WHERE EVERYBODY KNOWS YOUR NAME

Unsure what to do after grad school, Tandi Wilson took up bartending until she could figure out her future. Then inspiration struck. As a 26-year-old bartender, Wilson opened her own establishment, the Bar Nine, an ECU neighborhood staple.

Story by Allison Todd

PAWS-ITIVELY PAMPERED

This “spa day” had the hair and the nails — but also a few howls and barks. A dog day afternoon at the Four Paws Inn in Greenville had a little bit of everything, as groomers and technicians worked hard to transform local pups into clean, freshly trimmed companions.

Story by Reyna Crooms

DESIGNING WOMAN

At first, designing and making sorority apparel was a sideline for Molly Moore. Then the orders flooded in, and a business was born. Today, her Raleigh-based business makes custom apparel for 17 national sororities.

Story by Makayla Perkins

UP IN SMOKE

With more people working from home during the pandemic, more American homes caught fire in 2020. But Sarah Barkley already knew what it was like to lose her childhood home to fire. She vividly remembers the aftermath.

Story by Sarah Barkley

A BITTER PILL

Jenny was a tired college student and the tiny orange pill seemed like a harmless “pick-me-up.” Until it wasn’t, and Jenny was hooked.

Story by Elke Crabtree

A CAREER IN CARING

At 8 years old, AC Kendall had a sister with cancer and parents who were overwhelmed. A child life specialist helped AC to cope. Now she hopes to do the same for other children.

Story by Abbie Clavijo

Countenance design team:

Emma Beaty
Samantha Dolan
Kristen Heliar
Leah Johnson
Michelle Mazzei
Katrina Orifice
Samantha Tilley
Allison Todd

Countenance (Vol. 6, Issue 1) is a general feature magazine produced by students in the School of Communication at East Carolina University since 2017. The articles were written by students in the Fall 2021 Feature Writing class taught by Cindy Elmore. Countenance was designed by students in Desktop Publishing, which was taught by Barbara Bullington in the spring of 2022. Funding for the magazine was provided by the School of Communication.

Questions or feedback can be addressed to Cindy Elmore at elmore@ecu.edu or 252-328-5816.
Tandi Wilson knew she wanted to own a business, but what kind was in question — until a series of unexpected events led her to Christy’s Euro Pub.

Christy’s Euro Pub, Greenville’s very ownCheers, sits on the corner of Jarvis and Third, where it has been for nearly 20 years. A small but mighty bar may be the first thing you see as you enter Christy’s. The smell of fried food and a relaxed atmosphere, along with the childhood memories and fun paraphernalia on the walls, draw you in. With not a single spot open in the parking lot outside, many in the area can agree that Christy’s is a Greenville staple. But when did it become such a fixture? The regulars at Christy’s would say the moment its second owner, 30-year-old Tandi Wilson, took the reins.

Christy’s, located in a neighborhood a couple of blocks north of East Carolina University’s campus, is nothing new to the residents of Greenville. Its bar-like interior stands out among the neighboring houses, and its greatest hits—music can be heard from any nearby front porch. Bright green leaves on the trees surrounding the small brick building give a welcoming welcome to the large wooden door that enters Christy’s. On this day, a warm breeze blows through the door as Wilson recalls the spring day when she first stepped foot in Greenville.
It’s an evolution. People come and go but you always come back.

Wilson says it was warm and the flowers were in bloom. The day she first visited the ECU campus after being accepted as a student. With her college plans focused locally on her hometown of Alexandria, Virginia, a found in Greenville and eventually at Christy’s son’s new house in Wilson’s mind. But her father encouraged her to explore ECU because he knew personal ties to it, and Wilson says she knew it the place for her the moment she stepped on ECU’s campus.

Wilson says owning a car was originally on her bingo card for life either, “Discovering a business for me, but I wanted to do public relations,” she explains. Wilson says her fictional inspiration was Samantha Jones of “Sex and the City,” the public relations guru of the show’s famous friends group. Wilson says her planning important events and writing press releases. This seems a stretch from her rock-music-in-the-background, beer-sticks-to-the-floor, stickers-on-the-wall life now.

But there Wilson sits, at the far end of the bar, her bright blonde hair straight as a pin, spects to one side and a grin plastered on her face which is unsmacked by make-up. Her intimate daughter, Cameron, sleeps in a carrier on the barstool beside her. Wilson says she was pregnant with her first child when she and her husband, booked, decided to put changing tables in the bathrooms, anticipating their new parenthood. Longtime customers of the bar would wonder where the bathrooms, so they changed tables in a bar’s bathrooms. One even went so far as to write on the men’s changing table, “Who brings a baby to a bar?”

Wilson says, “I wanted to write books. The owner does.”

Wilson began her time in Greenville at ECU in 2001, studying communication, with a concentration in public relations. Wilson was committed to that Samantha Jones daydream she held so close to her heart, her high school. She graduated with her bachelor’s degree in 2005 and went on to pursue her master’s but says after a year she realized it wasn’t what she wanted. In 2007, Wilson began working at Christy’s as a bartender with the question of her heart. After two years of employment at the rustic olive bar, Wilson bought Christy’s from its owner at the young age of 26. Wilson says she didn’t know she’d buy Christy’s until her now-husband gave her an ultimatum right there in that very bar where they met. “He said he had done bartending before and wasn’t going to do it again. So, if I was going to bartend, I needed to own the place,” says Wilson, gesturing to Christy’s. This was the ultimatum that would somehow lead to 12 years of ownership. a marriage and two children.

But the success did not come without hardship. After buying Christy’s for $35,000 and giving Greenville Utilities a $4,000 deposit, Wilson had just $1,000 sitting in her bank account to begin her business. Not only was she starting with little money, but Wilson also struggled with a business partner who wasn’t meeting up to the 50% ownership obligations she carried. After a lot of tears and hard nights, Wilson was able to buy out her business partner, getting full ownership for her and her husband.

