

Countenance

Spring 2022

An award-winning magazine by ECU students

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KNOWS YOUR
NAME

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Made by
Mollz

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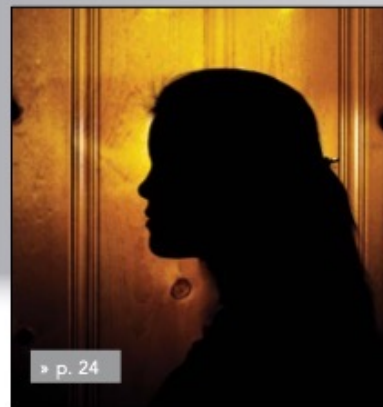
At first, designing and making sorority apparel was a sideline for Molly Moore. Then the orders flooded in, and a business was born. Today, her Raleigh-based business makes custom apparel for 17 national sororities.

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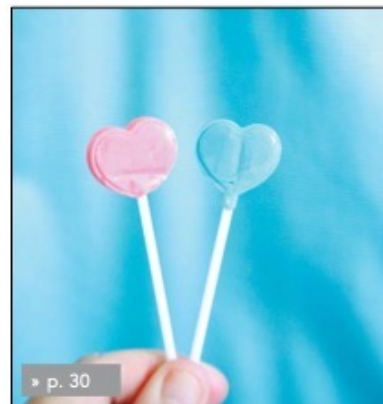
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Countenance is an award-winning magazine, now in its sixth year of production. Both the 2019 and 2020 editions of Countenance received the highest rating (Gold Medalist) from the Columbia Scholastic Press Association. Additionally, an article in the 2020 edition of Countenance received a Certificate of Merit from the CSPA. The 2021 edition received the 2022 recipient of the Silver Crown award, College Print General Magazine, and the “All Columbian” award. Student writers Caroline Inderlied and Sydney Hunnell also received honors via the 2021 CSPA Gold Circle Awards Program.

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Front cover photo courtesy of Molly Moore

p. 2 Christy's photo by Allison Todd

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WHERE EVERYBODY KNOWS YOUR NAME



by Allison Todd



Tandi Wilson, owner of Christy's Euro Pub describes the work environment as being "like one really big family."

photo by Allison Todd

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 own Cheers, 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 chalkboard menu 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 favorite? The regulars at Christy's would say the moment its second owner, 38-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 exterior 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 ambience 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 future in Greenville and eventually at Christy's was nowhere in Wilson's mind. But her father encouraged her to explore ECU because he had personal ties to it, and Wilson says she knew it was the place for her the moment she stepped on ECU's campus.

Wilson says owning a bar wasn't originally on her bingo card for life either. "Owning a business for sure, but I wanted to do public relations," she explained. Wilson says her fictional inspiration was Samantha Jones of "Sex and the City," the public relations guru of the show's foursome friend group. Wilson saw herself planning important events and writing press releases. This seems a stretch from her rock-music-in-the-background, beer-stuck-to-the-floor, stickers-on-the-wall life now.

But here Wilson sits, at the far end of the bar, her bright blonde hair straight as a pin, swept to one side and framing her face, which is untouched by makeup. Her infant daughter, Carson, sleeps in a carrier on the barstool beside her. Wilson says she was pregnant with her first child when she and her husband, Jacob, decided to put changing tables in the bathrooms, anticipating their new parenthood. Longtime customers of the classic bar wondered why there'd be changing 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 back: 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 in 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 future in the back of her mind. After two years of employment at the rustic dive 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 dated bartenders 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 someday 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 measuring 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 business partner and manager of Christy's Euro Pub, Taylor Johnson, who is crunching numbers at the bar. She smiles when asked how Wilson is as a business partner and friend.

"She's just a badass," Johnson says, explaining that Wilson's greatest strengths are her organization and ability to remember things like a big order or even the sales numbers from 2009. However, Wilson says she's her own worst critic and struggles to see her own strengths.

Wilson says it has always been challenging being a small businesswoman in the small city of Greenville, especially so when starting out. "But even now, I can walk into meetings and be the only woman in sight," Wilson says.

She is not alone in this reality. According to the Census Bureau's 2019 annual business survey, only 19.9% of business owners are female.

