



SL

STEPHENS LIFE

The
Harlequin
Issue



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR	2
KEEPING IT PRIVATE	5
LEVEL UP!	9
I WAS ONCE LIKE YOU	17
DOUBLE STANDARDS	23
HAPPINESS IN ONE EASY STEP	29
MUSHROOM TEA PARTY	35
SAYING YES TO THE DRESS	47
CAKE	51
INVISIBLE FIGHTS	57
MINERAL MAGIC	63
THE BIG O	69
QUEEN OF HEARTS	73
MONOPOLY	79

TABLE *of* CONTENTS

Letter from the *E d i t o r*

This is the biggest thing I have ever done – correction, this is the biggest thing we have ever done.

Ever since stepping up as the creative director a year ago, all I have ever wanted was to be editor-in-chief. And god, didn't it show? Now I'm here and it sure is lonely at the top.

Stepping into this role, I knew I wasn't going to be in charge for long, especially since I graduate this December, but I knew I wanted to be remembered. Isn't that what every great artist wants? Whether it was to help mend old ways or to evolve into a new. I guess only time will tell.

I had the honor of being a leader to so many people I have grown to respect, as well as meeting new creatives. I have seen Stephens Life through its "Dark Ages" and I could honestly cry about how happy I am to come out of it on the other side. I spent so many long nights editing almost every single photo we put in the magazine for an entire year. Now that I have this incredible team, I can sleep easy.

This entire semester had been a whirlwind. You name it and we've all probably felt it. I'm not sure if it's just the world trying to go back to how it was two years ago prior to the pandemic or what, but I'm sure not the same person I was then. None of us are. We actually care about our mental health and know how to limit ourselves to what we can handle. The person we were two years ago, doesn't fit the mold of who we're suppose to be now.

In this issue, we aren't silent. We go over topics that are present in our everyday lives, but are never discussed. Yet, here we are throwing it in your face. Please, do be mad and be relieved, and most importantly, be open.

Enjoy, converse & stay curious,

Bri Bunker

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



SL

STEPHENS LIFE

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Columbia, MO 65201

Stephens Life is the award winning student-run magazine of Stephens College.

EDITORS

Editor in Chief

Bri Bunker

Creative Director

Leslie Douglas

Copy Editor

Bridget Bush

Social Media Director

Arika Smith

STAFF

Elyse Clayton

Jaedyn Colvin

Lydia Graves

Madison Green

Nathalia Harris

Ryann Jenkins-Leflore

Savana "SJ" Johnson

Madison Moore

Gillian Sanchez

Alaysia Taylor

CONTRIBUTORS

Morgan McCall

Hope Daugherty

Alexander Nease

Air Bnb hosted by Thomas and Jackie

ADMINISTRATION

Staff Advisor

Meghan Meurer

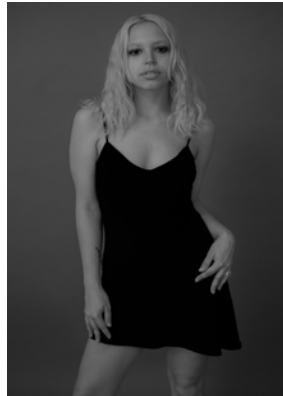
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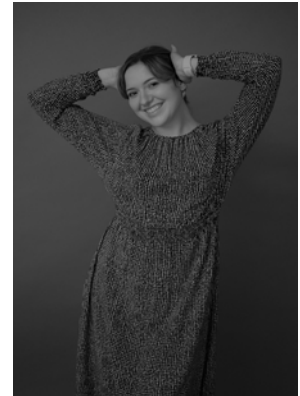
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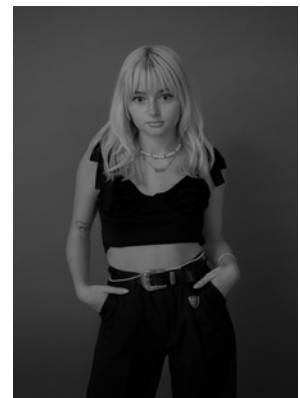
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Editor-in-Chief



LESLIE DOUGLAS
Creative Director



BRIDGET BUSH
Copy Editor

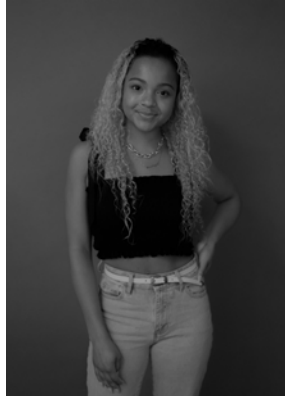


ARIKA SMITH
Social Media Director

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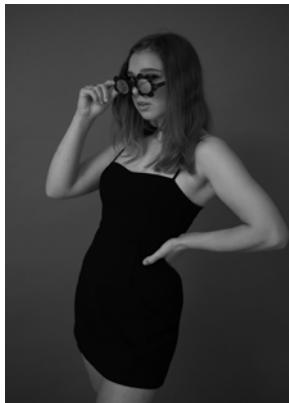
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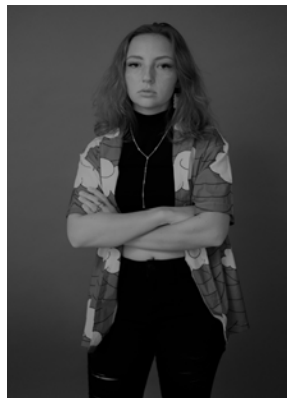
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LEFLORE**



NATHALIA HARRIS

A look into transgender and non-binary acceptance at Stephens

KEEPING IT *private*

*Story by Elyse Clayton
Illustrations by Madison Moore*



meet SHANNON WALLS
(she/her)

*Title IX Coordinator
for Stephens College*

meet STEVE PANKEY
(he/him)

*Vice President for Enrollment
Management at Stephens*



Terms to Know:

Transgender: someone whose personal gender identity does not align with their birth sex

Non-binary: someone who identifies outside of the gender binary of male or female

Q: Why go to a women's college?

Walls: I am an alum at Stephens, and I've worked here since 1995, so I have a very keen and very personal take on this. My belief is that women's colleges transform lives. I believe that women find their voices at women's colleges in a way that they wouldn't find at a co-educational experience. I also believe that we have the opportunity to focus on the individual at a small college, and most women's colleges are smaller, so I think that we have the ability to focus on the individual student, and in this case on women, to help them explore their interests both personally and academically and become who they are going to be. So I think that there's a lot of value to women's colleges. I also think that women's colleges provide a strong community with like-minded people to create a network of lifelong friendships and support. I do think that there's a lot of reasons to come to a women's college.

Pankey: I think that we are a very unique institution in that we present an environment that is something that you can't find anywhere else, especially in the Midwest. I think that we present a family atmosphere that helps students feel supported and really, truly at home. I think that this is a place where students can be themselves and can find themselves. A lot of times students find themselves in environments where they have to put on a brave face, or do something that they don't necessarily feel comfortable doing, or be around people that they're not comfortable with, and they're just not themselves. So at an institution and environment like Stephens, we're allowing women to be themselves and to identify their true selves. They may not know who they want to be the second they step on campus, but they can find that just by being in an environment that nurtures and that wants to get at the true person that a student is as opposed to wanting someone to follow a false narrative or be someone that they're not, be someone that you see in the media or something like that. I think that students get to be who they want to be here.

Q: What makes us a women's college?

W: What makes us a women's college is that we primarily serve women. It's been our mission from the very beginning that we serve women. While we do have academic programs that admit men—for instance, our graduate programs that

are required under Title IX to admit men, and we will soon have a conservatory that will also admit men. Even in those programs we still find a way to make them women-centered and women-focused. A good example of that may be the MFA program in scriptwriting and screenwriting that takes place in Los Angeles and online; it's a co-educational experience that is elevating women's voices in that industry that is male-dominated historically. It's a way that we can focus on women and include them in that industry.

P: If we're going all the way back to the founding principles, and I think this is what the Board would say, is that we were founded on the principles that women deserve a safe space and deserve an opportunity to learn in an unencumbered environment that really allows them to learn and become leaders and grow in a space that doesn't make it difficult to become educated. That persists today, and I think our Board of Trustees firmly believes, and I firmly believe this as well, that is the mission that Stephens should continue into the future. It's certainly not something that we want to move away from. Having a women's college is what makes us who we are, and it's the value proposition that we in admissions work on. It's something that we have the opportunity to go out and talk about and be excited about because, again, there's not a whole lot of other institutions like us in a place like Columbia. In the middle of the country, there just isn't anyone else like us.

Q: Founded in 1833, Stephens started long before trans and non-binary identities became commonplace and accepted. How do you feel the school has adapted throughout the years to remain inclusive?

W: Stephens has always been a place that has evolved to meet the changing needs of women. We've said throughout our history that we are always educating the quintessential woman of her era, preparing women for the lives that they'll lead in the times that they're living in. The cultural understanding of womanhood has broadened to be inclusive of transgender women, and I think that Stephens's policies have evolved to celebrate this.

P: The Board made a policy in 2018 that specifically states that we do accept trans-women, and we

have adjusted our procedures to make sure that we are being as inclusive and accepting to trans and non-binary students, and truly any non-male gender identity, as we can to truly allow those students to feel welcome to the institution. We've adjusted our application to reflect that. There are, I want to say, 24 gender identities that students can select from in the application. When we are working with the students we are respectful of the pronouns they want to use and the background and story that they come from so that we're really speaking to the student, using the language they prefer and speaking from a perspective of support and helping them find themselves at Stephens, because that's really the most important part of building that relationship with them.

Q: What are the school's current policies for transgender and non-binary students?

W: First and foremost, the college's Nondiscrimination Policy prohibits discrimination on the basis of age, color, disability, gender expression, gender identity, genetic information, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation or veteran status and any other classification protected by law for all students, employees and third parties. We include gender identity and gender expression very purposefully in that statement, and that's one thing that protects students with those identities. Under Title IX, the law enacted in 1972 to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex in educational institutions, Stephens and other private colleges are exempted in their undergraduate admission policies, which allows us to remain a women's college. In 2018, the Board of Trustees approved an updated Admissions Policy for enrollment to the undergraduate residential programs for students who are sexed or gendered women and who self-identify and live as women, or who are assigned female at birth but whose self-identity may not fit within the gender binary. We take our women's college founding and our mission very seriously. The cultural understanding of what womanhood means has broadened, and we believe that women of all kinds should be a part of Stephens. We celebrate womanhood. The college does not enroll students who self-identify or live as men to the undergraduate residential program. Students not assigned female at birth provide documentation that they are actively engaged in

the sex reassignment process. This can be through hormone therapy or surgical process with the intent to transform from male to female or through a change of legal identification to reflect female status as documented by birth certificate, passport or other federal identification card. Students who were assigned female at birth but no longer fit the gender binary are also welcome here. We have women and non-binary students here.

Follow-up question for Walls: Slight take-off of that, but you said that transgender women who come here must have that legal or medical documentation. Do you feel that would disclude or delegitimize the women who can't necessarily afford or go through those processes?

It's possible, but I think that the world is a lot more open to supporting people through those processes, and there are agencies that really can support them in doing that. It's the policy that the Board of Trustees passed to ensure that we are staying true to our mission and making sure we are doing our due diligence in elevating our women's educational background.

P: For non-binary, basically as long as they were not born as a male, then we have no policy that prohibits non-binary women-at-birth. For transgender, if they are transitioning to a woman, then we require documentation. That's part of the admissions process to the institution. We require a secure document, things that we keep secure and do not share with anyone outside of the admissions process. It's something that pretty much only myself and President Lynch would see, basically to make sure that we're keeping our student population safe and protecting the integrity of the women's college.

Q: If you accept a man who identifies as a woman (trans-woman), the decision is based on identity. If you accept a woman who identifies as a man (trans-man), the decision is based on biology. So what is the standard for acceptance?

W: We do not enroll transgender men or students who self-identify or live as men at Stephens. Students whose sex or gender identity transitions after enrollment such that it is no longer consistent with the college's admissions policies are allowed

to remain at the college to complete the current semester. This would include students who self-identify as males through such practices as pronoun uses, social media profiles, etc, and/or physical transformation associated with hormone therapy or a surgical process. The college will assist students with transfer to another institution. Stephens continues to use female pronouns and the language of sisterhood which powerfully convey our core mission commitments and institutional identity.

P: The standard initially is that if a student identifies as a woman, we require the documentation that they're transitioning to be a trans-woman. We work really diligently to make sure that we're putting students in a position to be successful, so if there's a student on campus that is a female transitioning into a male, that is certainly something that we need to be aware of and to work through to make sure we are following our Board policy. The policy specifically states that we are a women's college and that we are accepting students that identify as female or identify as non-binary female. We don't accept men into the college. We accept them into the conservatory, and we accept them into the grad programs, but not into the college.

Follow-up question for Pankey: Speaking of the conservatory, that's kind of new, could you tell me anything more about it?

Starting in fall '22, we are going to start accepting any gender into the conservatory. Basically, we'll still be keeping those male students separate from the women's college. They will actually be able to do their gen eds through a separate source, and so they won't be taking those classes outside of the conservatory with the women's college students and will be working through the conservatory with their classmates. It has been designed, but the logistics are still being worked out. There certainly won't be any housing issues or anything like that, so we're working through that and making sure students are protected and safe in that environment.

Q: Do you believe Stephens should remain a strictly women's college, and, if so, can we truly be inclusive?

W: I believe very strongly that we should always remain a women's college. I read a quote attributed to a Radcliffe faculty member that said "when women's colleges become unnecessary or

irrelevant – that will be the sign of success." So when we get to a point where there is true gender equity and sex equity in the world, we will no longer need women's colleges. But we're not there yet; we have a lot of work left to do, and I think Stephens has a place in that work.

P: What I would say is that Stephens is, like I said, a unique institution. That's where we started, as a women's college. By nature, we accept only women, people who identify as women or non-binary. To some extent, I think that, if we're going to stick to our mission of the institution, we should be that way, and I truly believe that our board believes that way as well, so that's something that I don't think is up for discussion at this present time. I think that's as far as I'll go with that. I will say that I think that we work really, really diligently to make sure that every student who walks through the door is supported and feels comfortable in the environment. We find ourselves making sure that the relationship comes first and that wherever a student finds themselves, whatever background, whatever identity, that really we do everything we possibly can to support them. If Stephens ends up not being the place for them because of identity or something like that, we work really hard to help them find the support that they need or an institution that fits their needs. We just don't want to make everything more difficult for any student, whether they're a Stephens student or another institution's student. We work really hard to develop those relationships and be defined by them.

IN SUMMARY

Non-binary students are accepted into Stephens if they were female-at-birth. Trans-women are welcome at Stephens if they can provide some sort of document to admissions, whether that be legal, hormonal or surgical. Trans-men are not welcome at Stephens, even if it is only in identity and not in any sort of medical or legal documentation. If a student were to start transitioning from female to male while at Stephens, they would be allowed to stay through the semester while receiving help on transferring to another institution. **SL**



TAFKAR420

APPLEJUICE

PEANUTGIRRLME

LEVEL UP!

Story by Savana "SJ" Johnson
Photography by Savana "SJ" Johnson

New

SMITHSONIAN

YACHICITOKA

LAPLIOS

SILVERDIPPER

NIGHTNGAIL



Colorful flashy lights, attention-grabbing sound effects, and a wide array of funky ranged and melee weapons to choose from—video games have had the same formula since the early '70s. These digital graphics quickly exploded in popularity and were adapted to better suit the male market, which also happened to be the same market that programmed the systems these games ran on. They were truly made by men, for men. This toxic masculinity within these virtual spaces still exists today where players who play competitively are excluding those that don't identify or sound like a typical cisgender man would. But here at Stephens College, a talented group of individuals is taking a stand against this discrimination, and they're doing it by playing video games.

A NON-CONTACT SPORT

When one hears the word “sports,” they tend to think of the physical contact games that ESPN is notorious for hosting on their many platforms: football, baseball, soccer, etc. What about when one hears the term “Esports?” The letter “e” at the beginning simply stands for the word electronic, which is

just another way to talk about the competitive and professional platform of video games. This form of competitive gaming has really taken off within the last decade, and the only difference it has in comparison to traditional sports is the lack of physical involvement. On most other levels, Esports is just another version of a complex game that fans and supporters can rally behind and hype up their favorite team. In fact, here at Stephens College specifically, you can earn a scholarship to play, just like you would for any other sport on campus. This is another huge step for the Esports community to get the level of recognition it deserves, and it helps bring prospective players to Stephens. It's a win-win for everyone in the Stephens community. Sophomore Taylor Smith shared that “Esports is an opportunity in every aspect of the word. You get to meet people and grow your social skills; you get to expand your understanding of video games and the internet. It's an eye-opening experience.”

“IT'S A FAMILY HERE, AND WE HAVE EACH OTHER'S BACKS. IT'S SOMETHING TRULY SPECIAL.”

- SHELBY THOMPSON

INSIDE PLAYS

Gisselle Benitez, a junior on the Stephens Esports team, says “[Esports] is a lifestyle, or at least it has become that for me over the past few years.” Gisselle has been a part of the team since 2019 and has witnessed its tremendous growth firsthand. The team itself started in the basement of one of Stephens' school buildings and is now projected to have space in one of the old residential halls on campus, all because of the amount of growth the team has had over the past two years. The same can be said for senior Shelby Thompson, who has been at Stephens since 2018 and has been looking forward to the Esports team since her high school years. “This group is seriously the most inclusive and encouraging team I have ever been a part of. I've been in other similar groups and others felt like they couldn't join because it was male-dominated. It didn't feel welcoming. Here at Stephens, that discomfort vanishes. The atmosphere here is whole and full of women and non-binary people.





