

Free

# AUMNIBUS

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Chronicling the Campus Community and Beyond Since 1971

## Summer Edition

### Modern Slavery: A Real Threat

By Dasa Rosca



According to the U.S. Department of Justice, there are 27 million slaves worldwide. Photo courtesy of Dasa Rosca.

Every 30 seconds a person becomes a victim of human trafficking. Yes, slavery still exists in the 21st century. In fact, according to a study done by the Free the Slaves organization there are more slaves now than during any other time in history. What makes this issue even more alarming is people's belief that human trafficking does not exist in America. When we do not know that an issue exists, we cannot fight to solve it. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, there are 27 million slaves worldwide; the scary fact: 2.5 million of them are located in the United States.

Human trafficking is a crime against humanity. The Department of Justice defines it as "recruitment, transportation, transfer and harboring of people by use of threat, force, abduction, deception and abuse of power for the purpose of exploitation." Most of us falsely believe that traffickers only target vulnerable populations – the migrants, runaways, homeless, and orphans. However, this crime strips the victims of their humanity, and everyone is at the risk of becoming a target, especially when they are not informed. Young and vulnerable teens and mostly females can fall prey by being lured into empty promises for a better life.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, 200,000 of American children are at high risk of being trafficked within the U.S. each year. In the last decade, 750,000 women and children have been trafficked into the United States. A victim's average life span is three to seven years.

Their early death is often caused by abuse, HIV, malnutrition, overdose, and suicide. Human trafficking is a high-profit business for criminals. After drugs, humans are the most trafficked items in the world. Each victim will generate up to \$150,000 to \$300,000 a year for his or her capturer. This crime is a \$32 billion a year industry worldwide, and it is estimated to be a \$9.7 billion a year industry in the U.S. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the crime of human trafficking affects every nation, and each one of them is involved in this industry. Some countries will serve as the country of origin, some as the destination and others as the transit. India, China, Pakistan, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Russia and Thailand are the countries that have the highest numbers of enslaved people.

Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery. According to the U.S. Department of State, there are a few ways that we can combat human trafficking. Get informed, so you don't become a victim, raise awareness by joining or establishing a club on your campus, volunteer to do victim outreach, and offer your professional services to local anti-trafficking organizations.

William Wilberforce a leader for the movement to abolish slavery in England said: "You may choose to look the other way but you can never say again that you did not know." Getting informed about this crime is the first and most important step in helping fight this injustice that denies freedom to 27 million people around the world.

### Happening in Montgomery:

- May 20th**  
Riverbend Brewfest  
6-9 p.m.
- May 21st**  
River Jam Music Festival  
5:30 p.m.
- May 27th**  
Montgomery Symphony  
Jubilee Pops Concert  
7-9 p.m.
- June 4th**  
Montgomery Film Festival  
6-10 p.m.
- June 11th**  
2016 Gump Games  
9 a.m.-12 p.m.
- June 14th**  
Veg Out Montgomery  
7-8 p.m.
- June 18th**  
Taco Libre  
2-8 p.m.
- June 21st**  
River Jam Music Festival  
6 p.m.
- July 4th**  
4th of July Picnic on the River  
5-10 p.m.
- July 11th**  
Second Saturday  
5-9 p.m.
- July 31st**  
Stars on the Riverfront  
7:30-9 p.m.

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## It's Your Turn to Bring a Furry Friend Home

By Rachael Fairchild



Shortly after her adoption from the Montgomery Humane Society, Willow Prevatte could be seen kicking back and adjusting easily to her new home. Photo courtesy of Lauren Prevatte.

When I have a break between classes I often find myself at Petland playing with the adorable fur babies as stress therapy. Who doesn't love playing with a little puppy or feline friend in between classes? However, as much as I would love to take one of those little friends home, the hefty price tag does not fit into my college student budget. Thankfully, there are alternative adoption centers for furry friends such as the Montgomery Humane Society that provides the opportunity to adopt a lovable animal at a reasonable cost.

