Are we on the cusp of a future where we can just take a pill to work longer, learn faster and achieve more?

Is that a world where we want to live?
DEVELOPMENT & ALUMNI AFFAIRS

LEAVE A LEGACY...
SUPPORT GEORGIA STATE

As Georgia State’s Neuroscience Institute, Ph.D. student Kate McCann
is drilling down to the molecular level to find out how outside stress causes
 certain behaviors and what can be done to counteract it. Her own stress level
 has been lowered by alums Kenneth and Georganne Honeycutt, who’ve
 provided not only financial support — through the graduate fellowship that
 bears their name — but also the encouragement that fuels McCann’s
 drive to keep exploring.

THE GIFT THAT IGNITED
my research

The Honeycutts are such genuine and supportive alumni, which really helps motivate me, and it lets
me know that what I’m doing is important.

Please contact Laura M. Sillins, J.D., at (404) 413-3425
or lsillins@gsu.edu to discuss a planned gift today.

OFFICE OF GIFT PLANNING | giving.gsu.edu

CONTENTS

10 New Digs
Dean Steven J. Kaminshine talks up the College of Law’s new building
opening this fall.

14 Marketing Poison
Public Health Professor Monica Swahn fights to stop drinking from
destroying Uganda.

15 Cultural Entrepreneur
Jeremiah Ojo (B.S. ’13) blends business, community and art.

16 THE NEW NORMAL
Cognitive-enhancing drugs with no medical side effects may be on our horizon.
How will they raise demands on society?

18 A GOOD MAN FOUND
Flannery O’Connor’s longtime friend Regents’ Professor Bill Sessions is writing the
author’s official biography.

22 FREEDOM RIDE
Grad student Nedra Deadwyler tells the stories of Atlanta’s Civil Rights sites on
two wheels.

28 Cover Illustration by Mario Wagner. This page photo by Chris Stanford.

The Honeycutts are such genuine and supportive alumni, which really helps motivate me, and it lets
me know that what I’m doing is important.

“My life goal has always been to bring people together in the community.”
—Nedra Deadwyler
FROM THE PRESIDENT

The group is broadly representative of the university, and this experience is taking shape to be a transformational one for every member of our team.

APEX EXPERIENCE
CLIMBING 10781 FEET IN THE CASCADES WITH 10 GEORGIA STATE STUDENTS

As a Georgia State’s president, I have many opportunities to talk with students and learn about what drives them to succeed. Those talks are among the most rewarding and Servitizing aspects of my job and remind me why I do what I do.

This spring, I’ve had a unique opportunity to go beyond conversation with 10 of our students. I’ve been training alongside them in preparation for a summit attempt at Mt. Baker, a glaciated mountain in the North Cascades in Washington State. We’ve hiked weekly with backpacks, learned how to work as a team at our Indian Creek high ropes course and attempted mountain, looms large to the south of Mount Rainier. Someday I would return to climb Rainier. But I’ve also been training because my younger daughter, Allston, has always been interested in competing in the Sport Climbing competition. Allston and I planned to attempt Mt. Baker.

The group is broadly representative of the university, and this experience is taking shape to be a transformational one for every member of our team.

By the end of our journey the students will have acquired important life skills. These students, none of whom have ever climbed a glaciated mountain, will be challenged mentally, emotionally and physically.

With proper planning we’ll travel relatively comfortably, regardless of what weather we’ll encounter. Just as important, our work with the students has been aimed at doing everything we can to make the trip to Mt. Baker enjoyable rather than something to be endured or survived.

I started hiking and backpacking in high school and fell in love with the mountains. As life and the adult responsibilities of work and family mounted I did occasional hiking, but nothing too challenging, perhaps other than a scramble up Mt. St. Helens in the late 1980s.

Mt. Rainier, a magnificent, heavily glaci- fied mountain, looms large to the south of Seattle. In the late 1980s I was a post-doctoral fellow at the University of Washington, and when I left the Pacific Northwest in summer 1991 I promised myself someday I would return to climb Rainier. Climbing Mt. Rainier became a “bucket list” item for me, but as the years passed many more pressing or convenient priorities took precedence. Finally, in the fall of 2012 I decided I needed to make time in my life to train for and climb Mt. Rainier. I was not getting any younger, and I realized that climbing a mountain like Rainier is more than a day hike. My climbing group was fortunate to experience ideal weather and conditions, summiting as planned shortly after daybreak on the morning of July 8, 2013.

The sheer joy and peace I found on the mountain has led me to return to climbing again and again. I’m excited about sharing this experience with students, but even more excited about what they will come away with. There is no doubt this will be a learning experience for us all.

If you are interested in learning more about the trip, please visit www.gsu.edu/apexexp.

Sincerely,

Mark F. Becker
President

A MOVING STORY
I am a regular reader of the magazine and really enjoy keeping up with what’s happening around Atlanta and the university. I have been moved by many articles in the past, but the story about Allston Webb and her son, Lee, was a bit more personal. In my work as a physical therapist, I have the honor to bear witness to the highs and lows that children and families deal with when health challenges and adversity come their way. I have never encountered in my lifetime what some deal with on a daily basis.

Through the 28 years I have been in practice, I consider them all heroes. I have many opportunities to talk with students and learn about what drives them to succeed. Those talks are among the most rewarding and Servitizing aspects of my job and remind me why I do what I do. Ms. Webb’s story and scholarship are so reflective of the shared understanding that all children and their contributions matter and should be celebrated any way we can. This philosophy is the cornerstone of why I do what I do. I hear her voice: as a mom, as a mom of children of color, as a citizen and as a fellow Georgia State alumna. I want her to know that her voice and Lee’s presence are not lost on the passing of time. Dr. Ann W. Jackson (B.S., ’87), Dr. Jackson is the founder of the Leading by Legacy Scholarship Foundation. Visit www.leadingbylegacy.org.

LETTERS

“What a great attitude and outlook: ‘We have to get out of the mindset that we are just Georgia State.’”

Diane McDonough Riley (J.D. ’88)

MIXED SIGNALS
It’s great to see your magazine lavish praises on the growing film industry. However, it bothers me that there is no mention of the broadcast industry. I have spent 35 years as a media professional, 24 years as the sound designer for the International Olympic Committee, in the broadcast industry. I have spent 35 years as a media professional, however, it bothers me that there is no mention of the broadcast industry. I have spent 35 years as a media professional, however, it bothers me that there is no mention of the broadcast industry. I have spent 35 years as a media professional, however, it bothers me that there is no mention of the broadcast industry. I have spent 35 years as a media professional, however, it bothers me that there is no mention of the broadcast industry.

Don Hale
Publisher
IN THE CITY

NEXT STEPS
Consolidation with GPC moving forward

Georgia Perimeter College (GPC) is expected to become the 10th college of Georgia State University, and GPC students who meet admission requirements will be able to transfer seamlessly to Georgia State without reapplying.

Baccalaureate degree-seeking students will attend Georgia State’s downtown campus, while associate-degree-seeking students will attend classes on what are now GPC’s campuses. The online campus at GPC will become part of a larger university-wide platform for online education.