A NEXT ROUND

The Esports team being a safe space from the toxicity that they run into on a daily basis is one of the biggest factors as to why so many people seek to be on it. Taylor Smith's answer to how she deals with toxic guys during matches was one that summed up the feelings of many on the team: "I don't deal with them, they have to deal with me, and they have to seek me out. I know what I bring to the table, and so I don't worry about it." The level of security and confidence in her skill set has really allowed her to shine through over the past two years, and she hugely credits it to the welcoming environment that the Esports team has created. Shelby added on to that idea with "As Gisselle said, I just play harder. It shouldn't be the case to have to be respected in the community, but if I do, it'll make it easier for the

toxic players to be silent. Just prove them wrong, and one day they'll shut up and go away. I'm there for my time and to have fun. That's their day ruined, not mine." Just because there is a level of safety and family within the team, doesn't mean that the nature to compete is diluted in any sense. "It's a bunch of nerds trying to one-up each other, and it's been that way since the beginning. Especially in games that aren't seen as competitive," Gisselle admits, "We strive for a lot more inclusivity and opportunity in our team. It's such a small program still growing, anyone can jump onto the hype train here at Stephens. Everyone has a chance despite their skill levels or knowledge." Everyone interviewed agreed that they thought of each other as a makeshift family, one that they know they can rely on, no matter what.

"WE'VE GOTTEN SO MUCH ATTENTION THAT IT'S IMPOSSIBLE FOR THIS PROGRAM TO DISAPPEAR NOW. WE ARE HERE TO STAY."

-ADRIENNE MCINTIRE

The term "community" was brought up a lot during this interview, which is really refreshing to see. "We aren't necessarily looking to be the team with the most wins, that's just an added perk." Head coach Adrienne McIntire states, "When I started, I asked myself 'How can we be more than just a competitive team?' That's what every other college is. So I went out and did my research." Turns out, there are plenty of people and organizations that want to help lift these students to higher levels and it's all because they understand and support the mission they have: to create a safe and welcoming environment for people who want to enjoy the things they love. It's truly a heartwarming scene with how tightly knit the team is.

Stephens College's isn't the only program out there that is comprised of only women and non-binary folk, but it sure is a trailblazer for those to come. This work isn't going unnoticed either. The Stephens Esports team has received recognition through their community and through awards continues earning more respect from those within the gaming industry. "We've gotten so much attention that it's impossible for this program to disappear now," Coach McIntire insists, "We are here to stay and that's final." **SL**





Gisselle Benitez gazes towards the audience, carrying the confidence of her team on her shoulders with ease.



Mac Christensen holds their own on the racing game, similar to how they keep their cool on the Esports team.



SUPERBIKE

HALL OF FAME

Rank	Player Name	Time
4	MENNP	
5	COLE	1:28:44
6	DJLMMMM	1:28:54
7	KB	1:28:87
8	PLAYER1	1:28:93
9	PLAYER1	1:28:93
10	JJIIII	1:28:99
		1:29:14

MONEY IN: 0 SWINGS
COST: 20.00 / 1 SWING

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I WAS ONCE LIKE YOU

Story by Leslie Douglas

Photography by Madison Green



On July 20th, 2021, the first Blue Origin rocket launched into space carrying four passengers: Jeff Bezos, Bezos' brother Mark, 18-year-old Oliver Daeman, and 82-year-old Wally Funk. This trip was not only monumental for the future of commercial spaceflight but had also broken records for both the then-youngest and -oldest person to go to space. Bezos, founder and executive chairman for Amazon, founded Blue Origin to play his hand in the new space race of commercial spaceflight. For passenger and Stephens College alumna Funk ('58), the flight to space was much more than that. "I want to go up again, fast!" Funk exclaimed on a live stream following the flight. She had finally completed a sixty-year journey towards becoming an astronaut.

Funk was destined to break glass ceilings from the start. As a child, Funk was guided by her parents' wishes to see her achieve her dreams, no matter the obstacle. Hungry for adventure, a young Funk forged herself into an excellent skier, riflewoman, and pilot, taking her first flying lesson at age nine.

Before finishing high school, 16-year-old Funk hopped on the Stephens College train from Santa Fe to attend the school's aviation program as a "Flying Susie." There, Funk worked her way up to being the best aviator in her class of 24 fliers. Every flight was a thrill, and Funk couldn't get enough of it. The aviation program took the team all over the United States in competition with other schools. Funk's skill made it obvious that she was born to fly, as it seemed to be second nature to her. Funk then embarked on her journey as a pilot. Her still-active career in aviation includes multiple firsts for women, including becoming the first woman to complete the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Operations Inspector Academy course, to become a specialist in the Systems Worthiness Analysis Program (FAA SWAP), and to become a female Air Safety Investigator for the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB). Funk has also competed and placed in multiple air races, taught thousands of people to fly, collected over 20,000 flight hours, and flown about every kind of plane imaginable. Her numerous accomplishments and long career didn't come without challenges. Even the sky has limitations for women. As she once said, "We just have to have ability and a bit better ability in a man's world."

At the age of 21, already established as a pilot, Funk received an invitation to join the "Women in Space" program founded by Dr. William Randolph Lovelace. This program aimed to prove that women were just as capable of becoming astronauts as men. Although Funk didn't meet the program's age requirements, she was accepted anyway because of her experience. A total of thirteen women completed the program, earning them the nickname of the "Mercury 13." Rigorous testing, both physically and mentally, was conducted on these women by Dr. Lovelace's team. One test included spending multiple hours in a sensory deprivation tank; Funk set a record for the longest time spent in the tank without hallucinating, a total of 10 hours and 35 minutes. Though some women had outperformed the male astronauts, NASA still blocked women from their program due to unequal requirements. The "Women in Space" program was closed after President Lyndon B. Johnson wrote a letter stating, "Let's stop this now."

Johnson's letter was written in the 1960s, just before the women's liberation movement began. At the time, many people shared the same view of gender roles as astronaut John Glenn, who was quoted saying, "It's just a fact. The men go off and fight the wars and fly the airplanes. That women are not in this field is just a fact of our social order." This was a mindset Funk refused to take on.

"We just have to have ability and a bit better ability in a man's world."

Wally Funk

Funk excelled in aviation, but never forgot about space. Funk had applied numerous times to NASA after they began to accept women in the 1970s. Still, she was denied, due to her lack of an engineering degree and test pilot career. "I went to go get an Engineering degree and [the NASA recruiter] poked me on the shoulder and said, 'You're a girl, go to home ec.'" By the time Lt. Col.

Eileen Collins became the first woman to pilot a Space Shuttle into space in 1995, Funk was too old to become one. That is, until nearly three decades later, when she would travel with Blue Origin.

Funk never doubted her abilities. Funk knew she was just as capable, if not more, than her male colleagues as it was proven several times: “Your goal is to keep saying ‘yes, I can do it.’ Keep moving forward with a lot of confidence. Don’t sit on a pile of negative.” As time has passed, her confidence in herself has only increased “I never thought of myself as ever getting older and don’t today... and I have always thought very young and acted [very young.]”

Unfortunately, too many associate a negative connotation with aging. Instead of looking at older generations with admiration, they’re made to feel worthless compared to younger generations. This narrative proves to be even harder for women, as their gender, age, ethnicity and sexuality seem to be working against them. People like Wally Funk are inspirations partly because they are representative of the fact that societal standards do not have to be right. From the first wave of feminism to the fourth wave of today, women have spent over a century proving themselves to be worthy to vote, work, earn equal pay, legislate their own bodies, and change the narrative on what it means to be female.

Julie Remington is also an alumna of Stephens College who attended up until her sophomore year in 1988 when she left to pursue film production in Los Angeles, something Stephens did not offer at the time. When asked what it means to be a woman, she said, “I think it’s important for those who are naturally strong confident women, to raise up those women who are marginalized and made to feel inadequate and unworthy. It is our duty to support each other.” Remington had no idea that her gender would later cause complications in her career.

Moving to Los Angeles after Stephens, Remington finished her undergraduate work at Mount St. Mary’s and immediately dove into the industry. Living and learning film brought many amazing opportunities Remington’s way. She worked in post-production and, through that, was able to travel throughout Europe for film festivals, work with well-known directors, and grow in her creativity. Remington even enjoyed the Cannes Film Festival while seated next to Ridley Scott and

Brad Pitt, who were there representing their film *Thelma and Louise*. The film she worked on at the time, *Mi Vida Loca*, was in competition and also happened to be Salma Hayak’s first American film.

After many years spent in Los Angeles, Remington had relocated to Carbon Canyon in Malibu where she lived in the guest house of an Austrian film director and his Parisian wife, who was a former model. This magnificent home, inspired by Moorish, Turkish, and Greek architecture, would grow to feel like her home as she spent more time with the couple and their famous friends and neighbors. Remington had no idea of the tragedy that would lie ahead.

“And then the skies turned orange and brown one morning when wildfires broke out during a Red Flag warning,” Remington recalls. She continues: “The hillsides were burning, embers falling all around us, and walls of flames hundreds of feet high blocked the entrances of box canyons. Carbon Canyon was engulfed in an inferno. I had no idea if my friends had escaped or if their beautiful home had survived.” Unable to leave the area, Remington and her cousin began to assist in serving meals to the firefighters. Firefighters and engines came from far and wide to battle the fires. Locals were working together to support the firefighters who were working tirelessly and sleeping anywhere they could. “I witnessed for the first time in my life; a community of volunteers, the glamorous and the unglamorous, all haggard, disheveled, covered in soot, dirt, and blood, sweat, and tears, pulling together to help neighbors and total strangers survive,” Remington recalled.

This wasn’t Julie Remington’s only experience with disaster. Only a few months after the fires, she found herself in the Northridge 6.7 earthquake that rocked San Fernando Valley at 5:00 am on January 17th. This earthquake left the area in a disastrous condition. Remington’s roommate had jumped out of a plate glass window and was bleeding out with a damaged artery. With no first aid experience, Remington rushed her roommate to a nearby hospital, St. John’s ER in Santa Monica. “The streetlights were out so it was really difficult to see the street signs and find the hospital, fires from gas lines, downed power lines, car alarms blaring everywhere, buildings destroyed or collapsed, and LA looked like a war zone once again. I was all adrenaline and in fight or flight mode,” Remington said. The two arrived to a building in disarray.



Model, Kirsty Buchanan exemplifies beauty and grace.

Fearful that the building would collapse, St. John's staff began wheeling patients out into the parking lot. The ER team was short-staffed and working without power, but they hurried Remington's roommate in to begin operating. "[A surgeon] had me glove up, hand him bandages, and hold the flashlight while he sutured and bandaged my friend. While I watched I promised myself to never feel so helpless again," Remington reflects. She soon sought out a basic First Aid and CPR course, but knew that was not enough for her.

In 2000, after moving to Orcas Island in Washington, Remington joined the Orcas Island Fire Department. Here, she became a structural firefighter. "After I joined the fire service, I realized I had become an adrenaline seeker. Safety is always paramount but when the tone goes off and your heart starts pumping and you suit up and roll out, the excitement of not knowing what lies ahead and what challenges will be thrown at you [is thrilling.] I knew I had found my niche," Remington said. A few years after gaining her basic EMT certification, Remington became a Wildland Red Card Type 2, which allowed her to fight woodland fires across federal lands.

Despite proving her physical and mental strength throughout her career, she did not anticipate the attitudes towards her from her fellow male firefighters. "I was excited to be a team and support my fellow members, thinking I would be considered one of the guys. Without realizing it I began to downplay my femininity and bury my outgoing social-friendly nature," Remington said. Being the third female firefighter to join the department in its 75-year history, she expected to be welcomed by her male counterparts as they seemed enthusiastic about her joining. She continues on by saying, "From the beginning drills and training were fraught with outright chauvinism and negative attitudes towards women. Bullying was excessive with no intervention." Even with witnesses of these events and documentation, it continued. "I endured sexist remarks by officers, gender discrimination, body shaming, derogatory demeaning name-calling by officers and the, now retired, chief, misogynistic aggression by my superiors, refusal of advanced training and promotions, and veiled threats of violence." Remington still worked hard, followed orders, and played by their rules, but it didn't stop.



There are several specific events that Remington recounts, one of those being when she was ridiculed for her body type by a captain in charge of outfitting the department. She quotes him as saying, “Your body was designed all wrong. Your arms and legs are too long, your shoulders are too broad, your waist is too short, hip to rib ratio is wrong. No company in the U.S. can make bunker gear for your irregular misaligned body type. We will have to have custom gear made for you and that will cost the department and taxpayers too much.

Let’s show the chief and get his opinion”. She was told to stand in the chief’s office as they circled around her, pointing at her body while spewing out insults. The captain was visibly angry and exclaimed, “Chief let’s just face it. She is built all wrong and nothing will fit her body. Please just make her go away. Just make IT go away.” Although she was being made to feel out of place, her measurements didn’t call for custom gear. Her size 42 men’s regular bunker gear fit like a glove. When she later resigned from the department, several male firefighters had requested

to inherit her gear as they fit them so well. “[It felt so] disappointing that no matter what we do, or how well we do it, we worked in a culture of fragile egos that were so threatened by women overshadowing or upstaging them. No one should have to downplay life’s little achievements,” Remington shares.

Remington did find strength and empowerment in this profession, even through the blatant misogyny she endured early on. Her job brought her to the disasters of the 2005 Hurricane Katrina, where she was tasked with dispatching recovery teams throughout New Orleans. Three years later she would assist on an urban interface strike team against the San Diego County wildfires. In 2009, Remington would complete an International Diploma of Humanitarian Assistance in Geneva through Fordham University and United Nations School of Staffing and College of Surgeons of

Ireland. In 2011, when the EF5 tornado wiped out Joplin, MO, she assisted the survivors in need.

Remington retired from her firefighting position and soon after was diagnosed with CFS ME, fibromyalgia and degenerative disc disease, something she predicts was caused by her years spent in Emergency Services. “The stress and toll it takes on your health catches up with you. That constant adrenaline release which I was so drawn to for most of my adult

life, comes at a cost,” Remington continues to reflect on her career, “Realistically it’s a great career for people in their 20s or 30s to pursue. I didn’t discover the fire service until I was 35. But I want to see women excel in it for generations to come. The culture is changing and women will continue to rise to the top positions,” Remington said.

Remington continues her work today in a different form through her humanitarian work in Ghana in West Africa. There, she’s created a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization to help more than 30 orphaned children and their caregivers gain access to safe drinking water, proper shelter, consistent food, and balanced nutrition. Her project is called Ghana Ohana, named in honor of

her missionary ancestors of Maui. Remington also hopes to create documentaries on the topics of refugees, immigration, human rights, and animal welfare.

There are many ways to be a woman. Some feel uplifted in their womanhood through helping others or making advancements in their career. You can feel womanly when wearing your favorite high heels or when tying up your boots. Womanhood is defined by nothing and no one except yourself; not even your profession, style, or body.

The stories Stephens College alumnae have to share are abundant. The ability for women to gain power over their womanhood can first begin with allowing them to write and tell their own story. What does being a woman mean to you? SL

“...we worked in a culture of fragile egos that were so threatened by women overshadowing or upstaging them.”

Julie Remington

DOUBLE STANDARDS

*Story by Nathalia Harris + Bridget Bush
Photography by Bridget Bush*

Sex has been a taboo topic for women of all ages, but why? Why can men lavish in sleeping with multiple partners at one time while the woman is scrutinized? Why must a woman “lose” her virginity and “lose” her respect, while a man “gains,” “takes” and is accomplished for the notion of having a sexual relationship? Why should the woman in a sexual relationship feel shame about wanting to be pleased or making it known that she is not? The double standards of sex have affected

women for years, but women in this generation have broken the ties to feeling ashamed while they enjoy their sexual relationships, partners and the numerous ways sex makes them feel empowered.

Society and the media’s perception of sex has drastically changed over the generations. Women are taking their agency back and feeling empowerment for enjoying sex instead of guilt. While the women of today are breaking ties to slut-shaming, the beliefs of yesterday still find

DOUBLE STANDARD (N.): A RULE OR PRINCIPLE WHICH IS UNFAIRLY APPLIED IN DIFFERENT WAYS TO DIFFERENT PEOPLE OR GROUPS.



ways to tap into our confidence and make us question whether we're rising above the double standard or living our lives in ways we'll question in the future. Many women have faced the shame of double standards. It impacts us all in diverse ways.

Morgan Lowery, a Stephens College student, explained the way double standards have affected her: "I feel like everyone I've been with are men who think they're the only ones who should be pleased.

It's safe to say I've had very selfish lovers. I haven't been prioritized at all."

The standard that men are the only ones that need to climax has left women in the dark. Women aren't prioritized and their pleasure isn't considered.