While the humane shelter may not be able to offer you purebred animals, it has a wonderful variety of furry friends up for adoption that have a backstory much more incredible than the little pups at Petland. According to its mission statement, the Montgomery Humane Society operates an animal shelter for homeless, abandoned and unwanted animals in order to prevent animal cruelty. It is always seeking safe and loving homes for the animals. With an adoption from the Humane Society, you can feel good knowing that you are not only rescuing an animal, but also furthering its mission to prevent animal cruelty.

Pet adoption can be a hassle, but the Montgomery Humane Society

tries to make the process as easy as possible while still taking precautions in order to certify the safety of its animals. One fellow student, Kalen Huggins, adopted her own black Labrador retriever from the Humane Society and said the adoption was a seamlessly smooth process. "The employees were so helpful in the process but also went through great lengths to ensure that she would have a good home with me, which I am grateful for," said Huggins.

Huggins paid \$150 when she adopted her lab Iris and said it was an easy price to pay when she considers how loving and cuddly her little pup is. Other young adults in the community such as Lauren Prevatte, a local photographer, have also adopted from the Montgomery Humane Society. Prevatte recently brought home an older German shepherd mix when she went to volunteer one weekend. "I had no intention of adopting an animal, but could not resist my loving Willow when I saw her," Prevatte said. "I had to bring my husband back the next day to finalize the adoption." She says the adoption was a complete godsend because when going to pay the adoption fees they discovered that they had already been paid through the Humane Society's Angel Pet Sponsorship Program.

The Angel Pet Sponsorship Program gives pet lovers the opportunity to sponsor an adoption of one of the shelters adoptable animals. Many of the supporters are unable to adopt themselves because they already have a home full of pets, but the program allows them to make it easier for others to adopt and add to their family. Prevatte described how the Angel Pet Program not only covered the adoption fees, but also covered the heartworm treatment her dog needed following the adoption.

Whether you are a college student, staff member, or recent grad, now is a great time to adopt and bring a furry friend into your life. Both Huggins and Prevatte recommend taking the time to visit the Humane Society and see the beautiful animals first hand. They challenge you to see if you can resist the loving eyes and soft fur of the shelter's adoptable animals.

You can view the Montgomery Humane Society's adoptable pets by visiting its website at [www.montgomeryhumane.com](http://www.montgomeryhumane.com) or visiting the shelter between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Sunday.

## Party on the River

By Matthew Robinson



The River Jam Music Festival will take place May 20 and 21. Photo courtesy of Wind Creek Montgomery.

The end of the semester is upon us and if you are like me, you are absolutely ready to take a much needed break. Summer can be a bit boring though, especially if you aren't taking a vacation. Luckily, Montgomery has a lot to offer this summer: two of the most exciting events planned are the 4th Annual Riverbend Brewfest and River Jam Music Festival. This joint event will begin on May 20 at 6 p.m. and will continue the next day, May 21, starting at 5:30 p.m.

Admission to the River Jam Music Festival is free, but the Riverbend Brewfest will cost \$25. While that may seem a little high, you will get a commemorative tasting glass in addition to being able to try craft beers from local as well as national brewers. One other thing to keep in mind is that Brewfest is limited to those who are 21-year-old and over. That being said, the River Jam Music Festival looks to be fun for all ages.

Presented by Wind Creek Montgomery and the Alabama Roots Music Society, River Jam has scheduled artists from across the country to play this year including Grammy nominated artist Shawn Mullins, Atlanta based rock band Bloodkin, and Indianapolis blues group Queen Delphine and the Crown Jewels. Local artist will also be featured like Lisa & The E-lusion and BPM. From soul to the blues, music lovers are sure to hear something right up their alley on both days.

Because the event has been split into two days, there will be a couple of locations for you to attend. On May 20, both the Brewfest and River Jam will be held in the Union Station Train Shed, located at 300 Water Street. River Jam will then be split up to two stages on May 21. One stage will remain in the Union Station Train Shed, and the other will be located at the Riverwalk Amphitheater on the Riverfront. No outside food or drinks will be allowed, but refreshments will be available for purchase at the event.