Georgia State President Mark Becker said GPC’s strong online presence creates a great opportunity for all Georgia State students wishing to take core classes online.

“I’m pretty excited about this,” he said. “I expect online to continue to grow.”

The Consolidation Implementation Committee, appointed in January, recently crafted the mission statement, goals and direction of the new institution. The team includes Becker, GPC Interim President Rob Watts and 20 representatives from each institution.

Visit consolidation.gsu.edu for more information.

RESEARCH RECORD
Funding increases 30 percent over last year

Georgia State achieved a record level of research funding — $53 million — in the first two quarters of fiscal year 2015, a 30 percent increase over last year’s $39.9 million awarded in the same period.

The jump represents a 50 percent increase in research funding over 2011.

Federal awards make... CONT’D ON P.9

EDUCATION EXCHANGE
GEORGIA STATE GRADS GROOM A COHORT OF CHINESE STUDENTS FOR ACADEMIC LIFE IN THE STATES

INTERNATIONAL INTROS: Graduates of the College of Education recently began teaching a cohort of 11 high school students at Guangdong Overseas Chinese High School in Guangzhou, China. The program is teaching a standard American curriculum to rising 10th graders.

CUSTOM EXPERIENCE: As one of only a handful of initiatives like it in China, the program is pioneering new paths in international education and working toward one of the five goals in Georgia State’s strategic plan in achieving distinction in globalizing the university.

MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING: The expectation is that these students will pursue their baccalaureate degrees in the U.S., and ideally at Georgia State. The program also provides College of Education graduates with the opportunity to gain valuable professional knowledge while also having an enriching cultural experience.

THE LONGSHOT
Mark DiNatale’s (B.A. ’07) dream to make the Atlanta Hawks everyone’s team.

BY TONY REAGAN PHOTOS BY BEN ROLLINS

Illustrated by Raymond Biesinger
**THE LONGSHOT**

Mark DiNatale isn’t your stereotypical sports fan. He lives on the Goat Farm, an idyllic arts community on Atlanta’s west side, where he works as director of operations and programming and hangs out in the name-your-price coffee shop listening to foreign jazz.

He grew up in Atlanta playing baseball and football and pulling for the local professionals just like any other kid. And as an adult, he watched with disappointment as the Thrashers hockey team flew north, scratched his head when it was announced that the barely 20-year-old Georgia Dome was to be replaced with his tax dollars and shook his fist when the Braves decided to leave for Cobb County.

So in January, when the Hawks went up for sale and cast doubt about whether that franchise would stay in the city, DiNatale decided he’d had enough. He took to the Web and started a campaign on gofundme.com called “Let’s all buy the Atlanta Hawks.” The stated goal: To be the first fully crowd-funded professional sports franchise in history.

Sports Illustrated, the USA Today and others took note. The campaign raised more than $100,000. TheDiNatale’s response with “investments” ranging from $5 to $15,000 (which would never come due if the goal wasn’t met). Within a month, DiNatale had raised more than $100,000. The team sold to billionaire Tony Ressler in April for $850 million.

In addition to his job at the Goat Farm, DiNatale is pursuing an MBA from the J. Mack Robinson School of Business. He’s no dummy. He knows the idea of a crowd-funded pro sports team is absurd — that’s the point. “It’s part trolling, part performance art,” said DiNatale. “I wanted to show how powerless the fans actually are to affect anything.”

And whether they got the joke or were seriously trying to stake their claim, the public was on the Web and started a campaign on gofundme.com called “Let’s all buy the Atlanta Hawks.” The stated goal: To be the first fully crowd-funded professional sports franchise in history. Sports Illustrated, the USA Today and others took note.

This sort of grassroots activism is what DiNatale is all about. After earning his degree in political science, he worked with Greenpeace, the Peace Corps and AmeriCorps, teaching environmental conservation and organizing farmer cooperatives. When he returned to Atlanta in 2009 he founded Fresh Roots Farm, which transformed underused urban land into farmland. He also co-founded Farm Think, a development company that seeks to bring environmental conservation and organizing farmer cooperatives. When he returned to Atlanta in 2009 he founded Fresh Roots Farm, which transformed underused urban land into farmland. He also co-founded Farm Think, a development company that seeks to bring environmental conservation and organizing farmer cooperatives.

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ENTRÉE TO ENTERPRISE

Georgia State introduces new minor in entrepreneurship

The J. Mack Robinson College of Business will introduce in fall 2013 an undergraduate minor in entrepreneurship which will be open to all eligible Georgia State students.

The five-course program will provide students with the knowledge to form startups of their own. Professor Richard Welke, an entrepreneur himself and director of the Center for Process Innovation, spearheaded development of the minor and has been appointed director of the new Entrepreneurship and Innovation Initiative.

Over time, the initiative will culminate in the establishment of an institute for academic and research activities on the topics of entrepreneurship and innovation for Robinson and the broader university community.

FACING HIGHER ED CHALLENGES

University wins Institutional Transformation Award

Georgia State has been awarded the 2013 American Council on Education (ACE)/Fidelity Investments Award for Institutional Transformation in Recognition of the innovative ways university has increased graduation rates.

President Dr. Alps accepted the award at ACE’s 97th annual meeting in Washington, D.C.

Ten years ago, Georgia

2,388

Millions of viewers for the March 21 NCAA Tournament game against Xavier.

FIRST, WE EAT...

GRACE STUHRMAN, A GRADUATE STUDENT IN NUTRITION, IS TAKING ON FOOD INSECURITY ON CAMPUS BY HELPING TO START A FOOD PANTRY.

Why start a food pantry?

Same former nutrition graduate student, here recognized inadequate nutrition and food insecurity within the Georgia State community — 68 percent of the students they surveyed expressed need. It turns out lack of funds is one of the top reasons students do not complete their college degree. Students who experience financial stress are often battling food insecurity in addition to academic responsibilities, which is a huge obstacle. A food pantry is not a solution, but it provides short-term assistance to students in need.

How does it work?

The food pantry, called Panther’s Pantry, is student-run by the Nutrition Student Network and a graduate student — me. We welcome all students. We want to make sure we are reaching as many students as possible. We do not exclude any student. We want to make sure we are reaching as many students as possible. We do not exclude any student. When the food pantry opens, food donations can be dropped off on Tuesdays 10 a.m. to noon. Also, any food donations can be dropped off on Tuesdays from 4–5:30 p.m.

Where is it and when is it open?

Panther’s Pantry is on the parking level under the Urban Life Building at 140 Decatur St. SE. Food pickup hours are Mondays, 2–4 p.m. and Wednesdays, 10 a.m. to noon. Also, any food donations can be dropped off on Tuesdays from 4–5:30 p.m.

What kind of food is available?

We only supply non-perishable food items such as canned vegetables and fruit, soup, peanut butter, cereal, pasta, tuna, rice, etcetera.

Our mission is to assist students who are in need as possible. We do not exclude any student.

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1,300
Average number of Georgia Perimeter College students who transfer to Georgia State each year

State’s institutional graduation rate stood at 52 percent, and low-income students receiving Pell Grants were graduating at rates 15 percentage points below those of non-Pell students.

