

NSU's Demon Heat Colorguard finished their winter guard season. Read about their season long process of perfecting their show titled, "Splash of Color."

Meet NSU's recognized student organizations trying to beautify and conserve the environment and learn about a community restaurant that tries to help the homeless.

The Women's Track and Field assistant coach has been named assistant coach of the year. Read about Adam Pennington's achievements.

As the semester ends and seniors experience the whirlwind of emotions that come with graduation, Destin Lopez gives advice to fellow seniors as they approach the finish line.

# THE CURRENT SAUCE



THE STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF NORTHWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA

## Best of the Year



Photo Submitted by Demon Heat Instagram  
Winter Guard at championship.

for the most part it's a different panel of judges every single time that you perform it," Steele said.

The panel is made up of five specialized judges that each focus on separate aspects of the routine. The judges will come together to score each team based on their choreography and dance technique, routine design, rifle and flag handling and general effect.

"(These) are sort of the five categories: movement, equipment, design, and then two GE judges and then the timing and penalty judge," Steele said.

The timing and penalty judge is a separate judge which does not affect the initial score, but can later alter it.

"We have seven minutes to bring all of our props on, perform our show, and take all of our props from behind the middle penalty line so the next group can sort of set up," Steele said. "So the penalty and timing judge is mainly there for safety, to make sure that we're not stepping outside of our performance boundary and to keep the shows moving."

Though teams are given scores following each completion, Steele explained the scores do not affect their circuit ranking.

"The only time that the score and the ranking matters is at championships, so these shows you go to, to sort of better yourself and to grow throughout the season have the show evolve," Steele said.

Steele feels the team has done well in taking constructive criticism to better their routine.

"Our first competition I think we scored a mid-60s out of 100 and then each competition, the score went up and up and up," Steele said. "At our last competition in Denham Springs, which is in Baton Rouge, we broke 80."

In the 2023 competition season, Steele shared the only time Demon Heat broke 80 was in their championship competition.

## Demon Heat Colorguard earns second place with their show "Splash of Color"

BY NINA OVALLE

The Northwestern State University of Louisiana Demon Heat Colorguard participates in competitions under the Louisiana, Mississippi, Colorguard and Percussion Circuit (LMCGPC).

LMCGPC operates under Winter Guard International which hosts several local, regional and national competitions during each spring semester competition season.

Classifications under LMCGPC include the Novice Class of middle school competition, Scholastic Regional A of

high school competition and Senior Division, which are teams unaffiliated with any school. Demon Heat performs in a classification called Independent A, meaning they are an independent team affiliated with a university.

David Steele, director of Demon Heat, explained how the competition season operates.

"Basically there are competitions every weekend from the beginning of the season to the very end of the season," Steele said. "The last show is called championships and it's where everybody gets together for one final performance and we all compete for our medals."

This season, Demon Heat has

participated in five competitions against Louisiana State University, Crescent City New Orleans and University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

"It's rare that people go to every single competition throughout the circuit," Steele said. "Every time you perform, you get comments from judges and based off of those comments, you sort of make little minor changes to the show, so the show sort of develops throughout the season."

Each competition, the teams perform for a new set of judges to gain fresh perspectives on their routines.

"It's different judges from all over the United States, there may be a repeat judge at some certain competitions, but

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“As of last weekend, Demon Heat has the highest score in our classification so we are hoping that we will get a medal, whether that’s gold, silver, or bronze, we’re not really quite sure yet,” Steele said.

Demon Heat has worked on and developed a routine called “Splash of Color,” which Steele began working with fellow Demon Heat leaders on during the Fall 2023 semester.

“It’s a very interesting show, it’s been, I would say it’s probably one of my favorites,” Steele said. “I was an integral part of picking the soundtrack and Jena, the other director, was sort of the one who came up with the theme and the idea and the design around the soundtrack that I picked.”

The soundtrack Steele selected was composed by Josh Vek who he found on TikTok and has stayed in contact with to update throughout the season.

“The trick is you have to pick a track, musically speaking, that you’re not gonna mind hearing a billion times and

also musically has a lot of opportunities in it for you to sort of build moments in the show,” Steele said.

Dakarrus Shackleford, freshman hospitality management tourism major, performed “Splash of Color” in his first Demon Heat competition season this semester. He described his experience differentiating the competition season from marching season.

“I feel like it brings us a lot more

**Photo Submitted by The Potpourri  
Demon Heat members showing their  
moves during a Football game**



together because on the field we’re a lot more spaced out and we’re also with the band and with the dazzlers, but with winter guard it’s just us, it really shows what we can do,” Shackleford said.

Mickey Williams, senior general studies major, emphasized the hard work and effort Demon Heat puts into their competition season.

“I feel like the season is going so well, we’ve already broken our record high score,” Williams said. “We have been working hard and the payoff is tangible!”

In the spring season, Demon Heat will typically spend 12 hours a week plus the mornings before the competition rehearsing for the show. Williams compared the Demon Heat marching season to the spring semester competition season.

“There’s higher expectations and more time commitment for winter guard than marching” Williams said. “We’re a very competitive team and we’re up against talent, so it’s hard work.”

Steele agrees that the students of Demon Heat put hard work into their competition.

“These kids, and the staff, dedicate a huge part of our lives to this show and to the development of the show in the spring season, it becomes literally a full time job,” Steele said.

He expressed that though the work is hard, the payoff shows greatly.

“It’s well worth it to see the product at the end of the season and to see sort of how the show has evolved and developed throughout the season,” Steele said. “To see the kids pull off something that at the beginning of the season seems impossible, they find it within themselves to sort of grow into these really incredible athletes and performers on the day where it really counts at championships.”

The Demon Heat Winter guard earned a second place silver medal at their championship for the Spring 2024 competition season.

## Opinions on campus parking vary among NSU faculty and staff

BY NINA OVALLE | DEC. 7, 2023

As with any controversy, opinions vary based on perspective. However, the controversy of parking is a unanimous and unavoidable experience for anyone, including faculty and staff.

Northwestern State University of Louisiana faculty and staff have voiced their perspectives and opinions regarding the parking issues in the faculty/staff lots on campus.

Wesley Harrell, the University Police captain, frequently notices students parking in faculty/staff parking areas, which remains a major concern for faculty members.

“A lot of students park in faculty/staff lots, then faculty start calling. Our dispatchers are emailing me about it, and we have to send officers, but we just want to make sure we are keeping everything safer,” Harrell said.

Harrell believes that the parking lot’s capacity isn’t the issue; rather, it’s the responsibility of students to park in their designated zones that creates the problem.

“If the residential students park where they’re supposed to park, there’s plenty of room for the commuters and plenty of room for all. If the commuters park where they’re supposed to park, there’s plenty of room in housing to park. Nobody needs to park in a faculty lot,” Harrell said. “Students need to make sure they’re parking in the right parking lot.”

Kent Peacock, an assistant professor of history, specifies that certain faculty/staff lots experience more issues, but he believes that NSU has sufficient space for student parking.

“I would say the issue is with certain lots; there are certainly enough parking spaces on campus overall, but certain lots, there are issues,” Peacock said.

Peacock wonders if the struggles might be related to student awareness.

“Honestly, I don’t know how aware students are that they’re only supposed to be parking in certain lots, so I wonder if a lot of students just aren’t aware,” Peacock said.

Traci LaBom-Norris, the director of Accountability and Student Conduct, agrees that NSU has an adequate parking infrastructure to accommodate every student’s needs. She believes students need to be aware.

“We as a university can actually resolve this issue simply by everybody following the designated zones. We do have adequate space, I think it’s just that everyone just has to be mindful of their designated zones,” LaBom-Norris said.

LaBom-Norris’s office, situated on the third floor of the Student Union, often finds a full parking lot.

“The Student Union is a local spot so people are gravitating to our parking lot. But the people who are assigned, which are the faculty/staff, we end up not having an adequate amount of



Photo by Nina Ovalle

While faulty gate arms may contribute to the problem, Garfinkel also suggests that the signage in faculty/staff lots can cause confusion

space for ourselves,” LaBom-Norris said. “I can actually say that personally, because there have been times where there were actually no spots available at all.”

Typically, faculty/staff lots feature gate arms, which open only with card access, assigned to faculty and staff members. However, NSU is experiencing technical issues with those gate arms in some faculty/staff lots.

“Our gates have been lifted so that means there was an overflow of students. So now we have students there, it doesn’t matter if they were commuters, residential... everyone. It’s kind of been a free for all,” LaBom-Norris said.

Brett Garfinkel, the department head of Theatre and Dance, believes that the malfunctioning gate arms have increased parking difficulties this semester.

“I do not have any major parking issues ‘cause there’s only one lot that I park in, which is the CAPA (Dear School of Creative and Performing Arts) faculty parking lot, but ever since the gate stopped working there has been lots of problems with students parking in the lot,” Garfinkel said.

While faulty gate arms may contribute to the problem, Garfinkel also suggests that the signage in faculty/staff lots can cause confusion.

“The signage for faculty/staff just shows an ‘F’ and an ‘S’ in a black box with white letters and in very small print underneath it, it says ‘faculty/staff parking’ which is not always clear for students that are rushing to class,” Garfinkel said. “Yes, there’s been a lot of students parking in the faculty lot, but I think a lot of them are unclear that it’s a faculty lot because the gate is not working.”

Garfinkel believes the only solution lies in repairing the gate arms.

“I think the only thing that would fix this is to get those gates working again,” Garfinkel said.

Malfunctions in gate arms began when the previous parts supplier went out of business. John T. Dunn, the president of the faculty senate, elaborates on the plans to fix the gate arms in faculty/staff lots.

“The supplier of the gates was the sole producer of parts for the gates, but they recently went out of business so we found another supplier willing to take

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The Current Sauce is the official student-run newspaper for Northwestern State University. The content and stories within the paper may not necessarily reflect the views of administration, faculty and staff.