For more information on the Riverbend Brewfest, visit: <http://www.funinmontgomery.com/announcements/brewfest>. Tickets are on sale right now! Also, if you would like to know more about River Jam, visit: <http://www.funinmontgomery.com/announcements/river-jam>. I look forward to jamming with you all on the river!

## Yoga in the Park

By Rachael Fairchild



Locals practice meditation at Yoga in the Park. Photo courtesy of Yoga Wellness Center.

Imagine spending your Sunday evening partaking in a group yoga class. Not in the typical studio or gym setting, but instead at a local park. That's right: finding your balance, breathing in rhythm with those around you, and releasing all your stress as the soft spring breeze swirls all around, cooling the tiny sweat beads glistening on your forehead—this is exactly how I spent April 17 in the upper half of Cloverdale Bottom Park.

For the past seven years, Marjorie Jean, owner of the Yoga Wellness Center, formerly known as MJ Yoga, has hosted Yoga in the Park in Old Cloverdale. Over the course of 70 minutes, "MJ" guides participants through a series of mixed level poses. Yoga in the Park is open to everyone. With a suggested donation of \$5.50; mats are also available for those who do not own their own.

When I arrived at the park with my Nalgene and yoga mat in hand, I was personally skeptical of how the evening would go. As I set up in the middle of the group, I did a few stretches on my own and had a minimal conversation with the older woman to my right before the session began.

"Just Breathe," I remember thinking to myself as MJ welcomed the class. I consider myself a mediocre yogi; I took Bikram yoga for two months the summer before my senior year and do a slow-flow cycle in the comfort of my own home a few nights a week, but am by no means a yoga expert. However, as we continued through the session, my insecurities and surroundings began to melt away.

Even though we were in an open park with a crowd of people right around the corner, it was as if we were in our own Zen studio. People of all ages, sizes and stages of life were trying something new or participating in something they already love. No one was concerned with the thoughts of others in the park, or even those in

the class. Instead, it was evident that everyone was there solely for their own wellbeing. As I left, I felt peaceful and refreshed despite the slightly darker shade of my workout tank from the sweat inducing workout.

If you think you might be ready to try something new, I personally recommend attending the next Yoga in the Park event May 15 from 4:30 to 5:45 p.m. in the upper half of Cloverdale Bottom Park. But if you aren't ready for an outside setting, consider visiting MJ at the studio. Silvia Giagnoni, Associate Professor in the Department of Communication and Theatre, has attended the Yoga Wellness Center for over five years and said: "Going to the studio is a nice break from the routine. Personally, it helps me re-center."

For more information about the Yoga Wellness Center, you can visit [www.mjyoga.net](http://www.mjyoga.net) and look under the events tab or show interest on Facebook for the May 15 Yoga in the Park event. If you would like more information about MJ and the other classes and events offered at the Yoga Wellness Center, visit its website or give them a call at 334-398-8161.

## Intramural Sports at AUM

By Turner Griffin

Since coming to AUM as a transfer student this fall, one of the things that has stood out to me as about life on the AUM campus is the amount of enthusiasm surrounding intramural sports. In my time here it has been obvious that the student body at AUM is a close-knit group and the University's intramurals are an excellent embodiment of that environment. However, there does not seem to be a lot of advertisement for the intramural program and I think all students should be aware of it.

Wilson Hallford is a senior business major here at AUM who has been involved in both the intramural flag football and basketball leagues for two years. "Some of my best friends at AUM were made through intramural teams" Hallford said. "We have fun on and off the field." Hallford's flag football team, The Gamecocks, went undefeated in the regular season and playoffs, and qualified to enter the National Flag Football Championships at the University of West Florida in Pensacola. AUM sponsored the team to enter the tournament covering all of their entrance fees and the team headed to Pensacola for a weekend of flag football and fun on the beach.

