

# ThreeSixty

Minnesota Teens Report Stories and Issues That Matter

## Staying off the streets

Twin Cities activists get serious about teen prostitution

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### When he was 16...

Talking high school with Chris Kluwe Page 8



### Fashionable art

Korean student gets creative Page 16

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**What is ThreeSixty Journalism?** ThreeSixty Journalism is a youth journalism program of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of St. Thomas. The non-profit program is committed to helping Minnesota teens tell the stories that matter in their lives and communities.

### **What is ThreeSixty Journalism's mission?**

ThreeSixty's mission is to bring diverse voices into journalism and related professions and to using intense, personal instruction in the craft and principles of journalism to strengthen the literacy, writing skills and college-readiness of Minnesota teens.

**Whom do you serve?** ThreeSixty Journalism directly serves more than 100 Minnesota high school students each year via after-school classes, weekend workshops, school partnerships, individual coaching and summer journalism camps. About half the students served come from low-income homes and more than 60 percent come from communities of color. We serve thousands more via our print publications and website—[www.threesixtyjournalism.org](http://www.threesixtyjournalism.org)

**How did ThreeSixty Journalism start?** The program began as the Urban Journalism Workshop in 1971. UJW provided basic journalism training to Minnesota high school students, particularly low-income and minority teens, at summer camps at the

University of Minnesota. In 2001, the program moved to the University of St. Thomas and became a year-round program with a full-time staff.

**What does the name ThreeSixty mean?** In 2006, the program's name changed to ThreeSixty Journalism to reflect the program's growth and the range of backgrounds among the students we serve. We are interested in telling stories from all parts of our community, using a variety of media tools, including words, photos, illustrations and video.

**How can I get involved?** Apply for our after-school NewsTeam program, which will start in February. For applications and details, go to our website: [www.threesixtyjournalism.org](http://www.threesixtyjournalism.org)

To submit ideas, essays, photos or artwork, email them to [info@threesixtyjournalism.org](mailto:info@threesixtyjournalism.org) or contact Editor Thomas Rozwadowski at [thomas.rozwadowski@stthomas.edu](mailto:thomas.rozwadowski@stthomas.edu)

To arrange classroom visits, contact Community Outreach Editor Katie Johnson at [katie.johnson@stthomas.edu](mailto:katie.johnson@stthomas.edu) or Executive Director Lynda McDonnell at [lmmcdonnell@stthomas.edu](mailto:lmmcdonnell@stthomas.edu)

**How can I support ThreeSixty?** Visit the Supporters page of our website to see a range of ways you can help as a donor or volunteer. [www.threesixtyjournalism.org/audience/supporters](http://www.threesixtyjournalism.org/audience/supporters)

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**For Minnesota teachers** If you would like to receive ThreeSixty free of charge four times a year, send the following information to [info@threesixtyjournalism.com](mailto:info@threesixtyjournalism.com).

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Please include your name, address and email address.

Volume 3 • Issue 2

# ThreeSixty

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## COVER STORY

The Federal Bureau of Investigation has identified the Twin Cities as the 13th largest center for child prostitution in the nation. In an average month, more than 200 girls are sold for sex in the area. Their average age is 13.

Organizations led by the Women's Foundation of Minnesota are rallying for change and working to end the sexual exploitation of teen girls. In this issue, meet Angela, a 26-year-old woman who still struggles to talk about her year-and-a-half on the streets. For her, it was never a "chosen" lifestyle. | **Page 13**

### Send comments to ThreeSixty Journalism

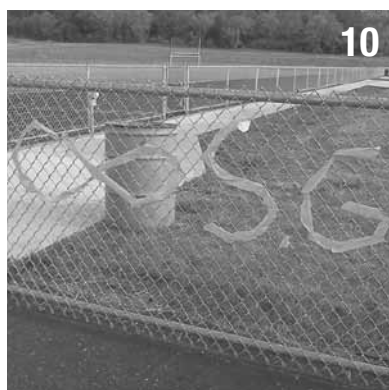
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Find more at our website:  
[www.threesixtyjournalism.org](http://www.threesixtyjournalism.org)

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## MEET THE EDITOR

# Let's get writing, teens

By **Thomas Rozwadowski**, ThreeSixty youth editor

**M**y journalism career peaked on Nov. 30, 2004. That was the day I interviewed Dennis Haskins, or as you may or may not know him better, Mr. Belding from the cheesy '90s-era teen sitcom "Saved by the Bell."

Since I was only about two years into my tenure as a full-time Green Bay Press-Gazette writer, I doubt the interview was any good. Instead, it's special to me because as a pop-culture nerd who

a) has engaged in serious adult conversation as to whether "Saved by the Bell" could be considered legitimately funny—I've always argued yes—and

b) used to get quizzed by high school classmates about largely inconsequential details like Zack Morris' SAT score—ahem, 1502—I remember thinking to myself, "Wait, I get paid to do this?"

That's the beauty of journalism. Every day can be different. Every story a new challenge.

In 11 years at my hometown paper—first as a part-time photo clerk, then a night cops reporter, and finally, holding down a dusty features/entertainment desk since 2004—I had the opportunity to tell amazing stories about amazing people. What made it even more fulfilling is that I experienced those special moments in my own back yard.

Though I worked for my high school and college newspapers, and later as a writing tutor at St. Norbert College, I still didn't have any clue what I wanted to do post-graduation. I only knew that anything involving math and science was out the window, so by



Thomas Rozwadowski

default, writing full-time seemed like a pretty decent gig.

One minor hang-up: I didn't like talking to people. Instead, I've always been the quiet, judgmental kid in the corner as the loudmouth party guy soaks up all the attention, unaware of my sarcastic mutterings. That's probably what made writing so appealing. All the things I wanted to express but really couldn't in person (well, unless I wanted to get punched in the face a lot), tended to pour out of

me naturally with a pen or in front of a keyboard.

Journalism changed everything for me. You learn a few things about yourself when forced to tap a random teenager or mall mom on the shoulder to discuss "American Idol" results or the best ice scrapers to use in winter (don't look that last story up, please). Being the topical grab bag that it is, features forced me into all sorts of awkward situations, eventually allowing me to bust out of a long-inhabited shell and be comfortable with, God forbid, talking.

More than anything, working for a newspaper taught me a great deal about my community. As fun as it can be to say you've interviewed athletes, chefs, musicians and celebrities—or in the case of Mr. Belding, celebrities only to reporters who had childhood crushes on Kelly Kapowski—the best part is interacting with everyday people. People I never would have met otherwise.

If you're a teen who finds power in the written word, or a parent/teacher with a student who loves to write, e-mail me at [thomas.rozwadowski@stthomas.edu](mailto:thomas.rozwadowski@stthomas.edu). For partnership and workshop opportunities, contact our community outreach editor Katie Johnson at [katie.johnson@stthomas.edu](mailto:katie.johnson@stthomas.edu). Got a one-time only opinion piece? Send it over. We'd also love to hear your best story pitches.

So, there you have it, teens. Turns out you can get paid to do this, too.

## This issue's artists and photographers

**Mary Wu**, a junior at Thomas Edison High School in Minneapolis, is an exchange student from Taiwan, which is a small island beside China.

"This winter is going to be the first time I will experience a snowball fight, the coldest temperature I will have gone through (because my country doesn't have snow), and I'm really excited about them.

"I wish while visiting this year, I could get to know every tiny microscopic thing about America, and have lots and lots of fun."



**Elise Swenson** is a junior at Thomas Edison High School in Minneapolis.

"I've been doing artwork for as long as I can remember. I love learning about different art styles from cultures across the world, and I'm interested in how art and psychology relate. I love creating art because it lets me express myself in a beautiful and creative way."



**Jennah Benalshaikh** is a senior at St. Paul Preparatory School. She plays soccer, speaks a little Arabic (her dad's from Saudi Arabia) and loves photography and art. She would love to interview Lady Gaga or Katy Perry to learn their background stories and how they became famous.



**Nico Machlitt** is a senior at Highland Park Senior High in St. Paul, where he works on the yearbook staff. He speaks English and Spanish and has studied Chinese for four years.

"For fun, I like to read, paint, draw, ski, snowboard, run and go see movies. If I could travel wherever I wanted, I'd go back to Peru, because that is where I was adopted from."



**Victoria Turcios** is a senior at Washburn High School who runs her own photography business. She enjoys ThreeSixty because "there are so many ways you can be a journalist. It doesn't have to be just about writing what happens somewhere and then you're done. You become part of the story."



**WRITE IN, GET PUBLISHED** Teachers, send us your student responses to December issue stories and we'll print them online and in our February publication. Email: [thomas.rozwadowski@stthomas.edu](mailto:thomas.rozwadowski@stthomas.edu)

# Reader response

## WE WRITE, YOU REACT

*Editor's note: Students from John Henningsgaard's Personal Writing class at Laporte School in north-central Minnesota responded to articles in ThreeSixty's September-October issue. As Henningsgaard shared with us via e-mail, "the students were interested in the articles, so we broke into groups and took some time to read and discuss ... From there we looked at letters to the editor, and I asked them to craft a response to their article."*

**ThreeSixty article:  
Can't you take a joke?**

"It is sad that some people still believe in racial stereotypes. For example, in my community, if a large black man is seen walking in

an alleyway, he may be perceived as dangerous and to be avoided. If a white man is seen in the same situation, he may be perceived differently. These racial stereotypes have been ingrained in society for

years. The problem runs much deeper though, because we continue to use jokes while saying that race doesn't matter, that the jokes aren't that bad. The very essence of these jokes implies that race does matter. It undermines the ultimate goal. The very fact that we have this hypocritical view of race is dangerous, and it contributes to the problem of racism in America."  
— Brian Bass

**ThreeSixty article:  
Gay marriage as a matter  
of fairness**

"America is supposed to be an amazing country, (which it is), where we can celebrate our freedom and personal views.

Everyone should be given a chance to have the same opportunities when it comes to marriage. I have a friend who is gay, and he feels very strongly about whether gay couples should be able to get married or not. Knowing someone who is personally gay, I know that they are exactly like every other person around. Should someone be denied the right to show the way they live their life in any type of relationship? Gay couples deserve the same rights as everyone else."  
— Kara Shadrick

**ThreeSixty article: Driving  
as if Mom is in the car**

"I'm just not convinced that having another distraction in the

car is worth it. The camera is in the windshield, which provides another blind spot. The fact that, you as a driver, are being watched can cause some discomfort. This is a big distraction for a teen's mind to take when it's already going so fast. They don't need one more thing to think about. In the article, one of the parents of the program was asked if, as a teen driver, would you drive with the camera? They said, 'No, I wouldn't like it.' So as a parent, why make your child do something that you wouldn't even do? That's like saying, 'I hate liver, but here son, you have to eat this.'  
— Kyle Kerby



## Report stories that matter to you

- What?** An introductory journalism after-school class
- Who?** For high school students interested in telling true stories using words, photos and videos
- Where?** At the University of St. Thomas, St. Paul campus
- When?** Starts February 7 and meets every Thursday from 4-6 p.m. for 10 weeks
- Why?** Give voice to the issues happening in teens' lives  
Earn money for articles, photos and videos  
Build your resume and network with professionals  
Get published on our website and in our magazine  
Make new friends



Apply at [www.threesixtyjournalism.org/  
apply-spring-2013-news-team](http://www.threesixtyjournalism.org/apply-spring-2013-news-team)

Deadline: January 25

# Nazario's writing journey

## AUTHOR FINDS HEART OF HARROWING IMMIGRATION ISSUE

*Editor's note: Award-winning journalist and "Enrique's Journey" author Sonia Nazario was the featured speaker at ThreeSixty Journalism's annual Widening the Circle fundraiser in November.*

Not many journalists would sit on top of moving freight trains, live in the near-constant danger of being killed and travel thousands of miles away from their spouse to tackle the unknown in the name of investigative reporting.

Sonia Nazario, however, did all these things to tell a mind-blowing tale of a Honduran teenager, Enrique, who traveled through a perilous world while riding on deadly train tops to the United States to find his mother, Lourdes, who left him behind when he was a starving 5-year-old.

For Nazario, there wasn't a better way to research the experiences of children hitchhiking on up to 30 trains to come to America. So she tagged along with them—even though it meant the risk of being raped or robbed, getting beaten by gangs or falling off trains and losing limbs or life to the rolling wheels.

"I wanted to put the reader on top of that train alongside Enrique," Nazario said. "I wanted them to feel the terror that he felt when he was beaten, the fear that he lived in and all he had been through every step along the way."

Nazario captured these harrowing journeys six years ago in her Pulitzer Prize-winning book, "Enrique's Journey," exposing a little-known story of the immigration wave from Mexico and Central America to the United States.

However, she didn't stop where the book ended. Nazario has continued to follow the legal cases of immigrant children in courtrooms and detention centers.

"When these kids go before an immigration judge to argue the right to stay here, whether they have the right or not, they're not entitled to a government attorney," said Nazario, a former Los Angeles Times reporter. "I saw kids of five-to-seven years old, coming to immigration courts in L.A. They're supposed to make a case before the immigration judge."

Nazario felt the need to stand up for them. She helps recruit attorneys to represent these unequipped kids for free. In early November, Nazario gave a talk before the Philadelphia Bar Association in Denver, Colo., asking lawyers



**By Ibrahim Hirsi**  
ThreeSixty  
Journalism alum



Photo by Jennah Benalshaikh

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Sonia Nazario talks about the importance of covering social justice issues at ThreeSixty Journalism's Widening the Circle fundraiser on Nov. 2.

to help the estimated 100,000 children who come alone to the United States from Mexico and Central America each year.

Nazario is no stranger to the plight of those immigrants she advocates for and writes about. Her father, Mahafud Nazario, of Syrian descent, was born in Argentina. Her mother, Clara Nazario, was born in Poland but fled to Argentina during World War II. The couple later moved to the United States, escaping Argentina's dictatorship government, which suppressed academic freedom.

They gave birth to Sonia in 1960 in Madison, Wis.

Growing up in Kansas, Nazario lost her father to a heart attack when she was 13. Her mother decided to move back to Argentina with the family during its bloody Dirty War in the late 1970s, which claimed an estimated 30,000 people.

One day, as she walked with her mother, Nazario spotted the blood of two journalists on the sidewalk



Photo by Victoria Turcios

of her hometown, Buenos Aires.

"But why were they killed?" Sonia asked.

"Because they were trying to tell the truth about what was going on here," Clara said.

That was when Nazario saw the power of storytelling and realized that a functioning democracy isn't possible unless society is educated about what happens around them. At 14, she wanted to become a journalist.