Christy's kitchen manager and longtime employee, Kevin Kayes, describes Wilson as a strong woman who knows what she wants. This is exactly what Wilson has to be in the "good 'ole boy" economy in Greenville, as Wilson describes it. But she jokes about her challenges with a twinkle in her eye, saying, "It helps to know the

right good 'ole boys." With this attitude, along with the skills she's learned over the years, Wilson has practically become a small business tycoon by owning four businesses in 12 years, including two restaurants, a bar and a bottle shop.

On this quiet afternoon at Christy's, one of Wilson's staff members swings open the kitchen door, nearly hitting the baby carrier.

"Whoa! You wake this baby up, and you're the one putting her back to sleep," Wilson jokes with the employee, who laughs.

One may think Wilson knows this employee especially well, but this is Wilson with all of her staff – laid-back with a happy-go-lucky attitude.

"We'll take out the trash, we'll clean the floor. Whatever we ask them to do, I'm going to do it, too. It's just like one really big family," Wilson explains.

The regulars

And that family extends beyond the staff. Wilson says that the regulars at Christy's are the backbone of the neighborhood bar's family. This includes the businessmen who come in during the week for lunch and the college kids who wander in on the weekends for brunch and mimosas after a night out. But on Wednesday nights from 5 to 7 p.m., the self-proclaimed friend group, the "old farts," also gathers at Christy's.

The table bursts into laughter over a joke being told as they take a sip of their drinks, their warmth radiating off the cold rain outside the bar's screened-in porch. The Wednesday group, a mix of 60- to 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, a good conversation

and some laughs. The group says that the atmosphere is what draws them in to Christy's.

"It's an evolution. People come and go but you always come back," Jerry Allegood, a retired reporter from the Raleigh News & Observer, says.

"Half the fun of it is that it is old farts, but it's also sweet, young friends," Pat Allegood, a retired nurse and Jerry's wife, says as she points to their friend, McKenzie Shelton, from across the table. Shelton, a professor at ECU and the youngest of the group, holds her hand over her heart in admiration.

"They started out as just the old people at the bar. But now they've become near and dear to my heart," Shelton says. No matter the age, gender or background, the welcoming spirit of Christy's is one that all will remember.

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 peep in every once in a while, before she can completely let go 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 piercings or in a business suit, you're welcome at Christy's. ■

Allison Todd is a communication major from Fayetteville. After her December 2022 graduation, she hopes to work in feature writing and reporting or magazine writing.



SPECIALS
TODAY'S SPECIAL IS:
CHEESEBURGER SOUP
BANANA CRUMB
BREAD

The food likely helps keep people coming back. A recent special — pan seared schnitzel with some homemade spatzle dressed in a brown butter sauce, peas and bacon topped with a house red wine gravy — is just one example of a recently featured menu item.

photo courtesy of Christy's Euro Pub Facebook page

PAWS-ITIVELY PAMPERED



by **Reyna Crooms**



Four Paws Inn employee Tiffany Rose holding a curious "client."

photo by Reyna Crooms

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.

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 tops of their noses to the tips of their tails.

Some of that care comes from the Four Paws Inn, a pet boarder, 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 Scrape works at her computer, looking at the schedule for the day. On the wall next to her, leashes, 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 dolled up."

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 tan and brown fur, pieces of Bella's coat drop to the floor, hitting the purple mat underneath Wilson's feet.

Behind Wilson stands Patricia Faux grooming a black and white dog that resembles an Oreo. 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

work on commission at Four Paws and are able to set their own schedules. Starting every weekday by 8:30 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 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 Tenth Street Animal Hospital sometimes rescues animals, then sends them to Four Paws for services. A rescued dog can have matted, overgrown coats that are painful for animals because the matting causes the skin to be stretched and pulled down by the heavy fur.

Kyle Felton, a kennel technician at Four Paws, says if a dog's nails are not properly clipped, they can also cause a dog pain. Yet some owners do not feel comfortable doing it themselves.

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 when an animal comes in under bad conditions, they often have to shave down the animal, and it can then 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

It's nice to be in a facility like this where you can just take your time and make sure that everyone is happy, healthy and safe.

animal to regain trust after being mistreated by humans, but the time spent is worth it in the end.

Although both Wilson and Faux said 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 when 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 leave to the professionals, because they may

not have the equipment, the time or the space to bathe and groom a dog themselves. Four

Paws Inn manager Gabbi Whitlock says some dogs know how to test their owners' boundaries and will behave better with a groomer.