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Photo by Lia Portillo  
Nick Taylor does, however, agree that there is a parking issue at NSU.

on repairs,” Dunn said.

However, Dunn also acknowledged that the manufacturing and supply of replacement parts has taken longer than expected. “The last I heard, gates should be coming back online in the near future,” he said.

While Dunn understands the inconveniences created by the malfunctioning gate arms for many faculty members, he personally has not encountered issues within the CAPA faculty lot.

“Personally, I have young kids, so I get here early enough to not have a problem. I also park in a lot that is big enough to support the number of people working in the building, but many other lots, however, are much smaller, and when students take up all the spaces, there is no place left for faculty to park,” Dunn said.

Paul Christopher, an associate professor of music, also parks in the CAPA faculty/staff lot and has not experienced any personal parking issues.

“I’m in this lot, so it’s never been a problem for me, but I do think there’s a problem even though it doesn’t impact me personally,” Christopher said.

Christopher expressed a more lenient perspective regarding parking issues.

“I mean, I don’t walk around paying attention to it. I do know it’s a problem for a lot of students, but have I ever had a problem with students parking here? No,” Christopher said. “If I can’t get in there, I can always find another place to park, but once again, that’s just me.”

As for solutions for parking problems, Christopher acknowledges the presence of an endless cycle of questions.

“There’s another point... police the lot, but...there’s other things they can be making sure are secure. It’s an endless cycle, so clearly the best thing to do would be to just add more lots, but where do we add the lots? I don’t even know,” Christopher said.

However, Christopher said the only thing for certain is that there is an issue for students parking at NSU.

“I do agree it’s a problem, I know it’s a problem. I know it’s a problem especially for students, I just don’t know what exactly we should do,” Christopher said.

Adam Philley, the associate director of choral activities, shares a similar understanding of the student perspective on parking struggles.

“I mean, I only park in like, one spot, so I don’t know that there’s a serious parking issue here. But times when I come down for social events, it is kind of an issue; like Gala or football games, it’s difficult, so I can see student’s struggle,” Philley said.

Though Philley understands the students perspective, he differentiates times when faculty need priority.

“Especially if I’m coming back to teach, I do think that I should have that priority parking, but if I’m just here to see a performance then we’re all kind of the same there. I feel like it’s a faculty lot, and I’m faculty. So, I should have the first right to park there, but I also understand. So I’m not going to roll down my window and yell at you, that’s not how I feel about that,” Philley said.

Philley has never experienced a situation where he felt the need to alert parking security due to a parking issue.

“I haven’t ever had a situation where I felt like I needed to call, but that’s not to say my experience stands for all. My experience may be different from others,” Philley said.

In contrast to Philley, Pete Gregory, a professor of anthropology, predominantly uses the faculty lot adjacent to John S. Kyser Hall, an area often patrolled by University Police.

“They give a lot of tickets out here now. They pretty much control this lot, and students use it a lot, but they come out and write a lot of tickets so it’s not filled up now like it was a couple weeks ago,” Gregory said.

Harrell, the University Police Captain, clarified the consequences associated with parking citations.

“Citations start at \$45, then they only go up from there, and that’s for all improper parking, like if somebody parks in a handicap spot, etcetera,” Harrell said.

University Police typically grant a grace period for students to adjust themselves to campus parking policies, and aim only to provide a safer environment.

“We don’t like to write tickets, but that’s a part of our job and tickets are

a necessity to make the campus safer. The parking and safety committee sets that so we don’t benefit monetarily, the only benefit we’re aiming for is to make the campus safer,” Harrell said.

Gregory, however, believes that the grace period does more harm than help for students.

“With the grace period, students get used to it and don’t think they’re going to get tickets, then they start giving tickets and students get upset because ‘I been parking here so why am I getting a ticket now for,’” Gregory said. “I think with the grace period, maybe they could just not have the grace period, that way students wouldn’t feel like they could get in here.”

He acknowledged that though he has his own experience and opinions, so do many other universities.

“It’s a worldwide problem. I can’t think of a campus anywhere I’ve ever been on that people didn’t have parking problems. Ours is wonderful compared to LSU (Louisiana State University),” Gregory said.

Nick Taylor, an assistant professor of New Media, Journalism and Communication Arts, compared the parking situation at NSU with that of other universities.

“I think, of course, I’ve been to different universities, there’s always parking issues. Is this any worse than any other university? Absolutely not. In fact, in a lot of ways, it’s better than a lot of universities,” Taylor said.

Taylor does, however, agree that there is a parking issue at NSU.

“Yes, students love to park in our lots, and I understand why. We’re right here, they’re in a hurry, they see open spots. So students do park there often, that is an issue,” Taylor said.

Parking problems remain an inevitable experience of university life, but Taylor believes NSU maintains faculty/staff lots well.

“I mean we have more cars, sometimes, than spots,” Taylor said. “I think the university overall, if I was giving them a grade, I’d give them a B+ for taking care of parking issues, which is much better than most universities.”

Parking issues differ among all university campuses, as do opinions about them, as well as possibilities of resolutions. Taylor emphasized the need for a continuous assessment and adaptation of parking policies and solutions.

“Parking policies and parking issues have got to be completely, or continually looked at and updated,” Taylor said. “You’re never gonna solve them because as soon as you solve one issue then another issue is going to come up. It’s just something we gotta continually handle.”

<https://purplemedianetwork.com/16841/news/opinions-on-campus-parking-vary-among-nsu-faculty-and-staff/>

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## NEWS

# NSU increases enrollment by maintaining current students

BY KALLIE BOURGEOIS | FEB. 29, 2024

Following the enrollment decline of the Fall 2023 semester, retaining students that are currently enrolled has remained the priority.

Northwestern State University of Louisiana has successfully increased retention rates for the Spring 2024 semester.

Vanner Erikson, director of enrollment and recruiting, explained that NSU offers resources for high school students to hopefully benefit enrollment, but that retaining current students is just as important.

“There are multiple reasons for the decline in enrollment, but we aren’t the only schools facing a decline, about nine other schools in the state are as low as we are,” Erikson said. “When you think of enrollment, whether it’s a decline or increase, a piece of that is not only recruiting but it’s also retention and retaining the students that you have.”

Since shifting focus toward retention, Erikson has seen significant improvement in spring enrollment.

“The retention number skyrocketed to the highest of all time to 87.8% of those students that retain at Northwestern,” Erikson said.

He also addressed that, yes, the decline extends from previous years, but there will always be a spring enrollment decline until NSU gets more students in the fall semesters.

“Our total enrollment number for the spring was 8,035, so it was a bit lower, the good thing is our total number of freshmen that came in the fall and went into the spring,” Erikson said. “From that point it’s awesome, because that means we are doing things right in terms of looking at helpful financial pieces, scholarships, barriers students are having and fixing those.”

Erikson predicts the incoming class of 2028 should bring more freshmen in the Fall 2024 semester.

“If there’s any indicator for next fall, the fall of 2024, all of the receptions we’ve been doing are higher than last year; those are students that are more than likely coming to Northwestern,” Erikson said. “So if that’s high, in my opinion, I think we’ll start seeing some increases across the board as we look at total enrollment and other things.”

Though incoming freshmen play a big role, there are other means of increasing enrollment numbers at NSU.

“What helps spring numbers are

all the students including: first-time freshman, transfer students, graduate students, dual enrollment students and international students, so across the board, we have strategies in all those places that we consistently do things to increase enrollment,” Erikson said.

Yonna Pasch, director of student affairs, explained that the decline in enrollment has been a trend in higher education for the past few years.

“Our university enrollment team has worked hard to close the enrollment gap and they continue to be creative and intentional in their outreach efforts,” Pasch said.

Student affairs is an integral part of the student experience which can also involve enrollment.

“Out of classroom activities, programs, resources and opportunities help students find a successful path at NSU,” Pasch said. “We are committed to supporting the success of the whole student through initiatives that focus on academic, emotional, psychological, physical and spiritual growth.”

Student affairs provides many resources to set up currently enrolled students for a continual, successful college experience.

“I feel it is important to focus on the students that are enrolled currently and finding ways to keep them engaged and persisting to the next semester,” Pasch said.

Pasch highlights the creation of the Demon Mentor Network as an initiative from Student Affairs to increase retention at NSU. The program pairs freshmen with current students of NSU to help navigate college successfully.

“It might not increase enrollment of first time freshmen but the program aims to help increase persistence with continuing students,” Pasch said. “I believe NSU is on the right track to help with our enrollment numbers.”

Pasch encourages current students to be engaged in on campus activities.

“I want students to realize that they are their best advocates,” Pasch said. “I challenge students to step out of their comfort zone and be part of their campus community in some way, engaged students are enrolled students.”

Marissa Howard, sophomore social work major, is involved in the Social Work Club, TRiO Student Support Services and La Belle Femme. She believes that being involved with different organizations on campus



Photo by Lalaina Wood. Current students continue to follow their daily schedule and move from class to class.

helps students fit in.

“I would recommend NSU to other students considering applying, because NSU has a place for everyone,” Howard said. “There is at least one organization for any of your interests and if there isn’t one, you can find people to help you create the organization.”

Howard also said that students who live on campus are more likely to stay enrolled.

“Students who live on campus definitely are more involved on campus because it is easier for them to access events,” Howard said. “Since I live on campus, when events are hosted, they are almost always within walking distance.”

During her experience at NSU, Howard has utilized several resources of NSU which can help students stay enrolled as well.

“Tutoring is offered all around campus and there are many organizations that have mentors who can help guide you through your college life,” Howard said. “NSU definitely can make it feel like the campus is your home away from home.”

Similar to Howard, Cailen Wiltcher, sophomore health and exercise science major, explained that being a part of Sigma Sigma Sigma Alpha Zeta, Alpha Lambda Data and TRiO has allowed

her to be successful at NSU.

