A Few Parting Words...

Our last issue of Deconstruction. Ever. As freshmen four years ago, we never thought this day would arrive. The end comes with a melancholic jumble of both sadness and relief. As Publicity Director and Cultural Editor (as well as Writers/ Copy Editors/ Artists/ Readers/ Supporters/ Overall DEcon Lovers) it is hard to believe that we will never again be a part of such an eclectic publication with a staff just as eclectic and wonderful. While the poignancy of the final issue is overwhelming, we are relieved that we will never again have to scramble to pull articles together, pull a cover out of thin air or have to see the inside of the Morris Library Mac Lab… Relieved that we are able to graduate on May 30th and leave the future of DEcon in capable hands.

This final issue of DEcon almost didn’t happen. The overwhelming stress of classes, exams, jobs etc. really gripped us all, however, we knew that ending our time here at UD without a final issue just wasn’t right. Thanks to a select few, we were able to pull this compilation together and present it to you. We want to thank you all for being loyal readers and supporters these past couple of years and hope that you will continue to read, contribute and enjoy Deconstruction after we are gone.

Consider this issue as toast to the future, though foggy and unpredictable it may seem. As daunting as it sounds, we all will be moving on, leaving the Blue Hen nest Delaware has so kindly provided for us and bravely taking flight into the real world. This one is for the seniors, Class of 2009, good luck, have fun out there, and please don’t forget DEcon and your time here at UD!

Peace Love and Happiness,

Kathryn Santora
and Jess Eisenbrey
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Check Out the Deconstruction Web Site and Blog at:
http://copland.udel.edu/stu-org/DeconMag/
http://deconstruction.wordpress.com/
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## FEATURES...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Non-Profits You Might Not Know About (But Should!)</td>
<td>Jessica Eisenbry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Eggs For Sale</td>
<td>Kathryn Santora</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Who Are You and What Do You Do? Contemporary Problems in Journalism</td>
<td>Danielle Pro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The Real Stars of Slumdog Millionaire: Where Are They Now?</td>
<td>Claire Gould</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>The Rescue</td>
<td>Sarah Forst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>UD Student Aid Groups</td>
<td>Sarah Forst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>The Art of Looking Middle Class</td>
<td>Claire Gould</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Let’s Go WWOOF!</td>
<td>Rachel Smucker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>How iPods Keep Us From Socializing</td>
<td>Jessica Sorentino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Dressing for Delaware</td>
<td>Sara Fabryka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>What Matters Most in Life</td>
<td>Megan Richards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>There’s a New Princess in the Castle</td>
<td>Evie Hayman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Childbirth in Crisis: America Needs a Midwife</td>
<td>Rachel Smucker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Just Dance!</td>
<td>Megan Richards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## REVIEWS...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Manchester Orchestra</td>
<td>Karen Dieso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Potstickers: A Restaurant Review</td>
<td>Jessica Victor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4
So you’ve gotten your tax rebate check back, and although you might want to spend it all on drinks at Kildare’s and calzones from D.P. Dough, you start to wonder what other options are available. Here are just a few nonprofit organizations, both local and global, that are more than worthy of your hard-earned money.

Non-Profits You Might Not

By Jessica Eisenbrey

1) The Mocha Club (www.mochaclub.org)

This organization believes in changing the world for the same amount of money you might pay for two mocha lattes at Starbucks. I learned about this organization from Matt Wertz at his recent concert in Philadelphia. He said the Mocha Club was started as a way for people to make an impact in Africa without feeling obligated to give thousands of dollars. The website allows users to start a team of friends, family members and co-workers, encouraging them all to donate just $7 a month. If you donate $7 a month, you can feed one person in Africa for a month, educate two children for one school term, save one person’s life from malaria, and provide clean water to seven Africans for one year.

As broke college students, it’s tough to feel like we can make any sort of impact on the problems occurring in Africa. But I think even we could skip out on buying a couple of caramel frappaccinos this month and sign up for the Mocha Club instead!

2) TOMS Shoes (www.tomsshoes.com)

Though this organization is considered a for-profit company, its leaders aren’t flying their private jets to Key West for the weekends, I can assure you. In 2006, Blake Mycoskie traveled to Argentina and met several children there whom he noticed had no shoes on to protect their feet. Though shoes might not seem like a necessity for children living in poverty, they can help prevent the spread of diseases, namely parasites, and provide invaluable protection to children against cuts and scrapes on their feet as they walk on unsafe roads.

The TOMS website offers several pairs of shoes, t-shirts, hoodies, hats and even skateboard decks that, when purchased, help provide at least one pair of shoes to a child in need. The concept is called One for One and is not only creative but also admirable.
5) The Fresh Air Fund
(www.freshair.org)

According to The Fresh Air Fund’s website, this organization has been giving inner-city children the joy of a summer vacation since 1877. This unique program offers kids the opportunity to experience a different atmosphere than the noisy and often dangerous cities they are used to living in, even if just for a summer. Families can volunteer to host children (if you’re from Delaware or another northeastern state, encourage your parents to do this!) or kids can choose to attend one of five camps in upstate New York.

Through the website, visitors can make donations, sign up to host a child or apply to become a camp counselor.

As college students, we might not feel like we can make any real impact within our own nation or in others. But if we educate ourselves and learn about the different organizations out there, we can offer what little time, money or other resources we have to make a difference.
I have always been an entrepreneur. As a kid my lemonade stand, complete with Pillsbury chocolate chip cookies, brought in twice the revenue as my down-the-block competitors. My own business savvy told me to increase rates on warmer summer days, and to offer a ‘two cups for three dollars’ deal to the construction workers across the street. I was suave. I always had a personal table at the neighbor’s yard sales selling anything from old storybooks to hand-drawn works of art. One year I decided I would be a jewelry designer, found a couple of investors (my wonderful parents) and whipped up about 200 hemp bracelets, which I later sold at the elementary school craft fair. Even as a 7 year old I had a smart sense for business and was extremely successful (I pulled in a good $25 a week at those summertime lemonade stands). My adorably youthful pigtails and toothless smiles may have had a hand in my high sales, but hey, there is nothing wrong with a little bit of competitive marketing. Regardless, I knew how to work it.

Thirteen years later I have not lost the moneymaking fervor, but lemonade and cookies just won’t cut it anymore. For the past couple of months I have been looking for a real-world, non-citrus drink job – with no avail. With the job market looking as somber as ever I am considering reverting back to my pre-pubescent entrepreneurial mindset. But what to sell? I can still weave a mean hemp bracelet, but the school craft fair just isn’t my scene anymore.

What is readily available and in relatively high demand? Eggs. Human eggs. I have thousands of them just lying around doing me no good, so why not try to unload them on people in need?

Egg donation has been around since the 1980’s and provides women in economic distress a way to independently support themselves. Each donated egg can offer a paycheck starting at $5,000 and in some areas a one-time harvest may pay up to twelve grand. In today’s economy everyone is looking for that extra dollar. 12,000 extra dollars sounds like a gift from God. Whether it is the poor job market or an increase in self-dependent 20-somethings, the news of egg donation’s economic possibilities is rapidly spreading and women across the country are becoming more aware of the possibility. In fact, there is an egg donation advertisement each week in UD’s newspaper, The Review.
However it is not just the overwhelmingly large check that lures in a potential donor. An egg, as microscopic as it is, can build a family and provide a lifetime of happiness. It can fill the empty void for a childless couple and potentially fix failing marriages. Not only does the donation of an egg provide the donor a period of financial freedom, but also it is a good deed that may honestly change someone’s life for the better.

