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Shepard House to be converted back to dorms; Bearcat Chat and Triathlon to move

Gia Patel
Staff Writer

The name Shepard House may be unfamiliar to many students, but the building at the corner of Mill and Winter Street, right across from Lee and York, will once again be residential housing for the upcoming 2024-25 academic year. This shift reflects a growing need for student housing as enrollment numbers increase. Various groups currently using the building, such as Bearcat Chat and the Triathlon team, will be displaced due to an increase in need for student housing.

Shepard House, which was built in 1967 for the Alpha Phi sorority, recently operated as student housing until being turned into an office space in 2021. After a brief stint serving the Claremont School of Theology, Shepard House became home to the Triathlon team and Bearcat Chat, the latter of which serves as a call center on campus that reaches out to parents, alumni and parents of alumni in order to ask for monetary gifts to the university. The shift back to housing is primarily due to "having a larger

number of students on campus and having a two year live on campus requirement. We just want to house as many students who would like to live with us on campus," said Heather Kropf, director of residential life and student conduct.

In terms of the groups currently using the space, Lizzie Waldorf ('25), a student manager at Bearcat Chat, explained that the call center "began working in Shepherd House the fall of 2021. Yet during the initial quarantine period of the COVID-19 pandemic, people [who worked for Bearcat Chat] were calling independently from their own dorms. Then, prior to that, we were located in a small room in the Smullin basements." Waldorf explained that as Bearcat Chat has expanded, there has been a need for office spaces like Shepard House, as it offers separate rooms for student workers to conduct calls.

Waldorf added, "At most, we have 12 people on calls at the same time. It would be incredibly difficult to do our jobs in a space that didn't cater to the needs of Bearcat Chat." They also attributed the organization's continued improvement post-pandemic largely to

the facilities and community the group has established within Shepard House. They said, "I think it's no secret that Bearcat Chat has been the most successful it's been in a very long time."

As of now, Bearcat Chat doesn't know where they will be relocating. Waldorf explained that the group is trying their best to advocate for conditions that accommodate the needs of a call center and is searching for the benefits that Shepard House has provided them with for the past few years. They explained, "The conditions for where we are [currently] calling are really concrete. Not only for keeping employees, but also for keeping happiness."

Waldorf also shared concerns about the conditions of Shepard House, and whether or not it would be suitable enough for residential housing within the next coming year without extreme renovations. "Shepard House is simply an office building. All of the doors have a little window on them, so when it has to be converted, they either have to get new doors or just paint over them." Waldorf went on to explain that "there [have] been pretty

continuous maintenance issues as far as living facilities the entire time that [Bearcat Chat has] been at Shepherd House," including the toilets not flushing properly, a lack of laundry service and the stove being broken. "The soundproofing is not that great, and we can hear conversations clearly from the next room over. There would need to be a lot of work [for the space to become liveable]," Waldorf added.

However, Kropf is optimistic about the future of the new building, saying, "It's going to be a really great opportunity for non-first year students to live in a double occupancy area space, and [the new housing] could be helpful for students who are in the [dual degree] programs." She emphasized that students who had lived in Shepard House prior to its renovation to an office space had extremely positive experiences and enjoyed their time there.

Kropf also mentioned she did a walkthrough of Shepard House on Dec. 1, 2023, and said, "It feels like the major issues are getting wifi back and to get the residential spaces ready with room furniture." She added that she "took

some of our student leaders [Resident Advisors] on a tour over there and they were very excited about the state of the space." She additionally noted that Shepard House will be available for residential hall tours during February 2024.

Brett Franz, coach of the Triathlon team, declined to be interviewed but sent in an email: "We knew that Shepard House was most likely a temporary spot for Triathlon, but we were grateful that the University gave us access, it worked out really well. The University has been extremely supportive of the new Triathlon program and we are working now to find a new space with the idea of finding a permanent space for the Triathlon program in the future."

Photo by Anushka Srivastava



Coach Adelman out: A new era for Men's Soccer

Gia Patel
Staff writer

If you have been on Indeed lately, maybe searching for a summer internship or a job after graduation, you may have noticed that a job listing has been posted for the head Men's Soccer coach here at Willamette. While you are definitely not qualified for the job, someone who is will be leading one of Willamette's most successful sports programs next fall, as Coach Sam Adelman has resigned as head coach of Bearcat Men's Soccer.

Adelman has been with Willamette soccer for over ten years now, starting in 2012 as a player and graduating with

the class of 2016. After spending a brief period away from the school, he came back to campus as assistant coach of the Women's team in 2017. He became assistant coach for the Men's and Women's teams the following year.

While Adelman enjoyed his time as an assistant, he had his eyes on the head position. "Knowing that you're the person truly leading and making every decision for the program was something that I was looking forward to for a long time," he stated. He was promoted to head coach following the departure of Jared Rust in 2021 and enjoyed an especially successful run with the Men's team. Adelman noted that he was able to dedicate

special priority to the program because, unlike his two predecessors, he did not have children during his time as head coach. He feels he was able to be more present, be in the office more, and travel to recruit more athletes as a result.

Having success in an athletic program on a college campus is hard enough, but having continuous winning seasons is even harder to do. Between his three seasons as head coach, he sported a record of 34-18-5. A lot of moving pieces need to come together for this to happen. Adelman believes another big part of his continued success is the people around him. "We did a really good job building a staff. That

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Photo provided by Sam Adelman

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Flood in Kaneko B Wing causes monthslong disruption

Chrissy Ewald
Staff Writer

Students in Kaneko B Wing are finally back in their rooms after a flood caused significant damage to the building in early October.

Residents woke up to the fire alarm going off at 8 a.m. on Thursday, Oct. 5. After swiftly evacuating to the softball field behind the building and milling around for twenty minutes, students began to suspect this was more than a regular false alarm. When they returned to the building, everything seemed normal — until they saw flooding in the hallways.

A fire sprinkler had gone off in a third-floor apartment at around 7:30 that morning, creating a flood that eventually spread to all three floors. Water seeped through the building into hallways, stairwells and other apartments.

The amount of water damage varied greatly. In one apartment, water flowing through a wall damaged one of two bathrooms and entered the fuse box, which had to be shut off for a few days. In another, damage to the only bathroom rendered the whole apartment uninhabitable. The most damage was done to the apartment where the sprinklers went off, where students saw contractors removing water-damaged cabinetry.

“Eventually, [the residence life coordinator was] like, yeah, you might want to grab some of your stuff,” said Lauren Meekins (‘24), a B Wing resident. Meekins and their roommate, Kendra Hutchinson (‘24), reached out to housing later that day after hearing nothing about what had happened or what to do. Their first email from housing about the situation came at 1 p.m. on Oct. 5. Their apartment’s bathroom was damaged, but

lucky placement of belongings in their rooms meant the water that seeped under their bedroom doors didn’t reach anything.

Hutchinson initially wanted to remain in their apartment because none of their things were damaged. Despite initial approval from housing, Hutchinson received an email at about 3:30 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 6, informing them that their apartment was not habitable and that they needed to move because it wasn’t safe. Hutchinson was moved from their single room into a shared room in the Alpha Chi Omega (AXO) house. Meekins was moved into the house as well.

A total of 23 students were offered temporary rooms due to the water damage. Some, like Meekins and Hutchinson, were required to move because their apartments weren’t safe to live in. Those who had less serious damage were still offered different housing, said Director of Residence Life and Housing Heather Kropf, and many took it. By early November, all but eight students were back in their rooms.