“Being involved in campus organizations helps draw you closer to the campus, it definitely enriches the college experience,” Wiltcher said.

Freshman Connection, Demon Days and other events on campus allow new students to adjust to campus life.

“NSU offers a multitude of services to help create a successful college experience,” Wiltcher said. “The events and organizations help navigate and assist with academics and campus life.”

Wiltcher shared that becoming a Demon at NSU helped her find her place and feel welcome to a new chapter of her life.

“NSU also offers a small campus feel with all of the advantages of a larger campus,” Wiltcher said. “It gives you the opportunity of one on one interaction with faculty and staff while providing first class education for your future.”

While NSU may be experiencing a decrease in enrollment of prospective students, the number of students choosing to continue their education and college life at this institution is increasing due to events, organizations and resources offered on campus.

<https://purplemedianetwork.com/17183/news/nsu-increases-enrollment-by-maintaining-current-students/>



Photo by Madelyn Murphy

ECO member, Jayda Gee, poses for a photo to promote their Don't Litter campaign.

## Environmental Catalyst Organization of NSU strives to bring awareness to environmental problems

BY MADELYN MURPHY

Whether walking through a forest or on a college campus sidewalk, not a day goes by without one seeing a piece of trash on the ground. In today's world, it has been like this for as long as people can remember. At this point, it may seem as though the world is rapidly degrading and there is not much people can do to save it.

This is not the case. Working to preserve the planet, the Environmental Catalyst Organization of Northwestern State University of Louisiana has a mission to bring awareness to environmental issues by taking small steps at NSU.

ECO has a history at NSU, going back many years, but it first went inactive due to lack of funding. It was then restarted by one of the former student presidents, Isabela Musgrove, a current senior at NSU with a major in psychology.

"One of my biology professors, professor Antoon, wanted to start up ECO again and asked me to help him with it because my family owns plant nurseries and I really like nature and the environment," Musgrove said.

Musgrove jumped at the opportunity to take her love of the environment and let it blossom into something more. She

wanted people to realize that anyone can have an impact on the world.

"My whole premise of me becoming the president of ECO was because I majored in psychology and addiction studies, the complete opposite of nature and all that kind of stuff," Musgrove said. "I really wanted to stress to students, professors and anyone that would hear that you don't have to have a background in nature or biology or agriculture or anything like that to either to just do something for your community, start a club or be a president of a club."

However, Musgrove ended up having to leave and live in Shreveport. She tried to turn the organization over to the vice president, but she could not take the position. In addition to this, the organization's funding was dropped because professor Antoon had left and moved to Arkansas.

"I was very, very sad about it because it was like something that we built together, so whenever he left there were a lot of things that the university was contacting me about, and since I wasn't in Natchitoches, I wasn't able to pick it back up," Musgrove said. "I was so happy and glad when Nina contacted me about it and asked me all these questions because she's done such an amazing job; I'm so proud of her for that, and she's done so much in

such a short time too."

Recently, ECO was restarted by the current student president, Nina Ovalle, who is a junior with a major in hospitality, management and tourism. Ovalle was a member of ECO when Isabela was president, but she left campus for an internship the same semester Musgrove moved to Shreveport. When Ovalle came back to Natchitoches, her passions led her to restarting ECO.

"I felt it was something we really needed on campus and it was something I was very interested in," Ovalle said.

With this, she took initiative. She contacted Yonna Pasch to help her with the organization's reinstatement and Musgrove for permission, she said.

In October of 2023, Ovalle officially restarted ECO and posted on the organization's Instagram page to share the news with students.

Now that she is coming up on her senior year of college, Ovalle feels sentimental when thinking of her college campus.

"I feel like when you care about your environment, you want to help your environment, so I want to do something that will last at the university or do

something to help the university," Ovalle said.

Although the organization just started, members of ECO feel that the smallest actions can lead to big changes.

"What I want to do is just make people aware of the things that they do that can affect the environment and the little things that they could change," she said. "Like our first project was our electricity initiative, so we hung up little signs all around campus right by the lights as a reminder to turn off the lights on your way out; it's such a small thing that can help in such a big way if enough people do it."

ECO recognizes that students need to be informed about the impact they have on the environment as individuals. Students in the organization do this by spreading awareness around campus through events such as "These Hands Don't Litter," where they created a banner for students to stamp their hands on to show they are against littering.

"Especially on a college campus, there's so many people here that we can reach," said Ovalle. "Because even if they didn't print their hand on our banner, they still know that there's people here working against littering."

Yasmine Holmes, who has a major in

ARTS & LIVING

biology with a concentration in clinical laboratory science, is the secretary of ECO. Although she is not attending college with the intentions of an environmental career in the future, Holmes plans to take precautions to avoid furthering environmental damage. Within her labs, for example, she is sure to only change her gloves if absolutely necessary.

Holmes elaborated on where her care for the environment stemmed from.

“I guess I grew up in a childhood house where, if we left the light on, we get in trouble; like you’re wasting power,” Holmes said. “But it wasn’t anything taught, it’s just natural.”

Holmes’ love for the environment has grown up with her as she transitioned from her childhood home to her college dorm. When going about her daily life, Holmes will pick up trash and throw it away as she sees it. This is usually an everyday occurrence, especially in the parking lot of University Place 2.



Photo by Madelyn Murphy  
Students stamp their hands on the banner to show they are against littering and for preserving the environment.



Photo by Madelyn Murphy  
Yasmine Holmes and Nina Ovalle pose with the in-progress banner which students stamped their hands on to show they stand against littering, preserving the environment.

“It’s really dirty,” Holmes said. “There’s so much trash, and that kind of makes me mad, too, because I step out my car and I’m stepping on top of a Chick-fil-A bag, a coffee cup that’s half filled with coffee and stuff like that; I don’t like that.”

On campus, alone, people carelessly throw trash on the ground.

“Lately, everybody’s been really upset about how it’s been cold in the spring, warm in the winter, but the thing is, people just complain and don’t do anything about it,” Holmes explained.

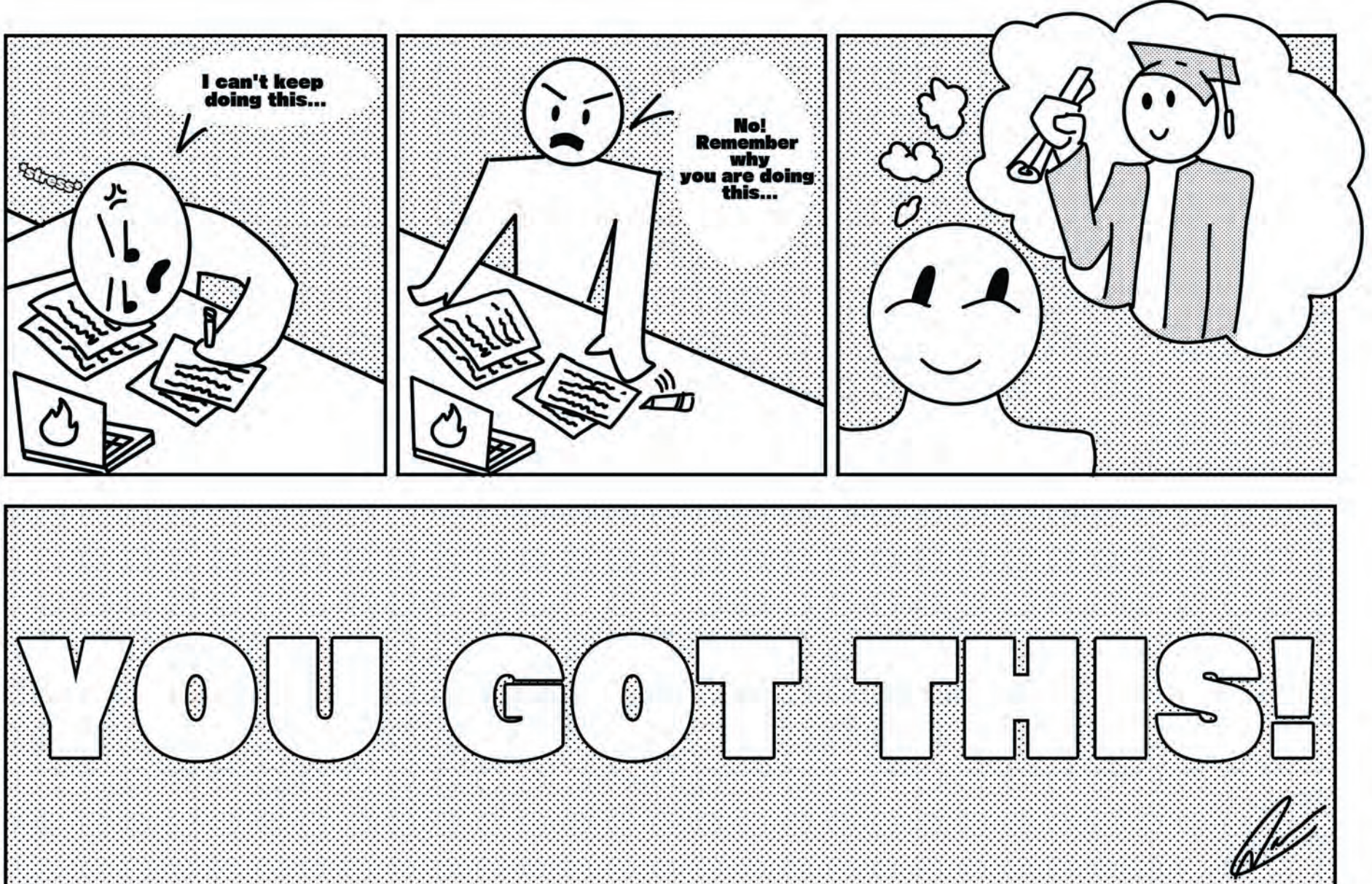
She wants people to recognize that they

are part of the problem they are upset about, and being in ECO allows her to spread awareness to others. Not only this, but ECO is taking action to solve the problem by starting on campus, she said.