Managing with a smile

On this day, a customer walks in, ordering a drink at the bar before taking a seat behind Wilson’s current executive partner and manager of the team, Taylor Johnson, who is tending bar at the bar, the bar’s warm radiating off the cold rain outside the bar’s windows. The Wednesday group, a mix of 60-70-year-old friends, started coming to Christy’s to enjoy the music and friendly atmosphere, before it quickly became a weekly tradition of sharing a cold beer and a good conversation and some laughs. The group says that the atmosphere is what draws them into Christy’s.

“It’s an evolution. People come and go but you always come back,” Jerry Allgood, a retired reporter from The Raleigh News Observer says.

“Half the fun of it is that it is old farts, but it’s also young friends,” Pat Allgood, a retired nurse and Jerry’s wife, says as she points to their friend, Melvin, sitting, across from the booth, Melvin, a professor at ECU and the youngest of the group, holds his hand over his heart in admiration.

“They started out as just the old people at the bar. Now they’ve become near and dear to my heart,” Melvin says.

Aatar year ago, the welcoming spirit of Christy’s is one that will never be forgotten. In 10 years or so, Wilson says the business will go to Johnson, and Wilson will retire to her family’s new beach house in Kill Devil Hills. But Wilson says she’ll have to poop in comes in a while, before he can completely get out of her “restaurant baby”.

Legend has it that a customer of Christy’s described the bar 20 years ago by saying, “It’s like your living room but you have to wear pants.” Wilson has kept that slogan true ever since she began her journey as the owner so many years ago. She says it doesn’t matter whether you’re covered in tattoos and pierced or in a business suit, you’re welcome at Christy’s.

Allison Todd is a communication major from East Carolina. After her December 2019 graduation, she plans to work in feature writing and reporting or magazine writing.

---

**Specials**

**Todays Special Is:**

Cheeseburger, Crumb Bread

The food likely help keep people coming back. A recent special —“Beyond Second Street with some house specialties that are a hit with our downtown customers” — is just one example of a nearly flawless menu item.

*photo courtesy of Christy’s ECU Facebook page*
Most people have heard the term “man’s best friend” when referring to our furry companions. The saying not only expresses the bond people share with their pets but also the lengths pet owners will go to ensure their animals are well taken care of, from the top of their noses to the tips of their tails.

Some of that care comes from the Four Paws Inn, a pet boarding, daycare, groomer and spa in Greenville. The Inn offers services for all animals, and a bright, smiling face greets customers at the door. Pictures of staff featured on a corkboard decorate the walls behind the entrance door. The sounds of dogs barking and whimpering fill the ears, and a sign that says “Beware of Wiggle Butts” sits on a long blue countertop.

Behind the counter, Courtney scrapes works at her computer, looking at the schedule for the day. On the wall next to her, shelves, collars and doggie bowties line the walls along with doggie bandanas that are holiday-themed with different characters printed on them. An open hallway leads to a room with a sign on the door that says, “Come in quietly, pets are getting groomed.”

A passion for animals

One morning starts quietly in the grooming room, with two dogs already on the groomers’ tables, awaiting their haircuts. Laurel Wilson works quietly on Bella the spaniel. As she takes her purple clipper to the top and bottom fur pieces of Bella’s coat, the dog is calm, and Wilson’s focus is on Bella’s coat to the floor, hitting the purple mat underneath Wilson’s feet.

Behind Wilson stands Patrick Faux grooming a black and white dog that resembles an Otter. Faux has been grooming dogs for 13 years, and Wilson for 12. Both say they have always had a passion for working with animals; they

Television for the dogs, rescue pets who are now mascots, and plenty of other personal touches make Four Paws Inn a happy environment for employees and the pets in their care.
work on commission at Four Paws and are able to set their own schedules. Starting every weekday by 9:30 a.m., Faux can groom between six to eight dogs per day and Wilson between four and five, since she is newer to the salon. Each dog can take anywhere from an hour to a hour and a half depending on the dog’s age and behavior.

Both groomers say they enjoy the intimate feel of the Four Paws Inn versus the corporate world of professional pet grooming at the larger pet store chains. Wilson and Faux say they are able to cater to the pets’ individual needs and take more time with each animal.

The two women buy their own scissors and clippers, which can cost almost $400. Luckily, clippers can be used for long periods of time on cats and dogs. Only the blades need to be switched out, depending on the type of haircut.

While haircuts and nail trims are aesthetically pleasing for pet owners, they are also beneficial for the animal. The nearby Touch Street Animal Hospital sometimes rescues animals, then sends them to Four Paws for services. A scared dog can often be comforted by the warm and loving touch of the groomer.

Inside the grooming salon, a board on the wall displays a collage of pictures that show the current window or door. The grooming staff takes care to make sure that the animals are not frightened by other dogs, which is why they are often housed separately to prevent conflict.

On this day, Felton is working quickly in the hallway, gently clipping a dog’s nails while Wilson and Faux work in a separate room on grooming.

Gaining trust

Wilson and Faux say how animal’s come in under bad conditions, often having been shaved down, and it can take a long time to gain trust. Wilson experienced this on a personal level when she adopted a dog of her own that was once neglected. Wilson says it takes time for an animal to regain trust after being mistreated by humans, but the time spent is worth it in the end. Although both Wilson and Faux say the job can be rewarding it also comes with concerns.

Five years ago, Faux had to get three stitches in her lip after being bitten by a Shih Tzu. That was her worst bite, although minor cuts and scratches come along with working with animals. Faux says as a groomer it’s important to watch the dogs closely and learn to read the animal’s body language in order to prevent injury to the groomer and pet.

On an average day, though, no one is leaving the salon with stitches but rather a wagging tail and a fresh haircut, which many pet owners love to see. Wilson says that the salon is like a family where everyone is happy, healthy, and safe.