And she did.

Clara felt Argentina was too dangerous, and within two years, the family returned to the United States, resettling in Kansas. It's where Nazario attended high

school and worked as a waitress after school and on weekends to help her financially struggling family.

A 1982 graduate of Williams College in Massachusetts, Nazario quickly found work at the Wall Street Journal, reporting from four bureaus: New York, Atlanta, Miami and Los Angeles. She also wrote about Latinos in the United States and reported from Latin America.

In 1993, Nazario joined the Los Angeles Times as a projects and urban affairs reporter. Among other issues, she wrote about immigration, hunger and drug addiction before she left the paper in 2008.

Nazario, who is working on her second book, spends three to four months a year travelling across the world to talk about "Enrique's Journey."

"I write about social justice, about people who don't have enough representation," Nazario said. "I've always felt very passionate about writing certain kinds of stories and writing about immigrants."

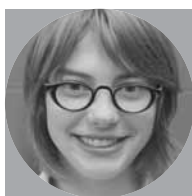
# Does Uncle Sam still want you?

## FEWER WAIVERS ISSUED AS RECRUITMENT GOALS WANE

If you've been planning to join the United States military, you'd better cut out the extra calories and tattoo shop visits. The Armed Forces has raised its standards and is looking for more than able-bodied recruits.

Since 2011, the military has been cutting back on recruitment goals, mostly due to drawdowns in Iraq, as well as budget reductions, said Andrew Wade, Center Commander of the Army recruiting site in St. Louis Park.

Wade also said one way the military has raised its standards is by issuing fewer waivers to serve.



By **Grace Pastoor**  
University of  
St. Thomas

A waiver grants entry to a potential recruit who would otherwise be disqualified from military service due to anything from a felony conviction to a weight problem. The military decides how many waivers to issue and who receives them.

According to the New York Times, the number of waivers issued to Army recruits with felony convictions more than doubled – from 249 to 511 – from 2006 to 2007, during the height of the Iraq war. But in past years, the amount of waivers has decreased dramatically, with misconduct waivers – issued for behavioral issues such as misdemeanors – decreasing from 546 in 2009 to 189 in 2011.

Courtney Gorder is glad the military is becoming more careful about who they allow to serve.

The 18-year-old from St. Louis Park, who enlisted in the Navy this spring, said the increasing rarity of waivers makes her feel safer.

“From what I’ve read, there’s a lot of sexual abuse of women in the military,” Gorder said. “I feel

like if we’re not hiring people with behavior issues, sexual abuse would happen less.”

During 2007, the number of waivers issued by the Army to people who had committed rape, sexual assault or sexual abuse increased to five from two in 2006, the Times reported. There was also one waiver issued in 2007 for kidnapping or abduction, up from zero in 2006, and two issued for indecent acts with a child or molestation, up from one.

Wade said the changes in standards include lowering the maximum eligible age from 41 to 35 years old and rejecting more potential recruits who do not have a traditional high school diploma.

He said these cutbacks have helped increase the quality of the armed forces.

“As a result of the smaller pool of training slots, we’ve been able to raise our standards to make sure we get the most qualified applicants,” Wade said. “We are establishing a base of discipline and moral values.”

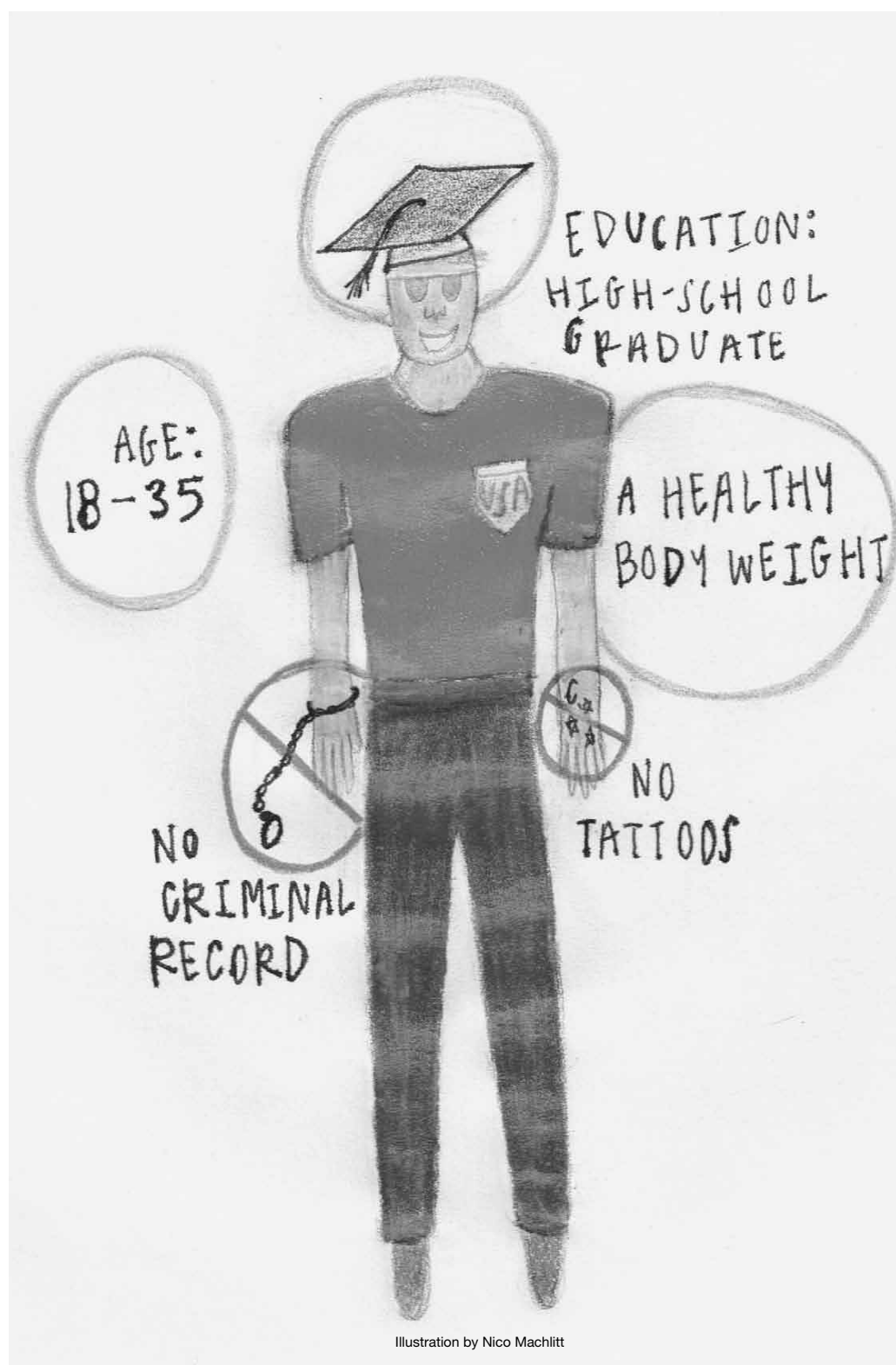


Illustration by Nico Machlitt

**IN OR OUT?** There are many requirements a person must meet before they are able to join the military. Here are some that could disqualify you from military service:

- Being overweight, which is defined as having a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 25. BMI is the measure of a person's weight while taking into account their height.
- Having a criminal history, including misdemeanors
- Tattoos that violate good taste or are exhibited outside the uniform
- Drug use
- Lack of a traditional high school diploma
- Failure of military entrance exam (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery or ASVAB)

## VIKINGS PUNTER WAS ALWAYS CONFIDENT AND COMPETITIVE

Three self-described “nerds” are clustered around a glowing computer screen, riveted as the display lights up with flashy colors and images. Just another video game marathon inside a teen household, right?

Fast-forward to today when that same youthful spirit of competition finds its way into Chris Kluwe’s suburban Minneapolis living room. Yes, he has to get the juices flowing for his day job as the Minnesota Vikings star punter. But if you saw his giant laptop gaming screen—“a treat to myself,” Kluwe said with a smile—you’d also know how seriously he takes his unpaid profession.



**By Dan Baden**  
Roseville Area  
High School

Then again, his Twitter handle is *@ChrisWarcraft* for a reason.

“To me, it’s those various parts of my life that make me a complete person. Parts of a whole, a whole that defines me,” Kluwe said. “So part of who I am is that I read a lot of books and play video games. I love those parts of my life. And yes, I also happen to play sports. And yes, now I have a family. It’s those complexities that make us who we are.”

Being comfortable in dual worlds might have seemed impossible given the natural clash between nerd and jock social cliques. But for the California native, confidence was never an issue as a teenager. No matter the adolescent crisis, even at 16, Kluwe said he always focused on the big picture.

“Everything in the moment always seems so important. So life and death,” Kluwe said of high school drama. “Will this really affect me in four years? If not, then why worry about it?”

Simple enough.

Achieving success in the National Football League meant pushing himself “to be the best at

### ABOUT THIS SERIES

This marks the first installment of ThreeSixty’s “@16” series, where our teen writers interview Minnesota newsmakers and celebrities about life as a 16-year-old high school student. Who should we talk to next? E-mail [rozwadowski@stthomas.edu](mailto:rozwadowski@stthomas.edu) with your suggestions.

something if you’re going to do it.” Originally a soccer standout, Kluwe figured his skills would translate to kicking a football. After he received high praise at a camp run by ex-NFL players, Kluwe determined that punting was “the easiest way to make a living” and put hours into perfecting the precise craft.

“For me, it was always about taking things one day at a time. I approached every football game as doing the best I possibly could at that particular moment. It

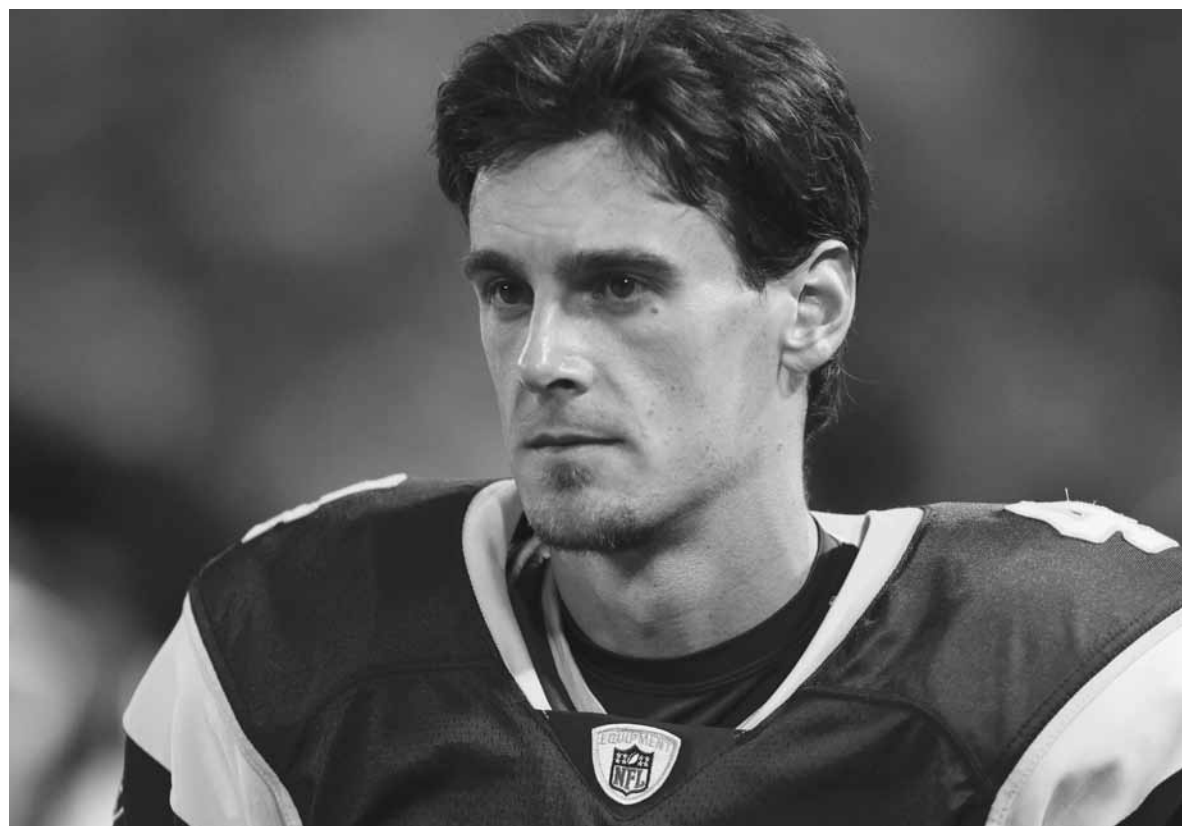
# W/CHRIS KLUWE

was never about my future or my past. I never thought about where (punting) would take me. It was more about, ‘What can I accomplish right now?’ And I went out and did it,” said Kluwe, who played at UCLA during college.

“I was always very practical about it. I had to punt during foot-

ball practice, so that’s where I took it really seriously. I figured, hey, I had to be there anyway, so I might as well maximize my time as best as I possibly could. That’s where I put the work in. I still had plenty of opportunities to hang out with friends, work out and do all the things I wanted.”

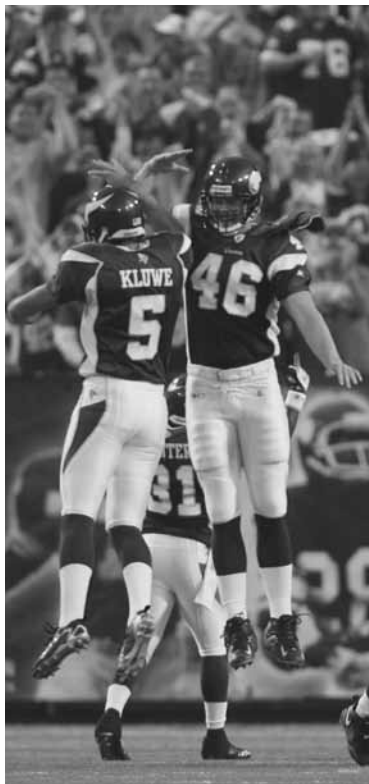
Reaching for lofty goals also came with a push from his parents, but only because not getting him off the couch would have meant “days of nothing but playing video games,” Kluwe joked. (For the record, when a new game comes out now, he’s still known to go on all-day binges.)





Photos © Star Tribune, printed with permission

How many NFL punters can also claim the title of Salon's "Sexiest Man of 2012?" Only one: Chris Kluwe.