The organization is going to place 10 new trash cans around campus, one of them being in UP 2. In addition to this and to celebrate Earth Day, ECO is having a butterfly release event on April 22 at 4 p.m. outside of the Friedman Student Union.

The organization hosts biweekly meetings on Wednesday in Bienvenue Hall room 122.

Illustration by Noah Melvin



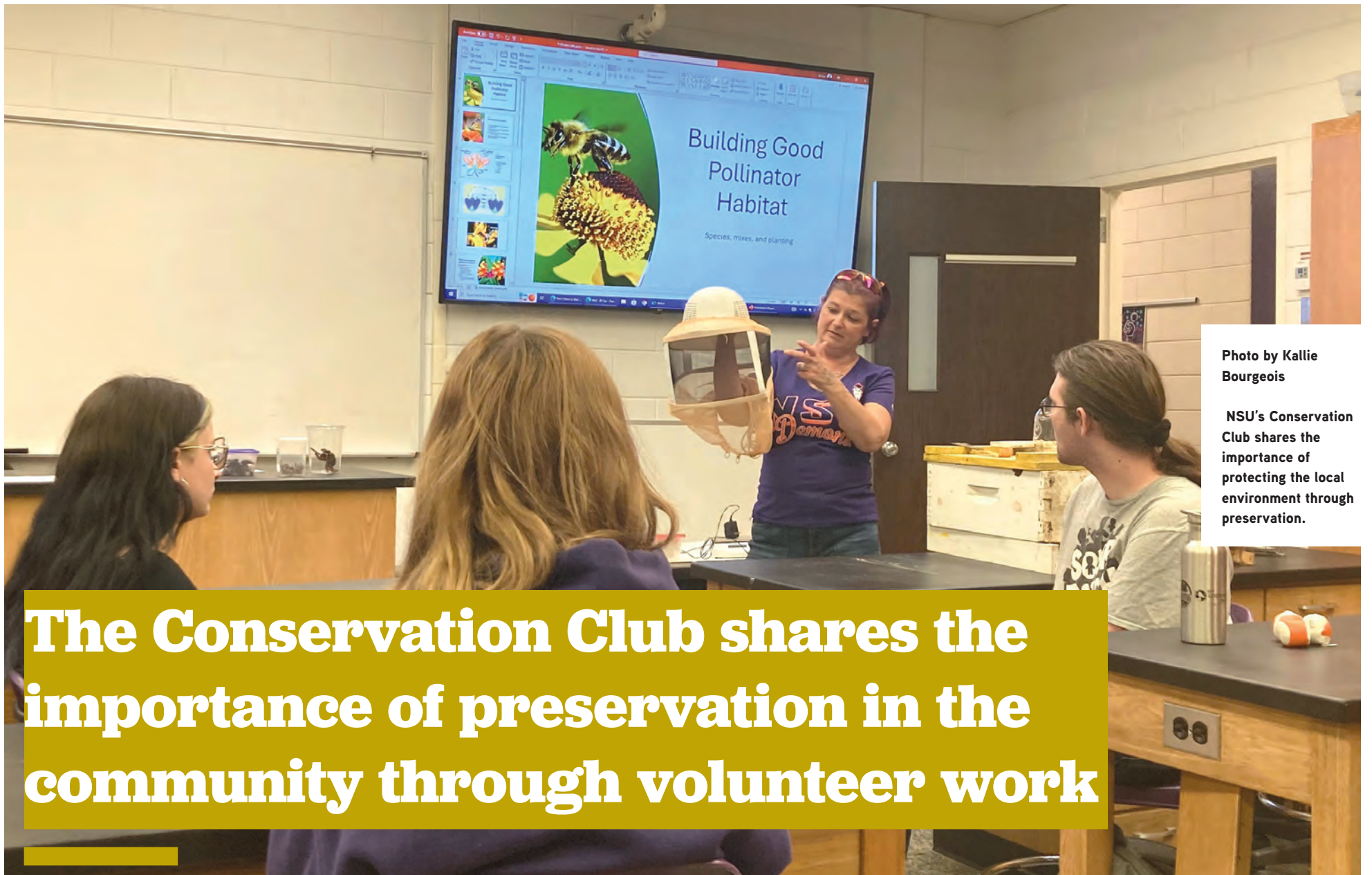


Photo by Kallie Bourgeois

NSU's Conservation Club shares the importance of protecting the local environment through preservation.

## The Conservation Club shares the importance of preservation in the community through volunteer work

BY KALLIE BOURGEOIS

People tend to admire the breathtaking views and wildlife that inhabit the surrounding area, even though the environment is in desperate need of preservation due to the lack of action in the community. However, through volunteer work, a group of like-minded individuals formed the Conservation Club at Northwestern State University of Louisiana. The organization is determined to protect natural resources and the environment for future enjoyment.

The president of the club, Blake Inabnet, a senior with a major in biology with a concentration in natural science and a minor in wildlife management, shared that the goal of the club is to spread awareness of conservation throughout the community.

"Our members volunteer at a variety of locations. We have a few at the Natchitoches Fish Hatchery," Inabnet said. "We've volunteered at Briarwood Nature Preserve before, and another club member and I have been volunteering at the Natchitoches alligator park; we have had, and hopefully will have, more volunteer opportunities cleaning Grady Erwin Nature Area."

Since taking on the role of club president, Inabnet has shared his love for conservation and the importance it plays in fostering a clean environment.

"This semester I have been fortunate enough to begin work on collaborations with other groups for upcoming events," Inabnet said. "My days are often busy with classes and volunteer work, but in between the two, I talk

with our other officers and members to coordinate future events for the club."

With more volunteer opportunities and projects planned for the club in the near future, he shared his excitement to create more memories through conservation work. One of the club's projects in the works is the creation of a pollinator habitat on and around campus to beautify the land, promote the wellbeing of pollinator species and increase the native biodiversity.

"My favorite memory of the club is a tough choice, but our Briarwood cleanup is a standout to me," Inabnet said. "We got to clean up their pitcher-plant bog and, hopefully, that will not be the last volunteer opportunity at that location."

The club provides members with opportunities that are applicable to their field of study.

Christopher Acker, vice president of the club and a junior with a major in biology with a concentration in wildlife management, agrees with this.

"This club provides quite a few resources and opportunities to do service, conserve, bring awareness and get students out to volunteer for conservation jobs," Acker said. "This puts the students' names out and provides a great success for NSU."

Acker stressed the importance behind why NSU and the Natchitoches community should care about conservation, especially wildlife.

"One reason is the recreational and harvesting of fish and other game species (these are species that people hunt for sport or food)," Acker said. "Fish and deer are not only historically important, but also the community has fun and harvests for consumption."

He added that agriculture is very important to preserve in the community.

"The vegetables and fruits that a lot of people eat, and animals eat too," Acker said. "Pollinators are very important to maintain the agriculture in Natchitoches and other culturally important plants such as the magnolia tree."

Olivia Habetz, a senior with a major in hospitality, management and tourism and a minor in wildlife management, is the event coordinator for the club. She admires the work the club has put into preserving the nature and wildlife in the area.

"This club gives me an outlet to try new things and discover why we need conservation efforts in our region," Habetz said.

Habetz explained that, as a member of the club, there are various duties that are fulfilled.

"We volunteer in different areas and activities while educating other members and students on campus why conservation is important," Habetz said. "We clean up areas around campus, pass out reusable water bottles, help with tree sales and more."

Secretary and treasurer for the club, Hailey McGovern, is a senior with a major in biology with a concentration in natural science. With this, she is in charge of updating the club members on the status of events.

"I am responsible for handling all things financial such as club fees, and, more recently, the Conservation Club T-Shirt Fundraiser," McGovern said. "I also keep record of all of the club's major decisions and plans for future activities

or events."

McGovern explained the club has broadened her knowledge on the importance of soil and plant conservation for the health of the environment. She has a passion for conservation and is pursuing a career as a zoo endocrinologist, which advances the current conservation efforts for endangered wildlife species.

"Through various volunteer events, such as the Grady Erwin clean-up days, the annual tree sale hosted by the Natural Resource Conservation Service and the STEM Day's soil conservation talk, I am able to actively take part in and observe the profound effects of conservation efforts on our local communities," McGovern said.

Within the club, McGovern has loved sharing her passion with students that have similar interests, while helping improve our environment at the same time.

"I loved it when we took a trip to Briarwood as part of their annual Tom Sawyer Day to help restore their famous Bay Garden, one of the oldest Louisiana iris gardens, and to clean-up various other exhibits showcasing rare plant species," McGovern said.

Much like Inabnet, McGovern has created many lasting memories because she joined the Conservation Club.

If interested in gaining more information or joining the conservation club, the meeting times are posted on Instagram.

# The Breadhouse-Nakatosh restaurant serves soul food dishes and a place of community

BY MADELYN MURPHY

**W**alking inside The Breadhouse-Nakatosh, customers are greeted warmly with the smell of fresh soul food. They enjoy food for the soul within a homey, comfortable environment.

Located at 1202 Texas St., The Breadhouse-Nakatosh is owned by Denise Bradley and Harry Hymes, or, as customers and employees know them, Miss B and Mr. James.

Today, Bradley and Hymes own The Breadhouse together, but their relationship goes further back than this. The couple has been dating for around nine years. However, they also dated when they were younger.

The two grew up on the same street in Natchitoches, visiting and sharing meals at each other's houses. After Bradley's parents felt Hymes was too old for her, the two went their separate ways. Bradley went all the way to California, where she lived with her sister and found herself a job.

Much has changed since then.

"In the same field where we are now used to be the old bread house warehouse; everyone used to come here and buy day-old bread and pastries when they were young with a grandparent, parent or uncle," Bradley said. "It was just always a fun, feel-good place because you were going to be able to get a honey bun or something and he wasn't going to squawk about it because it was the right price."