The first place several Kaneko B Wing residents were moved to was the former AXO sorority house on Mill Street. The house had been empty since the end of the 2020-21 school year, when it was voluntarily closed by the chapter. The building didn’t have Wi-Fi, so WITS set up a connection in the common room that Meekins said didn’t work. The AXO house also lacked laundry facilities, so students were given access to the laundry in Lee and York. Affected students were given a free meal plan at Goudy Commons regardless of whether they had to move out. Housing offered to transfer students living in the AXO house into conventional dorm housing, which two students accepted.

After the AXO house’s

new residents tried to have a party on the first night that was quickly discovered and shut down, a westside Residence Associate (RA) was supposed to oversee the house. However, Housing switched to having a Campus Safety officer check in on the house instead.

Meekins said that throughout the process, communication with housing has been “bad. Really bad.” They noted that students have largely been responsible for seeking information and advocating for themselves, beginning on the first day when students were the ones who reached out to housing to ask about getting new rooms. Hutchinson agreed that students have been responsible for reaching out to housing, but that the office has been helpful when contacted.

Kropf said repair work was done by an external contractor and that housing and facilities were pleased with their work. The first step after the flood was to set up fans and extract as much water as possible from the building. Extraction included removing one damaged bathroom vanity and evacuating water from electrical systems. Then, contractors set to work removing damaged sheetrock and drywall. Students said they followed the repair process on their apartments by checking the repair checklists taped to their doors because they received no updates on what was being done and when it would be completed.

Meekins and Hutchinson were able to move back into their room the week before Thanksgiving break.

Jacob Plax (‘25) was able to remain in his room for the duration of construction. His apartment had the flooded circuit box, but after it dried, the only damage to his apartment was in one of the two bathrooms, so he and his housemates could use their



Photo from Collegian Stock Photos

other bathroom and were allowed to remain. Plax said the removal of damaged drywall in his bathroom was very quick but putting in new drywall took longer. He explained that he would have liked more communication from the contractor or housing about the timeline.

Plax said the construction noise was loud and started early — 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. every day — but noted that the evaporation fans at the start were the worst part. Though Plax said the noise was annoying, it didn’t affect his studies or his comfort as much as those who had to move out were impacted.

Meekins and Hutchinson said the flood and construction period had significant effects on their academics and comfort. “I’ve basically been out of my room for it feels like half the time that I’m going to be here, and it’s ... yeah. It’s been really frustrating,” Meekins said. “And then [housing] doesn’t know what’s going on and they’re overwhelmed because there’s only, like, so many people in housing.” Despite the situation, Meekins

said their friends, professors and on-campus job have all been supportive.

Hutchinson said the first couple of weeks were very rough. “It was like the university did not want me to keep being a good student, because it just was like ... it’s not nice not knowing where you’re going to sleep.” They expressed frustration that the university is not reimbursing students for losing access to amenities they paid for.

Kropf said she isn’t aware of a flood of this scale happening at Willamette in recent memory. None of the students interviewed had renter’s insurance, and Hutchinson said they didn’t remember being required or strongly encouraged to get insurance throughout the housing sign-up process.

Hutchinson said there was one bright side to the situation: “I was planning on moving off campus next semester, but there’s like a \$900 fee for canceling your housing contract. But they said they will waive that fee for me, so that’s really nice.”



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Collaboration needed to improve menstrual product distribution

Robin Linares
Staff Writer

Ongoing concerns regarding the maintenance and filling of menstrual product dispensers in residence hall bathrooms are causing a push for the housing department to rethink protocols.

Many students may be familiar with the period product dispensers providing free pads and tampons to students in the residence hall restrooms. This initiative, first introduced in 2021, allowed for the installation of 37 dispensers in various women's and gender-neutral restrooms. However, there have been increasing issues with the dispensers, ranging from not being consistently stocked, to mechanical issues.

Of 50 women's and gender-neutral bathrooms examined throughout the residence halls on the week of Nov. 13, 33 had period product dispensers. However, within this sample, 11 machines were experiencing mechanical issues, meaning that products were unable to dispense. Another 13 machines were either empty or only had one type of menstrual product.

According to Sarah Henry ('24), a resident advisor (RA) and Associated Students of Willamette University (ASWU) senator, the RA on duty is in charge of restocking

the products as part of their nightly tasks. She noted some common reasons this task could be overlooked, which include communication issues, occasional forgetfulness and most recently, a lack of pad supplies. "That's why I've been working through my role as an RA and also an ASWU senator to meet with housing, and other people, to try to get better practices, and setting up the foundations for how these things are supposed to be managed," Henry explained.

Heather Kropf, the director of residence life & student conduct, noted the limitations of the current system in place, citing a current "gap in [Willamette's] protocol" as reasoning for some of the hiccups faced. Ordering period products from the vendor and looking into maintenance of the machines hasn't been a task that Kropf, who joined Willamette's housing department in May 2022, has needed to do until now, since the stock of pads had recently run out this semester since the first time she had been hired.

Henry noted that many of these protocol-based issues can be attributed to a wave of turnover in the housing department after the initiative was newly implemented, before any formalized protocols were in place. "Things fall through the cracks, and I think that is unfortunately what has hap-

pened," Henry explained. "The staff pre-COVID at Willamette didn't leave a lot of reference guides on how to do anything for a lot of the people who are new. So I don't think it's a reflection on the people who are here that those issues have kind of arisen but [more due to] staff turnover."

Because of these concerns, Henry is working to expand access to period products as a part of her ASWU campus improvement project, which includes clarifying period restocking procedures and adding accountability measures to ensure the task is done. One method currently used is adding the task to the RA-on-duty summary log to get a paper trail to see whether that task is getting done. However, Henry did note that the procedures to ensure a dispenser is restocked can vary by residence hall. Another method that other halls utilize is adding a QR code near the machine to a restocking form so RAs can get notified when the dispenser needs to be restocked.

Another concern with the dispensers is their uneven distribution throughout residence halls. Within Baxter Hall, there are 12 dispensers, while Matthews Complex has six, Doney has four, both Lee and York and Lausanne have four, and Kaneko has two. Because of this, a few restrooms have plastic bins carrying



period supplies, which are sometimes maintained by the residents themselves. Karmen Zhao ('27), a Kaneko resident, has set up her own bin in one of the restrooms as a way to ensure residents have access to these products. "I think that it's important for those who need it to have access to period products. If I have enough to give, then I think that I should be able to provide a little bit for everybody," Zhao said.

When looking to the future, the ideal goal is to have more dispensers and ideally have some in academic wings as well. However, the funding for maintaining and furthering these ideas continues to be discussed. The cost of a new dispenser is \$315 and a box of 500 pads and tampons costs \$150 each, which is enough product to fill five dispensers. Because of this, Kropf expressed the

Photo by Lucy Devlaeminck
need for collaborative funding between the housing department and other student groups, like the Residence Hall Association and Community Action Fund for Equity and Sustainability grants. "My budget can cover potentially things like pads and tampons, but the dispensers would be something that I would need assistance on from a budgetary standpoint," Kropf said.

For now, the main goal is to get these conversations started about creating new uniform protocols and ironing out funding issues in order to help sustain and grow this project in the future. "It's a complicated, structural thing that hopefully, with my advocacy, will not be as much of a problem for the future," Henry said.

