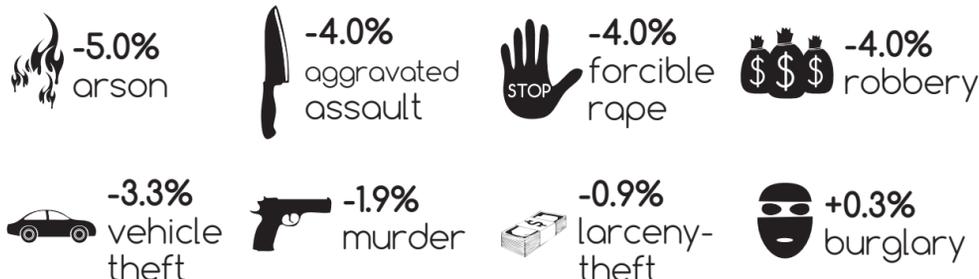


## Violent crime in the United States during 2011 compared to 2010



\*according to www.fbi.gov/news

## New year, new goals

This year, the Index Staff's New Year's Resolutions are to...

1. Stop tweeting pictures of our dinners.
2. For once and for all, learn the difference between "its" and "it's" and "there" and "their."
3. Find valuable work experience while still in school.
4. Begin networking. It will be time to start lining up job interviews sooner than we think.
5. Convince ourselves that the weekend doesn't start Thursday.
6. Stop wasting money to have Jimmy John's delivered.
7. Set realistic expectations. Sure, getting straight A's and dropping 10 pounds would be great, but make sure the goals we are setting are achievable and something we really want to do — not something we think we should do.
8. Start weaning ourselves off Facebook. Looking through our sister's mother's friend's birthday party pictures is not conducive to studying.
9. Attend a Truman State sports event. We might as well put to use that automatic \$50 charge anyway.
10. Stop leeching off of our friends. It's okay to use a lifeline every once in a while, but it's time to stop asking our smartest friends to do our Spanish homework or depending on the other people in our group project to pull our weight.
11. Quit being a constant complainer. Yes, the walk to Barnett Hall in the middle of January is terrible, but putting all our energy into negativity is self-destructive.
12. Take advantage of what Kirksville has to offer. It's easy to coop ourselves up in our residence hall rooms. Make it a point to catch a movie at the theater downtown every few weeks or go out for pizza at Pagliai's with a group of friends.
13. Attempt to reclaim a normal sleeping pattern.
14. Be on time to class regularly.
15. Eat less Ramen. It might be every college student's dinner staple, but it's time to face the facts. It's 35 percent of our daily sodium!
16. Not merely say the same resolutions as last year but actually live them out.
17. Call a family member or friend on the phone and talk to them for at least 10 minutes. It's time to put our hands up and back away from the Internet slowly. Talking on the phone is more personal than texting or messaging and will make it easier to maintain relationships.
18. Spend more alone time with ourselves. It's okay to treat ourselves to an ice cream or go for a walk alone. It's a great way to clear our heads and gear up for a stressful week of homework, papers and tests.
19. Fit in fitness. We will challenge ourselves to begin a fitness routine. Find a pick-up game at the Rec or find the resolve to go on a run with a friend twice a week.
20. Quit using acronyms like YOLO, BTW and LOL mid-sentence.
21. Learn something new this year. Take a pottery class or go rock climbing. It's good to get out of your comfort zone every once in a while.

Index Staff

## Small town crime causes concern



Lacy Murphy

Many Truman State students returning for the spring semester already have learned about the murder that occurred Jan. 6. The crime involved the alleged stabbing and dismemberment of an unnamed victim. Naturally, this crime has shocked the small community of Kirksville.

For Truman students, this is an unusual crime in Kirksville. Many of us come from more populated communities that might experience more crimes of this caliber, but a murder hasn't been committed in Kirksville since 2006, according to www.city-data.com. In fact, Kirksville's crime rates repeatedly have been lower than the average US crime index. Most people typically feel safer in smaller communities such as Kirksville, but a crime like this forces members of the community to think twice about their security and safety.

Overall, the FBI reported a 4 percent drop in crime throughout the U.S. during 2011 in comparison to 2010. Curiously, the number of murders in the Midwest has risen by .06 percent. Likewise, the number of murders in towns having a population smaller than 10,000 has risen by 18.3 per-

cent, according to FBI data. Although Kirksville is a community larger than 10,000, those still are troubling statistics for those living in small Midwestern communities. Why are small towns experiencing more murders and how will it affect the community?

When a murder occurs in Los Angeles, most people wouldn't bat an eyelash. Murder and other violent crimes have become commonplace events the population has come to accept as inevitable. However, in a smaller community, a murder has heavier consequences. It cannot so easily be ignored. When families sit at home and see it on the news, they don't just shake their heads and mutter "What a shame," they say, "I can't believe anyone around here would do something like that." They are blindsided by a harrowing realization — maybe they aren't as safe as they thought they were.

Many experts think crime is being driven out of the bigger cities and the relocation of these crimes is causing drugs, and the violence associated with it, to be brought to smaller towns. Other experts are saying an overall moral degradation is leading to increased violent crimes. And thus we are posed with the age old question: which came first — the chicken or the egg? Is it the presence of drugs that brings the violence, or the presence of violence that brings the drugs? Do drugs make people inherently more violent, or are people simply more violent these days?