After Bradley retired, she came back to Natchitoches to take care of her parents.

As good food connected Bradley and Hymes when they were younger, it found a way to bring them back together years later. After the old bread house closed, Hymes and Bradley drove by thinking about how such a nice building should be in use.

"Then, our minds just started rolling," Bradley said.

The couple opened The Breadhouse-Nakatosh on April 24, 2021.

"After I retired, I just wanted to do something to help the community and stay connected," Bradley said. "With the restaurant, we get a chance to feed the homeless and people that are down on their luck; we also meet a lot of people

off of 49 that are on their way to Florida or New Orleans who Google us and come by because of our ratings."

In addition to this, they were sure to carry on the old bread house's feel-good environment and affordable prices for their food.

"We make the food that we grew up on with black-eyed peas, cream corn, cornbread dressing ... and the barbeque is just the icing on the cake," Bradley said.

The Breadhouse's menu ranges from smoked brisket to beef tips and turnip greens to candied yams. This wide selection of food came from the efforts of the owners.

"When we first opened the business, I felt we needed some tea cakes, so I started looking for my grandmother's recipe; I had half of it and my sister had the other half, so I put that together and perfected it," Bradley said. "So, I make the tea cakes, now, as well as candied yams and peach cobbler; I learned how to make it good, and I learned that, with anything, if you keep doing it, you will get good at it."

Bradley learned to cook a little later in life, but Hymes learned how to cook at 10 years old.

"My grandma inspired me when I was young; I'd hang around the table and she'd let me cut up stuff and mix up stuff inside the bowl; that got my interest up really quick because if you like food, you probably need to learn how to cook," Hymes said. "We were from a big family of 13 siblings, so there was a lot of cooking going on in my family. Back in those days in the 50s and 60s, a lot of the family hung out together so when we did cook, it was like every day was a picnic."

Hymes was surrounded by a family of good cooks. Because he is the main cook for The Breadhouse, the cooking style for the restaurant stems from Hymes' grandmother's cooking.

"We don't have recipes, baby," Hymes said. "We cook; you watch Grandma, you watch Mama, and they put a dash of this and a dash of that."

Hymes picked up on his family's cooking technique, and this adds to the homestyle food served at The Breadhouse. He finds comfort in cooking, as he comes from a passionate family.



Photo by Madelyn Murphy  
Denise Bradley and Harry Hymes, owners of The Breadhouse-Nakatosh, happily pose in front of their restaurant.

"We love to see people enjoy our food," Hymes shared. "And then we get a chance to talk to a lot of people, we tell people about Christ and then we get a homeless ministry going on where we feed people when they're hungry and they can't afford the food."

Hymes has brought both his family's passion and their hearts to The Breadhouse. He went on to describe what he enjoys the most about being a part of The Breadhouse.

"God will get a chance to use you; you get to meet people, serve people and feed people so they get more than just one thing when they come into The Breadhouse," Hymes said. "Community and family - all that's right here in The Breadhouse."

Bradley and Hymes make the effort for their customers to feel seen. They feel it's very important to treat people the way they would want to be treated, so they create a personal experience for their customers by thanking them and talking to them.

"We're here to feed people and help them to grow spiritually and help us to grow too," Hymes said. "In my opinion, that's what it's all about: growing spiritually, learning how to love people and we get love back in return."

"The owners' efforts to spread love is made clear by how their employees feel about them.

"Compared to other bosses I've had, they're very understanding, they're

very nice and if they can help you in any way, they do," Rachel Jordan, who has been an employee at The Breadhouse for nearly two years, said.

Out of all the menu items, the beef tips are Jordan's favorite. Still, it is clear that the "soulicious" food is not the only reason she's had a good work experience.

"It's laid back, it's calm, it's peaceful and, for the most part, it's like a family," Jordan said.

The family-like environment within The Breadhouse is felt through the kindness Bradley and Hymes share. This feeling fills the building and is even felt by the customers.

"The food is good, the owners are friendly whenever you come in and the quantity of the food is worth the price," a customer visiting the Breadhouse said.

As reflected on the menu, Hymes looks for the lowest prices when grocery shopping for The Breadhouse. With this, some customers even eat with them three days a week. According to Bradley, a Northwestern State University student favorite is the \$10 barbeque plate: a two-piece rib, two sides and a roll.

The Breadhouse is open seven days a week from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. This upcoming April 24, 2024, they will have a third anniversary celebration. To view The Breadhouse-Nakatosh menu, visit their Facebook page here.



# Madeline Romero's "Little Bird" senior exhibition invites viewers to find their inner little bird



PHOTO BY MADELYN MURPHY

MADELINE ROMERO GAZES AT HER ARTWORK; WHEN SHE LOOKS IN THE MIRROR, SHE SEES LITTLE BIRD WITHIN HERSELF.

BY MADELYN MURPHY | DEC. 9, 2023

Stepping into the narrow, long gallery, a girl smiles at the sight of familiar paintings that evoke a sense of calmness within her. She walks further down the gallery, filled with joy as she views paintings of a cute little bird living its life. She soon realizes, though, that she has never seen these exact paintings before. It is what the paintings consist of that forms the feeling of familiarity.

Recently, senior studio art major Madeline Romero presented her senior art exhibition, "Little Bird." Studio Art students are required to have a senior exhibition, where they showcase the work they are most proud of in a gallery, as if their art were going to be in a real museum.

At first, Romero knew her exhibition needed a theme, but had no idea what it would be. Eventually, it clicked.

"Once I started drawing Little Bird, it felt like it came naturally, like I was meant to paint Little Bird," Romero said. "So I was like, 'Oh my god, my theme is just going to be Little Bird because it makes me so happy, and I don't have to stress about anything.'"

Everything in the long gallery centered around Romero's character, Little Bird.

"I draw Little Bird in everyday situations to tell stories and draw out memories," Romero said. "I want my art to evoke a sense of familiarity in the

viewer, a sense of self. I want people to understand they are not alone. We all go through similar experiences in life at one point or another."

Although Little Bird is just a cute little guy, his purpose goes much further than that. He represents everyone's lives, providing a sense of unity and tying people together.

"Little Bird is you, Little Bird is me, Little Bird is everyone (hence the mirror)," Romero said. "I want people to look into it and see Little Bird in themselves."

In her painting, "Mirror (The Little Bird Inside You)," Romero hopes that others see Little Bird within them, just as she sees Little Bird in herself. Numerous paintings are inspired by events in Romero's life that are relatable to others. On one of her canvases, Romero painted Little Bird having a panic attack, as she had a panic attack while painting him. Numerous people of all different backgrounds can relate to this painting, along with many more of Romero's art pieces.

In a book Romero left in the gallery for people to leave notes in, someone wrote: "Walking into the gallery, I felt a very warm welcome. Through the chaos and problems of the world, I can rest easy knowing there is Little Bird."

It is clear the impact Little Bird has on people, giving them someone to relate to and letting them know they are not alone in any of their emotions or situations. Although everyone shares emotions of anxiety and panic, they also share feelings of happiness and good memories.

"The painting with the telescope, 'Little Bird goes Stargazing,' is a memory of when I was little and my dad bought me a telescope, that shade of blue specifically," Romero said. "We'd go over to his house, go outside, and we'd look at the moon just about every night."

Including this piece in her gallery emphasizes, again, the idea that Little Bird is everybody. Including this piece tied to a specific memory of hers emphasizes the idea that Little Bird is Romero. Romero smiled as she reflected upon this memory.

"Family is a big part of my life," Romero said. "They're an inspiration for me. They're always there for me. They push me to do great things."

With this, Romero anticipated the night of her reception, which her family attended. She hoped her friends, family and dad would especially like it. Luckily, her family's reactions proved Romero's efforts paid off.

"My family was very proud of me and all the work I had done, and my dad loved the lighting on the painting in the back," Romero explained.

By the end of the reception, Romero had a successful night. Not only was her family there to support her, but so were many others.

"I honestly was rattled by the sheer amount of people that came to my reception. It really warms my heart to know I have so many people in the art department and on campus that support me and my endeavors,"

Romero said. "The art department is my family, and I hope future art students feel the same."

Many of those who viewed her gallery left notes about how proud they were of Romero, how much they enjoyed the show, and how Little Bird impacted them. With that, she wanted to encourage and support future seniors in their endeavors.

"The comments people left for me in my book allowed me to reflect positively, as I could tell that I achieved what I set out to do," Romero explained. "Little Bird made a home in so many people's hearts."

With that, she wanted to encourage and support future seniors in their endeavors.

"To future seniors figuring out their exhibition," Romero began, "don't feel overwhelmed by how big the space in the gallery is. It's not a requirement to fill the entire space; just try to put together a cohesive show. Get a head start on making pieces for your show in your sophomore and junior years. Find a theme or concept that you can expand upon that brings you joy or resonates deeply with you. You can do it because Little Bird and I believe in you."

<https://purplemedianetwork.com/16846/arts-living/madeline-romeros-little-bird-senior-exhibition-invites-viewers-to-find-their-inner-little-bird/>

# Adam Pennington named Track and Field Assistant coach of the year

BY CHRISTIAN ROBINSON

Adam Pennington, associate head coach and sprints and hurdles coach, has served as a coach at Northwestern State University of Louisiana for five seasons. Since being promoted to associate head coach in 2015, he has been appreciated for his positive impact on the NSU Track and Field team.

His work has been recognized as 2023 USTFCCA's (U.S. Track and Field and Cross Country Coaches Association) South Central Assistant Coach of the Year for the women's team.

NSU is not only a job for Coach Pennington, but it is also his former Alma Mater, as he was a former Demon runner for the university as his success is one of reasons that led him to be promoted to coach.

The USTFCCA's award is open to power five universities and only the elite coaches in the conferences.