Wilson says, “It’s nice to be in a facility like this where you can just take your time and make sure everyone is happy, healthy, and safe.”

On the overhead television, Wilson and Faux watch Rocky Horror Picture Show, a favorite among the staff. The movie is a perfect way to unwind after a long day of grooming.

Another employee enters the room, her black scarf decorated with ghosts and goblins. Devon Allen, a groomer in training, is accompanied by Sonny, a 60-pound golden doodle. Allen started working at Four Paws two years ago as a kennel technician and began her training in the grooming salon after growing up watching her grandmother groom dogs.

Cuddles, now fully grown, stands shaking on the table. “You’re okay, you’re okay,” Faux reassures him. Faux’s eyes focus on the dog’s paws through black glasses, pulled back out of her face. She then holds Cuddles’ right leg to trim his hair, and works her way to the dog’s face, using curved, indescent rainbow scissors to trim his beard. Her silver cowlick follows the scissors and, working her way through the dog’s bangs, she holds each of Cuddles’ ears to give him a trim.

Meanwhile, Sonny the golden doodle stands tall on the third grooming table in the room, with all three tables now occupied by a dog ready for new haircuts. “He’s being such a good boy,” Wilson says. “He’s a handsome boy and I know it.”

Allen joins in, running her wired brush through Sonny’s golden fur, brushing out each curl to prepare him for his bath. Each dog goes through this process to ensure that there are no mats or tangles before the bathe.

After a brush down, Allen takes Sonny off the table, puts him on a short black leash, and walks out of the room. A short walk leads to the bathing area, where Sonny quickly realizes that it isним dislike.

Sonny plants his body on the floor outside of the bath, refusing to walk any further. Allen sighs as
With Sunny’s head hung low and wet ears flopped over, he looks like he is contemplating life and how he ended up in the bathtub this morning.

she looks down at Sunny, remembering this reluctance from Sunny’s last appointment.

Then things get worse. With his body still sprawled on the floor, a yellow liquid oozes out from underneath him. Allen looks at Sunny with pity, rubbing and petting him while giving words of encouragement.

Another golden retriever walks by, and Allen asks if she could bring over some treats to entice Sunny into the bath. With a treat held out in front of him, Sunny slowly makes his way closer to the bath. The second treat almost gets him into the bath but to no avail. Allen has to gently lift Sunny into the white walk-in bathing area.

Once in the bath, Sunny looks sad and disappointed as Allen fishes out the dog’s body with soap and warm water. Allen looks at the green, waterproof mat that lies in the soap to use on Sunny and any special requests from the customer. With Sunny’s head hung low and wet ears drooping over, he looks like he is contemplating life and how he ended up in the bathtub this morning. Allen shaves blue shampoo on his hands and washes Sunny’s face as two dogs look on from kennels behind him.

Down the hall at the back of the building, four more dogs, each in individual kennels, make their presence known. Two of the dogs belong to a kennel tech on the clock. One makes crying noises that almost sound like human laughter. Another is Cuddles’ sibling, Bubbles, who is much louder than his brother.

Plenty of rooms at the ‘inn’

In 2021, the Inn scheduled 5,000 guests. It can hold up to 70 animals at a time during busy seasons. All of the facility’s operations are managed by Whitlock, who graduated from East Carolina University in 2019.

After completing her studies, Whitlock went to work as an event planner for the city of Washington. She lost her job due to the pandemic and ended up at Four Paws Inn. She saw the job as a challenge but knew she could use her event planning skills to better organize the business.

Close to the front of the facility, Whitlock walks into a room where most of the dogs are held during the day for boarding or daycare. A slight odor fills the room as she walks past Little Jug (Jim), who small dogs and puppies are kept. When she greets and smiles at the dogs through their glass kennels, they happily wag their tails and pause at the gate. Whitlock eventually comes to an enclosure with two French bulldogs, one black and one gray. The dogs sit in the kennel with the mess they made and an “accident” on the floor.

“I thought I smelled something,” Whitlock says. “It’s not always clean,” she adds as she opens the glass door, pats the dogs on the head and takes them outside. As the dogs play outside, Whitlock comes inside and takes a few green bags to clean up the mess. Whitlock walks through the hallway, filled with kennels and dogs still barking, scratching and sniffing on the glass.

Little TVs are placed on the walls to entertain the dogs during their stay. Whitlock says she also thinks the TVs help the animals feel more at home and relaxed.

“I like seeing all the animals every day,” Whitlock relays. “I like being able to help clients understand how to better care for their pets. I also enjoy working with everyone that is here.”

Back in the grooming salon, Wilson finishes up working on Bella, who walks out with a brand-new do.

Sunny Crovato, a customer, says she started bringing her pets to the Inn because she took them to Tench Street Animal Hospital, which is close by. She brings her black lab, Max, to daycare about five days a week because the dog suffers from separation anxiety and the daycare helps with socialization. She said part of the reason she left that job does not have to be alone, Crovato adds.

Each day at the Inn looks a little different, from the scheduled groomings to the doggie daycare, but the care for the animals remains the same.

Pet owners can spend thousands of dollars to ensure their animals are healthy and happy. At times it can be easy to forget all the aspects that go into treating a cat or an animal, when sometimes all they need is a day at the Inn.

Reyna Crovato is a communications major from Aspen who expects to graduate in May 2023. She hopes to work in TV reporting or another job in journalism after graduation.