Chris Kluwe, left, celebrates with Minnesota Vikings long snapper Cullen Loeffler after a successful special teams play against the Carolina Panthers.

*"You can't label someone without putting them into a box that doesn't encompass everything that they are."*

—Chris Kluwe

Kluwe was his own motivating force. He admits to being highly competitive, a personality trait that has since spilled into social activism, blog writing, hardcore gaming and bass playing with his hard rock band, Tripping Icarus.

He even learned to hone his writing skills by "trolling" on video game message boards. Pushing those buttons still works for him as an active presence on Twitter and while sticking up for gay marriage—Kluwe was Minnesota's most visible celebrity face for the "Vote No" movement – or former Oakland Raiders punter Ray Guy's NFL Hall of Fame credentials in a scathing Deadspin editorial.

As he explained his writing these days, "I say what I want, and I guess people listen."

"For me, it goes back to always doing something to the best of your ability. If I can do that while also having fun? I'm finding myself in more and more of those situations," Kluwe said. "It's me basically giving everything I have into what I'm doing at the moment. That's who I am."

He also attributes his success to the Golden Rule. It's why he viewed the Minnesota marriage amendment as an "issue of basic human freedom" that needed outspoken advocates.

"You can't label someone with-

out putting them into a box that doesn't encompass everything that they are," Kluwe said.

"Hopefully people I went to high school with would say I was a good person. I always tried to do the right thing. Treat others as I would want to be treated in return. That model of empathy and tolerance is what I always strived for."

But there is more to overcoming challenges and achieving goals than a few simple rules. Kluwe remembers the hormones, urges and pressures of being a 16-year-old student. It's why he always comes back to the trick that he used in high school—breaking issues into smaller pieces to focus on them easier.

When he's punting inside an NFL stadium on Sundays, Kluwe is completely focused on football. But during his free time, he's able to forget the professional spotlight and go back to being a husband,

father, bassist, blogger, gamer ... the list goes on and on.

"The fact is, people take each other way too seriously at times. If you can't laugh at yourself, I mean, really ..." Kluwe said. "There's so much that's ludicrous about life. I mean, look around you at the absurdity of life. This planet, it's like, .000001 percent of the universe. We're such a miniscule amount of what's out there. So it's almost ridiculous to even think we're here in the first place. You really have to laugh at the world around you.

"So I always think about that, how we're all human beings, random people on this planet. Yes, I may be good at kicking a football. But there's a lot I'm not good at. There's stuff that others are really good at and should get attention for. So when I think about life that way, I have a hard time taking myself too seriously."

—Additional reporting by Thomas Rozwadowski

## THE KLUWE FILE

- **Profession:** Punter for the Minnesota Vikings (undrafted, joined the Vikings in 2005)
- **Age:** 30 (turns 31 the day before Christmas)
- **High school:** Los Alamitos HS, California
- **College:** UCLA
- **Highlights:** Voted by teammates as Vikings special teams MVP in 2010; set Vikings records with a 47.6-yard gross punting average and 33 punts of 50-plus yards in 2008; holds top three marks in Vikings history for landing punts inside the 20-yard-line
- **Find 'em:** On Twitter @ChrisWarcraft, a reference to the popular role-playing game "World of Warcraft"
- **Personal hero:** "Probably Leonardo da Vinci. He was the most accomplished at everything he did."
- **Best advice for teenagers:** "It's important to know that you can do the right thing. Who you are isn't defined by other people. You're defined by your own actions. If you look at life that way and only take responsibility for yourself, you realize that it doesn't matter how other people try to define you. Don't let someone live your life for you."

# “Are you buckled up?”

## DEATH OF A CLASSMATE CHANGES LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

Inside an eerily quiet River Falls High School auditorium this fall, a guest speaker addresses the student assembly about her daughter’s death in a car accident.

She asks how many students in the crowd fail to wear their seatbelts when they enter a vehicle.

No one raises a hand.

To most people, May 18th may seem like any other day on the calendar. To the student body in River Falls, it’s a day that marks the death of a classmate and friend. A freshman girl with the whole world ahead of her.

Sara was a shortstop for our school’s softball team, an easy-going blonde from Michigan who was never without her phone, loved to wear yoga pants and had a super sarcastic sense of humor.

She was *always* known for being a klutz.

Last year, Sara and I had a pottery class together. One day, I was working on a piece of clay when Sara tried to dramatically slide onto her stool. Instead, she fell off and landed in some clay on the floor.

Of course, for the rest of the day she had clay dust all over her pants.

Sara and I were also altos in choir. We spent the Friday of her car accident practicing, and to be honest, making fun of our ridiculously cheesy “High School Musical” songs for an annual concert. The last words I said to her were, “See you at the concert tonight.”

She never made it.

Sara was one of three classmates in a truck that rolled over in the River Falls countryside only a few miles from my house.



By **Maya Shelton-Davies**  
River Falls High School

the auditorium waiting for our turn onstage, I looked in amazement at everyone next to me, phones pulled out and texting for updates. I desperately tried to read facial reactions.

As students started to learn more, my friend Michelle texted Tanner about his whereabouts. He was fine. So was the other passenger.

Then she texted him, “What about Sara?”

Ten minutes passed without a reply.

At that moment, I knew what happened. I just denied its plausibility.

I can remember every detail

Traveling on the aptly nicknamed Rollercoaster Road, the truck hit gravel on the shoulder, and swerved to avoid an oncoming car. The driver, Tanner, then swerved into the ditch, where the vehicle overturned. No one had seatbelts on.

Whispering. That’s what I’ll remember most about the night we found out.

We were warming up in the choir room, unenthusiastically going through the songs and choreography. That’s when classmates began whispering to each other about a car accident and how they heard girls in our grade were possibly involved.

No one knew what happened for sure, or if anyone was even hurt. But Sara’s absence, coupled with the whispers, were enough to cause panic. Some students assembled in a circle to pray. Others simply sat, attached to their phones waiting for any information.

While seated in a back row of

about that night.

I remember watching at one end of the room as a group of my friends confronted a senior girl who had been told what happened. I remember hearing more whispers, then like a flash, one by one students started to pour out of the room crying. I remember confronting that same senior girl, pleading to know the truth.

Her cold reply: “People are running out of the room crying. You *obviously* know what happened.”

It wasn’t until my friend Brittany came running in that I officially knew. I didn’t even have to ask before she choked out, “It’s Sara. It’s Sara.”

More than a summer removed from the accident, it’s still difficult to think about, let alone put emotions on paper. Knowing that someone I saw every day, who I talked to in the halls, would never be around is impossible for a 15-year-old to understand. I



think spot

Think of a time you’ve seen a friend do something risky. What could you say that might make them reconsider?

think back to being surrounded by classmates and friends, all crying and praying in the band room after we were told Sara had died. It’s indescribable.

Teenagers are supposed to stress out over basketball practice and test scores, pass the time chatting about favorite TV shows, potential crushes and summer vacation schedules. While emptying out Sara’s locker, we glanced at her day planner. The pages were filled with notes about the last day of school, the start of summer, a concert with her best friend, all with Sara’s exclamation points.

She figured tomorrow was guaranteed. We thought so, too.

Everything changed in River Falls that day.

Now, most students in my school don’t think twice about wearing seatbelts.

“Are you buckled up?” “Are you buckled up?” Whenever I step into a car with my friends, it’s the first thing I hear. We repeat it to everyone in our school.

Even a friend of mine who didn’t know Sara keeps pink and yellow fabric—Sara’s favorite colors—hung from her front mirror as a reminder to stay safe while in the car.

But it’s not a silver lining. Sara shouldn’t have had to die to teach us to take the few extra seconds to click a buckle.

Being teenagers, we think we’re invincible. That when we’re driving around with friends, it’s more about packing the car with bodies and having a good time.

Before the accident, I often neglected to wear a seatbelt. But Sara’s death taught me a valuable lesson.

She wasn’t invincible. Neither am I.

# Making every voice count

## VOTING EFFORT MOBILIZES ASIAN AMERICANS—AND ONE STUBBORN DAD

In August, I was asked to take a part-time job with a non-partisan effort to get 10,000 young Asian Americans in Minnesota to register and vote on Nov. 6, Election Day.

I wasn't sure what the three-month position would involve. But I knew I had to do it. I needed a job to pay my monthly bills. Plus, it sounded like a great opportunity to challenge myself and do something I never imagined doing – getting my peers to vote.

I'm young and part Asian, like the people we were trying to reach. It bugged me that voter turnout among Asian Americans is lower than average—49 percent in 2008 compared to 64 percent of the total population. In a democracy, fewer votes means less power.

I also liked the campaign's focus on young people. More than 60 percent of the Asian Americans in Minnesota are younger than 35. In the Hmong community, about 80 percent are. We need to make our voices heard.

The campaign leaders told us from day one that 18-35 year-olds are Minnesota's future. So, for the next 12 weeks, my priority was to learn about the issues and educate my peers about the importance of becoming politically aware and informed about the issues that matter to us and our families. And, most importantly, to vote on Election Day.

### The campaign at home

At home, I asked my 52-year-old father if he had ever voted. I

was more curious than surprised when he said no. I asked why. He shrugged.

"You should vote this year!" I urged.

"I don't think my vote matters," he said. "Our political system is..."

This was going to be harder than I thought.

My dad is not uninformed. He watches the news and reads the paper, and is never shy to share his opinion.

But he has struggled. He was born in Korea to an American soldier and a Korean woman who gave him up for adoption. At six months old, he arrived in Minnesota malnourished, attention-deprived and in desperate need of healthcare.

He grew up in a white family in



**Ariel Kendall**  
ThreeSixty  
Journalism  
alumna



Photo by Victoria Turcios

a predominately white neighborhood and was often teased for looking different.

My father had never really felt like he belonged. It was evident that he had never made an effort to vote because he had felt like such an outcast. I was determined to change his mind, not just for me but for him.

### Frantic days

When people asked me what I did as an organizer, I explained that my schedule changed each day. I was constantly on the phone, email, and Facebook, and meeting college students on campuses in the Twin Cities.

Everywhere I went, I recruited new people to our campaign network and volunteer list. I walked up to students on the street, sat next to them on the bus and made conversations at every opportunity.

When I asked if they planned to vote, many said, "I don't know" or "I don't really care enough."

I always tried to dig deeper. What was holding them back? What issues might motivate them?

Often it wasn't that they didn't care, but that they didn't understand how to register or find out where to vote. I tried to leave every person with a sense of empowerment and a plan for making a difference in the election.

### My inner organizer

Meanwhile, I continued to ask my dad if he would vote. He always

said no, mostly to get a rise out of me.

One day when we were in the car together, I asked again,

"Are you going to vote?"

"I don't know."

"I know you're not registered.

Are you going to register?"

"I don't know how."

This I could help with.

Later that week, I handed him a registration form and asked him to fill it out right then so I could help if he had questions. He said he was tired. He would do it tomorrow.

### Help from friends and family

While organizing voters, I took full advantage of my networks of family and friends. My aunt let me borrow her car to get to meetings. Other friends tapped their friends via Facebook and got them to register.

One of my best friends from college, Suemee Lee, stopped by one day and asked if she could pick up some registration forms to take to Duluth over the weekend.

Suemee is quiet and shy, and I was thrilled by her willingness to help. I was even more blown away when she returned with all 25 pledge forms filled out.

"Sorry, Suemee, I'm a monster," I said.

"No, you're just really passionate...and you've turned me into a monster," Lee assured.

For the rest of the campaign, her words never left me. They helped keep my passion strong, no matter how difficult some days felt.

### Finally registered

Another week passed before I remembered that my dad still needed to register. One evening, I found him sitting at the kitchen table.

"Please fill out the form," I pleaded.

My mom chimed in, "Ariel, you're going to have to fill it out for him. He is not going to do it."

"Give me this!" My dad snatched the form from my hand and began writing.

### Crushing comfort zones

Another friend, Emily, helped me canvass before she left for Army Basic Training. She pushed me to walk up to every possible person and get comfortable with being uncomfortable. I needed to stand up for what I believed in and help others be a part of our vision.

She inspired me to keep chugging, even on days when I felt like little had been done toward meeting our goal of 10,000 new voters.

On Election Day, we got the results: Our efforts helped mobilize more than 13,000 Asian American Minnesotans to vote. And the entire effort was led by people like me, mostly in our 20s and working on our first campaign. For most of us, it will not be the last.

But the best moment came when my dad proudly showed me his red "I Voted" sticker and smiled. We are determined to keep our conversation going.

# Truth and consequences

## STRUGGLING WITH THE MODEL MINORITY MYTH

When I went to my first lecture for a Creative Writing class, I wasn't expecting much. I thought I'd only be treated to "professional" writers tooting their own horns at us poor, inexperienced college students.

I was pleasantly surprised when we were introduced to our speaker for that day: Bao Phi, a Vietnamese-American poet.

You might ask what is so exciting about that. Well, he's Vietnamese-American.



**By Diana Lu**  
PSEO student,  
University of  
Minnesota

"So what?" you might say. It's not *that* amazing.

Let me tell you, as a Chinese-American child growing up in white-dominated America—yes, it *is* that amazing.

When you imagine an Asian, what do you think? They're bad at English maybe, they're probably from China or Korea, they'll grow up to be doctors or lawyers or they'll go into business.

Bao Phi is the first Asian-American artist I have met.

Why? Let's talk about societal and cultural expectations.

Ever since day one in school, Asian-Americans are bombarded with expectations. We're supposed to be smart, quiet and submissive. Other students think they can go to Asian-Americans for homework because we'll know all the answers. Unless we can't speak English, then best not talk to us.

Asian-Americans are shown that we should excel in math and science, but things like art? Well, we can play piano, flute or violin, but that's all.

The pressure, to some extent, starts at home. A good portion

of East Asian immigrant families move to the U.S. out of ambition. The child born in the land of opportunity is expected to shoulder the responsibilities of that ambition.

My natural knack for learning has made pressure an unnecessary exertion, but that is not the case with my sister, for instance, who has to struggle to meet my parents' academic expectations.

On TV, Asians are always the "smart best friend" or the "eccentric shop owner" or "the guy that knows kung-fu" — that is, when they're shown at all.

None of my favorite authors or TV characters were Asian. None of the pretty women I saw in magazines had dark hair and almond-shaped eyes like me. I became, by standards of the community in which I grew up, physically undesirable.

I wanted blonde hair and blue eyes, like the TV stars and models. But my parents wouldn't let me dye my hair or buy blue contacts — I had to be a bland, unpretty Asian. So I thought that, if I couldn't be pretty, I

could be smart.