Students and professors navigate use of AI in academic fields

Alan Cohen
Staff Writer

The recent developments in artificial intelligence (AI) are starting to affect many aspects of people's lives, including professional fields. The academic community is no exception, with professors and students at Willamette and other institutions having to navigate the implications of this technology in teaching, learning and academic research.

Dean of the new School of Computing and Information Sciences, Jameson Watts, hosted a webinar in December explaining how AI has developed over time and how the academic field can adapt to it. He commented that the technology is not new, as it was already widespread in the business field during the 2000s, but its usefulness has increased very rapidly in the past several years. He stated that humanity's future is likely to be substantially shaped by AI and the ethical issues surrounding it, pointing to recent AI regulations in the European Union as an example.

AI and machine learning softwares work by storing information, recognizing pat-

terns, and gradually learning from them to provide tailored outputs and achieve tasks more efficiently. As Watts stated, AI "mirrors the way humans themselves evolve and mature over time," since humans are constantly learning patterns that allow us to interact in the world.

Visiting Assistant Professor Ambrin Ling, who joined the studio art department last fall, teaches drawing and extended practices. They regularly use AI for their professional life, including exhibitions and academic research, and are incorporating the technology into an upcoming course called Drawing Inquiry for Advanced Art Students.

Ling, who has a background in humanities and academic research, stated that they see AI as an opportunity to redefine ideas of originality and as a "fun way to think about how to generate art and to get outside the artist as the sole author of work." Examples of their professional use of AI include generating art prompts with ChatGPT and visual images with DALL-E. Ling recommends students use these technologies for tasks such as brainstorming or structuring thoughts and ideas, while still

ensuring they understand AI's issues and limitations.

Ling stated that not only is the responsible use of AI compatible with critical thinking, but it also helps students understand and explore the concepts of ownership, as well as consider "whether you can even have an original work of art in this day and age."

Nonetheless, AI has the ability to be abused by students claiming its outputs as their own work, which is very hard to be detected with certainty. According to a report by the company OpenAI, which owns ChatGPT, AI detectors are unreliable and incapable of determining whether an individual has utilized their platform to generate a written text or essay and claimed it their own. Although the report is specific to ChatGPT, other experiments have suggested that this failing extends to most other AI platforms.

More than half of college students nationwide have reported using AI for their assignments or exams, and the academic community has yet to find consensus on how to best regulate and foster responsible uses of the technology. Willamette does not have specific policies regarding AI, but

the use of AI-generated works, like with any other online tool, is considered plagiarism when it is not acknowledged and properly cited. Faculty members have different strategies and individual AI policies, with some encouraging responsible use in class and others prohibiting it altogether.

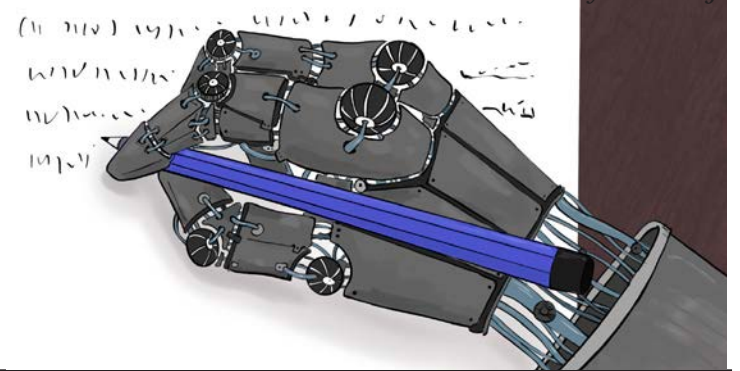
William Smaldone is a professor of History and the chair of the history department at Willamette University. He stated that there are legitimate ways of using AI in education, such as looking for specific facts similar to those found on Wikipedia or other online encyclopedias. Nonetheless, he stated that he is concerned with the negative consequences of AI in education due to its potential to limit students' creative and intellectual abilities,

which he finds "utterly problematic."

Despite students' ability to use AI illegitimately, Smaldone has trust in the student body. "I hope [cheating] doesn't happen very much, and I don't think it does. If I catch someone who is cheating, whether it's with ChatGPT or not, I will impose a penalty. I try to come to work optimistic, and I generally think most of the students are quite honest," Smaldone stated.

Most generative AI platforms are still in their early stages. Willamette and other educational institutions have yet to find consensus on how to best regulate it and promote a responsible use, but there is no doubt that this technology is here to stay.

Art by Eli Fukuiji



Willamette librarian whimsically crafts a new world in recently published YA novel

**Sage Lamott
Staff Writer**

Uncover the mysteries of the blue mist and delve into a literary world created by one of Willamette's own. Willamette librarian and new author John Repplinger released his debut young adult novel, available for pickup outside of his office. Following the intrigue of a magical blue mist and the journey of a brave young heroine, the novel, "Amara and the Giant's Ring: The Blue Mist," explores themes of maturity, finding one's place in society and self-acceptance.

Repplinger's Word-Press summarizes the novel, detailing the story of a young girl named Amara struggling to discover herself. Along her journey she discovers a bracelet containing blue mist capable of taking on a variety of shapes. She discovers that the bracelet was passed through decades of renowned warriors, craftsmen and skilled hunters. Exploring themes typical to that of coming-of-age media, Amara must uncover the secrets of the bracelet while exploring her own independence. Repplinger

detailed that the story vaguely came to him in the form of a recurring dream. He found inspiration from the dream's imagery: "The blue mist kept reappearing and I thought to myself, maybe I should do something with that!" The novel is directly related to "growing up and changing," following the classic themes of young adult literature but through a "fantastical" lens.

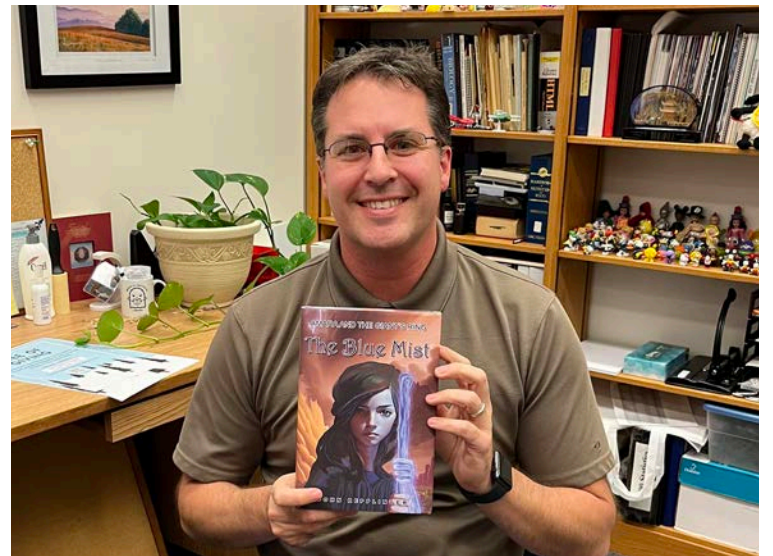
Despite this being his debut piece, Repplinger finds a sort of whimsy in the act of writing, crafting worlds and introducing characters. He shared how he created the cover art for the work utilizing an AI system and editing minute descriptors to get the specific image he wanted. "The process took a long time."

