BLOT

DECEMBER 2016

University of Idaho student-run magazine

Editor's note

It's estimated that as of 2014, there are 4,200 different spiritual belief systems practiced around the world.

In the U.S., the word "religion" might bring to mind only a handful of those, such as Christianity, Catholicism, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism or Buddhism. While each of those belief systems comes with its own set of preconceived notions, it's important to remember that not every individual who identifies as Christian or Muslim or Jewish is representative of the expectations and stereotypes that American society applies to their faith.

Whether a population is composed of social activists, political advocates or believers of a specific faith, there will always be members who are loud, abrasive and sometimes harmful to others in the way they express themselves, but who do not represent the group as a whole.

It's important to remember that religion is not a series of individual boxes that one either fits into or does not, but rather a continuum — a personal journey. Each individual on this spectrum experiences faith in their own way.

Everyone's journey is different. Some grew up with one religion and their belief in that faith only strengthened over time, while others converted to a different religion or lost their faith completely. Some take various parts of multiple religions and adhere to a self-composed faith, while others strictly follow the teachings of one specific faith.

The complexity of religion and the various societal stereotypes surrounding many faiths can make it difficult to talk about.

When it comes to having conversations about religion, respect and empathy serve as valuable tools for understanding a different perspective in a new way.

— CB

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HUMANS OF MOSCOW

"There is this great saying by Rita Mae Brown that states 'Language is the road map of a culture. It tells you where its people come from and where they are going.' My native languages of Swahili, Luba and Nyanja are rooted in me, and have played a major role in who I am as a person today. Growing in Zambia, and living in Democratic Republic of Congo gave me the opportunity to learn about my heritage and culture. Being able to speak multiple languages has given me the ability to be able to connect with people from different backgrounds and cultures. I want to travel the world once I am done with school, and hopefully be able to learn about different cultures as well as languages that I am curious about like Portuguese and Arabic.

Find Humans of Moscow and more at **facebook.com/uiblot**

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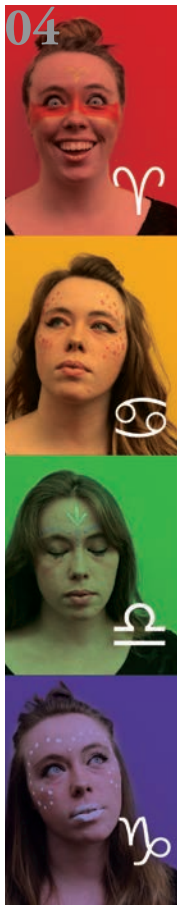
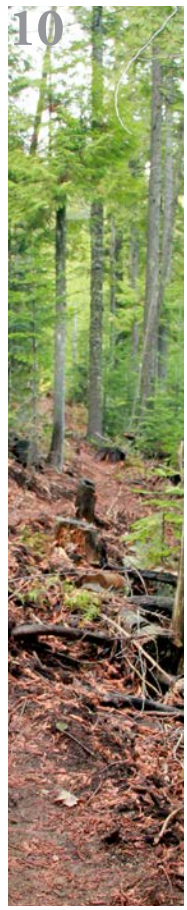
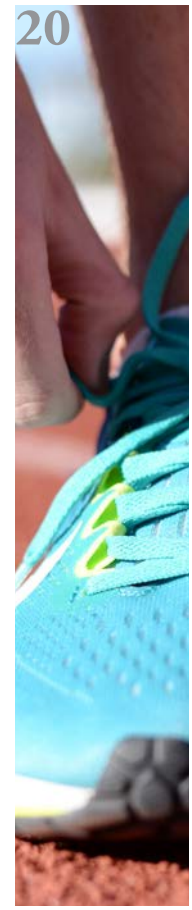
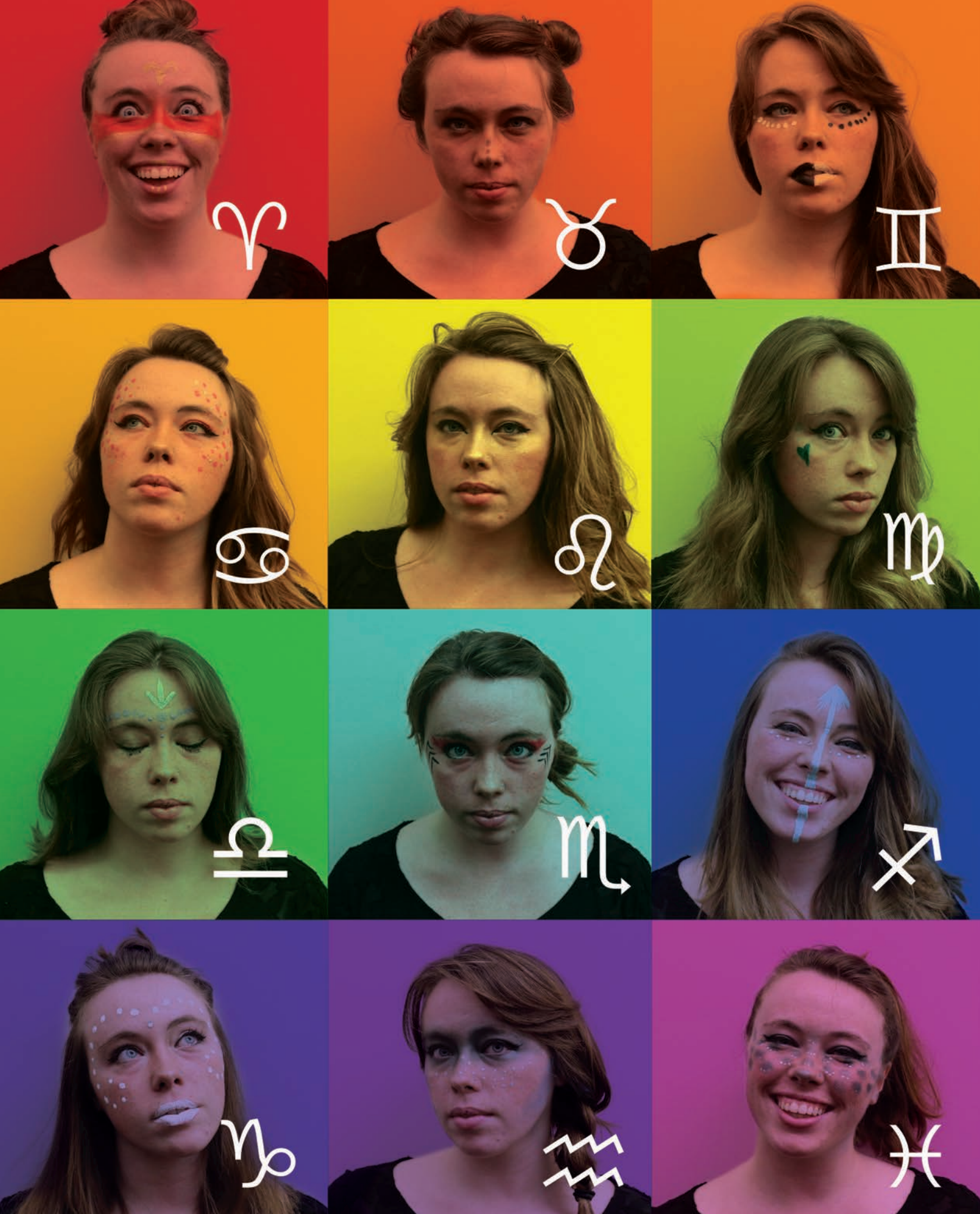
PATRICK MUTEBA









The self among the stars

The practice of astrology and its associated sun signs attracts people for various reasons

STORY BY Lyndsie Kiebert
PHOTOS BY Leslie Kiebert

The sun rises in Moscow and University of Idaho student Brandi Billing checks her daily horoscope.

She doesn't feel inclined to leave the comfort of her warm bed, and yet her horoscope reads the opposite, "You're going to have a great adventure today."

So Billing, being the adventurous Scorpio she knows herself to be, crawls out from beneath the covers and prepares for a day of astrologically-predicted excitement.

"I've always been in love with the idea of what my sign is … I think it's just interesting how much of it actually relates to what I think I am or who I think I am," Billing said.