**ASPICA Tips for Bathing Your Pet**

- **The ASPCA recommends bathing your dog every three months. Some may require more frequent baths if they spend a lot of time outdoors or have skin problems.**
- **Use a soft, non-sudsing shampoo to keep the dog healthy.**
- **Avoid a bath if your pet is poorly fitting or has a fever.**
- **Rinse your pet thoroughly to remove all soap and suds.**
- **After a bath, give your pet a good brushing to help remove any mats and tangles.**
- **In between baths, replace grooming with a towel or air-dry, but if your pet’s hair is still wet, you can help keep your pet’s hair in good condition by removing and spreading antioxidants throughout your pet’s coat, as recommended by your veterinarian.**

Sources: 
- Neatre: *www.aspca.org*
- *www.aspca.org/tips-and-resources*
Molly Moore had a dilemma. She was a sophomore at East Carolina University, thinking of ways she would fill five large baskets with gifts to give to her younger sorority "sister" in Zeta Tau Alpha.

"I had to put out of pocket. I was using the money that I was saving from old high school jobs, and the money was quickly running out," Molly recalls. She began stressing over how she was going to afford everything, and then an idea sparked.

The event was called the Big Little Reveal, a nationally known sorority tradition through which an older sorority member becomes a mentor to a new member. The mentors are referred to as "big sisters," while the new members are referred to as "little sisters." Molly became a "big sister" to Katelyn McElrath in September 2017.

Molly had joined the sorority a year earlier when she first arrived at ECU from New York not knowing anyone and thought it would help her to find friends. It did.

"The girls were like a second family to me," Molly recalls. "Most of my favorite college memories are with my sorority sisters."

Big Little is an exciting occasion for sorority members. However, it can be expensive. Sorority "big sisters" are expected to buy both the sorority merchandise for their "little sisters." The occasion lasts five days.

"Each day was a new theme and required a new basket," Molly says. "The baskets might include sorority shirts, sweatshirts, paintings, candles, decorative accessories, and additional gifts to welcome the new members. Rather than spend hundreds of dollars online for sorority apparel, Molly decided to create her own."

"I started making sorority stickers. T-shirts and sweatshirts, and then filled my baskets with them," Molly explains.

"I made it a business and it just took off," Molly says about her clothing line. "I decided to expand my business and create more products for sorority members and other women."
Molly’s original design were for a Big Little Novel event by a local author. She began selling the designs, and Molly’s website, featuring a wide variety of other designs, requiring her to maintain a steady stream of inventory as her business grew. Photos courtesy of Molly’s Studio.

Other members in her family soon became aware of her designs, and Molly began getting requests to make security apparel at an affordable price.

Molly began researching the process of selling security apparel as part of her own business and realized that she was required to obtain a special license from the national security organizations. Within 36 hours, Molly had obtained business insurance and found the license allowing her to make security apparel. Molly recalls her mother, Linda Marshall, often saying, “Molly was always a problem-solver as a child, unless she really wanted something.”

Molly was just 23 when she struck a partnership with CBE Pirate Wear, a boathouse on East Carolina University that also sells ECU and security apparel. College students in sororities began buying the apparel that she designed shortly after its release, and sales took off.

“TUMI started with a consignment deal, not knowing how well the products would sell. After a social media post, shirts and sweatshirts started selling right away, and they could not keep products on the shelves,” Molly says.

She called her company Made by Molly.

A tough decision

Molly says she found it hard to focus on her classes while starting a small business.

“I was leaving my apartment when I was fulfilling orders and expanding my business just to sit in class for attendance and then continue to do Made by Molly work on my laptop,” says Molly, who in 2023 and living in Raleigh.

Molly studied law and criminal justice in her first year in hopes of becoming a lawyer. However, despite enrolling in a 2013 internship of a courtroom in New York, she decided that becoming a lawyer would take too long. In her sophomore year, she enrolled in a double major in business and fashion merchandising. During the last weeks of her first semester of junior year, Molly decided to drop out of ECU to focus on her business. “Since I had changed my major three times, I was already not going to graduate on time.”

Though leaving college was not an easy decision, Molly believes that it was the right decision. “It was still, of course, terrifying dropping out of school, and some people thought I was absolutely crazy,” Molly recalls. Yet, “I knew that I could never have started my business without my three years at ECU. I truly owe it all to ECU.”

Molly’s older sister, Nicole, was not surprised by Molly’s decision to focus on her business. “She likes to create something that she can be proud of, so it makes sense that she would run her own business,” says Nicole.

Prospering and expanding

Today, Made by Molly is licensed to make apparel for 17 sororities nationally. Each sorority comes with guidelines that specify the colors, fonts, graphics and designs that must be used.

“Out of thousands of designs I have submitted, I have had 170 of my designs declined,” Molly says. As a result, she must develop original concepts and keep an eye out for competing businesses that also offer security apparel.

Molly spends a great deal of time creating her designs, and has encountered others copying and resenting her work. “This occurs a few times, and nine out of 10 times, it is by unlicensed businesses,” Molly explains. If this occurs, Molly contacts the business and asks them to refrain from selling her designs. If they refuse, she then reports the company (or selling unauthorized apparel)

as the owner of a small business in security apparel and accessories.

Molly also undertakes a number of responsibilities and tasks. Besides the rigorous design process, she devotes time to the business’s social media accounts. She frequently monitors orders and processes orders and plans public relations activities, such as pop-up events that increase sales and marketing.

While running a business may be stressful, Molly’s long days and hard work are paying off.

Stephen Maguire, who oversees the company’s finances and works on the company’s quarterly royalty reports for its security licensees, says the business has been prospering.

“In 2018, the company had a 40% increase in revenue. As of 2021, revenue has increased by 20%,” Stephen relates.

Made by Molly has made over $10,000 since 2017, which he suspects may be connected to the pandemic, when more people were shopping online.

“Today, Made by Molly’s largest sales are in Texas, Tennessee, North Carolina, Georgia and Illinois,” Stephen explained.

In February 2021, Molly began an “ambassador” program, adding 70 ambassadors across the country, who are current college students who help to market the business.

