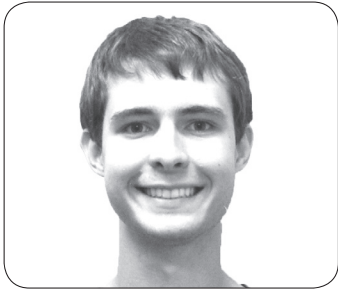


## Amateur art is important



Conor Gearin

One of the most liberating experiences of my young life was finding a vast collection of online Harry Potter fanfiction, none of which I could bring myself to read.

It was liberating because I saw it as a massive effort of mind and heart to continue exploring a fictional world the fans loved. Everyone I know has attempted to make art. I think we should encourage and not regret these attempts. Giving art a shot, and making something you know most people never will praise, can help us better appreciate masterful artwork, develop empathy for professional artists and encourage others to give their own art a try.

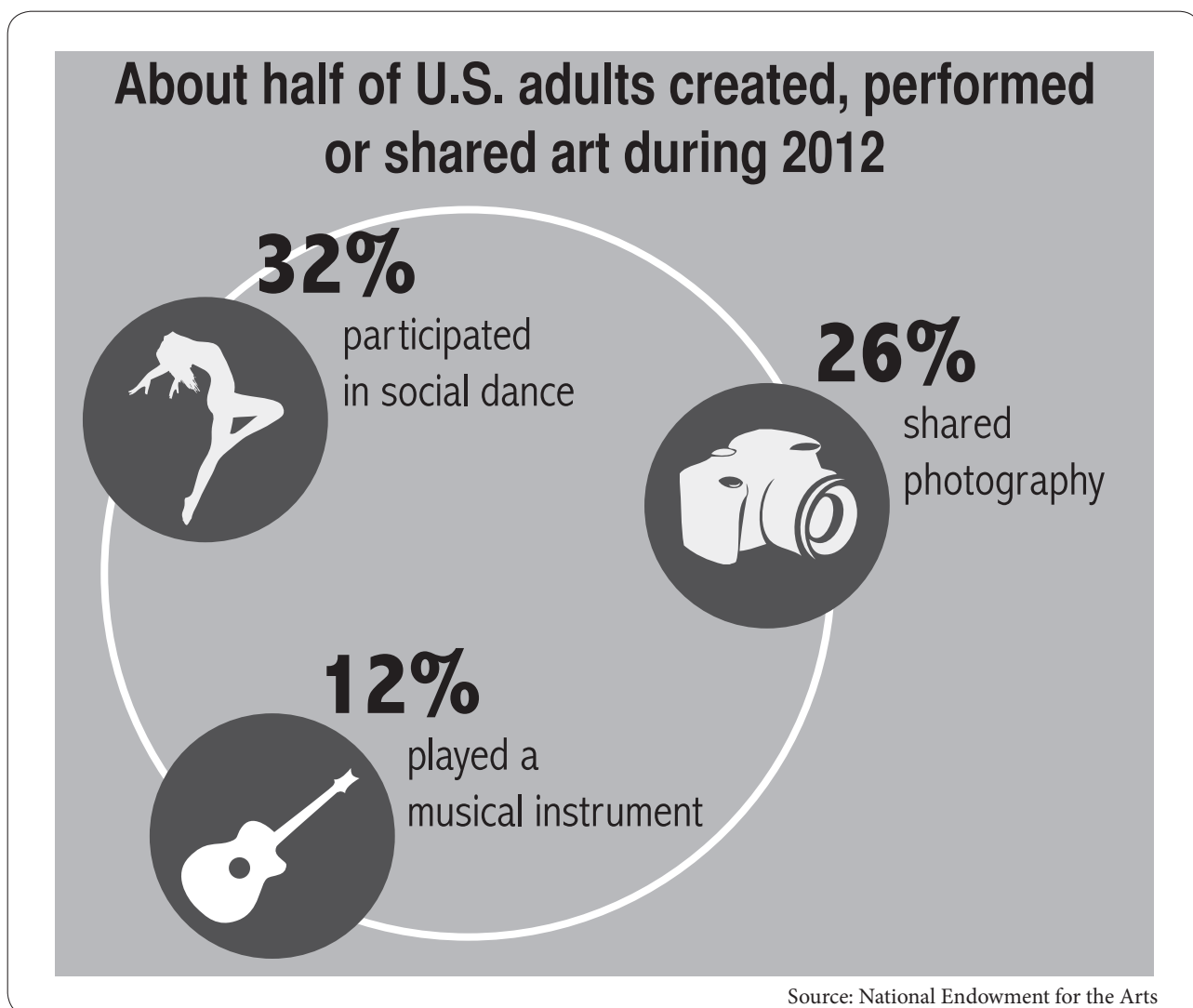
Poet Dean Young wrote that if everyone in the world wrote a poem one day, “the world would not be made worse,” in his book, “The Art of Recklessness.”

“The creation of art, okay, just the attempt at the creation of art, as well as the appreciation of it, is both an enlarging of the world and an expanding of consciousness,” Young wrote.

After learning some basic skills in watercolor painting, my understanding of my place in the world changed. Even when just learning the fundamentals, I felt myself connected to a new world of artistic effort through the language of painting.