In late September, a wave of reports surfaced that NASA found a new constellation with which the sun intersects and therefore a new sign for the zodiac. This "new sign," Ophiuchus, caused every other sign to shift, leaving many wondering if they'd been living an astrological lie. Billing was quick to reject NASA's announcement.

"Initially, my reaction was very negative. Basically, 'I'm not going to take this,'" she said. "I am a Scorpio from the day I was born until the day I die."

Despite her strong ties to astrology and belief in the associated sun signs, Billing understands that many don't share her sentiments.

"Who's to say if it is true or not — I mean, I believe it is, at least to a certain extent," she said. "I think it's just like anything else. It's your opinion, I can't sway it, but I don't think your judgment should be affecting me in any way, shape or form."

"You can't use scientific criteria to judge a symbolic system."

Billing said she uses astrology as a personal tool.

"I think it's so interesting to see what your ideal path would be. To just kind of help you identify yourself," she said. "I think it's something people can try to explore themselves within, and I think that's what's so cool about it."

Though the personal exploration aspect still excites her, UI student Katrina Alverez said she is better known among her friends as the woman most likely to inquire about someone else's astrological sign soon after meeting them.

"It's like a joke that when I ask people their birthday people are like, 'Oh my gosh, there she goes again,' just because I like knowing peoples' signs because I feel like there's some truth behind it," Alverez said.

She said she likes to apply her knowledge of the signs when working with others. Alverez can see patterns within people that correspond to their astrological identities — including her skeptic of a boyfriend.

"My boyfriend has been a nay-sayer, and I have convinced him just by pointing things out, and he'll still say, 'I don't think it's real, but there's some coincidences,'" she said. "If you just look, you plant the seed, and if people genuinely want to research it they can listen and maybe the seed will be planted."

Planting that seed might be as simple as knowing peoples' tendencies to desire a group or label, said UI professor Kenneth Locke. Though Locke has no background in astrology, he specializes in the study of personality and is familiar with how and why people define themselves. He said in his experience, people enjoy feedback from tests or systems that tell them who they are or what they should be like.

"It's far from, 'Don't define me, don't label me,'" he said. "They're usually saying 'Please do.'"

But Locke also said individuality is an undeniable human desire — to a point. He said astrology is reminiscent, on a psychological level, to this idea.

"What people like is, 'I'm different, but I'm also like some other subgroup of people,'" Locke said. "I think astrological signs are kind of that type of thing, where you're distinct, but there's a whole other group of other people — Capricorns — out there."

Those who cling to their sun sign subgroup made up the bulk of those who denounced NASA's findings back in September, and astrologer Maria Maggi said this wasn't the first time scientists attempted to interpret a system they don't understand.

Though other systems recognize the 13th sign, Maggi said modern western astrology — the version that uses the 12 signs most people are familiar with — is not meant to mirror the constellations.

"You can't use scientific criteria to judge a symbolic system," she said.

This symbolic system attracted Maggi's passion when she was about 18, but she lost sight of her love of astrology when she began her college career studying English. After the birth of her son, Maggi found herself drawn again to the stars. She asked her yoga teacher — who did astrological readings on the side — to teach her more.

"I wanted to see what was making my son tick," she said. "I couldn't get enough of it — it really rang true to me."

Maggi lived in Moscow for about 22 years, but moved to Portland in 2014 to be closer to her son. While in Moscow, she taught in UI's English department.

During her years as a teacher, poet and astrologer, she said astrology continued to ring true, particularly in what she sees as the cyclical nature of the world. She said though not every aspect of someone's sign or horoscope might be accurate, astrological readings must be held like a photograph — by viewing things from a certain angle, something will inevitably resonate.

"They might not hit every mark, but every once in a while it's like 'Oh gosh,' and you feel a kinship with that," Maggi said.

She said it is also important to remember that no one is made up of a single sign — sun signs are commonly known, but people also have moons and myriad of other astrological identifiers, depending on when and where they were born. Sun signs are a reflection of a person's creative being. When someone doesn't feel their sun sign completely defines them, Maggi said their moon — which reflects emotional aspects of their being — might be the piece that's missing. ■

The industry and culture of video games is taking connectivity to new heights

STORYTELLING T·H·R·O·U·G·H SIMULATION

STORY BY Hailey Stewart
ILLUSTRATION BY Cody Muir

Right now, someone is scaling Mount Everest in the midst of a snowstorm. Someone is orbiting the moon and peering down at Earth. Someone is hiding out in an abandoned bomb shelter waiting for the enemy to return. Someone is summoning magical creatures through spell.

All of this is being done in the same world — a virtual world.

> “Everyone has a story to tell — it’s about what speaks to them.”

Darren Kearney, University of Idaho ITS Help Desk manager and Vandal Overnight event coordinator, said every video game player has their own reason for being drawn to games, but they all want to feel a sense of discovery.

“Most of us don’t have the time to go run on some adventure to find hidden treasure out in the middle of the jungle, but you can jump on a game and sort of simulate that over an evening or two,” Kearney said.

It is the adventure and story that gamers thrive on. In today’s industry, Kearney said video games often revolve around real-life events that don’t usually become reality for the average person.

“A lot of games are based around stories and they are based around the ability to do something you can’t do in real life,” Kearney said. “It is fun to find those things that don’t happen day-to-day, and realize that games can make those things into a virtual sort of reality.”

Brian Cleveley, a professor in UI’s Virtual Technology and Design department (VTD), said all successful games begin with a story.

“Sure, one of the first things creators think about is what genre they want to create a game in, because there are so many,” Cleveley said. “But then ultimately, everyone has a story to tell — it’s about what speaks to them.”

Cleveley said video games often become lost behind the rapid innovation of technology, but at the core of each gaming creation there is a rich story that lends to every other aspect of the design. From a story, a game designer and creator will build upon the characters, the scene, the experience and the outcome of the game. But, Cleveley said even then the process takes much more than combining a few ideas and clicking a few buttons.

“All of these pieces come together to create a larger experience, whatever that may be,” Cleveley said. “It’s very complex.”

Adding to that complexity, Cleveley said it takes an array of people to get a video game off the ground and into the production phase.

He said he explains the process of any design by drawing a sketch of what the person wants to get out of what they create. It is a concept-to-output model that has no straight path, making the whole operation multi-faceted.

The process of designing a video game from start to finish is never linear, but Cleveley said that is what makes game design so interesting.

“You have to move forward and come back, and check in with each creator involved,” Cleveley said. “There are more people involved in the process now than ever.”

He said most people wouldn’t expect an anthropologist, an English major, a classical artist and a code developer to be in the same room, but this is a common occurrence when creating a video game. The industry holds a place for many career fields because of how diverse gaming has become.

Though current gaming technology is quickly advancing, Cleveley said the need for an array of creators and thinkers is more than what was needed 10 or 20 years ago.

“I think teams of creators are growing a little more because we now understand the value of having diversity at the table,” Cleveley said. “There are many leaders at different times of the project, and in this industry each contribution strengthens the game’s design.”

Jean-Marc Gauthier, an associate professor in the university’s VTD department, said just as video games require many creators, the gaming industry now requires many different game genres.

“There are just too many facets to the industry anymore to pick out a singular game or style of playing that makes for an essential go-to game,” Gauthier said.

Today's gamers expect a lot from video game companies. Company names like Atari, Ubisoft and Nintendo will always be recognized, Gauthier said, but they are not as relevant in the center of gaming culture as they once were."

"When you look at games across time there were always leaders, but the leaders are never the same," Gauthier said. "There are always new gaming companies that are not far behind, ready to enter the limelight. Companies stick around for a while, but not forever."

This comes from the many new companies that constantly spring up with new technologies and interesting game ideas. Gauthier said he attributes this growth to independent gaming start-ups, known as indie games.

With the growth of the internet, indie gaming companies opened up a new world to avid players. Gauthier said the original commercial structure of the gaming industry is still intact, but there is now less pressure to be part of that side of the business. The more unconventional side of the gaming economy lends an open hand to young developers and designers, he said.

"So for students, this new feel in the industry is very attractive to them," Gauthier said. "With a great idea that blends quality, technology and story, there really is no limit to how far you can go as a creator. It's a wonderful time to be young and part of the new gaming culture."

This budding side of the industry is what Hal Bateman, a UI sophomore studying video design in the VTD department, said draws him to creating and gaming.