Self-publishing the work allowed Repplinger to control the creative processes and outlook of his novel. He noted that going through publishers can take many years, and being a librarian, he has had exposure to how that process works. He hopes to inspire students to "write and pursue their goals, academic or personal," and recounted that he "wanted to go through the pro-

cess and serve as a model for students to understand how the self-publishing system works." Additionally, Repplinger looks forward to the potential of working with Willamette students within the realm of editing and continuing to review his work.

Repplinger thanked the support of his Willamette community for his success in publishing his novel. Having served as the Hatfield Library science librarian since 2002, he has watched the community grow and adapt. Being a librarian, he "spends a lot of time around books," which he notes has allowed him to explore works similar to his. He added in the acknowledgments of his book the names of the library circulation staff due to their help with editing and reviewing the piece. "The piece went through a decent amount of testing and editing," he noted. He added that he gained insight from students in the age demographic the novel is aimed towards, gauging different reactions to specific moments or tidbits.

Through Repplinger's writing, he aims to continue a family tradition of storytell-



Photos by Carolyn Vazquez

ing. Telling a heartfelt family story, Repplinger shared that his grandfather was "known for his storytelling," and that, as a child, Repplinger himself would "tell his siblings stories in exchange for them doing his chores." As a writer, he views the larger concept of storytelling as "piecing the little things you think of into something larger."

Looking toward the future, Repplinger aims to write and publish more stories, forming a series that follows

the journey of the main characters of "Amara and the Giant's Ring: The Blue Mist" towards adulthood. Combining experience within the industry as well as a passion for his work, Repplinger hopes to delve more into the science fiction realm in addition to the fantasy realm, utilizing his knowledge to expand universes and plotlines.

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Using Minecraft to create a better Willamette

Izzy Cornelison
Staff Writer

Almost everyone has heard of Minecraft, the popular online game built entirely out of blocks. Unlike most people, however, Forrest Derr ('24) does not play Minecraft just for fun — they are using the platform to construct a miniature, idealized Willamette.

Last semester, Derr applied for the Carson Grant, a general research grant for Willamette students that pays out a personal stipend on top of any expenses for a project of their choice. The main goal of Derr's project was to build Willamette's campus in Minecraft, as well as interview different clubs and affinity groups about their ideas to help redesign aspects of campus in the digital space.

The idea to build the campus didn't begin with the Carson Grant. Derr said they had wanted to build the campus in Minecraft ever since they started at Willamette, and they had been working on a design on and off as a personal project. The Carson Grant was always on Derr's radar but they had never seriously considered applying

until after the deadline had passed. However, due to a lack of applicants this year, the deadline was extended, allowing Derr to apply with their project.

Derr's Willamette campus is built on a one-block to one-meter scale, making the world proportionate to its real-life counterpart. To get accurate measurements for the insides of various buildings, Derr explained they took measuring tape and simply did it themselves. They used Google Maps for the measurements of buildings' exteriors, but indoor spaces posed a bigger challenge.

"Indoor spaces are kind of atrocious to build because not only is the scale kind of weird, but your perspective in Minecraft is also kind of weird," said Derr. They explained, "A meter doesn't feel like a meter because it's a block in Minecraft, so everything feels really cramped in indoor spaces. For example, I built a few dorms, and in the dorms it's kind of like you enter through the door, [and] there is a one-block gap between the beds on either side."

If you have ever tried to build in Minecraft,

you know the act is tedious and time-consuming. When asked how long it took to build the campus, Derr replied, "Too long."

"I used a couple of tools, [like] World Edit when I messed up or needed to move stuff. But I'm not very good at using this as a tool, so I've been constructing it in a single player world with mods," Derr said, explaining their process. "There's no actual mods used in terms of the content because I wanted to keep [the server] vanilla so that it would be accessible to as many people as possible. But those mods did things like you could build a wall quickly, or you could build the floor quickly and that helped [with] speed."

In the world of online games, "mods" are modifications made to the original game to make it operate in a different way. In this context, the mods are altering the building mechanics to make the process more efficient.

Another challenge Derr faced throughout the project was that the majority of Willamette buildings are solid brick, and with only one in-game brick texture, they were worried about re-

dundancy. However, "After showing it to some people who played Minecraft and don't play Minecraft," Derr said, "the feedback was generally good, except for bushes and trees still look atrocious. There are ways to fix that too, without mods, which I plan on potentially doing in the future."

Derr said that the server is accessible to the public to look at but not to edit.

For the second half of Derr's project, they wanted to help redesign Willamette based on students' ideas. Because doing so in Minecraft is far easier than in real life, they looked forward to revamping spaces in the digital world, provid-

ing a template to implement these changes in reality.

"Going forward, getting more student input and kind of continuing that project of reimagining spaces on campus would be helpful," said Derr, "and also just doing something with the spaces that have been reimagined. Ultimately this is meant to be fun — yes — but also like a tool for student groups as part of ... ongoing efforts to improve campus."

If you would like to follow along with Derr's ongoing project to finish campus and adapt spaces based on student input, you can follow the project's Instagram @willametteminecraftproject.



Images provided by Forrest Derr

Sports clubs looking to bloom in spring semester

Mason Williams Staff Writer

As the semester starts up and Bearcats return to campus after the winter break, students begin looking forward to what awaits them in the spring semester. With the warm weather comes better conditions and more enthusiasm for sports participation on the Willamette campus. While clubs like the Willamette Rugby Football Club maintain a solid (and loud) presence on campus, other sports clubs can become question marks as they evolve and work through difficulties. Here's a glance at some of the lesser-known clubs that are making a return or becoming more active during the spring term.

Rock Climbing Club

A newcomer at Willamette, the Rock Climbing Club has been building its foundations over the fall semester and seeks to expand upon its experience in the next term. Earlier in the year, The Collegian had the opportunity to speak with

its exec team on their reasons for founding the club and their plans to improve it in the future.

Co-Presidents Wes Anderson ('27) and Markus Varner ('27) both expressed that they wanted to continue their passion for rock climbing into college. "There wasn't a lot of opportunity here [on campus] for people to climb, especially being in Oregon where it's a popular thing ... we know a lot of people would like to be involved in [climbing]," Varner said.

Anderson added, "[The club] is a new way to meet people and discover a sport that we all love. Everyone that I know who does it loves it more than anything." The exec team expressed that they want the Rock Climbing Club to be an accessible way to exercise, providing a fun alternative to going to the gym.

Vice President Flannery Sheets said that their main goal in expanding the club would be to get reduced membership fees at The Rock Boxx — a rock climbing gym

located in southeast Salem — to make climbing as accessible as possible for club members. The exec team hopes to foster a system that will allow anyone in the Willamette community to participate in the club in the future.

Tennis Club

Due to weather and scheduling issues, the Tennis Club could not host meetings over the fall semester. Its president Grace Corsac ('26) said that they will resume meeting next semester when weather permits.

Taekwondo Club

The Willamette Taekwondo club was also on hiatus for the fall semester. Club President Anders Webb ('25) announced via an email to the club on Nov. 24 that he was unable to host fall practices, but plans to get them started again this term.

Nicholas Cottril ('26), who is helping to get the Taekwondo Club up and running again, stated that the club may experiment with new activities this semester, such as sparring practices. Cottril said that the

Taekwondo Club was a great introduction to martial arts for him last year. Last spring he went to one of their meetings intending only to check out the club once, but has since been a regular attendee. He even began practicing martial arts beyond the campus after his experience.

"It continued to spark my interest in this sort of stuff. I actually did Thai kickboxing over the summer, which was

super fun." The Taekwondo Club remains committed to offering Willamette students a beginner-friendly approach to martial arts.