There is a lengthy process and intense screening procedure that goes along with becoming a potential egg donor. The ideal donor is between 21 and 35 years of age, is physically fit, does not smoke, and must be free of any hereditary disease. First an application form must be completed along with an interview. If accepted and matched with an anonymous family, the long donation process begins.

It is not as easy for women to donate as it is for men. We can’t just read a magazine, squirt our eggs in a cup, be done and go to lunch. Female egg donation is a long, and at times a painful process. After the initial medical screenings and blood tests the donor begins an injected hormone regiment with two drugs, Lupron, which will suppress her monthly cycle, and a follicle-stimulating hormone that increases the number of mature eggs able to be harvested. Once the eggs are matured they are harvested by aspiration (“gentle” vacuum removal). The donor is put under light anesthesia and is expected to recover in about one day.

Donation is a long and at times painful practice. It can take six to eight weeks before the eggs are ready to be harvested. In that time the donor must go to regular screenings where blood will be drawn and she will be injected with more hormones. Egg donation is definitely not for the needle-phobic. There are also risk factors involved with being an egg donor. The hormone regiment has been known to cause ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome, when ovaries become enlarged. It is a very painful and uncomfortable condition that usually reverts back to normal when the hormone treatment ends. There are also short-term risks including bloating, weight gain and abdominal pain.

While there are many positives to egg donation, it begs the question, is it reasonable to put your own health and physical comfort at risk to earn a bit of money? While the 12 grand paycheck swings in front of my face, I find it hard to believe that so many women are willing to sell a part of themselves, go through months of pain and discomfort just to have their name written on that hefty check. Although there are moral benefits, call me cynical, but I do not think there are too many selfless people out there willing to donate without thinking about the payoff.

It is distressing that we are in a time of such financial anguish that egg donation is a real possibility for some people. I will not deny that the recipients of the egg are extremely fortunate and some aspects of donation are constructive; however, to me the pain, distress and time commitment outweigh the positives. Sacrificing my body for a couple of thousand dollars is just not worth it, and I hope never to be a situation where donation would be an actual financial option. For now, I will continue to channel my 7-year-old lemonade selling self. If you see me setting up shop out on the green, stop by and have a cup. Maybe I’ll even give you that 2-for-5 deal.

For more information on egg donation go to the NAFG website, www.assistedfertility.com
Who Are You and What Do You Do?

Contemporary Problems in Journalism

By: Danielle Pro

It is practically impossible to decide who is a journalist anymore. Is my all-time favorite anchor Charlie Gibson a journalist? Naturally my answer is a resounding, “of course,” but despite my obvious bias I believe others would agree. It seems evident Gibson is a journalist since he delivers a newscast each night filled with information that is of the public interest.

Let’s pick a more difficult example: Perez Hilton. Arguments can be made that he is a bona-fide journalist. He writes about timely events that are newsworthy enough to obtain a large following. Is it a problem that the breadth of his content is celebrities and Hollywood? A simple retort is that even the 5 o’clock news has a “People” or “Entertainment” segment that covers the very same people Perez Hilton editorializes. Or, is the problem that Perez Hilton blogs? As of yesterday Oprah Winfrey (a household name who defies the need to even be questioned about her journalist status) twittered. I am arguing for argument’s sake. I would never consider Perez Hilton a journalist but I can see how an argument can be constructed in opposition, and, herein resides the problem.

There is certain ability to provide news in a way that is not too easy or too complicated. It feels like some broadcast news stations are “dumbing down” to be more accessible to the general public. In fact, the desire to reach more of an audience is probably the rationale behind the puzzling MSNBC update crawl. While I do not agree with simplifying news, some news feels too complicated. The Wall Street Journal is a technical business newspaper that appeals mainly to people in the financial sector. The newspaper never changed its format to appeal to a large audience.
If the general public has difficulty identifying who are journalists, the general public probably also has trouble reckoning with the role of the journalist. Unfortunately, technology is exacerbating this problem. I am currently interning for a half hour public broadcast news show twice a week. Part of the job is to constantly consume news. In the office there are two televisions that are always set to different channels. One side of the room watches CNN while the other watches MSNBC. First day on the job I fatefully chose the CNN turf and now find myself to be a journalism student who is constantly questioning what I expect out of journalists these days.

Let me paint you a picture and perhaps my dilemma will make more sense. Sometimes the morning show consists of absolute chaotic commotion. The screen is split; on one side is the anchor, dressed in a distracting and unflattering outfit accessorized by the largest hoop earrings an earlobe can support. On the other side of the screen are three eager faces of reporters who are going to deliver their health, business, and international segments. The graphics department enlarges the face of the person giving the tease for the “coming up” and makes the other faces smaller simultaneously. This process happens for each of the three reporters. Meanwhile there is a crawl along the bottom that gives “updates.” The term updates is facetious because the information is so cryptic it is practically indecipherable. My new favorite update: man found in Guatemala. To make this crawl charade even more comic, more often than not, the story was never initially covered by the network to warrant said update. Needless to say I am overwhelmed.
Unfortunately, my only other option is to be underwhelmed. The latest craze to hit the news world is citizen journalism. In the old days (at least the ones I have read about) citizen journalism meant that people submitted news tips or made themselves available for interviews and insights into current news stories. Nowadays everyday people are the reporters and photographers for the news. Cell phone cameras and digital photography provide pictures and video that airs during any news broadcast as if it is professional video. In addition to cell phone cameras, webcams are a new way for citizens to contribute to the newsroom. If I am not overwhelmed by the anarchy of the top of the hour tease I am underwhelmed by the random woman from Suburbia, U.S.A. ranting into her webcam about her feelings on the current state of the housing market as part of a new “You Tell Us” segment. Clearly this woman is not a journalist, nor has she been presented as such, but what exactly am I supposed to do with the information and opinions she presents?

Maybe I am getting closer to discovering the role I feel that journalists should play in this game called the news. It isn’t simply that a journalist should not wear distracting jewelry or should do everything opposite of the peeved webcam operator. My concerns about on-camera appearance aside, my problem with citizen journalism is that it lacks the skill essential to a career in news: the ability to disseminate useful information to a demanding public.

There is a balance. News can be presented in a way that appeals to the average person, somewhere in the middle of webcam woman and specialized newspapers. So far this is the only rule of thumb I have devised: if you have found a form of news that you can understand and trust, stick with it. Personally, I’m a 6:00 news kind of girl. The big four networks produce succinct, timely, and smart news. The New York Times online edition is another good option. It’s free, easy to navigate, and has just the right balance of understandable yet academic articles. Parsing through news is part of the process of being a good citizen. The watchdog function works in two ways now: journalists keep an eye on the government and we keep an eye on the journalists. Proliferation is the sign of the times. There is so much news out there and even though we don’t know who is a journalist and we can’t precisely verbalize what we want, there are plenty of options.
By now almost everyone has heard of “Slumdog Millionaire”, the Bollywood-turned-Hollywood movie about a boy pulled from the slums to win big on “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire.” “Slumdog” won eight Oscars this year and has managed to rack up 77 other awards and 27 nominations, according to imdb.com. Critics loved it, audiences enjoyed it, and the actors have been catapulted to stardom.

Or have they?

While the “Slumdog” children (the younger incarnations of the main characters, who some think are the real stars of the movie) are certainly famous now, that seems to be all their stardom has brought them. Their story seems to have all the makings of traditional rags-to-riches fairytales:

“two kids get pulled out of the horrible poverty they are living in to become big stars and walk the red carpet.”