Outside of the grooming salon, a board on the wall displays a collage of pictures that show the current meme war the staff has going on. The memes show pictures of pets with a joke written on them in big white letters. Inside the salon, laughter fills the room as Wilson tells Faux her pun of the day. Both continue tending to the dogs, with a spread of pink and green papers on the countertop dividing the two groomers. The pink paper belongs to Faux and the green to Wilson. Each paper has a different client's name written at the top, and the details on the groom requested.

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

Faux grabs a dryer that resembles a small car vacuum to use on Cuddles' coat to dry off the remaining dampness in his fur. Cuddles takes the blow dry in stride as his coat transforms from shaggy and wet to soft and fluffy. Wilson continues with the grooming on Bella. She walks over to her storage bin where she keeps cutters of all different



Patricia Faux has been grooming dogs for 13 years, and has always had a passion for working with animals.

photo by Reyna Crooms

lengths perfectly laid out in the first drawer.

Another employee enters the room, her black scrubs decorated with ghosts and goblins. Devin 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 dry, 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 with half of her dreads pulled back out of her face. She then holds Cuddles' right leg to trim his fur, and works her way to the dog's face, using curved iridescent rainbow scissors to trim his "beard." Her silver comb follows the scissors and, working her way through the dog's bangs, she holds each of Cuddles' ears to give them 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 he knows it."

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

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 is bathtime. 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 Sonny, remembering this reluctance from Sonny'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 kennel technician walks by, and Allen asks if she could bring over some treats to entice Sonny into the bath. With a treat laid 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 Sonny into the white walk-in bathing area.

Once in the bath, Sonny looks sad and disappointed as Allen lathers up the dog's body with soap and warm water. Allen looks at a green, waterproof notepad that lists the soaps to use on Sonny and any special requests from the owner. 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. Allen slathers blue shampoo in her hands to wash Sonny's face as two dogs look on from kennels behind her.

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, Patches, who is much louder than his brother.

Plenty of rooms at the 'Inn'

In 2021, the Inn scheduled 5,800 grooms. 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 Dog Land, where small dogs and puppies are kept. When she greets and smiles at the dogs through their glass kennels, they happily wag their tails and pounce at the doors.

Whitlock eventually comes to an enclosure with two French bulldogs, one black and one grey. 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, puts the dogs on leashes 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 thinks the TVs help the animals feel more at home and relaxed.

"I like seeing all the animals every day," Whitlock relates. "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.

Ileen Craven, a customer, says she started bringing her pets to the Inn because she took them to Tenth Street Animal Hospital, which is close by. She brings her black lab Iris to daycare about five days week because the dog suffers from severe separation anxiety and the daycare helps Iris with socialization. The best part of the daycare is that Iris does not have to be alone, Craven adds.

Each day at the Inn looks a little different, from the scheduled grooms 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 properly caring for an animal, when sometimes all they need is a day at the Inn. ■

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



Above: Photos and bios of staff members help cultivate a team environment at Four Paws Inn.

Below: Staff members of the four-legged kind are also featured on bulletin boards. These include a rescued cat named Doodle, who welcomes cuddles from staff members who are on break or during down times. Link, a Bassett Hound and German Shepherd mix, is the staff mascot, and comes to work every day with a member of the staff.

photos by Reyna Crooms



ASPCA TIPS FOR BATHING YOUR PET



•The ASPCA recommends bathing your dog once every three months. Some may require more frequent baths if they spend a lot of time outdoors or have skin problems. Dogs with loose facial skin — such as Shar Peis and Pugs — need special attention.



•Cats are well-equipped to tackle their own hair care needs. But you may need to give a cat a bath if it gets into something sticky or smelly.

•Before a bath, give your pet a good brushing to remove all dead hair and mats. During the bath, be careful to not spray or pour water directly in its ears, eyes or nose.

•In between baths, regular grooming with a brush or comb will help keep your pet's hair in good condition by removing dirt, spreading natural oils throughout the coat, preventing tangles and keeping skin clean.



Sources: www.aspcanews/home-pet-grooming-top-tips-and-recommendations
www.aspcanews/pet-care/dog-care/dog-grooming-tips

DESIGNING WOMAN



by **Makayla Perkins**

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 pay 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 "biggs," while the new members are referred to as "littles." Molly became a "big sister" to Cailleigh McLaine 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 baskets full of sorority merchandise for their "little sisters." The occasion lasted five days.

"Each day was a new theme and required a new basket," Molly says.

The baskets might include sorority shirts, sweatshirts, paintings, candies, 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.