Another member of The Gamecocks, Daniel Cox, said that there were eight teams in the flag football league and 12 teams in the basketball league. "While this number of players and teams made for a great year, we are always looking for new players to expand the league and increase the number of games played," Cox said. He also added that there are many intramural sports to get involved with. "There

really is something for everyone," Cox said. The intramural program offered pickleball, ultimate frisbee, frisbee golf, soccer, flag football, basketball, softball, tennis, ping pong and kickball this past year. In the past, dodge ball and sand volleyball leagues have been formed but more students are needed in order to keep these leagues going.

To get involved with AUM's intramural program go to [IMLeagues.com/aum](http://IMLeagues.com/aum) and create an account today or simply go to the Wellness Center and ask about the program. Students with smartphones can also get involved by downloading the app REC\*IT. This app will place you on a team, keep up with your team's roster, and schedule and keep track of rankings within the league of your particular sport. There are women's, men's, and coed leagues. There is no skill-set requirement to join any league and it is free to sign up. I encourage any student interested in recreational activities and meeting other students to join a league or if you have an idea for a new league, begin to form your own!

## Sustainability and Organic Practices in Action

By Nick Manoliu



The French breakfast radish is just one of the many colorful vegetables grown at Joy Haven farms. Photo courtesy of Sheila Dicks.

Many businesses and local establishments try to do their part in making a difference for the better. Going organic is a great way to increase sustainability because it lowers the introduction of chemicals and genetically modified materials into the environment. A great example of a business trying to improve sustainability is Joy Haven Farms (JHF).

As students, we have a lot of responsibilities. More often than not, sustainability does not get categorized as one of those responsibilities. But it's an important issue we often take for granted. Sustainability is a very real problem and it cannot be ignored. Whether you limit your ecological footprint or go organic, there is always something you can do to help.

As a local farm that prides itself on organic produce and goods, JHF works with other local establishments to provide fresh, ecologically conscious products to consumers. From eggs to onions, JHF provides consumers with quality foods. To get a better understanding of exactly how a farm can be organic or make a difference, I

decided to sit down with a friend who has been working there since February, HeavenLee Pagan.

We began to talk about organic farms versus traditional farming practices and the myths that tend to go along with them. More often than not, the popular notion is that organic farms sacrifice quantity for quality or that organic farming is unregulated or unsafe. However, Pagan shed a good bit of light on the subject: "We are part of an organization called Certified Naturally Grown (CNG)," Pagan said. "The term, 'certified organic,' is strictly for USDA clarification. However, CNG restrictions are the same as USDA Organic restrictions. It operates by peer-review certification between CNG farms. Three things are promised when you're working with a CNG farmer: no GMOs, no synthetic chemicals, and the product is from a local farmer. But there are also a lot of other regulations when becoming certified. The farmers know each other and work with each other."

GMO is an acronym for genetically modified organism. GMOs have been under scrutiny because they do not seem to produce the yields that larger, corporate farms once promised. GMOs are engineered to withstand larger amounts of pesticide and herbicide. Overall, the greatest fear with GMOs is that tampering with the genetic material of the plant can have a long-term, ecological impact on the surrounding environment. Essentially, we can't know long-term ecological effects until they occur and any repercussions that come about could cause permanent damage to insect, plant or animal life, directly or indirectly. Pesticide and herbicide residues are shown to have a negative impact on human health. As a result, organic practices and products have become more popular because they have none of these residues.

One of the biggest reasons GMOs gained initial support is because larger, corporate farms suggested that greater use of herbicide and pesticide would boost yields. Over the years, many have assumed that organic farm practices, therefore, produce lower yields. However, Pagan seemed to think this stigmatic notion was less than true. "[Working on the farm] completely shatters this idea," Pagan said. "We work smart and hard. We have quality and quantity. We grow year round and have a ton of variety in our produce. We choose to grow produce that has high yields or pick a variation of a crop placement to help repel insects: like putting crops such as garlic and onions on the outermost [raised] beds. There is so much more we do to maintain quality and increase quantity."