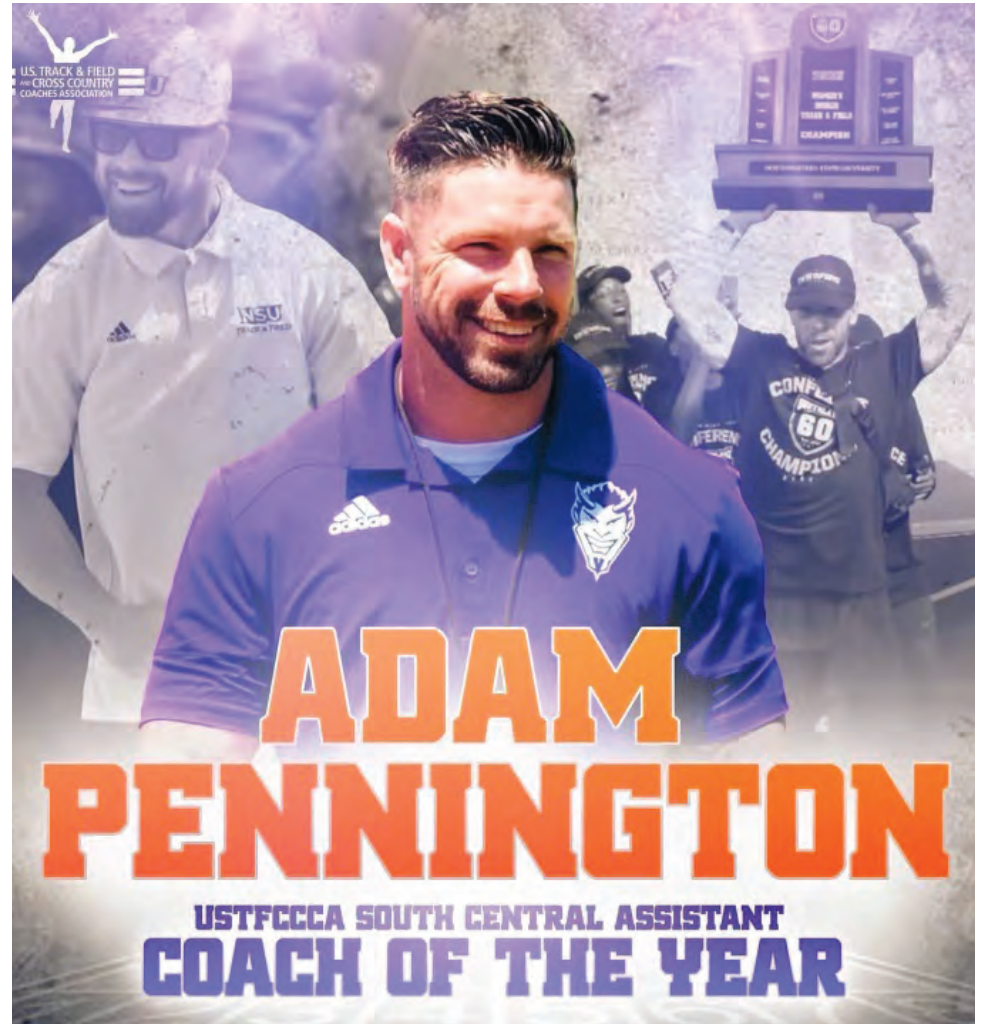
Coach Pennington so far in his career has the resume to classify in that category. Under Coach Pennington's

leadership the women's sprinters placed second in the 2016 Southland Conference Outdoor Championship. While in the same championship under him, the men's sprinters placed third.

The women's second place record was tied in 2023 as they placed second under Pennington's coaching ability. One of Coach Pennington's biggest strengths as a coach is his dedication to the players and getting the absolute best out of them every event they compete in. With the results and accomplishment piling up for the NSU track and field team.

One of his players, Sanaria Butler has won four events and was named Most Valuable Female Performer in a conference meet. She ran a 52.92 in the 400 race during the season breaking a conference record. He also coached her to win SLC Women's Most Outstanding Player in outdoor championship in 2023.

On the men's side, Zach Beard was named Second All-American in the 60-meter sprint. In one conference meet, Pennington coached the 60m, 200m, 400m, 60m hurdles and 4x400 relay which led the team to four gold



Graphic Submitted by NSU Athletics Department

medals, one silver and one bronze medal.

Despite all the success that Coach Pennington has brought to the athletic program not only as a player but also as a coach, he still gives most of the credit to the players and staff. "Usually, these awards are taken by power five

universities, so I'm a little surprised. Also, I have to thank my athletes and staff because none of this is possible without them," Pennington said.

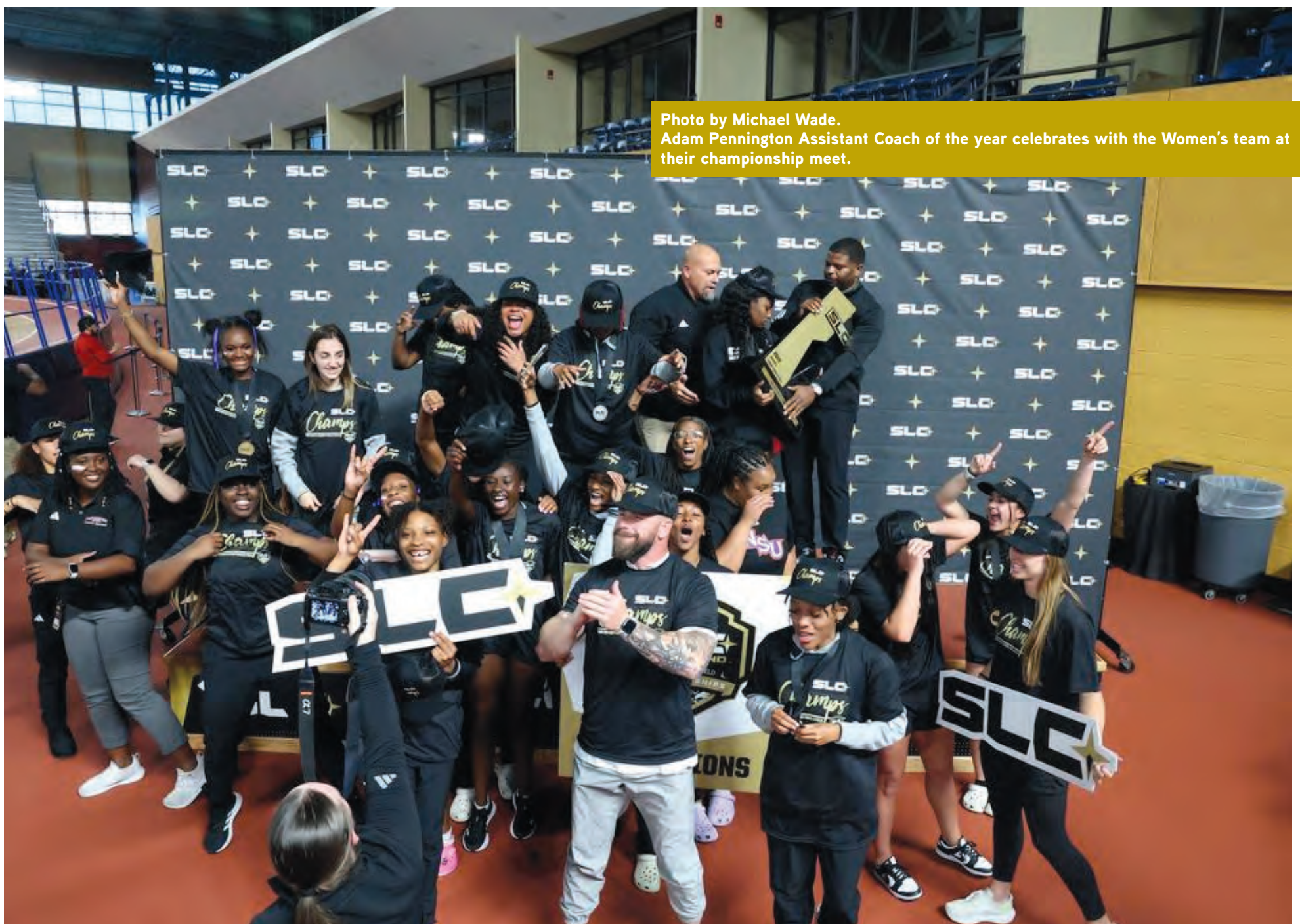


Photo by Michael Wade. Adam Pennington Assistant Coach of the year celebrates with the Women's team at their championship meet.

## SPORTS



Photo by Brad Welborn.  
NSU associate head coach Stacey Aldredge passionately coaches the Lady Demons volleyball team from the sidelines.

## Lady Demons' Volleyball Stacey Aldredge has head coach potential a national coaching hotlist claims

BY CHRISTIAN ROBINSON | JAN. 24 2024

**S**tacey Aldredge, associate head coach on Northwestern State University of Louisiana's Lady Demon volleyball team, has been on staff for nine years and has contributed a new energy into the team. This has led to her success to rise in rankings under associate head coaches and in future head coaching considerations, according to an article titled "VolleyballMag's College Coaching Hotshots list."

Stacey Aldredge was a former student-athlete at NSU as an outside hitter for the Lady Demons volleyball team. At that time, the program was not the best and did not have any playoff success.

"When I played the team wasn't very good, but it did not stop my passion for the sport and my love to play the game," Aldredge said. With this love and passion and her will to win, she led the Lady Demons to their first playoff in 2014.

At the end of her student-athlete journey, she finished as a three-time All-American.

After graduating with a bachelor's degree in family and consumer services, Stacey Aldredge served as a volunteer assistant coach for Clemson University women's volleyball team and in 2016 she helped build a program in Natchitoches Central High school.

Once her time was done there, she was hired by head coach Sean Kiracofe as a graduate assistant in 2017. After five years working as a graduate assistant, she was promoted in 2022 as associate head coach.