SOME RESOURCES FOR WOMEN STARTING A SMALL BUSINESS

SCORE for Women Entrepreneurs

score.org/women-entrepreneurs

Along with resources and tools created for women entrepreneurs, SCORE offers free and confidential business advice. SCORE mentors, many of whom are successful small business owners, help others achieve business goals.

The Association of Women’s Business Centers

www.awbc.org

A nonprofit organization that partners with the U.S. Small Business Administration helps women-owned businesses by supporting and promoting Women’s Business Centers across the U.S. Women can receive training, mentoring and more.

Molly is very sweet and treats us all as if we were her best friends... She cares a lot about this business.
Feedback and engagement

In April 2023, Molly organized a pop-up event hosted at the Alpha Omicron Pi sorority house on ECU’s campus. Gianna Lagrange, a member of Alpha Omicron Pi sorority, attended the event, where she bought her first Made by Molly apparel item.

"Those clothes are so cute! I have never seen designs like this before," Gianna says.

She purchased a creme-colored Comfort Colors shirt with purple butterflies and the words Alpha Omicron Pi printed on it and a brown creekside with cheetah print AOPI lettering.

"The clothes I bought were so soft, and it was pleasantly surprised after washing them that the vinyl print did not fade," Gianna explains.

Molly values her customer's feedback and invites them to engage in future design concepts. Made by Molly acquired six additional sorority licenses in 2021 and is launching future designs in 2022.

"To know how far this business will take me, I love what I do, and I am going to continue doing it," Molly says. "The best is yet to come."
UP IN SMOKE

Putting the pieces of a family’s life back in place after a home fire can be challenging, to say the least. This is one family’s story of what it’s like when a home goes up in flames, and the look at why the unimaginable isn’t actually such a rare occurrence.

by Sarah Barkley

It was May 7, 2007, the sun was beaming, and the wind was howling. Smoke was filling the neighborhood of Stonegate, in Wake Forest, North Carolina. A second-grader was in a burning house but didn’t realize it was on fire. Tyler Barkley, my brother, was that boy.

Tyler thought there was a tornado outside because he could hear gusts of wind hitting the house. He noticed the house was on fire when the cat started to run up and down the stairs frantically. All of a sudden, he heard glass breaking and felt heat. Footsteps kicked in and he grabbed the white, 40-pound English bulldog and followed the cat out the front door to safety.

Two neighbors, one a deputy sheriff, grabbed garden hoses and tried to fight the fire, but it was too big and too strong. They shouted to the next-door neighbors to leave their homes because of the strong wind. Luckily, the neighbors’ houses were spared.

“Never in a million years did I think my house would burn down,” said Hubert Barkley, our dad.

Our family lived in a rental home for almost two years before we were able to return home. The insurance company wanted to rebuild on top of the charred foundation, but my parents refused. Court battle after court battle, we won in the end. Our house was going to be completely torn down, allowing us to have the first say about what our home should look like.

As a child I wasn’t worried about what my future held — I just wanted to play with the new gifts that were donated to me after the blaze. My favorite, a pile of Webkinz plush animals, ready to be logged online. I knew the grown-ups would take care of everything. After all, I was young and innocent, still new to the world. The very next day after the house fire was picture day at school and a field trip to the Museum of Natural Sciences. I remember that day so clearly, my teacher had bought me a brownie and Diet Coke for breakfast. The Diet Coke was her favorite soda and she decided I needed it. I felt so special. Parents of the children in my class had brought me bags of clothes to pick through, packed lunches for the field trip, and some even bought me toys from the gift shop. I went to stay at a family friend’s home that night, but what was a tragedy to my family felt like a celebration for my 6-year-old self.

Causes of home fires

Homes are supposed to be a safe haven, a place where you feel comfortable, which is especially true during the pandemic, as the number of Americans working from home nearly doubled to 42% in 2021, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics’ American Time Use Survey.
As people stayed home during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of house fires increased. Fire departments responded to an estimated 19 million fires in 2020, just in the United States. The number one cause was accidental kitchen fires. It is estimated that a house fire broke out every 89 seconds, killing over 3,300 people and injuring another 13,200. The National Fire Protection Association reported that the number of fires in 2020 was an anomaly.

It was 5 a.m. on Christmas morning 2020, when Summer Warmack, an East Carolina University student, was woken up. “Fire!” her mom screamed.

Summer couldn’t smell or see a fire until she opened her bedroom door. Summer grabbed her robe, threw on her pajamas, then made a run for the door.

“I couldn’t see anything in front of me, just the thick smoke,” Warmack said.

She thought she was going to get out of the house as fast as she could and that little progress was being made in preventing the fire.

Jessica Blackwell, fire and life safety educator for the City of Greenville, said, “People think it can’t happen to them. It’s not just one age group who can die in a fire; it’s people of all ages.”

**Safey Measures**

Something people can do is check the smoke detectors in their homes and make sure they are working properly. Jerewy Anderson, Greenville fire battle chief, said sprinkler systems also prevent deaths.

“Because the fire code is stricter for apartments, owners are required to have sprinkler systems installed,” he said.

At a result, far fewer people die in fires in buildings with sprinkler systems, according to the National Fire Protection Association.

My childhood home had smoke detectors. The detectors saved me and my brother’s life because he was home alone. I can still recall the day. My mom picked me up from the YMCA after-school program and told me to get into the car. Tears were rolling down her red cheeks. “Our house is on fire. There came total silence. I didn’t say a word on the car ride home. We pulled into the neighborhood and immediately saw a line of fire trucks, police cars and ambulances. It didn’t feel real. I went numb.

We climbed up the hill at a steady pace, watching the house burn, consumed by smoke. I felt like the entire neighborhood was on my street watching too, as it was a movie set. But it wasn’t a movie—it was my home. At home we had just moved into six months earlier. But how could a brand-new home just combust into flames? We wouldn’t find out the answer for weeks.