As my conversation with Pagan continued, we began to discuss typical misconceptions and how he or she can get involved with organic practices or learn more about them. "I think the best thing we do at Joy Haven for sustainability is getting others involved," she said. "We encourage people to get to know what they're eating and retake control of the food industry. When working with a CNG farm, you become a part of a very supportive community."

From there, I started to inquire about Pagan's time at the farm, how she came to be there, how to become involved and how she likes it. She lit up and told me about the system JHF employees can use. "I started working there when a friend of mine told me about the farm," Pagan said. "There are some people at the farm that are paid money and others that are paid in produce. It really depends on the person and what you've agreed upon with the owner. Joy Haven also supports World Wide Opportunity on Organic Farms. In this program, an individual works at a farm for housing and food. I've met a few people who have done this and they say it is a great way to travel."

As our discussion began to wind down, I asked Pagan where I could find the farm or some of their produce. The college diet is not the greatest, so I wouldn't mind getting my hands dirty and getting paid in food.

The farm is located at 605 Old Federal Road in Shorter, Alabama. Pagan said that most produce is sold to restaurants, Springhouse in Alexander City being one of them. However, the farm just started back to selling at the Montgomery Curb Market on Madison Avenue on Saturdays. Even if it is just switching to an organic diet or supporting organic businesses and practices, there is always something you can do to improve sustainability.

## My Smartphone Addiction

By Dasa Rosca

Lately, I have obsessed more about making sure my phone has enough battery power than anything else going on around me. I keep a charger in my car, in my backpack, in my office, and a few at home beside my bed just in case a battery crisis occurs. The moment the message "Low Battery" pops up on my screen I go into panic mode and I am certainly not the only one doing it. Our smartphones are giving us the feeling that we are more connected than ever when in fact we are keeping ourselves from forming real connections.

As an introvert who prefers not to have any type of human interaction neither in person nor digital form, my smart phone is often my best friend. My alarm clock, books, flashlight, dictionary, CD collection, maps, and camera have all been replaced by one single device. It often feels as if my smartphone is the digital form of me. A miniature selfish world where I allow myself to escape. It also rescues me from being alone with my thoughts.

I have come to realize that being able to devote tech-free time to those around me gets harder every day and communicating in the digital form has become more preferable. The truth is that we are losing the art of listening, the art of creating relationships, and both are a fundamental necessity for our life. According to Time magazine

9 out of 10 adults carry a phone. Our smartphones deprive us of meaningful connections and even though we are able to distract ourselves temporarily this is going to affect us in the long run because even when we put down our phones we still have a hard time focusing on what is going on around us. To be honest I do not remember when was the last time I had my phone on silent during the night. I always make sure that it is right next to me and I can hear it every time it dings. One of the main reasons is because most of my family lives 6,000 miles away and there is an eight-hour difference between us. So when I go to bed at night they are just waking up and the fear of something happening and me sleeping through it does not allow me to switch my phone off. According to The Huffington Post, 50 percent of Americans sleep with the phone next to them.

Whatever the reasons are that we are addicted to our smartphones, I think we should at least try and think broadly about the real expense of our addiction and once in a while make an effort to disconnect from our phones and connect to those that matter most.

## Let's Taco 'bout It

By Kalen Huggins



Taco Libre will take place at Montgomery's Union Station Train Shed on June 18. Photo courtesy of Lightning Line.

What are you doing Saturday, June 18th? You can find me at Taco Libre. You've never heard of it? That's because Taco Libre is the state of Alabama's first ever taco festival. For someone like me who has an unimaginable love for food, this is huge.

News of Taco Libre was released roughly a month ago and already almost 3,000 Facebookers have agreed to be in attendance. The festivities will take place at the Montgomery Union Station Train Shed from 4-8 p.m. This event is a spin-off of last year's "MGM Burger Bash" in a big way. There will be a wide assortment of tacos from local restaurants, such as El Rey and Dreamland, as well as food trucks from all over the state. As if that isn't enough, there will be a large contingency of Alabama's breweries present to offer up their best beers. Some of the many breweries that will make an appearance include Rocket Republic Brewing Company, Black Warrior Brewing Company, and Blue Pants Brewery. The list of restaurants and breweries that are participating grow daily and it appears that Lightning Line, a local event creation and promotion company, has many more exciting additions coming our way in the next month.