For the three months when I visited Taiwan each summer, I felt differently. There, the beautiful women on the billboards and selling makeup in the department stores all looked like me. It was a place where the whole range of options — being an artist, a doctor, an actress, a political leader — seemed open.

### History of the myth

Compared to other ethnic stereotypes, being considered "the model minority" — smart, disciplined, docile — might seem like a good thing. Not if you look closely. The origin of the term "model minority" stems from a 1966 issue of *The New York Times Magazine*, in an article by William Petersen entitled "Success Story: Japanese American Style." He praised Japanese Americans for their virtues, in particular their ability to adapt to mainstream American culture.

The 1960s were marred by racial tension, and to some historians, the creation of the model minority myth during that time period is not a coincidence. According to Guofang Li and Lihshing Wang, who wrote "Model Minority Myth Revisited," the stereotype "divert(ed) attention away from the problems faced by Asian Americans, and ... pitt(ed) Asian Americans against other groups of color."

Like any stereotype, the model minority label erases the reality of

individual differences. At home and at school, Asian-American kids are told that they have to be intelligent and get good grades.

But what if they aren't or can't? Let's face it, not all Asian kids are smart, and the ones who lag behind suffer for it, psychologically and emotionally. They feel as though they aren't living up to expectations, and they're ashamed to seek help from their teachers. They become disappointed in themselves and their self-confidence drops.

Even if an Asian-American student is smart, very few will recognize it unless the student does more than what is expected of his or her class.

Michelle Tran, community relations specialist at the U.S. Attorney's Office in Minneapolis, often encountered trouble in her school years due to how teachers viewed Asian-Americans.

"I've had teachers or professors who have a certain stereotype of Asian people as being quiet, and in some ways that can become a self-fulfilled prophecy," Tran said. "It was very frustrating for me when I was in a classroom and I raised my hand and I was always speaking up, but the teacher felt like I was being quiet."

Oftentimes, Asian students have to go above and beyond their classmates in order to be noticed, she said. "It takes a little more to fight against that and to make a larger point of having to be louder than other students," Tran said.

She was delighted when Jeremy Lin, the first American of Chinese or Taiwanese descent to play in the National Basketball Association, briefly ignited "Linsanity" with the New York Knicks last spring.

"There is that stereotype that Asians don't participate in the great American sports. Then there's the stereotype that Asian people are small. I think that's why people were captivated by him 'cause he broke a lot of those stereotypes," she said.

Ironically, when Asian Americans excel, it can sometimes be held against them. Elite universities are often accused of discriminating against Asian-American applicants because they don't want one ethnic group to be too dominant. As recently as 2011, Asian-American applicants filed complaints against Harvard and Princeton, alleging that they were rejected due to race. To counter this, some people no longer mark their ethnicity in applications.

### Who is "Asian?"

Then again, what does it even mean to be Asian-American?

Asia is a huge region, sweeping from Japan in the East to the Philippines and Indonesia in the South to India and the Middle East in the West. Everyone who lives in that area is called "Asian," but the truth is that Asia is a highly diverse continent.

That's also reflected economically, with Asian-American families obtaining a higher median annual household income than the rest of the American population. But a lot of Asian and Asian-American families also live in the lower class.

Many of the poorer Asian kids I know are children of Hmong parents who've recently immigrated. The model minority stereotype ignores these people — the recent immigrants from Southeast Asia, whose education and income

levels are lower than the average American. As a group, they also remain a numerically insignificant part of the nonprofit sector.

### Dispelling stereotypes

All stereotypes are bad. There are no exceptions. Anyone who forms part of the population regularly stereotyped by mainstream media knows the feeling of being objectified.

“It’s telling us that others are controlling how we define ourselves,” said Kang Vang, a filmmaker and director of programming for Asian Media Access, a nonprofit in north Minneapolis.

“You become like a product. You become like Chinese food.”

For me, the model minority stereotype feels like being put in a very small box — a box for Chinese take-out — with very little room to move.

I’ve already somewhat settled on my future; I want to go into international relations and help develop partnerships with other countries that are based on deeper understanding of their cultures and history. But I also love to draw and write. Sometimes I wonder if I weren’t branded as a “model minority,” would I be an English major instead?

I want other Asian-American children to see that they do have room to be who they want to be—to have Asian-American characters to look up in their favorite movies and TV shows, to see Asian-American women and men modeling outfits and advertising perfume.

I want them to have every door flung wide open for their choosing and for them to step bravely through whichever ones they choose.

CAMPAIGN REVEALS  
THE PAIN OF TEEN VICTIMS

# Prostitution unmasked



Illustration by Elise Swenson

*Editor's note:  
To protect Angela's  
anonymity, Three-  
Sixty Journalism  
is not disclosing  
her last name or  
any other details  
that may easily  
identify her.*

**S**exually molested by an uncle at 14, she's learned to devalue sex. She starts sleeping around to fill the void left by her broken family. To find affection. It doesn't help.

*She slips into a cocaine haze to numb the pain. Prostitution is how she pays for her crippling new habit.*

Angela's story of sexual exploitation didn't happen in some far away metro area like New York City or Los Angeles.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation has identified the Twin Cities as the 13th largest center for child prostitution in the nation. In an average month, more than 200 girls are sold for sex in the area,



**By Simon  
Lancaster**  
PSEO student  
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*“People think everyone who is doing this is happy and it’s a choice and that they want to meet some rich guy and be happy in the movie. But that’s not the case. People don’t want to know the truth. It’s not pretty.”*

—Angela, a former teen prostitute

according to a 2010 study by The Schapiro Group, an Atlanta-based research firm that works with nonprofits. Their average age is 13. And they’re expected to sell themselves for sex five times a day.

Organizations led by the Women’s Foundation of Minnesota are rallying for change and working to end the sexual exploitation of teen girls. They are fighting for Angela and young women like her who are forced into a life of torturous sexual abuse.

Angela’s story is similar to many teens’ across the nation. Regrettably, not all are as fortunate to come in contact with support organizations and embark on a successful recovery.

Even now, close to four years since she’s been free and clean, Angela finds it difficult to talk about. While avoiding eye contact and fidgeting, she tries to describe what her life on the streets was like. She often stops mid-thought and can’t bring herself to open up.

For Angela, it was never a “chosen” lifestyle.

“People think everyone who is doing this is happy and it’s a choice and that they want to meet some rich guy and be happy in the movie. But that’s not the case,” she said. “People don’t want to know the truth. It’s not pretty.”

All too often, young girls are swept into the sex trafficking system as a result of abusive home situations, naivete and simply being at a vulnerable age, said Artika Roller, program director for PRIDE (PRostitution to Independence, Dignity and Equality), a Family Partnership advocacy group that provides support to sexually exploited individuals and their families.

If there is a homeless youth

on the street or couch hopping, within 36 hours they will be approached by a pimp, and likely sold online, she said. The scene isn’t the same as it was 20 years ago. Gone are the days of Johns surveying a neighborhood to pick up prostitutes near a dark alley.

Everything has moved online, making it much more difficult to combat, Roller said. Girls are sold on commonly visited sites such as Craigslist or Backpage.com, right in the public eye. From there, they are swept into a life no one would ever ask for.

According to a 2002 study by the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work, more than 50 percent of sex trafficking victims are classified as homeless runaway youth. Those not classified as runaways are often recruited into prostitution through abduction, pressure from parents, or through deceptive agreements between

parents and traffickers. A 2010 study by The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children estimates that around 100,000 children are victimized each year in the United States prostitution trade.

There are several reasons why the Twin Cities is prominent in sex trafficking: dual interstates, Minnesota’s border with Canada and a major port on Lake Superior, said Mary-Beth Hanson, direc-



Illustration by Mary Wu

**WARNING SIGNS** Be aware of street activities you see and take note of girls you suspect may be at risk of harm and/or sexual exploitation. If you feel concerned, talk to a counselor, teacher or other trusted adult. If they share your concern, tell them they can call 911 or the National Human Trafficking Resource Center at 888-373-7888. Signs of a possible victim include:

- Multiple unexplained absences from school.
- A repeated tendency to run away from home.
- Frequent travel to other cities.
- Older boyfriends or girlfriends.
- A sudden ability to have expensive items.
- Appearing depressed or suffering physical injuries.

Source: MN Women’s Foundation

tor of communications at the Women’s Foundation, which has spearheaded a multifaceted education effort called “MN Girls Are Not For Sale.”

The Duluth port, especially, has a dark history of sexual abuse among Native American girls being beaten and gang-raped on ships by freighter crews. Today, that abuse continues with young girls of multiple racial backgrounds, many exploited by pimps to the point of absolute desperation, Hanson said.

Even if they wanted to flee, it’s common for many girls to resort to survival sex, or the exchange of intercourse for a warm place to sleep, food for the night and other basic human needs.

“I was living with a guy 30 years older than me to have a place to live. What 20 year old wants to be with a 50 year old?” Angela said.

Lucky for her, she got out after a year and a half and is attending college, thriving at an internship and counseling teen girls.

Much of Angela’s progress can be accredited to her involvement with PRIDE, which helps 150 women and girls escape the streets annually. In addition to counseling and therapy, PRIDE offers a supply room with basic necessities like shampoo, diapers and snacks, providing an alternative to survival sex. At the bare minimum, the organization’s six locations in the Twin Cities provide a safe haven for teens who simply need a place to talk.

“We don’t believe there are teen prostitutes. What we’re looking at

are teens who have been sexually exploited,” said Roller, adding that awareness levels about teen sexual exploitation have vastly changed from a decade ago.

Started in 2010, “MN Girls Are Not For Sale” is a five-year plan to combat sex trafficking statewide. Its purpose: To galvanize resources and eliminate sex trafficking of Minnesota girls through grants, research, public education, engagement and mobilization of the public.

The campaign’s goal is to raise \$5 million and provide grants to institutions that serve to combat sex trafficking, Hanson said. For example, grants could be provided to an organization that provides housing for victims, especially since there are currently only two to four beds statewide, on average, set aside for teens in the sex trade. A report to be given next month to the Minnesota Legislature calls for having 50 beds through shelters and host homes by 2014, Hanson said.

So far, the “MN Girls” campaign has raised \$3.7 million, 74 percent of the goal.

“It’s a horrific act of violence against these children, and it was something that we felt was our mission to pay attention to,” Hanson said. “Being a philanthropic organization, we’re in a unique position to convene all the groups necessary to create systemic response and we’re connected to the resources to get this work done.”

When the Women’s Foundation first addressed this issue in 2008, the need for that kind of coordinated response was clear. Through the creation of the “MN Girls” campaign, and the organization and coordination of other programs and activists, the

**WHAT ABOUT BOYS?** Despite framing “MN Girls Are Not For Sale” as a single gender issue, teen exploitation isn’t a female-only problem, said Mary Beth Hanson, director of communications at the Women’s Foundation of Minnesota. Though the concentrated effort to combat sex trafficking in Minnesota skews heavily toward teen girls, plenty of male victims are also on the streets.

However, male exploitation is “more difficult to assess” because of its hidden nature, Hanson said. For example, teen boys aren’t as likely to rely on pimps, but instead engage in survival sex—the exchange of sexual favors for basic necessities—to stay alive, Hanson said. Whatever resources are available to females through the coordinated efforts of Twin Cities advocates also apply to teen boys.

## WHAT IS THE LAW?

### FEDERAL

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 is the first comprehensive law to address the trafficking of “persons.” The law provides a three-pronged approach that includes preven-

tion, protection and prosecution. Under U.S. federal law, “severe forms of trafficking in persons” includes both sex trafficking and labor trafficking.

Sex trafficking is defined as the recruitment, harboring,



transportation, provision or obtaining of a person for the purposes of a commercial sex act, in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age.

Labor trafficking is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud or coercion for the purposes of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage or slavery.

### STATE

Minnesota’s Safe Harbors Law of 2011 builds a system that responds to child victims of sexual exploitation and sex trafficking. It treats sexually exploited children (under age 16) as victims in need of protection, not criminals, and establishes a mandatory first referral to services for youth ages 16 and 17.

- Among the other provisions:
- Increases fines on johns to create a funding stream for supportive services.
  - Explicitly defines sexually exploited youth and sex trafficking victims as children in need of protection or services.
  - Excludes sexually exploited youth and sex trafficking victims from the definition of delin-

quency. This provision, effective 2014, ensures that adequate systems to address sexually exploited youth are in place.

- Amends the definition of “prostitute” to include only individuals 18 years of age or older, also effective 2014.
- Charges the commissioner of public safety, in consultation with the commissioner of health, the commissioner of human services and other stakeholders, to develop a victim services model to address the needs of sexually exploited youth and youth at risk of sexual exploitation.
- Increases penalties for buyers of prostitution with revenue split between service providers, prosecutors and law enforcement.

Source: MN Girls Are Not For Sale

foundation is hoping to create a model for other states to follow, Hanson said.

One essential step in the campaign is the introduction of a new piece of legislation this January that will further develop and amend the Safe Harbors Minnesota law created in July 2011.

A primary component of the Safe Harbors law was the construction of a task force, whose recommendations to combat teen exploitation led to the proactive measures today. Another important factor of the law was the decriminalization of teens who are arrested for prostitution while under the age of 16. They are no longer treated as criminals, but as they should be—victims, Roller said.

If the new legislation passes,

that gentler approach would be used for anyone under 18 who is caught selling sex. The previous age was based on the legislature’s decision that 16 was the age one could give sexual consent.

“Truth is, if you’ve been sexually exploited since you were 14, the day you turn 16 does not give you a choice,” Roller said.

The most comprehensive approach to sex trafficking, and a big part of the “MN Girls” community-wide education push, is to view it as any other market. Sex trafficking is strictly a market-driven enterprise, and like any business, it relies on demand, Hanson said.

“If we can elevate the issue in the public and show people what this really looks like, and how no child ever chooses to be prosti-

tuted, then we can start to reduce the demand and change what the market looks like,” she said.

For example, the Washington D.C.-based Polaris Project, one of the nation’s first grassroots initiatives against human trafficking, estimated that a pimp housing three girls often enforces an average nightly quota of \$500 per girl, per night. If these quotas are met consistently, a pimp can make as much as \$547,000 in a year.

“Educating people who would purchase sex would make them not want to do it as much, and help lower demand,” Angela said.

Further efforts include the involvement of Minneapolis Public Schools to develop health class curriculum that would address the issue district-wide. Community education initiatives also include

training police, security guards and even hotel staff to recognize potential warning signs.

However, the harsh reality is that often it takes more than good intentions to rescue a girl from a life of exploitation. Many times, girls believe they’re in love with their pimps or feel they have no other means for survival. The road to recovery requires that teens value themselves as human beings and learn that they deserve respect, one of the key steps in therapy.