As a result of a campus-wide commitment to student success and strategic programs, the university has closed its achievement gap. The institutional graduation rate has improved 12 points in the past decade, among the highest increases in the nation over this period. Students with Pell grants now graduate at rates equal to those students without Pell grants.

For each of the past three years, Georgia State has conferred more bachelor’s degrees on African Americans than any nonprofit college or university in the United States, with at-risk students making the greatest gains in degree attainment.

INNOVATION STATION
Georgia Health Policy Center takes lead in reducing health disparities

Georgia State’s Georgia Health Policy Center (GHPC) has been named a national coordinating center by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to support the “Bridging for Health: Improving Community Health Through Innovations in Financing” initiative. The project is aimed at helping regions, states and communities improve health and reduce disparities through innovations in collaboration and financing.

The grant of more than $4.5 million will support the work of the center and up to 10 communities over the next three years. Karen Minyard, director of the GHPC, and Chris Parker, associate project director with the GHPC, will direct the project.

“I have long been convinced of the importance of comprehensive approaches to bridging health and health care,” Minyard said. “This partnership creates an exciting opportunity to integrate what we’ve learned from our projects over the years and support financial innovations that build health.”

Communities that demonstrate innovations in health policy, healthcare delivery and financial strategies that align investments in health for better outcomes will be selected over the next two years. With an eye toward creating stable financial systems among a variety of sectors, the center will also ensure selected sites are working to address equity and hold the promise of collective impact within their communities.

TREATMENT LEADER
Molecular and Translational Medicine center founding director named

Ming-Hui Zou, an internationally recognized researcher in molecular and translational medicine at the University of Oklahoma Health Science Center, has been named the founding director of the new Center for Molecular and Translational Medicine at Georgia State.

He is also a Georgia Research Alliance Eminent Scholar in Molecular Medicine, becoming the seventh eminent scholar at the university.

Zou’s research focuses on cardiovascular complications related to diabetes, atherosclerosis and hypertension. “This center is designed to meet health-care needs by converting significant research findings into diagnostic tools and medicines that will help improve the health of individuals,” said James Weyhenmeyer, vice president for research and economic development.

Zou is recognized for making influential discoveries in cardiovascular research, including identifying the role of two key proteins that can lead to vascular disease. He has previously collaborated with the pharmaceutical companies Eli Lilly and Merck to develop new drugs and conduct clinical trials, and at Georgia State he plans to develop new therapeutics for cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

QUICK FACTS:
Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certified sustainable construction

The north entrance to campus and part of the university’s Woodruff Park District plan is an academic corridor south of Woodruff Park that includes 26 Park Place, 90 Park Place and the new Creative Media Industries Institute.

21 state-of-the-art classrooms, including a 250-seat formal moot courtroom/auditorium.

Ample space for clinics to provide care to underserved.

A DEDICATED HOME
College of Law Dean Steven J. Kaminshine talks about the college’s new building, opening this fall, at the corner of John Wesley Dobbs Avenue and Park Place.

PHOTO BY HEID MILLINGS

“The new building increases the College of Law’s capacity to attract top students and engage with the greater legal community. It affords us the space to expand and improve our programs to serve more students and help our clinics assist underserved Georgians.

It is designed to make students want to stay to study, work in teams and interact faculty throughout the day. The choicest spaces in the building are dedicated to the students. The top two floors are dedicated to the law library with its natural light, outdoor terrace and collaborative learning commons.

The faculty offices are embedded among the classrooms to facilitate greater student interaction. The classrooms are designed with the latest law curriculum advances in mind. The skills suite on the first floor features flexible classrooms that transition from seminars to courtrooms to mediation rooms.

The new building features a conference center to bring the legal community in for closer collaboration and engage in great community conversation. The greatest example of this kind of collaboration is the space devoted to the Atlanta Center for International Arbitration and Mediation, which is designed to help the city become a leading center for resolving international commercial disputes.”

CONT’D ON P.12
GUT REACTION

Widely used food additive promotes colitis, obesity and metabolic syndrome

Emulsifiers, which are added to most processed foods to aid texture and extend shelf life, can induce intestinal inflammation that promotes the development of inflammatory bowel disease and metabolic syndrome, new research shows.

The research, published Feb. 23 in Nature, was led by Georgia State Institute for Biomedical Sciences researchers René Chassaing and Andrew T. Gewirtz. Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), which includes Crohn’s disease and ulcerative colitis, afflicts millions of people and is often severe and debilitating. Metabolic syndrome is a group of very common obesity-related disorders that can lead to type-2 diabetes, cardiovascular and liver diseases. Incidence of IBD and metabolic syndrome has been markedly increasing since the mid-20th century.

Chassaing and Gewirtz’s findings suggest emulsifiers might be partially responsible for this disturbance and the increased incidence of these diseases. The team is now testing additional emulsifiers and designing experiments to investigate how emulsifiers affect humans. If similar results are obtained, it would indicate that this class of food additives is driving the epidemic of obesity, its inter-related diseases and a range of diseases.

GLOBAL TOLL OF SMOKING

Georgia State dean authors the “Tobacco Atlas”

Michael Evrard, dean of the School of Public Health, was a lead author on the “Tobacco Atlas,” which was released in March at the 16th World Conference on “Tobacco Atlas,” which was released in 2015. The book provides a free electronic version of the book. The site also allows journalists, policymakers, public health practitioners and advocates to create customized data visualizations.

5,700

A record number of undergraduate, master’s, doctoral and law students will graduate this May

ACCOLADES IN ART EDUCATION

Georgia State’s Melody Milbradt named Art Educator of the Year

The National Art Education Association has named Melody Milbradt, professor of art education in the Ernest G. Welch School of Art and Design, as the 2015 National Art Educator of the Year. This award, determined through a peer review of nominations, recognizes the contributions, service and achievements of one outstanding educator annually at the national level.

“Melody Milbradt exemplifies the highly qualified art educators active in education today: leaders, teachers, scholars, and advocates who give their best to their students and the profession,” said Dennis Inhulsien, president of the association. The National Art Education Association is the professional association for art educators.

ATHLETICS

THAT SHINING MOMENT

Panthers eye return to tournament after March Madness success

When R.J. Hunter, knowing the Panthers are in good hands made his decision to turn pro a little easier. “When it’s your year, it’s your year, and I believe in my heart that it’s time for me to go,” Hunter said. “If they needed me, I would have been back, but this year was more difficult. I looked at the roster and said, ‘They don’t need me.’”

Next year’s team will have a new look, but Hunter says will fill the void. For R.J. Hunter, knowing the Panthers are in good hands made his decision to turn pro a little easier. “When it’s your year, it’s your year, and I believe in my heart that it’s time for me to go,” Hunter said. “If they needed me, I would have been back, but this year was more difficult. I looked at the roster and said, ‘They don’t need me.’”