The kids are Azharuddin Mohammed Ismail and Rubina Ali, who play little Jamal and little Latika in the movie. Mysteriously, there is no information available about the other four “Slumdog” children—nothing about their background or where they are now.

Still, what we know about Azharuddin and Rubina isn’t a fairytale. The filmmakers debated whether to even use kids from the slums. “Part of your brain thinks, would it distort their lives too much?” said director Danny Boyle to Erika Kinetz of the Associated Press. “Then someone said, “These people have so much prejudice against them in their lives. Why should we be prejudiced against them as well?”

Things seemed to be going well at first: the movie was met with blockbuster ticket sales and excited critical reviews, ending in its nomination for 10 Academy Awards. But at first it seemed that the two eight-year-old stars would not be able to attend. “I am worried that after the Oscars are over, they will forget us and no one will be interested,” Rubina’s mother told the Indo-Asian news service (the Indian equivalent of AP). She requested the plane fares be given to her instead to spend on other things. Azharuddin apparently didn’t know his Oscar dreams were about to be dashed, telling reporters “I am going to the Oscars. It is very exciting. I am practicing my English for it.”
At the last minute, the two children were allowed to attend, telling Ryan Seacrest on the red carpet that the experience is “unbelievable” and that they loved talking to Angelina Jolie, one of the only stars the children recognized. The children were given new clothes for the event and then stayed in California for some downtime with director Danny Boyle. They walked along the pier in Santa Monica and took a trip to Disney Land, where the children tried out the rides, signed autographs, and posed for a well publicized photo with Mickey Mouse.

But that was the end of the fairytale. Rubina and Azharuddin were returned to their homes in the slums.

For those of you who didn’t see the movie... the slums of Mumbai are the very definition of squalor. To call each dwelling a house might be pushing it. The slums are layers of tiny shacks, a lot like a house of cards made with sheet metal and boards. There is no electricity, no running water, and the only heat for cooking comes from open fires. All the trash ends up in huge piles that grow and grow. Sewage runs through the streets. Thousands upon thousands of people can live in less than one square mile.

The Indian government says almost 65 million Indians live in these conditions.

At any second, the government can bring bulldozers and destroy the entire community, an event that happens with some regularity, but it doesn’t stop the slums from returning. These people have nowhere else to go.

Azharrudin returned to find his slum home demolished. Now he sleeps under a plastic sheet on the side of a railway track, with his father who suffers from tuberculosis. Rubina was returned to the tiny shack she shares with her parents (her father broke his leg in an accident and cannot work) and siblings, just feet from an open sewer. The smell is everywhere, CNN reports, of sewage and sweat, garbage and burning plastic. “I’ve been praying for a new home for a long time,” Rubina told Mallika Kapur of CNN. “It’s up to Allah now.”

The producers paid the children a lump sum for their work but have not disclosed to the media how much it is, for fear the children will be exploited. Their parents are claiming Azharrudin
was paid less than $2500, and Rubina about $700, according to the London Telegraph. The producers enrolled them in a school called Aseema, a non-profit English-language school for underprivileged kids, according to an AP article on February 22. If they attend until they are 18, they get access to trust funds in their names. The film company is paying for a rickshaw to take the kids to school every day. They told the British newspaper Daily Mail that they had paid the families to buy better housing, but the families gave the money to brokers who disappeared with it. “The families just aren’t equipped to deal with that kind of money,” producer Christian Colson told the Daily Mail. Director Danny Boyle added, "The producers have promised to move the families into apartments nearby the communities they feel comfortable in. These would be real apartments, costing about 20,000 pounds each, with electricity, plumbing, brick walls and proper ceilings: things the children have seen but never really experienced. The Mumbai housing association has said it also wants to buy the children decent places to live because they brought Oscars to India. Many critics say this is just a political move for the upcoming election and that the producers are the children’s last best hope. If the filmmakers do buy the families apartments, they will retain ownership until the children are 18 and can handle the leases themselves. The parents will never have ownership of the leases, according to an AP article on February 22.

It’s a good thing, too. It turns out the parents of at least Rubina can’t be trusted. Her father has been accused of trying to sell her for $300,000 to a sheikh in Dubai. According to allheadlinenews.com, the father denies the allegation. “I politely said Rubina is happy with me and wanted to leave. After this they made me an offer of money in English which I didn’t understand.” Rubina still wants to live with her father. Some papers, however, like Britain’s News of the World, does not believe her father’s denials. The selling of children is common practice in impoverished societies, as 11 million children are abandoned each year in India and many are sold in sexual or physical slavery. The sheikh in question insists that he just wanted a daughter to love, according to a News of the World article on April 19. Rubina is currently back with her family and the deal appears to be off.

The filmmakers are not just focusing on these two children, however, as there are countless others that need to be helped. According to The Australian, on April 17, $1 million of the proceeds from the movie are going to PLAN, an international children’s charity that has been working in India for 30 years. The movie made $445 million, and if you take into account that production costs were at least $146 million, this leaves quite a bit of profit for the producers. This doesn’t include the trust fund and the costs of the apartments, but still, it must be asked:

Are we doing enough too? It’s easy sometimes to think that poverty only exists in the movies, to think that kids don’t really live on trash heaps and next to open sewers, that they have never had electricity or plumbing or even an education. But this is reality for hundreds of thousands of children, not just in the Mumbai slums but children in poverty all over the world.

We who have so much have some ways we can help these children who have nothing. Donate to www.savethechildren.org or sponsor a child through www.worldvision.org; www.children.org and www.mercycorps.org are also reputable organizations that help children and adults in poverty around the world. If you would like to help specifically in India, go to http://indiafocus.indiainfo.com/society_and_culture/ngo/ for a list of charities. Make sure you do your homework, however, because as seen in the movie, not all charities are reputable.

"We want the kids to have more than wealth, we want them to have the skills that will set them up for life."
Imagine: thousands of people in over one hundred cities across the world, gathered together on one night for the same cause. The cause? Rescuing the child soldiers of Uganda and ending the war there that has caused the deaths of thousands of people. The night was April 25th, 2009.

Organized by Invisible Children, “The Rescue of Joseph Kony’s Child Soldiers” was designed to raise awareness about the situation in Uganda and to create change. Over the last 23 years, Joseph Kony, Lord’s Resistance Army leader and mastermind, has overseen the abduction of over 30,000 children and forced them to commit genocide. In the past, this atrocity received very little media attention and therefore very little action. The Rescue sought to break this silence, and it succeeded. Senators, representatives, and even President Obama will be receiving thousands of letters urging them to take action. Cultural moguls ranging from Oprah Winfrey to Pete Wentz showed up at Rescue events across the country to show their support and bring attention to the events. Participants stayed up all night, cheering and dancing whenever goals were reached, which included getting the media to cover the event, and raising a certain amount of funds.

The Rescue was a huge success and brought a lot of attention to the plight of the child soldiers in Uganda, but the war is not over yet, and there is still much to be done. Check out Invisible Children at www.Invisiblechildren.com, or join one of the student groups here at UD to help those in Uganda and across the world!
If you’re interested in helping others in need around the world, UD offers plenty of opportunities for you to do so. We may be known as an apathetic university, but there are several very passionate groups on campus that are socially conscious. At times the number of groups and clubs might get a little confusing, so here’s an easy guide to the student aid groups on campus:

**STAND** is a student-run anti-genocide coalition and is the student version of the Genocide Intervention Network. It originally focused on ending the genocide in Darfur, but it has now expanded to trying to help end all genocides. The group raises awareness and funds throughout the year with events such as Dinner for Darfur and Mock IDP (Internally Displaced People) camps. This group will be a great fit for you if you like working with a mid-sized group (25-40 people at most meetings) and are passionate about ending genocide. It meets on Mondays at 6:00 in Gore Room 102.