“It’s better to tell people what’s going on than keeping it inside,” Angela said. “Tell someone who can help, that you can trust.”

After Angela arrived at PRIDE as part of her probation, she began to see there was hope. Most girls that the organization

counsels have been brought to PRIDE through an outside adult confidante. Finding that person who can reach them requires a tremendous amount of trust, Roller said.

PRIDE has since become a solid wall between Angela and the streets. Not only is it keeping her safe, it’s pushing her to believe in herself.

Angela is thriving in college with a 3.9 grade-point-average and counseling teen victims at court appearances. Her goal is to obtain a law degree and help other teen girls who aren’t in a position to help themselves.

“I want people to know that this is not something that just happens far away,” Angela said. “It’s going on here. People need help, not to be arrested.”

# Fashioning art

## KOREAN STUDENT THRIVES ON CREATIVITY, ACHIEVEMENT

**H**ee Soo Kim is different and proud of it. Whether it's the way she does her hair or the art she creates, the senior at St. Paul Preparatory School keeps changing things up.

"I want to be unique," said Hee Soo, who moved from Korea last year to attend high school in St. Paul.

In July, she had her hair long and wavy and wore a striped t-shirt under a big tunic with splashes of blue. Now her hair is chin-length, black and pencil straight, and she wears it proudly. Her look is simpler and more monotone – black jeans, white sweater, black jacket.

Last year, she drew detailed portraits with colored pencils. Now her work ranges from big, splashy self-portraits to book pages cut into lace-like patterns with X-ACTO knives. She wants to be a fashion designer and is working on her portfolio so she can get into a good art school after graduating in the spring. On the side, she has a business painting shoes and making jewelry.

The chance to experiment and be creative is a big reason Hee Soo, 19, decided to leave home when she was 17 to study at St. Paul Preparatory, a private high school where most students come from other countries.

### Leaving family behind

It wasn't easy to leave her parents, younger brother, sister and friends to come to the U.S. But Hee Soo had big goals.

"I really wanted to go to college in the U.S.," she explained.



**By Jennah Benalshaikh**  
St. Paul Preparatory School

To succeed at an American college, she needed to know English better. Attending an American high school would help.

At first, her parents were unhappy about the request because it would put her behind in school. Hee Soo was a junior in her Korean school, but differences between school systems meant that she would have to start as a sophomore in the U.S. But she persuaded her parents – Hee Soo's father has a company that trades products with other countries and her mother helps him – and now they think she made the right choice.

### Art training differs

High school in Korea is strictly for studying, Hee Soo explained, and art training involves repeating work over and over until it's correct, or until the student is good at it.

"They don't do anything really

creative," she said. In the U.S. she can be more creative and experiment with different styles.

Hee Soo's drawings and paintings have won her national awards, a trip to New York City and a scholarship to a college art class last summer.

She submitted many of her art pieces last fall to the Minnesota Scholastic Art Show, hosted by the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. Her paintings won three gold keys, one silver key, two honorable mentions and a scholarship for the MCAD summer program.

Two of her paintings made it all the way to a national competition in New York City. One piece, "Seeking Attention," a colored-pencil drawing of her grandmother's dog, won a national gold key, the highest honor awarded at the

competition.

Kate Woolever, Hee Soo's art instructor at St. Paul Preparatory, said Hee Soo's training in Korea gave her exceptional technical skill and a commitment to working hard – including before and after class. She shares her knowledge generously with her fellow students. In art class she offers to help people with their work and teaches them how to make it better.

"She is an outstanding student," Woolever said.

### Sharing her skill

Hee Soo is my classmate, and she has helped me a lot in art class. Once when I was sketching my face for a self-portrait and Hee Soo was busy getting ready for her trip to New York, she stopped to help me get the eyes right. "Do it

this way," she said and drew an eye on another sheet of paper to show me how. In one part of the iris, she drew a semicircle to demonstrate how the eye reflects light. I hadn't thought about that detail before.

But Hee Soo is modest about her skill. If someone compliments her artwork, she gets really shy and says it needs improvement.

### Winning a national prize

Coming to the U.S. has allowed Hee Soo to study fashion and get a better sense of what other styles exist outside Korea. Hee Soo also wanted to experience living in a more diverse area. So her parents sent her to live with a host family in the Twin Cities.

She never dreamed she would travel to New York for a national art competition.

When she and Woolever went to New York, the Empire State Building was lit up in gold to honor the gold key artists. Hee Soo and her teacher attended the award ceremony at Carnegie Hall, where she was awarded her national gold medal.

They also went to artists' talks, workshops and art galleries, and visited the Fashion Institute of Technology and Parsons The New School For Design.

After returning from New York, she finished up her junior year, then headed home to Incheon, Korea, to see her family. She came back to the U.S. on July 13 so she could attend summer classes for two weeks at MCAD.

There, Hee Soo stayed on campus and lived the life of a college student. She started out each day with liberal arts or a basic drawing class, and then painted from 1 to 5 p.m. every day.

"It's a long, intensive studio



Photos by Jennah Benalshaikh

Hee Soo Kim frequently changes her look. This fall, her hair is chin-length and she dresses in black and white.

think  
spot

**Would you go to high school in another country if you had a chance? What pros and cons do you see?**



*“I am learning  
the real American  
culture.”*  
—Hee Soo Kim

For her book art class, Hee Soo Kim uses an X-ACTO knife to cut intricate patterns and human figures into black paper.

Above: Hee Soo Kim wants to be a fashion designer and is already decorating t-shirts, shoes and jewelry for friends.  
Below: A self portrait explores different moods.

class,” said Lara Roy, director of continuing education at MCAD.

She also had to speak English all the time at MCAD because the other students were American. At St. Paul Preparatory, more than 80 percent of students are from other countries, including many from South Korea. So when she’s not in class, Hee Soo can speak Korean with her classmates.

“I am learning the real American culture,” Hee Soo said. She also earned two college credits and learned a lot from her fellow students.

“I am motivated by them.”

Ultimately, Hee Soo doesn’t plan to be a painter. Even though she likes the craft, it’s too much of the same. She likes that fashion is always changing and believes that clothes help define people.

Hee Soo plans to study fashion design and marketing in college and use her talent as an artist to become a fashion designer. She is also starting an online store, Tvetvetve, where she sells some of the clothes, shoes and jewelry that she has made.

Woolever believes in her student’s future: “What ever she does, she will be successful.”



# What are the effects of classroom technologies?

Many schools are investing more money in classroom technology—such as iPads, SMART Boards and laptops—because they think it will help students to learn better. However, studies have not been able to clearly prove a link between technology and better academic performance.

We asked students to tell us, based on actual experiences, how much technology has helped in classroom learning...or not. We received thoughtful responses—from a record number of 209—on the assets and pitfalls technology has brought to students' lives.

## FIRST PLACE

(\$100 prize)

**Yee Leng Yang**

Washington Technology Magnet School

*Yee Leng writes with a unique perspective as a recent immigrant from Thailand. Having been restricted from technology for most of his early life, his outlook is very different from a student who was born in America. Also appreciated is the evident research that accompanied the writing of his essay.*

Growing up in a small refugee camp in Thailand, there were no possible ways that I could ever know anything about technology. Restrictions were all around us. For example, in order to get out of the camp legally, we had to do paper work. A place where I could really call home was inside the camp. Outside of it, it was a strange land. A strange land that I dreaded to enter and explore, because if someone caught you, there would be consequences. So as a minority, we had to depend on each other for protection.

My family immigrated to the United States on October 30,

2005. Leaving home was not easy, but we were optimistic about the migration. We had always heard that America was a land of freedom, food, money, dreams, and opportunities. During our early settlement, I could sense that my family had finally come to a great place.

Early on, I encountered many things that define America, but the most extraordinary thing that caught my attention the most was a computer. I was so fascinated with this device. It was then that I realized technology is one of the reasons why America is so great. It has changed my life since then.

Nowadays, technology has helped me even more with many modifications over the last few years. More importantly, with the technology in my school, I think it has taken me a step further whether in my life or schoolwork. In my classroom, there are SMART boards, computers, calculators, etc. This technology has become part of my daily life.

To begin with, I'm a visual learner and I learn better by seeing images and different colors. A study has shown that 65 percent



Yee Leng Yang

of the population are visual learners and 90 percent of information that goes to the brain is visual. Hence, I think SMART boards are the best thing that every classroom could possibly have.

There are also computers in my classroom. I can't miss out on this one. This technology has helped me a lot. Thanks to Bill Gates and Steve Jobs for their efforts. I have used computers to learn typing, do research, for entertainment, to email teachers and friends. I really enjoy typing. I often play games to improve my typing skills, because if I type fast, I will finish my work faster.

Last but not least, calculators are just as important as the other devices. What I like about them is that they can show graphs. That makes it a lot easier for me to learn.

In conclusion, these technologies have truly improved our lives. So when asked should schools invest in more classroom technology, I have no doubt in answering "DEFINITELY YES."

## SECOND PLACE

(\$50 prize)

**Sophie Dwyer**

Southwest High School

*Sophie's essay explains the dichotomy between using technology for entertainment and educational purposes. While technology can often become a distraction, Sophie reminds us that we each have the personal power to use it in ways that will benefit us in the ways we so choose.*

Everything has its ups and downs - technology is no exception. Technology has made so many things easier including writing, spelling, mathematics, and research. I personally believe the question of how technology impacts learning depends on how you choose to use it. If you choose to waste your time on websites such as Facebook and Twitter, of course there will be no improvement in your knowledge. Conversely, it can be an excellent resource to help better your education.

As a student in modern day America, we have wonderful equipment at our disposal to help us improve our minds. Teachers have SMART boards to show PowerPoints and demonstrate math problems on. We have nice computers on which to type reports and do research.



Sophie Dwyer

Many people have smart phones and iPods to text, play games, listen to music, and use social networking sites. That is where I believe technology becomes a problem. This provides a distraction for

students that takes away from their learning. I've seen students slip and not do their work because they'd rather Tweet than do math. It happens to me; sometimes if I get too discouraged, I'll goof around on my phone instead of sitting down and trying to solve the problem.

For me, technology has undoubtedly helped me learn. Teachers use their SMART boards to show colorful, informative PowerPoints while lecturing to keep students engaged. Heck, without the PowerPoints, I'd probably be bored senseless! With computers at my disposal, I have access to resources that I would have never had if I had just been paging through books. I am able to accomplish more work faster because of typing and because of how easy it is to do research for large projects. One delightful plus of technology is the online textbook. I'm taking more and harder classes this year, and it is an absolute pain to lug textbooks back and forth. Instead of having my backpack weigh fifty pounds, I can simply go online and sign into the textbook's website and even get videos and more examples than in the physical textbook. Technology has been indisputably helpful to me.

Whether or not technology is a valuable learning tool really comes down to how you choose to use it. If you get distracted by funny photos or the latest relationship update, doing projects may mostly be updating your status. But if you choose to use it as the incredible research tool that it is, it will make learning much more enjoyable and easier. We have been blessed with wonderful technology, use it wisely.

ThreeSixty Journalism's  
**Your Turn**  
**Essay Contest**



## Dear Mr. President...

In 500 words or less, ThreeSixty Journalism invites you to give the President advice on one of the following concerns:

- Education
- Immigration
- Creating jobs
- Keeping my neighborhood safe

**What's one thing he could do that would help you, your family or your community?**



Submit your essay at  
[www.threesixtyjournalism.org/president](http://www.threesixtyjournalism.org/president)

**\$100 for first place**  
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**Deadline: Friday, Jan. 25, 2013**

Winning essays will be presented to Minnesota's U.S. Senators Amy Klobuchar and Al Franken and published online at [www.threesixtyjournalism.org](http://www.threesixtyjournalism.org) and in the February-March issue of the ThreeSixty Journalism magazine.

## THIRD PLACE

(\$30 prize)

**Nathaniel Larson**  
Southwest High School

*Nathaniel shows us a snapshot in his educational career that brings to light the importance of educating educators on how to best use technology as an effective teaching tool. He ends with a profound statement about the power of humans over machinery.*

As anyone can attest to, our lives are affected immensely by technology. But people often misuse these ever-complicated gadgets and fewer people understand how their technology works. Educators want to tap into these innovations, which continue to get smarter and faster, but they fall short. Ever since my education started and the push for technology in the classroom picked up pace, my learning has not been helped, but sometimes even hindered by technology.

The first school I attended was invested in bringing technology into education; our computers were replaced twice over the course of my years there. Every teacher received a SMART board. But as much as these tools were fun and interesting, the way they were used didn't help me. Technology breaks, and must be fixed by someone. Technology costs money—lots of it—to replace every few years. Most importantly, technology in the classroom often detracts from the true focus: learning. Technology can be very useful, but it needs to be incorporated into learning, rather than replacing it.

I once had a teacher who did not do well incorporating technology into his curriculum; we will call him Mr. S. That year we had a major history project as the centerpiece of our learning. It was many months long, so it took up a lot of our time. Multiple days a week we would go to the computer lab to conduct our research, but either students didn't care or were too confused about how

to conduct deep research on the Internet. We wasted many hours this way. It made the use of technology increase and therefore administrators assumed that it was beneficial for our learning, while the truth was quite to the contrary. Mr. S had one constantly unused computer provided to his classroom, and taught with a chronically finicky and underutilized SMART board. When time came around for the presentation of our projects, many were unprepared. From the bibliographies to the display boards one could tell it was not even a month long project. Mr. S left the following year.

Make no mistake, it was not just the use (or misuse) of technology that made that year's learning substandard. His methods were slow and he couldn't always control the class. But this brings up an important point:

the money and resources used to buy and maintain a slew of technology for the school could have been used to pay for better teachers or professional development. Rather than another computer, a better method of teaching would have helped me learn.

The power of technology is one that any educator wants to bring into the classroom. But this must be done in an effective fashion. Teachers need to know how to use it in order to bring its benefits to students. The power of technology is great, but it cannot replace the power of good teaching. So let us consider before we leap headfirst into a technology craze. I want good teachers, not computers, to teach me about the world.



Nathaniel Larson

## HONORABLE MENTION

(\$25 prize)

**Maria Lewis**  
Indus School

*We couldn't leave out the story of a girl from a small Minnesota town who is often faced with technological detriments. Maria YourTurn continued on page 30*

# Special consideration

## STUDENTS RELY ON STRONG SUPPORT SYSTEM TO OVERCOME DAILY CHALLENGES

Unable to walk on his own, Kenny Knutson relies on his parents to move him around the house in a wheelchair.