This coincides with the outdated notion that sex is for the man. Melanie Sanchez, a Stephens alumna, says, "[the double standard] has affected not only me with my partners, but my family values as well. Being brought up in a strict Christian household, we aren't allowed to have sex outside of wedlock or pleasure ourselves. So, for a long time I felt ashamed." To say the least, women are expected to uphold standards and have consequences that are not ever considered for men. Men are expected to have sex well before they are married and, if not, it's deemed that something must be wrong with them.

The double standard has never been favorable to women—if anything, it has consistently othered women. It's positioned women as less-than and impure for enjoying the activities their male counterparts partake in without judgment.

Stephens College student Elisabeth "Lyssa" Horney, a 25-year-old self-identified "queer, pansexual,

polyamorous person," gave some insight into how these double standards take root everywhere in our society. Horney grew up in a strict Christian household that really bought into the culture of "purity rings and the whole shebang," as she puts it. Her understanding of what her life should look like from a sexual standpoint was that she must stay a virgin until marriage. Then, whenever her husband wants sex, she would have to oblige because that would be her duty as a wife. She grew up without

the notion that sex can and should be pleasurable for her, too. Not only have women been othered for far too long, but they are also shamed if they have agency over their bodies and pleasure.

Men have had a history of ignoring the needs of women. The pleasure of the woman, including the female orgasm, has been overlooked and disregarded because of the double standard. When asked how she feels about the notion that sex is only enjoyable from the male's perspective,

Lowery responded, "It goes along with the notion that men control the sex and the idea that they have the power. Oftentimes, women are expected to give into sex and it's expected of them to give their bodies for the male pleasure. It's never been a priority to pleasure the woman or even know how." The double standard has also

made it hard for some women to talk about what they like or find pleasurable in sex without feeling judged. Sanchez responded, "I feel like it goes back to when a woman would speak out about what she likes, whether it be something she finds pleasurable or a position she likes, there are connotations made about her immediately. I feel as though even women





from past generations have shied away from talking about sex because they can find it embarrassing, unladylike or even a damage to their reputation.” Men have been the center for sex and seen as the person with the power in sexual relationships.

Once Horney started exploring her identity more, she started to make sense of her sexuality. She found the catch. “If sex is only enjoyable from a male perspective, then why do women have sex with each other?” In any sexual relationships with women, Horney does not introduce them into existing sexual relationships with other male partners. She doesn’t want to feel like they would be doing anything for a third party’s pleasure over their own. She wants her partners to know her other partners, but there is no question about sharing her female partners because the answer is no. She wants to commit to the female partner and herself and their own pleasures without worrying about what male partners would want, and she felt the best way to do that is leaving the men out altogether.

The language surrounding sex between men and women has always pinned women as the losing party; a woman “loses” her virginity while the man “takes” it. When asked to respond, Lowery commented, “I think the stigma is stupid. Growing up, that’s what I was taught. We were giving our bodies to boys and men without gaining anything in return, but there was always a sense of loss. I thought sex was for men and it was our responsibility to provide it.” On the other hand, this is one of the aspects in society and the media that has seemed to flip. It’s considered a fifty-fifty take between parties. Sanchez countered, “I feel as though, at least now, as long as it’s consensual, women are ‘taking’ as well. Women have gotten into the habit of getting into situation-ships* and they’re more aware of just wanting the benefits of sex.” In a more proactive society, we’ll give up the two-dimensional connotations about who is winning or losing and start practicing sex as an equal exchange where all parties are pleased and considered.

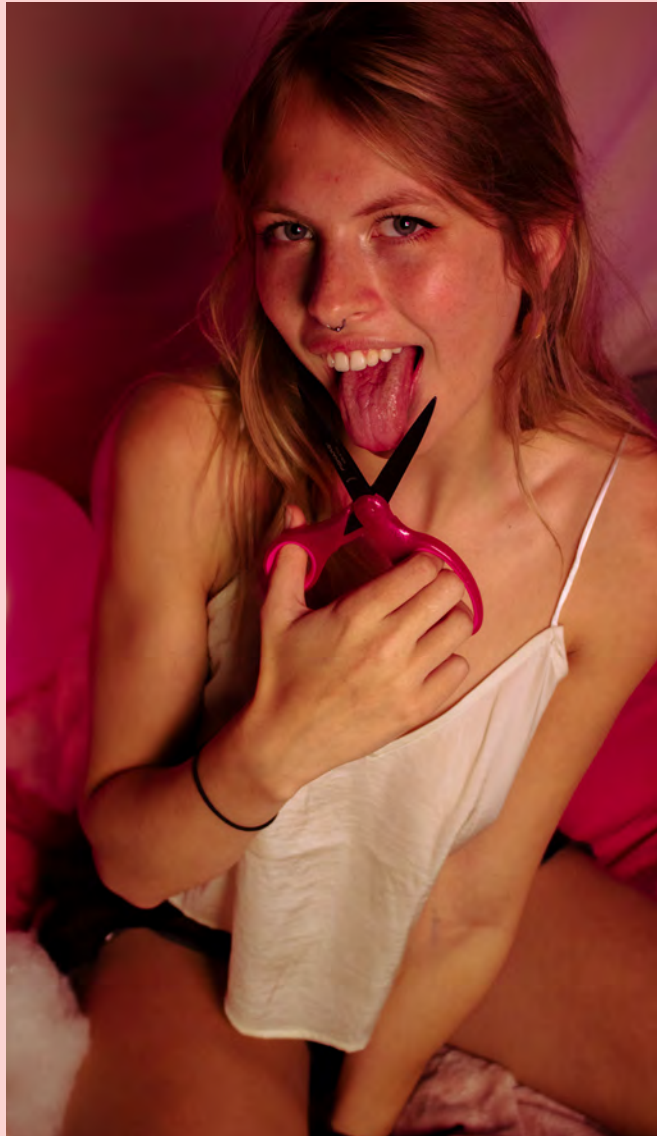
Contrary to the ideals she grew up with, Horney now understands that, regardless of someone’s gender, casual consenting sex can be emotionally harmful if the parties are not open and honest with emotional or physical expectations. Partners can end up feeling used or like they’ve used the other person. However, it can be a safe, fun, healthy experience if everyone is communicating. She said, “It felt like society was

dictating what and how much to give away, and now I feel like I can do what I want with it. I can give however much or little, because I am in control. It’s also beautiful to connect with a human like that and I can choose when and with whom I want that connection.”

SI-TU-A-TION-SHIP (N.): A ROMANTIC OR SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP THAT IS NOT CONSIDERED TO BE FORMAL OR ESTABLISHED.



Finding ways to escape the pressures and associations imposed upon women can prove difficult. Whether communication between partners is unclear or women counterparts aren't comfortable expressing experiences they find pleasurable, there are many standards that women find themselves needing to rise above every day. Sometimes partners don't feel safe or comfortable talking to their counterpart about what they enjoy, and in turn are unsatisfied. When asked if she finds it easy to talk to her partner about what she liked during sex, Lowery shared, ". . . I don't think I've ever felt comfortable talking to my partners about what I like. And when I do open up about it, I feel like I'm being judged. . ." The concept of feeling judged was brought up between both interviewees, and they agreed that sometimes the topic can become sensitive very quickly. They talked about the male ego being hurt and their partners retracting because they feel as though they've failed up to this point. Sanchez commented about some of the conversation topics being harder to talk about compared to others, ". . . for the most part, I do talk to [my partner] about what I like, but there are some kinks I have that are harder to talk about because I'm unsure if they're going to like it or if they will think it's weird." She went further to say she enjoyed the sensation of having her toes sucked or caressed, but never expressing it because she feels it's an uncommon kink. Whether it be kinks, exploring your own body or the pleasure of sex with a partner, it's important to remember the ways women can rise above the double standards and find sex empowering and confidence boosting.



We also had the opportunity to talk to Jordan Mazur, owner of local Columbia, Missouri business Muse Pole Fitness. With a longstanding background in classical dance, Mazur was introduced to pole fitness by a family friend at the age of 18. She talked about how starting young helped her to break free of societal pressure and expectations before they really could grab ahold of her. She also liked how empowered it made her feel. Jordan said that sometimes society has a tendency to "make people feel like things are wrong when they're not." Her view of sexual double standards for women is that society says to "be sexy but of course not too sexy... have sexual preferences but keep them to yourself." She goes on to say, "There's no reason to put things into such a little box when there's such a big world." She often has patrons coming in who are looking to feel sexy for the first time in years, and she wants people to know that Muse is a safe space to do that, free of societal pressures and double standards.

Lowery explains that she transcends the double standard by reminding herself that there's nothing wrong with women having sex for pleasure. "We're no different from men who want the same thing. I'm not a whore because I have a vagina and he has a penis. Being in college has opened my eyes and shown me that I'm no different than anyone else and I shouldn't feel bad or succumb to the unrealistic standards if I so happen to have the same body count as the guy next to me when he's being praised." She says she feels like the control she has over her body is the most empowering



during sex. Sanchez rises above double standards by not being afraid to express her sexuality with her peers, “I like to remind myself that we’re not in the [19]20’s and it’s normal to talk about it, even with professionals, if you’re feeling insecure. I don’t let my body count interfere with my confidence or what I think about my body. My body is still a temple and I’m happy with the choices I’ve made in my sex life.” Sanchez talks about the way sex empowers her to enjoy the body she’s in: “It grows my confidence on the way my body looks and feels and it reminds me the power my body has over my male counterparts.” Sex can be many things to the woman just like it can be to the man. Whether we’re empowering ourselves through the act itself or the pleasure the body experiences, we’ve grown to own the physicality of our bodies while not being pressured to feel shame.

As empowering as sex is for some women, not everyone always feels the ease when it comes to being able to rise above the standards set on women. Just as equally as those who are confident, there are those who struggle with not feeling as self-assured or even feel guilt that they enjoy the act. Lowery reminds, “It’s okay to feel pleasure and put yourself first. You shouldn’t feel ashamed about receiving the same thing your partner is.” At the end of the

day, we like to remind ourselves and others that their autonomy is their choice. Your body is yours to do with what you please, regardless of what standards others’ opinions may be constructed around. Sanchez urges that “there’s nothing wrong with enjoying sex. It should never feel one-sided.” As we become more accepting of ourselves, we also grow to be confident, to love ourselves to unrealistic standards.. Women have the power to come together and support one another. Although there will always be people who disagree with such decisions, yours and yours alone is the one that matters. **SL**



Model, Sarah McMurray is surrounded by candy colored pills that she has been prescribed. She looks to be sharing.

Happiness in One Easy Step

Story by Lydia Graves

Photography by Madison Green

*Name has been changed for privacy reasons.

Therapy is truly life changing. Earlier this summer, in search of a new therapist, Cerebral, piqued my interest. The virtual therapy platform was affordable, included a full mental-healthcare team, and was renewable every month. At the moment, it seemed like a “why not?” I had a short meeting with a counselor on the first day; it went well. I already felt better chatting with someone again after a few months out of therapy. The next day, I met with a psychiatrist. This went less well. As if a robot inputting information, she asked me question after question until ding! Result found! It had been a ten-minute discussion to which she diagnosed me with bipolar depression. Please consider, this is a diagnosis that can take nearly three months to make. Not only was I incorrectly and prematurely diagnosed, I was also sent medication. Lamotrigine, a medication known for pushing Stevens-Johnson syndrome into action, was being sent to my doorstep. At the time, I felt lucky to have knowledge in the medical field due to a family member’s career as a nurse practitioner. It made me curious. How often is this happening to unsuspecting individuals?

Step 1:

“It just appalls me. I had a patient’s mother say to me today ‘I just want to thank you for working with us and listening to us and considering what we think. You’re the first person that’s ever done that, and by doing that, you’re the first person to figure out something that would actually help her. She’s doing so much better, and I think that’s because you listen and care.’ How awful is it that I’m the fifth provider this child has seen?” Denise D. Crosson, Ph.D. has been a nurse for thirty-nine years, a nurse practitioner for nineteen years, and a nurse researcher for twelve

years. She explains a large problem originates from the screening process in that many clinicians utilize it as a ‘yes or no’ answer. However, the screen test should be used as a suggestion tool for therapists seeing patients, but as Crosson tells, “Some people will go into an appointment for a diagnosis and leave with six.” Dr. Andrea Bloch, DO, a psychiatry specialist with over 30 years of experience in the medical field and emphasis on psychotic disorders, also tells me she’s seen countless numbers of misdiagnosis in mental disorders. “It’s something that takes time. You can’t do it over a 15-minute meeting or even just 60-minutes.” Bloch believes it is within this quickness in turnover to see a patient that misdiagnosis occurs. Crosson also brings up that if the same information was given to ten separate certified persons, there’d likely only be a 50-60% concordance. Many therapists have bias when it comes to diagnosis, such as if there wasn’t an event of being shot in combat, some therapists will not diagnose PTSD. She also mentions that diagnosis cannot only attend to the criteria, but also must consider that exclusions for the condition could also be driving behavior. Plus, many times misdiagnoses are made as therapists are pressured to shorten sessions. This is unfavorable as last-minute thoughts clients have are never analyzed or taken into consideration by their provider. “There’s incredible pressure and incentive that the faster you can do things, the better.” Both express that there’s also a high percentage of misdiagnosis in younger ages. A younger patient may be diagnosed with something, but as they age, they exhibit more of the characteristics for what they truly suffer from. There is also a lack of therapists that contributes to an overall decrease in care quality.

Adara* is a college student who has had situations regarding mental health from a very young age. “I remember when I was younger getting tested from the school because it was noticed I was missing information and awkward in social situations.” Instead of following up, her teachers ignored the situation and labeled her as ‘lazy’ and a ‘nuisance’. By fifth grade, Adara was noticing she had little missing pieces from class and began to struggle. She saw a therapist around this time but was not diagnosed with anything beyond OCD before her dad pushed her to end the sessions. “When I got a little older, during high school, I was taken to the hospital for mental health issues pertaining to suicide. The person I was meeting with for the initial therapy intake wrote me off and ended up telling my mother, ‘I think she’s just sensitive, and she’ll get over it. I think she just needs to toughen up, and she’ll be fine.’” Despite knowing deeply that there were underlying issues, Adara was forced to second guess her beliefs and self. She explored therapy again during her senior year of high school wherein she felt uneasy and things did not work, leading her to wait until freshman year of college to find a therapist that made her feel comfortable and heard. Until then, she was never given the help she needed despite access. She felt very ‘pushed in the corner’ and, being a minor, couldn’t advocate for herself. “[Being misdiagnosed] is being written off, and it is really frustrating. I didn’t get an actual diagnosis till I was older. There’s a lot of patterns I learned over those years that are not beneficial to me.”

In best cases, being misdiagnosed will have no repercussions. Sometimes an individual will have no response to the diagnosis nor medication. Some, like myself, may not even trust the prescriber and refuse the medication. However, consequences can be grave for others. Bloch discusses, “You have to be very careful because that can follow you through your life on your medical record... and depending on what someone may want to do for a career, it might be detrimental.” Worst case scenario it is a life changing, sometimes even life-ending, situation. It’s very common a person may come in for an appointment viewing it as a “last effort” to aid themselves. If this circumstance is missed by a provider or seen as something else, consequences are dire. Other instances, incorrect medications can create suicidality worse. All medications have side effects, but a few will result

in worse cases than others will. Crosson brings up a great point that undoing mental misdiagnosis can be very difficult. “Undoing that mental diagnosis is almost the most labor intensive thing I do.”

The Behind-the-Scenes Step:

Every therapist uses the standardized DSM5, The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, as criteria to base a mental disorder diagnosis. There is more to diagnosing than referring to this book, though. For Crosson, utilizing the screen tests and asking a good amount of questions is crucial as her intake on the first visit. “The point is not to try and figure out how to label people. The point is to do something that’s helpful and improve the quality of people’s lives.” Bloch refers to history heavily. Along with that comes collateral history a spouse, family member, or friend who participates in therapy to further the treatment interests of





or you just wake up feeling like dead would be better than this, I want to hear from you right away.”

Dan Kisinger, PhD, LPC-S is the director of Stephens College’s graduate level counseling program. In our discussion, he explained how students are taught to make accurate diagnostic impressions. For instance, students are taught specifically how to use the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) to construct diagnostic impressions. In addition to learning how to navigate the DSM-5’s diagnostic categories and coding system, counselors-in-training are taught to consider the ethical and cultural influences that could lead to an inaccurate diagnosis and the implications an inaccurate diagnosis has on treatment planning and, ultimately, client care. Following this academic training, counselors-in-training spend nearly 1.5 years in clinical training (i.e., practicum and internships) working closely with clients under the supervision of faculty and site supervisors who are also licensed mental health professionals. Treating everything with care and being thorough is crucial. Everything is discussed in manners of learning and nothing is overlooked to mitigate the potential for inaccurate diagnoses.

The Step Before Step 1:

“Advocate for yourself. Don’t lose hope for it. Don’t get stuck in your head. Find different therapists; you don’t have to stay with whoever you’re seeing. It’s okay to branch out and get other opinions. Eventually you will find someone that you like and can supply the right help,” Adara expresses to anyone who has, or believes to be, misdiagnosed.

It is crucial to complete research on a therapist prior to seeing them. Some comfortability between patient and counselor has potential to create misdiagnosis much less likely. Bloch emphasizes research into durations of sessions in particular. It’s major to ensure there is enough time for a proper visit. “It really matters a lot who you see,” voices Crosson. It’s also important to be clear to the provider on what pushes you, as an individual, to an appointment seeking care. Some cases, this may be asked, but either way it must be voiced for proper support. This helps diagnostic care or the possibility of over reading symptoms.

the patient which can improve outcomes and the process of therapy to a great degree. It’s key to see patients on a regular basis as well. Also, in some cases, there is a collaboration between therapist and primary doctor with the use of lab tests.