**Uganda Untold** is a group dedicated to raising awareness about and helping those in, as you might have guessed, Uganda. According to their website www.udel.edu/stu-org/uganda, they “fundraise for several charities that will bring peace and stability for all parties involved in the twenty-two year conflict in northern Uganda.” The group also supports and promotes the organization Invisible Children, which works to end the war in Uganda and the abduction of child soldiers. If you are particularly concerned with the situation in Uganda and support Invisible Children, this group will be perfect for you. They meet on Thursdays at 6:30 in Gore Room 318.

**Amnesty International** at UD is the student chapter of a worldwide organization that works for human rights, including an end to torture and executions, as well as fair and prompt trials for political prisoners. You can learn more at http://udel.edu/stu-org/amnesty/about/.

Of course, you don’t have to pick just one of these groups. Many members of these groups overlap, and they often work together for events such as this spring’s “Discover*Understand*Change”.
The Art of Finding the Middle Class

By Claire Gould

They are the people we love to hate. Every school has them; they’re the boys who wear nothing but Lacoste and Ralph Lauren, play golf on the weekends and drive a BMW; they’re the girls with multiple genuine Coach bags, credit cards with no limit and that $200 sweater from Anthropologie that they just “happened” to leave the tag on.

But now, as the economy is taking a downturn and populist anger is building against the financial bigwigs responsible for this crisis, showing off how rich you are seems a little… well, tacky. With unemployment at 8.5% in March and more and more Americans struggling just to pay their electric bill, telling people how much you pay your butler just doesn’t seem worth it. The rich everywhere are recognizing it and cutting back on their ostentatious spending… at least a little bit.

The biggest example of this is Sharon Baum, one of the top real estate agents with Corcoran Group Real Estate in Manhattan. She is usually driven around the city by her chauffeur, Abdul Jaffeer. Her car: a huge forest green Rolls Royce.

“We’ve had a great time with this car,” Baum told the New York Times for an article on March 2. “But now, with the recession, it’s not an appropriate time – nor do I want to be riding around in a Rolls Royce.”

She’s planning on being chauffeured in her Audi station wagon instead. She said she’ll probably just put her Rolls Royce in storage, paying the monthly fee: in essence, paying to look like she isn’t rich. To avoid the expense, she’s currently looking for someone buying a new, less-ostentatious car to “car-swap” with (even though she’d be losing money on that trade, too). I volunteer!

It’s not just Baum giving up her luxury wheels, however. In an article on February 21, AutoBlog reported that luxury car sales have declined by at least one-third this year. The rich are opting for Lexus and Mercedes instead, even going for some less expensive hybrids to replace their “I’ve got money” statement with an “I’m eco-friendly” one. Of course, some of the decline in sales is because bankers, financial analysts, and real estate agents are losing their jobs in the languishing economy; but those who still have lots to spend have decided that running the risk of having their beautiful Aston Martin pelted with eggs as they roll down the street just isn’t worth it anymore.

But hey, if you don’t mind the risk, now might be a great time to pick up one of those flashy luxury cars while companies scramble to find buyers.

Cars aren’t the only place the rich are scaling down. Vacations are also becoming a little less private island and a little more hotel spa.

“Luxury shame is very real,” says travel industry analyst Henry Harteveldt of Forrester Research, in an article for USA TODAY on March 6. “When your neighbors are losing their jobs and you’re doing well, you don’t flaunt your success. Of course, there are still people who will continue to enjoy the fruits of their success. They may still rent the beachfront home and continue to fly in the G5 and tool around in the leased Bentley, but they’re not going to go home and brag that that’s what they did on vacation.”

That’s why former Securities and Exchange Commission head Arthur Levitt canceled a spring trip to eastern Asia, because, he said, “I don’t feel right about spending large sums of money in this environment.”

Travel agents have even found their clients prefer to take taxis from the airport to the hotel instead of a chauffeured car, even though it costs the same, and ordering expensive wines and champagnes to their hotel room instead of ordering them at restaurants.
And even though some rich clients aren’t cutting back at all, they’re telling their friends that they did: saying they went skiing in Colorado instead of Switzerland, or that they cut back their trip by a week out of compassion for the poor plebeians, even if they did no such thing.

Speaking of skiing, according to Newser on April 22nd, a parking spot in Vail, Colorado close to its famous ski slopes is going for $500,000. Buyers are already interested. True, the space is heated and indoors and only a block from the list. 15-20 people are already interested in a “cheaper” space a little further away, selling for $385,000.

Ah, life must be hard when you’re rolling in the Benjamins.

Of course, there are some rich people who just resent the poor for putting us in this mess. Marc Sperling is the president of an equity trading company. He is only 36, but he just bought himself a $4 million apartment (he already has two others, $2.5 million each).

“I don’t want to sound harsh, but the people who were buying million-dollar houses with a combined household income of $70,000 or $80,000 were the ones who were chasing easy money,” he told the New York Times for their “Despite Tough Times, Ultrarich Keep Spending” article on April 14. The Times called this “inverse class resentment.”

We shouldn’t get too mad at those poor souls; their spending will hopefully kick-start the economy for the rest of us. And they might die young.

And some of the super-rich’s efforts to be less ostentatious are useful to the rest of us.

Fashion, for instance, is moving heavily towards American designers, who are usually cheaper than their European counterparts. Michelle Obama and the Obama girls started the trend with their J. Crew and their Donna Karan, but now it’s been picked up by online retailers as well as boutiques. “I skipped the last buying trip to Paris altogether,” says Erin Crandall, head buyer of designer collections for online retail site ShopBop.com, in a Slate article in May of last year. “The cost of the trip would have outweighed the money we’d have made on the lines.” So get ready to see more Diana von Furstenberg and Alexander Wang, making it so much more affordable to look like the well-dressed rich and their celebrity friends.

Designers are getting more practical, too, as their main audience moves away from pieces that shout needlessly. Used to creating haut couture for fashion buffs with more money than sense, designers are now having to create pieces that look less flashy (even if they cost the same price). The same Slate article describes how “in the fall collections, showcased in New York earlier this spring, editors and buyers sensed a move toward minimalism and even austerity.

“There’s a mood: It doesn’t feel right to show things that are overly opulent or steeped in luxury, in light of everything going on in the world,” says Hope Greenberg, fashion director of Lucky magazine.” This makes it even easier to pretend that black skirt you bought at Kohl’s was walking the runway only weeks ago on a gorgeous model.

Some ultra rich are even rewear some clothing! The horror! In a New York Times article by Shaila Dewan entitled “Extravagance Has Its Limits As Belt-Tightening Trickles Up” is the story of Sacha Taylor, a “gala woman” who hops charity event to charity event. She went through her closet this week and found a gorgeous 10 year old dress she hadn’t worn again since. She’s used to buying a new dress for every gala, but this year it just seemed… frivolous. Ethel Knox, the wife of a pediatrician, was also interviewed. She recently cleaned out her home and donated all the things she had in storage. She also gave away an old car to a needy friend. “I just feel so decadent with all the stuff I’ve got,” she said.