ATHLETICS

THE VOLCANO SPIDER

The air-droppable sensor package can detect seismic signals and mining, for example. Song said, in oil exploration and mining, for example. The system takes a web of sensors and connects them to an air-droppable sensor package called VolcanoSRI, for Seismic Realtime Imaging. The system takes a web of sensors and connects them to an air-droppable sensor package called VolcanoSRI, for Seismic Realtime Imaging.

The result? A real-time display of earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and mining, for example. Song said, in oil exploration and mining, for example. The system takes a web of sensors and connects them to an air-droppable sensor package called VolcanoSRI, for Seismic Realtime Imaging.

FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Scientists know a lot more about volcanoes than they did in 1980 when the eruption of Mt. St. Helens in Washington State killed 57 people and caused more than $1.1 billion in damage. Advances in sensor technology and computing models have helped volcanologists predict the likelihood of an eruption, but researchers still have to physically go up to each sensor on a volcano to download the data they need. Getting a full set of data for one volcano can take weeks, even months. Computer Science Professor WenZhan Song and the students in his laboratory are trying to get rid of that delay with a project they call VolcanoSRI for Seismic Realtime Imaging. The system takes a web of specially designed sensors and connects them together into a distributed computing network. The result? A real-time view of what’s going on under a mountain.

Visit magazine.gsu.edu for a video of Song’s online volcanoes.

AN ARTIST EMERGING

Bethany Collins (M.F.A. ’12) is a link to national recognition

A little more than two years after earning her Master of Fine Arts degree from Georgia State, Bethany Collins was an Artist in Residence at the prestigious Studio Museum in Harlem, which yielded a review in The New York Times. She was accepted into the Viewing Program at The Drawing Center in New York, received an Artdadia Award and garnered recognition by the Richard Gray Gallery (New York and Chicago), which showed her works at Art Basel Miami Beach.

Collins’ works have been exhibited throughout the country, including The High Museum of Contemporary Art in Atlanta. Despite her success, her trajectory to national recognition is the professional association for art educators.
MARKETING POISON

Public Health Professor fights to stop drinking from destroying Uganda.

BY ANNA VARELA  PHOTO BY BEN ROLLINS

For five years, Monica Swahn has studied the no-holds-barred approach to marketing alcohol in the crowded slums of Kampala, Uganda, and how easy access to alcohol has helped fuel high rates of HIV transmission.

Unlike the U.S., which has strict rules on where and how alcohol can be marketed, in Uganda, the industry is self-regulating. “Sometimes they have big billboards right in front of schools,” said Swahn, professor of epidemiology and biostatistics at the School of Public Health. “There’s no limit to placement, context, content.”

Industry reps even offer free alcohol to children. “I think alcohol is potentially dangerous,” she said. “We know how to improve their well-being much too early, which is so tragic, given that they will become productive citizens. They will die of other infectious diseases and health problems but not live healthy lives to violent crime, suicide, high levels of alcohol consumption.”

But what I’m worried about is that if people continue to ignore alcohol, even though it is so clearly a public health problem, she said. “We talk about HIV, other infectious diseases and health problems but ignore alcohol, even though it is a problem. I think alcohol is potentially dangerous.”

Industry reps even offer free alcohol to children. She said, “We know how to improve their well-being much too early, which is so tragic, given that they will become productive citizens. They will die of other infectious diseases and health problems but negotiate alcohol consumption.”

Industry reps even offer free alcohol to children. Though the drinking age in Uganda is 18, “the industry and sellers through the reps give free alcohol to whoever walks up. It doesn’t matter if you’re 12 or 15.”

Much of Swahn’s work in Uganda has been funded by the National Institutes of Health, with the goal of developing an alcohol prevention program to reduce underage drinking and alcohol-related HIV transmission rates. She works closely with the nonprofit Uganda Youth Development Link, which runs drop-in centers for youth in the Kampala slums.

In a typical day, 1,600 young people stop in for counseling, HIV screening, vocational training and other services. Swahn met the nonprofit’s executive director, Roger Kasirye, at a scientific conference in Europe, where he spoke about how alcohol was damaging the lives of young people in a nation where half the population is under the age of 15.

“I thought, ‘Why is nobody talking about alcohol in Africa?’ It’s this huge burden,” Swahn said. “We talk about HIV, other infectious diseases and health problems but ignore alcohol, even though it is so clearly linked to these health concerns.”

She notes that many public health efforts in Africa focus on helping children survive the first five years of life.

“And I would never argue with that,” she said. “But what I’m worried about is that if we don’t have interventions for alcohol use and mental health, we’re losing the youth to violent crime, suicide, high levels of alcohol consumption. Then they don’t live healthy lives or become productive citizens. They will live too early, which is so tragic, given that we know how to improve their well-being and prevent their deaths.”

CULTURAL ENTREPRENEUR

Jeremiah Ojo (B.S. ’13) blends business, community and art

When Jeremiah Ojo started school at Georgia Perimeter College, he was sure his future would be on Wall Street. After earning his associate’s degree in finance, he came to Georgia State to study public policy. The work led him to nonprofit leadership, and ever since, he’s been “connecting and building,” he said.

“I learned a lot about leadership and how to craft compelling narratives to get communities and elected officials engaged in matters impacting Atlanta,” he said. “It really opened my eyes and propelled me to pursue work in arts administration.”

Ojo was selected to join the Atlanta Regional Commission’s Arts Leaders of Metro Atlanta 2015 Leadership Class, and he’s also a member of the Georgia Arts Network, where he advocates for arts funding and support.

“Merging my love for community and art, I’ve navigated my way to a profession where I am able to lead and integrate both sectors through my work with Capture and Connect and my role at the gallery,” he said.

THE FOUNDING MOTHER

Eva Galambos (Ph.D. ’69), first mayor of Sandy Springs, Ga.

Eva Galambos, the first mayor of Sandy Springs, Ga., from its incorporation in 2005 until her final term ended in November 2013, succumbed to cancer April 19. She was 87.

Galambos was a Georgia State Distinc-
Are we on the cusp of a future where we can just take a pill to work longer, learn faster and achieve more, and is that a world where we want to live?

By Sonya Collins

Illustration by Mario Wagner
GEORGIA STATE PRE-MED STUDENT “Jason” holds leadership roles in several clubs, has conducted research with doctors at a local hospital and still makes time for his girlfriend, who’s also a college student. And most recently, Jason has taken a weekend restaurant job to help pay his rent.

“When I used to use weekends to catch up on my school work, but I don’t have that anymore,” he says. But these activities haven’t prevented Jason from taking a full load every semester. He recently learned he’ll graduate in the fall, a semester early. But how has he managed to study?

Jason clears entire days to hunker down and hit the books, and on those days, he takes a Vyvanse. The central nervous system stimulant, a type of amphetamine prescribed to people with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), can improve focus and concentration. It can also reduce hyperactive, impulsive behaviors, such as the impulse to check Facebook 10 times before you finish reading a single paragraph of your textbook. In some people, these effects improve learning, recall and working memory, the ability to temporarily hold information, such as a phone number, in your head.

“It gives you a hardcore motivation to sit down and study the most mundane topics for a really long time,” Jason says. “You can do work that you would otherwise procrastinate on. Procrastination is a serious issue in college.”