When considering time, there are many components to therapy to keep in mind. Many times diagnoses are made in a time frame set by insurance companies. However, therapists may begin with a small, general diagnosis and develop it the longer sessions continue. These proper sessions are at least 60 minutes with a provider. Follow-up after diagnosis ranges. Diagnosis for a fairly stable individual without prescribing medication may have a recommended follow up a month later. For those who may need more guidance, weekly sessions are recommended. If there is medicine involved, the follow up may shorten to one–two weeks. “This is as long as everything’s good or better than it is right now,” Crosson elaborates, “Even if tomorrow, things are appreciably worse because some acute situational thing has changed



Step 2:

Diagnosis can be a very good thing. As Kissinger points out, they can be very enlightening for some individuals. A diagnosis, properly explained, can help a client understand themselves and some of their experiences without feeling stigmatized. Adara agrees, stating “It’s really beneficial to have acronyms. I can be like ‘oh [a certain reaction I have] is because of this [diagnosis].’” It is crucial to take steps toward finding the right therapist and making sure it is the right fit so that there’s trust and contentness upon any diagnosis.

Now with the correct diagnosis, Adara feels as though she has hope moving forward. She is in the process of improving herself and developing tools to work towards a better life. “I feel more hopeful towards what I am able to do in the future. If I didn’t have the right diagnosis and tools, I’m not sure I’d be able to do that.” She thanks Stephens’ counseling center for assistance in her diagnosis and further resources. She closes by saying, “All feelings are valid and keep on swimming.”

One of the most important ideas to always stay in touch with no matter the accuracy of your diagnosis is that you are not a label. You are a person—a lovely, brilliant person. Stay in control. Live your life, not the life a disorder or (mis)diagnosis would tell you to. A further, paramount note, Bloch adds, “We need people to be more aware of mental health issues and get rid of the stigma.” **SL**

If you or a loved one is suffering from depression or suicidal thoughts please contact the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at (800)-273-8255.

A Good Patient's Guide

A spin on "The Good Wife's Guide" of May 13, 1965

- Prepare yourself. Take 15 minutes to rest so you'll be refreshed when your disorder arrives. Touch up your make-up, put a ribbon in your hair, and be fresh-looking.
- Always smile and be a little more interesting for your disorder. Its boring day may need a lift, and one of your duties is to provide.
- Clear away the clutter. Make one last trip through the main part of the house just before your disorder arrives.
- Be happy to see it. Greet it with a warm smile and show sincerity in your desire to please it.
- Listen to it. You may have a dozen important things to tell it, but the moment of its arrival is not the time. Let it talk first – remember, its topics of conversation are more important than yours.
- Make the evening its time. Never complain if it pesters you or makes you feel insignificant. Instead, try to understand its world of strain and pressure, and its very real need to be at home and relax.
- Don't greet it with complaints and problems.
- Don't ask it questions about its actions or question its judgment or integrity. Remember, it is the master of your mind and as such will always exercise its will with fairness and truthfulness. You have no right to question it.
- A good patient always knows his/her/their place.

Model, Sarah McMurray is baking up a delicious mood-stabilizing dish.

Mushrooms
Tea Party

Story by: Madison Green
Photography by: Madison Green

Model, Bri Bunker portrays Alice as she goes
in search of Wonderland.

To protect the privacy of some interviewees, the names have been changed.

"Imagine creativity like a faucet when you let it flow— it just flows. It keeps coming. You just snowball with it. When you stop it, you have to restart every time. So, it will take you a long time to fill your bucket, as opposed to if it's just flowing. You can develop on what's building. That's how it is for me," explains Neil Volner. Volner is a Cannabis Advocate and works at North Dispensary, a Missouri Cannabis Dispensary. Volner is a part of the Executive Leadership Team and the Director of Marketing at North. Mushrooms, fungi, psilocybin, cannabis, marijuana, ganja, Miss Mary Jane, are all plant-based holistic medicines that are being medicinally used to heal the human mind and body. Plant-based medicine (which has magical benefits – pun intended) is an ancient practice which persists today.

The use of plant-based medicines tends to be underreported and not widely known by the human collective. There are many factors that can drive one to embody the experience of healing through this method (using psilocybin and cannabis). The use of plant-based medicines can be generational, passed down by ancestors, the result of failed attempts of conventional therapies, a fear or dislike for pharmaceutical medications, mental health issues, overall wellness, moderate illness, and extreme diseases. Holistic medicine practitioners believe that the whole person is made up of interdependent parts and if one part is not working properly, all other parts will be affected. In this way, if individuals have imbalances (physical, emotional, or spiritual) in their lives, it can negatively affect their overall health. Holistic therapists and doctors provide patient education on lifestyle changes, plant-

“Microdosing makes happy people.’ That’s a Paul Stamet quote. Everybody could use a little happiness in their life. Everyone microdoses for their own reasons. It balances what needs balancing. It helps me feel balanced. It makes me feel aware. I don’t feel as anxious. Anxiety still comes, but I can handle it – I become aware of my own anxiety. It allows me to bring creativity into my job and my personal life.”

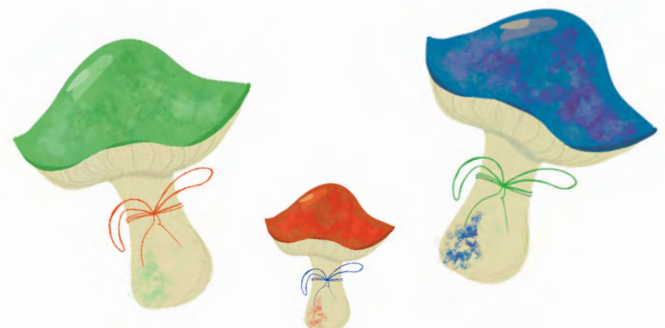
- TISH GOMEZ

based medicine, and self-awareness to promote overall wellness. This may include diet, exercise, psychotherapy, relationship and spiritual counseling, and more. Complementary and alternative therapies include acupuncture, chiropractic care, homeopathy, massage therapy, naturopathy, and others.

MAGIC MUSHROOMS

HISTORY OF MUSHROOMS

“Fungi has been around for millions of years; they were the first organism that really flourished on our planet. When you consume them, you’re consuming thousands of years of knowledge. That’s why these experiences are so intense because you’re getting so much information from these organisms that are trying to expand your consciousness and allow you to see in a different light,” states Enoki Brown, a personal trainer and sport nutritionist specialist. Psilocybin, or better known as magic mushrooms, is a natural psychedelic that is grown from our Mother Earth herself. There are more than 200 species of fungi that can cause mind-altering effects that include euphoria, visual and mental hallucinations, changes in perception, a distorted sense of time, and perceived spiritual experiences. Microdosing medicinal mushrooms is the practice of consuming very low, sub-hallucinogenic doses of psilocybin. Many individuals who have incorporated microdosing mushrooms into their weekly routine have reported higher levels of creativity, more energy, increased focus, improved rational skills, as well as reduced anxiety, stress, and even depression. Imagery found on murals and rock paintings of modern-day Spain and Algeria suggests that human usage of psilocybin mushrooms predates recorded history. In Mesoamerica, mushrooms had long been consumed in spiritual and divinatory ceremonies



before Spanish chroniclers first documented their use in the 16th century. Albert Hoffman is a Swiss chemist who studied the mushroom *Psilocybe mexicana*. Hoffman's employer marked and sold pure psilocybin to physicians and clinics around the world for use in psychedelic psychotherapy in 1959. By the end of the late 1960s, strict drug laws were made that put a pause on scientific research on the effects of psilocybin and other hallucinogens. Along with the strict laws that were created came judgement, fear, and stigmas towards the use of mushrooms.

WHY DO PEOPLE USE MUSHROOMS?

Psilocybin is consumed for many benefits like improved energy, enhanced cognitive benefits, social benefits, creativity, improved mood, physiological enhancement, self-efficacy, reduced anxiety, improved focus, and more. "Mushrooms can literally increase neuroplasticity. It's like the collagen that you have in your skin, but in your brain. So, if you have a piece of gum and you stretch it out once and you try to retract it, it's not going to be in the same form. So over time it stretches and stretches, and it will never go back. So basically, mushrooms are something that can mend that. You can gain more neurons in your brain. So, you know how we always say, 'We are losing brain cells.' Mushrooms increases brain cells. It increases the amount of information that you can retain," says Tish Gomez, a mushroom advocate and an Agricultural Research Scientist for a biotech startup. Individuals consume mushrooms for its benefits and for the experience of a trip. Microdosing is, as stated before, is the use of psilocybin in small dosages. Macro dosing on the other hand, is the use of psilocybin in large dosages to manifest a psychedelic experience. Macro doses are best ingested in a therapeutic setting (and not recreationally). Whereas microdoses are used in any setting (and recreationally).

It was suggested to Gomez that a pharmaceutical antidepressant and Adderall would be helpful for her depression and ADHD. Gomez knew that she did not want to take antidepressants and wanted to experiment with microdosing instead, as it is a more natural healing approach for her conditions. "It really helps on days when I have to start a new project at work or have to do critical thinking at work or I have a meeting... because of my ADHD I have mental blocks and it breaks those blocks down," explains

Gomez. "The biggest benefit I will say is the ability to be more mindful to my own actions and what I am saying and thinking about what I say before I say it. And I have been able to say more with the ability to break down those mental blocks. I've been reflecting and journaling – which gives me a nice chance to be able to see the differences. I feel so much more creative and aware of my surroundings. Personally, I haven't felt the need to get on antidepressant. I don't ever see myself reaching for a psychotherapist to prescribe pharmaceuticals to me," she finishes.

"Learn more and watch [Fantastic Fungi on Netflix](#). It's not 1960 anymore. More people are waking up to the fact that we shouldn't believe everything that we see on TV. Now is the time to start being your own researcher. Learn everything you can. Mushrooms have changed my life. Mushrooms have the ability to be a life changing tool in our toolbox, for all of our mental health issues and overall happiness."

- TRISH GOMEZ

Mushroom advocates, Shaye Danna and Brown (introduced earlier), have had similar benefits to Smith when it comes to microdosing. Danna is a full time nanny. "Shrooms gave me permission to feel things deeply. I express myself but I am not emotional in front of people. I think that I've grown more with that, and I have allowed myself to be like, 'Hey, it's okay to have emotions,'" says Danna. "I am able to focus more and complete tasks. When I microdose I feel more aware of my thoughts. It has a positive effect on my creativity," she could have been said,

she continues. Danna struggled with depression and disorganization before mushrooms entered her life. Magic mushrooms have helped her to have a clear mind and not focus on things that don't truly matter.

"I really started getting serious with psychedelics when my brother passed away. It was a turning point in my life that I needed more stones flipped to help me understand the feeling of being completely at peace and letting go with not only my life but somebody else's life that I loved dearly. It allowed me to make peace with what should of/could have been said, being in the Now, and making peace with what currently is and what always will be," says Brown.

“I definitely have noticed an impact on psilocybin making me feel more upbeat, more light-hearted, more interactive, and more talkative. Essentially, my worries dissipate. Life is an inside job, whenever you focus a lot on the outside stressors, you can get lost in that. Everything is internal and for me psilocybin has really opened that internal portal to focus on what’s going within. I’ve noticed that psychedelics have allowed me to blossom that internal feeling so that I can give more.”

- ENOKI BROWN

“I microdose and macrodose. There’s a lot of variables that come into play for me. Set and setting is of most importance, especially when you do experiment at high dosages of psychedelics. That one, your mental state is angled properly – that you’re not going through extremely stressful times in your life. That you’re not having a point where you’ve had multiple mental breakdowns,” explains Brown. “You can use psychedelics as tools to heal but macrodosing whenever you are at that point mentally is not very good. It can turn negative quickly,” he continues. “Microdosing though, whenever you are going through extremely stressful situations can provide benefits, especially with neurochemistry, feeling your emotions more, and understanding perspective. You’re able to step away and look at a wide camera angle of what is happening. You’re able to take a step back and have perspective of what’s going on that’s making you feel a certain set way and then you can ask yourself, “Okay, why am I feeling like this? What is making me feel this way?” Brown states.

WHY STIGMAS AREN’T NECESSARY

“People associate mushrooms and other psychedelic drugs with bright colors, the sixties, immediately picture a Woodstock scene, and I think a lot of people shrug it off because I don’t think they know that much about it. It’s our own fault that people don’t know as much because we can’t study them. People are afraid of what they don’t know. There’s the stigma of fear,” says Gomez. Considering that psilocybin is illegal in 49 states, the stigma of fear about them is inevitable. Mushrooms are low toxicity

and have low harm potential and yet they are treated and punished like harmful drugs known as heroin, cocaine, and meth. Mushrooms are a natural fungus that grow from the Earth and have so many holistic health benefits. Humanbeings can experience positive effects on mood disorders and anxiety. How magical is that? There’s even research that exist that proves that psilocybin contains cancer-preventive and cancer-fighting actions. Yet, foundations like The Beckley Foundation (pioneering psychedelic research organization) must actively push for the legalization of psilocybin mushrooms. In November 2020, voters passed Oregon Ballot Measure 109, making Oregon the first state to both decriminalize psilocybin and legalize it for therapeutic use. We are on are way to living sustainable, natural, holistic lives.

“The media, in the past especially, has only covered bad stories about psychedelics. Things are blown into a ridiculous proportion. Don’t knock it until you try it and that is something my parents told me,” Danna laughs. “If you are at a place in your life, whether you’re searching for something, you feel like you’re not where you’re supposed to be, or that you might be struggling – and not necessarily with a negative mindset but just in general. I would say defiantly find at least one good person to do them with or a good group – I mean like 3-4 people. It’s not a party drug,” she explains. “I think shrooms are misconceived as a party drug. Like, ‘Oh yeah, we are going to do shrooms!’ First off, people think all psychedelics are the same. That it is all the same kind of trip. That it is all the same kind of mindset and feeling. Any psychedelic is completely opening your mind in every and all aspects that you can possibly think of and then past that even,” Danna continues. “It can turn into a bad trip so quickly just because how open your mind is and how aware you are. Being around a bunch of people and noises, it’s not very beneficial. Shrooms are grounding and it is spiritual experience. You get much more out of it with less things going on around you because there’s so much already going on in your mind already. Being at a party will only overstimulate your mind, when the psychedelics itself already do that,” she finishes.





Model, Bri Bunker portrays Alice and Queen of Hearts as they share a cup of tea together.



MISS MARY JANE

HISTORY OF CANNABIS

Mary Jane, also known as marijuana, cannabis, hemp, ganja, or pot. The Cannabis plant was also grown and gifted to us from our Mother Earth – like mushrooms. Marijuana has a long history of recreational use. Cannabis can be found in ancient times, but it wasn't used to get high. Rather it had herbal medicinal purposes in many different cultures. The history of cannabis cultivation in America dates to the early history of colonists, who grew hemp for textiles and rope. Unfortunately, political, and racial factors in 20th century led to the criminalization of marijuana in the United States, although thankfully, the legal status of cannabis in America is changing in many places today. The marijuana plant originally evolved in Central Asia, and it was introduced to Africa, Europe, and the United States. Hemp fiber was used (and is still used) to make clothing, paper, sails, and rope. Its seeds were even used as food. There is evidence that ancient cultures knew about the psychoactive properties of Miss Mary Jane. The same evidence shows that ancient cultures cultivated religious ceremonies and healing practices using the cannabis plant. It was in the mid 1800's that doctors and scientists began to find that cannabis extracts could help lesson stomach pain and vomiting in people suffering from diseases like cholera. Scientists later discovered that THC was the source of marijuana's medicinal properties. The psychoactive compound for marijuana's mind-altering effects (THC), also interacts with areas of the brain that can lesson nausea and promote hunger. The first national regulation was the Marijuana Tax Act of 1937. Marijuana was officially outlawed for any use (medical included) with the passage of the 1970 Controlled Substances Act (CSA).

WHY DO PEOPLE USE CANNABIS?

“Dec 6th, 2018, is when medical marijuana became legal. You have to have a recommendation from a doctor to possess or use cannabis. With a doctor recommendation, which is fairly easy to get, you can purchase cannabis, or you can also get a cultivator's endorsement that allows you to grow cannabis,” explains Neil. Now that marijuana is on the journey





Model, Bri Bunker portrays the Queen of Hearts as she smokes what the Catapillar is always raving about.

of becoming legal everywhere within the United States, Miss Mary Jane can be consumed in many ways. “Tinctures, sublegal tinctures, fast-acting oral sprays, nose-sprays, transdermal patches, gels, suppositories, teas, bath soups, lotions, topicals for muscle creams. You name it, there are many ways to use it,” explains Kelsey Volner. Kelsey Volner, who is also a Cannabis Advocate, works as the Office Administrator and in HR at North Dispensary alongside with Neil. She oversees Training and Development for new employees.

“Cannabis gives me the ability to relax. It lets me be the creative being that I really am. It gets me out of my own way. The conditioned part of me that was taught to rush around, taught that I’m only enough if I am doing too much, the part of me that needed validation for how much I could get done, basically all of the things that causes anxiety – is gone.”