**Connecting the Dots**

An investigation had to take place, and eventually, the investigators connected the dots. A workman from the telephone company had been working on our landline that day. We could call people from our house phone, but when people tried to call us, the calls wouldn’t go through. Electricity ran through the lines under our house. This was a new job to do. What could have gone wrong?

But it wasn’t the workmen’s fault. He didn’t know that the house had phaseouts in the gas line. Because an electric line sat on top of a gas line, an instant spark created a massive fire in our living room.

Nearly one-third of electrical fires begin with the ignition of wire or cable installation, according to the National Fire Protection Association.

All that was left was a gaping hole in the house. Our memories smeared in smoke and dusted with soot.

Sarah Blackley graduated with a bachelor’s degree in communication from ECU in December 2021. Originally from Wata Forest, Sarah works in Orlando, Florida for Unitran Rait Schneider and for a social media marketing company. She hopes to develop her journalism or create media content for a theme park.
The borderline obsessive focus Adderall produces has led a growing number of young adults to take the medication. But, the little orange pill can lead to some big problems.

by Elke Crabtree

I t was the night before Finals and sleep-deprived college students filled the library. Jenny, a freshman in college, was sipping on her third peach-flavored Red Bull with a shot of 8-hour energy when someone tapped on her shoulder. Jenny turned and recognized the girl from her biology class.

"Have Adderall. Do you want one?" the girl asked.

Jenny, who requested that her real name and university not be used for this story, had never taken Adderall before, but she had trouble concentrating and needed a good grade to keep her scholarship. The girl dug through her backpack and pulled out a single, bright orange pill. Jenny extended her hand to receive it, popped it in her mouth, and swallowed the pill with a sip of Red Bull. Jenny knew about Adderall—a medication used for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder—but knew nothing about its prescribed condition.

According to psychiatry specialist Dr. Karen Meehan, Adderall is a psychostimulant medication prescribed for ADHD, predominantly inattentive, hyperactive, and combined type and narcolepsy.

Because of Adderall's stimulant effect, it is popular among college students. Meehan, who has a practice in Durham, has over 31 years of experience in the medical field and specializes in child and adolescent psychiatry.

The borderline obsessive focus Adderall produces has led to a growing number of teenagers and young adults taking symptoms to obtain a prescription or illicitly take the medication. In 2011, 34 million monthly prescriptions were written for people ages 20 to 39, almost three times the 5.6 million given in 2007, according to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health.

Two hours after taking her first dose of Adderall, Jenny was the only person left in the library. She hunched down in a study room in a state of euphoria. Everything around her blurred; her laptop and textbook were all that existed. Concepts she could not understand before Adderall were effortless.

When morning light shone through the window, she was hunched over her laptop, fervently typing the last words of her 4,000-word essay. Jenny was unaware the sky was turning orange and the world outside her study room was waking up.
Hiding the adrenaline high

"I had never felt so high," says Jenny, now a college senior. "My mind was racing, and my heart was pounding, and I remember thinking, 'How am I going to get another?'"

Before Jenny's first experience with Adderall, she had no qualms about her ability to concentrate. She was an average student who got her work done, albeit rather slowly. However, after repeatedly taking what Jenny calls her "nerdy drugs," she realized she lacked something—the turn-on-like focus the pill given her.

She would wait till the last minute, like the ten last minutes to do her math, but it worked for her," says Jenny's best friend of 10 years. However, Jenny's friend was unaware of the Adderall use until recently.

From the beginning, Jenny made a subconscious effort to hide her relationship with the little orange pill. No one knew how deep the dependency went, but Jenny would credit her high energy and good grades to sleeping better, exercising more, and eating cleaner. People commented on her transition to a healthier lifestyle.

Jenny took extra precautions when she went home for breaks. She put the pills in a vitamin bottle. She told her parents she was going to the gym but was sitting in the Target parking lot watching YouTube videos. Despite having no appetite, Jenny ate the meals her mother cooked.

Jenny's mother was proud of her daughter for living a healthier lifestyle. "When she came home for her freshman year for summer break, she looked a little thinner than normal. But I just thought it was because she started being healthier," says Jenny's mother. Jenny is a petite girl, with a statue of a 5 feet and weighing no more than a 110 pounds. So Jenny's weight loss was evident to her mother. When she voiced her concerns, Jenny credited it to not eating McDonald's cheeseburgers every night after going to the bars. Jenny's mother believed her daughter.

There were no indications that her daughter was heavily using non-prescription amphetamines. Jenny refused from telling her mother about her Adderall usage until years later.

"When she told me, I just couldn't believe it. How could I not see it?" says Jenny's mom. "I felt a lot of guilt because of it."

According to the Addiction Center, an informational web guide to substance use and mental health disorders, in 2012 over 116,000 people were admitted to rehab for an addiction to amphetamines like Adderall. The medication impacts the brain like meth does by producing a wave of neurotransmitters that stimulate the mind and body. The active ingredients in Adderall are dextroamphetamine and amphetamine salts, which increase levels of dopamine in the brain, causing a spike in focus and energy. The result is an adrenaline high.

Supply and demand

The U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency classifies ADHD medications as Schedule II drugs because of their potential for addiction, dependency, and abuse. Other Schedule II drugs include cocaine, opium, codeine, and phencyclidine. Psychostimulants give a false sense of safety that contributes to the normalization and increase of medication misuse on college campuses.

Follow-up visits are crucial for patients taking Adderall because of its addictive qualities. One of the measures required by the HEDIS—Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set—is that physicians who prescribe medication for ADHD schedule a follow-up appointment 30 days after the initial prescription. Munsat says she prefers frequent visits to monitor her patients' progress.

"I confirm the diagnosis and prescribe a reasonable dose in quantity," Munsat says. "I'm in touch with people frequently and they are very stable and responsible."