As the campus begins to come back to life when students return in the spring, these clubs will join the others in offering a myriad of ways to be active and build community at Willamette University.

Photo by Skeet Starr



Jef Lucero: on the mic from McCulloch to Lumen Field

Jackson Garrett Staff Writer

If you've been to a Bearcat football, basketball, soccer or volleyball game in recent years, then you've likely heard the booming voice of Jef Lucero. As a commentator and announcer, Lucero has become one of the most recognizable features of Bearcat athletic events. However, his talents reach far beyond the confines of the Willamette campus — he recently got the opportunity to stand in for a Seattle Sounders playoff game at Lumen Field in place of James Wollard, their usual announcer. In light of his recent success, The Collegian felt it was a good time to get to know the voice behind Bearcat victory.

Lucero's resume as an announcer has a wide vari-

ety in terms of locations, levels and sports — he has done play-by-play, public address announcing and broadcasting at the high school, college and professional level. Lucero started his career between 1995 and 1998, beginning with volunteering at KAOS radio at the Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington. He then moved to high school and college announcing: Tenino High School, Centralia College, Black Hills High School, Puget Sound, Saint Martin's University, Oregon State and University of Washington were among the schools Lucero worked for before making his way to Salem.

In terms of professional organizations, Lucero has worked for Seattle Impact FC men's indoor soccer, Kitsap Puma SC, the DubSea Fish Sticks Collegiate summer

baseball, the Seattle Storm, as well as his recent gig with the Sounders. The latter event was a big opportunity for Lucero. During the playoff game, his voice was heard by a happy crowd of 35,000 Seattle supporters (one of his largest crowds yet) as the Sounders defeated FC Dallas to earn a spot in the Western Conference semifinals.

Lucero speaks highly of his relationship with the Seattle Storm, the WNBA franchise where he became the public address announcer in 2020. When questioned about his favorite memories as an announcer he stated: "[I enjoyed] being a part of the Sue Bird retirement ceremony and her last regular season and playoff games in Seattle." He didn't leave out the Bearcats however, going on to say he's "been fortunate enough

to watch some buzzer beaters, including one here on campus last Sunday," referring to a 55-52 Women's Basketball victory over Whittier on Nov. 12.

Commentating and announcing come with their own difficulties, however. As with any live performance, Lucero only gets one shot. "The mental part of it in terms of mispronouncing a name or stumbling through a read, you kind of just have to power through it," Lucero explained. As a former baseball and tennis player, Lucero knows well the struggles of performing in the moment. "It's not a whole lot different

than playing, you know that mental part of it. We all get in our own heads and I'm by far my worst critic as well. As soon as I screw something up I get mad at myself for probably a lot longer than I should be."

With Lucero having announced for so many teams in the Pacific Northwest throughout the last 25 years and being given the opportunity with the Sounders recently, there seems to be no limit on the possibilities that could come from his talents on the microphone.

Adelman Contd. from cover

spoke to where we were as a program and what we continued to do to push the envelope in the right areas." Between this and scheduling nationally ranked opponents, Willamette Men's Soccer has turned into one of the top or at least one of the most recognized DIII programs on the West Coast.

This season was a bit of a hangover of a year after 2022's Northwest Conference Championship success. The Bearcats finished fourth, failing to make it to the regional tournament. However, you can't blame this year's shortcomings purely on performance. The team was riddled with injuries all year. "Sports have the power to humble you. The group that the new head coach has will rally together and will be ready to get back after it," Adelman said.

This end of Adelman's chapter at Willamette is taking him to new, uncertain and

exciting pastures. His fiancée, Whitney Pitalo, has been coaching women's college soccer for several years after playing Pac-12 soccer at the University of Southern California and has been offered the job to coach as an assistant for the women's team at Boston College. Boston competes in the Atlantic Coast Conference, which is widely regarded as the cream of the crop for Division I women's soccer, so the two will be moving.

Moving away from the people that he has made great relationships with here over the past few years is hard for Adelman. "Leaving this chapter and closing this was one of the hardest things that I have done. I don't know what's next for me but I am looking and interviewing and things have been progressing." He and Pitalo will be getting married at the end of the year.





ASWU Student Org Upcoming Events

- **ASWU:** Vice President Office Hours - 2/14
- **ASWU & Admin:** Bridging Connections - 2/14
- **ASWU:** Vice President Office Hours (via appointment) - 2/15
- **Outdoor Program:** Sahalie and Koosah Falls Hike - 2/17
- **Outdoor Program:** Row River Trail Hike - 2/18
- **Toilet Paper:** Late February Edition Submission Deadline - 2/20
- **Outdoor Program:** Tumalo State Park Yurt Camping - 2/23-25

Be sure to get your club or org event in the calendar by posting to the university events calendar or contacting The Collegian directly.

ASWU sponsored orgs from the University Calendar are added here.

See more at: <https://events.willamette.edu/>

GET QUACKING!



YOUR AD HERE!

Contact us at

collegian-editor-in-chief@willamette.edu

Fast Break sports report

Skeet Starr
Sports Editor

1/30

Hello, Bearcat fan! The waters of creativity once again threaten to breach the banks of the Fast Break Sports Report. What you are accustomed to today will soon be nothing more

than a foggy memory. Let's go to the news!

Women's Basketball has hit its full stride, winning all three contests this week, including another nail-biter against defending champs Whitman (67-62). If all goes well, their final matchup against number one Pacific will be the last true test before playoffs.

Men's Basketball strolled past the Pios early in the week (77-66), then crashed out at home against the Blues (67-83) before earning their playoff spot back against Whitworth the next day (85-78).

Men's and Women's Swim have failed to live up to their pre-season

Art by Carolyn Vazquez

promise. Despite trampling and upsetting Lewis and Clark early in the week, the Linfield Wildcats stole the show to drop each squad to 1-5 in conference.

As temperatures made their way above 60 degrees this weekend, the Baseball Team crawled from their winter hiding places and onto Sparks Field. Early reports suggest that none saw their shadows and thus winter should be wrapping up shortly.

In the world of sport: Chiefs and Niners in the Super Bowl (yawn), Jürgen Klopp is shedding his liver bird feathers, and at 48 years old Elissa Steamer is still finding her way onto the cover of Thrasher Magazine.

Consider in the coming weeks: Is it too late for Swim to turn their luck around, and alternatively, is anyone else concerned about the sprawling expanse of fluorescent light-filled hallways which sit deep under the Lausanne and Doney basements?

2/6

Hello, Bearcat Fan! I didn't see you come in. I'd love to chat about that recent thing that happened to you, but unfortunately I have to write my column. Please get out of my dorm and let's go to the news!

Women's Basketball cracked first in the conference with only four games left before the champion-

ship tournament. However a narrow escape from a bitter Pacific Lutheran side (72-70) and a surprise defeat at the hands of fifth-place Linfield (71-78) this week showed that the 'Cats are still walking a treacherous path toward conference dreams.

Men's Basketball thrashed the Lutes (82-70) but also failed to execute in their derby matchup against the Wildcats (76-89). They are hanging onto their playoff spot by the skin of their teeth. Each basketball team will face Pacific at home tonight.

Field and Track set off on spring 2024's maiden voyage at the George Fox Invitational. Usual suspect Whitley Stepp ('26) took second in the high jump, and the Willamette athletics site reports that she has overtaken the national No. 7 spot. Newcomer Mason McMillin ('27) took second in the 60m hurdles.