He eats from a feeding tube since he can't close his mouth or bite. His eyes are permanently open, so his parents apply drops to moisturize them.

"We're very lucky that he's able to talk to us," said Kenny's older sister, Kaitlyn Knutson. "He can still read. And he can still learn and everything. Some kids can't actually speak."

Kenny has been diagnosed with Agenesis of the Corpus Callosum, or ACC, which means his Corpus Callosum, the part of your brain that connects the right and left sides, is underdeveloped.

The doctors explained to Kenny's family that it's like having the "super highway" of his brain—where information can pass quickly between both sides—cut off.

"He has to use the country roads to get the info where it needs to go," said Kenny's mother, Danielle Knutson. "So he is a little slower to do things, cognitively and physically. Also, the ACC results in global developmental delays for his gross motor control issues."

### Meet Kenny

This means a regular day for Kenny is a lot different from the average student's.

A seventh grader at Woodbury Middle School, Kenny is one of six million young students enrolled in public school special education programs, according to the National Education Association. The variety of disabling conditions



**By Simone Cazares**  
Woodbury High School

ranges from autism and Asperger's syndrome to emotional disturbances, developmental delays and speech, language or other health impairments.

Kenny doesn't switch classes. Instead he stays in the same room all day and learns basic grammar or how to memorize his phone number. At home, Kaitlyn helps her brother with everyday activities most teenagers take for granted, like peeling a banana or playing an Xbox game.

It's hard on Kenny's family because they often see the reaction from strangers, and can only do so much to protect him from it.

"A lot of times little kids, like, they don't understand. They usually stare at him because of his eyes or something," said Kaitlyn, 14. "I remember one day we were walking, and there was this family passing by, a woman and her two children. And I could hear as they walked by, the little girl said, 'Mommy, what's wrong with that boy?'"

"And you know, it was hurtful. But I also know that she was a little girl that was curious, and

depending on what her mom told her, (that's) how she is going to judge. Because some kids, they're lucky they have parents who are very sensitive. And they're able to tell them about it and say it nicely, while some people are like, 'Oh, they're just retarded.' Very rude people that don't understand those sorts of things."

### Daily challenges

Stacy Lundell, a licensed marriage, family and play therapist at PrairieCare in Woodbury, helps special

education students cope with everyday social difficulties.

Once-per-week she meets individually with teens to discuss anxiety or depression issues. Most of Lundell's patients are there to discuss bullying.

"Sometimes the (special education) kids may think that they are the victim, but are not realizing that they are a bully too," Lundell said.

In special education classes, many students have trouble controlling their behavior or understanding how it affects others. That might lead them to badger or otherwise harass their peers without recognizing what they're doing.

"They don't think they are doing anything wrong ... and the students who may be bullying them may not understand that either," Lundell said.

Self-esteem is also a big issue. Because their brains aren't able to function normally, Lundell said special education students often feel overwhelmed and think they can't complete a task. This affects their ability to keep trying. They also dwell on negatives and label themselves "bad" or "stupid," she said.

Sally Ryan, a special education teacher for Aris Clinic in Woodbury, deals with students who may be too anxious to attend a regular school. Aris operates a one-room schoolhouse that divides students into two groups — elementary and junior high school in one, senior high school in another.

Regular school subjects are taught at Aris, but an additional Individualized Education Program is administered for further evaluation. There are different areas that



Submitted photo from Knutson family

Kenny Knutson, bottom, was diagnosed with Agenesis of the Corpus Callosum at an early age. Because his brain is underdeveloped, he needs help with everyday activities most teenagers take for granted.

*“Give every person an open heart regardless. Whether they are disabled or not.”*

—Kaitlyn Knutson

can qualify a student for an IEP, for instance, speech and vision difficulties.

Many students start in the program at a young age and stick with an IEP through college. The benefit of an IEP is that special education students get more time to work on assignments or take tests, Ryan said.

“Students go to a professional for a whole

day or check in with someone,” she said. “It depends on the level.”

### **‘Really sweet kids’**

It’s a lesson in patience, one Kaitlyn knows firsthand as Kenny’s sibling. She admits to internalizing a lot of frustration, especially as a child when her interests took a backseat

because of Kenny’s scheduling or lack of accessibility. As he’s become “an annoying teenage boy,” his tendency “to repeat things constantly” continues to test her.

Yet having seen her brother’s progress firsthand, she hopes that others will take the time to get to know special education students like Kenny before making judgments.

“Give every person an open heart regardless. Whether they are disabled or not,” Kaitlyn said. “Some have amazing skills in reading or math and might not be as good in other things. Or they just might not look like they’re good in other things.

“If you just get to know them, you can find out that they are really sweet kids.”

# I’m in special ed. Does it matter?

*Editor’s note: To protect the writer’s privacy, ThreeSixty Journalism is not disclosing his name. We have also changed the names of the other students.*

**“D**on’t let anyone see this,” I screamed inside my head. The C+ in red marker was suddenly an afterthought. I wasn’t prepared for what my teacher had attached to the end of my 8th period test.

Designed to keep me on task, my special education behavior chart was in plain sight. It’s the one thing that had caused me to stay inside a shell at my new high school. The reason I couldn’t be “me” around classmates.

“Don’t let anyone see this,” I kept repeating.

I frantically stuffed the chart into the back folder of my three-ring binder. Too late. It had caught the prying eyes of my classmate, Tim.

“Are you in special ed?” he blurted.

I immediately put my guard up. This was just like middle school again.

“Why does it matter?” I asked defiantly.

Before he could respond, I struck back harder.

“Are you gonna judge me because of that? There are a lot of people who have problems in this school that you’d never even know about. Do you have problems?”

This kind of reverse psychology was nothing new for me. Tim was a popular kid who always got away with saying what he wanted. He also spoke loud enough so that others could eavesdrop. I hated that.

Now they were all going to take shots at

me, I thought. When one person knows, everyone does.

This, more than anything, is what scares me about being labeled as a “special education” kid. Classmates are unwilling to include a “slow processing” person—which is what I’m always called—in everyday conversations about sports or video games. Girls don’t want to go out with someone who has “special needs.” Students always think I’m behind, so why bother getting to know me?

Sure, I might be a little socially weird at times. Whenever I’m introduced to new people, I fidget and look for ways to distract myself. I’m always nervous inside.

I also speak carefully. It’s my way of listening to information and being thoughtful with responses. But to most people who meet me for the first time, I’m not fast or loud enough. I never show the same level of emotion that they do.

I’ve suffered those judgments at every one of my schools.

In fifth grade, I was shooting hoops by myself at recess when another kid, Charlie,

grabbed my basketball and kicked it across our huge playground.

At first I was stunned. “What the heck? Go get my ball,” I told him.

He started laughing. Other kids gathered around to join him.

I snapped.

Even though Charlie was bigger, I punched him in the stomach and snatched him so hard by the head that his ear began to bleed. It was the first time I ever stood up to one of my bullies. Honestly, it kinda felt good to see him cry.

Looking back, that incident with Charlie was a turning point. I’m not the kind of person who explodes on classmates. But those constant judgments had been building. To always be the quiet kid. The slow kid. The nervous kid. The pushover. Bullies feasted on that.

What made the fight even worse is that summer vacation was only three days away. I never went back to that school again.

At my next school, I got in more fights and landed more suspensions. My principal, who I couldn’t stand as an “unfair” disciplinarian, eventually sat me down for a tough talk.

“You need to stop what you’re doing because in high school you’re going to end up behind bars. I don’t want to see that happen to you because you have so much talent that can be used on other things,” she told me. I went home crying.

All the labeling and bullying had taken a toll on my academics and social interactions. I also have ADHD, so with everything crashing down on me, there were days when I wouldn’t even remember a teacher’s lesson. My mom thought I needed extra help, so we worked with the school to design a special education plan for me.

Having this plan meant I could take extra time on tests and quizzes, learn lessons at

*Special continued on page 29*

## THE FACTS ABOUT SPECIAL ED IN MINNESOTA

- In 2012, 36,257 high school students were enrolled in special education in Minnesota. That’s 13.7 percent of all 9th to 12th graders.
- Minnesota spends about \$876 million on special ed services each year. That’s 12 percent of total state education spending.
- “Special ed” covers youth with a wide range of disabilities. They range from autism to speech impairments, from behavioral disorders to blindness or traumatic brain injuries.
- Services for special ed students range from offering Braille and technical resources for blind students to one-on-one help for students to prepare for jobs and independent living after high school.
- Each special ed student has an IEP, or Individualized Education Program. Based on assessment data, a student’s educational needs and a written statement, IEPs are developed and periodically reviewed by a team that includes a parent and at least two teachers.

Sources: Minnesota Department of Education

# Running away to the circus

## FRIENDSHIPS, SKILLS FORMED AT ST. PAUL'S CIRCUS JUVENTAS ENDURE ACROSS OCEANS

Back in fifth grade, Sam Krey joined the circus. “I fell in love with the circus from that very moment,” Krey said.

Krey, who is now 19, loved the chance to perform in front of more than 900 people when shows sold out at Circus Juventas, a youth circus in St. Paul. Just knowing that a sold-out crowd came to see him leaves a warm feeling in Krey’s heart, he said.

The St. Paul circus school teaches youth ages 3-to-21 the gymnastic, juggling, trapeze and acting skills needed to make a large crowd stand up and cheer. Twice a year in the spring and summer, hundreds of students perform in the Circus’ giant dome in Highland Park in St. Paul. The rest of the year, students take classes and practice.

Like the famous Cirque du Soleil, Circus Juventas tells stories with acting and theater. Unlike the traditional three-ring circus, there are no tigers jumping through hoops or girls riding galloping horses. Instead, there are six-year-olds walking on giant globes and teenagers spinning like basketballs in the air, then being caught by partners on a swinging trapeze.

Circus Juventas also has a different theme every season. Last

May’s shows highlighted famous movies like “Jaws,” “Grease” and the “Indiana Jones” franchise. August’s shows featured advanced students performing a Wild West theme.

Connor Houlihan, a long-time friend of Krey’s, introduced him to the circus nine years ago. They started by taking nonperforming classes that helped build their strength and balance. Another friend, Zeb Fricke, joined the circus later, when he was 17.



By **Frederick McConnell**  
St. Paul Conservatory



Photo by Ryan Siemers

Sam Krey chats with other Circus Juventas performers.

Krey said that being in the circus and in theater at his school helped improve his grades.

“They stayed the same at first, but after I enrolled in more classes (at the circus), they improved,” he said. “I think that being busy with the classes helped me.”

### Friends challenge and inspire

By last summer, the three friends were performing the most challenging and dangerous acts—



Photo by Ryan Siemers

Like all Circus Juventas artists, Zeb Fricke applies theater make-up before performances.

walking on the high wire and performing on the Wheel of Death, which requires keeping your balance while walking inside two wire wheels at opposite ends of a long bar that spins in a big circle. They also were teaching classes to younger students.

“We all kind of inspire each other,” Krey said.

The guys loved to test their limits in training to help build more confidence and encourage each other to do his best. During training, they’d watch each other closely from backstage. Afterward, they’d high-five each other but also point out mistakes.

After every show, Krey, Fricke, Houlihan and the other performers celebrated with their closest friends and went out for an hour-long lunch at favorite spots like Mickey’s Diner or Famous Dave’s on 7th Ave. Then it was back to flipping, flying, riding, juggling, tossing, shouting and styling in glittery costumes.

Back to the smells of hot, salty pretzels and steaming, grilled

**GOOD GRADES** Circus Juventas and other performing arts programs in the Twin Cities help make sure students keep their grades up.

Circus Juventas has a good-grades policy, which requires a C average to participate, because many students spend too little time on academic studies.

“This rule is to help children understand that it’s more than just performing, but school is an important factor as well as having fun,” said Dan Butler, founder and head of the circus.

Staff at Children’s Theatre Company in Minneapolis agrees. “It’s one of our expectations for the children here,” said Sherry Ward, senior publicist for the theater. “The performers must have a passing grade to perform in the shows or else another person replaces them.”

Children’s Theatre also offers homework tutors for performers who need help with any subject in school. “People get used to being busy and will learn how to handle things so that their performing life will be a lot more exciting,” said Tim Jennings, the theater’s managing director.

Jerome “JT” Scott was 18 when he joined Circus Juventas in 2011. He had been involved in gymnastics since age 5, which enabled him to get accepted in the advanced shows with their more rigorous rehearsal schedule.

Scott had to manage his grades while taking classes at the circus and he has succeeded.

“It was a lot harder, but I didn’t let it affect my grades,” he said. “I studied hard, even if I had to stay up till 1 a.m. or 2 a.m. to get school work done.”

think spot

Sam, Connor and Zeb challenge each other to work harder and develop their skills. Have you had a similar experience with friends?



Photo by Dan Norman

The three friends performing together during a 2011 show. At the right side of the photo, Connor Houlihan, Zeb Fricke and Sam Krey are seen with Gracie White.



Photo by Ryan Siemers

Connor Houlihan shows off his biceps before a performance of "Sawdust" in 2010.

*"I don't know where or when, but I can tell you that we are all going to try and create the opportunity to perform together again."*

—Connor Houlihan



Photo by Dan Norman

Connor Houlihan as Little Red Riding Hood's wolf in a 2011 performance of "Grimm."

## SCHOLARSHIPS

Circus Juventas offers scholarships to families that can't pay the full tuition for classes. Students may also work off the cost for participating in the classes by cleaning around the arena or helping move mats.

without the use of words ... all you have to act on is your body."

Fricke is working with a circus in Australia and Houlihan is attending a circus school in Canada, trying to polish his skills before auditioning for other big circus companies.

The friends stay in close touch.

"Facebook is a big one,"

Houlihan said. "We are constantly posting things and sending each other messages about shows or acts we have seen and what we are up to in general. We call each other when we can, but Zeb is out of the country a lot. Also, Skype is nice because we can actually see our faces while talking."

They also dream of the time when they'll perform together again.

"I don't know where or when, but I can tell you that we are all going to try and create the opportunity to perform together again," Houlihan said.

"Before we all left, we got together and shared a moment together. We were finally all going to do what we have dreamed of from the time we met. I know that our friendship will stay strong until the day we die."

hamburgers. Of sugary cotton candy and buttery popcorn. And finally, back to earth and waving to the audiences after the final act.

### **Moving on, staying connected**

This fall, the long-time friends split up. Krey started college at DePaul University in Chicago, where he was one of only 30 students accepted into the theater program.

"Best I've ever felt in a long time," he said.