- BARBIE JANE

Cannabis is consumed for individuals who have chronic pain, alcoholism, drug addiction, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, cancer, multiple sclerosis, epilepsy, and more. “Around 2015, I had pretty bad anxiety. I was taking a lot of vitamins and really taking care of myself, but my body wasn’t processing the vitamins properly because I was so anxious. My body was functioning on stress chemicals. I started doing yoga, meditating, and using cannabis all around the same time. All those things combined helped to ease my anxiety and solved all my digestive issues that I had. I started to be able to absorb nutrients again,” explains Barbie Jane. Barbie Jane is a young woman who is a cannabis advocate and an apprentice of the property manager at a hemp farm. “Cannabis gives me the ability to relax,” Jane begins to say. “When you are stressed and tense, you’re DNA is more tightly coiled.

Your energy doesn’t flow through it, and it doesn’t have the ability to grow the telomeres that lengthen our lives. When we are all stressed, and our DNA is tightly coiled, and our muscles are tight. Our brain isn’t functioning because our nerves are buddled,” Jane explains.

“Our nerves are connected to our brain; our body hears everything that our brain is thinking vibrationally. All our thoughts are vibrations that our body hears, very specifically because each one of our cells is a tiny piece of consciousness that is here to be a completely corporative component of our bodies. There are so many people, because of our society, that run on stress,” Jane further explains. “The stress chemicals are the only thing that keeps us going through the exhaustion. Stress chemicals break down your body. When you let go of that stress, your brain gets to work properly because the neurological connections that are firing aren’t stress related, they are problem-solution finding rather than freaking out about a problem, you’re able to see solutions,” Jane finishes. Cannabis can help to release those stress chemicals so that you are able to navigate through life with a calmness that your body and mind needs.

“I use cannabis as self-medication. I have anxiety, which is common, in the state the majority of people who have their medical card are for mental health reasons,” Neil begins. “I have anxiety. I’ve had depression. I have trouble paying attention. I started realizing I was using it (cannabis) as a tool, rather than to just get high anymore,” he continues. “I have to do a lot of creative work and whenever I need to be creative, I have to focus. I can’t focus sometimes. So, what I do is get medicated. I am able to zero-in and do what I need to do,” Neil says. “Personally, I am hesitant to deal with any issues that I have through pharmaceuticals. So, if cannabis will help me relieve anything, any issues I have, I am defiantly going to go down that route first. So, it was just one of those things where I was already using it, I just didn’t realize why I was using it,” he finishes.

“My cannabis journey began with the stigma of cannabis means you’re a bad guy. That stigma is still being fought to this day. There are still people who will think of you as lower because you consume cannabis. That’s a general one. You smoke weed, you’re a criminal or criminal-minded. Which is not the case, I know a lot of people who are up-standing citizens and have done a lot amazing and great things all while consuming cannabis.”

- NEIL VOLNER

WHY STIGMAS AREN'T NECESSARY

“Two big things that I can narrow it down to is dealing with stress and dealing with sleep. A lot of times those two things will go together. People get stressed out, they have trouble sleeping, or maybe they have trouble sleeping because they are stressed out,” Kelsey explains. “Once you get your stress levels down and enough proper sleep. Your other elements seem to fall into place,” she finishes.

Appetite is a big one. Some people who are ill cannot eat, and cannabis will certainly help that. There’s also inflammation. A lot of the cannabinoids and terpenes that are inside cannabis have anti-inflammatory properties,” Neil adds in. “People who have pain from inflammation, will get relief through cannabis. Most pain is caused by inflammation. You have an endocannabinoid system that can become out of balance and consuming cannabinoids will help balance your endocannabinoid system, which also governs several other parts of your body, sleep, appetite, mood, etc. It helps you remain regular and those areas,” he finishes.

“When cannabis becomes legal in more places, the less stigmas there will be about it. I know people who work at hospitals that have their green card and are medicating with cannabis,” Jane says. The legalization of marijuana has been an ongoing battle amongst the people and the government within the United States. As of 2020, there are 12 states that have fully legalized marijuana, medicinally, recreationally, and no criminalization. There are 8 states that do not allow any type of marijuana use. In other states they offer a mix of legalization, where medicinal is legal and recreational is not. The fear of using cannabis because the legality and criminalization of it has turned many people, the very people you may need it most, away. “Some people can’t use it as the medicine that it is because of that stigma,” explains Jane. Cannabis can be used to replace the very pharmaceuticals used to treat (or control) mental illnesses.

“My father was incarcerated for cannabis for two separate occasions in my life, as a nonviolent cannabis offender. He’s been in prison for about eight years total. That led me when I was young to determine whether I agreed on the laws, because it was a common occurrence that I was told; “Well,

he’s a criminal. He’s a bad guy.” I was told all these things that I know that he is not,” Neil explains. “At some point, I determined whether or not I wanted to agree with that. I didn’t,” he says. “I know my dad is a good respectable person and he’s not a violent person, he doesn’t hurt people, and for me to try and view him as a criminal or the bad guy that people would tell me that he is - just didn’t make sense. So that led me to be a cannabis advocate,” he finishes.

Nature itself is the best physician. Plant-based medicines like mushrooms and cannabis are the original medicines and modern medicine was only discovered a 100 or so years ago. There is incredible self-awareness and ecstasy when one identifies themselves with the whole of nature. What one chooses to consume has a snowball effect on the mind, body, and soul. Just like Trish Gomez said, it is not the 1960s anymore. Be your own researcher, take control of what you consume, be curious, remain open-minded, and the path of holistic medicine will lead you to a place you never knew that existed. SL

THE END.









*Saying
Yes
to the
Dress*

*Story by Nathalia Harris + Dakota Gibson
Photography by Bri Bunker*

Dakota is a twenty-two-year-old transgender woman who is currently a senior at Stephens College. She is an English/Creative Writing major as well as is part of Kappa Delta Sorority. She wanted to begin her story by acknowledging that there is a broad umbrella and many ways to be trans and that she can only speak on herself and her experience.

For me—the way I rationalize it is that when I was being made or when I was born, somewhere, someone, something in the gene department got filed under the wrong page and there was a misprint, and I came out wrong. To me, it was a random mistake. Something that happened and could have happened to anyone. It wasn't easy. For a long time growing up I didn't even know it was a thing. I didn't know trans people existed. It never really even registered as something that needed to be labeled. I just remember always being so confused and sad about the fact that I couldn't be like my big sister. I knew I wanted to express myself in the ways she had the freedom to and the way other women had the freedom to. I knew from very early on I was not like other boys. I was never going to be big and macho. I felt shackled being put into the world as a boy. Even from the beginning, arbitrary gender roles never seemed to make much sense to me just because I didn't want to fall into the male roles. It never sounded appealing.

**“BY THE TIME
I WAS SEVEN
I KNEW I
SHOULD’VE
BEEN A GIRL.”**

As I got older it got harder to let myself feel those things just from pressure from myself and the outside world. I was made to feel ashamed of the fact that I was different. I think for a long time that fucked me up. Especially throughout high school, that was such a rough time, and I know high school was a rough time for everyone, but it was BAD. I bottled it up and ignored it. I told myself it was just a phase. I didn't even really let myself start acknowledging it and experimenting with it until my senior year, and even then it was private. Eventually, I came out to my girlfriend at the time and told her that I was just experimenting, and I didn't know how I identified. She was very supportive, she helped me feel things out, but then we graduated and went our separate ways. We broke up and it did put a little bit of strain on our relationship.

I went to Columbia College Chicago initially for my freshman year. It was very intimidating. I had just recently accepted that I was queer at the very least and experimenting with my gender. I felt very vulnerable and exposed and getting thrown into the deep end of the South Loop of Chicago was very overwhelming for me.

I BASICALLY RAN BACK INTO THE CLOSET AND BOLTED THE DOOR SHUT.

I was miserable the entire semester—which is when I made the decision that I either needed to accept this part of me, move past my own prejudices and say fuck what anyone else thinks, and do what I needed to do for myself otherwise I'm going to die unhappy and alone without reaching my full potential. The thought of that or growing up living a life that was never fully meant to be mine was horrifying. So, then I came out and started transitioning and everything started to make so much more sense. When I came out to my family, it was a long arduous process.

Initially, I came out to my mom first. My mom is my best friend, she's my biggest fan. I came out to my mom on three separate occasions. The first time it went like: “so mom, sometimes I wish I was a girl, what do you think about that?” And then the next time it was like, “Hey remember about that one time I told you about that thing—well I've been experimenting with it and I think I might be gender fluid.” When that happened, she was completely open and accepting. She was definitely shocked, but



I think the more she thought about it, the more it made sense to her. She had a lot to learn but she threw herself into it to support me and that's one of the greatest things anyone has ever done to me. Eventually, when I went to school I was like, "hey that was just a phase—not happening," and six months later I told her I was transitioning. She said, "Girl, you're a whirlwind." My mother supported me every second of the way and I would not be here without my mom.

I told my sister after and, God, my sister probably knew before me. I would sneak into her room and steal her clothes and her makeup as a kid and she would always find out. There were times where we'd hang out and she'd dress me in her clothes and we'd just be sisters. We'd watch barbie movies and as we got older, sure we drifted apart, and our relationship wasn't great in our preteens. But I feel like a lot of that is because I repressed a lot. I feel like she just knew and by the time I told her I was experimenting with being trans, she just accepted it and told me she's always wanted a sister. I'm very grateful for the relationship I have with her.

Now my dad I was terrified to come out to. I was his only son and there's a bond that fathers and sons have that I always saw in friends with their dads, and yeah I had a good relationship with him, I just never felt THAT bond. It sounds kind of awful when I say it like that, but I always knew I was different, and I knew he knew we didn't have that connection. I just always thought he thought I was gay. So coming out to him was a whole other thing—especially since my parents are divorced. I had a very safe space to transition at my mom's house and I kept him out of it. I didn't tell him about any of it because I was terrified. When the time came that I couldn't hide it anymore, I had to tell him that I was transitioning. It's actually ironic. He used to be a Trump supporter and the day I came out to him, I'd just come home from winter break. I had just decided I needed to transition and we went to lunch. I hadn't told him yet and he brought up the bathroom debate. I think I asked him if he was a trump supporter and he said yes—then asked me if I was still a raging liberal and I said yes. So then we got into a debate about that and he asked me how I'd feel if a muscular man walked into the bathroom with my sister. My first words were, "First of all, that doesn't happen in real life." That's not what trans people are and I basically just schooled him about it. He backed down and agreed because he wasn't intensely [conservative] so he was open to learning. After we left lunch I almost [didn't tell him]. But I had to, so I did, and he was so shook which really shocked me. He had a lot of questions, but I feel like it kind of clicked with him and made sense, just not as fast as it did for my mom. He wanted to learn and support me and that's really what matters.

IN THE END MY FEARS WERE UNFOUNDED.

I was really afraid he'd disown me and I think that's a common fear that trans women share. I was pleasantly not let down by my father.

Everything about me, about the world—the way I perceived things, the way I perceived myself was much clearer. It hasn't been easy, but it's been worth it. And there have been some parts that have just been amazing and experiences that I wouldn't have ever gotten otherwise. It can be really hard being trans sometimes, but I wouldn't trade it for the world because it's made me who I am today despite the fact that there are a lot of things I don't like about myself,

I do love myself and I'm really proud of how far I've come and I'm excited to see where else I go because ever since I came out and started to be me it felt like my future has been open. Before it just felt like this dark dreary path that I was doomed to head down, and now there are a million different rainbow roads heading down every direction. It's crazy.

By the time I was interested in coming to Stephens I had already been out and transitioning—taking hormones for little over a year I think. I was a lot more confident in myself and my identity at that point than I was at the beginning of my transition. I felt more secure and confident. I did my second year online because I couldn't deal with being at a university in the awkward stage of my transition, but once I came out of it I wanted to be on campus again. I remembered back in high school my teacher raved about Stephens. She would push it on all of the girls. It was an option she presented to me before graduating. When the time came to look for schools after my time in Chicago it was important to me to go somewhere I felt accepted and understood. Stephens was one of the first schools I thought of. I talked to the faculty to make sure I would be allowed to come. When I took the tour I immediately thought that I would have a place here and I'm so glad I came here. I've had the most amazing experience of my life even despite covid. I'm so grateful to the school for making me feel like I belong. It's overwhelming sometimes to think about how far I've come.

A couple months ago, I changed my name for a second time. It was a tedious process both times. The first time around when I settled on naming myself 'Dakota' I was ecstatic, but I didn't have a middle name yet. Regardless, I just went for it and I actually kept my dead name as my middle name because my parents 'loved that name!' Over time I really didn't like it and decided to change it again. When it came time, I knew I wanted my middle name to be Grace. I chose Grace because someone mistakenly called out "Grace Gibson" in an assembly at school and the name stuck with me. I really liked the way it sounded. When it came time to pick my middle name I just knew--it felt right. I was annoyed I had to go through the process again. But I did it! I got it done and I have my ID. My name is legally changed and it's fantastic!

Being trans is a really important part of who I am and my identity and I'm proud of it, I'm not ashamed of

it, but I also don't want it to define who I am. There's a lot more to me than just the fact that I'm trans and sometimes it feels like a lot of people aren't able to see past it which is shitty, but it just makes me appreciate the people who don't care even more.

It's important for me to acknowledge that I've had a lot of privilege and a privileged experience through my transition. I've come so far so fast and so many trans people don't have that opportunity. I've been very lucky. It may sound hypocritical of me to give the advice to be patient, but that's all you can do. You're not going to wake up the next morning and instantly see all the changes that you've been waiting for. It'll bog you down sometimes, but over time those gradual changes will add up and it'll be like everything is so much brighter. You need to hold on to the hope and belief that eventually you'll be your fully realized self. **SL**





Model, Abbey Heller portrays Marie Antoinette as she looks upon her subjects.

Cake

*Story by Nathalia Harris
Photography by Bri Bunker*

The pandemic was a catalyst to many aspects of our lives becoming unbalanced. It made our routines, self-care, home dynamic, and confidence feel more different than ever before. One of the most common ways we hear of change post pandemic and stay at home order concerns our bodies. The pandemic forced us to stay at home, lose gym memberships, limit our social interactions, and in some cases order take-out more than usual. This caused the slowing down of our daily lives, the increase of body weight, and the stimulation of self-love, self-reflection, and change.

Society has always had the nasty habit of telling us what our bodies should look like, where we should curve, stretch, fold, and roll. Even with the more recent body positivity movement, the pandemic changed our leeway with ourselves and the way we viewed and loved our own bodies. After the pandemic, people were really hard on themselves. They struggled with their self-image and some even shamed themselves for having gained weight, but no one considered the fact that we went through a global pandemic. We were ordered to stay at home and some of us weren't in the best living environments while we were home—whether it was due to our mental health not being great or because our families broke our peace. In order to make room for our mental health and sanity, some of us gave up a few things. We either willingly or forcefully gave up our gym routines, we stopped watching what we ate, and we were less active altogether—none of which was necessarily a negative. For some of us, it was our idea of self-love.

Bella Marco, an equestrian studies major, talks about being upset that she wasn't upkeeping her body the way she was used to, "I've been an athlete my entire life, so when Covid hit I lost a lot of my strength, my body parts weren't as defined as they once were, my arms and legs didn't have the definition they once used to, and I was unhappy. I feel like there were things I could've done to upkeep—I just had no motivation." Bella explains that the pandemic caused her to notice her insecurities more prominently. She expressed that the insecurities she once had only grew throughout the stay-at-home order, and at the time she felt like there was nothing she could do about it. Although Bella says that she happened to notice more insecurities about herself, she notes that quarantine actually made it easier for her to love her body. She explains that not seeing people from day to day played a huge part in being able to feel herself


in her body, and at the time she wasn't worried about what others saw or thought. She explains that although her body changed during quarantine, she made a habit of not penalizing herself for the way she felt about herself even prior to the pandemic. She says she still has that mindset today, but it's still a little bit shocking to see the ways her body has changed.

Caylea Ray is a Stephens alumna who also worked on Stephens Life. She admits she didn't particularly notice that she gained weight until after the stay-at-home order was lifted. "I gained fifteen pounds during the pandemic. Since I wasn't as active as I normally was, I didn't notice it for a while until months went by and I didn't like the way I felt." Caylea opens up about not recognizing herself when she looked in the mirror, and she never noticed that she didn't like her appearance until she looked back at photos. Caylea talked about the way she didn't exactly like her body before the pandemic either, so when she made the habit of going to the gym and having the practice taken away it caught her off guard. She explains that she actually didn't feel like she was taking care of herself throughout the quarantine, which pushed her to do better once the order was lifted. Although she felt like she wasn't taking care of her physical self, she shared some ways she took care of herself mentally and emotionally. "I practiced self-care by dying my hair and doing my makeup, not because I felt like I had to, but because it made me feel better about myself. I did those things because of me, not because of who I was seeing, which contributed a little to not seeing my body or caring how it looked." She said that although she didn't go to the gym consistently, she did take "quarantine walks" and that was a way she connected with herself.

