

# Benefit celebrates life of local

**Family and friends of Troy Lawrence celebrate his life while coping with his death**

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Kirksville resident Troy Lawrence, 37, was driving home Jan. 17 when his car crashed on Highway 11. Lawrence died and in the face of this loss, his friends and family held a benefit to celebrate his life.

Lawrence's death was mourned during his funeral Jan. 17, but at the benefit at Moose Lodge in Kirksville on Feb. 10, friends and family gathered to celebrate Lawrence's life. More than 500 people attended the benefit, which raised more than \$27,000 to cover funeral costs and to help fund the education of his two children, 8-year-old Skyler and 11-year-old Daulton.

Lawrence's cousin, Radonna Daniels, said Lawrence died without life insurance, leaving his family to cover the funeral costs. Daniels said the family and friends who organized the banquet wanted to help with funeral expenses and to pay for a nice headstone.

"Troy died with \$1 in his wallet and he had two young children, so I know the family was going to struggle with paying his funeral expenses," Daniels said.

Daniels said the benefit featured Lawrence's favorite things. Three bands performed at the event, including Strange Brew Country, a classic rock band, Black Bea, a rock and blues band and Kentucky Windage, an alternative rock band. Daniels said these bands were picked because they represented Lawrence's favorite music genres.

Lawrence also was an avid hunter known for his ducks calls, so the live and

silent auctions included guns, Daniels said.

Community members donated many of the items in the silent auction, and Daniels said this is just one way the community has supported the family.

"We've just had a huge outpouring of public support with donations and items and just sympathy for our loss," Daniels said.

Lawrence's aunt, Brenda Shillings, said Lawrence was an outgoing person who made friends with everyone he met. She said the benefit was full of people whom Lawrence impacted during his life.

"No one who met him was ever a stranger," Shillings said. "Everyone had a nickname or a story about a special moment with him."

Shillings said Lawrence was a caring individual who didn't hesitate to help others every chance he could. She said the event turnout touched her heart because she saw how Lawrence's life had touched the lives of others.

Tina Pape, Lawrence's close friend, described his death as losing a family member.

"He was always at our house," Pape said. "My kids call him uncle so it's very, very hard for us. He was just a part of the family."

Pape said her first reaction was deep sadness. She said she immediately was concerned about his children.

Pape said her children have helped her cope with Lawrence's death.

"We just talk about Uncle Troy every day," Pape said "My son says ... 'It's OK mom, don't be sad because Uncle Troy is a star and God made him a star.'"

Anyone interested in donating to the cost of the funeral or the education of Lawrence's children can donate to the Troy Lawrence memorial fund at Northeast Missouri State Bank.



Submitted photo

Troy Lawrence, left, and his two children, 11-year-old Daulton, middle, and 8-year-old Skyler, right, pictured together at a friend's house. After paying for funeral costs, the money raised during Lawrence's benefit will go toward his children's education

# Women share race related experiences

BY DAVID HUTCHINSON

Staff Reporter

Sophomore Briana Bonner experienced so much racial tension with her roommate freshman year that she decided to move.

"She would say things like, 'Your people always come and knock on the door,'" Bonner said.

After the most intense of these encounters in which Bonner's roommate complained there were too many black people in their room, Bonner decided it was time for a new roommate, she said.

Black women like Bonner, history professor Sylvia Macauley and sophomore Jessica Swopshire have adapted differently to the predominantly white environments in Kirksville. At Truman State, the stories of black women like these will be the focus of the University's Black History Month events.

Bonner said she thought she needed to join organizations like the Association of Black Collegians, which aim to promote the welfare of black students, to authentically feel black, she said.

"I came from a multicultural high school so I didn't think anyone could formulate those opinions," Bonner said. "It kind of hurt, but then I got out more and experienced that everyone does not have that judgmental mindset."

Bonner adapted to her environment by immersing herself in campus activities and befriending many of the international students on campus.

As a student adviser in Dobson Hall, Bonner said she has met a lot of open-minded and interesting people. Even with these friends, she said she still has frustrating moments with them because she's black. After the YouTube video "Sh\*t White Girls Say ... to Black Girls" went viral during early January, Bonner said some of her white friends and acquaintances would quote bits of the video and reach for her hair.

Like Bonner, Swopshire said she has experienced frustrating moments with her white friends, but remains convinced her friends accept her for who she is. Swopshire recently straightened her hair after wearing an afro since the beginning of the school year, and frequently has heard from her white friends that her hair doesn't "look black." She also has been told she doesn't seem black by white students who have told her she doesn't speak 'black' either, she said. Swopshire said she rejects these characterizations because they equate white with good and debase black people.

When history professor Sylvia Macauley arrived in Kirksville 12 years ago, the culture shock she experienced was immense. Macauley, originally from Sierra Leone, had been in the United



Rose Sparks/Index

Senior Rebekah Gates discusses senior Rachel Vaught's piece at Women: Through Her Eyes, an event sponsored by the Multicultural Affairs Center. Gates also displayed art at the show.

States before, but within the metropolis of Washington, D.C. at the historically black Howard University. Macauley always had been surrounded by black people, so being in Kirksville, a town with a black population of 2.2 percent according to the 2010 census, has required some adjustment.

A privilege of the past, Macauley no longer is surrounded by other black people with similar experiences to her. There was one other black female professor at Truman when Macauley first became a faculty member. Macauley said she knows of two others.