However, before prescribing any medication, physicians can check a list to identify patients who are being given multiple medications by different clinicians. The Drug Enforcement Agency created a standalone database called the Prescription Monitoring Program that allows doctors to cross-check patients' prescriptions. If someone is looking to get a prescription, the doctor can see if they are already getting it somewhere else. Munsat says she checks the PMP list before giving medication to ensure no other doctors are prescribing to the patient, which can prevent abuse. But Jenny was not on the database yet, so there was no one to monitor her.

Jenny would search for that euphoric sensation throughout her time at college. There were many ways to procure the bright orange pill, each one mentally gray. There was Jenny's roommate, who conveniently let her pilfer her pills in her backpack or her locker, or the rich ADHD kids who sold their prescriptions for $50 a pill. But after a month into her sophomore year, she decided to acquire her own prescription.

The only thing standing between Jenny and her pills was a 30-question survey on which she rated various symptoms on a-0-5 scale. Her friend told her about the survey and explained to Jenny: the higher you score, the higher your dosage. Jenny answered every question with a four or higher. Her friend instructed her. She finished the survey and had a prescription in her hand within 15 minutes.

"When I went, they didn't ask me any questions. She handed me the sheet with the survey and my prescription, and that was it," Jenny says.

A national survey by Ohio State University found that nearly one in 10 college students say they have used stimuli like Adderall without a prescription. Munsat, the psychiatry specialist, says she takes precautions to ensure nobody else will be taking her patients' medications. "Especially with college students who have roommates, I ask that they get a locked box for their dorm room and not advertise they are on it," Munsat explains.

When the risks become reality

To Jenny, the Adderall hours quickly became her most valuable time. She preferred the perfect version of herself rather than the imperfect student she..."
I woke up in the student health center and didn’t remember anything. I thought I got hit by a car or like fell down the stairs because everything hurt so bad.

She knew she was. Post-Adderall, Jenny could study all day, then run 5 miles, then party all night without waking. While Jenny loved Adderall, she knew nothing good would come out of the relationship.

One night during Jenny’s junior year, she started to feel strange. It had been a hectic week because it was exam week. She had been asleep for over 24 hours and running on 30 milligrams of Adderall and Red Bull. Her heart started to pound so violently, she thought it was going to burst out of her chest. She was shivering, but her body felt like it was on fire. Jenny covered her ringing ears with shaking hands on her vision went blurry. Am I dying? she thought before succumbing to darkness. Jenny found out the following morning that she was not dying but experiencing a panic attack and dehydration.

I woke up in the student health center and didn’t remember anything. I thought I got hit by a car or like fell down the stairs because everything hurt so bad.

Not only do prescription stimulants carry a risk for dependence, but the side effects are serious as well. According to a Johns Hopkins University study, ED visits for nonprescription amphetamines rose 565% between 2006 and 2011. Some side effects include irregular heartbeat, headache, dizziness, weight loss and anxiety. In the worst case, overdose can lead to liver failure, smoke or heart attack.

The nurse in the student health center asked Jenny if she was taking any medications. Jenny wanted nothing more than to tell the nurse every single thing, but she was embarrassed. So she said no, and explained she was burned out from studying and forgot to eat.

Jenny left the health center, rushed back to the apartment and broke down. As a last resort, she called her brother.

"I told her to call mom. Just call mom, and she will know what to do," says Jenny’s brother.

"She wouldn’t, and she told me not to say anything.

At the time, Jenny’s brother was living in Washington, D.C., eight hours away from her younger sister. He felt helpless. Her knee-injury would not tell anyone else. Jenny always dealt with things internally too stubborn to ask anyone for help. This time was different.

"I got myself into it, so I had to get myself out of it," says Jenny.

The months following her sick in the student health center were tough. Jenny decided to part ways with her favorite orange pill. She did not realize how heavily she relied on the pill until she had to go without it.

Mundane tasks like getting out of bed or going to the grocery store felt insurmountable. It felt like being buried under her skin, and nothing could satisfy the itch. Jenny was constantly doubting herself and questioning if getting better was worth the discomfort.

Nonetheless, she didn’t take it one day at a time and slowly but surely, the itching and headaches subsided. Getting out of bed became something, she looked forward to doing, not a chore. Jenny was cooking healthy meals and feeling her degraded body.

She was going on early morning walks and writing in a gratitude journal. She even adopted a cat named Phil. Recovery was the hardest thing Jenny had gone through, especially doing it on her own. Jenny was and is happy now. She says her quality of life increased because of it.

Elke Crabtree is a conversation major from Cary, North Carolina. After graduating in December 2022, she plans to work in the publishing industry.

The desire to get grades can make Adderall tempting for students, who believe it will improve their academic performance. But prescription stimulants can have serious side effects and dependencies. Photo by Andrea Pasquale on Pexels.

According to Entyvio, there are just some of the possible side effects of using Adderall.

- agitation
- nausea
- rhinitis
- myalgia
- nausea
- flushing
- headache
- decreased appetite
- dizziness
- upper respiratory tract infection
- nasopharyngitis
- pharyngitis
- sinusitis
- conjunctivitis
- nasopharynx
- ear infection
- diarrhea
- constipation
- peripheral edema
- increased liver enzymes

Photo by Stanley Nashed on Pexels.

Getting Help

Addiction is a disease. If you or a loved one have an addiction, get help. Treatments are available.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration National Helpline: 1-800-662-HELP (4357).
SAMHSA’s National Helpline is a free, confidential, 24/7, 365-day/year treatment referral and information service in English and Spanish for individuals and families facing mental and/or substance use disorders.

For more visits: www.samhsa.gov.

The desire to get grades can make Adderall tempting for students, who believe it will improve their academic performance. But prescription stimulants can have serious side effects and dependencies. Photo by Andrea Pasquale on Pexels.

According to Entyvio, there are just some of the possible side effects of using Adderall.