Bateman said playing video games is enjoyable and entertaining, but for many designers like himself, creating a video game is much more exhilarating. The excitement to work with others and think creatively is what Bateman said he learns every day in his classes.

"We learn about collaboration the most, because working in teams is really great," Bateman said. "When you get into the industry, you almost always have to work with others in a team-like setting."

Bateman said through friends, instructors and buzz from the gaming industry, virtual reality gaming is where the culture of video games is heading. Virtual reality technology allows users to become immersed in the game via headset where the movement of the user allows them to be part of the experience. He said it is a gaming technology that takes more time to produce because of how realistic the experience feels.

However, Bateman said no matter what is most relevant in the industry right now, there will always be games for any kind of user.

Kearney said that's among the reasons why the culture of the gaming world is vast — because of how social it has become.

"It's not just people playing individually anymore," Kearney said. "Often times, you are playing with someone even if you don't realize it."

This is due to the gaming community moving to the online format around 10-15 years ago. Kearney said most people might think that gamers would become more antisocial and reclusive because of the internet setting, but this isn't the case.

"It sort of started as an in home thing where you played by yourself or you had a couple friends come over and play, but now gamers can reach out to people across the world," he said.

Cleveley said he believes multiplayer games will only continue to grow because of the social aspect they bring to gaming. He said knowing people all over the world through a single video game is half the fun of playing. With the internet becoming more robust and far reaching every day, Cleveley said he only expects the culture of gaming to become more social.

"It's a continuum — there is always something new to discover," Cleveley said. "I think as tech evolves, as social creatures we will evolve with the technology. It will be fascinating to watch it grow, because it makes the world a very differently connected place."

Beyond that, gaming is now a lifestyle more than ever. Gauthier said for years now children have grown up with technology in their hands, which is what makes the culture of gaming so relevant.

"For some people, it's more of an artistic hobby to create and play games. For others, it's just entertaining fun," Gauthier said. "But for many gamers, it really is a lifestyle." ■

More than a mountain

STORY BY Cassidy Callaham
PHOTOS BY Cassidy Callaham and Yishan Chen

Moscow Mountain provides the local community with natural beauty and an opportunity for activity

After hiking through a blanket of branches with only brief glimpses of what lies beyond the trees, footsteps become faster and breathing, louder. Light breaks through the maze of trunks up ahead. No one says a word. The only noise is the wind that rustles the surrounding leaves.

At the top of the trail, there are footprints in the mud, indents in the earth where others stood and looked out at hills of green and gold that roll on for miles.

The view from the Eastside Lookout on Moscow Mountain is one that Kyle Flack, a University of Idaho senior born and raised in Moscow, knows well.

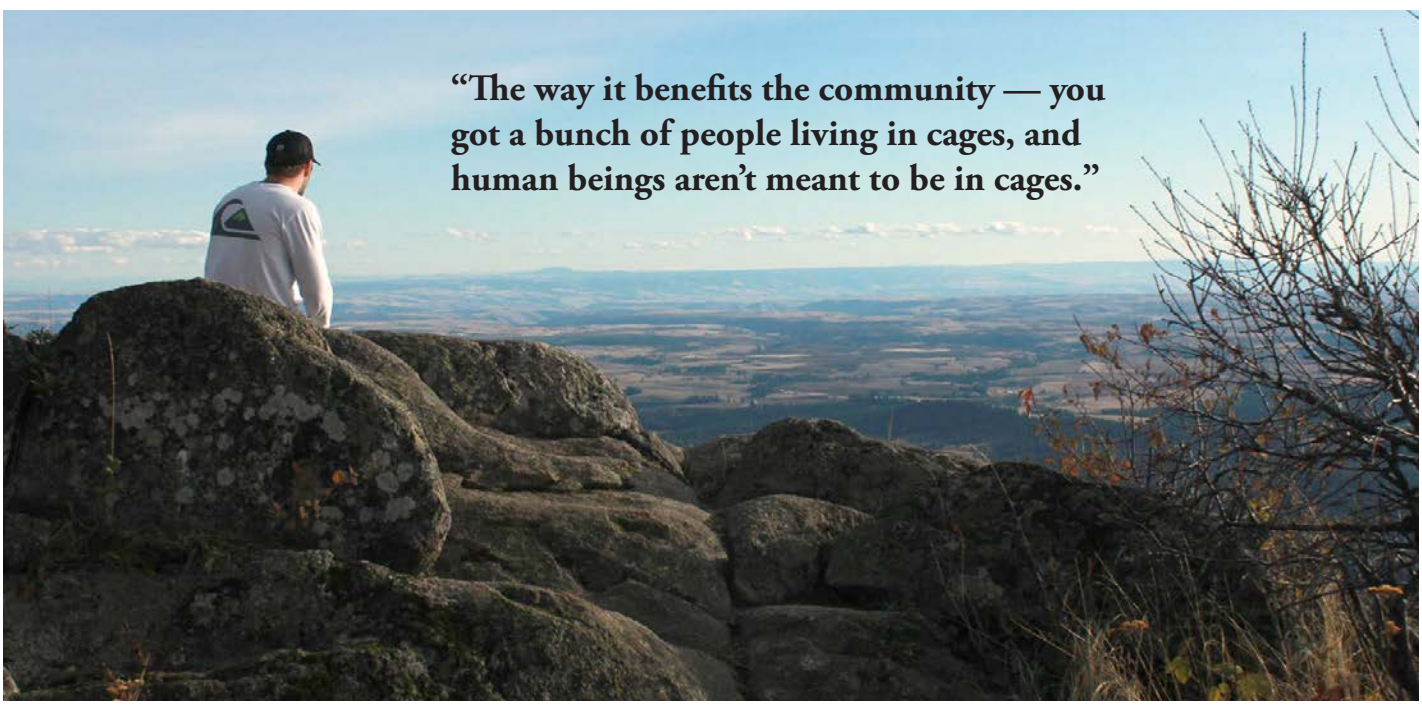
Flack, a mechanical engineering major, has been hiking and biking the mountain since middle school. He has had the opportunity to get to know his classmates thanks to the trails.

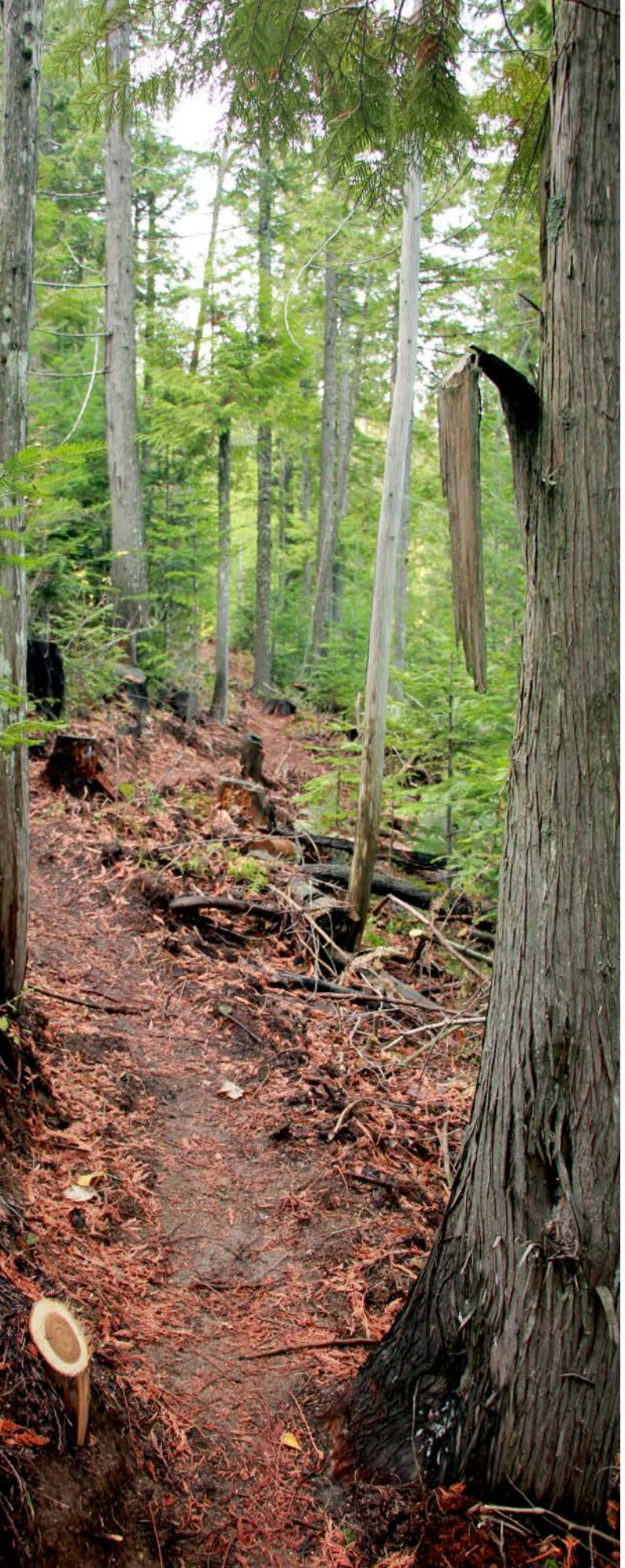
"In my major, mountain biking is a huge thing, like just this weekend I went out with, like, five engineers," Flack said. "We love going out there and plus, you can build trails."