"The hiring process and interviews were a long and dueling process. And her interview was long and detailed. But I believe I made the right choice" head coach Sean Kiracofe said.

The knowledge she has brought to the team has given her a connection to the players. With the players seeing her as a second mother and someone they can rally behind, players said.

"Honestly she is like a second mother to me and I talk to her more than the head coach. It helps that she was a student-athlete herself; Ashlyynn Svoboda, junior biology major and libero position in the team, said. "Because she understands the trials that us players

have to go through on a regular basis."

Her dedication to players has led to individual players gaining success. Reaghan Thompson, sophomore middle blocker, and Teresa Garza, junior outside hitter, last year received All Louisiana honors. This led Reaghan Thompson to win Southland Conference player of the year last year as a sophomore. With the accomplishments rising on her resume, Stacey Aldredge's name is popping up more and more on the associate head coaching list.

With Aldredge acknowledging a few thoughts: "I don't really know what holds in the future for me. If a head coaching job comes I will discuss it and think about it," she said. "But I really like it here with the players and the coaching staff and coaching my former alma mater. As long as I coach the sport I love and teach my knowledge to players who want to learn, that is my dream job no matter the place."

<https://purplemedianetwork.com/16886/sports/lady-demons-volleyball-stacey-aldredge-has-head-coach-potential-a-national-coaching-hotlist-claims/>

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# NSU Demons Head Football Coach Blaine McCorkle introduced and welcomed in public press conference



On Wednesday, Nov. 29, 2023, NSU athletics named Blaine McCorkle the new head football coach. Photo by Lia Portillo Cantarero.

BY KALLIE BOURGEOIS | DEC. 1, 2023

**N**orthwestern State University of Louisiana held a public press conference to announce Blaine McCorkle, the new head football coach for the 2024-2025 season, on Wednesday, Nov. 29, 2023, in the Donald G. Kelly Athletic Complex.

Director of athletics Kevin Bostian addressed the search for hiring the right candidate for the job, reaffirmed the decision to hire McCorkle and welcomed him and his family to NSU.

"The process was quick and deliberate, it was thorough and we had over 60 candidates for the position that ranged from D1 head coaches to D2 head coaches to power five assistant coaches," he said. "As I mentioned this was a highly thought out position and we chose coach McCorkle from a great list of candidates."

Bostian explained why he was the right candidate for the coaching position.

"As we went through the search process coach McCorkle possessed all the qualities that we had as a community," he said. "I was looking for one of them being a head coach to turn around a program that hadn't had a lot of success, obviously he did that during his last three years at Belhaven University, and showed clear progress and change within a program that hasn't had that success."

Bostian then introduced NSU's 16th head football coach, who previously spent six years as the head coach at Belhaven University, where in his final three seasons McCorkle led the Blazers to a 24-7 overall record and earned three American Southwest Conference/USA South Coach of the Year awards after they had not won more than three games a season since 2013.

McCorkle acknowledged why he came to NSU.

"It's truly an honor and a privilege to be here a part of the Northwestern State community, and personally this has been a 26 year long dream of mine to come back to the state of Louisiana, which I love dearly, as the division one football coach," McCorkle said. "This is a dream come true today, but this is just the start."

He clarified his background in coaching collegiate athletes.

"The biggest part of my career has been in Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) football with the six institutions - Delaware, Richmond, Liberty, Tennessee Tech, Chattanooga and UT Martin - before I went to Belhaven, so a lot of which attracted me to NSU was FCS being my comfort zone," he said. "This is where I feel I fit the best because I've got the most time invested there. I love this level of football and I still think it has a lot

of purity to it, while still playing at an extremely high level."

McCorkle addressed meeting with the team the previous day as the new head coach.

"First of all, I had a chance to meet with the team yesterday and really enjoyed that, hopefully they felt we will do things differently and as a good thing," he said. "First thing I said to them I want to share with all of you, the Northwestern State community, my condolences. We don't want to forget what has happened, we don't want to move on, but we want to move forward."

McCorkle said the football staff should be in place soon.

"I don't want to reveal any specific names yet, but I have three or four right now that should be here Monday. I have met with the entire existing staff and I appreciate them taking the time to sit down with me, that was one thing that was really important for me to do," he said. "Being a college football coach is a calling not a job and I know the previous staff here put their heart and soul into this thing."

He explained his expectations for the future of NSU football moving forward.

"I like a challenge, I'm a competitor and I like to compete at a high level and the

fact that the success hasn't been real good here lately inspires me," McCorkle said. "It makes me want to come in here and see if I can do something other people haven't been able to do."

He also added that engaging students to build support for the team will be important for the next football season.

"Best way to engage students is to give them a good product on Saturday. I think it's very important that our football players are a part of the campus community, if there are activities going on campus they should be present and be seen," he said. "If you're proud to be at Northwestern State, then you need to be proud of all Northwestern State and not just isolate yourself and play football."

**This story was made with NSU-TV with reporters Mariah Kador and Destin Lopez providing footage of the conference. The article was originally published Dec. 1, 2023.**

<https://purplemedianetwork.com/16802/sports/nsu-demons-head-football-coach-blaine-mccorkle-introduced-and-welcomed-in-public-press-conference/#>

## VIEWPOINTS

# Fighting against graduation anxiety: cherish the little moments before entering the real world

BY DESTIN LOPEZ

The last day of classes is only a few days away, and graduation is very soon after that. For many seniors, this fact may bring fear to their hearts. This is a common feeling though, but there are tasks and things you can do to help feel more prepared for graduation and life afterward.

The most important thing to do is to have a plan. It does not have to be set in stone, but you need to have the framework of what you want to do after school ends.

It starts with an idea, take time to sit down and think about what you enjoy doing, and if you can make a career out of it. You might decide you want to go back to school. You might realize you want to stay in Natchitoches for a little while longer. You may have trouble deciding what you want to do as a career, so you are staying in your college job for a little longer. And that is all okay, but it is time for you to decide that.

For me, I decided that the best plan was to take a gap year before applying to Law Schools. I have been in school non-stop since Pre-Kindergarten, and

I want to use that time to explore the world while not being a student. I want to work and save up money for the move. I want to grow and mature before deciding on where I am going to live for three years, and possibly the rest of my life.

I do not feel like I am ready to pick a law school now, and that is why I made a plan. Last-minute decisions usually do not end well, and I do not want to make the wrong one because I felt compelled to.

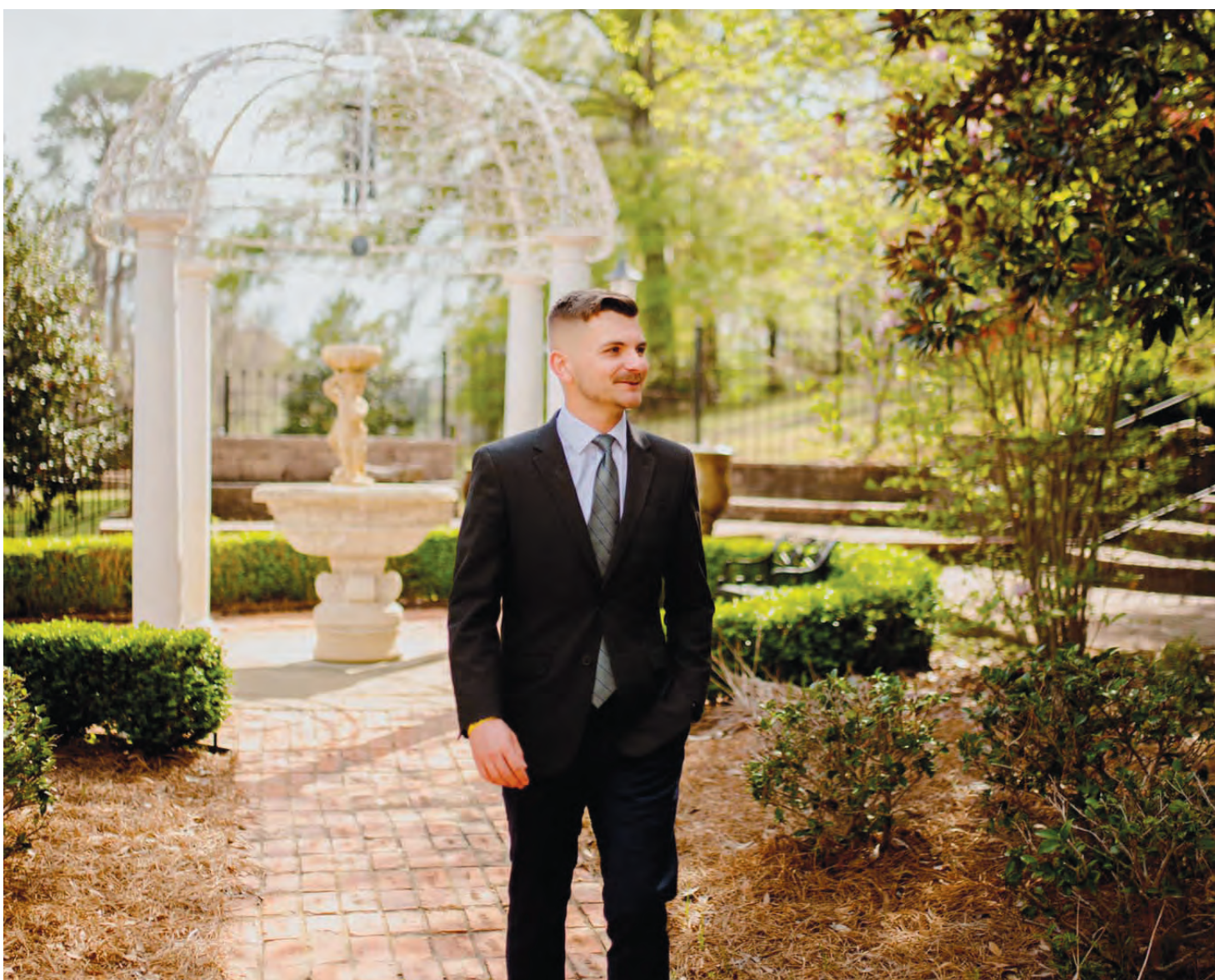
Do not feel like the world is rushing you. You are making life-changing decisions, and you might not feel ready to do that at 22 years old. I know that I do not. Many other seniors feel this way.