When Jason told his longtime family doctor that he couldn’t focus in school, the doctor skipped the standard ADHD testing and said, “You seem like a really motivated student, and I’ve been in your shoes before,” Jason recalls. Then the doctor wrote him a prescription for Vyvanse.

“Quite frankly,” he says, “they go around like candy. If you don’t have a friend who has it, you’ll have a friend who knows someone who has it.”

The Time Is Now

A world in which we power through our work on pills is not the stuff of Orwellian fantasies or sci-fi flicks. The Presidential Commission for the Study of Bioethics Issues released a 150-page report last March called “Gray Matters: Topics at the Intersection of Neuroscience, Ethics and Society.” The report offers the President formal recommendations on future neuroscience research. One chapter examines “neural modification,” which includes the use of prescription medications to improve cognitive function within and beyond “typical or statistically normal ranges.”

While the report lists some ethical concerns of cognitive-enhancing drugs, the authors write that if research proves the drugs bring cognitive benefits without harmful medical side effects, we will have a responsibility to make sure everyone has equal access to them so that the drugs — Vincent says, “We need to start taking responsibility for the technologies that we produce and for the fact that they do change the moral, social and the legal landscape. Take control of the technology before it takes control of you.”

An international organization, the World Anti-Doping Agency, regulates drug use among athletes. In fact, on game days, athletes can’t take the same stimulants students take to pull all-nighters.

“We discuss how the game should be played in sports, but we don’t talk about how the game of life should be played. So much more is at stake,” Vincent says. These questions drive Vincent’s work at Georgia State. She joined the faculty in 2013 as part of the university’s Second Century Initiative (2CI). The program is in the final year of a five-year push to add 100 faculty positions to the university to strengthen research and improve the university’s overall quality, interdisciplinary richness and competitiveness.

A Philosophical Approach

ACCORIDNG TO THE National Institutes of Health, up to 30 percent of college students take stimulants not prescribed to them. Students who buy the pills pay about $5 to $10 a pop. Most students say they use the medications as a study aid. Some people find the drugs helpful. Some feel no effect at all.

Forget for just a moment that many of these students are taking a prescription that wasn’t intended for them. Let’s imagine any hardworking student or professional who wants to study all night or pull a double shift can buy a bottle of Vyvanse, Ritalin or Adderall off the shelf as a drugstore.

“In the kind of society that we’d like to live in,” asks Nicole Vincent, associate professor of philosophy and an associate faculty member in the Neuroscience Institute. Vincent asks us to consider this question before we get too excited about a pill’s potential to help us work more, harder, better.

Do we want to live in a world where we can just take a pill to work longer hours? It may sound like a great way to power through the occasional, inevitable all-nighter, but if these drugs were available to everyone, could the work habits they create become the new normal? And if they did, would everyone then be forced by societal or workplace pressure to take these drugs just to keep up?

Our society is well equipped to consider the medical side effects of a medication or technology before it hits the market, Vincent says, but what about the social side effects?

A philosopher interested in neurotechs — the ethics of neuroscience — Vincent says, “We need to start taking responsibility for the technologies that we produce and for the fact that they do change the moral, social and the legal landscape. Take control of the technology before it takes control of you.”

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THE ETHICS OF NEUROENHANCEMENT

getting safer." And normally medica-
tions with fewer or less-pronounced side
affects would be viewed as a good thing
But Vincent points out that, somewhat
paradoxically, this is only likely to inten-
sify the social problems.

Legal Obligations

VINCENT SUGGESTS that pilots and sur-
geons who are in professions in which
passenger and patient safety depend on
focused, alert workers, might be among
the first professionals expected to take
the drugs. “You’re performing a job that many
people’s lives depend on,” she says, “If you mess
up and people die when you could’ve just taken this pill, people will
see that as negligence.”

The Presidential Commission’s report
also points to aviation and medicine as pro-
fessions that would benefit from education
and guidance on neural modulation.

“Modafinil, boiled down to its
most basic use, is just like late adopters of answering machines and cell phones.

Vincent and her colleagues argued in a 2014 article, “we think it is perfectly conceiv-
able that a future report may recommend
such drugs.”

Whether or not your employer expects
you to enhance your performance, you
may one day expect of yourself, if the
drugs are available to everyone, Vincent

If the drugs are available to everyone, Vincent
suggests, and your coworker gets all the promotions
because she puts in longer
hours than you do
with the help of a stimulant, you’re likely to feel the
pressure to take it, too.

fit to Die?

In 2004, the state of
Arkansas executed
Charles Lavone
Singleton even
though he was con-
sidered legally sane
only when treated
with modafinil. Without
the drugs, Singleton,
a convicted mo-
derately diagnosed with schizophrenia,
could not be put to death under the 8th Amendment, which
prohibits cruel and
unusual punishment
including the execu-
tion of the insane.

“After all, if we had medications
that could cure men-
tal illness, then psy-
chiatrists would be
prescribing them to
mentally ill people,” she
says. “Here, proponents of this practice reply that we don’t need to
see that as negligence.”

For Vincent, the ethical
decision to administer
drugs to make an inmate competent
enough to execute is
troubling.

“Those medica-
tions are meant to
bring them back
to us for just long
enough so that they
can be punished,” she
says.

If you mess up and people die when you
could’ve just taken this pill, people will
see that as negligence.”

The question of whether a professional, such as a surgeon, should be
able to use drugs to enhance
his or her performance
without facing the same
sanctions as someone
who uses drugs for non-medical purposes is problematic.

Vincent says, “It’s not that hard to get a prescription no matter what your pro-
fession. A 2009 statement from the American Academy of Neurol-
ogy tells neurologists it’s neither illegal nor unethical to prescribe
neuroenhancement medications to adults who ask for them.

“Athletes aren’t allowed to use steroids to build muscle and
speed, but physicians, lawyers and business men are allowed to
use stimulants to boost their brain,” says Jose Rey, a professor of
pharmacy practice at Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lau-
derdale, Fla., and a co-author of the poker player study.

The drugs haven’t gone mainstream yet, says Vincent, only be-
cause they bring a risk of potentially serious side effects, including
heart palpitations, high blood pressure, insomnia and addiction.

“Once cognitive enhancement no longer has medical side ef-
facts, and you can legally get it, everyone’s going to expect you
to use it;” she says.

With progress in science, technology and medicine, Vincent
explains, “we can expect these pharmacological agents to keep
advancing, just like late adopters of answering machines and cell phones.

Vincent suggests, and your coworker gets all the promotions
because she puts in longer hours than you do
with the help of a stimulant, you’re likely to feel the
pressure to take it, too.

sony Collins is
an Atlanta-based
independent jour-
alist who covers
health, health pol-
icy and scientific
research. She is a
regular contribu-
tor to WebMD
Magazine, Phar-
macy Today, Yale
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News.
Grad student Nedra Deadwyler tells the stories of Atlanta’s Civil Rights sites on two wheels. BY TONY REHAGEN

PHOTOS BY CHRIS STANFORD

HISTORY AND HANDLEBARS
MAGAZINE.GSU.EDU
24

GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE SUMMER 2015

MAYBE YOU SEE A NEED IN THE COMMUNITY THAT’S NOT BEING MET. YOU
HAVE A SKILL OR EXPERTISE YOU BELIEVE IS MARKETABLE. PERHAPS YOU
HAVE A LIFELONG PASSION THAT YOU’RE TRYING TO FULFILL.