Saving money on a sorority project was the original inspiration behind her designs, but this entrepreneur became successful enough to design and sell apparel and accessories for a living.



Many of Molly Moore's sorority apparel designs can be seen on her etsy shop at: www.etsy.com/shop/MadebyMollyShop

photo courtesy of Molly Moore

Molly's original designs were for a Big Little Reveal event her sorority was holding. "Stars Big Little" t-shirts (below) are now available on Molly's website, among a wide variety of other designs, requiring her to keep plenty of inventory on hand. (shown on right)

photos courtesy of Molly Moore



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

Molly began to research the process of selling sorority apparel as part of her own business and realized that she was required to attain a special license from the national sorority organizations. Within 24 hours, Molly had obtained business insurance and filed for the licenses allowing her to make sorority apparel. Molly recalls her mother, Linda Marshall, often saying, "Molly was always a procrastinator as a child, unless she really wanted something."

Molly was just 20 when she struck a partnership with UBE Pirate Wear, a bookstore near East Carolina University that also sells ECU and sorority apparel. College students in sororities began buying the apparel she designed shortly after its release, and sales took off.

"UBE 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 Mollz.

A tough decision

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

"I was leaving my apartment where I was fulfilling orders and expanding my business just to sit in class for attendance and then continue to do Made by Mollz work on my laptop," says Molly, who is now 23 and living in Raleigh.

Molly studied law and criminal justice in her first year in hopes of becoming a lawyer. However, despite enjoying a 2015 internship at a courthouse in New York, she decided that becoming a lawyer would take too long. In her sophomore year, she enrolled as 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



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



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 of course terrifying dropping out of school, and some people thought I was absolutely crazy," Molly recalled. Yet, "I know 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 Jobe, 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 Mollz 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 sorority apparel.

Molly spends a great deal of time creating her designs, and has encountered others copying and reselling her work.

"This has occurred 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 for selling unlicensed apparel.

As the owner of a small business in sorority 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 individually makes the products, 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 sorority licenses, says the business has been prospering.

"In 2020, the company spiked a 600% gain in revenue. As of 2021, revenue has increased by 20%," Stephen relates.

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

Today, Made by Mollz's largest sales are in Texas, Tennessee, North Carolina, Georgia and Illinois.

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

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 women small business owners, help others achieve business goals.

The Association of Women's Business Centers

www.awbcs.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.



I do not know how far this business will take me, but I love what I do, and I am going to continue doing it.



her products. The students are all affiliated with a sorority that Made by Mollz is licensed by and must actively promote Made by Mollz on their social media and their campus.

One such ambassador is Rachel Dutch, an Alpha Omicron Pi member at East Tennessee State University. After being given a Made by Mollz sweatshirt from her mother for Christmas, Rachel says she fell in love with the clothing company. In January, Rachel began working with the company and was provided with complementary merchandise, including shirts, a sweatshirt and stickers each ambassador receives in their first package. Rachel says she feels privileged to be a part of the team. "Molly is very sweet and treats us all as if we were her best friends. . . She cares a lot about this business."

Because of the increase in sales, Molly also decided to hire a part-time assistant to help with design and social media. Emily Pasola, a member of Kappa Delta sorority at North Carolina State University, says Molly's passion for her business inspires her.

Some afternoons, Emily comes to the office to work on new clothing designs with Molly. Molly describes the two as "extremely like-minded" and says she benefits from getting a second opinion. They derive some of their design ideas from sources such as Google images and Pinterest and occasionally go into public areas to observe what people are wearing for inspiration.

"We work hard but have a great time doing it," Emily says.

Following the completion of the design process, Molly creates her apparel. Molly's workstation is surrounded by packages and racks of items from "Comfort Color," a popular clothing brand that allows businesses and organizations to customize its apparel with logos and graphics. The racks are brimming with a range of vibrant shirts and crewnecks grouped by color and size. Comfort Color's ring-spun cotton and polyester combination creates a soft, vintage-like fabric that buyers find appealing. Molly also offers T-shirt brands such as Gildan and Bella + Canvas to make her apparel more affordable for college students.



Getting creative

Molly virtually creates designs using an app called Procreate. She then transfers the design from her iPad onto a computer using an airdrop. The design is then processed by Silhouette Studios, a software program specifically designed to generate vinyl cutouts. She prints the design and uses a hot press machine to transfer the vinyl cut design to the Comfort Colors product. Once each product is individually hand pressed, the products are packaged and shipped off with a personalized thank you card for the customers.