The pandemic clearly had an impact on how we looked at ourselves and the confidence that we felt towards ourselves and our bodies. Body image still plays a big role in how confident we feel today, and Leila Harris, founder of Love Life Coaching LLC, reminds us that we are all human and we experienced very human things and emotions throughout the pandemic. Leila was vulnerable with me and shared the experiences she had as a mother in addition to as a Self-Love Coach. She explains, "I shed my baby weight prior to the pandemic only to realize that I gained fifteen pounds after the stay-at-home order and then became pregnant again!" While the pandemic allowed us to have comfort practices, it also allowed us to slow down and pay more attention



Model, Abbey Heller portrays Marie Antoinette as she makes her subjects watch her eat.



*“Weight gain is
natural and our bodies
took care of themselves
during the pandemic.”*

- Caylea Ray

*Model, Abbey Heller portrays Marie Antoinette as she
even makes cutting cake look good.*

to each other. We paid more attention to not only what others were doing through social media, but the habits in our lives that we either liked or didn't like. Leila mentions, "for me personally [the pandemic] influenced me to make changes I wanted to see in myself, not just my body." Leila described people trying to love themselves more and that there has been a trend of awakening as to what self-love truly is—beyond the physical self. "I think the pandemic has allowed people to identify the blocks of why they're not loving themselves." Although weight gain became a trend, across all platforms we're doing more as a community to remind each other that it's okay if we're not okay, it's okay if we don't necessarily love the way we look, and we're encouraging each other to do what we need to do mentally and emotionally to grow to loving ourselves in the best way possible.

After the pandemic, we've opened our minds to accept love of ourselves, our souls, our lives, not only tied to and centered around our bodies. As a society we have seen that there is way more love and inclusion in the media when it comes to our post pandemic lives and there's way more representation on and acceptance of people who have different body types and lifestyles. Self-love after the quarantine looks different to everyone, and it's okay to struggle with finding ways to love yourself while your body has changed in ways you may or may not be okay with. With that being said, our practices changed as well. Bella says, "I try to do a lot of yoga while I'm not doing cardio to keep my flexibility and mobility up—I think a lot about what my body needs during my yoga sessions." Bella found the motivation after quarantine to do something that makes her feel good and stimulates thoughts about the things her body and herself need. Similar to Bella, Caylea became active again, but reminds us, "a lot of people and fitness gurus still say you 'need' to shed the quarantine 15 and I disagree. Weight gain is natural, and our bodies took care of themselves during the pandemic. I didn't feel pressure to lose the weight or not to; it should be a personal decision." Whether your body changes and you're happy with it or in the process of accepting it again, Leila urges us to challenge our belief as to what we find attractive and why. She says, "Self love is a journey. We don't wake up one day and think we're perfect. It's okay not to be happy—it's the first step in your journey. Self love can happen to be pushed on people—if you feel bad about something, let there be grace and motivation instead. Be okay with not being okay. Tend to the

areas of your life that YOU want to improve on." The tip that Leila leaves us with when it comes to loving the way we look in our skin is "embrace your body by working with your body shape." In other words, feel good about the body you're in and the way you look in something that fits you and your body versus fixating on something that looks good on someone else.

The stigma attached to what others find attractive is not universal. It's not one size fits all. We're becoming more self-aware of how we want to feel and how we want to make others feel. Many times we tend to have ideals of beauty that line up with unrealistic photos of social media, or we drive ourselves crazy following rituals that influencers are using that won't work with our body types or don't medically even work at all. When we are able to change our beauty standards to ideals on an interpersonal level instead of what we're taking in through the media, we can put out a wave of positivity and encouragement to love yourself the way you see fit and the way you want. **SL**





INVISIBLE FIGHTS

Story by Savana "SJ" Johnson
Photography by Savana "SJ" Johnson

C OVID-19 has truly flipped the script when it comes to how the world views illnesses. From the availability of remote jobs to the emphasis on health in the workplace, a much-needed upheaval has swept the workforce off of its feet. But even with this turnaround, there's still the old societal mindset that people are always slacking if they aren't at work 24/7. Mental health has become a more important topic within the past decade, but what about the physical ailments that cause just as much turmoil to the body?

INNER TURMOIL

Emma Schepker, Rachel Willis, and Carley McCall may all live very different lives as college and graduate students, but they all share one thing in common: Crohn's Disease. Crohn's Disease, by definition, is "A chronic inflammatory bowel disease that affects the lining of the digestive tract." It often is seen in the colon, but can happen anywhere on the digestive tract system, and can easily vary in lethality. Symptoms often include: immense pain in the intestines or throughout the body, extreme fatigue, drastic weight loss or gain, anal bleeding, and other similar issues. Not to mention, this is a chronic disease, so it will never truly go away. Crohn's Disease can also vary when it truly begins to show as symptoms in a patient's body. To each of these gals though, it means a different way of dealing with life. For McCall, it's waking up every morning and hoping she has enough energy to get through her classes. For Willis and Schepker, it tends to be a guessing game to see how many hours they have to spend in the bathroom per day.

"DOCTORS NEVER LISTEN. EVER."

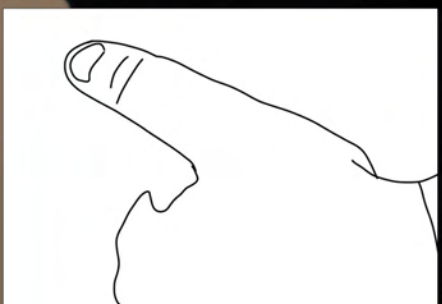
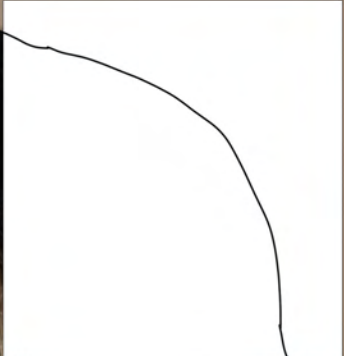
-RACHEL WILLIS

BATHROOM BABBLE

"Crohn's is basically just my body constantly disagreeing with my brain." Willis explained when asked what Crohn's means to her. "I know I'm not going to let it ruin my life, won't let it do that, but it's just going to make my life a little bit more difficult". Willis' journey with Crohn's is probably the most recent out of the three women, as she was only diagnosed within the past year. Her mother had brought her lunch to her one day and told her she had news but couldn't tell it to her in front of her friends. "I told my mom that if she won't tell me what it is right now, that means I have cancer." They continued to argue for a minute, but her mother finally told her that she had Crohn's Disease. "I was just like 'YES! NOT CANCER!' when she told me that."

For Schepker and McCall, their diagnosis periods were more somber than Willis', and both happened during their junior year in high school. "I had lost so much weight when I had to leave school for a little bit, but everyone thought I was anorexic because I had just gone through a break-up at the time," McCall confessed when recalling her first diagnosis. "In reality, I just couldn't get anything to sit in my stomach without it coming back up." Schepker's story unfolds in a similar way, but she recalls having these sorts of stomach issues since she was in Kindergarten. "Being able to finally get a name to this illness that's been plaguing me for years, it was like a weight had been lifted from my shoulders."

2





During the interview, the three women were asked how they go about their day-to-day lives with Crohn's, and they all collectively agreed with Schepker's phrase of "Ignore that you have the disease and deal with the blood that comes with it later." The term "unknown" was used a lot during this time, as Crohn's is such a fluctuating disease. You could feel like a completely normal person when you wake up that morning, but by 3 pm that day you could be having the absolute worst cramps and stomach pain; It's always because of a flare from Crohn's. It also doesn't help these gal's cases that those looking from the outside in have no idea, and will just chalk it up to an excuse to get out of a chore. Willis described it as "having a little sister living in your intestines. You're always questioning why she's being difficult while you're out in public, and people are constantly judging you for it." There was always a constant level of exhaustion and mental toll mentioned between the three of them when describing portions of their day-to-day lives, and the Spoons metaphor was

brought up. "The Spoons Metaphor is a visual way to help describe what it's like living with an illness to others," Schepker explained. The basics of the spoon metaphor boil down to this: everyone has a certain amount of spoons they get at the beginning of the day. Completely normal people start with say, 10 spoons each and every day without fail. Each spoon is worth a task for the day, like showering or going to work. People with autoimmune diseases wake up every morning with much fewer spoons than the normal person, and they take longer to replenish. "Some days I wake up with 3 spoons, and I'll be out of them by 11 am. Once I'm out of spoons, I'm out of spoons and need to rest."

**"WE HAVE TO TALK ABOUT THIS,
EVEN IF IT'S NOT PRETTY."**

- EMMA SCHEPKER



At the end of the day though, these women just want people to understand that they're still completely capable human beings, it's just going to take them longer to get a task done than a completely healthy person would. Schepker emphasizes that, "This isn't like a cold, I have this for the rest of my life," and wants people to think about that before trying to judge her for having to leave class or work early; "It takes me a whole week extra to recover from a cold, where someone else would recover the next day. It can become debilitating quickly." These three aren't the only ones with this disease in the world; there are thousands upon thousands of other people that suffer from Crohn's or similar illnesses, and most of them are our very own friends and family – people like Schepker; like McCall; like Willis. Just because they aren't bleeding from their eyes or have their arms twisted the wrong way doesn't mean that they aren't in pain. "Just take a moment to try and understand the pain we go through. We're the ones that live with it every day, after all." SL



A woman with her hair pulled back and white star-shaped glitter on her cheeks stands in front of a large, mossy rock formation. She is wearing a light pink, sleeveless, floor-length dress with a gathered waist and a small pocket on the chest. Her arms are outstretched to the sides, palms facing up. The background is a lush, green waterfall cascading over the rocks.

Mineral

Magic

*Story by Gillian Sanchez
Photography by Bri Bunker
Illustrations by Madison Moore*

When most people think about stones, they think of cute little souvenirs meant to look pretty. In reality, they are capable of a lot more. Crystals are one type of stone that grow in nature when molecules collect together and the water starts to cool or evaporate. Most crystals form underground and can be found in many places across the earth. Minerals are another naturally occurring substance with a lot of power. Minerals form when atoms of heated rocks move to form different molecules. Because of how they are formed, stones contain many beneficial substances that are used in everyday life. There is a lot more to crystals and minerals than what meets the eye.

Stones can benefit the user's mind and body in many ways. One caveat of this is that the stones need to be charged to work effectively. This is one of the reasons that crystals and minerals get written off as not having any real benefit. Using stones when they are not charged or when you are negative is not going to produce a positive result. There are a few different ways to charge crystals and minerals. The easiest and most popular way is to lay them out in direct sun and or moonlight for up to 24 hours which will cleanse out the negative energy and bring in positive energy. Be careful with sunlight however because it can cause some stones to lose their color.

There are many uses for stones beyond just "witchy healing." There are stones that are commonly used in technology and medication. Radios, for example, contain quartz crystals to control the frequencies in them. While most stones are used for positive outcomes, there are some with a potentially darker side, with effects that are harder to ignore. Bronzite is one of these stones. Bronzite is a mineral containing iron, magnesium, oxygen, and silica that can be found in many places across the earth. When carried or worn, bronzite will take negative energy directed at the wearer and return it back to the sender times two. One person who I interviewed used bronzite and it changed one of her relationships for the better.

she asked Linda Bonebreak, the owner of Karma Care, about what crystals or minerals are best, she introduced her to bronzite.

**“BRONZITE
DOESN'T JUST
PROTECT YOU
FROM NEGATIVE
ENERGY, BUT
IT ALSO SENDS
DOUBLE THE
AMOUNT OF
NEGATIVE ENERGY
BACK TO THE
SENDER.”**

-LINDA BONEBREAK

Bronzite

Ally Ainsleigh, a 22 year old college student, bought bronzite because of how she was being treated after a break up. Originally, she went to the crystal store in search of a crystal to ward off negative energy. When

After Ainsleigh heard that, she was a bit skeptical, but wanted to see if it would work. Ainsleigh had said she only assumed the bronzite would, at most, make it so that her ex would finally understand that the way she was being treated was unacceptable. The events that happened after were nowhere near what she expected. It had only been about a week of her having the bronzite when she got a text from her ex saying that he almost totaled his car and that he's very lucky he didn't die. Ainsleigh shared that she was immediately really freaked out. She thought it was really weird timing considering she had only had the crystal for a week. He continued to share with her that he was experiencing bad things happening to him, so Ainsleigh had decided not to wear the stone anymore. After a few months of tucking the stone away in her bag, he shared with her that he had another near death experience. It was only after this time where he apologized for everything he had done, not only after the breakup, but also for how he treated her during the relationship. Ainsleigh shared that to this day, she will never underestimate the power of stones again.

One Impactful Meteor

Moldavite is another powerful stone with an interesting history. Moldavite is not a stone that originated on earth. It is technically a tektite, which is a material melted by meteorite impact. It was brought to earth by a meteor hitting the Czech Republic, and is the only place you can get real moldavite from. This powerful crystal will lead to positive changes in your life, however, most people are not too fond of change. Many people across different social media platforms have shared that the change this crystal causes was not what they expected. Because of this, the effects of moldavite can cause emotional stress for a time before things settle. The biggest problem with moldavite is that there are a lot of fakes made to sell because it is in such a limited quantity. This issue was made worse when moldavite went viral on TikTok. Fakes have been produced more and more, and the uses of moldavite that were shared were either dramatized or just entirely false. TikTok has caused people to be afraid of moldavite and how it can influence your life. It is definitely a very strong stone, but it is not one to be feared. If you want to purchase or use

moldavite, make sure that it is authentic because the fakes won't do anything for you. Moldavite is not a cheap stone so if the price seems too good to be true it probably is. Real moldavite is green and will have some imperfections like scratches or bubbles. If it looks flawless and shiny, it is likely a fake.

The World of Stones

In the world of stones, there is a general opinion that crystals do not do anything and the people who are using them are either crazy or lying. Contrary to this opinion, there is actually a lot of science behind the power of these crystals. Kunzite for example, is a mineral that is crushed and used in bipolar medication. Kunzite is used because it is high in lithium which helps to balance mood. One of the reasons that most people do not know this is because on the bottle, kunzite will be listed as "contains minerals". Some bipolar medication has other side effects because of all of the other things that are in it along with lithium. It is unnecessary for kunzite to be ingested. The lithium from it can be absorbed through the skin just by holding it. This would also eliminate all of the negative side effects that are caused by ingesting it. The reason that more people don't just hold or wear a crystal is because stones are not given as a first choice of treatment. Stones are seen as being as Bonebreak says, "just a bunch of woohoo!" Traditional medications are prescribed first, and in a lot of situations, seen as the only option even though there are natural options.

**“KUNZITE IS A MINERAL
THAT IS CRUSHED UP
AND USED IN BIPOLAR
MEDICATION.”**

-LINDA BONEBREAK



Model, Marley Lefler embodies the stone, Moldavite. Like the stone, she is ethereal and possesses unyielding power.


More About Stones

Crystals and minerals, like any other form of treatment, are affected by the placebo effect. If the person strongly believes that it is not going to work then it probably won't. People who don't think crystals are effective as treatment for physical and mental ailments will not receive the benefits of the crystals or minerals because they are too closed off to the idea. This happens with modern medications as well and is especially common with cancer treatments. The mentality of the patient is a strong indicator of how well they will do with the treatment.

Another mineral that not as many people know about is labradorite. Labradorite is a stone found in northern Canada, Finland, and Northern Russia. Labradorite has many uses to help with the user's mind and body. This stone promotes respiratory health, especially in the lungs.

It can also help with digestion and boost your metabolism. Labradorite can also be used to help with premenstrual syndrome (PMS) symptoms and pain while on your period. It can also help to restore your energy when you feel drained. This crystal is not very well known considering its abundant uses. This crystal has the capacity to aid in many areas of mental and physical healing.

In short, stones can be extremely beneficial for you, both mentally and physically, if you're open to it. There is a crystal for almost any mental or physical ailment that you might have, if not multiple. Not all stones are created equal and the belief that any of them can do anything is just wrong. Each stone has its own unique set of properties and benefits and, whether you use them for health purposes or just your own spiritual journey, they are something that should be recommended to everyone. **SL**

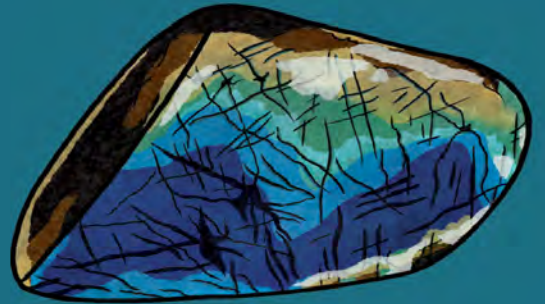
A woman with her arms outstretched, wearing a white dress, stands in front of a large, mossy rock formation. She is looking upwards with a serene expression. The background is a lush, green, and rocky landscape.

Model, Ambria Maddox embodies the stone, Bronzite. Like the stone, she gives protection and wards off others' negative energies.

Magical Stones



Bronzite



Labradorite



Rose Quartz



Moldavite



Kunzite



Fluorite



Hematite

The Big O

*Story by Jaedyn Colvin
Illustrations by Bri Bunker*



Finger painting, buttering your muffin, paddling the pink canoe. Whatever you like to call it, we're talking about it. That's right—masturbation. Here we are in 2021, and self-pleasure is still such a taboo topic. Women speak about it in hushed tones (or not at all), and are continuously shamed for what goes down when they're alone. It's time for us to embrace sex with both ourselves and others. I want you to start yelling from the rooftops, "I love sex!" I want you to tell random people on the street, "Hi, I love sex" and most importantly, I want you to love sex with yourself. Not only is masturbation fun, but it is also good for your physical and mental health. So, what's not to love? From burning calories to floods of dopamine, masturbation does it all. And you should too— be doing it— all.