- agitation
- nausea
- rhinitis
- myalgia
- nausea
- flushing
- headache
- decreased appetite
- dizziness
- upper respiratory tract infection
- nasopharyngitis
- pharyngitis
- sinusitis
- conjunctivitis
- nasopharynx
- ear infection
- diarrhea
- constipation
- peripheral edema
- increased liver enzymes

Photo by Stanley Nashed on Pexels.

Getting Help

Addiction is a disease. If you or a loved one have an addiction, get help. Treatments are available.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration National Helpline: 1-800-662-HELP (4357).
SAMHSA’s National Helpline is a free, confidential, 24/7, 365-day/year treatment referral and information service in English and Spanish for individuals and families facing mental and/or substance use disorders.

For more visits: www.samhsa.gov.
A CAREER IN CARING

Not everyone knows what they want to be when they grow up. But, this future child life specialist says her past led her to a career where she can do for others what was done for her as a child—provide understanding and make a difficult situation easier to handle.

Anna Caroline and her sister Kateri, photo courtesy of Kari Kendall

As a 4-year-old girl sits in an unfamiliar room, she’s in the hospital, but she’s not the one who’s sick. Her big sister is very ill. That’s about all she knows. No one will explain anything to her not her parents, not her aunt, not her grandparents. She feels like she has to figure this out on her own.

A woman sits down with her. A kind smile on her face, she has candy in her hands.

“Anna Caroline, your sister has leukemia; do you know what that means?” she asks.

The little girl shakes her head. Her light blonde hair swishes around her shoulders. She eyes the candy, wondering if she’ll get to eat it.

The woman takes the candy and lays it on the table in front of her. Using it, she begins to explain what is wrong with the sister, and for the first time, the little girl understands. She also gets to keep the candy.

Now 20 and a sophomore at East Carolina University, Anna Caroline Kendall is studying to do what that woman did for her all those years ago. She says she remembers deciding that she wanted to become a child life specialist while at a summer camp for children with cancer and their siblings. Camp Charm was something that she attended yearly, while her sister was sick.
Training to help kids

Anna Caroline, or A.C., as her friends and family call her, is now working toward becoming like the people who helped her through this tough time in her life. She spends most of her time at ICU, taking classes that will help her learn college with the ability to help children who are going through what she went through.

The College of Health and Human Performance is the home of ICU’s child life program, which was started by Dr. Charles Snow. Students like A.C. are required to take an array of classes in ethics, psychology, child development and behavior, and intervention.

Graduating with a bachelor’s in child life is only the first step for students wishing to pursue this path. According to the Association of Child Life Professionals, in addition to the academic requirements that lead to a bachelor’s in child life, which includes classes like those listed as well as a course taught by a certified child life specialist, graduates must also acquire volunteer hours, complete an internship that will give them clinical hours and take a certification exam. Once each of those tasks have been completed and the exam has been passed, the student is then officially a certified child life specialist.

Associate Professor Patricia Daus is one of the coordinators of ICU’s child life program. Daus is a certified child life specialist and teaches both graduate and undergraduate classes that prepare students to gain their certification following graduation.

“Once our students graduate, we have alumni working all over the country — in Texas, Philadelphia, California even — which is exciting to see,” said Daus. “We also have students who come from all over for our child life program. I think we need to be talking to more HOSA (Health Occupations Students of America) advisers in high schools so maybe let students know that child life is an option to hopefully bring more awareness to the profession.”

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the demand for certified child life specialists is in fact growing, and the employment rate of people in this field is projected to increase 7% by 2028. The need for students like A.C. is growing, and the field is becoming more competitive, but some things have the potential to set her apart from her peers.

Adapting on her own

Growing up, A.C.’s parents had to prioritize her sister, so A.C.’s childhood was not like the childhood her friends remember. In a way, she had to figure out certain things on her own.

“My parents weren’t really there, and obviously that’s not their fault, but I had to kind of learn how to take care of myself in a lot of ways,” she said.
A.C. is like one of the most supportive people I know. If I do something wrong, she will definitely not hesitate to tell me, but she does it in a way that shows she understands.

Because her parents couldn’t be there when A.C. needed them to be, she learned around the houses of family and friends, sometimes showing up having to spend the night with nothing except for the clothes she was wearing. All the uncertainty in her life — the not knowing who would be taking care of her each night, not knowing how long she’d be staying at someone’s house and having to be the one to keep track of her own belongings and schoolwork — allowed her to gain a sense of independence at a young age.

Though A.C. had to fend for herself in a lot of ways, her independence did not go unnoticed by her family members.

There was one day when she asked her aunt Kim (pronounced Ceeem) to take her to the store. A.C. needed a few things to get her through the week. At the register, she checked out by herself and then took out her phone to take a photo of the receipt. Kim looked at her with a worried look, and asked A.C. what she was doing. A.C. responded by saying she needed to send a picture of the receipt to her parents so they would reimburse her.

“She just added up the amount of her bills and sent it to her parents’ whitey,” said her aunt, Kimmy Smith. “I know it doesn’t really seem like a huge deal, but she was only 10.”

Kimmy says that being forced to become independent at such a young age has allowed A.C. to become much more self-sufficient as a young adult. Because she was responsible for holding herself accountable, A.C. says that, in most situations, she is able to adapt on her own without needing anyone behind her.

“A.C. needs support and motivation but she doesn’t need to ask for it,” said her older sister Katie Kendall, who at 12 has been cancer-free for almost eight years. Katie recognized that the life her cancer gave A.C. affected her in many ways, both positive and negative. Even though Katie is no longer sick and the two have each other as a support system, the way they grew up is still reflected in their levels of independence and priorities for the future.

A vision for the future

A.C. says that if she didn’t have the experiences she had as a child she wouldn’t be where she is now. Posing her child life classes with grades high enough to put her on the Dean’s List and being able to balance being in ECU’s Honors College, her classes and her family and social life are some of the things she attributes to her past experiences.