OR MAYBE YOU JUST CAN’T THINK OF ANYTHING ELSE TO DO.

FOR GRADUATE STUDENT NEDRA DEADWYLER AND HER FLEDGLING VENTURE, CIVIL BIKES, IT WAS A BIT OF ALL OF THE ABOVE. AFTER SPENDING MORE THAN A DECADE AWAY, SHE RETURNED TO ATLANTA IN 2010 AND SAW THE TOWN WAS SLOWLY PEDALING TOWARD BEING A MORE BIKE-FRIENDLY CITYSCAPE. HAVING LIVED, WORKED AND BIKE IN THE CYCLE-FRIENDLY STREETS OF NEW YORK AND SEATTLE, SHE HAD THE EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE OF TWO-WHEEL TRANSPORTATION. AND SHE HAD ALWAYS HAD A LOVE OF HISTORY, EVEN THOUGH SHE HAD PASSED OVER THAT FIELD OF STUDY FOR A MORE PRAGMATIC DEGREE IN SOCIAL WORK.

MORE THAN ANYTHING, DEADWYLER WAS, WELL, LOST. IN THE SUMMER OF 2013, SHE WAS LAYED OFF FROM HER JOB WITH THE GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES. AND AFTER ALMOST 20 YEARS OF STUDYING AND LABORING IN SOCIAL WORK, SHE WAS TIRED OF THE BUREaucRacy AND THE LIMITED REACH.

“THERE JUST WEREN’T ENOUGH RESOURCES TO REALLY STABILIZE YOUNG PEOPLE’S LIVES,” SHE SAYS. “FOR INSTANCE: HOW DO YOU MAKE SURE THEY NOT ONLY GO TO COLLEGE BUT HELP THEM ANTIASH?”

SHE COULDN’T FIND A JOB IN A NEW FIELD IN ATLANTA AND DIDN’T HAVE THE PROSPECTS OR MONEY TO LEAVE TOWN AGAIN. SHE DIDN’T REALLY HAVE A REASON TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL.

SO SHE WENT ON A ROAD TRIP. DEADWYLER HOPPED IN A CAR AND DROVE ACROSS THE SOUTH WITH A JOURNALIST FRIEND WHO WAS RESEARCHING LANDMARK SITES FROM THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT. AND THAT’S WHEN DEADWYLER HAD THE IDEA. SHE KNEW THAT HER HOMETOWN ATLANTA WAS RICH IN ITS OWN CIVIL RIGHTS HISTORY. BUT THE SWIFT OF THE CITY MADE WALKING BETWEEN ALL THE MONUMENTS AND HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS, FROM AUBURN AVENUE TO THE ATLANTA UNIVERSITY CENTER TO THE MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DISTRICT, IMPOSSIBLE. ATLANTA TRAFFIC MADE DRIVING A NIGHTMARE — AND BESIDES, IT WAS HARD TO INTERACT, TO DWELL, TO FEEL THE HISTORY AND GET LOST IN THE MOMENT COOLED UP INSIDE A CAR OR SUV. IT’S ALSO HARD TO TALK TO OTHER TOURISTS, TO DISCUSS WHAT YOU ARE SEEING. NOT TO MENTION THE FACT THAT IT JUST SEEMS WRONG TO CRUISE AROUND IN AN AIR-CONDITIONED CAR WHILE TRYING TO REREAD THE GUTTING STRUGGLE FOR EQUITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS.

A BICYCLE, HOWEVER, OFFERS THE PERFECT COMBINATION OF RANGE, INTIMACY, AND SACRIFICIAL SWEAT. DEADWYLER KNEW BIKES. SHE LOVED HISTORY. SHE WAS AT A CROSSROADS IN HER LIFE, OPEN TO ANY NEW OPPORTUNITY. CIVIL BIKES WAS BORN.

BUT AS EVERY ENTREPRENEUR KNOWS, THE DISTANCE BETWEEN IDEA AND VIABLE BUSINESS IS AN UPHILL RIDE. AND AS DEADWYLER EMBAKED ON THAT RACE, TERRAIN WAS FOREMOST ON HER MIND.

WHEN SHE LEFT GEORGIA BACK IN 2000, ATLANTA WAS STRICTLY A FOUR-WHEEL TOWN. EVEN DOWNTOWN, WHICH WAS CUT UP BY INTERSTATES AND CLOGGED WITH CARS, THE ONLY CYCLISTS SHE WOULD SEE WERE THE FANATICS IN SPANX.

BUT BY THE TIME SHE RETURNED 10 YEARS LATER, ATLANTA, LIKE MOST OF THE COUNTRY, WAS STARTING TO EMBRACE THE BICYCLE. THERE WERE MORE BIKE PATHS AND LINES AND THEY WERE BETTER CONNECTED TO THE PARKS AND MAJOR NEIGHBORHOODS, MAKING CYCLING A MORE VIABLE COMMUTING OPTION FOR PEOPLE LIVING IN TOWN. DOWN TOWN, GEORGIA STATE’S POPULATION HAD EXPLODED, AND THE UNIVERSITY WAS BECOMING A MORE CAMPUS-BASED SCHOOL, BRINGING A LARGER AND MORE DIVERSE GROUP OF STUDENTS WHO PARKED AT THE BIKE RACKS ON THEIR WAY TO CLASS.

STILL, ATLANTA WAS FAR FROM A TWO-WHEEL HAVEN. THERE WEREN’T QUITE ENOUGH BIKE LINES, ESPECIALLY ON THE MAJOR THOROUGHFARES, AND THE EXISTING PATHS WERE TOO NARROW, LEAVING LITTLE MARGINS FOR ERROR. CULTURALLY, MOTORISTS STILL RULED THE WAY, AND THEY WERE LEARNING, RATHER RELUCTANTLY, TO SHARE THE ROAD. AS AN EMERGENCY OPTION, SIDEWALKS — WHERE THEY ACTUALLY EXISTED — WERE TOO OFTEN CRACKED AND UNEVEN, PERILOUS FOR EVEN THE MOST EXPERIENCED ALL-TERRAIN CYCLIST. DEADWYLER PERSONALLY BIKE AND WALKED AROUND TOWN AT VARIOUS TIMES OF THE WEEK TO PLOT OUT THE SAFEST AND LEAST STRENUOUS.

THE GOAL IS TO OFFER NOT JUST POINTS IN HISTORY, BUT AN INTERPRETATION OF HISTORIC MOMENTS AND GIVE CURRENT CONTEXT AND RELEVANCE.”

PREVIOUS SPREAD: Nedra Deadwyler and a Civil Bikes tour of Louis Delteil’s 125-foot-long Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Mural in Peace Plaza at the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site.