However, the best part is that our money will go toward a good, local cause. A portion of the proceeds will be going

to EAT South, a non-profit organization located in Downtown Montgomery that "promotes the principles of food justice through education and sustainable farming." EAT South aims to transform our local food systems through community-led programs.

The pricing has not been released yet. As a matter of fact, the only information that can be found about Taco Libre is on social media and as I previously mentioned, Lightning Line is rapidly adding to it. If you're interested in keeping up, like the Taco Libre event Facebook page, The LightningLineMGM Facebook page, or follow the TacoLibre Instagram account.

## The Twitch Effect

By Zachary Ashburn

Video Games. Whether you play them on your phone, tablet, computer or console, they have become a part of everyday life for much of the world; over 1.2 billion people according to a state of the industry report by Spil Games. The video game industry is constantly evolving and expanding. South Korea hosts regular game competitions that rival the Super Bowl in national viewership. Volkswagen used a mobile video game, with great success, to launch a new vehicle. Video game development is one of the fastest growing job markets in the United States, especially with the increased popularity of indie games.

One innovative company capitalizing on this, once considered niche, market is Twitch.tv. Twitch is a live streaming video site that focuses primarily on video game playthrough and the broadcast of esports. Unlike YouTube channels that feature video game playthroughs, viewers on Twitch can interact with the person streaming in real time. Twitch has also recently expanded its scope and allowed artists to stream their creative process.

One of Twitch's most interesting contributions to the gaming world is the fact that they have made it possible for any person to turn playing video games into a legitimate job. Twitch viewers can follow their favorite streamers, but they can also subscribe to them for five dollars a month. Half of that five goes to Twitch and the other half goes to the streamer.

That may not sound like much at first, but it can add up fast. For example, if you managed to get 1,000 subscribers, that would add up to \$2,500 a month and \$30,000 a year. One of the more popular streamers on Twitch, LIRIK, is nearing 10,000 subscribers. That many subscribers would pay out \$25,000 a month! What's more, it is rumored that Twitch only takes 30 or 40 percent of the subscription fee of its more popular streamers. Unfortunately, these details are laid out in individual contracts and are not public knowledge. Viewers can also make donations to the streamer, which are untouched by Twitch.

Twitch has obviously played

a part in mainstreaming the video game community; however, they have also found ways to give back to their community and society. According to the article "Twitch Gives Back: 2015 Charity Recap" on their official blog, Twitch and its community of users raised over \$17 million for various charities in 2015. This is a significant increase from raising \$11.1 million in 2014. Simply playing a video game and saying it was for a charity raised all of that money. Those involved didn't even have to leave the comfort of their couch or computer chair.

With all of these possibilities for success and notoriety, it is not surprising that many people dream of acquiring Twitch fame. I recently sat down with Liz Bozeman. She is a sophomore at AUM majoring in pre-med biology, but is also an aspiring Twitch streamer and GameStop TV host. For Liz, gaming isn't just an activity to pass time; it is a part of her identity.

Liz has been playing games as long as she can remember. She started off playing Pokémon Blue on her Gameboy before eventually graduating to a PlayStation 2. Although at times considered a "nerd" and outcast by her peers, Liz found solace and "overwhelming acceptance" in the gaming community.

Liz currently works at GameStop and is becoming somewhat of a local celebrity amongst the area's regular customers. Her charisma and passion for video games draw people to her, so much so that GameStop has recognized and awarded her for her outstanding customer service.

Obviously, the appeal of fame plays a part in Liz wanting to stream on Twitch, but it does not stop there. Liz wants to offer that same feeling of acceptance and camaraderie that she experienced growing up. "I want to be an influential and guiding voice in the gaming community," Liz says. "I think it would be awesome if I could inspire kids to have dreams in the MLG or anything like that."