Swim is heading to the conference championship tournament this week.

In the world of sport: New Timbers head coach Phil Neville is bringing his son Harvey on as a trialist. Oh, and the Super Bowl and whatnot.

Consider in the coming weeks: I'm heading to the store. Do you want anything?



UPCOMING OUTDOOR PROGRAM TRIPS

- 02/17: Sahalie and Koosah Falls Hike
- 02/18: Row River Trail Hike
- 02/23-25: Tumalo State Park Yurt Camping
- 3/2: Cosmic Tubing
- 3/10: Mt Hood Ski and snowboard
- 3/17: McDowell Falls Creek Hike



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Poet Sterling Cunio addresses activism in Willamette MLK talk

Lee Parsons
Staff Writer

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commemoration event Willamette University held on Jan. 24 hosted keynote speaker Sterling Cunio, who spoke about his personal journey with activism and poetry. Cunio was sentenced to life in prison without parole at 16 years old, but after transforming his life, Cunio was released after serving 28 years. He is now an award-winning poet and activist raising awareness for restorative justice, mass incarceration and food scarcity.

While opening the event, Cunio admitted to being nervous and said, "I'm a poet, so I'll lead with a poem." Beginning with the line, "Born to a woman shackled to a hospital bed," Cunio detailed his life in verse. He described the dysfunction in his childhood beginning at 12 years old, his crime-filled adolescence, and his conversion into commitment to activism and redemption. Reading this poem provided necessary context about his background, he explained.

Cunio was raised in a stable environment for 12 years until the death of his grandmother, after which he was moved between dysfunctional family members, juvenile correctional facilities and foster homes before spending two years homeless in Salem, Oregon. Cunio says that his adverse childhood provided the typical setup for a life of crime, but that ultimately his own actions "lost him his life, and others' lives as well."

After entering the prison system, Cunio spent nine years in solitary confinement. This gave him time to reflect on his life and the effects he had on others, and during this time he began to write. Cunio stated, "There wasn't a lot of places I could be vulnerable, so I went to the page." Conventions tended to get in the way of Cunio's writing to express himself due to his lack of formal education, so he turned to poetry where he was less restricted. In his words, "All you have to do [to write poetry] is feel."

The literature that helped Cunio along his journey included Nelson Mandela's "Long Walk to Freedom," William Styron's "Sophie's Choice" and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail." The first poem Cunio ever wrote was about Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK). The response he got to this poem from friends and peers encouraged him to become a spoken-word poet. Sitting in jail himself, MLK's letter from jail helped him discover himself. He says the letter struck him because "with

his letter, MLK engaged not only his community, but humanity."

After his release from prison, Cunio began working with Church at the Park to build houses. While doing this, he was in the area where MLK lived. He noticed the well-deserved plaques and memorials at MLK's house, but also noticed the lack of memorialization a few houses down where the women who helped MLK lived. This inspired him to tell the stories of other people through poetry. He said, "I started writing poetry first for the emotion, then I started writing for the story."

Cunio wanted to give a voice to those who couldn't tell their stories, as he has experienced a lack of advocacy as well. As he said, "Once you're in the system, you become voiceless."

Cunio discussed his journey into becoming a successful poet, and the need for a counter-narrative. When told by teachers that his work was exceptional, Cunio was skeptical. He talked about how teachers are supposed to tell you that you have a voice. It is their job to convince you to develop your writing, he said, so he didn't believe that his writing was out of the ordinary despite his teachers' assertions. However, when he began to win competitions, he realized that he had something valuable to share. He recalls winning his first competition and thinking it was only because he had help with his writing, then winning a second and dismissing it as luck, then winning a third and thinking the judges weren't very intelligent before realizing his writing had truly earned him success.

Cunio said that it's important to "use your own autobiography for political actions" when you can because "the power of your words comes from the conviction in your life." For his part, Cunio shares parts of his life in his poetry to give it a moving and personal quality, while relating his stories and others' stories to larger global issues, such as food scarcity, climate change and homelessness. These personal touches serve to make global issues relatable and attention-grabbing. He encouraged the audience to analyze his poems for these elements during his workshop.

Cunio was recently invited to speak at the White House for the National Endowment of Arts, and while at Willamette he read a draft of the poem he intended to share there. He also has a podcast coming out soon called Cellblocks to Mountaintops. You can find out more about Sterling Cunio on his website <https://sterlingcunio.com/>.



Opinion: Country music got worse (but it can easily get better)

Marit Hickey
Staff Writer

Country music today often strikes people as a set of recycled songs about beer, nationalism, blue jeans and, on occasion, a good pair of cowboy boots. This makes sense, given a lot of the songs that get played on radio stations tend to center on these topics. Country music wasn't always this patriotic and derivative, however, and so the genre has the potential to return to its roots.

Country music is a uniquely American genre born out of folk and blues traditions, specifically, the folk music that was carried to America by poor Scottish and Irish immigrants and the blues that was sung by African Americans after the Civil War. Both of these groups endured a lot of hardship, and this was reflected in their music. Often, the themes of folk and blues music involve the singer living despite the harsh world around them. These were songs about discrimination, loss, poor working conditions and the orchestrated misfortunes these people faced. When country music started to emerge in the 1920s,

these topics were reflected more within it. It was, in every sense, a genre that belonged to the working-class people of the American South.

Jumping to what is considered the "fourth generation" of country music in the 1970s and the 1980s, America saw two major movements emerge: pop country and outlaw country. In pop country music, featuring well-known artists like John Denver and Dolly Parton, themes tended to center around love, heartbreak and hometowns. Outlaw country, on the other hand, had an attitude to it. Most commonly associated with Willie Nelson, it was more angry at mainstream American culture at the time and used imagery from the Old West to encourage listeners to buck norms. Still, there was none of the patriotism that is currently the defining characteristic of modern country.

When did that change? The short answer is 9/11. Now, it is important to understand that, yes, country has always been a quintessentially American sound. After 9/11, though, love of the USA came to the forefront of the genre. Suddenly, a series of songs came out condemning the attack, from

"Courtesy of the Red, White, and Blue (The Angry American)" by Toby Keith, to "This Ain't No Rag, It's a Flag" by Charlie Daniels, both of which promised to avenge the attacks. These songs were just a small example of the surge of nationalism felt by the American public, but they brought country music back into the spotlight under the context of patriotism. Soon, country artists would discover just how profitable that patriotism was.

Today, what some might refer to as "stadium" or "bro" country is full of American pride, even when it doesn't seem to mesh with the rest of the song. It almost feels like singers need to reassure listeners that they're all for the flag. For example, there is an infamous monologue about how Americans need to support the troops sandwiched into "Chicken Fried" by the Zac Brown Band, a song that is — as implied by the title — otherwise about fried chicken.

All this being said, even for those who don't like their music with a side of red, white and blue, there is still hope in the country music genre. Artists like Orville Peck are expanding the audi-



Art by Anushka Srivastav

ence of country music, especially to marginalized groups like the queer community, for the first time in years. Folk music, which has always been the more progressive twin to the more conservative politics of post-9/11 country music, has also fought to create safer spaces for sidelined Americans, with artists like Willi

Carlisle writing songs about queer experiences ("Life on the Fence"), or being poor in today's America ("Vanlife"). All in all, the scourge of nationalism in country music may dominate understanding of the genre today, but that doesn't mean that this overbearing pride needs to stay.