THERE ARE MANY REASONS TO START YOUR OWN BUSINESS.

MAGAZINE.GSU.EDU 25
27

ON A CIVIL BIKES TOUR, Deadwyler says she likes to take history and put it into context using the landscape. “The tour is also about engaging the participants,” she says, “asking for their input, their thoughts, knowledge and impressions to add to the discussion. The goal is to make history come alive, for it to breathe with life.”

Deadwyler also visits sites most riders probably wouldn’t know have significant history, such as the David T. Howard School. The Howard School in the Old Fourth Ward, where Martin Luther King Jr. attended elementary school opened in 1923. It’s named for David T. Howard, a former slave who became a wealthy undertaker and gave generously to support the community and the education of African-American children. It served as a community center for neighborhood African-American families and even housed a radio station. It closed in 1976 because of low attendance due to the constant change of demographics of Atlanta, Deadwyler says.

routes between landmarks for not only the cycling enthusiasts, but also the novice and beginner bicyclists she would need to attract to make this business work.

Next, she checked out the competition. She emailed Georgia State history professor Cliff Kuhn, who gave a walking tour of the sites of the 1906 Atlanta Race Riot. Deadwyler and Kuhn hit it off immediately.

“She was soaking the stuff up,” says Kuhn. “You like to help her because she’s so fresh and naturally charismatic. It’s great for somebody of my generation to come across someone with so much passion.”

Larger, the two went on a bike ride, where Deadwyler told the professor about her idea. He suggested that she enroll in Georgia State’s Master’s of Heritage Preservation program, where she could bolster her knowledge of the architectural history, folklore and preservation efforts behind the stops on her tours. She decided to make the investment.

“Studying, as opposed to reading, broadens understanding,” Deadwyler says. “Engaging competing ideas and being informed of the most recent scholarship improves content — not just relying on what gets into the history books. The goal is to offer not just points in history, but an interpretation of historic moments and give current context and relevance.”

Instead of just a drive-by glance at Louis Delamar’s colorful mural at the Martin Luther King Jr. Historic Site, Deadwyler would stop, talk about the artist’s influence and inspiration, dissect the images depicted on the wall, and spur debate of the work’s subtle details — like a college survey course on wheels.

Now all she needed were paying students. IN JUNE 2014, DEADWYLER TOOK HER savings and a $500 grant to open Civil Bikes appropriately located on Sweet Auburn, the once-thriving heart of black culture and business in the city. She obtained a small fleet of used bikes through another grant. In addition to two-hour, eight-mile educational tours in and around downtown, the business offered bike rentals, cycling instructions and a rest component for gear and repairs. Some initial success allowed her to move into a P.O.D. storage unit parked outside The Spindle bike shop on the Atlanta BeltLine.

“A very, very lean start-up,” says Deadwyler. “And living low to the ground.”

If Deadwyler has learned anything from her first year in business, it’s that autonomy — financial and otherwise — is the key to happiness. In late fall of 2014, she started giving the tours out of her house with designs on renting her own space at an as-yet-undisclosed location by summer 2015. Ideally, she’d like to give her used bikes away and purchase her own inventory to sell and rent.

Deadwyler has also expanded her focus beyond historic tours and bicycle retail. She aims to start Belles On Bikes, organized rides geared toward getting more women aboard the two-wheel movement. She’s also thinking big picture, hoping awareness raised by Civil Bikes will spur the city of Atlanta to embrace bike culture. More and wider bike lanes. Maybe even a few separate designated bike paths. And most important, the one-time social worker wants to reach out and help cyclists coexist on Atlanta pavement with their car-driving cousins.

“My life goal has always been to bring people together in the community,” says Deadwyler. “Civil Bikes is letting me do that differently. What I do now, I still consider social work. But now it’s on my terms.”

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ILL SESSIONS SAT DOWN at a table in room 312 of the Holiday Inn Express in Milledgeville, Ga., by Highway 441, and blew the dust off a metal box. Inside? The makings, as Sessions puts it, of “a book that would make a difference.” Actually, two books and counting. Sessions would use the personal papers of Flannery O'Connor to “animate” her in written words once again. ¶ O'Connor died in 1964 at age 39, a victim of lupus. After long years of protecting O'Connor’s privacy, family members entrusted part of her archive — that metal box — to Sessions, the Regents’ Professor Emeritus of English at Georgia State and the writer’s long-time friend. ¶ From the papers, Sessions edited a 2013 volume, “A Prayer Journal,” a soul-searching collection of personal prayers O'Connor scribbled into a student diary at the University of Iowa before her 23rd birthday. (Sample: “Dear God please help me to be an artist, please let it lead to you.”)

Along with the diary, Sessions found inspiration for an O'Connor biography, a comprehensive study of the writer’s literary and personal life that stretches to 800 pages. Now completed, “Stalking Joy: The Life and Times of Flannery O'Connor” is with Sessions’ agent. “This isn’t a book that I wrote because I need prestige,” Sessions says. “I want to get it out because I know things about Flannery O'Connor nobody else knows.” O’Connor left the world two novels, “ Wise Blood” and “The Violent Bear it Away,” and 32 short stories. Unsettling, widely anthologized short stories such as “A Good Man Is Hard to Find” and “The Displaced Person” established her as one of America’s most influential literary figures. “The Complete Stories of Flannery O’Connor,” published posthumously, won the 1972 U.S. National Book Award for Fiction.

In 2004, The Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine inducted O’Connor into The American Poets Corner, a literary honor comparable to the British enshrinement of writers at Westminster Abbey. She joined Emily Dickinson, Herman Melville, Langston Hughes, Mark Twain and 45 other immortals of United States Literature.

Sessions alone, among all the scholars who have written or who vie to write about O’Connor’s life, received the blessings of the O’Connor family and estate. His is the only authorized biography.

MURDEROUS, MOST FOWL

Drawing from the trove of O’Connor’s letters, illustrations and journal entries in the metal box he opened in autumn 2003, Sessions produced perhaps the most important work of his career. He is uniquely positioned, because of his friendship with O’Connor, to embellish her biography with personal detail.

“Flannery O’Connor fell in love three times,” Sessions says, in the voice of a confidant. “Not many people are aware of it.” Indeed, few people know much at all of O’Connor’s personal life. The writer lived with her mother, Regina, at Andalusia, a 554-acre family farm in Milledgeville they shared with dairy cows and a tribe of beautiful, belligerent peacocks. Many readers hold an impression of O'Connor as cloistered, too ill to engage with the world, a writer devoted to solitude.

In fact, O’Connor traveled frequently, nobbling along on cruises to great many letters to talk about writing and, often, her deep Catholic faith. For a woman with a terminal illness, O’Connor attended a surprising number of events at universities and on the literary speaking circuit. She also energetically and exhaustively wrote letters.

An example? She informed Sessions in an early missive that “the Catholic believes any voice he may hear comes from the Devil unless it is in accordance with the teachings of the Church.” Sessions’ voice bemused and amused her.


