

# Local student “geeks” it up on TV show

BY JESSICA RAPP  
Assistant Features Editor

No one said geeks can't model. Tony Tran, a contestant on this season's "Beauty and the Geek" on the CW, does mathematical modeling. He also collects medical school books, watches anime, dances and studies.

Tran graduated from Johns Hopkins University with a degree in biomedical engineering in 2003 and currently attends A.T. Still University of Health Sciences, where he plans to complete a graduate degree in osteopathic medicine. Raised in Arkansas, he has enjoyed life in a small town, he said.

"I kind of like to be in the middle of nowhere," Tran said. "Kirksville has a really nice charm. It's really small, and everyone's so nice at [A.T. Still]."

His gig with "Beauty and the Geek" started when a friend at Johns Hopkins encouraged Tran to interview for the show.

Tran then sent in his audition tape for the second season, but the producers only chose him for the casting call show. The second season hosted a "geek" who could solve a Rubik's Cube in less than two minutes, and Tran said he couldn't compete with that.

After asking him to audition several more times, the producers selected him to star in the fourth season. Then he said he met Ashton Kutcher and taught him how to tie a bowtie.

"I'm trying to bring [bow ties] back," Tran said. "But I wasn't on the show long enough."

Tran and his partner Amanda left the show on the first episode after

losing in the final contest. He said he was disappointed that he left so soon, if only because he thought that he could do more to stay on the show longer. He said he enjoyed his experience, especially after not expecting to do the show in the first place.

"The cast of people were amazing," he said. "I really loved each and every one of them. The only thing bad was sleeping hours. It really threw me off. I was exhausted afterwards."

He said that after leaving the show he wished he could have shown viewers the side of Amanda that she wanted people to see. He also hoped to discover the right way to date.

"I have no dating advice," he said. "Two dates. No second dates ever. I watch a lot of romantic comedies, so I think I know what I'm supposed to do. It just hasn't worked out yet. Maybe I should go and try to win the date auction."

When Tran is not on a date, he studies. Tran said he enjoyed the free trip to Los Angeles for "Beauty and the Geek" because it gave him plenty of time to study in his hotel.

Tran said now that he is back in Kirksville, he keeps busy with his schoolwork.

He said on an average day, he studies for eight to nine hours, and the leftover time he spends doing a break dance called Bboy. Tran said he also can tap dance and that he owns a pair of clogs.

Tran said he likes to try a little bit of everything. He plays Chinese chess, skateboards

and is a member of the pediatrics club at A.T. Still. He said he at least tries to try everything.



ATSU college student Tony Tran outside the Kirk Memorial Building on Monday. Tran appeared on this season's episode of "Beauty and the Geek" on the CW.

"I still can't swim," Tran said. "... I just can't float. If I could float, it would be easier."

Even his taste in music, Tran said, is a bit geeky. When Kutcher asked him what type of music he listens to, Tran said that instead of listening to music, he likes to study to The Teaching Company, a college lecture series. Tran said he also, however, listens to Beethoven and Mozart and that he loves the bands Rilo Kiley and The Shins.

Heather Halloway, casting director for "Beauty and the Geek" said they were looking for more than a stereotypical geek — they were searching

for someone who would work well with the idea of the show.

"[Tran] was that person," Halloway said. "He was very dynamic, very sweet, had a heart of gold and he was very relatable. He would be able to help in the partnership by being open-minded and having an enthusiasm for learning."

Although many people who watch the show didn't realize that Tran was from Kirksville, his fans at Truman have rooted for him ever since he left the show. Groups of students around campus have had viewing parties for the season, and some of these students, including freshman Amanda Tharp,

said they wish Tran had stayed.

"It was horrible," Tharp said. "He was the best geek, and he left the show. He made the show even better when I found out he was from Kirksville because nobody is from Kirksville."

Tran said his experience on the show has humbled him and has taught him more about his "geekiness," which he said was more prevalent in college.

"At the end of each day, I can look in the mirror and say, 'I'm really happy with myself,'" he said. "Whatever I do, I'm pretty much happy with who I am. I'm just a simple person who happens to be on a reality TV show."