For a small town like Kirksville, I predict people will be deeply affected by the news at first. Citizens of Kirksville will be reminded that even in a small town, safety cannot be ensured. They might react by installing a few more locks in their homes or carrying

pepper spray with them. But these small acts will just be to compensate for the initial fear they might be experiencing. Eventually, this crime, like most crimes, will be forgotten with time.

To Truman students, native Kirksvillians might be more bewildered than those who are traveling from larger cities. However, the news of this tragic event will most likely shift the perception most students have of Kirksville. Truman students should remember the dynamics of a small town are much different from larger cities. Citizens of larger cities tend to follow national news and events more often than local. Crimes and violent acts that occur on the other side of the city don't seem to pose that large of a threat, and therefore citizens are less interested. For Kirksville residents, "across town" in most cases is less than 10 minutes away.

Truman students and Kirksville residents alike should remain calm and, while not ignoring the statistics, should not become paranoid. The people of Kirksville need to keep in mind crimes happen in areas of social deprivation. Even though this most recent crime in Kirksville could be considered a fluke or unlikely to happen again for the time being, community leaders and members should remember how an increase in crime can weaken the social fiber of the community. Crime negatively affects economic productivity and makes people more withdrawn, defensive and less willing to contribute to the community. If crime and murder truly is increasing in small towns, Kirksville residents should endeavor to increase their community involvement in hopes of counteracting the threat of violence.

Lacy Murphy is a sophomore French major from Springfield, Mo.

## What are your New Year's Resolutions?



"To focus more on my studies and bettering myself."

Chelsie Little  
Sophomore



"My New Year's resolution is to not procrastinate."

Alyssa Smith  
Senior



"To learn to play guitar."

Tom Sandbrink  
Junior



"Wake up before eight every day."

David Stodden  
Sophomore

## AROUND THE QUAD

## Plagiarism charges should not be leveled lightly



Robert Overmann

During 2006, the Red Hot Chili Peppers released their album "Stadium Arcadium," featuring "Dani California." The song reached No. 6 on that year's Billboard Top 100 and was featured on the popular music videogame franchise Rock Band. It also almost landed the Red Hot Chili Peppers in a legal battle with American rock musician Tom Petty for allegedly plagiarizing his 1993 hit "Mary Jane's Last Dance," according to a June 2006 "Rolling Stone" article.

The songs certainly sound quite similar, but

was the song plagiarized? That is, did the Red Hot Chili Peppers knowingly steal Tom Petty's intellectual property? I don't know, but it's only safe to assume not. Plagiarism is a serious offense — because of this, accusations should only be made with substantial supporting evidence. The accuser should bear an equally high burden of proof — proving, beyond a reasonable doubt, that the accused did indeed plagiarize.

Last semester, a friend of mine, who shall remain unidentified, was fired from her writing job and brought before the student conduct board. She had been accused of plagiarizing, inarguably the most damaging and shameful intellectual offense of an artist or writer.

Plagiarism is the capital murder charge of the artistic world. Being charged with plagiarism calls not only the validity of the individual work into question, but the originality and quality of all previous work. The artist or writer's talents and their entire character are brought under close scrutiny. A conviction of plagiarizing in one's work spells the immediate and inextricable death of one's professional career. Convicted plagiarizers often are rejected by any and all academic institutions, in addition to being rejected by many professional occupations, and certainly by many publishers. To the intellectual world, a

conviction of plagiarism is an indelible brand as a cheater, a liar and a deceiver.

The plagiarism charges levied against my friend were, thankfully, dropped. Her offense? Emailing a draft of her work and forgetting to attach the works cited page. It was understood by both parties that her work was not complete, nor would that draft be published. There was no malicious or deceitful intent, nor was she given a chance to explain herself when informed of the charges against her. From what she had told me, I'd gathered that the evidence of her plagiarizing was weak and her accuser rather reckless in their accusation. After several months and significant stress, she was acquitted of all charges.

Although her charges were dropped, even an accusation of plagiarism has the potential to permanently damage one's academic reputation. For this reason, such charges should never be leveled lightly. I'd much rather wrongly acquit an individual actually guilty of plagiarizing than wrongly convict an individual innocent of plagiarizing.

Students should not be made to fear wrongful accusations of plagiarism. In an academic environment, the goal should be to educate, not intimidate. If a student inadvertently plagiarizes

by incorrectly citing a work, or unknowingly incorporates a phrase similar to another source into his or her work, it should be pointed out. But before an academic hearing is arranged and formal charges levied, perhaps it would be more beneficial to all parties involved to simply teach the student how to cite correctly, or understand that coincidentally similar phrases and ideas do occur. With millions, if not more, published works, it is not inconceivable that something one writes might accidentally bear semblance to another's work.

Plagiarism should be thought of as a criminal offense. While not against the law, the consequences in academic and professional environments can be every bit as devastating as committing a felony. I'm not advocating a reduction of these penalties — plagiarism, or theft of ideas, is an incredibly serious offense. I'm advocating that we not jump to conclusions, that an individual who might have plagiarized be granted a fair hearing. If evidence is not strong enough, or beyond a reasonable doubt, then plagiarism charges must be dropped.

Robert Overmann is a junior English major from Cape Girardeau, Mo.