At the time, Sessions held his first academic position, lecturing at West Georgia College (today the University of West Georgia) in Carrollton for $3,600 a year. He also reviewed books for the Archdiocese of Atlanta, and he made contact with O’Connor by commenting on one of her own reviews. They found common ground in their Catholic faith. The deeply, unapologetically religious O’Connor invited Sessions, a recent convert, to visit Andalusia.

Sessions describes their first meeting in the prelude to “Stalking Joy”:

Although Flannery had written to invite me to drop in that afternoon at any time, I felt the need to see some motion from the house. I knew Flannery had special times for special activities, including times to take her medicines, the periods changing with the plateaus and descents of her incurable disease. I also knew the porch was special. As she had warned me in her invitation, she did not emerge from her room until around 10 or 11 every morning, when she finished her work. She asked that on good days, she would sit on the porch and, tired from the morning’s writing, would just stare. I was waiting for a sign from that porch.

A sign came. Peacocks assaulted him. When they start to charge at me, the beaks are raised like knives. Their long iridescent tails swoop across the spring green scrub grass of the lawn. I dash fast as I can for the brick steps. The peacocks call out in frenzy, surrounding me. Later I would learn that seeing certain strangers, the peacocks judge them as the chosen who might feed them. All I want now is to escape them. When I reach the bottom of the brick steps, I jump quickly out of their scrunching onslaught, sharp pecking at my legs. Then, from behind the screened door, I hear a sound, a thump-thump,
crutches, across the wooden floor of the porch, and then a command to the birds, nasal and drawingl. As I turn back to clear my legs, the front screen door at the top of the brick steps squeaks, opens. I look up.

Large deep blue eyes behind rimless glasses stare directly down at me. They hold that gaze as my own eyes look back. Then the eyes relax, as the young woman of medium height and with uneven teeth leans slightly on one gray metal crutch, holds the door open with the other crutch.

She glances at the beat-up car and then at me. "Well," she says, "you got here."

Sessions got there. But he traveled a twisty road from rural beginnings to reach Flannery O'Connor's front porch.

He grew up in tiny Conway, S.C., near Myrtle Beach, among strict Southern Baptists. The Sessions family, settling after immigration as French Huguenots, had lived in the area “since the late 1600s,” he says. Bright, buxom, just 39, the Sessions scion graduated from the University of North Carolina in 1961.

At Chapel Hill, he had become founding editor of the respected literary periodical, The Carolina Quarterly. But he felt dance was his true passion, and he dallied in theater. "Myter's Ambition." (The injury later helped sessions required hip surgery.) Sessions then entered the world of hip surgery. (The injury later helped sessions required hip surgery.)

At a Metropolitan Opera Ball, a 20-something ava
dorah, a most prominent photograph, a 20-something ava
dorah, a most prominent photograph, a 20-something ava

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He also ventured into subject matter far beyond that of his Milledgeville muse, writing dozens of book and magazine articles on other writers. Sessions founded Studies in the Literary Imagination at Georgia State, and he published poetry in The Southern Poetry Review, The Chattahoochee Review and elsewhere. And he found his way into theater after all, by writing plays. One, "A Shattering of Glass," won the Southern Theatre Playwrights Competition.

The University of Mississippi produced that work for the Festival of Southern Theatre.

Among many awards, Sessions claimed a Pulitzer while at Columbia, and later the Nikos Kazantzakis Medal from Greece, the Outstanding Teacher Award from the South Atlantic Association of Departments of English and an honorary degree from Coastal Carolina University.

Sessions retired from Georgia State in 2005.

Neither tone nor cadence changed him. Although Sessions changed himself at times to humor Flannery O’Connor, he put on a "silly Billy" persona, a pose also used for effect in "Stalking Joy." "I make myself deliberately silly, off
to me," he explains. "I think it works as a way to show how Flannery thought and acted."

What does he mean? During one porch swing conversation on faith — O'Connor and Sessions were "true believers together," he says — the young convert asked a challenging question "as a sort of a joke, in one of my silly Billy ways."

"Out of the blue, he blurted, "What about being a saint?""

Sessions vividly remembers O'Connor’s reaction. "Her face changed," he says. "It was plain seeing. She was amazed. She said, "You know, I never thought of that before."

"I said, 'Okay, let's think about it.'"

The unnecessary worry of the year was whether it would be necessary to hold a literary conversation with Billy. No conversation whatever was necessary. He arrived promptly at 3:30, talking, talked his way across the grass and up the steps and into a chair and continued talking from that position without pause, break, breath, or gulp until 4:30. At 4:30 he departed to go to Mass (Ascension Thursday) but declared he would like to return after it as I thereafter invited him to supper with us. He brought back, still talking, and bearing a sack of ice cream and cake to the meal. He then talked until supper but at that point he met a little head wind in the form of my mother, who is also a talker. Her stories have a non-stop quality, but every now and then she does have to refuel and every time she came down, he went up. After supper she retired and I listened to Billy until around 10. If I said six complete sentences all afternoon and evening I don’t know what they were. Two days later, we both get thank you letters from him saying he knew he stayed too long but he had enjoyed the conversation so much that he forgot the time. My mother and I howled.

It was, Sessions writes in his pre
dign, in a long and lasting friendship.

GOOD COUNTRY PERSON

Sessions got there. But he traveled a twisty road from rural beginnings to reach Flannery O'Connor's front porch.

He grew up in tiny Conway, S.C., near Myrtle Beach, among strict Southern Baptists. The Sessions family, settling after immigration as French Huguenots, had lived in the area “since the late 1600s,” he says. Bright, buxom, just 39, the Sessions scion graduated from the University of North Carolina in 1961.

At Chapel Hill, he had become founding editor of the respected literary periodical, The Carolina Quarterly. But he felt dance was his true passion, and he dallied in theater. "Myter's Ambition." (The injury later helped sessions required hip surgery.) Sessions then entered the world of hip surgery. (The injury later helped sessions required hip surgery.)

At a Metropolitan Opera Ball, a 20-something ava
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GOING DANCING (ON ONE FOOT) • “I haven’t jumped that high in 26 years. I knew when I came down I had done it. But I wanted to go celebrate. Celebrate with my team and celebrate with my son.” Head Basketball Coach Ron Hunter on tearing his Achilles tendon after celebrating the Panthers’ Sun Belt Championship Tournament victory over Georgia Southern and the team’s invitation to the NCAA Tournament. Because of his injury, the rim had to be lowered for Hunter to cut down the net.

INSIDE INSIGHT

New York City
Wednesday, May 21
Happy Hour at 3 Sheets Saloon, The Lido Deck
6:30-9:30 p.m.

Washington Nationals Game
Tuesday, June 23
Washington Nationals vs. Atlanta Braves
First Pitch 7:05 p.m.

Chicago Cubs Game
Wednesday, June 24
Chicago Cubs vs. L.A. Dodgers
First Pitch 7:05 p.m.

Colorado Rockies Game
Friday, July 24
Colorado Rockies vs. Cincinnati Reds
First Pitch 6:40 p.m.

Charlotte Knights Game
Tuesday, August 11
Charlotte Knights vs. Gwinnett Braves
First Pitch 7:05 p.m.

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