Monica Dioda Hagedorn, a 40-year-old lawyer who is married to the heir of the Miracle-Gro fortune, summed it up best. “It’s disrespectful to the people who don’t have much to flaunt your wealth.” Good call, Monica. Rich haters, stand down. The rich are at least trying not to rub it in our faces anymore- and it’s for their own safety, because when the angry pitchfork-waving mob arrives, with this downgrading going on, the rich will be much harder to spot.
When Sue Coppard wanted to learn more about organic farming, she simply asked her fellow Britons for help. 

“I put a small ad in Time Out, and 15 people answered,” Coppard wrote in an article for The Guardian in March 2006. “Two of them went with me and the farm managers made us do what is known as housework: clearing encroaching brambles and cleaning out ditches. It was idyllic. By the end of the weekend, the farm managers said we could come back whenever we wanted.”

Coppard’s system of free exchange farming would continue for some time before it developed into the mega-network known today as World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF), a nonprofit organization that facilitates the connection between willing worker and organic farmer. The program operates on a strictly voluntary basis; in fact, farmers are not permitted to pay their workers with anything other than lodging, nourishment, and ideas.

Thirty-eight years after Coppard’s initial experience with organic farming, WWOOF has firmly established itself as one of the world’s largest and most trusted organizations for those looking to both travel and learn more about the organic way of life. More than 40 countries currently have their own autonomous WWOOF organizations, including Argentina, India, Bulgaria and New Zealand. Fifty-five other countries are home to WWOOF Independents, individual host farmers in countries that lack a national WWOOF organization.

While each country differs slightly in its way of supporting WWOOFers and host farmers, there are basic principles that all WWOOF organizations are required to follow. In 2000, representatives from 15 countries met in England for the first International WWOOF Conference, where they officially established guidelines, goals, and further means of support for all national WWOOF organizations. Though some of the WWOOFing “rules” established at the conference are practically impossible to uphold (e.g., “members should have an interest in organic principles and be willing to learn,” says the conference report), others have helped organize and create universal WWOOF standards.

“I found out about WWOOF through my friend who worked in Italy,” said Paige Nuzzolillo, an undergraduate at the University of Connecticut who plans to WWOOF in Spain at the end of the
semester. “I’m extremely interested in the rural side of Spain, and wanted to be able to practice my Spanish further… The experience will be one that will allow me to gain more knowledge on the diversity of Spain as a country.”

Though Nuzzolillo plans to be in Spain for only one week, many WWOOFers choose to stay on a farm for a month or more, depending on their rapport with the host farmers. Many farms look for WWOOFers during specific time periods, such as the harvest, or for particular tasks (e.g., clearing out a large patch of land, repairing a fence, shearing sheep, etc.).

For those of us whose barn-building skills are not yet fully honed, there are options. Each national WWOOF organization provides a website or booklet for interested WWOOFers that contains information on every host farm in the country, including details such as the type of tasks, people, and climate with which the WWOOFer chooses to work; there are no “assigned” WWOOFers. For a small fee (usually about $30), anyone can have access to this and to the contact information for each farmer.

France, for instance, has so many host farms that it offers a clickable map on its website (www.wwoof.fr) that enables viewers to search for hosts in a specific region. Knowledgable searching can allow curious WWOOFers to narrow down their interests without having to scroll through the hundreds of farms. An interest in olive trees, for example, would probably steer you to Provence, rather than to Paris. Knowing this limits the search to only several dozen farms.

As with any interpersonal (and international) exchange, some caution must be exercised, especially while traipsing solo across the French countryside (as dangerous as that sounds). It is up to the WWOOFer to keep in contact with his or her own host farm, and to judge whether or not that particular farm would be a good fit.

“I have heard from several people that the families can be pretty hit or miss,” said Ella White, who plans to WWOOF in New Zealand after she graduates from the University of Puget Sound in the spring. “You have to be careful about where you go stay.”

Nevertheless, WWOOFers from around the world have filled their journals and the blogosphere with positive feedback about their WWOOFing experiences, ranging from interesting to enlightening to life-changing. It is worth noting that WWOOF administrators feel the same way.

“WWOOF is successful because it is democratic and acts on feedback,” says the WWOOF 2000 Conference report. “WWOOF crosses all social and cultural boundaries. If all politicians went WWOOFing there would be no wars!”
Everywhere you look, any time you turn your head, what do you see? Headphones, cell phones, I don’t know, maybe sometimes even microphones. But what do all of these ‘phones’ do? They prevent socializing. Well, maybe not the microphones, but you get the point.

Students all over campus use their iPods and cell phones as a way of not being alone while walking or doing other solo activities. For the most part, students do not like to call attention to themselves when they are on their own. “I feel like if I walk down the Green all attentive by myself then people notice I’m alone, and I don’t like that feeling,” one sophomore informed me. She went on to say, “If I put my headphones on, or I talk on the phone, it makes me feel less alone or possibly makes me look like I’m headed to meet others.”

She is definitely not alone with this paranoia of being caught alone. While walking to class is not the most opportune time to meet new people, this very popular habit of isolating yourself from the crowd makes it even more difficult for friends to communicate. Students become so lost in their music, or letting their fingers text away, to even recognize they walked past four people from their building, or they just bumped into that girl they have class with.

Like I just said, walking may not be the best time to stop and converse, but what about when you get to class early and sit there listening to music? Sometimes it’s nice to just have a general conversation with whoever is sitting around you. Listening to music via headphones sends out the vibe of “I don’t feel like being friendly right now” to other students.

Also, the wave of texting has altered communication greatly, and personal communication seems less important. Sometimes, people pick a person to text just to keep themselves busy while walking, sitting through a boring class, or at the gym.

Actually, let’s talk about that for a second. The gym is 99% filled with people who are there and working alone. The iPod is understandable while running on the treadmill or something, for motivation, but at the same time, the gym blasts music from MTV-U, and while you and other solo exercisers work out individually, listening to the same music together connects everyone there, in a way.

To me, the funniest part about using our iPods as a way of tricking ourselves and others into thinking we are busy, is that music is a big subject that brings people together. Generally speaking, your play-list on a morning you feel like crap is going to let others know you feel like crap. People relate to music. It starts many conversations, and yet we all prefer to keep our choices and preferences to ourselves.

The way we use them now, iPods keep us from socializing. Why not switch it up a bit? Next time the boy sitting next to you in math walks in with his iPod on, ask him what he’s listening to. Guaranteed it’ll start a conversation, and maybe next math class he’ll take off the headphones and talk with you before class begins. It’s about time that the dependence on these socially-inhibiting devices ends. And a new friend in exchange for a few play-list songs seems like a worthwhile trade to me.
Start out with a hoodie or sweater over a tank or tee and some sweats over shorts. Simply shed some layers as the day heats up and keep them handy in your backpack for when you walk into your class and the air conditioning makes it feel like you just stepped into the Arctic Circle. A slight issue of where to stash your discarded clothes does present a bit of a conundrum, but a backpack or tote bag is easy to carry. You could always go old-school and tie your hoodie around your waist (right after you start wearing a fanny pack again...).

One choice that’s somewhat of a throwback is convertible clothing. You know, like those pants that zip off at the knee to make capris and sometimes again mid-thigh to make shorts. Those were real popular in, what, about the 5th grade? Regardless, these are great for those spring days when it’s chilly in the morning and warm during the afternoon. Just zip off the bottom portion of your pants after lunch, and you’re ready for a day in the sun. Then if it cools off again after the sun sets, just zip ’em back on and you’re good to go. Who knows, they could make a comeback in the world of fashion. Companies also make convertible jackets featuring removable sleeves to make a vest and convertible shirts, for those who can’t roll up their sleeves like the rest of us. Hint: don’t try to zip your jacket sleeves onto the bottom of your shorts.