Made by Mollz apparel and accessories are available for purchase online through the company's website or on Etsy. Additionally, Made by Mollz

may be purchased in person at local pop-up events.

"At the moment, I've only done events at ECU and NCSU, but I would like to travel to more universities to sell my product," Molly says.

Feedback and engagement

In April 2021, Molly organized a pop-up event hosted at the Alpha Omicron Pi sorority house on ECU's campus. Gionna Lagnese, a member of Alpha Omicron Pi sorority, attended the event, where she bought her first Made by Mollz apparel item.

"These clothes are so cute, I have never seen designs like this before," Gionna says.

She purchased a crème-colored Comfort Color shirt with purple butterflies and the words Alpha Omicron Pi printed on it and a brown crewneck with cheetah print AOII lettering.

"The clothes I bought are so soft, and I was pleasantly surprised that after washing them that the vinyl print did not lift," Gionna explains.

Molly values her customers' feedback and invites followers to engage in future design concepts. Made by Mollz acquired six additional sorority licenses in 2021 and is launching future lines in 2022.

"I do not know how far this business will take me, but I love what I do, and I am going to continue doing it," Molly says. "The best is yet to come." ■

Makayla Perkins is a communication major from Northborough, Massachusetts, who expects to graduate in May 2023. She hopes to write for a travel magazine or to go into marketing and advertising.

HOW TO MAKE YOURSELF HEARD IN BUSINESS



Dr. Pam Hopkins leading a speech workshop with members of the ECU women's basketball team

photo courtesy of ECU's School of Communication



PRO TIPS:

It's not always easy to make one's voice heard, especially as a young professional, and especially as a woman.

Dr. Pamela Hopkins, director of the Speech Communication Center at East Carolina University, offers some tips for becoming a more effective communicator in business meetings and in other professional situations.

"You don't need to be the loudest voice in the room," Hopkins says. "You can be the strongest voice in the room if you are confident."

So, how does one exude confidence when they're not in the habit of giving speeches or otherwise communicating ideas or important information?

Hopkins offers three key tips for success:

Tip #1: Avoid using "upspeak"

Hopkins describes upspeak as making a statement that sounds like a question by letting your voice go up as you speak instead of maintaining a level pitch.

When making definitive statements, end that statement with a lowered versus raised intonation.

Tip #2: Prepare

Hopkins strongly recommends preparing before every meeting, presentation and interview.

"Know your audience, make sure your message is relevant, organize your information," Hopkins explains.

She also recommends practicing out loud to determine what one's strengths are and to find areas to improve upon. Preparing can also help eliminate some of the fear of the unknown by helping one iron out potential problem areas.

"Stand in front of a mirror or use your phone to record yourself. Give yourself constructive feedback."

Tip #3: Watch out for filler words

Filler words, such as "uhm," "ah," "you know?" "like" and "okay," can make someone sound less confident, which is why Hopkins recommends working to weed them out of one's communication.

To learn more about the Speech Communication Center, visit: communication.ecu.edu/services/

A large photograph of a house on fire. Thick white smoke is billowing from the roof and windows. Two firefighters in orange gear are visible on ladders extending from the roof. A red fire hose is in the foreground. The title 'UP IN SMOKE' is overlaid in a blue box.

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 a 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 seventh 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 realized 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. Instincts 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 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 rental homes 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 final 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, as 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 8-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 2020, 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 1.4 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 3,500 people and injuring another 15,200. 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, fire!" her mom screamed.

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

"I couldn't see anything in front of me, just the thick smoke," Warmack said.

Her first thought was to get out of the house as fast as she could and to leave everything behind. Luckily her dad grabbed their cat and two dogs before the fire got worse.

Still, Summer was in shock. The power had gone out in her house the night before, so her family decided to light a candle, which had melted when it was left burning overnight. The tall white taper was

sitting on top of a holder and the candle burned all the way down. A picture became caught in the flames, which set the mantel on fire. The entire house was covered in soot—except for Summer's bedroom.

Luckily Summer's boyfriend decided to run back into the house, grabbed a towel and soaked it in water. He threw the towel on top of the mantle fire and put it out. Firefighters responded to the scene after the fire was out.