Twitch has truly revolutionized the gaming world. Playing video games is no longer a solitary activity for "nerds" that is regarded as a waste of time. It has evolved into an immersive hobby and lucrative career filled with entertainers and trendsetters, thanks largely to the contributions of Twitch. After experiencing Liz's personality, charisma and passion first-hand, I have no doubt that she will find some level of fame within the gaming community. It seems she is already on her way, given her status at GameStop. I plan to follow and chronicle Liz's path to potential Twitch stardom. Expect to hear from me again, but if you can't wait, follow Liz on Twitter @drulinechick.

## The Robert Bentley Scandal and Why Being Informed Matters

By Matthew Robinson

The past few months have been a very turbulent time politically for the state of Alabama. Robert Bentley, our governor, is in the middle of a sexual misconduct scandal, with much of the evidence pointing to his guilt. In addition, Mike Hubbard, speaker of the Alabama House, is on trial for ethics violations. It is troubling to think that these elected officials represent the people of Alabama and our interests. However, what is most upsetting is that many of our students are uninformed about Alabama politics.

A good number of the people I talked to on campus did not know much about Gov. Bentley outside of the sex scandal, or about what Hubbard was on trial for. For example, not a lot of people are aware that Gov. Bentley is being investigated for misusing state funds in his divorce and affairs. Keep in mind also that The Business Journals ranked Gov. Bentley #36 out of 45 governors in June 2013. The rankings were based on their job creation records.

It is very important to know these issues because they directly impact us. There are many reasons why students remain uninformed on political issues. So I asked an expert on Alabama politics. "First, they have a lot of other priorities and responsibilities such as taking care of their families, working their jobs, and, of course, going to school," said retired AUM Political Science Professor Brad Moody. "Second, they don't see the importance of politics and government for their immediate problems or issues. Yes, they certainly should but they often see other things as having much greater priorities for them."

It is easy to overlook politics when you have three projects and four papers due, but trying to stay informed is imperative. As citizens of the United States we have the power to directly influence our government through voting. Voter apathy is an issue with college-aged students, and I am very guilty of it myself. Voting is the only way officials like Hubbard and Bentley received office, and a well-informed public can make sure that people like them don't come into power.

Moody offers some advice: "Probably the best way for students today to stay informed is through the websites of major news organizations like The New York Times, The Washington Post, the broadcast networks, and especially public broadcasting programs like Morning Edition and All Things Considered on National Public Radio and The NewsHour

on public television.”

Locally, you can read newspapers like The Montgomery Advertiser and websites like AL.com. At AUM, the AUMnibus is a great resource for what is happening on campus from the perspective of your peers. Also, pay attention to the AUM News and Headlines that come in your email as these are official newsletters from the university. While it may be hard to stay on top of everything, having at least a finger on the pulse of what is going on is much better than being in the dark. Staying informed is just one tool that we can use to better our society, so don't be afraid to use it!

## When I was “the Other”

By Dasa Rosca



Photo courtesy of Dasa Rosca

“Dasa, get over here now,” I heard my mother call.

Oh no! I shouldn't be here, I thought while folding the corner of the page.

She did not approve of me reading while perched up in the cherry tree because of how absent from reality I became when focused on a book. When my bare feet hit the ground the dry cherry seeds from the previous years sank into my heels.

“Dasa?” I heard my impatient mother call again. I walked rapidly towards the house, hoping that she would not have any chores for me so I could finish reading my book.

“How many times do I have to call your name before you hear me?” my mom asked as I walked up to her.

“Give me your book and sit down,” she said to me.

She's not happy. My cousins must have told her what I was doing, I thought as I nervously sat down on the steps of our home beside my three younger cousins who were living with us.

“We are moving to Russia; the train tickets are already booked,” my mother said. Her words seem muffled—far off—as their reality hit me. I thought about the friends I was going to leave behind, my dog, my little raspberry garden and the tree where I spent all my afternoons reading. She tried to explain that the move was necessary because our home country, the Republic of Moldova, was in an economic struggle and had little to offer to its citizens.