Opinion: Why Sparks should continue being a student-only gym

Brooke Austin
Staff Writer

When Sparks Fitness Center reopened after the pandemic, there was a proposed fee for faculty to utilize the gym, although many staff members wanted to work out at Sparks for free. As a result, a conflict developed, even prompting some Willamette faculty to protest at President Thorsett's office, as reported in this sports article. This issue asks the question as to whether or not WU faculty and staff should be able to utilize the Sparks gym, alongside students, for free. The common consensus among students? No. I spoke with roughly fifteen students on campus, and all of them expressed that not only do they feel as though faculty shouldn't be able to use the Sparks gym for free, but that faculty shouldn't use the Sparks gym at all.

Sparks gym is not free to anyone, not even students who pay roughly \$60,000 per year to attend Willamette University. This fee includes the allowed usage of all WU resources, including Sparks gym. In fact, tuition went up by about \$3,000 last year, meaning that many students feel entitled to squeeze all the juice out of Willamette's resources. It is important to acknowledge

that although Willamette values and appreciates its faculty, the gym is geared toward students, hence why there are only student workers at Sparks and why there are normally only students, undergraduate or graduate, working out in Sparks.

Students benefit a lot from Sparks being a student-only facility. The on-campus gym is supposed to be a safe place for young adults to get exercise. Willamette has even gone as far as to create dedicated inclusive times called Lift Up hours at the gym to ensure every student gets to use Sparks comfortably. Based on the students I spoke with, many expressed that they would be uncomfortable with the idea of working out in the same space as their professors. "There are better options than sparks that still preserve a student-faculty boundary," Rya Hirsch ('27) said.

Some students told me that if they knew there was a chance of seeing their professors at the gym, they wouldn't go. Often those who attend Sparks wear workout attire such as sports bras, Spandex, cut-off tank tops and even swimsuits for students who swim during the (incredibly sporadic and inconvenient) pool hours. Though this kind of clothing is appropriate for the gym and around peers, it's not

exactly the preferred attire to wear to be appropriate around professors, and the idea of doing so makes students understandably uncomfortable.

Sparks being a student-only facility also supports students by providing a space where they can create a healthy disconnect between home life and school life. College can be a strange experience to navigate; for the first time, your friends, hobbies, school and "home" are all within a 10-minute walk from each other. Having Sparks be a student-only facility would help students further create that healthy separation of home and school that can be tricky to navigate if students are living in the dorms.

The faculty at Willamette are special. Every professor is passionate about creating positive learning experiences for their students. They develop connections with their classes in order to create safe and engaging environments. That level of connection is appreciated in a classroom, but at its core Sparks is for people who attend Willamette University. There should be a divide, as faculty members work at Willamette, but they do not attend it.

Sparks being a student-only gym creates a safe space for students to get exercise, as well as emphasizes a healthy barrier between home

and school. Sparks should be for students that attend Willamette, undergraduate or graduate; faculty work at Willamette and should thus treat it like a work environment. With these

expectations, students are able to utilize Sparks in the most comfortable environment possible.

Art by Anushka Srivastav



Opinion: On-campus jobs should be more accessible

Brooke Austin
Staff Writer

The classic “college student budget” is a universally known aspect of college life where students begin to savor every penny they’ve got. Many students work on campus to help pay for tuition, while others may seek employment to make sure they have enough money to get their daily coffee from the Bistro. Either way, on-campus jobs are essentially always in demand and can make up a huge aspect of a student’s college experience.

Jenna Bellows (‘26) is a student who is currently working at both the Bistro and the mailroom, but also considers herself a “Goudy survivor” as they worked at the dining hall in a previous semester but didn’t stick with it. However, in general they have loved their experience with on-campus jobs here at WU. “The mailroom [is] really calm ... I can do homework if I have extra time. All of the guys that work there are super great,” Bellows said. Even while enjoying the tranquility of the mailroom, they also appreciate their job as a cashier at the

Bistro, saying that it’s “buzzing always. I always feel like there’s commotion, like happy commotion.”

Despite Bellows working two jobs they enjoy here on campus, employment has not been so easy for everyone, especially first-years. Olivia Austin (‘27) expressed that she has been trying to look for a job on campus since she moved in, but to no avail. “It has been hard because the jobs get taken really fast,” she said. Austin explained that the whole application process is “confusing” and that Handshake isn’t much help. “I know about Handshake, but I don’t know what to do when I get the job.”

Even after Bellows scored two on-campus jobs, she also admitted that the job application and interview process can be tedious, such as with the many rounds of interviews they completed to work at the Bistro. “The [Bistro] did an application process, and [I] applied, and then from all the applications they selected people to do a group interview.” After that, the coffee shop “selected people to do individual interviews.” A four-step or other similarly rigorous hiring process can make employment

difficult. “Finding a job on campus is much harder than people may realize, especially for freshmen,” Lauren Besford (‘27) said. “And a lot of the jobs, especially the higher paying ones, aren’t available for first-year students.”

Obtaining an on-campus job can be a strenuous process, but once a student has a job, they usually enjoy the experience. So how can the application process be better and what are students looking for when applying for jobs? Austin gave her own solution, saying that perhaps it’d be beneficial if the admin explained how to go about finding jobs. “There should definitely be a section during Opening Days that’s just like specifically for jobs,” she proposed. Besford also specified exactly what she’s looking for: “I would like if there were more options to work in specific fields that coincide with majors so that students could get more experience in their industry before graduating.”

It goes without saying that providing opportunities for students to work on campus is incredibly beneficial. Besford spelled it out, explaining that “possible work grants ... to lower tuition costs, connec-



Photo by Maillie Olgay

tion with their school or community or even the stability in having a routine and the discipline it takes to have a job” are all examples of how job opportunities can support students here at WU. The application processes could also be made tremendously easier by simply taking a moment to explain to new students how job applications work on campus.

On-campus jobs are wonderful opportunities for

students to ensure they can get their sweet treats from the Bistro, help with tuition through work-study, and get involved and develop more connections with the Willamette community. With this extended knowledge and support, Willamette is able to help more students to work on campus and see the importance of doing so. However, jobs must be accessible to students first.

Staff Picks: What is your favorite reality TV show?