History of Masturbation

Masturbation is something that is standard, normal, and good for you, so why is it something that is so shamed? The ancient Greeks criticized masturbation and saw it as something only the poor and slaves would take part in. The elites on the other hand, had the role to further family lines, so engaging in intimacy with their wives was a duty. The elite men would use poor slaves and women for their pleasure though. Christianity furthered this criticism to every man. Starting from the Book of Genesis, when God killed Er, Judah ordered his second son Onan to marry Er's widow Tamar. But when he laid with Tamar, Onan spilled his semen on the ground knowing that having a son would cost him a lot of his inheritance. This angered God. Therefore, Christianity deemed masturbation and contraception a sin. Fast forward to the nineteenth century, Jean-Etienne Esquirol, a distinguished psychiatrist and physician-in-chief, declared that masturbation was a form of insanity. However, in 1972, the American Medical Association pronounced it to be normal. Still to this day, the shame and stigma behind self-pleasure continues.

Based on The National Survey of Sexual Health and Behavior conducted by researchers at the Center for Sexual Health Promotion, 84 percent of Americans are touching themselves and 78 percent of those who identify as women are flicking the bean. Many people are taking part in sexy-self care. Julie Gaia, sex coach and sex educator, says it best, "I feel joy when I talk about sex." The two acts of joy and self-pleasure are so connected to each other that it shouldn't be something to be scared of. "I start to think, is real joy so obviously connected to sex though?" she continues on. Women can not feel genuine joy when they feel this pressure of not being good enough in bed or sometimes shame when engaging in sex both with others and by themselves. They are often stuck in their heads. So, the overall question is, how do we get past that? By not giving a shit about what other people have to say about your pleasure. Start becoming comfortable with your body and how it feels and reacts. This is not an easy task either; it is a journey to un-condition yourself to think negatively of self-pleasure. It is empowering to know your body inside and out. Stand in the mirror naked and see all the glory standing before you and give it the love it wants.

Health Benefits

Masturbation is a healthy act both mentally and physically. Besides the vigorous hand movements that make a killer arm workout, your pelvic floor muscles tighten when preparing for an orgasm, and keeping a solid pelvic floor. This will help your core and prevent incontinence. Besides your pelvic floor, your legs and core also tense when your body is preparing for that big explosion. Masturbation is a gift that keeps giving. Sex leads to stronger muscles, therefore, giving you more sexual control. More control gives you more enjoyment, which ultimately leads to more sex. A happy sex cycle, if you will. Your body also flushes out harmful bacteria and toxins, improving your vaginal health. Another great benefit to touching yourself is creating a mindfulness practice. By getting to know yourself, you are

allowing your body to get in touch with itself. “Mindful masturbation is designed to increase your understanding of your body, discover new feelings, and help you explore new ways of pleasuring yourself,” Daniel Saynt says in BuzzFeed’s “9 Masturbation Tips That Are Basically Self-Care”. Masturbation is also good for your skin. Reports have shown that women who have sex on average four times a week look ten years younger than they actually are. How accurate are these reports? I am not sure. But touching yourself feels good, which overall makes you feel good, which reduces stress. When you have less stress, that improves the look and feel of your skin. With all the benefits of getting down and dirty with yourself, why would you not?

was more hidden and secretive. Women are then entering into sexual experiences with others while never entirely having the opportunity to know their own bodies. There is a reason so many women are faking orgasms— because they don’t know how to communicate what they want and what feels good. After all, they do not know themselves. “Of course, men would be having so many more orgasms in their sexual relations, because they had so much of a head start.” She goes on to say when exploring the topic of the gender orgasm gap.

Men have never

The Masturbation Experiment

Keeley Olivia is a female sexuality expert on a mission to revamp the sexual experiences of women and couples the world over. In her Ted Talk, “Masturbation is the New Meditation”, she talks about how, as teenage girls, masturbation

been shared for pleasuring themselves and some have even been encouraged. That when they engage in sex with another person, they are focused on getting themselves off and not on what their partner is feeling. Over the course of one year, Olivia masturbated for an hour a day, five times a week. Applauses and yells are heard across the room in her Ted Talk from the revelation she had just shared. She continues that this sex experiment had opened her eyes to the world she was missing. In her own life, she felt that she couldn’t be a respected woman who watched porn, so she bought a vibrator and masturbated to her imagination of the porn she had watched. “This



made me sad, because I knew my body was capable of magic yet my sexuality felt constricted and trapped.” Through the course of her year long self-pleasure journey, she realizes how she can achieve an out-of-body experience. By focusing on her breaths and the sound of her body moving instead of having her mind wander, she thinks about where her pleasure is coming from. Then ultimately, “self-pleasure felt like a loving way to connect with my body and orgasming for the first time felt soulful and nourishing.”

I am not saying you have to go out and flick the bean for an hour every day — unless you want to then, by all means, go ahead. But, start to treat your body like the temple that it is and stop letting other people control what you can and can not do with it. Julie Gaia gives a tip to “imagine you are doing sex in front of the mirror and get rid of this idea that to only have joy in sex is to have over-the-top sex.” Let your body feel pleasure the way it wants. Stop faking orgasms with other people. Give into the pleasure your body craves, and start loving sex. **SL**





QUEEN OF HEARTS

*Story by Ryann Jenkins-LeFlore
Photography + Illustrations by Savana Johnson*

Drag has been around for a long time. Drag queens such as Marsha P. Johnson fought for LGBTQ+ rights and drag queens inspire others to be more comfortable in their bodies. Drag has done so much for the community and others and yet, they aren't talked about or appreciated enough. In some cases, they aren't accepted or respected within the LGBTQ+ community—their community. The life of drag is a beautiful one that deserves to be told. I hope that after reading this they become a queen or king of your heart.

TANNER SCHATZ “MISTY UNDERTAIN”

Tanner Schartz is an employee at Stephens College working with the conservatory for the performing arts. When interviewing Tanner, my first question was one I've been pondering. Do you think drag queens and Kings are underrepresented? “In the LGBTQ+ community itself, I think that it's not as celebrated as much as I would like it to be. There's this dynamic of ‘you're too feminine for me’ or ‘you want to be a girl’ and it's like no. We need to address that it's a type of performing art.”

Being in the LGBTQ+ community, you know the struggles we all face every day and if not every day then at some point in your life. As an LGBTQ+ person, you've faced some kind of discrimination or hatred based on who you are and who you love. Because of that, It's heartbreaking when someone else within the community belittles you, uses internalized homophobia to invalidate you, or doesn't give you the recognition that you deserve because they of all people should understand. “I don't think we're underrepresented, I think acceptance in our community needs some work.” Tanner went on to tell me that he's faced ignorance with one of his partners not accepting him as a drag queen, to which he replied, “I'm still Tanner. In drag I'm Misty, but I'm still Tanner.”

Theatre was what brought Tanner into drag. He auditioned for a show called “Peter and the Starcatcher” and there was a role that needed to be played by a woman, but there weren't enough women. When asked how he felt about playing a nanny named Mrs. Bunker who is busty, loud, and British he was in. “I said yes. And I did it and I've never felt so beautiful and so empowered.” Learning

about drag culture is what made Tanner want to get up in drag and do it himself. He says that drag was always a part of him that he's always wanted to explore. Drag was something that Tanner went out and found but had to tell himself that it was okay.

Femininity is what drew Tanner in. It was the fact that you can forget those societal norms and be who and whatever you want to be. “Girl, I was born with these long eyelashes. I better use them.”

LIZ ANYA



Liz Anya is a local Columbia drag queen. She was brought into drag by her drag mom, Veronica Versace. Relationships within the community are like a family for Liz. “Anytime we hang out it's just like a bunch of dumb bitches.”

The act of performing and interacting with the crowd is what motivates her to do drag. “I found so much out about myself, activism, and the gender spectrum.” Being a drag queen allowed Liz to come to terms with “being super fucking gay,” and allowing herself to live and forget about the societal norms put on male-identifying people. “To me, being a drag queen is all about being at the forefront of everything and being the pillars of the community.” For Liz, this is what drag means to her the most. Because she grew up in a small town where she didn't feel comfortable being herself, the validation that she's making others day and making a difference in the Columbia community is another reason why Liz continues. Liz Anya is an extension of Anthony, it's who she's always been.



**“THERE ARE TRANSGENDER QUEENS, BIO QUEENS, AND BEARDED QUEENS AND IT'S WONDERFUL. I LOVE ALL KINDS OF DRAG BECAUSE IT'S WHATEVER YOU WANT IT TO BE.”
-TANNER SCHATZ**



"I THINK IT WAS PEPPERMINT THAT SAID, 'WE'VE BEEN THE STORYTELLERS OF THE COMMUNITY FOR SO LONG.'"

- LIZ ANYA



Ryder Allnight holds his poker face as he gets a clean sweep.

BRIDGET BUSH “RYDER ALLNIGHT”

Bridget Bush is a third-year student at Stephens College and a drag king! Bridget has done cosplay in the past and is also an actress so getting into character was very familiar to her. She’s always been drawn towards male characters and roles which is why Bridget was so intrigued about drag kings. “I love dressing up. I love being someone I’m not, it’s why I’m in theatre.” This past summer at Okoboji summer theatre was Bridget’s first time performing. Initially, she was going to perform a

song from “Lemonade Mouth” until she found a pair of sparkly chaps and a sparkly cowboy hat.

Drag is a way for Bridget to amplify her inner wild child and let loose while also being able to pull it back off-stage. “The amount of times I’m able to get up on stage as a man are small.” When asked why she chose to be a drag king instead of a bio queen, Bridget explained that she presents as a woman every day. Being a drag king allows Bridget to be sexy and to keep in touch with the masculine side of herself that she doesn’t always get to be on stage or in her day-to-day life.

ARTEMIS GREY

Artemis Grey is a local Columbia drag queen. She started performing a year and a half ago. Performing for the first time was scary, but it was also “A transformative experience” for her.

Artemis started doing theatre makeup and through that learned about transformation and “stepping into someone’s shoes.” She fell in love with it. Then, she started practicing drag makeup. Artemis talks about turning 16, discovering who she was, but being too scared to talk about it until she found “RuPaul’s Drag Race.” Learning about queer representation helped blossom the idea of being confident about who she was. “I think drag found me. In my most vulnerable moment, I saw men in wigs and said, ‘why can’t I do that?’”

“You have those moments where someone comes up to you and tells how much it’s changed their life.” What keeps Artemis going is knowing that drag is not only impacting her in a positive way but also others around her. “In a way that I can have someone look at me and say ‘you made me realize it’s okay to be who I am.’”

Because drag has put her in the public eye locally, it’s forced Artemis to make sure she’s saying the right things and not offending anyone and making sense.



It’s a challenge that holds her accountable. “Some days you wake up and you’re like, ‘I put on a wig and a dress for money’ and other days you’re like, ‘why the hell would I not put on a wig and a dress for money?’” In drag, Artemis is powerful, loud, and strong, but outside of that she’s quiet and reserved. Drag makes her feel empowered. Through Artemis Grey, she found a way to be comfortable with herself outside of drag. “Drag was a way for me to escape the real world, but it also allowed me to grow what was already inside of me.”

“ASIA O’HARA SAID ‘IT’S THROUGH DRESSING LIKE A WOMAN THAT I LEARNED HOW TO BE A MAN’

-ARTEMIS GREY

The inspiration behind Artemis Grey: the Greek goddess of the moon. Artemis Wanted something mysterious and powerful. She fell in love with the idea of a woman who lived one life and then became a total badass when she logged out of her day job.



KAYCEE

Kaycee is another Columbia local drag queen. She began in December of 2021. Kaycee's first show was with Artemis Grey and now considers Artemis her sister. At the beginning of her drag career, she started on a small stage and wasn't able to leave it to collect tips due to Covid-19 and had to adapt to not being able to interact with the audience. There was a challenge of now having to perform solo on stage. What helped Kaycee was remembering that she once did theatre, and this performance was like being on a stage again, auditioning, or performing a cabaret. "You're standing there and you're doing a full number by yourself, not feeding off the audience, and just doing it for you."

The representation that Kaycee provides is what pushes her to continue. She goes on to talk about the theatre world, drag, and Columbia not being diverse enough as far as people of color. "I want to be one of those queens just in case people look at me and go 'okay someone like her is doing this, I think I can do that.'" When Kaycee started with

theatre, she wanted to see herself on stage. While doing "Pinkalicious" for Okoboji summer theatre, a little boy approached her, and said, "because of you, I want to do that and I like pink." The fact that sometimes drag feels like just fun and goofing off means so much more to people. Like the little boy is what motivates Kaycee to keep going. "I want to push myself to go farther and see what more I can do for the community or as a performer." As Kaycee got into high school, she explored more of the world around her.

"One day I was scrolling on amazon for something to watch and I came across "RuPaul's Drag Race." I was like, okay I don't know anything about that let me look into it."

At the time in Topeka, Kansas, where Kaycee grew up, there wasn't any drag. When Kaycee moved to Columbia and found an LGBTQ+ bar with a drag community she knew that it was where she wanted to be.



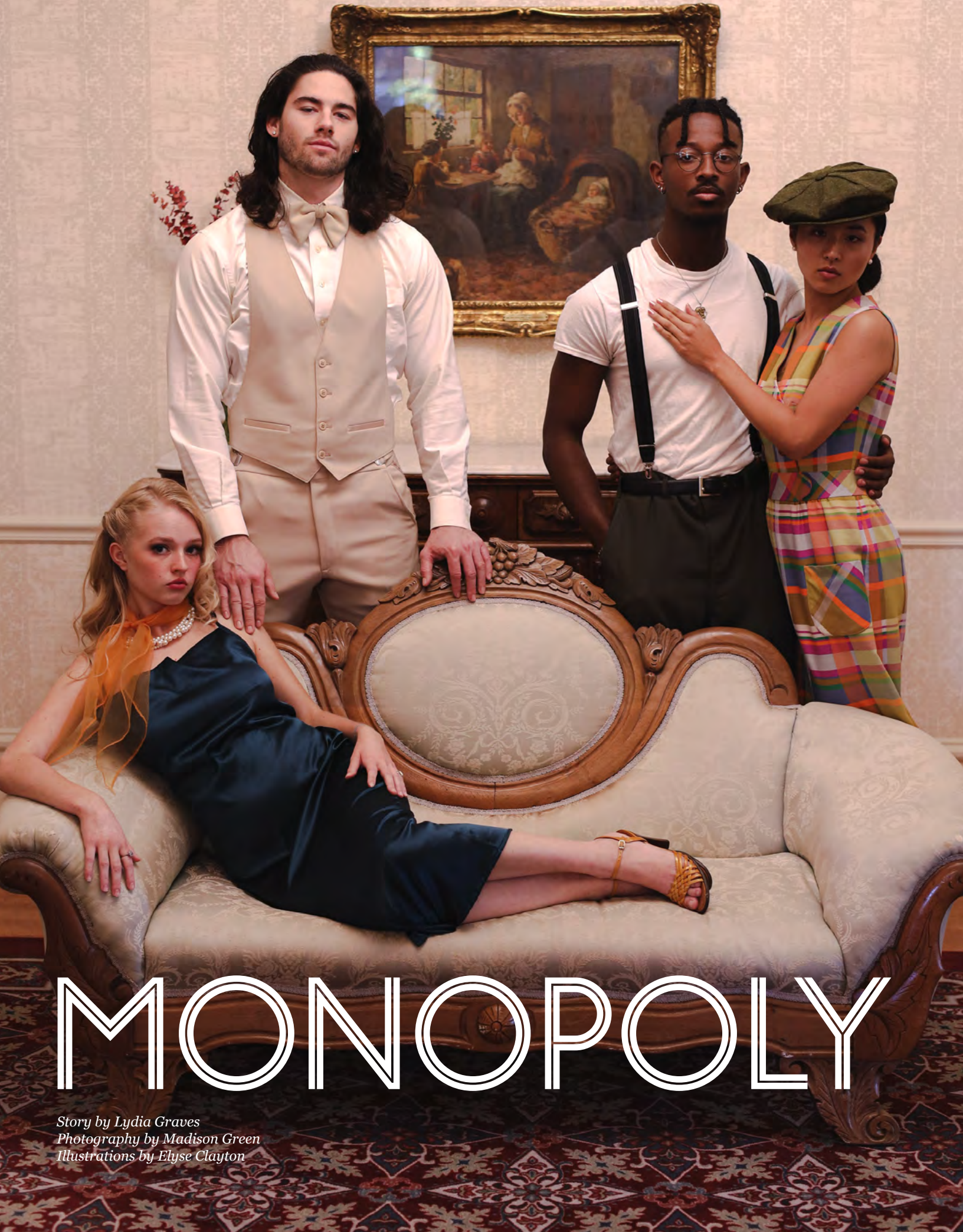
Going out to shows and watching others so she can learn and taking breaks when she needs them so that she can come back and be her best, has helped Kaycee from quitting. "A horrible flaw I have is that I compare myself to other people." The realization of how much she's invested and how much she's pushing herself helps to fight the self-doubt of not being enough or not doing enough.