A bit of advice: invest in an umbrella. Great. Now comes the tricky part – you actually have to carry it around with you. Usually when you make an effort to grab your umbrella before heading out, it won’t rain a drop, by virtue of the fact. But when the sky can go from cloudless blue to raining buckets in less than two minutes flat, it’s always better to be prepared. On the other hand, notions of a movement to revive the classic rain slicker are beginning to make a stir. “I wish more people wore ponchos,” one interviewee confided. “They’re cool in the summer, but they keep you dry and you don’t have to worry about running into people with your umbrella.” Slickers are lightweight, portable, convenient, and come in your basic primary colors – yellow, red, blue – and sometimes clear. Some people substitute them with a garbage bag, but let’s not go there… While on the subject of rain gear, think about picking up a pair of those stylish rain boots that everyone seems to be wearing…but be careful not to get your wool wet when sloshing through the puddles. Baaahh!!!

Accessories can be another great way to combat the forces of nature while walking to your lecture that’s a 25-minute walk from your dorm. Sunglasses and hats keep you cool and comfortable in the sweltering heat and humidity Delaware is famous for. Conversely, scarves, hats, and gloves all keep you toasty on the walk to class and can be easily stashed in pockets and purses when not in use.

Whatever the weather brings, it’s good to have a diverse wardrobe to handle the Delaware climate. It pays to plan ahead, and accessorizing smartly can insure you’re comfortable and still look cute. Just remember, the next time you look out the window to a sunny sky, it might not be a bad idea to grab the umbrella. Delaware weather isn’t always as it seems.
When I came out of the womb I didn’t cry, but this hasn’t stopped me from crying over petty situations in my day-to-day life. I’m not going to deny that I have made a big deal out of nothing because I have. All of us have at one time or another due to stress, exhaustion or a lack of patience. Stressful measures bring negative toxic emotions. Tears are the body’s way of purging toxins…bring on the water works!

Last Sunday I experienced one of these stressful situations. It was the night before an exam, which I had started studying for at 2 pm that day. Granted, by this time it was 2 am, and clearly I was losing my mind from exhaustion, I felt the tear ducts start to go. I couldn’t concentrate any longer. I opened a blank word document and started to type out in a crazy rant everything on my mind. As I was re-reading what I wrote in a blurry-eyed frenzy, I started to question myself. What really mattered in my life? Did getting a good grade on a test honestly matter in the whole scheme of things?

I started to think of who I love, what I love to do, and what makes my life ultimately worth living. It made me ask myself why I was stressing over something so tiny compared to the rest of my life. One test is not going to determine my self-worth. I can study and learn it. I’m taking the class by choice, so clearly it interests me in some way, but focusing too much on what the grade outcome will be is pointless.

It’s not only grades that I’ve put far too much emphasis on in my life, but it’s also petty things like overall appearance.

What’s most important in your life?
It’s a part of our culture and society: how we are perceived is how we are going to be treated. We’ve been socialized and taught by our parents to look and act a certain way in order to get ahead in life. This is the mentality that if everything looks just dandy on the surface, then everything else will be perfect as well.

News flash!

**Happiness is a state of mind.** Happiness does not come from wearing a specific style of clothing nor does it come from measuring up to a specific height or weight. Happiness does not come from appearing to be happy when in reality your life is complete and utter chaos.

Deep down, under the surface, when all you want to do is cry and scream you can’t, because we are taught this is not acceptable, and in consequence, we suppress the negative. We lie to ourselves, and in the end this will leave us more unhappy than we were to begin with. Happiness is an important factor in my life. Making myself happy is one of my top priorities, because doing what makes me happy makes my life enjoyable.

Sometimes in life we all have to do things we don’t want to do (like studying). This may be the case, but why focus on what we cannot control? We can’t control how easy or difficult the multiple choice questions are on the scantron, all we can do is try our best. I think we should all give ourselves more credit for what we do. I want to make it a goal to remind myself:

The best I can do may not be perfect, but:

My best is just fine with me.
This December, Disney will unveil its very first African-American princess. After more than 90 years the Walt Disney Company has finally decided to represent the most populous American racial minority in their films. But why now? There are eight official Disney princesses, only three of whom are of a racial minority. Each of these three princesses debuted in 1990s, with the last in 1998. The eight princesses, in order of their debut, are: Snow White from Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Cinderella from Cinderella, Aurora from Sleeping Beauty, Ariel from The Little Mermaid, Belle from Beauty and the Beast, Jasmine from Aladdin, Pocahontas from Pocahontas and Mulan from Mulan. Finally young African-American girls can relate to a Disney character who looks like them.

The new film, The Princess and the Frog, takes place in New Orleans during the jazz age. Princess Tiana kisses a frog who used to be a prince and ends up on an adventure through the Louisiana bayous. The film will be hand-drawn like earlier Disney movies. Princess Tiana is voiced by Anika Noni Rose, the star of Dreamgirls. In addition, Oprah Winfrey makes an appearance as the voice of Tiana's mother. Very little information about the plot or the film itself has been released at this time. Many websites claim to know details, but Disney has neither confirmed nor denied the speculations. The Disney website for the film has very little information and the trailer on it reveals almost nothing about the movie. The official release date for the film is December 11.
As we all know, race is still a very sensitive subject in America. The Princess and the Frog is no exception. Already certain plot details have been changed due to public outcry. According to the Times Online, Tiana’s original name, Mad- dy, had to be changed because people thought it was too close to “Mammy”, a name equated with times of slavery. In addition, Tiana’s profession was switched from a chambermaid to someone dreaming of becoming a restaurant entrepreneur. There has also been much criticism over the choice of the prince. Rather than being black, he is olive-skinned.

Of course, this isn’t the first time Disney has been accused of racism. In several animated films some have found fault with the portrayal of racial stereotypes. With a company as large as Disney, controversy will inevitably arise. Regardless, Princess Tiana is going to have a huge impact inside as well as outside the theatre. It’s almost a rite of passage in America for little girls to go through a stage where they convince themselves they are a princess like in the cartoons. Now, every little girl will be able to feel like they can be a princess, no matter what their skin color. All I can really say is: it’s about time.
Childbirth in Crisis: America Needs a Midwife

By Rachel Smucker

“Basically, what the medical profession has done,” said Nadine Goodman, crossing her arms, “is convince women that they don’t know how to birth.”

Goodman, a public health specialist, is a part of “The Business of Being Born” (2008), a documentary exposing the financially and politically corrupt side of obstetrics and gynecology. It was initially shown at the University of Delaware as part of the Women’s History Month Film Series, which takes place every March. The on-campus group, Students Acting for Gender Equality (SAGE), showed the film again on May 12th.

Though the documentary seems to have garnered only cult status among viewers so far, its message aims to reach beyond that of a handful of supporters. Using videos of home births and expert opinions to bolster its facts and appeal, “The Business of Being Born” presents a solid, cogent argument for the increased use of midwifery in the United States. Viewers of the film are of a nearly unanimous opinion: “The Business of Being Born” is pretty damn convincing.

Midwives take part in about 8-9% of births in the United States, a statistic that pales in comparison to the 70% of births that involve midwives in other developed nations. Among other important factors, this dramatically lower rate of midwifery owes most of its problems to the difficulty with which midwives are able to integrate themselves into the American health care system.