Krey believes that his experience with Circus Juventas made the difference.

"Circus is what sparked my career in acting. It gave me my strength in physical acting because

# Brave new world

## STUDYING ABROAD PROVIDES UNIQUE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR AMBITIOUS STUDENTS

**B**ungee jumping. Jet boating. Lugging. Hiking through picturesque mountains, passes and glaciers.

Scott Carpenter also did some studying during a five-month spring semester in Queenstown, New Zealand—the “adventure sports capital of the world.” Just not in an environment most American college students are used to.

“It is not what you think of traditional classroom learning,” said Carpenter, a senior English major at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul. “I learned the most by talking to other students and going out and participating in various activities with students from all over the world.”

Carpenter attended the University of Otago in Dunedin, New Zealand through a study abroad program run by Arcadia University. It was a chance for the Owatonna native to get out of the Midwest and explore the world before “graduating school and being tied down by work or other financial, relationship obligations.”

Inspiration from his sisters’ travels led Carpenter to pursue a study abroad opportunity, one that around 1,000 St. Thomas students take advantage of annually, said Sarah Huesing, a study abroad advisor at the college. About 50 percent of undergraduates embark

on an overseas study trip during college, according to Open Doors, a program run by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the U.S. Department of State.

St. Thomas’ specialties include studying in Rome at the Angelicum campus and a popular London business program where students not only earn college credit in Great Britain’s largest city, but also get to travel throughout Europe. Common majors that study abroad include business, journalism, psychology and language, though science and engineering students are becoming increasingly aware of overseas opportunities,



**By Mary Meehan**  
Delano High School



Submitted photo from Scott Carpenter

University of St. Thomas student Scott Carpenter carved himself a comfortable (though admittedly cold) spot in New Zealand during a study abroad trip to the University of Otago. His advice: Get out and explore the world before a full-time career kicks in.

Huesing said.

“It was not necessarily where I traveled, but the impact of being overseas that as a whole ... changed me,” said Huesing, who turned those early international visits into a career path. “I had never been outside of my comfort zone. I was very much a homebody (before). Now, I hope other students have the opportunity.”

Before digging your passport out, there are some essentials to know about the study abroad experience:

### Do your research

Become familiar with the wide array of options and programs available. That way, students can

find what fits them academically and personally. Once you’ve applied for a program, set up an appointment with an advisor who will walk you through the basic steps. This not only includes cultural details, but financial components including campus scholarship opportunities or national ones targeting merit or money-based needs.

A “first step session will teach you how to research your program and apply online—there is a separate application process,” Huesing said. “We talk through academics, financial and cultural things so one can feel more comfort in knowing that advisors will answer all questions possible when choos-

ing a program.”

### Know your options

Travel methods can include a faculty led program with a class, a self-guided trip with a host family or a program at a specific country’s university. St. Thomas trips can vary by length—a year, semester, J-term, month or summer long. Summer abroad programs last 3-to-10 weeks and are especially popular with students involved in sports during the academic year.

### Determine your budget

Read the fine print so you know what is/isn’t included in a program. For example, when looking over meal costs, verify what’s pre-covered (a host family may also be providing food) and what’s out of pocket. Also important: Figure *Study Abroad continued on page 30*

think  
spot

**What challenges do American students who study in other countries sometimes face? Does the idea of studying abroad appeal to you?**

# Game on!

## STUDENTS CAN POWER UP DESIGN SKILLS FOR SUCCESSFUL VIDEO GAME CAREERS

Stephen Dinehart has always been a gamer and comic book lover.

When he was 10 years old, he bought the original Nintendo Entertainment System for \$110 after a year of saving his money.

"It was the best day of my life," the California native said.

An avid gamer with dreams of working at Marvel as a comic book designer, Dinehart attended the University of Southern California, got an internship at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and started making brochures and graphics for clients.

Fifteen years ago, he got his big break. He scored a free ticket to the Electronic Entertainment Expo in Los Angeles, the largest gaming show in the country, and was able to talk his way into the VIP lounge.

There, he passed out his business card to everyone he saw, and a few months later got a call from Warner Bros. They offered him an internship, and he dove in by working on high profile games like "Medal of Honor," "F.E.A.R. 3" and "Constantine."

Dinehart's path is just one way into the lucrative gaming industry—a massive market where Microsoft alone has sold more

than 68 million Xbox systems this year.

For most, the idea of playing games every day and turning that passion into designing or conceptualizing mega-selling titles seems



Stephen Dinehart



By **Darwesh Singh**  
Nova Classical Academy



Illustration by Nico Machlitt

like a pipe dream. But schools like Brown College in Mendota Heights offer bachelor's degree programs in game design, giving students the skills to create and develop every aspect of a game, even ones they'd never think about.

That's why the education of gamers is as important as the development, marketing and publishing of games themselves, said Ari Carrillo, a video game design teacher at Brown.

The majority of students in Brown's gaming program want to be artists—to create characters and design how they act and behave. Most of them don't like the idea of having to write programs, even though it's the highest-paying job, by far, in the industry, he said.

At Brown, students play games to analyze how they work. Carrillo teaches them to create small, high-quality level designs, as opposed to a full game with too many holes to pick apart.

"We teach them to value quality over quantity," Carrillo said. "It makes no sense to have a huge, crappy game."

Despite that advice, only five percent of his 200 annual students become professional game developers, Carrillo said. The rest go into related fields, including pho-

tom transitioning to newer mobile platforms.

While Dinehart represents a new generation of gamers adding their individual touches, people like Carrillo are teaching gamers the skills they need to create them at a basic level. After all, Dinehart's dream career wasn't narrative design. But as he got his foot in the door, he learned to master everything about the industry and found his niche.

However, as gamers know all too well, not every new level reached leads to a perfect ending.

Now an award-winning narrative designer working on freelance projects, Dinehart has seen both the good and bad in the industry. While there is a lot of demand for developers, designers and storytellers, the market is a minefield, he said.

"The atmosphere at these big houses quickly becomes negative," Dinehart said. "They aren't open to new ideas."

Only a few games become hits and actually produce some sort of profit. Also, because "big houses" like Blizzard, Electronic Arts, Gameloft and Nintendo usually make the most popular games of the year, they can take all the rights—even Dinehart's narrative credit.

Ultimately, it's a reflection of the industry's massive appeal, and why Carrillo and Dinehart believe gaming will be relevant long into the future. Though mom and dad may have discouraged those marathon nights of "Diablo III," career-wise, gamers have a lot to gain from their video game passion.

"Gaming is never going to go away," Carrillo said. "It's essentially my job to teach (gamers) the skills to make good games."

*"We teach them to value quality over quantity. It makes no sense to have a huge, crappy game."*

— Ari Carrillo

tography and Internet technology.

That's also what makes the game development program unique. The skills required for making video games can be used in numerous professions, Carrillo said.

Brown students learn a variety of different computer languages and game formats to account for swift advances in technology. Brown is migrating from Adobe's now-dying Flash to the new HTML5 while still teaching staple software programs like Unreal Engine 3 and 4 and Unity 3D, Carrillo said.

The school is also preparing its students for mobile gaming since the market is growing exponentially. Desktop, console and mobile platforms share a lot of similarities, which means that someone who learns primarily about developing older formats won't have a prob-

think  
spot

What challenges face someone who wants to be a professional developer of computer games?

# Stepping up

## DESPITE TOUGH JOB MARKET, MINNEAPOLIS PROGRAM MATCHES TEENS WITH **OPPORTUNITIES**

To most teenagers, being surrounded by 20 or more children would be something to avoid. To Anel Braziel, it's an opportunity.

During the summer, Braziel worked as a teacher's assistant at Kaleidoscope Place in Minneapolis, helping students with math and reading in an eight-week program called Summer Kids.

"I have to do activities with the kids," Braziel said. "We do structured math and reading."

Braziel, 15, lives in Minneapolis with her mother. She got her job through a summer employment program called Step-Up Achieve, operated by the city of Minneapolis.



**By Calista Dunbar**  
St. Paul Central

Tammy Dickinson, director of Step-Up for the city, described it as an internship program for 14-21 year-olds.

"We typically serve youths who are least connected to the work force, whether they're from low-income families or they have a risk factor or some other barrier that would make it challenging to graduate," Dickinson said.

Since 2000, the number of 16- to-19-year-olds with paid jobs dropped to the lowest level since World War II, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, a federal agency that studies work trends and unemployment. USA

Today reported that more than 44 percent of U.S. teens who wanted summer jobs wouldn't get them or would be working fewer hours than they wanted.

In August, the national unemployment rate for 16- to 19-year-olds was 24.6 percent compared to 8.1 percent overall.

Step-Up's main goal is to get low-income kids into the work-force by providing them with direct experience that employers are seeking.

"It came out of programming to get young people job-readiness skills, primarily the soft skills," Dickinson said. "We keep hearing



Photo by Jennah Benalshaikh

As part of the Step-Up job program, Anel Braziel worked as a teacher's assistant at Kaleidoscope Place in Minneapolis, where she once attended school.

over and over from employers that they can train on the hard skills."

Soft skills include knowing how to dress, whether it's for the corporate world or the child-care world; how to problem-solve, including whom to go to for help and how to solve the problem; and communication skills.

About 2,000 youth sign up for the program every year, and 1,700 are placed with employers in the private sector. The other 300 find jobs with non-profit organizations.

Braziel was in the Kaleidoscope program as a young girl, and because Kaleidoscope was a partner with Step-Up, it seemed right to work at a place that she had enjoyed for years.

"I remember always being excited when I got to come here," Braziel said. "It was like a home away from home."

Step-Up partners with about 230 employers, Dickinson said.

### MORE INFO

For information about Step-Up Achieve, check out <http://www.achieve mpls.org/stepupachieve>

"They typically fall in about six or eight categories: social work, working in government, as clerical support, and in schools," she said. "We do have youth placed in the legal field and the medical field, finance industry, and typically those are going to be support positions."

Ryan Kirk, advisor of Kaleidoscope Place, said the longtime partnership with Step-Up has fostered a strong feeder system of future employees.

"We have our 40 years of students," said Kirk, pointing to a bulletin board filled with student pictures. "These are pictures going

back all the way to the early 1970s. We have some pictures from several years ago of students who now work for us in the youth employment program."

Kirk knows firsthand how valuable interns can be in the classroom.

"Somebody who is there regularly knows what works and what doesn't work," he said. "We do have a lot of tough students with a lot of tough situations."

"We have a teacher's assistant who was invaluable. She was out at another camp for two or three days, and we did as best as we could without her."

Braziel said her job as a teacher's assistant gives her experience and responsibility, but it also shows her what it would be like if she were to follow the same career path.

"After being a teacher's assistant for so long, maybe I can become an actual teacher here," she said.

think  
spot

Do you have the "soft skills" that employers look for? Who could help you develop them?

# Living art

## DEDICATION AND SECOND JOBS SUPPORT ARTISTS' CAREERS

**B**ryan Nichols is an accomplished jazz pianist from Minneapolis who makes his money from performing and teaching.

That wasn't always his plan, though.

Nichols attended Iowa State University with a full scholarship, thinking he was going to be a doctor. He began to pursue a degree in biology and pre-med, but eventually realized that he was not cut out for medicine.

"I wasn't interested in lab work," he said. "I wasn't excited about that."

Now his education is a joke at parties, where he'll ask strangers, "Hey, guess what I got my degree in?"

Nichols, 33, is a Twin Cities artist who decided to follow his dream instead of pursuing a more lucrative career. Although many people might consider such a move risky in today's economy, Nichols said it's possible with hard work. But when it comes to financial stability, being an artist has its ups and downs.

### Count on a second job

Lisa Brimmer, 26, knows that well.

Brimmer is a spoken-word artist in the Twin Cities. She attended the University of St. Thomas with a major in psychology and a

minor in English literature. After graduating in 2008, she began working as a personal advocate in the health-care business, answering questions about insurance policies.

"It was what I thought I was supposed to do," Brimmer said. "I thought I was supposed to get my college degree, and then go climb the corporate ladder. But it's not me."

In addition to being a spoken-word artist, Brimmer works as a waitress to support herself.

"It can be difficult in this economy and in this country to build a life off of being an artist. Specifically if it is the written word," Brimmer said. "The game's tough ... because you can't just be a writer. You must be a writer and a



**By Simone Cazares**  
Woodbury High School



Photo by Howard Gitelson

Pre-med might have been his goal in college, but Bryan Nichols decided to ditch lab work for a career performing and teaching jazz.

waitress, or a writer and librarian, or a writer and all of these other things."

### Turning down gigs

Nichols makes most of his living as a performer, but also does some teaching at MacPhail Center for Music in Minneapolis and in his home. It allows him to turn down gigs he doesn't like.

"At this point, I almost always play music that I want to be involved in," Nichols said. "But a lot of people, if you're not teaching, have to take a lot of stuff that maybe you don't always want to do, but you have to. And I would rather not do it."

Although the number of venues for performers has decreased in the past 10 years, the music scene in the Twin Cities is still quite active, and neither Nichols nor Brimmer has much trouble finding places to perform.

Nichols often performs at the Artist's Quarter in St. Paul, the Dakota Jazz Club in Minneapolis



Photo by Calista Dunbar

Lisa Brimmer left the corporate world to pursue her true passion—spoken word performance.

and a newer venue, The Ice House, also in Minneapolis. Brimmer can be seen at The Turf Club and Black Dog Café, both in St. Paul, and the 331 Club in Minneapolis. Other venues include the Red Stag Supper Club, Barbette, Café Maude and Studio Z.

### Combining influences

For Brimmer, getting gigs isn't hard because she works with jazz musicians.

The partnership allows her work to be heard by more people and create a diverse atmosphere that *Artists continued on page 30*

think  
spot

**What strategies have these two artists used to make a living while being active performers?**

# Youth movement

## JOHN MARK NELSON NO LONGER WAITING (AND WAITING) FOR HIS MUSIC CAREER TO BEGIN

**W**e all have a friend who is trying to become a rock star.

They drag us to shows, pass out demo CDs and hassle until we like their Facebook fan pages. Of course, their musical ambitions often don't amount to much, and eventually they have to be content with jamming in their parents' basements while punching a time clock elsewhere.

Not John Mark Nelson.

He knows how to get where he wants to go.

Thanks to his sophomore album "Waiting and Waiting," the 18-year-old singer/songwriter from Minneapolis is making a bold impression in the Twin Cities.



**By Grace Pastoor**

University of St. Thomas

Released in August, the album has spawned two popular singles—"Reminisce" and "Rain Comes Down"—on Minnesota Public Radio's tastemaker station, 89.3 The Current. Nelson said local music director, Jon Schober, discovered his early songs through Bandcamp—an online hosting site for indie artists—and offered to play them on The Current's "Local Show."