"Whatever I do, I'm pretty much happy with who I am. I'm just a simple person who happens to be on a reality TV show."

Tony Tran  
ATSU student



Phil Jarrett/Index  
When Kent Troester retired this summer, Ewenique Stitches owner Janina Snell took over his business selling Greek merchandise. The Golden Ruler also started selling similar merchandise in addition to office supplies.

## Greek merchandise options grow after business closes

BY ABBEY SNYDER  
Staff Reporter

A stitch in time saves nine, and a few new stores in Kirksville offering stitching will save Truman Greek students a lot of hassle.

Ewenique Stitches owner Janina Snell said she did all of Kent Troester's sewing work while Troester's was in business and had planned to continue stitching Greek letters once Troester retired.

"I was [Troester's] tailor, and I did all of his sewing, alterations and the sewing of all the Greek letters on the sweat shirts," she said. "When he told me he was closing I was ready to tell him I want to take over ... that part of the business. So ... I bought all of his equipment, all of his patterns and all of his supplies."

Snell said Troester still is involved in her store as a go-between for other Greek merchandise.

"He is the supplier of the Greek knickknacks," Snell said. "The glassware, the picture frames and stuff like that."

As an alumna of Northeast Missouri State University and a member of Sigma Kappa sorority, Snell said that when it comes to prices, she knows what it's like to be a student on a small budget.

"I'm not here to screw over the kids," Snell said. "I was once where you all are, and I know funds are limited."

Junior Danie Schallom said she used to shop at Troester's even though the prices were a bit high.

"Since it was the only place that you could go, they could charge you a lot

and it was kind of expensive," she said.

Ordering online is another option, but Schallom said she opted instead for The Golden Ruler, another local store that offers stitching and Greek merchandise.

"They don't have as big of a selection, but it was cheaper than Troester's," Schallom said.

Bryan Beckman, manager of The Golden Ruler, said the office supply store only recently started carrying Greek merchandise to make up for the demand left by Kent Troester's retirement.

"With Troester's closing, all that happened was we kind of supplemented our office supply and copier service business by adding on some of the Greek merchandise," he said. "I was a fraternity member when I was in college here so that just seemed like one of those natural things to start offering also."

Beckman said The Golden Ruler's embroidery is done at a sister office in Hannibal rather than in Kirksville.

"By going through our sister office it allows us a little more flexibility with what the student may want," he said. "If you went online, you wouldn't have quite as many options available to you."

What makes The Golden Ruler unique is that they don't have to rely on selling only Greek merchandise, and Beckman said they simply are doing so to help the Greek community.

"It's not like something we're out to make a ton of money [off] of or anything like that," he said. "It's more or less just providing a service to help supplement the rest of the store's offerings."

Snell said that although intimidat-

tion from competition might be likely, she's not planning on shutting down any time soon.

"I'm happy where I am," she said. "The rent is good, the people are fun, so it's worth the hunt to try and find [my store]."

Snell said she plans to stay competitive by offering a giveaway for anyone who comes into the store.

"Every month I will be giving away a free Greek-lettered shirt," Snell said. "No purchase necessary, just come in and sign up. The first month [September], I gave away a T-shirt, in October I'm giving away a long sleeved T-shirt, November will be a sweat shirt."

Snell said what she considers most important is the quality of the sweat shirts and Greek merchandise she supplies.

"I am a professional seamstress," she said. "I take great pride in making sure that the product that I put out there is of the highest quality."

Snell said she hopes students will enjoy her store as much as she and other students enjoyed Troester's for so many years.

"When I was in school at Northeast, Troester's was always a fun place to go, ... and you'd always have a good time going in there and looking for stuff," she said. "I want the kids to feel the same way about coming here."

Ewenique Stitches is located across the street from the License Bureau in the Grim Building at 113 E. Washington.

The Golden Ruler is located one block North of the Armory at 404 S. Elson.

## Enthusiasts, experimenters push musical boundaries

BY VALERIE SPENCER  
Staff Reporter

When it comes to college music, breaking the rules has never seemed so exciting.

Forget about what the stereotypical college student might have on his or her iPod. For some at the University, music isn't about following a trend but creating a path. New instruments and unique musical selections have made their way onto the campus, led by the masterminds who play them.