Students can build trails thanks to the Moscow Area Mountain Bike Association (MAMBA). Scott Metlen, president of MAMBA, is also an associate professor and head of the business department at UI. He said MAMBA has created around 70 miles of trails up on the mountain and they hold two trail builds a month when the mountain is open.

"All the trails are two ways. You can hike, bike, run, you can use horses," Metlen said. "The reason we get to use that mountain is because we have responsible people using it."

IMAGE BELOW: *University of Idaho student Michael Botterbusch admires the view from Moscow Mountain.*





All of the land on Moscow Mountain is privately owned. It is public knowledge who owns what land, he said.

"We go and talk to them and sometimes land owners approach us and say 'We want to build a trail,'" Metlen said. "Land owners have found that they have people trespassing all the time and it's better to do that in a structured way."

About one quarter of MAMBA's membership is composed of students, but Metlen said he would love to see even more get involved. He said this involvement would help other students understand the mountain.

"It's an amazing resource," Metlen said. "The way it benefits the community — you got a bunch of people living in cages, and human beings aren't meant to be in cages. So it gives you a chance to go out there and enjoy nature, relax and kind of decompress."

Moscow Mountain is also used for more than recreation. The northeast side of the mountain is home to the UI Experimental Forest. Rob Keefe, assistant professor of forest operations and director of the UI Experimental Forest, oversees the 8,300 acres of forest the university owns.

"The forest is managed by the College of Natural Resources (CNR), and we try to get all of the undergraduate programs out using it as much as possible," Keefe said. "We are making a big push now to increase the amount of teaching activities that happen on the forest."

Approximately 20 undergraduate classes provide students with hands-on learning by allowing them to work with the forest lands. Many CNR graduate students also conduct research on the forest, Keefe said.

"We didn't used to have it connected so well in our forestry program and we've worked really hard to change that, for teaching, research and outreach," Keefe said. "It gives them a chance to get out in their classes, so they can make management decisions."

Students within CNR aren't the only ones who benefit from the forest, either. Architecture students have spent time there learning about wood for architectural design to help them understand the building materials they work with. Engineering students do projects with radio-controlled vehicles in the forest and ROTC students participated in a land navigation course. Keefe said the forest is available to any students who want to utilize the land to benefit the university.

Outdoor Program Director Trevor Fulton said it's important that students know Moscow Mountain is a resource they can access.

"One of the biggest things we hear from students is there's nothing to do," he said. "That's one of those places that is five minutes from town. A lot of students don't know it's there and if they knew what it would have to offer, more people would enjoy it."

Fulton said students also need to be willing to explore a little bit and step outside their comfort zone in town.

"I think it's a detriment they don't give Moscow a chance and give someplace like Moscow Mountain a chance," he said. "It would really help kind of round out students and help that stress release and build that connection with nature we kind of started with." ■

IMAGE LEFT: *A one-mile trail was built by the team early this year.*

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The Journey Unfolding

Students of faith on campus experience inclusivity to varying degrees

STORY BY Corrin Bond
PHOTOS BY Tess Fox

Rodney Frey was brought up in a Methodist household. He worked alongside the Franciscan priests of the Crow Indian Reservation and later, the Jesuit priests of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe. Yet, at his core, the University of Idaho professor of ethnography is a Crow Sundancer.

During his battle with cancer, he said it was science and biomedicine, but also Sundance and prayer that helped him through his darkest moments.

Thousands of miles away from where Frey conducted his work with Native American communities, Vignesh Jayaraman Muralidharan, who was born and raised Hindu, found himself studying at a Catholic school under the care of a Muslim professor.

When he pursued a bachelor's degree, the UI graduate student stayed in the dorms with people of varying faiths — ranging from Buddhists to Christians and Muslims. Jayaraman Muralidharan said this diverse exposure led him to develop his own eclectic belief system.

It was at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust museum in Israel, that UI junior Sydney Silbert connected not only with her faith, but also her Jewish heritage. The museum is set up like a snaking path along which visitors view remnants of the Holocaust arranged in chronological order — pieces of the train cars used to transport Jewish communities to concentration camps, the shoes of the children who were killed. At the end of this timeline, the top of the path opens on a view of Israel. This is where the history of her people connected with her present.

"When it goes out to the view over Israel, it shows — despite everything — the Jewish people have gone through, look at what we have now, look at how we've overcome it all, and that's, like,

"It allows you to have kind of a mirror into yourself and you can explore your own foundation."

when I realized — this is what I am, who I am," Silbert said.

Their stories, circumstances and experiences all differ, but one thread strings them together — their faith, and the practice of it on a college campus, is a personal journey.

Exploring spirituality in the classroom

During her 15 years as a professor at UI, Sharon Kehoe listened to these journeys. The former Director of the Campus Christian Center helped write a proposal for a UI Core Discovery class, now known as Integrated Seminars (ISEM), that revolved around the teachings of world religions. In the initial proposal, it was called Introduction to World Religions. Today, students know the course as "Sacred Journey: Religions of the World."

On Core Discovery submissions, the purpose and value of the proposed class needed to be stated. While the class she was proposing would explore spirituality and faith, Kehoe said it was really about the personal journey of life.

"The idea was to show them that life was a journey and your year as a freshman will be a journey," Kehoe said. "You'll have the same class with the same students in the same classroom for a year, and so you would be with these people and they'll be on the journey with you."

At one point, Kehoe said the class was so popular there were seven instructors teaching the course. Frey, who was among the original instructors of the Sacred Journey courses, said he taught Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism and indigenous spirituality in the fall semester. He went on to cover Judaism, Christianity and Islam in the spring.

"It was a really rich experience for me, because it really allowed me to learn along with my students," Frey said.