Yet the American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM), founded in 1920 in response to an alarmingly high rate of infant mortality, continues to work towards establishing midwifery as a legitimate health care profession. The ACNM currently has three certifications:

- Certified Nurse-Midwife (CNM): equivalent to a registered nurse, is sometimes covered by insurance; requires an education and work experience in nursing.
- Certified Midwife (CM): not equivalent to a registered nurse, but is able to have other qualifications such physician’s assistant or physical therapist; licensed to practice in New York, New Jersey, and Rhode Island.
- Certified Professional Midwife (CPM): not required to have a nursing background; primary job is to provide ante- and post-partum care to women who have non-hospital births.

While hospitals employ 23.3% of CNMs and CMs, most midwives offer their practice in other locations, such as birth centers, clinics, and private homes. As of 2007, there are more than 11,000 CNMs and CMs in the United States.

Though 11,000 sounds like a promising figure, it is not nearly high enough to provide the type of pre- and post-natal care that midwives traditionally give. Midwives pride themselves on being able to give a woman continuous care throughout her pregnancy, and must have extremely flexible schedules to accommodate their clients’ needs. Most midwives consider their profession to be a lifestyle, rather than a “job.”

“Mothers, babies, and fathers need midwives to nurture them through the very impressionable and vulnerable period of pregnancy,” wrote Ina May Gaskin in her seminal work on childbirth, Spiritual Midwifery. “The wisdom and compassion a woman can intuitively experience in childbirth can make her a source of healing and understanding for other women.”

Such a holistic perspective on
pregnancy naturally lends midwifery towards the communal and the corporeal, the most basic role of the midwife being to foster a connection between baby and mother. Early skin-to-skin contact, delayed cord clamping, and encouraged breastfeeding are among some of the techniques used by midwives to help build this connection. Midwives also tend to less frequently use caesarean sections, anesthetics, and epidurals, as they try to encourage women to have natural vaginal births as often (and as safely) as is possible.

In light of these natural methods, it is easy to see why some obstetricians and gynecologists might disregard midwifery as outdated and dangerous. Having trained surgeons on hand to perform emergency caesarean sections, for example, is certainly an advantage to giving birth in a hospital, as is the availability of heavy-duty pain medications. Yet results from a recent report on childbirth show that unless the mother is in situations where she might need these interventions, there is no real need for them at all.

"Caesarean sections can save lives in some circumstances, but it does have risks for the mother and baby," said obstetrician Dr. James Walker in Pathways magazine, a publication dedicated to female and family wellness. "It is important that we don’t think of them as just another delivery option. This research is a reality check that we don’t go too far."

Non-emergency caesarean sections have been on the rise since the 1990s. The World Health Organization recommends that for industrialized nations, caesarean sections should not exceed 15%. Today, the American national average is 23.5%. Factors that may have contributed to this alarmingly high percentage are the availability of pain medication, the readiness with which American women accept surgery, and the efficacy of the procedure itself. Many doctors prefer to perform caesarean sections rather than vaginal births simply because they are quicker.

Perhaps the largest obstacle to increasing midwife care in the United States is the perception of the midwife herself. Not many American women are ready to replace the clean, crisp image of a doctor in scrubs with an informally dressed woman, let alone give up the hospital bed for a bathtub.

Yet the simple point that “The Business of Being Born” makes -- a point that so many midwives, due to stigma, are unable to voice aloud for themselves -- is that childbirth can happen naturally, and will probably happen with less pain and less prolonged labor than most people think. Hospital births have become so routine that the common perception of childbirth is one of horror, filled with sweating, screaming women, needles full of opiates, and torn perineums. It is no longer the communal effort of creation -- philosophical, spiritual, emotional -- that it once was, and still is, in many parts of the world.

As “The Business of Being Born” comes to a close, an older, grey-bearded man takes command of the screen. It is Dr. Marsden Wagner, former director of women’s and children’s health for the World Health Organization.

“The best thing to do, if you want a humanized birth,” he says, “is to get the hell away from a hospital.”
It started with an innocent bopping to Billy Ray Cyrus’ “Achy Breaky Heart”, with a pacifier hanging partially out of my toothless mouth. However, it was not until pre-school that I officially declared my devotion to dance, and my mom signed me up for ballet lessons. The thrill of prancing around in a bright pink tutu was as exciting as getting that college acceptance letter in the mail—I felt like I was on top of the world, I was truly accepted as a “dancer”.

Don’t be fooled, I never said I was particularly good at dancing. I didn’t have two left feet, but I was by no means a super-star. (Unless, of course, your definition of “super-star” is equivalent to Molly Shannon).

Regardless, I continued to dance. I danced in gymnastics routines, cheerleading competitions, and performed all through middle and high school in modern, jazz, tap and hip-hop. When I got to college it was a different story.

Determined to continue what I love to do, I attended a free dance class at UD with an instructor who reminded me of Channing Tatum, from “Step Up”. He looked like him and even danced like him! After the free hip-hop class, two things became obviously apparent to me. One: I was by no means cut out for a collegiate level dance team, and two: I am extremely white.

Even if I do dance like a white girl, there was no way I could dismiss dance from my life completely. Dance was something that lifted my spirits, let me go crazy and move any way I wanted to move. The words “Dance like no-one is watching” inspire me, and I do the best I can to follow them. Dance doesn’t have to be a talent, it can be a part of my life without the pressure and stress to be the best.

Although I had tried dozens of different styles of dance, there was something I had never had the chance to do until this year in college... something that I had re-watched over and over in my favorite movie “Dirty Dancing”, but didn’t have the guts to try. Partner dancing.

I don’t just mean ballroom fancy-schmancy dancing. I’m talking about swing, tango, and salsa dancing! Partner dancing that requires knowing the steps, without the guidance of choreography. It’s very improvisational, which to me is very scary (not knowing where my partner will lead me next), but thrilling at the same time.

I find it comparative to a metal rollercoaster. It’s unpredictable and stomach dropping but de-
spite being unknown and scary, it is still smooth and fluid.

My first encounter with partner-dancing? SALSA!

I came home to Baltimore for a weekend only to be met with the question from my mom: “Honey, do you want to come salsa dancing with me?” I had always wanted to try salsa lessons, so I couldn’t decline her offer. That night we went to a club called “The Arc” and took salsa lessons together. I have to admit, it was the best mother-daughter bonding experience I’ve ever had.

Although we didn’t dance with one another, we got to make fools of ourselves while goofing off, laughing and “dancing like no one was watching”. We even managed to learn a step or two in the process. My mom got partnered with a young 20-year-old, and I was partnered with a 60-year-old Indian man. It was love at first sight.

No, not really, but if I hadn’t faced the awkwardness of dancing with complete strangers I wouldn’t have learned nearly as much as I was able to, due to their previous experience. My mom and I decided that this would not be the first and last time we would go dancing together.

After sharing my fun and interesting experience with some of my friends, I was informed of partner dancing on campus! Who knew that every Tuesday night students gathered in Pearson gym to practice ballroom dance? Clearly, I had been left in the dust. I didn’t know what “ballroom dance” entailed, until I got up the courage to go check it out for myself. I pictured ballroom dancers as uptight mannequins, prim and proper with no expression on their faces. I was terribly mistaken by this stereotype!

The first night I attended, the instructors taught a style called Swing. I had a basic idea of the steps, but the instructor really broke it down for me and a couple other newbies whose eyes were glued to the floor. The instructor asked why I was looking at the floor, and I replied, “So I don’t fall over!” He took my hands and told me “Never look down when you dance. You will go where your eyes go. If you continue to look there, you WILL fall over.”

