Early risers greet students with smiles

By Hélène BieLaK

While most students are still sleeping, some people take their morning routines to the next level and begin their day early. Cafeteria staff, among other students, sacrifice some of their sleep every morning to ensure that the student body is fed promptly.

Sodexo worker Bleithing starts her mornings at 4:30 a.m. Her day consists of a 7:30 a.m. and late shifts depending on the semester.

Bleithing is one of the oldest employees on Truman's campus. She has worked here for 15 years and is a junior saxophone performance major.

Blind since birth, Bleithing says she feels more and more comfortable with her blindness.

Blindness has given her an opportunity to grow. "Anytime you have experiences like that, you go so much deeper," Bleithing said. "I think that's what kept me going.

"I was in a studio working on an album, and I just felt like, 'Man, I want to go back to school and do this stuff.' That was what I was going to school for, and I've done a lot of amazing things, but I've never totally learned how to read music."

Bleithing is hoping to double major in philosophy and religion and continue with graduate studies.

Gloria Joy Smith, vocal professor at Truman, knows Bleithing since she was 17, when she lost someone close to her. Smith said she expects Bleithing's courage to return to school to be noticed.

"I'm just really pleased that she's back," Smith said.

The first step of her journey was to live with her older sister in Oregon, near the Washington border. "There were all these mountains," Bleithing said. "I'm not sure how to describe the feeling that it gave me.

"I just really wanted to know the musical language more, and I wanted to know how to compose and to be able to write down ideas so someone else could read it and I felt like, 'Man, I want to go back to school and do this stuff.' That was what I was going to school for, and I've done a lot of amazing things, but I've never totally learned how to read music.

Bleithing said waking up early is not a big deal for her because she never really knew what to do with her time. "I was in a studio working on an album, and I just felt like, 'Man, I want to go back to school and do this stuff.' That was what I was going to school for, and I've done a lot of amazing things, but I can never totally learn how to read music."