"[The number of black women faculty is] not ideal, but I understand the challenges of retaining black women in a place like Kirksville," Macauley said.

In a predominantly white town like Kirksville, Macauley said there are no businesses that sell products specific to black hair care, which is part of the challenge with retention.

"Women do have a lot of unique needs, and it's even more difficult when you're a black woman so I can understand the difficulty in getting black women to stay."

In her interactions with her colleagues, Macauley said she felt they often have expectations for her because of her African heritage.

"Because I am originally from Africa, you tend to become the go-to for everything, and there is this expectation that you are to know everything about a whole continent," Macauley said.

While Africa might be a frequent topic of discussion, Macauley said she has not had a serious conversation about race with any of her colleagues during her 13 years at Truman. The 2008 elec-

tion, however, did inspire brief conversations among the faculty in discussing President Barack Obama.

Off-campus, Macauley said she only has talked about race with one other person — her elderly white neighbor. During the '08 election, she said her neighbor would seek her out to ask questions about race and talk to her about the racially inflammatory emails she received from her friends. Macauley said she was happy her neighbor was comfortable enough to bring up the issue with her and educate herself about it.

This February, to celebrate Black History Month, Truman is attempting to educate its students about black history by highlighting the experiences of black women. The events range from art shows and musical performances to an analysis of the film "Roots."

Macauley said she understands the usefulness of Black History Month, but black history still should be examined and appreciated year-round.

"When black history is limited to a month it becomes more like an exotic event," she said. "There is a lot more to the black population than can seriously be studied in one month."

Although Macauley said she appreciates the events that are taking place on campus, she insisted the education about black history occur in the Kirksville community as well.

"We are so remote from everything [in Kirksville], so making that conscious effort to do more would help," Macauley said. "I mean the campus environment might be good, but then you go home, there's the weekend. You have to live in Kirksville."

# "Beautiful you" rethinks beauty

BY EMILY BATTMER

Staff Reporter

Truman State counselors are starting a support group called Beautiful You to challenge the perceptions of physical beauty created by media.

Beautiful You is a support group for females that addresses body image and self-esteem, said Jane Maxwell, counselor and co-facilitator. Maxwell helped create the group, which met for the first time last week. The group will meet weekly to discuss and share their experiences and struggles with body image issues and to create a healthier self-image.

Body image-related concerns include a sense of self-consciousness, a tendency to equate self-worth with appearance and a lack of self-acceptance, Maxwell said. When low self-esteem keeps someone from doing activities they'd like to do, it can be a serious problem, she said, and it needs to be addressed.

While Maxwell strongly encourages people with eating disorders to come forward and seek help from counseling services, she said the group is for people with less serious concerns, which are much more common.

"I see this issue constantly with my own individual clients, and with a lot of people on campus," Maxwell said.

Although body-image issues are prevalent, Maxwell said the counseling center generally sees only a small percentage of people who share this concern. Counseling services has put together body-image support groups during the past, but they didn't attract as many members as Maxwell hoped.

"Many people don't want to come forward and talk about this stuff because it's too personal," she said.

Despite past struggles, Maxwell said she wants to create a safe and comfortable environment that will attract students. Because it's such a sensitive issue, she said she thought keeping the group all female would be best — even though it is not just a female problem. Limiting the group to only women makes students more comfortable about sharing their experiences, she said. Maxwell said men struggling with these issues should contact the University Counseling Services for help.

By sharing their experiences, students learn they're not alone and are better able to combat the negative messages present in the media and culture and reinforced by family and peers, Maxwell said.

Counselor-in-training Stacy Simmons said tackling body-

image and self-esteem issues as a group rather than as an individual is more empowering and liberating. Simmons is co-facilitating the group with Maxwell and she said the group is about finding ways to combat negative messages that affect women's self-esteem.

"It's an issue that's constantly thrown in our faces through magazines, billboards and television," she said. "I really wanted to start a group to create awareness and help girls find beauty within themselves, inside and out."

She said body-image issues affect everyone, because people constantly are reminded of what is beautiful and standards for what people should look like. She said she hopes the group will be able to find alternative ways to view the negative messages they're getting.

Senior Alissa Walkner said she wants to challenge beauty standards. She co-chaired this year's Eating Disorder Awareness Week committee and organized A Day Without Makeup to help promote healthy body image.

"You're used to presenting your face in a certain way and it's hard when you're not able to do that," she said.

She said it was interesting to hear how challenging the day without makeup was for students. Many students have a difficult time feeling comfortable in their own skin, she said, but the day without makeup was meant to help them embrace a healthier attitude and self-image. She said she thinks body image issues are pretty prevalent, but they can be difficult to detect. People are good at putting on a confident face and hiding any self-esteem issues they might be dealing with, she said. She wants to get people talking about these issues, especially because they can lead to more serious problems, like eating disorders.

Walkner said it bothers her that eating disorders and self-esteem issues often are misunderstood. She said many people think it is about vanity and getting attention, but that's not the case. She wants people to become comfortable discussing these issues, because they are important and seriously can impact people's lives, she said.

"It's so important to feel comfortable being yourself, whether you're beautiful by whatever standards are created," she said. "It affects everything you do."

Students interested in joining the Beautiful You group should contact University Counseling Services to begin the screening process, which determines whether the group will be a good fit for the student.