"Being at Stephens, I didn't get to see myself shine. Doing drag, I've been able to make a name for myself in a whole new form." Because of this, drag has been empowering; a way to embrace the femininity within her and a way to please the desire to perform.

It's an outlet and an extension of Kaycee. At Stephens, Kaycee was one of four men and because she was mostly given ensemble roles, she wasn't able to reach her full potential and excel until she got to Okoboji. Even with that, Kaycee learned a lot from Stephens. "I've been able to take all the critique I got at Stephens and the mentorship I got and tailor that to my life now as a performer. And I've also gotten to use that to talk to current professors to enhance the program." When Kaycee attended Stephens she wasn't able to receive a BFA and

fortunately that's changed. Being an alum has allowed Kaycee to make suggestions and help advocate for others in the program so that they have an even better experience and don't experience the same things she did. "Doing shows where you're like 'oh I think I can do this' and then you look back and everyone who's done it has been white. That's when it puts more self-doubt and you're like 'are you sure you can do this?'"

Drag has an impact on the people doing drag and the people watching. It's a performance, but it's also activism. These five people are just a portion of the large community that has done so much for LGBTQ+ people and who are going to continue to make an impact. Whether that be encouraging people to be themselves, providing representation, or protesting. Drag is fun, but it takes time, talent, and confidence. For that reason, drag queens and kings deserve credit, your attention, your money, and for their voices to be heard. **SL**



MONOPOLY

*Story by Lydia Graves
Photography by Madison Green
Illustrations by Elyse Clayton*



Each player starts solitary. They then take turns in order with the initial player moving around the board. A typical turn begins with the rolling of the dice and advancing a piece to the corresponding life experience. If a player rolls polyamorous, they become involved in multiple romantic (and sexual) relationships. If a player rolls monogamous, they are involved with one partner at a time. Players are permitted to roll once again (or more) if preferred but are valued no matter where they land on the board.

How to Play

In simple terms, monogamy, as many know, is a practice of being in a relationship with one person. It is typically characterized by a person seeking out another person with whom they would choose to spend their life with. Between these two individuals, there is a strong bond and emotional intimacy. There are an abundant number of benefits to identifying with monogamy: marriage to their partner, accessibility to life insurance together, help with medical decisions, and the list goes on. A monogamous self and spouse unlock an immense amount of rights, accompanied with happiness and a unique intimacy.

In its most basic terms, polyamory is loving, being with and having relationships with multiple people. As Madison Philips—a mental health clinician from Aspire Counseling—states, polyamory is a form of ethical non-monogamy. Those that identify with this form of relationship have an increased awareness and reflection built within each practicing individual. Openness and communication are crucial with both polyamory and monogamy. However, in polyamory, there are typically multiple people depending on an individual, their thoughts, their feelings and their behaviors. Polyamorous individuals must be incredibly transparent and aware of internal feelings; it is not only one relationship depending on the person but multiple. Regardless of relationship type, communication remains important.

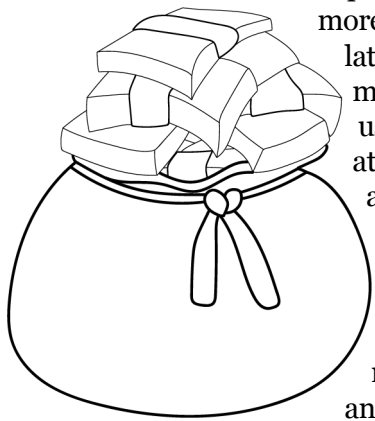


Meet the Players

The Money

Alyssa is a 21-year-old all about “fucking societal norms”. She is polyamorous-identifying, queer, alt, a stripper and vanlifer. Lately, Alyssa has been working and exploring Iowa before driving to Colorado. Currently, she is in a relationship with Emmett, who is trans-masculine and non-binary. They’ve been together for about six months. “We said I love you probably two or three weeks into seeing each other. It was ridiculously quick and unexpected.” Alyssa traveled in a normal van with her husky before meeting Emmett. They soon discovered they had a shared dream to travel. About three months into their relationship, they bought a small RV together to travel and moved into it full-time. Not long after, they got a second husky. “I didn’t ever think I’d like polyamory. I tried it at a very bad time when I was in a very serious, long-term relationship, and I discovered I loved it.” Alyssa has experienced both monogamous and polyamorous relationships. “I’ve always been open to both types of relationships depending how I felt in a relationship with the specific person.” But, she loves that her relationship with Emmett is always changing. “In the beginning everything was completely open. I was seeing Emmett and another guy named Keegan. Everything was going well, but when my relationship ended with Keegan, my relationship with Emmett was becoming

more serious. And about a month later we decided to try being monogamous since neither of us had any additional partners at the time. Maybe a month after that we wanted to remain open and practiced ethical non-monogamy. And our boundaries are always shifting and always respectful based on our needs and wants. It’s very fulfilling.”



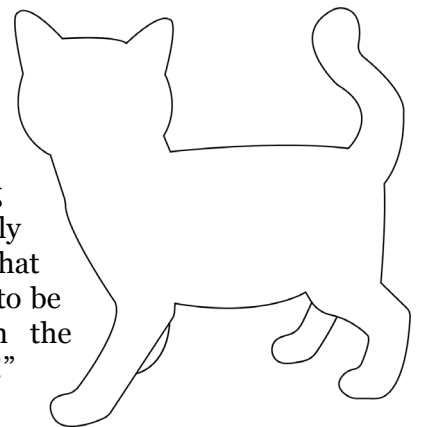
The Cat

Nadine is 19, recently married and living in small town Iowa with her husband and their two cats. Four years ago, Nadine met her partner in sophomore year of high school when he was a junior. “Ethan told me that he loved me first, before we were even dating. I guess that saying ‘when you know, you know’ is



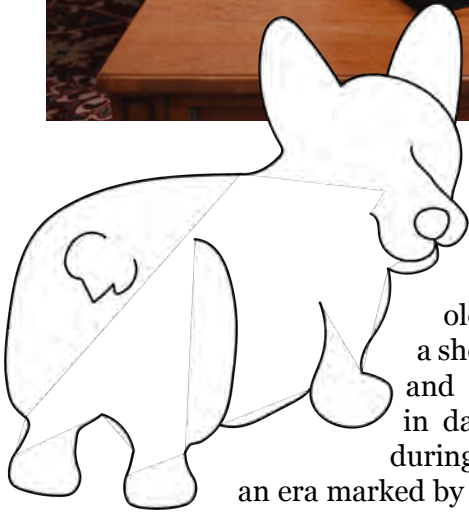
true.” Two years later, after she finished high school, they moved in together. Not long after, they were engaged. Nadine has known she was monogamous-identifying all her life. She relates it a lot to her religion as a Christian and the strong beliefs that come with it. She loves “sharing all the special things involved in a relationship” and the unwavering intimacy with her husband. “[Our relationship] has changed me for the better.

I was once in an abusive relationship and completely lost who I was. Meeting Ethan was literally a sign from God that my life was about to be turned around in the best ways possible!”





Models, Komachi Miyazaki and Ryan Jones indulge themselves in a game of Monopoly.



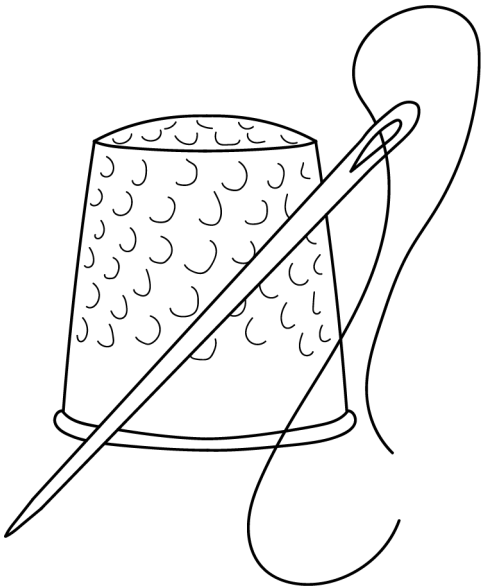
The Corgi

Jane is 64 years old with two corgis, a sheep dog, a daughter and a vast experience in dating. She grew up during the 60s and 70s— an era marked by free love. Jane also mentions her low self-esteem and how it urged her to look for love by exploring sexual relationships. As Jane began dating more seriously at the end of high school, she had more polymorous-identifying relationships, which she defines as, “being able to care deeply about more than one person and have a relationship with more than one person at a time.” She believes it doesn’t necessarily have to involve sex, saying there are more intimate ways to connect. “I mean, I’ve had orgasms just from kissing men, and those men I probably would connect with more intellectually.” One of her “best relationships”, she says, began when Jane started dating someone among her artist friends, relating it to the television program “The Big Bang Theory” but instead of scientists it was artists. “It was one of my more true and easy relationships.” With him, the relationship

was completely monogamous and lasted five years. They moved to the east coast together, but ultimately they wanted different things and later split. Not long after, she met the man of her dreams. He was just out of a failed marriage, and the two clicked. It became a polyamorous relationship while he sought out other companions, but Jane had residual insecurities that did not make the relationship ideal for her. Soon, though, she met another man in which things became serious quickly, but it was not satisfying to her; he did not meet all her needs. Eventually Jane married this man and had a daughter. But, leading up to the marriage and slightly into it, Jane continued to see her dream man. A few years after the marriage, Jane separated from her husband. Since, she has struck up a conversation with her dream man again. Looking back and reflecting, Jane says, “He stimulates me intellectually, we are compatible sexually, and I really feel he is probably my soulmate. It’s probably just that our times never meshed up and we never wanted the same thing at the same time.” She continues, saying, “I do think we can have more than one soulmate. I think there are people that will match with you on certain levels that other people don’t and can’t and will never be able to.”

The Thimble

Erica is 18, in college to be a costume designer for theatre, and polyamorous. She broke up with a boyfriend of six months recently, and has since met a girl she has developed a relationship with. They met on a dating app and immediately hit it off. Erica's girlfriend is in another relationship, but Erica is separate from it. Erica speaks about a milestone in relationships being building the trust one has for another. She shares that getting to the point where you can tell a partner anything and it be accepted is incredibly freeing. "There should be communication in all relationships... but I feel like in polyamorous relationships there's a lot more understanding." Erica likes having separate dynamics with people in her relationships. "One person will meet my attention needs and another person might fit something more physical." Everyone has different qualities and varying personalities. She stresses that polyamorous relationships are complicated. "I have literally made flow charts," she tells me. "I don't think [being polyamorous] is something that should be hidden... but sometimes I'm scared to tell people that I am." Erica shares that she's been told to "choose" between partners or that she's a "whore". It creates a sense of insecurity even though she knows what others say isn't true. "I'm just living my life and making myself happy."



Roll the Dice

Obviously the two types of relationships have their differences, but contrary to some thoughts, there are similarities. For instance, the development of the relationship is similar. Starting off, the honeymoon phase is when two characters begin to develop a relationship and have an infatuation with one another. This is when attraction is elevated, chemistry is high, neurotransmitters are very happy, and there are typically a lot of sexual encounters. Where it begins to differ is with the level of openness required in polyamory. Since the relationship already requires dialogue between partners, this opens up many conversations on sex and consent. Within these topics, it deepens intimacy and vulnerability, Phillips explains. But the rough spots remain similar no matter the relationship type. Jealousy and insecurity are very common. Happiness comes from a related spot as well, as Phillips suggests, “Boiled down very, very simply, I think happiness comes from that transparency and freedom to be who you are.” This can be found in a monogamous relationship as thousands of people have, and it can also be found in polyamorous relationships with a little more fluidity. Both forms of relationships have function, satisfaction between all individuals, passion and commitment.

Alyssa explains, “There are a lot of different kinds of polyamory, but what a lot of people don’t realize is there are different kinds of monogamy, too. If you ever notice those couples where both partners are extremely against their partner having friends of the opposite gender, it’s not always toxic. Sometimes it’s really a strict belief that

you don’t need friends of the opposite gender. They are both agreeing upon that as a boundary; it’s really just a strict type of monogamy. There’s monogamous couples who allow their partners to casually flirt and don’t mind as long as they don’t take it anywhere. And there’s people all along the spectrum. And then it hits polyamory where there’s also a huge spectrum from people who have a main serious partner and then are dating on the side. Some have multiple serious partners, or none are serious, or all partners are considered equal in their eyes, or three-way partnerships, or more. Honestly, any relationship is just a contract of boundaries all partners agree to. You can make it anything you need or want in a relationship.”

Despite so many similarities, people still portray polyamory in a negative light while monogamy is a “star-pupil” of sorts. This has been a bias planted and grown by large media, providing the idea that those identifying with polyamory are “sluts” or “just want to cheat.” “That’s so very different from how it is in practice, because it does rely so, so much on the transparency and the consent. Every party involved is on the same page, and ideally those tough conversations are happening throughout the whole buildup of the relationship or connections,” Phillips voices. Media plays a large part in societal standards and toxic monogamy. Forms of relationships are very stigmatized if it approaches outside bounds of monogamy. As humans, it is conditioned that one person will check all of our boxes. However, many times one person will not fit all the needs of an individual. Polyamory provides an openness to more. There is more connection, more honesty and more intimacy with others that is based around transparency.



Models, Ryan Jones plays the piano as Hannah Vanover listens and gazes her other partners across the room.

The Goal of the Game

“How we view love and what that means to us on an individual level I think is so different that you have to find what that means for you,” Phillips urges. Love is strange and unpredictable and sometimes even indescribable. Each player explores life as a game of deciphering what it means. Not only what the denotation is, but how it is defined in their own words.

Alyssa: “Love is a feeling you get when you care for someone or something deeply and you treat them accordingly. Respecting their boundaries and attempting to make your time with them meaningful and good. Making people happy shows your love. It definitely isn’t defined by relationships or labels or even knowing them long. Loving something is just about feeling it and treating it just right.”

Nadine: “I would define love as caring for this certain person more than yourself. Making sure they know you care about them, are there for them, and would never turn your back on them. Plus being their best friend!”

Jane: “I think love is being willing to give up yourself completely and open yourself completely so that you are totally naked in front of that person. And you know that, no matter what, they will accept you for whatever they see. [Love is] being willing to make sacrifices for that person and that relationship. When I think about love, I think about my daughter. I don’t think I ever knew love until I had her.”

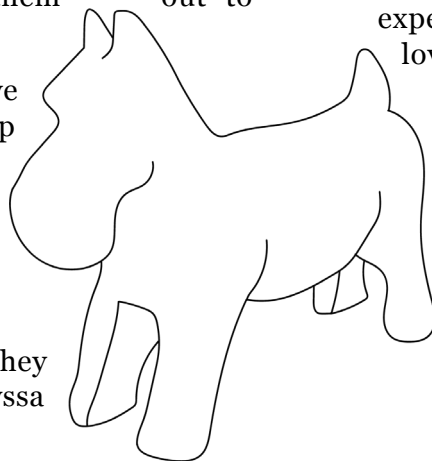
Erica: “Love, and how I think of it, is if I want to care for a person and I’m genuinely interested in what they’re up to and how their day is going. I care for them, and I want them to be happy. I want to give gifts or take them out to show my care selflessly.”

Madison Phillips: “Love is anyone that fills your cup and you feel that connection to; love doesn’t have to be romantic; it doesn’t have to involve sex; it can look lots of different ways.”

All the players have goals as they continue along their game. Alyssa

would like to be happy and settle down with a main partner(s) eventually. She wants to get better at pole work. And she’d love to finish seeing the country as she’s only halfway done so far with the whole west side to go. Nadine looks forward to buying a home with her husband and planning for their first baby. Jane wouldn’t mind living with someone again. She would like a companion who will stimulate her intellectually; in simple terms, she’s looking for someone to have adventures with. She also hopes to continue to mature, grow and understand herself more deeply. Erica would like to have a flowy relationship, but wants to focus on her costume designing career. She doesn’t think she’ll ever be able to settle down with one person, but wants to enjoy her life and be there for others. “If I want something or I need something, I want to know [my partner(s)] will be there. And if they want something, I will be there for them.”

In this game, players live life how they enjoy with people they love. They move around in life to each new game piece, sometimes alone and sometimes with others. Players collect memories, moments and milestones. Difficult experiences can also be gained through the chance and life card deck. This game has numerous rules (which players can choose to follow or not follow), thousands of different editions and many spin-offs. Players move throughout the board, gathering new experiences and understanding the concept of love for themselves. **SL**





Model, Hannah Vanover always has someone to light her cigarette.



issue credits

Keeping It Private

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Level Up!

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Graphics: Production Crate
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I Once Was Like You

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Double Standards

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Happiness In One Easy Step

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Mushroom Tea Party

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Cover

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Color Pages (first and last page)

Illustrations: Gillian Sanchez

Letter from the Editor and Table Of Contents

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Layout: Bri Bunker + Leslie Douglas

Staff Line Up

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Queen of Hearts

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Illustrations: Savana "S.J." Johnson
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Ryder Allnight
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Models: Ryan Jones, Komachi Miyazaki, Braiden Wade, + Hannah Vanover
Assistants: Lydia Graves + Arika Smith
Hair/Make-up: Lydia Graves, Arika Smith, +
Madison Green

virago

[vi-rah-goh]

(n.)

an archaic word meaning a woman of masculine strength or spirit; a female warrior.