Dance is all about having trust in myself. As corny and cliché’ as it might sound, not looking at the ground as a beginner is risky. I was dancing with complete strangers, and I didn’t want to clumsily step on their feet or stare creepily into their eyes, while really just in deep concentration of the next step. It’s scary at first, especially if you care about making a fool of yourself, but the instructors want to help. The instructors want you to make a fool out of yourself, because if you never even try, you will never have the chance to actually learn and enjoy dance.

After the first upbeat Swing class, I decided to go back and give it another shot. I was surprised by how much I remembered from the previous class. This time we worked on Swing again, but instead of focusing so hard on the steps I attempted to get my grove on. The following week was a drastic mood change from “happy go lucky” Swing to serious “we mean business” Tango. If I thought dancing with strangers was awkward for Salsa and Swing…Tango brought a whole new level of uncomfortable. I was not allowed to smile as my partner crushed my toes and continually rubbed knees with me. I held the rigid unfamiliar frame, while being tucked tightly enough to my partner’s T-shirt to smell his breath. I always thought the word “Tango” itself was intriguing, but the actual dance is clearly not my forte’.

I wasn’t turned off completely from partner dancing. The up-beat dances just feel more natural to me than the slow and serious mature dances. I plan on continuing to try and learn as much as I can in each of the different styles of dance, but I don’t think that any style will top a good old-fashioned spur of the moment dance party.

Dancing, in a way, is similar to hobbies such as golf or tennis, because you can still enjoy it as you get older. I’ve evolved as a dancer with age. Now instead of bopping to Billy Ray Cyrus’ country hit, I prefer to freak out with Miley…or just lean back with Fat Joe.
Georgia-based band Manchester Orchestra has come a long way since their critically acclaimed yet relatively obscure debut in 2007 with *I'm Like A Virgin Losing A Child*. Their second album and latest effort, *Mean Everything To Nothing*, has the potential to reach the visibility of the masses, a feat made easier by the success of fellow southern rockers Kings of Leon. Released on April 28th, not only did the album briefly hit iTunes’ Top Ten Albums, but it debuted at number 37 on the Billboard charts for that week. This is a gigantic accomplishment for a band that had no namesake merely two years ago.

Released under their own label Favorite Gentlemen Records, *Mean Everything To Nothing* is a refreshing deviation from the alternative rock trends of the past ten years. The general sound of the album is a throwback to the raw, unapologetic rock of Nirvana and the Foo Fighters, while the lyrics provide a direct contrast to the rough contours the music forms. The lyrics and subject matter aren’t so much angry as they are self-evaluative, poignant and sometimes religious, while always retaining a sense of ambiguity.

The album opens with “The Only One,” a brief yet driven song at under three minutes long. The opening line, “I am the only one / who thinks I’m going crazy / and I don’t know what to do,” does well to present what will prove to be a very personal album for lyricist and lead singer, Andy Hull. Where previously Hull has stuck to singing about other people as other people, Hull is now straightforward and honest as he sings about himself, as himself, for himself. The three songs that follow are equally driven and powerful, channeling a raw and grungy sound that repeatedly builds up and winds down. “Pride,” perhaps one of the strongest songs on the album, opens with a calm sort of anger. The guitar riff is heavy and repetitive as Hull sings (or yells melodically) with building intensity. The song hits a crescendo and pauses momentarily before picking up a winding melody that continues gorgeously throughout the rest of the song.

Manchester Orchestra has been known to approach religion in their songs, and this album follows through on this expectation. However, Hull doesn’t pen songs of worship but pens songs that wrestle with faith and doubt. “In My Teeth” is a prime example of this, as Hull sings, “Jesus is coming / better act our age” and “Well Jesus don’t come ‘round / unless we pray for 500 days / and I don’t know what you want anymore.”

“100 Dollars” comes off as a kind of nervous breakdown, yet another song that starts quietly and builds up to a high point of sound and emotion, polishing off at less than ten minutes. “I Can Feel A Hot One” is the only song on the album entirely stripped of the loud guitars that are characteristic of the album. Retaining the same tempo through the whole song, the lyrics shine through as deeply personal and poignant.

The album concludes with “The River,” another track in which Hull wrestles with his faith. This is a powerful song that uses the same kind of buildup and breakdown displayed in “Pride,” this time interwoven with piano. Hull sings, “I think I know you the best when I sleep / I think I know everything” and, “Take me to the river / And let me see again / Oh my God / Let me see again.”

It may not be seamless, but it is a very strong second attempt from Manchester Orchestra that displays a growth and maturity that was only just surfacing in *I’m Like A Virgin Losing A Child*. The album is musically strong and dynamic, ranging from quiet and muted to grungy and nearly heavy. Though sometimes ambiguous, the lyrics are also powerful, meaningful and poetic. *Mean Everything To Nothing* is definitely a standout release of 2009.
Potstickers: A Restaurant Review

By: Jessica Victor

As much as we all love the greasy college grub found on Main Street, no one can deny that it gets a little tiresome. Once many students have a car on campus, they venture out and search for something different to please their palate. Potstickers is just the place. Dubbed an “Asian grill and sushi bar”, it’s a nice break from pizza and burgers that make up the majority of our diets. It’s described as Euro-Asian, and the dishes blend the traditional with the innovative. Located about a ten minute drive from campus on New Churchmans Road in Newark, Potstickers won’t disappoint. The décor is beautiful; Asian tapestries dress the walls, the sculptures are unique and interesting and a five-foot Buddha sits right at the door. The restaurant seems swanky enough to be located in a city, with its own completely hip bar.

Whether you have a special occasion to celebrate, or just feel like treating yourself, Potstickers is the appropriate oasis. The cuisine blends Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Thai and Cantonese. The sushi bar has a wide selection that will satisfy even picky eaters. Although Potstickers is a little pricey for the average college student, the discounted lunch menu is a good option. I went there to celebrate a special occasion with my boyfriend, and the secluded plush booths made for a private, romantic dinner. It didn’t hurt that the drink list was extensive and very creative. The offerings include wine, beer, martinis, mojitos and, of course, saki.

The food itself has been labeled “Best of Delaware” and is top rated on Yahoo. The restaurant is famous for, what else, potstickers. They are made fresh daily, and range from Canton Style Chicken & Water Chestnut to Shanghai Style Shrimp & Spinach. The sushi bar has the traditional Spicy Tuna Roll and California Roll, but also has “creative sushi rolls” which include “The Potstickers Ninja Turtle Roll” made of eel, cucumber, shrimp and wasabi; and the “Happy Samurai Roll”, a soft shell crab roll topped with tuna, salmon and spicy mayo. For those of us like myself who are less brave, stick to the delicious Wonton Soup and the Chicken with Chinese Eggplant. Other favorites include the Mongolian Beef, the Pad Thai, the Crispy Sesame Chicken and the Crispy Whole Fish, a boneless striped bass with sweet and sour sauce. The fare is delicious; I have yet to try something I do not like. The service is satisfactory; on one visit I was left wondering if the chef was traveling all the way to Asia to prepare my meal.

I suggest making a reservation, as on weekends it can get pretty crowded. Whether bringing mom and dad on a visit or going out for date night, I highly recommend giving Potstickers a try.

Potstickers’ hours are Sunday through Thursday 11:00 am to 10:00 pm and Friday through Saturday 11:00 am to 11:00 pm. Potstickers is in Centre Point Plaza II directly across from Christiana Hospital, behind the Olive Garden. Their phone number is (302) 731-0188.