community in Boone. Dickens taught African drumming prior to Price's arrival and continues to play drums here, accompanying Price's class. Together, along

with fellow dance professor Regina Gulik who was once a fellow student with Price, these dance enthusiasts have cultivated students towards an introduction of African dance and culture.

Price's students are often returning, enrolling in his upper level African dance classes as well as frequently visiting Price to view a class after previous enrollment. Students learn African songs and are often heard by faculty singing them proudly in the hallways of the Varsity Gym outside of class.

Dance major Willow Mason, said that Price's class is a refreshing break from the stresses of auditions and performances.

"The relaxing atmosphere in his class really refreshes my passion for dance, even though dance is something i've felt myself almost fall out of love with recently," said Mason.

Eevie Fay is not a dance major, but has had an ongoing passion for the arts. She says that Price helps her keep that passion alive.

"I'm sometimes insecure about dancing nowadays and simply don't have time for it, but this class has been freeing for me, and a way to stay encouraged with Sherone's help." she said.

Price is happy to become a tenured professor next year, and despite teaching for many years, doesn't see retirement in his sights quite yet.

Sources:

Sherone Price (in person interview) pricesd@appstate.edu

Willow Mason (text interview) (304) 820-6259

Caitlyn Rogers (text interview) (228) 216-1065

Eevie Fay (text interview) (828) 964-7754

Graphics suggestions:

Headshot of Sherone Price

Photo from African dance class
Photo of Sherone performing