Compiled by: Priya Thoren, Opinions Editor

The Pick: Milf Mansion
Submitted by: Isis Coyle, Media Manager

The Pick: Lizard Lick Towing
Submitted by: Skeet Starr, Sports Editor

The Pick: Wipe-

out
Submitted by: Bella Montalvo, Editor-In-Chief

The Pick: Total Drama Island

Art by Eli Fukuji

Submitted by: Caramia Christensen, Artist

The Pick: Pawn Stars
Submitted by: Anushka Srivastav, Media Editor

The Pick: Jury Duty
Submitted by: Alan Cohen, Staff Writer

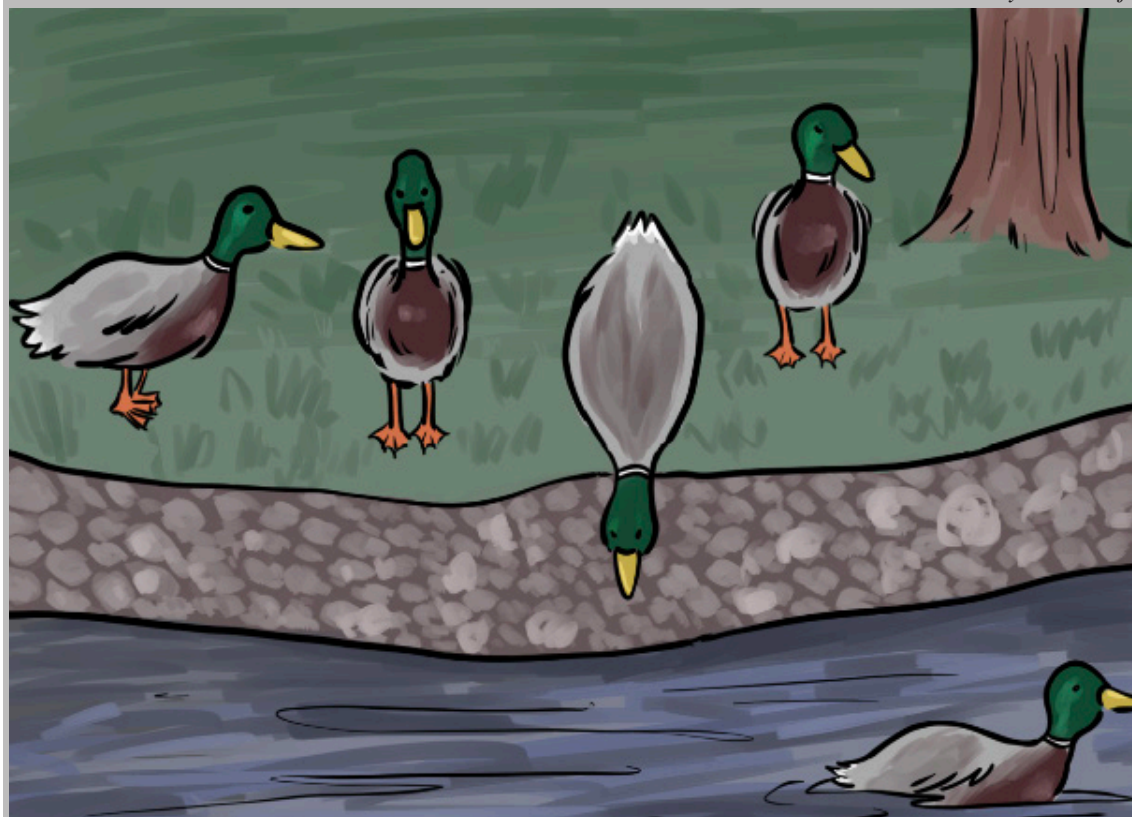
The Pick: Great British Bake-Off
Submitted by: Chrissy Ewald, Staff Writer

The Pick: Love Island (the British version) or Survivor

Submitted by: Eleanor Hu, Managing Editor

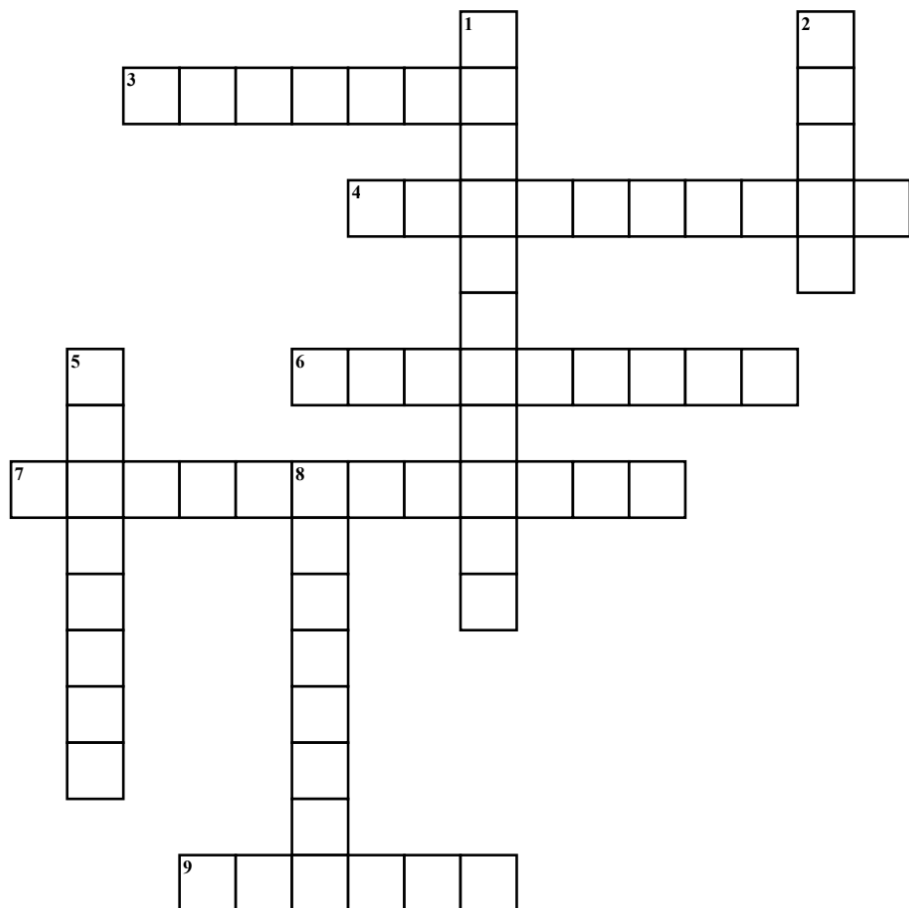
The Pick: Jetlag: The Game
Submitted by: Emma Innes, News Editor

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed are from the individual staff members and do not reflect the perspective of The Collegian as a whole. The submissions are unedited and unaltered from what was submitted by individual staff members.





Collegian Spring Kickoff Crossword



Across

- [3] This artist performed last year's Super Bowl Halftime Show.
- [4] Heart filled Holliday.
- [6] An alternative watch to the Super Bowl featuring four-legged players.
- [7] The 49ers are from what major city?
- [9] We are about to enter this astrological season.

Down

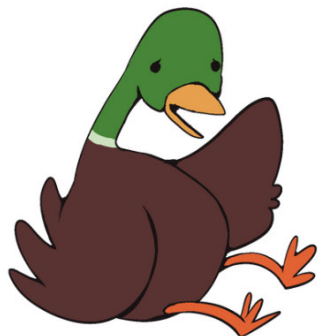
- [1] What did Punxsutawney Phil say we are going to have?
- [2] This artist most recently performed at the Super Bowl Halftime Show.
- [5] Which annual Willamette event is happening this spring on March 9th?
- [8] Astrological season we are currently in.

Answers Across

Comic by Isis Coyle



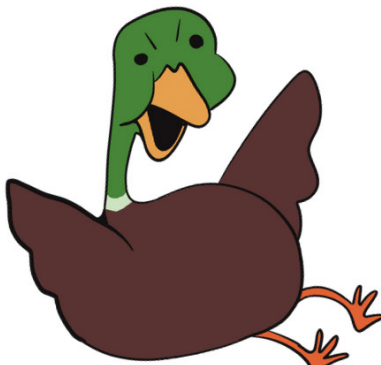
I'm so tired being a mascot! It's hard to maintain such a flawless public image!



I agree, Boots. The allegations are becoming too much to handle! I'm not a furry! I'm a cute and relatable mascot!



GALLDARN-IT! I can't just sit here anymore! We have to do something!



HUZZAH! Your call to action is music to my attentive feline ears! We are NOT furies! We are just mascots with—