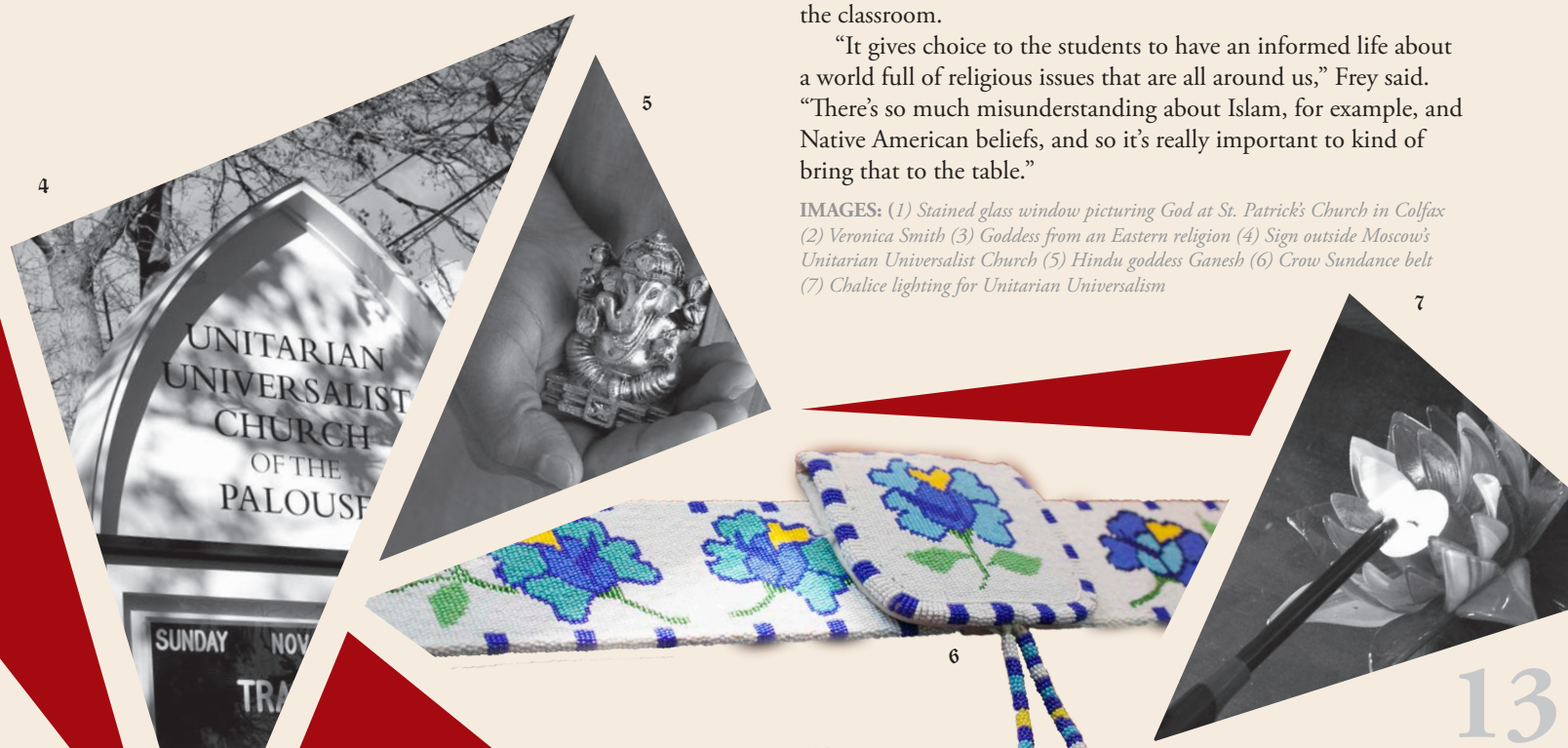
Now that the course is only one semester long, Frey said he only teaches Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism and indigenous spirituality. To minimize the chance of misrepresenting the faiths he covers in class, Frey said he tries to incorporate texts that are central to those belief systems. He said he considers the class to be a blend of the humanities and social sciences that provides students with the opportunity to learn more about the world view of other cultures.

"The fun thing about it is I'm not asking students to kind of embrace these religions and have them believe those other traditions, just to appreciate them and acknowledge them," Frey said. "I think one of the strengths is that when you juxtapose something that may have some similarities, but also differences from your own upbringing, it allows you to have kind of a mirror into yourself and you can explore your own foundation."

Frey said students can be more informed about a variety of belief systems when they aren't afraid to explore other religions in the classroom.

"It gives choice to the students to have an informed life about a world full of religious issues that are all around us," Frey said. "There's so much misunderstanding about Islam, for example, and Native American beliefs, and so it's really important to kind of bring that to the table."

IMAGES: (*1) Stained glass window picturing God at St. Patrick's Church in Colfax (2) Veronica Smith (3) Goddess from an Eastern religion (4) Sign outside Moscow's Unitarian Universalist Church (5) Hindu goddess Ganesh (6) Crow Sundance belt (7) Chalice lighting for Unitarian Universalism*



Experiencing the nuance of faith

The personal nature of faith makes it an exceptionally complicated topic, both to teach and explore as an individual.

Frey said one of his favorite ways of viewing religion came from a mentor he had the privilege of working with while on the Crow Reservation, Tom Yellowtail.

In some native communities, Frey said there are large medicine wheels, about 30 feet across, that have clusters of stones in the middle with spokes connected by a circular rim radiating out from their centers. Frey said Yellowtail saw the world like one of the great wheels.

"Tom went on to say he sees all the religions, all the various cultures and traditions, as separate spokes, each with their own history, their own way of ritual and prayer," Frey said. "But all the spokes are equal, all religious traditions are equally important. One shouldn't dominate the others."

It's a concept of spiritual connectivity that Thad Denyou, a member of the Unitarian Universalist Church, noted when she explained their belief system.

> "Whatever is a deity, whatever might make up any type of faith, think of it as the sun."

Denyou first became interested in the church while at the Palouse Pride Parade. The Unitarian Universalists were handing out bookmarks with a checklist of the church's principles on them. As she read down the list, she found herself agreeing with many of the boxes, such as, "You don't believe in original sin," and "You believe that everything is interconnected."

Once she gathered her courage to attend a church for the first time, Denyou said she connected with the idea of spirituality presented during the service. She said the idea was pulled from the book "The Cathedral of the World."

"Whatever is a deity, whatever might make up any type of faith, think of it as the sun. And then all these people are together and we're all clustered at different windows and they all show us different things," Denyou said. "Some of us might see something reflective of Catholicism or of Judaism or Pagan faiths. We're all clustered at these windows and it leaves us with different impressions of the sun, but we're all seeing the same light."

IMAGES: *(1) Artist's rendering of Spokane, Washington LDS temple (2) Statue of Mary, Joseph and Jesus at St. Patrick's Church in Colfax (3) Pins on a map showing locations of LDS temples around the world (4) Traditional dhoti (5) Candle at St. Patrick's Church in Colfax (6) The Bible (7) The Book of Mormon*

Expanding faith representation on campus

The Unitarian Universalist Church is one of the many places of worship that can be found in Moscow, including the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, the First Presbyterian Church and the Islamic Center of Moscow.

On the UI campus, there are three religious centers and a variety of faith-based student organizations.

Jayaraman Muralidharan said he believes the university fosters a religiously inclusive environment. Although he is Hindu, Jayaraman Muralidharan said he's been welcomed into a weekly Christian bible study and he's also attended the local Mosque on several occasions.

"They are not trying to impose a particular religion on the students, but they are trying to make little exposure for the students to get knowledge in different religions," Jayaraman Muralidharan said. "So students should not take that in a personal way, they should take it in a knowledgeable way."

Anna Arend, a fifth-year UI student pursuing her second bachelor's degree, said it was one of the religious resources on campus — the St. Augustine's Catholic Center — that solidified her decision to attend the university.

However, she said her experiences with religious attitudes on campus haven't always been inclusive.

"I would say the university in general — and I don't want to generalize — but I feel like it has a rather negative view of Catholicism," Arend said. "Although it's great that the campus is open to having a Catholic center, there has not been much more from the secular part of the university to make me, as my Catholic identity, feel particularly welcomed."

Arend said she's even had experiences in the classroom and as a university employee that made her feel as if her religion wasn't respected. In one instance, Arend was attending a diversity training through the university that extended into the weekend. When Arend asked to be excused from the training for one hour on Sunday to attend Mass, her request was denied.

"Especially since it was a diversity training and I was not allowed to practice my religion, I was extremely frustrated," Arend said. "So I wrote a letter in response asking that they please reconsider. They offered a room where any Christian could go and worship for an hour on Sunday, but again that was not a recognition of the diversity of religions."

Arend said she was frustrated because Catholics do not worship in the same way that other denominations of Christians do. After working with the dean of students, Arend was allowed to attend Mass for an hour that Sunday. She said she feels like such resistance regarding religion is what deters some students from openly practicing their respective faiths.

"That's just one situation where I think someone would have easily been scared out of practicing their religion," Arend said.

For students like Silbert, there are no religious resources on campus. The New Hampshire native said she was surprised to learn that no Jewish student organizations existed on campus, as support groups for Jewish students are common at public universities.

"We don't have a hallal or Jewish student club or something like that on this campus, or Students Supporting Israel, which is really common on a lot of state school campuses," Silbert said. "I have not met a large amount of Jewish students on campus through clubs and organizations I'm a part of. Because of that, I don't think there's enough demand on this campus."

Silbert said she doesn't feel as if religion is regarded in a negative way on campus, but rather that it is a non-topic for the university.

"I'm lucky that I haven't experienced anti-Semitism," Silbert said. "In that sense, it's inclusive, but I wouldn't say that anybody has gone out of their way to make me feel included, but I've never felt non-included."