That was in April, before much of "Waiting and Waiting" had even been written, Nelson said.

Once the recent Minnetonka High School graduate began working on new material, the whirlwind that followed changed everything.

When did this new reality sink in?

"I walked out on stage at the CD release show and found that I was looking out at a room full of strangers," he said.

Nelson began playing the piano when he was five or six but was far from a prodigy. He only became serious about music when he was a



Submitted photo

Thanks to a boost from 89.3 The Current for his "Waiting and Waiting" album, John Mark Nelson decided to forgo college and focus on his music full-time.

teenager.

It also helped that he grew up in "a very musical household." Nelson's father was a piano player and music minister, his mother a singer.

Before his songs experienced a surge in popularity, Nelson planned to study drum set performance at McNally Smith College of Music in St. Paul. Now, he's taking a gap year to capitalize on his current—no pun intended—momentum.

"For some people, the idea of not going straight to a university after high school is detrimental.



*"I am still just a kid who likes to make music."*

—John Mark Nelson

Others think that a gap year can be a good way to focus in on your long-term goals. There isn't one correct answer. I just needed a breath of air between high school

and college," Nelson said. (Music) "means everything. It's how I express ideas and relate to other people. It's a way for strangers to communicate and

think spot

**What made John Mark Nelson's music stand out to radio hosts at The Current, FM 89.3?**

experience emotions and feelings together. It's powerful and important, and something I truly love."

It shows during his live performances.

On stage, Nelson carries himself with a quiet confidence that could be the by-product of his natural musical talent, sudden popularity, or even his indie folk-rock beard, which is far bushier than that of the average teenager.

Instead of bursting onto the Triple Rock Social Club stage, electric guitar blaring, the spotlight focused on him alone. Accompanied by a ten-piece band—including an upright bass, violin and glockenspiel—Nelson switched between acoustic guitar and accordion, the harmonious blend of instrumentation as much a part of each song as his gentle voice.

It's a huge part of what makes his indie folk-pop unique. This is a teenager who is sensitive without being cheesy, contemplative without being complicated and humble without being fake.

"I am still just a kid who likes to make music," he said, citing a support group of family and friends who've become "excited and confused together."

"I hope to continue to make music in the Twin Cities. As far as making a dent, I think that is a



Photo by Grace Pastoor

Backed by a ten-piece band, John Mark Nelson, far right, performs during a recent opening gig at Triple Rock Social Club in Minneapolis.

long ways off. There are so many incredible musicians that live, and have lived, in this city. My musical journey is much more a work in progress than a finished product. I have a long way to go before any dents are made."

Still, the gathering storm suggests bigger and better things to come. In October, Nelson finished third in City Pages' "Click to Pick" best new bands poll, which is compiled annually with input from the Twin Cities' major music scenesters. He also contributes the opening Beatles cover, "Day in the Life," to the Minnesota Beatle

**LISTEN UP** You can hear John Mark Nelson's sophomore album, "Waiting and Waiting," online at <http://johnmarknelson.bandcamp.com>. The album is also available on iTunes or at local record stores.

Project Vol. 4 compilation, out this month.

Even better, his latest single "Rain Comes Down" has, again, earned fans at The Current.

"They have done a ton (to help

me)," Nelson said of the station. "They started rotating my music, sponsored my CD release show, invited me and the band to perform in their studio. Everyone at the station has been very supportive and encouraging. I owe them a lot."

Dave Campbell, a "Local Show" host for The Current, said Nelson's experience isn't typical for young musicians.

"There was an ephemeral quality (in his album) rare for young artists," he said. "Young kids don't have a refined quality or sound. For being such a young person, it

was such a fully realized sound."

It's why breaking into The Current's rotation is such an accomplishment for Nelson. The station receives so many CDs and demos, "you could build a house of jewel cases," Campbell said. It takes dedicated staff members to find the best Twin Cities' talent, turning the discovery process into a "game of telephone, where one person hears it and is like, 'Oh man, you gotta hear it!'"

"We like his art," Campbell said. "Our job here at the station is to find people's art we like and then talk about it."

Campbell also has some advice for teens who, like Nelson, want to succeed at making music.

"You have to learn how to do lots of stuff," he said. "Learn how to book shows, effectively market whatever you're working on, learn how to do live sound, play a couple of different instruments and study it. The truth is a lot of successful musicians are very skilled and organized."

Or more succinctly, make it your "invocation."

"Don't stop doing what you love," Nelson said. "If you pour your whole heart and soul into everything you care about, you are never wasting your time."

## SPECIAL

*continued from page 21*

my own pace, and work on behavioral issues constructively, for instance, by squeezing stress toys. The chart I received kept me on task with teachers, and I was always happy when I saw good marks. By the end of middle school, I even got into honor council and earned awards as Student of the Month and Principal's Choice.

I thought to myself, this was the "real me."

Today, I'm still not totally comfortable in my skin. At my first high school, the chart made me paranoid. Students, even though they didn't know about my special education background, would ask me personal questions and I'd freeze up. Especially Tim, who loved to jab at me about autism or Asperger's on the bus. The whole time I'd be thinking, "He's trying to put me down so others won't like me." He always tried to make me feel "different."

I've since transferred to a new school. Already, I feel more accepted. I also don't need to use the behavior chart any more. Instead, I can work with a case manager for extra help. So far, I haven't needed it.

People think if you're in special education, it automatically makes you "slow and stupid." I wish I didn't have to justify why I needed extra help, but I can't worry about my past. Now, my focus is on school and extra-curricular activities that will bring the best out of

me. I'm able to showcase talents that a lot of people don't have.

I know I'm always going to be quiet and nervous. I also know that the "real me" can be loud and fun, too. I wish I could loosen up around my classmates, but caring too much about what others think can really mess you up inside.

Until I learn to trust more, I'll still be doing a lot of screaming inside my head.

## STUDY ABROAD

*continued from page 24*

out the exchange rate. Anticipate major city costs since they'll be more expensive. Europe tends to have a higher cost of living compared to say, South America. This also factors into personal expenses. Since he wasn't aware of how much money to bring, Carpenter said he lost about 35 pounds because, "I couldn't afford to eat."

Money is often at the "forefront of a lot of people's minds" when determining travel options, Huesing said. After all, many students overseas either can't take jobs or, as Car-

penter pointed out, aren't legally allowed to because of work visa eligibility issues.

Huesing said another potential roadblock is loss of an "easy support system." Being in a new country without familiar faces can be stressful. Students may miss American classmates. The language barrier can lead to tough adjustments and miscommunication. As silly as it sounds, there may also be conflict with an international student or host family about everyday issues like allergies to a family pet or vegetarian food preferences.

Shy by nature, Carpenter said he learned to open up and embrace his new surround-

ings. While in New Zealand, he lived in a flat with several international students and a native Kiwi.

"Introversion is not insurmountable," Carpenter said. "The laid-back lifestyle there made it hit home to me that there is so much more to life than making money. I had to completely reassess my plans for post-grad life."

That future includes more travel, graduate school and teaching English abroad after finishing his St. Thomas studies in May, preferably in Sweden.

Exposure to other cultures often has that

kind of life-altering effect for study abroad students, Huesing said. Not only is it an opportunity to build a resume, but socially, it teaches students to become more culturally competent and increase independence, problem solving and language skills. It also forges lifelong relationships with new friends from the United States and beyond.

"I am definitely not ready to forego (another chance to travel) just to enter the workforce and settle down for the rest of my life," Carpenter said. "I want to see the world."

## ARTISTS

*continued from page 27*

people want to come back to. Anything to get more "names on lips," Brimmer said.

"Venues like it because we are bringing in artists that they have contact with," she said. "We're keeping a good relationship with the artists by booking them, and I think it's mutually beneficial."

The biggest challenge for these artists is just keeping their drive.

"It's like being in a relationship," Brimmer said. "I mean, you love it and you hate it and you're frustrated with certain things about it."

It's really up to the artists to stay involved in the arts community, do new things and keep getting better at what they do, Nichols said.

"There are all these roadblocks and bottlenecks and stop signs and everything. So you've just got to have the fortitude to keep going, and just believe in what you're doing," he said.

"If you love it and it's the only thing that will make you happy, do it. If something else will make you happy, do it on the side."

**SEE 'EM LIVE** To find out where Bryan Nichols is playing next in the Twin Cities, visit his website at <http://bryannichols.org/live/>.

Lisa Brimmer also posts shows on her blog at <http://2speakeaseblog.wordpress.com/>.

## YOURTURN

*continued from page 19*

*explains the negative impact technology has played in her learning and why she oftentimes gravitates toward the old-fashioned tools.*

**T**he use of technology is an ever increasing and evolving project. Some schools have more opportunities to access these innovations than others. At my K-12 school in rural northern Minnesota, students don't have a wide range of technological advancements available for use. Still, the role of technology is evident within my school.

Over the past few years, my school has received reprogrammed and updated computers. Personally, I don't think this has benefited the students. These updates have resulted in more time spent fixing the computer than using it. Often, it can take up to twenty minutes to log on to a computer. Class time is wasted on trying to fix technology that is supposed to work.

On top of this, privacy and protection acts have put restrictions on the websites that students can access. Most of the websites I have tried to use have been blocked because

the school labels them as "forums" or "blogs." Even sources like Wikipedia have been blocked for student use. These websites are classified as inappropriate for educational purposes.

Oftentimes, I feel as though the use of videos and DVDs in school is a way of relieving a teacher of their work. Whenever educational videos are played, I have a hard time retaining the information. Even though I am a visual learner, videos don't provide the instruction of teachers. I need repetition to grasp concepts. Usually, videos are only shown once. It is hard to retain information that you only see once. Plus, videos move quickly through their information and it is difficult to comprehend everything.

Technology has been an inconvenience for me. In most cases, I end up having more problems when I use technology than if I work on a project without it. I have seen how unreliable technology can be. Often, the computer networks at my school have failed to work. We have had to delay projects because we can't access our documents on the computers.



Maria Lewis

With the increase in dependence on technology, I see more time spent dealing with delays than actually working.

It is a hassle to finish homework when you have to go back and forth between school and home technology. It is time

consuming to transfer documents from one computer to another. I don't always have a jump drive with me. I have tried using Google Documents, but there always seems to be an error with the website when I use it at school. At this point, it seems easier to start my projects over. That way I can actually get work done instead of wasting time trying to make technology work.

Overall, technology has been a hindrance to my learning. Technology is supposed to make things efficient. Very rarely have I saved time by using technology. There is lots of information available with technology. Unfortunately, my experience hasn't provided me with that information. Technology is not useless. It is valuable when it functions properly. I, however, would rather stick to paper, pencil, and encyclopedias.

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# Students bite back

## MIXED RESULTS FOR HEALTHIER SCHOOL LUNCHROOM OFFERINGS

On first look during the new school year, it wouldn't seem much has changed at Central High School in St. Paul.

Classes are overcrowded with students. Hallways are as congested as someone's nose with the flu.

In the cafeteria, however, a food fight is happening. Due to new federal rules, schools across the country are required to serve healthier options and set calorie limits for their students.

Beware of flying bananas.

"The meatballs that were with my spaghetti look like soggy brown Styrofoam. And the chicken looks like it's made out of tofu," said Central High School student Tara Solvang.

The 17-year-old senior believes the overall quality of cafeteria food has suffered because of the healthier requirements. She's not alone.

Also unhappy with more restrictive servings, the new law led some students in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan and New Jersey to boycott their school lunch program this fall.

"It's like I eat breakfast in the morning on the first floor, and by the time I reach the fifth floor for first period, I'm out of breath and hungry after going up 25 million stairs," Solvang said.

The regulations go hand-in-hand with an increase in the childhood obesity rate, where 17 percent, or 12.5 million children ages 2 to 19, are considered obese, according to the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey.



By Calista Dunbar  
St. Paul Central

The law is also designed to help students develop healthy eating habits by providing fewer carbohydrates (bread, grains) and offering more nutritious foods. For instance, students are required to take at least one serving of fruits or vegetables.

Jean Ronnei, director of nutrition and custodial services for St. Paul Public Schools, said that the new requirements follow My Plate, which is essentially the time-honored food pyramid "but just on a plate."

"Some of the new changes have been dramatic, while others have not while following the 2010 dietary plan. If you remember the food pyramid that was shown to you as a kid in elementary school, then My Plate is simple to follow," Ronnei said. "The plate

shows what the students should have when taking a meal: fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean meats."

That has led to more fruit and vegetable options — kiwis, mangoes, watermelon, bananas, celery, tomatoes, carrots and green beans, to name a few. But even with those healthier benefits, there are drawbacks with meal planning, Ronnei said.

"With these new guidelines, it's hard to be creative while creating meals," she said. "Sometimes we come up with something, and then the guidelines come in and say, 'Oh, sorry, can't do that.' We try the best we can, but sometimes it just doesn't work."

If students don't like the cafeteria food offered at their school, they also can pick from a To-Go Bar featuring salads, parfaits, peanut butter-jelly sandwiches and packages of fruits and vegetables.

While in line, several students commented that they like To-Go because it's less congested and features better looking choices. Teens can also bring their own food from home.

Ellise Wright, a 17-year-old junior at Central, hasn't noticed a

*"Teens need to understand that mommy and daddy aren't going to always be there to make sure you're eating right and healthy."*

—Ellise Wright



Submitted photo by St. Paul Public Schools

Got greens? If St. Paul Public Schools had its way, the ideal lunchroom tray would feature plenty of healthy "all you can eat" offerings like fruits, veggies and legume salads. However, reaching for extra color isn't always the reality at Central High School.



Photo by Calista Dunbar

decrease in her appetite while making the cafeteria rounds. However, she does miss unique offerings like a brunch-combo that featured French toast.

"It was a ... cinnamon swirl-type thing with apples in a syrup glaze that came with scrambled eggs or home fries. That was a good lunch," Wright said. "I have no idea why I liked it so much. Maybe it was because it's something one wouldn't expect a public school to have available for lunch."

Despite losing some favorites, Wright said she understands why changes were made. Though teens

might not understand the benefit now, eating healthier while in high school could lead to greater self-sufficiency.

"Teens need to understand that mommy and daddy aren't going to always be there to make sure you're eating right and healthy. We're young adults and will be out of the house attending college. We need to learn how to do it ourselves before we're on our own," she said.

"If we learn these skills now — eating right, portion sizes, balanced meals — then our brains will be programmed to do that without a second thought."