Tyler, Monica, Sarah and Hubert Barkley

photo courtesy of Sarah Barkley

Greenville Fire Chief Bryant Beddard said that fires can be small ones, such as kitchen fires, or big, such as when an entire house burns down. In 2020, Greenville's fire department received 17,000 calls, which was, unlike the national trend, down from the previous year. The most frequent fire-related calls were for accidental kitchen fires.

A 2016 study conducted by researchers at Victoria University in Australia found that 46% of house fires were caused by unsafe behaviors. Another 40% were caused by other factors and had no human involvement. Lastly, 14% of house fires were caused by long-term negligence such as overloaded equipment or a buildup of grease on an appliance. These fires could have been prevented if people had recognized the risks.

In 1980, the number of fire-related deaths was



Damage to the Barkley home in Wake Forest. photos courtesy of Barkley family

QUICK SAFETY TIPS:

- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home, inside bedrooms and outside sleeping areas.

- Test smoke alarms every month.

- Talk with all family members about a fire escape plan. Practice twice a year.

- Replace smoke alarms that are 10 years old or older. Alarm sensors become less sensitive with age.

source: [redcross.org/](https://www.redcross.org/)

7.2 deaths per 1,000 reported home fires. In 2020, the number was 7.1 deaths, meaning that little progress has been made in preventing fire fatalities.

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."

Safety measures

Something people can do is check the smoke detectors in their homes and make sure they are working properly. Jeremy Anderson, Greenville fire battalion 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.

As 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 my brother's life because he was home alone. I can still recall the

day. My mom picked me up from the YMCA afterschool program and told me to get into the car. Tears were rolling down her red cheeks. "Our house is on fire."

Then 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 walked up the hill at a steady pace, watching the house burn, consumed by smoke. It felt like the entire neighborhood was on my street watching too, as if it was a movie set. But it wasn't a movie—it was my home. A 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 line under our house. This was a routine job to fix. What could have gone wrong?

But it wasn't the worker's fault. He didn't know that the house had pinholes 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 smothered in smoke and doused with water. ■

Sarah Barkley graduated with a bachelor's degree in communication from ECU in December 2021.

Originally from Wake Forest, Sarah works in Orlando, Florida, for Universal Studios and for a social media marketing company. She hopes to do broadcast journalism or create media content for a theme park.

A BITTER PILL

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**

It was the night before finals and bleary-eyed college students filled the library. Jenny, a freshman in college, was sipping on her third peach-flavored Red Bull with a shot of 5-hour energy when someone tapped on her shoulder. Jenny turned and recognized the girl from her biology class.

"I 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 Munsat, 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. Munsat, 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 faking symptoms to obtain a prescription or illicitly take the medication. In 2011, 14 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 hunkered 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.

photo by Alex Teodorescu



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 "study buddy," she realized she lacked something—the tunnel-like focus the pill gives her.

"She would wait till the last minute, like the *very last minute* to do her stuff, 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. Jenny would credit her high energy and good grades to sleeping better, exercising and eating cleaner. People commended 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 after her freshman year for summer break, she looked a little tinier than normal. But I just thought it was because she started being healthier," says Jenny's mother.

Jenny is a petite girl, with a stature of 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 refrained 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 stimulates 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.

QUICK FACTS:

•Adderall is the brand name for a combination of four amphetamine salts sold as a prescription stimulant to treat the symptoms of attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

•Ritalin and Vyvanse are also medications that are used to treat ADHD.

•The National Survey on Drug Use and Health reported that in 2017, more than half a million young adults between ages 18 and 25 misused Adderall and other prescription stimulants.

Source: areterecover.com

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.

— Dr. Karen Munsat



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, OxyContin 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 until 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 statewide 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 overuse. But Jenny was not in 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 morally gray. There was Jenny's roommate, who conveniently left her pills in her bedside drawer, or the rich ADHD kids who sold their prescriptions for \$30 a pill. But after a month into her sophomore year, she decided to acquire her own prescription.

The only thing standing in between Jenny and her pills was a 30-question survey on which she rated various symptoms on a 0-to-5 scale. Her friend told her about the survey and explained to Jenny: *the higher your score, the higher your dosage*. Jenny answered every question with a four or higher, as her friend instructed. 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 six college students say they have used stimulants like Adderall without a prescription. Munsat, the psychiatry specialist, says she takes precautions to ensure nobody else will be taking her patients' medication.