The resistance to talk about religion is something Frey said is potentially a product of the tensions that can come from differing ideologies.

"There is a way we can improve," Frey said. "There can be tensions between groups on campus, misunderstandings, but it's a work in progress and I'm hopeful we'll keep addressing it."

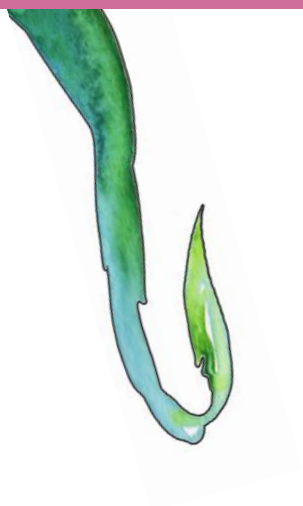
Beyond that, Frey said empathy is the most powerful tool students can use to disband any misconceptions they might harbor about a particular religion and better understand the similarities and differences between their own faith and someone else's.

"We're all on this journey, so part of it's perseverance, part of it is sort of digging deep into who you are ultimately and not letting the voices of others drown out a clear understanding of your foundation," Frey said. "As the voices get louder around you they may seem to attack you. It's an opportunity to first of all try to understand where they're coming from with empathy." ■

STORY BY Leslie Jimenez
ILLUSTRATION BY Le Hall

Talking the Talk

Persistence and positive energy play important roles in learning a new language



On the chalkboard at the front of room 301 in the Administration Building, the date, time and weather are written in Japanese

Ikuyo Suzuki, a University of Idaho instructor of Japanese, finishes roll call. She and her students then stand, bow at the waist and sit back down. The motions that begin and end each class are punctuated with three words — kiritsu rei chakuseki. Stand up. Bow. Sit down.

Suzuki's class is one of the many foreign language courses offered by the university. For some students, these classes serve as graduation requirements. For others, they're an opportunity to expand on their communication skills.

Rachel Halverson, chair of the Modern Languages and Cultures Department, said if people are motivated to learn a new language, the learning process will be more effective. Halverson, who teaches German, said learning a new language is not as natural as some think it is.

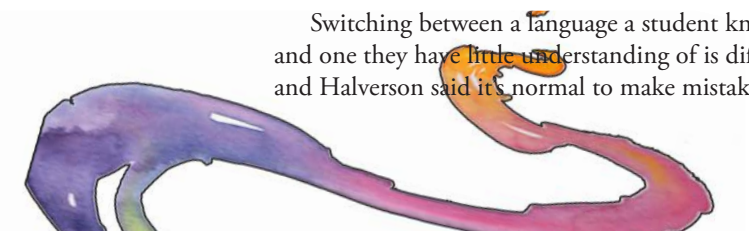
"Our brains work patterns, and we know this because if you have your own little kids who are learning how to speak a language, their first language, they create words and sentences based on patterns they know," Halverson said.

If an individual learns this one basic pattern, they can multiply it and generate more language.

Halverson said the challenging part of teaching new languages in college classrooms is that adult learners need to be conscious of such patterns.

"If you're an adult where you're absolutely fluent in your first language and you're learning this other language, you have to take all this linguistic complexity that you have in your first language and you have to reduce it to the very simple tool that you have in that second language, and that is really hard to do," Halverson said.

Switching between a language a student knows well and one they have little understanding of is difficult, and Halverson said it's normal to make mistakes. To help students better learn the language, she said she tries to create an environment in which students feel comfortable trying new things.



Kurt Queller, a professor who teaches linguistics and the history of the English language, said while there is recorded consistency in the areas of the brain that activate when a new language is learned, the conscious process is not the same for everyone.

He said during brain studies conducted on individuals learning and processing a language, several parts of the brain light up with activity, more so on the left than on the right.

Queller said regardless, students should find the learning process that works best for them when trying to become fluent in a new language.

"Be eclectic. That means don't feel you have to stick rigorously to one particular lesson plan, it is important to have discipline," Queller said. "Just work with what interests you at that point and spend some time on that. Listen, listen, listen, and speak when you're ready."

In addition to the motions that begin and end Suzuki's classes, the instructor said students take turns writing the date, time and weather on the chalkboard in Japanese as a means of learning to use the language's characters daily.

She said she tries to encourage her students to connect the language with their every day lives as opposed to only trying to memorize it.

"So try not to memorize it, but use it every day, like a constant pace or just in the real world, I want to connect it to that, to them," Suzuki said.

Casey Daw, one of Suzuki's students, said learning Japanese has been a challenge. However, Daw said she found the structure of the language interesting and fun. She said making flash cards and having personalized study habits has helped her through the process of acquiring a new language.

Study tools like flashcards can help students practice different parts of a new language on a daily

basis — something that Halverson said is important to the learning process.

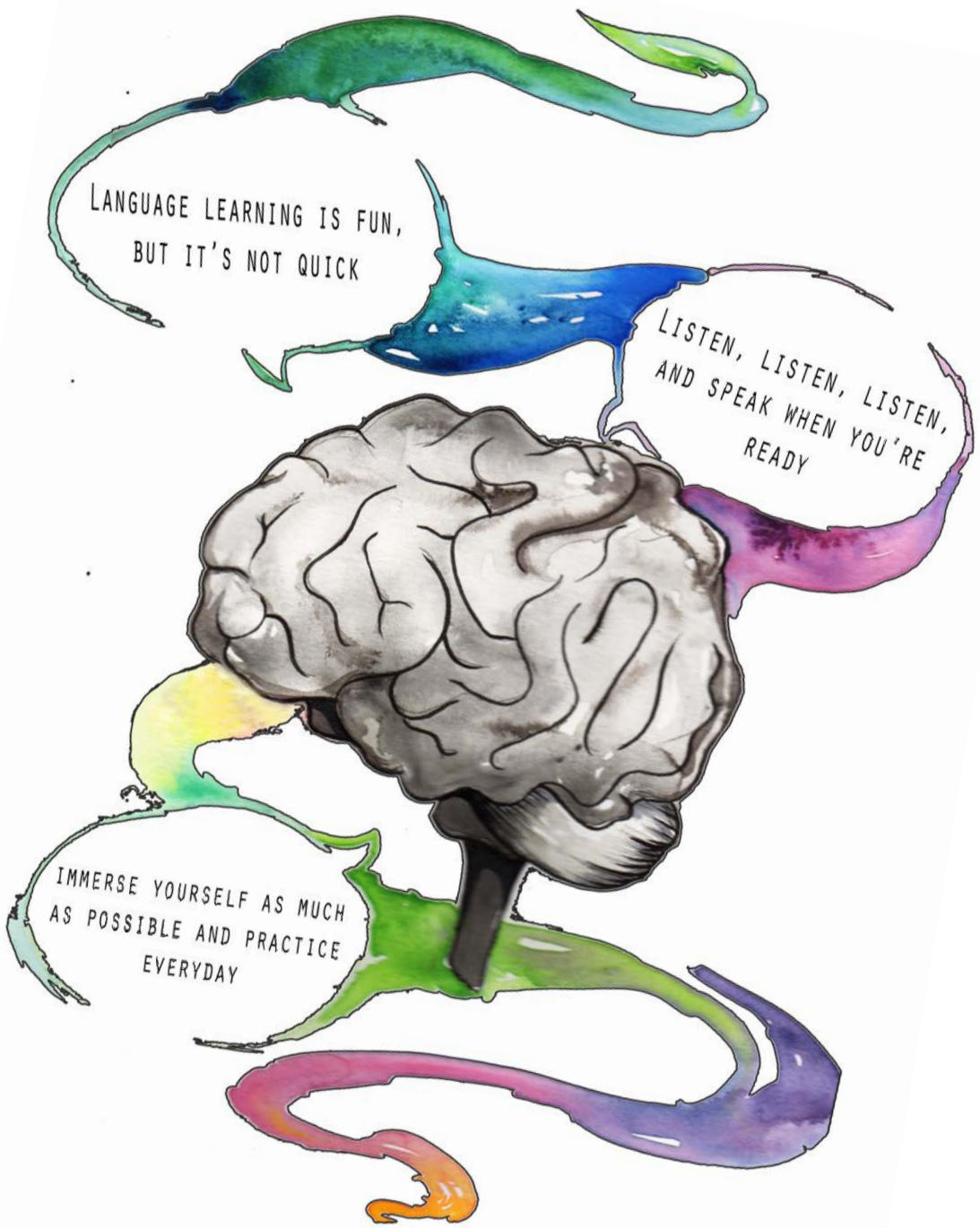
She said beyond that, the internet also serves as a useful resource for students who are determined to learn a new language but don't have the means to be completely immersed in it.