One such individual is Bradford Blackburn, assistant professor of music, who said he reconstructed models of unique instruments designed and created by Harry Partch, an American composer who was considered something of an iconoclast.

"Partch was active in the early 20th century up until his death in 1974, and during that time he built just over 20 original musical instruments that were designed to play in a system of extended just intonation — which is an alternate tuning system from what we normally use here in modern western classical music," Blackburn said. "And the instruments had unique configurations. Some of them were adaptations of conventional instruments, a few of them were completely new concepts in terms of playing techniques."

Blackburn said that while doing research for his doctorate, he got a grant to go to Montclair State University (N.J.), where the original Partch instruments currently are held.

"While I was there I took detailed notes about the measurements of the instruments," Blackburn

said. "I drew diagrams and got to know how they sounded and what their resonance capabilities were."

... I started out building the instruments in a piano tuner shop and using the tools there, but over time I gradually acquired things like a table saw and a sander and so forth and started building on my own."

These instruments include a diamond marimba, a harmonic cannon and an adapted guitar, Blackburn said. But it wasn't just Blackburn who had an interest in Partch music.

"Most of what I was working on in the past two years was learning how to play these instruments, and last year we put together an ensemble of music students here at Truman who were generous enough with their time to want to learn something different, and they went out and were in this ensemble, and we put on a performance of music by Partch at the 2006 Truman new music festival," Blackburn said.

One of the most rewarding aspects of learning about Partch music has been being able to pass on that knowledge, Blackburn said.

"Being able to teach students to play them is really exciting, too, because then you get to see that they suddenly discover something new and they realize, 'I can use this technique that I've already acquired here on this instrument and apply

it in this way that I wouldn't have thought of,'" Blackburn said.

One student who has taken it upon himself to learn a new style of music is senior Ken Goss. Goss said he has been playing Klezmer music, folk music of eastern European Jews, on his clarinet for about two years and that he discovered it by accident.

"I found a CD in a bargain bin that had a Hasidic rabbi ... playing his clarinet [on the cover], and I honestly found the picture humorous so I bought the CD — it was like two bucks — and I fell in love with the music," Goss said.

The music sometimes appears to contradict itself, but that's what Goss said makes him the most interested in it.

"It's a very emotional music to me," Goss said. "It always seems to be laughing and crying at the same time. It's a paradox."

Although Goss has never publicly presented his playing of Klezmer music, he said he hopes to one day perform it and put all of his practice to good use.

"There's not a whole lot of demand for it in this area so I don't get a lot of performance opportunities, but ... I am looking into being a clarinet professor, hopefully, one day," Goss said.

While Goss still might be playing more traditional, junior Adam Kalmbach is about as far away from con-

ventional music as possible. Kalmbach said he plays what he calls an unpredictable, cheap synthesizer.

"I did a piece recently, an improvisation, at the composers recital, and what I did then was take a cheap RadioShack four track mixer and plug it into itself, instead of using it to mix audio, making it a synthesizer," Kalmbach said. "When you plug the output into the input you make a feedback loop, just like a microphone into a speaker. And you can control it with the knobs. A volume knob becomes like a pitch knob, for instance."

Kalmbach said he enjoys the diversity of sounds he can evoke from the synthesizer and that he always is discovering new techniques.

"It's exciting because it's so spontaneous and consistently unpredictable," Kalmbach said. "It's surprising. It's really rewarding to sit down and mess with these knobs and have an infinite variety of sounds come out."

However, not everyone seems to appreciate all the surprises that a homemade synthesizer has in store, Kalmbach said.

"Someone took some pictures when [the band I'm in] did a Halloween show last year and there were members of the audience who were covering their ears, ... and I think that's the most common reaction," Kalmbach said. "But some people are into it."

No matter what instrument or type of music someone is interested in, Blackburn said there always would be difficulties that come up, but persistence pays off.

"Being dedicated to it helps," Blackburn said. "And having a lot of patience."

"It's exciting because it's so spontaneous and consistently unpredictable. ... It's really rewarding to sit down and mess with these knobs and have an infinite variety of sounds come out."

Adam Kalmbach  
Junior