"Especially with college students who have roommates, I ask 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.* 💡

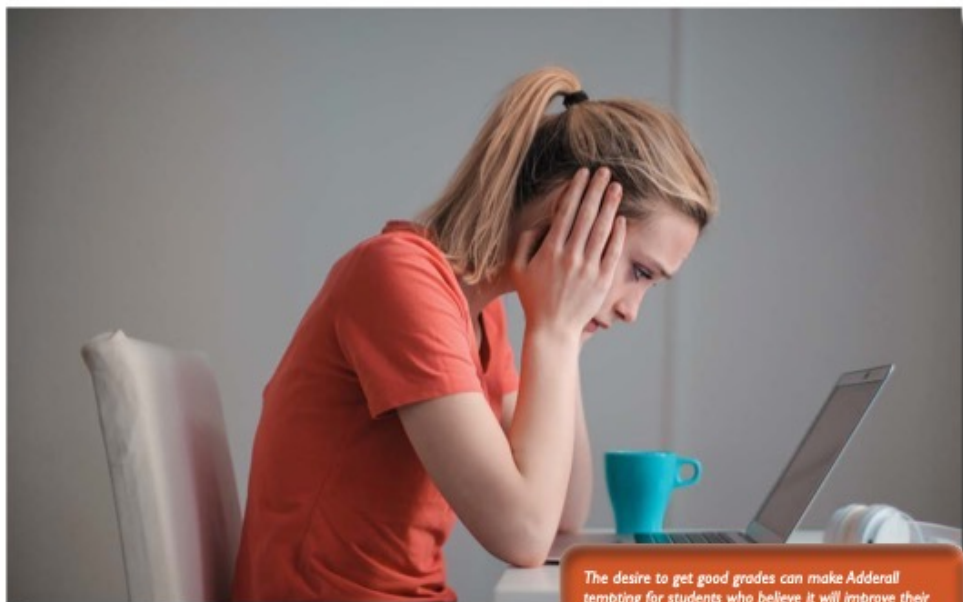
knew she was. Post-Adderall, Jenny could study all day, then run 5 miles, then party all night without faltering. While Jenny loved Adderall, she knew nothing good would come out of the relationship.

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 awake 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 as 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," Jenny says. "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, ER visits for non-prescription amphetamines rose 156% between 2006 and 2011. Some side effects include irregular heartbeat, headaches, dizziness, weight loss and anxiety. In the worst case, overuse can lead to liver failure, stroke 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 everything, but she was embarrassed. So she said 'no,' and explained she was burned out from studying and forgot to eat. When



The desire to get good grades can make Adderall tempting for students who believe it will improve their academic performance. But prescription stimulants can have serious side effects and dependence.

photo by Andrea Piacquadio on Pexels

Side effects of Adderall

According to rxlist.com, these are just some of the possible side effects of using Adderall:



photo by Stanley Morales on Pexels

- agitation
- anxiety
- blurred vision
- constipation
- diarrhea
- difficulty having an orgasm
- dizziness
- dry mouth
- excitability
- fear
- fever
- hair loss
- headache
- impotence
- increased blood pressure
- increased heart rate
- irritability
- loss of appetite
- loss of interest in sex
- nausea
- nervousness
- restlessness
- sleep problems (insomnia)
- stomach pain
- tremor
- vomiting
- weakness
- weight loss

Jenny left the health center, she 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. "But 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 his younger sister. He felt helpless. He knew his sister would not tell anyone else. Jenny always dealt with things internally, too stubborn to ask anyone for help. This time was no different.

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

The months following her stint in the student health center were taxing. 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 fleas burrowed under her skin, and nothing could satisfy the itch. Jenny was constantly doubting herself and questioning if getting better was worth the discomfort.

Nevertheless, she took 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 fueling her deprived 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 herself. But she did it, and her quality of life increased because of it. ■

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

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-a-year treatment referral and information service (in English and Spanish) for individuals and families facing mental and/or substance use disorders.

For more, visit:
www.samhsa.gov/

A CAREER IN CARING



by **Abbie Clavijo**

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.

An 8-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 Chemo was something that she attended yearly while her sister was sick.

Anna Caroline and her sister, Katie.
photo courtesy of Katie Kendall

"I realized they made my experience so much better, and I wanted to be able to do that for someone else," Anna Caroline said.

A child life specialist's job is to do what the doctors of chronically ill patients cannot: provide the family and the patient with comfort and explanations. Doctors usually don't have time to do these things; their job is to make sure that the patients get better.