"We retain knowledge based on association. Surround yourself with the language as much as possible, and the internet has made this so easy," Halverson said. "YouTube has a ton of stuff for language learners. What's cool about is you can choose the things that you want to understand so you know, let's say you really love music. And you're really into music videos, you can go online and get all kinds of music videos or German rock bands."

Language learners obtain more information effectively if they are motivated and are able to learn the phrases or words they find interesting to communicate in the new language.

Halverson said it's important for students to remember that while learning a new language can be fun, becoming fluent isn't an easy process.

"Language learning is fun, but it's not quick," Halverson said. "Study it for a couple years in the United States, but definitely go to the region or the country where it is spoken ... that will make it all worthwhile."



STORY BY Austin Maas
PHOTOS BY Joleen Evans

WHERE COMMUNITIES OVERLAP

The connection between the University of Idaho's LGBTQA and Greek students is continually growing

Every fairytale must have three things — a princess, a villain and, of course, prince charming.

That image is the standard among love stories, but for many members of the LGBTQA community, that image does not apply to their stories.

When University of Idaho sophomore Reagan Miniken first began to question her sexuality, the traditional love story seemed like unfamiliar territory to her. Like many other LGBTQA Greek students, it wasn't until she joined her sorority, Kappa Delta, that she found space for her own story.

"It was difficult for me in the beginning. I grew up watching Disney princess movies and realizing that that might not be what I want for myself was a big struggle," Miniken said.

As a bisexual woman, Miniken said she always knew she wanted to join Greek life when she went to college, but as she came to terms with her sexuality she began to question whether it was the right choice for her.

"There was a time where I wavered on it," Miniken said. "It was partly because of my sexuality — I didn't know how people would respond."

Initially, she said she worried whether or not there would be other girls like her in the Greek system. But Miniken is not the only LGBTQA person to have these concerns. For LGBTQA students, there can be an additional layer of discomfort when considering Greek life.

Julia Keleher, director of the UI LGBTQA Office, said LGBTQA students and Greek students often face broad stereotypes of gender and sexuality.

"Both for sororities and fraternities, I think there are stereotypes that affect people negatively," Keleher said.

She said gender stereotypes play a huge part in shifting people's perception of Greek life. In many cases, cultural depictions in pop culture create a mold of what it means to be a Greek student, which makes the prospect of fitting in more intimidating.

Keleher said the prominent stereotypes in Greek life are associated with either hyper-masculinity or hyper-femininity — but in reality, there are many different communities within that spectrum and people find their niche wherever they feel most comfortable.

IMAGE ABOVE: *Left: Sophomore Dominic De La Torre. Right: Sophomore Reagan Miniken.*

"I myself am very masculine, and during my undergraduate years I had this preconceived notion that I wouldn't fit into a sorority because I'm not girly," Keleher said. "But the reality is that that isn't how it works. There are plenty of masculine women or feminine men who fit into Greek life."

During her four years as director of the LGBTQA Office, Keleher said she has seen the relationship between the two communities grow substantially.

"I think more and more people are coming out in their houses, so the climate is changing for LGBTQA students in Greek life," she said. "The reality is that those students are fitting in and they're figuring out a way to bridge that gap and create a comfortable community regardless of their identities."

Despite how far the two communities have come, Keleher said more growth is still needed and she believes education is the key to breaking down frightful stereotypes.

"We continue to work toward blending the two communities in order to make life better for queer Greeks," she said.

Keleher said she has successfully conducted education training sessions with Greek houses in the past and plans to continue to do so.

"Once you learn about somebody and talk about their identity, all that fear immediately falls away," Keleher said.

Miniken's positive experience stands as a testament to the progress Keleher spoke of, but Miniken said more issues might be present in a fraternity setting, where there are clear ties to masculinity.

However, Dominic De La Torre, a UI sophomore who identifies as a Hispanic gay male and lives in Phi Gamma Delta fraternity (FIJI), said his experience living in a fraternity couldn't be more positive.

"I've never been uncomfortable with my sexuality because the guys have always been very accepting," De La Torre said.

Before attending UI, De La Torre knew he wanted to join a fraternity and wasn't worried about hiding his identity. He said the only resistance he encountered came from his own family.

"My family was telling me, 'You're not going to get into a Greek house because they're all conservative jerks,'" De La Torre said.

He said his family's statements were far from true and while he rushed, his sexuality wasn't even a concern of his future fraternity brothers.

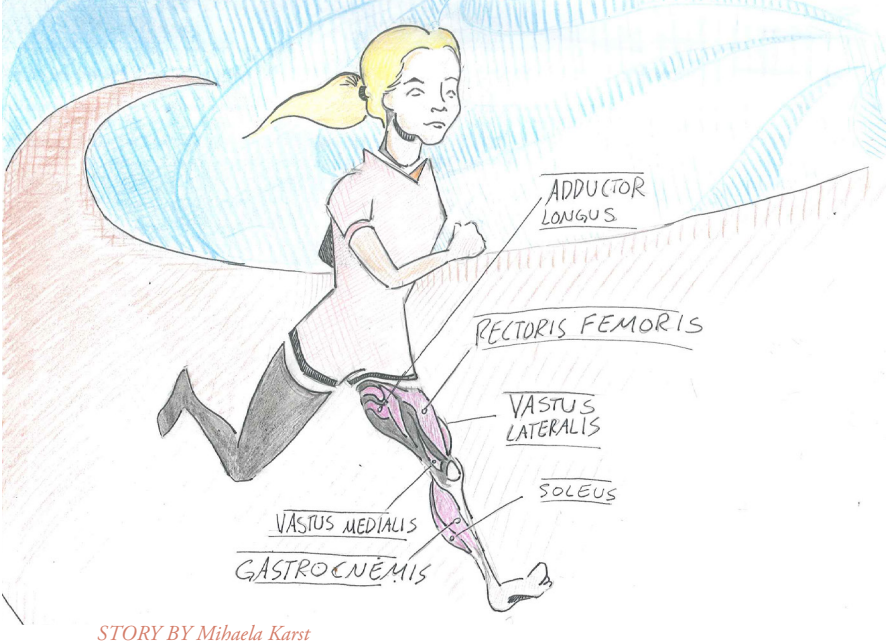
"When I was rushing FIJI, one person would talk to me about tennis, because I was a tennis player for eight years, and another person would talk to me about video games," De La Torre said. "It's about finding common connections within people, it's not about saying how you identify and how people should see you."

> ***"We continue to work toward blending the two communities in order to make life better for queer Greeks.***

De La Torre said he joined Greek Life to be connected to the strong community it provides and his LGBTQA identity has done nothing but strengthen his connection to the house.

"I've found way more acceptance here than ever before," De La Torre said. "Greek houses rush you for a reason. They tell you, 'You're a part of this fraternity for a reason. We want you because you are who you are.'"


1 mile
at a
time



Long distance runners endure *physical* and *emotional* stressors unique to the sport

STORY BY Mihaela Karst
PHOTOS BY Joleen Evans
ILLUSTRATION BY JP Hansen

She toed the white starting line, careful not to cross over even an inch.

Kinsey Gomez took a breath to steady the nerves that had plagued her throughout the warm up. She glanced at the man holding the starting gun and then back to the white line at her feet.

The gun fired.

As the swarm of distance runners flooded the course, Gomez's nerves vanished and her mind went blank.

The thought process that follows the start of a race is different for every long-distance runner, but Gomez, a Vandal alumna, said she runs some of her best races when her mind goes blank and she only focuses on running.

Tim Delcourt, a senior cross-country athlete, said he feels a multitude of similar emotions — eagerness, anxiousness, stress — but once the gun goes off, they all melt away.

"I think everyone can agree — it just goes away, and then you just go out and do your thing," Delcourt said.

