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All Eyes On: Brockell Briddle

Student returns to Truman after seven years of volunteering and playing music in a band.

BY JENNIFER LEWIS
Staff Reporter

Brockell Briddle has always had a thirst for knowledge and new cultural experiences. Instead of simply dreaming about exploring, Briddle got up and went. Starting with a semester off that eventually turned into seven years, this Truman student has done everything from working on organic farms, to touring with a rock band, to learning from Mexican midwives, all by the time she was 27.

Brockell Briddle now has returned to Truman and is a junior saxophone performance major.

Born and raised in Kirksville, Briddle became a full-time Truman student her senior year of high school while finishing up a few high school credits on the side. She then attended college for two years before deciding she wanted something more.

The first step of her journey was to live with her older sister in Oregon, near the Washington border. There she worked at a ski park, where she learned to snowboard and became a river guide on the rapids in White Salmon, Wash.

Her first opportunity to go overseas came with Willing Workers on Organic Farms, a program that connects volunteers who are interested in sustainable living with organic farms around the world that could use volunteers. Briddle was not yet involved with the movement toward sustainability but was looking for assistance in getting out of the country and decided it sounded interesting. She became a member of WWOOF and worked in Nicaragua and Costa Rica and, as a result, became very interested in sustainability.

"It just opened up this whole world of consciousness that I had never been exposed to before," Briddle said. "It was the first time I'd really started eating a lot of organic food, and I guess that consciousness stuck with me because once I came back, I wondered, 'Where is my food coming from? Is it being shipped all the way across the country? And just how sustainable a plan is this?' I could never go back to the way I had been living before."

Briddle's experiences in Central America colored the rest of her travels. She decided she had not yet had her fill of discovering new cultures and traditions, so she went to Mexico through a program at Goddard College that studied traditional healing practices, giving students a chance to learn from midwives, medicine men and shamans. The workshop was only two-and-a-half

weeks long, but Briddle decided to stay for two full months, exploring temple ruins and absorbing the culture.

The passion for sustainability Briddle found in Central America changed the course of her life. Briddle said she was working on an organic farm in Hawaii when she became acquainted with The Human Revolution, the band she ended up touring with. The Human Revolution was an eco-conscious folk rock group. Their songs promoted social and political change, and they toured in a biodiesel truck and an ethanol van, playing everywhere from bars to farmhouses. Briddle was a backup singer and fiddler and saxophone player. Briddle said it was actually the band that got her thinking about returning to school.

"I was in a studio working on an album, and it was my first studio experience," Briddle said. "I was doing all the female vocal harmony parts, two-part harmonies and singing other backup vocal parts, and I felt like such an amateur. 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 just felt like, 'Man, I want to go back to school and learn this stuff.' This was what I was going to school for; and I've done a lot of amazing things, but I'd never totally learned this."

Randy Smith, music professor at Truman, has known Briddle since she was 17, when she took saxophone lessons from him. Smith said he respects Briddle's courage in returning to school as a nontraditional student and is happy she made that decision.

"I'm just really pleased that she's back," Smith said. "I think the first time around she didn't realize the real worth in becoming an educated person and pursuing and achieving a college degree. But now that she's been out in the real world and has had some time to reflect, I think she really values education. She's got a purpose in her life now."

Brandie Briddle, Brockell's older sister and graphic arts instructor at the Kirksville Area Technical Center, said she does not think Briddle's many experiences have changed her, but instead have given her an opportunity to grow.

"Anytime you have experiences like that, you gain so much depth," Brandie Briddle said. "Her mind has been opened, and she has grown spiritually, physically and mentally. She has also grown as a musician because she has studied all sorts of subcultures of music and the heritage and traditions behind them."

Briddle is hoping to double major in philosophy and religion and continue with graduate school to study ethnomusicology. She said she hopes her adventures are not over now that she has returned to school, because there are so many places she still wants to go.



Krista Goodman/Index

Briddle returned to Truman for school after seven years of adventures including an eco-rock band and work with yoga and organic farms.

Early risers greet students with smiles

BY HÉLÈNE BIELAK
Staff Reporter

While most students are still sleeping, some people take their courage in both hands to begin their usual early morning shift. Campus staff, as well as students, sacrifice some of their sleep every day to be at work on time.

At 81-years-old, Betty Bleithing is not afraid of morning shifts. Monday through Friday, students are welcomed by her typical "Good morning" greeting when they come to breakfast in the Centennial Hall cafeteria. At the checker machine since 2000, Bleithing has a long experience in the Truman community.

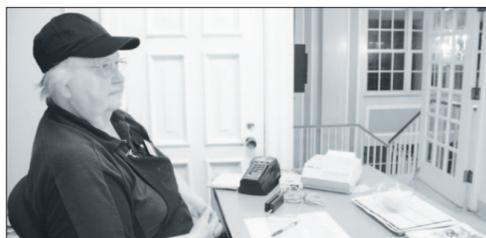
Bleithing said she started working at Truman in 1983 and worked as a cook for 21 years, before changing to her current position as a checker.

Every morning, Bleithing's alarm clock rings at 4:30 a.m., which gives her enough time to get prepared and drive from Brashear to Kirksville to be at work at 6 a.m.

Bleithing said waking up early is not a big deal for her because of the atmosphere in the cafeteria.

"I love my boss," Bleithing said. "I've worked with him for 15 years. He calls me his second mom."

She said that despite not remembering all of the students' names, contact with students is also something she appreciates in her job. She said that she becomes really attached to some students and even visits them sometimes.



Mayank Dhungana/Index

Sodexo worker Bleithing starts her mornings at 4:30 a.m.

Bleithing is one of the oldest employees on Truman's campus, she said. However, as long as she stays in good health, she will show up every morning at 6 a.m.

"I will retire when it gets to the point that I don't think I can make it," Bleithing said. "I mean, if I cannot get up and come to work everyday. And when it gets to the point I don't enjoy [it] anymore, I'll quit."

A couple steps away from Bleithing, custodian Eldon Rouse is running the vacuum cleaner. Since 2001, he has come to work everyday to make Centennial Hall shine from 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

"I get up at 5:20 every morning," he said. "Now it is like a sched-

ule. I like sleeping on the weekend but most of the time my alarm clock in my head wakes me up early.

"The morning is actually my favorite time of the day. Just the good time for me I enjoy ... It is not a problem for me, I am a morning person. I would come earlier if they begged me."

Similar to Bleithing, the student atmosphere seems to be a source of motivation for Rouse to come in every day. He said the students are one of the reasons that made him choose this job.

Finishing work early also has advantages: by doing so, he can enjoy his free time fishing, hunting, riding or playing music.

Senior Katie Sassenrath would agree with him. She has worked at the library since fall of her sophomore year, alternating early and late shifts depending on the semester.

"I think I prefer the morning shift, just because night shifts are usually the time I do homework," she said. "Plus, I would probably sleep 'til noon if I didn't have morning shift because I don't have classes in the morning."

To be on time at 8 a.m. for her early shift, Sassenrath wakes up around 7 a.m. She used to wake up even earlier for previous semesters.

"I did the opening before. The library opens at 7:30 a.m., meaning you have to be there at 7:15, and so I used to wake up at 6:30," Sassenrath said.

Like Bleithing and Rouse, Sassenrath considers herself a morning person.

"As long as I have coffee, it's not that bad," she said.

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