Do not let the rush to graduate stop you from enjoying your last few weeks of college. When you are thinking about skipping your 9 a.m. class because 'it's your last semester' and 'it won't matter,' remember that one day you will have your last class. You will walk up the stairs in John S. Kyser Hall one last time. You will probably never get stuck behind a golf cart on your way to class ever again. And that may excite you, but you do not want to regret not taking in the moments while they were happening.

A new chapter of your life is about to begin. You can be nervous and



Photos by Lindsey Chambley. Tyler Magnano, a senior communication major, is excited to enter this new chapter of his life as he graduates college.



frightful about what is to come, or you can be excited to experience brand new things. Every birthday is exciting because you are becoming an age that you have never been, graduation should be celebrated just the same.

There is a moment in the movie "Night at the Museum" that I think of often and have started to use as a personal belief when I become anxious of the future. A character says to Robin Williams, "I have no idea what I'm going to do tomorrow," and Robin replies "How exciting!" (I recommend watching this movie, or at least this scene!)

Why choose to worry, when you can be open to all the new adventures that are coming your way? Most people only get one chance at college, and I hear many adults saying that it went by too fast, and that they wish they could go back for a day. These people are rooting for you. Your teachers and peers are rooting for you to be successful and have a career that you love. The most important part is to root for yourself, otherwise you will never achieve your fullest potential.

# Forever Current Sauce: Kevin Thomas

BY KEVIN THOMAS

If you were to tell me four years ago that I would be graduating college as a communication major with a minor in history, and was the current copy editor of The Current Sauce I would say... "What is that?"

I came to college with a different mindset of what I wanted to be when I grew up and graduated college. I was dead set on working my way to be on Broadway, living in New York City and singing and dancing for a living. Never once did I think I would end up being a journalist for the school newspaper, and currently looking for a job in the magazine business.

Three years ago, I took the leap into a new major that could change the trajectory of my life and I am beyond blessed that I did that. I have learned so much working for The Current Sauce and I am forever grateful for the help I have had along the way.

When I first applied to The Current Sauce, I wanted to be the fashion columnist because it was a topic that I knew so much about, and a form of journalism that I could see myself doing. I was skeptical though. I was not a good writer; I didn't like writing and I feared that I would be judged for my lack of knowledge of journalism.

I feared for no reason.

I was surrounded by the most supportive and motivating students and faculty that wouldn't ridicule me for my zero experience, but people who taught me and encouraged me along the way. I found a family and something that I thoroughly enjoyed doing.

Writing about fashion was one of my favorite things, but then it came time to try something new. I wanted to branch out and learn more about journalism and experience something new, so I took on the challenge of being the Arts and Living Editor.

Taking on this position was one of the most challenging but fulfilling experiences I had ever had. Being able to connect with students, clubs and people around campus and the community was something that I cherished and loved. Doing this for a semester and a half was so fulfilling, but yet again I wanted change, and I wanted more responsibility. This led me to the Copy Editor position.

I had worked my way up and gained the responsibility to work alongside my Editor-in-Chief, Lia Portillo. Portillo took a chance on me allowing me to learn



Photo by Haley Wiggins. When I first applied to The Current Sauce, I wanted to be the fashion columnist because it was a topic that I knew so much about, and a form of journalism that I could see myself doing.

and grow in a way that I hadn't done before.

Accountability, consistency and communication are three major lessons that I have learned that I plan on keeping holding onto for the rest of my career.

Holding on to accountability and making sure that I own up to my mistakes is what helped me improve the most. What I have learned is that you will get farther in your career and journey if you are honest with yourself and the people around you. We all make mistakes and fall behind at some point, which is fine, but being able to own up to that is what will make you stronger and a stronger worker.

Consistency, when working for a newspaper, is a big key. You must stay on top of everything and allow yourself to have a schedule that will keep you going and keep you consistent.

I used to not be consistent and that held me back and didn't allow people to trust me as much as they should. But once you change that and prove it to others around you, you gain newfound respect from your co-workers.

Lastly communication, this one is self-explanatory yet one of the most important parts. I was prone to failing at communication, after realizing that

if I want to be taken seriously, I needed to communicate better. Once I did, it made my life so much easier.

I hold these three lessons close to my heart to make me a better writer and co-worker. Without learning these lessons, I would not be where I am with The Current Sauce now.

I want to say thank you to everyone that I have worked with on staff, every person I interviewed and every story I got to share. I am beyond blessed for this experience and the lessons that I have been taught and cannot wait for my future and what is to come.

## Fall '24 Student Media Applications are OPEN!

**Date Opens: Monday, April 1, 2024**

**Date Close: Monday, April 15, 2024**

**Mandatory Retreat Dates:**  
**Friday, August 16, 2024, & Saturday, August 17, 2024**

**Organizations:**  
The Current Sauce - Student Newspaper  
KNWD - Student Radio Station  
Potpourri - Student Yearbook



**Contact Matthew Craig for more information, [craigm@nsula.edu](mailto:craigm@nsula.edu)**

## VIEWPOINTS

# Is Louisiana up for the test against an El Niño Winter? (Don't let your home be the decider)

BY DESTIN LOPEZ | NOV. 30, 2023

**W**inter is approaching, and while most Louisiana winters don't bring drastic changes, this year's El Niño could bring dire consequences. Louisianians might need more than jackets and pants to brave the cold.

An El Niño winter, coupled with the state's lack of preparations for icy conditions, may leave many in undesirable and unlivable conditions without essential resources. Will Louisiana's infrastructure, designed for extreme heat, cope with a harsh winter?

El Niño is a weather phenomenon when the central Pacific Ocean's sea temperatures are warmer than average. This leads to cooler and wetter conditions in the southern United States, especially Louisiana, due to the Gulf of Mexico. When wet and cold mix, ice forms, creating extremely dangerous conditions that many native Louisiana residents do not know how to navigate.

An example is our water infrastructure's vulnerability. Louisiana pipes are not built to last for long periods of freezing temperatures. Unlike northern states where pipes are commonly in basements or insulated so they can stay warm year-round. Louisiana's exposed pipes can burst, leaving families without water, a basic necessity. Little things can be done to try to prevent this, like running water on days with freezing temperatures, nothing can prevent it fully, leaving households vulnerable.

Another example of unpreparedness is the lack of education for Louisiana drivers on how to navigate icy conditions. Snow tires are not as popular and readily available in the South as they are in states with guaranteed snow and ice every winter. When snow falls in Louisiana, especially South Louisiana, school cancellations are common because most residents cannot drive in snowy conditions, no matter how little it is. Untrained drivers on the road during rough weather with low visibility is a recipe for disaster.

When everyone is cold, residents tend to run their heating systems, unless you are in the percentage of Louisiana residents who do not have a heating system at all. If you have a gas system, running it constantly could leave a high gas bill and a warm house. However, with electric heating systems, every state resident running heat non-stop could overwhelm the power grid, resulting in power outages, with no power and no heat: both dark and cold.

The colder the winter, the higher the strain on the power grid, leaving many wondering how much it can take before it gives out. While generators can be life-saving, they can also be extremely dangerous if not used correctly, as seen evident in the recent case of a 3-month-old found dead from carbon monoxide poisoning in a New Orleans home after a generator was used inside the house. Carbon monoxide is odorless and cannot be seen, so it is especially dangerous; generators should only be used outside.

Winter storms bring destruction, knocking anything down in their path. With Louisiana's outdated power lines



Graphic by Naomi Adams.  
Louisiana pipes are not built to last for long periods of freezing temperatures

built on wooden poles above ground leaving them vulnerable. These power lines are susceptible to being knocked down, blocking roads and causing delays.

The question arises: when will our officials winterize our Pelican State? Louisiana can take steps to be better prepared for winter, including major infrastructure updates such as insulating pipes, upgrading heating systems and reinforcing the power grid. Additionally, making the public aware of possible dangers and learning how to prepare for winter is a necessary step.

With a new governor taking office in January, mid-winter, we can only hope that the state has a well-planned emergency response plan. This plan should include hiring workers for salting roads, clearing snow, shutting down icy roads and delivering emergency supplies in case of shortages. During hard times, residents should be able to trust their state government to get them to the other side of the season. News outlets need to give the latest weather updates constantly, preparing the public for what is to come. In times where a state of weather emergency is called, our state government should alert the public, giving ample time to prepare.

As El Niño brings a unique level of concern this year, residents should take proactive measures. Stock up on essentials like food, water and supplies to power your house, such as gas or firewood. Have blankets, warm clothes, candles, flashlights, batteries and lighters ready. Plan ways to contact loved ones without internet and power, and devise methods to keep necessary medicines cold without power.

In anticipation of winter, it is important to protect yourself and your family. Be sure smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors are functional, have a first aid kit ready and take care of vulnerable populations. Finally, try to stay warm and take care of the elderly, heed warnings and act responsibly.

<https://purplemedianetwork.com/16797/showcase/is-louisiana-up-for-the-test-against-an-el-nino-winter-dont-let-your-home-be-the-decider/>

**ECO's Earth Day Butterfly Release**

**Monday  
4/22/24  
4:00pm  
Student Union  
Plaza**

# A YEAR TO REMEMBER

PHOTOS BY ALESSA CONEO



PHOTOS BY NAYDU DAZA MAYA

PHOTOS BY LIA PORTILLO



PHOTOS BY LLUVIA GUILLOT