Long distance running is a sport all about managing discomfort — this was how Idaho Assistant Cross-Country Coach Travis Floeck described it.

"Every time you go out, you know that you're going to have to manage a lot of discomfort, and there's no way around it," Floeck said.

Delcourt said he agrees with Floeck that managing the discomfort that runners experience throughout the race is key. He said he finds himself overlooking the number of kilometers he has to run and instead focuses his attention on time.

"If I only have to hurt for 10 minutes, is that really so much to ask?" Delcourt said.

According to Floeck, distance running is more than what is on the surface, and there is a lot that happens behind the scenes the spectators don't see.

"They're pretty much running every day," Floeck said. "That's where it starts, but at the same time it's so much more than just going out and running."

IMAGE LEFT: *A runner ties their shoes before they go for a jog.*

In addition to logging plenty of miles — as many as 80 every week for some athletes — the runners also focus their attention on the entire body.

Gomez, a member of the Hansons-Brooks Distance Project, said she prefers to focus on her glutes, core and back.

"A lot of people may not realize that your core isn't all in the front, but it travels to your back as well," Gomez said.

She said a lot of running-related injuries are caused by tightness in the hips, and focusing on strengthening the muscles around them can help reduce the likelihood of injury.

Coordination, posture and balance are only a few aspects the athletes at Idaho try to strengthen on a daily basis. If someone was to look at one of the runner's weekly schedule, Floeck said they may be surprised at what they find.

"I think that if you were to look at somebody's schedule there would be a lot of things on there that you wouldn't quite know what those were, because there is a lot of variety in what they're doing every day," Floeck said.

For the athlete's sake, Floeck said he tries to make every day a little different than the last. Monotony is a common problem in the running world, and he said changing something as simple as the scenery can make a difference in an athlete's day of practice.

Not only do the runners maintain a vigorous training schedule, but they also place a huge emphasis on sleep and nutrition.

Delcourt stressed the importance of a sleep routine, and Gomez said she often feels she can't even function without getting eight to nine hours of sleep.

"I think there's a stigma out there, especially with distance running, that if you are smaller and eat less, you'll run faster, and I just don't think that's the right way to go about things," Gomez said. "I'm a big believer that if you fuel yourself right, it can really be a huge benefit in training."

All of these practices take a large amount of time, which means some college athletes have chosen to forfeit many socializing opportunities. For example, while many students relax on a

"Don't cheat yourself out of something you deserve."

Saturday morning, Floeck said the team is up at 8 a.m. for a 14-mile run.

"It takes a lot of dedication to force yourself, when a lot of your peers are going out and having fun, to go to bed early on a Friday night," Floeck said.

Some people would label these types of situations as sacrifices, but Floeck said the team tries not to see it that way.

"We always look at it as investments," Floeck said. "They have these big goals and they want to accomplish great things, and they want to run faster than they ever have, so when we make those decisions, we like to think of them as investments toward our goals."

Delcourt said the daily grind is not quite as impossible as it may seem to an outsider looking in, at least that's what he thinks when he is sitting in the middle of it. He said once he takes a moment to step back and look at his daily routine, however, he sees a hint of craziness he never noticed before.

"But when you're in it, you're so focused — it's just your routine — and you don't even think about doing anything different," Delcourt said. "When you have your time off, you're just thinking, 'Why the hell am I not running?'"

This is the moment Delcourt said he starts to not feel like himself, and he finds himself taking a little jog despite taking a much needed break from his training regime. He said he thinks for most runners, it's about having an outlet.

"Some people use it as a de-stressor, some people use it to be productive and creative, and some people just use it as a tool to be better. For me, I use all of it — it just depends on the day," Delcourt said.

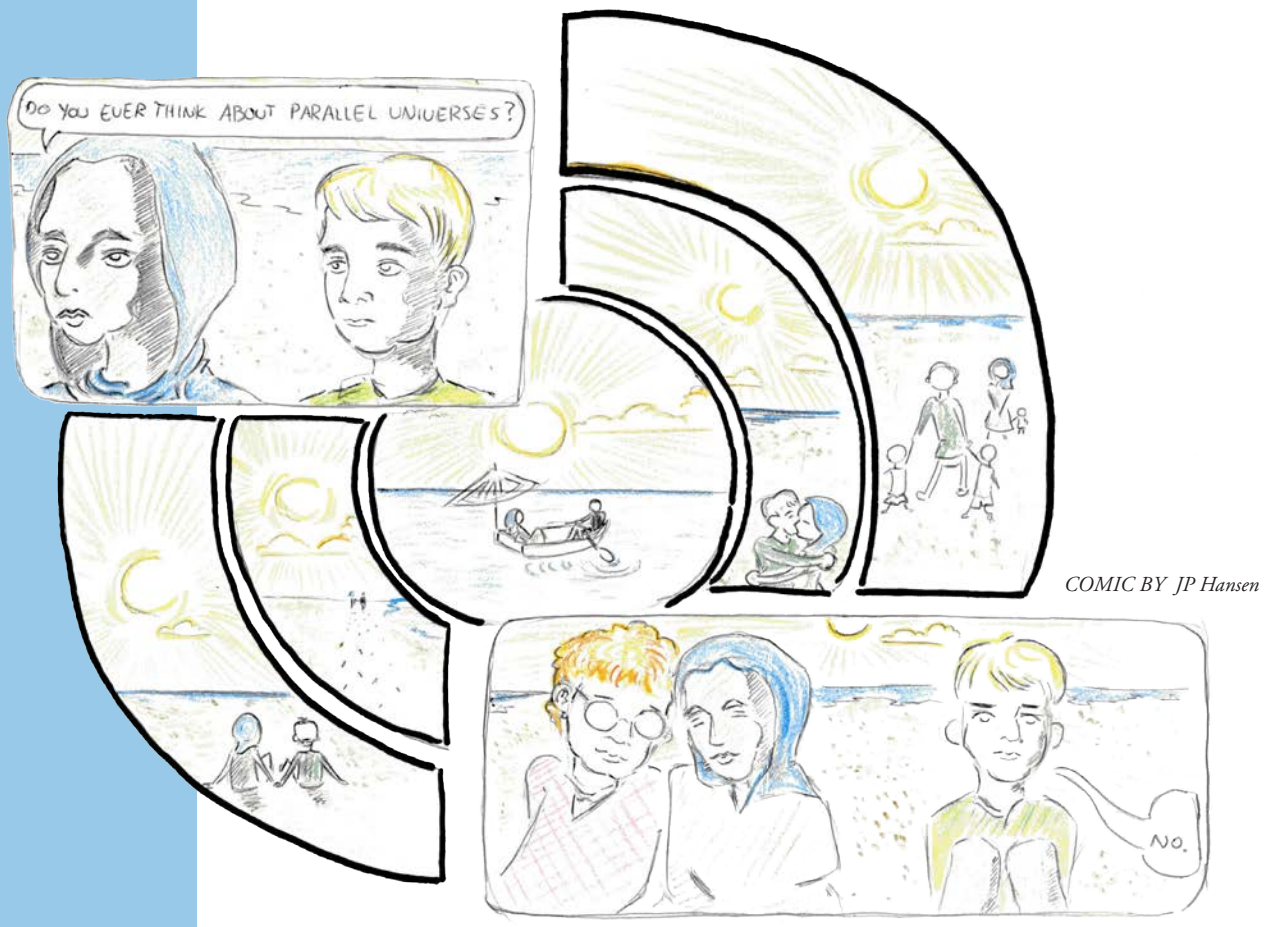
At the end of the day, when he steps onto the starting line, Delcourt said he is reminded of a quote he heard from a speaker that came to talk with the team: "Don't cheat yourself out of something you deserve."

"You do all of this work, but if you don't run with it the day of, why did you do all the work?" Delcourt said. "Why would you cheat yourself out of three months of hard work when you can just dig down deep for 10 minutes and have a good day?"

Floeck said the human body is an amazing thing in how it can adapt and condition itself, and the team is just focusing on callousing themselves up. He breaks down long-distance running into three basic ingredients — stress, rest and improvement.

"You go out and run and hope that you've put the stress on your body and you rest, and you hope a little miracle happens and you get better the next day," Floeck said. "Those are the basics." ■

IMAGE BELOW: *Endurance runners jog around the track on a sunny afternoon.*



COMIC BY JP Hansen

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