From the time Anna Caroline was 9, her life revolved around her sister's illness. Constant hospital visits, limited time with her parents and often spending

the night at houses that were not her own became a norm for her. She was too young to fully understand what was happening, and because her family was so occupied with her sister, no one would explain it to her.

That's where the importance of child life specialists came into play. These people helped a 9-year-old girl to fully understand what was happening to her sister and gave her comfort that family members seemed too occupied to provide. According to Anna Caroline, they were able to show her the empathy that no one else had been able to.

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 ECU, taking classes that will help her leave 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 ECU'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 result in a bachelor's in child life, which include 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 Priti Desai is one of the co-coordinators of ECU's child life program. Desai 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 Desai. "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 Occupation Students of America) advisors in high schools to 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 certain things out herself.

"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.

!!
She just added up the amount of her bills and sent it to her parents weekly. I know it doesn't really seem like a huge deal, but she was only 10.
!!

BECOMING A CHILD LIFE SPECIALIST



EDUCATION

Child life specialists must obtain a bachelor's degree that is related to human development. Child life and child psychology are two examples.
Source: my.clevelandclinic.org

INTERNSHIP/FELLOWSHIP

The Association of Child Life Professionals certifies child life specialists. Most employers require this certification. A requirement for certification is completing an internship or fellowship under the direct supervision of a certified child life specialist.
Source: my.clevelandclinic.org



WHY TO CONSIDER BECOMING A CHILD LIFE SPECIALIST

REWARDING CAREER

According to a St. Jude child life specialist, some of the most rewarding aspects include the freedom to create individual interventions via creative thinking, and seeing a formerly fearful patient get through a difficult experience with coping skills and confidence.
Source: stjude.org/



SALARY

The average U.S. salary for child life specialists is \$55,396 (as of March 29, 2022). The range falls between \$49,419 and \$62,073.
Source: salary.com



Anna Caroline is at East Carolina University, working toward a future of helping young people.

photo by Abbie Clavijo



Because her parents couldn't be there when A.C. needed them to be, she bounced 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 Kimery 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. Kimery looked at her niece confused, 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 weekly," said her aunt, Kimery Smith. "I know it doesn't really seem like a huge deal, but she was only 10."

Kimery 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 like to ask for it," said her older sister Katie Kendall, who at 22 has been cancer-free for almost eight years now. 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. Passing 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.

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.

ECU's Desai says that although there are occasionally cases like A.C.'s where the student has encountered a child life specialist before, it is not the most common reason students enter the field. In her experience, many students who are interested in the child life profession have parents or loved ones who work in a medical profession who then introduce them to the idea of child life.

"For the ones who have received the support of a child life specialist in the past, it's good that they've had that experience. We just have to make sure that those individuals are not going to project their personal experience on to their future patient," said Desai.

Understanding firsthand what a child life specialist can do for a child has given A.C. a vision for her future and an added perspective in her classes. She is also able to use what she knows to help her classmates, friends and peers.

"A.C. is like one of the most supportive people I know," said her roommate, Izabella Riley. "If I do something wrong, she will definitely not hesitate to tell me, but she does it in a way that shows she understands."

It has been over 10 years since A.C.'s first interaction with a child life specialist. Ten years since her childhood got flipped upside down. Ten years since she had to learn to grow up virtually on her own. These things that seem so far away for her now are still impacting her life today and soon could impact the lives of others.

"In a lot of situations, you can be empathetic and feel bad, but you're never going to fully understand unless you've gone through something similar, and in this case, I have," A.C. said. ■

Abbie Clavijo is a communication major who expects to graduate in June 2023. She is from Fuquay-Varina, and hopes to work in print journalism, ideally writing sports and/or human-interest stories.



EXAMPLES OF ROLES PLAYED BY A

CHILD LIFE SPECIALIST



PROVIDING COMFORT

Help children develop ways to cope with anxiety, fear and separation and adjustment due to surgeries or other hospital visits or stays.

ORGANIZE ACTIVITIES

Planning activities for young family members. These activities can include play, as well as art, music and pet therapy, which can all help with the coping process.



ANSWERING QUESTIONS

Addressing concerns and helping to explain to family members what to expect.

PHYSICALLY BEING A HAND TO HOLD

When parents are preoccupied with their sick child, the other child may need someone to comfort them and be strong for them.



SOURCES

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child_life_specialist
renown.org/blog/what-is-the-role-of-a-child-life-specialist/