This said, I still recognize over-praising a bad poem or sketch is problematic. Only the best work should be distributed to the masses. I think it is a good thing editors and art galleries reject the majority of work submitted to them. Acknowledging the shortcomings of our work helps us recognize great work when we see it.

Rather than criticizing amateur work as self-indulgence, we should recognize creative professionals are making art for their own tastes. A writer of a novel is intensely self-involved. A painter



has to focus on the images in her or his mind to reproduce them on the canvas. Though professionals learn to make publication games work for them, their work remains deeply personal — and often, playfully self-indulgent.

In other words, do not expect your colored pencil portrait of your dog or cat to sell. At the same time, the drawing can have real value to you and those close to you.

Art is not separate from daily life. In her book of poetry criticism, “Madness, Rack, and Honey,” Mary Ruefle said letters, prayers and poems are closely connected because “each originates in the pressing need to make a message directed at something un-near.”

How often do you turn to a song, picture or quote from a novel to communicate what ordinary speech cannot quite hold? Artwork fills crucial personal needs in our lives.

There is a reason older relatives appreciated your childhood scribbles and stick-figures on birthday cards — the effort of mind and heart to create art cannot be faked. It always demonstrates courage to give form to mysterious images and ideas.

College Board president David Coleman said our current education culture focuses too much on self-expression compared to comprehending and communicating nonfictional information, according to an October 2012 Atlantic magazine article.

Proponents of Coleman’s line of thinking would argue assigning students to focus on creative work gives them unreasonable expectations and poor preparation for adult life.

However, as I have grown older the demands on my empathetic and imaginative thinking have outpaced increasing needs to read and analyze technical information. I acknowledge the classroom focus for other young people might be different, especially given different educational backgrounds and goals.

Yet I feel aspiring writers and accountants both could make creative work a small part of their weekly routine, like jogging or forcing themselves to eat asparagus.

I picked up an Irish flute during winter break. I am still not good, despite lots of blowing and light-headedness. I will never be great. But was I overjoyed when I occasionally managed get a decent note from the flute, or even something resembling the Shire theme from the “Lord of the Rings” movies? I certainly was.

Conor Gearin is a senior biology and English major from St. Louis, Mo.

## Respect people with differing interests



Andrea Trierweiler

On New Year’s Day, CBS Sports Host Jim Rome posted an insulting tweet about marching bands during the Rose Bowl.

“Is there anyone not in a marching band who thinks those dorks running around with their instruments are cool?” Rome wrote, according to a Jan. 2 Huffington Post article.

The backlash that followed led Rome to remove the tweet.

“I do not condone bullying of any kind and that was not my intent,” he apologized in a new tweet, according to the article.

Apology or not, Rome’s original tweet draws attention to the way

members of certain organizations are viewed in our society. Almost any film about an American high school portrays athletes at the top of the social ladder and band members at the bottom.

It doesn’t make sense — some people find their calling in playing an instrument while others enjoy sports. Some enjoy art or video games or science — the list goes on and on.

At Truman State, there is a wide range of campus organizations students can be a part of. The fact that people have different interests should be celebrated. Why some activities have high social status while others are considered “dorky” is puzzling.

During my high school years, I was one of those “marching band dorks.” While nobody ever shoved me into lockers for playing an instrument, the snarky comments some of my classmates made about band members stick with me today — in particular, one person’s comment about color guard members being at the “bottom of the social ladder.”

As soon as I’d overheard her comment, I was confused. Why did my classmate think she was of a higher status because she played soccer and I played clarinet? When she saw that I’d heard her, she brushed it off with a “no offense.” Rome’s apology tweet is the same sort of response.

But it is offensive, because there’s no reason to discriminate based on activities people enjoy. Upon reading Rome’s tweet, I thought of my years in marching band, from the blistering summer days of band camp to the finger-freezing fall weather during rehearsals before school. I thought of the long bus rides to competitions and those brutal three-hour Tuesday night practices. All the time we put in came together when we performed at Friday night football games, supporting the team by playing the school fight song each time our team scored a touchdown. Some members of the band were even members of athletic teams.

I wanted people to enjoy the results of the hard work I put into something I was passionate about.

We should all at least appreciate what others put into their work and respect that they might have different interests.

Among the backlash at Jim Rome, I realized how grateful I am to go to a school where athletes are not put on a pedestal, but walk on campus the same as everyone else. In my hometown of Columbia, Missouri, Mizzou football players are local celebrities. Here at Truman, there isn’t that kind of divide. I appreciate how we are encouraged to participate in a multitude of activities here and explore various interests through the University’s liberal arts mission. As a society, we need to stop giving prestige to certain activities and allow all people to enjoy what they want.

Andrea Trierweiler is a senior Romance language major from Columbia, Mo.

## AROUND THE QUAD

Do you think there’s prestige attached to any Truman activities?

Definitely academics. It’s an academic school, so lots of good things come from here.

Trevor Hatfield  
Freshman



I like to believe people are involved in activities because it is their passion.

Lauren Dendrinelis  
Sophomore



Probably sports, but I don’t think sports are really popular at Truman.

Nikola Pesic  
Freshman



I think that the academic fraternities and sororities are prestigious.

Maha Mohamed  
Freshman