Moldova had been known as Bessarabia when part of the Ottoman Empire was annexed to Imperial

Russia in the aftermath of the Russo-Turkish War (1806-1812). In the early 20th century, Bessarabia gained its independence for a short period of time, and the Moldavian Democratic Republic was formed when the country joined the Kingdom of Romania. Romania and Moldova share the same language and ethnic culture. The peace did not last long, however, and Moldova was ceded back to the Soviet Union in 1940 when the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic was established. Fifty-one years later Moldova declared its independence from the Soviet Union. The country has been in an unending political conflict since then, and to this day is fighting the communist regime. Russians are the second largest ethnic minority in Moldova.

A few days later, I sat in the back seat of a rented van and looked through the window at our brown gate. I promised myself that when I grew up I would return home. The one-hour car ride to the train station was spent complaining to my mother about taking me away from everything I knew. I remember looking through the green bars of the fence at the train station in Moldova's capital city, Chisinau, and thinking back to what I'd often heard my mother say about Russians, specifically how they were very disrespectful to us in our own country. They completely refused to learn and speak the official language of Moldova and thought of themselves as the ones in control of the country. I wondered how were we going to be living in Moscow now.

As the green and yellow train marked with white numbers for each compartment approached the station, my heart raced with fear and excitement at the same time. We said our goodbyes and got in. I held my mother's hand as we walked to our assigned compartment through a dark and tiny hallway. As soon as the train was on the move, the conductor showed up and questioned my mother in Russian while looking down at me and my cousins sitting on one of the bunk beds.

It was when we reached the Ukrainian border that the 9-year-old me found out that our nationality mattered, and we were somehow different outside of our own country. The language I spoke and the cultural background I had set me apart from the majority. So I guess I can say that's when I became “the other.”

I spent the first few months unwilling to adapt and accept the country as my new reality, and maybe that is why I never managed to make the transition during the time we were there. My mother did not allow me to speak Romanian so I could learn to speak Russian, and so I did. Soon, I spoke the language fluently. But, that did not stop me from seeing myself as the outsider.

Today, I do not think that Russia is much different from Moldova. Maybe it was just the 9-year-old version of me that wanted to live in a country where she was not the minority and treated differently because of her nationality, language and culture.

In about a year, circumstances changed. We returned back home to

Moldova, and I got to spend many more afternoons reading on top of the cherry tree. Unfortunately, my country is still fighting the Communist regime, and the oligarchs who remain in control.

## Editorial:

### Vaping is a Solution, Not a Problem

By Nick Manoliu

In recent years, tobacco has become more taboo than ever. Many people try or have tried to quit smoking using conventional methods, whether they are using the nicotine patch, gum or drugs like Chantix. Others just try to quit cold turkey. The struggle to quit is an uphill battle that most people lose. However, vaping and e-cigarettes actually have a good success rate of helping people quit. So here's what I think: banning them with cigarettes is absolutely ridiculous.

For those who don't know, vaping is a general term used to refer to an alternative method of absorbing nicotine. Basically, it involves heating a glycol solution that has a certain concentration of nicotine and inhaling the vapor it puts off. There is no tar, very little heat, and the user breathes in mostly water vapor.

Banning vaping is just silly, especially if the goal of a “tobacco-free” campus is to get students to stop smoking, eliminate passive smoking and get students to be healthier. What so many people against vaping don't seem to understand is that a person vaping is a person actively trying to not smoke cigarettes. That person is vaping because it is the only thing that worked and continues to work. It's like shaming a fat guy out of a gym because he's overweight: that guy is trying to change for the better, but he's getting ridiculed because he does not fit some other person's ludicrous standard of body image or the process with which to attain it. He is doing what works for him and he's seeing results, but someone else is saying that way is not okay and only their way is acceptable. It sets the fat guy up for failure by putting him in a nearly impossible situation. It makes it much harder for him to even attempt to change. The scenarios are freakishly similar.

As a former smoker, I will tell you that quitting nicotine or tobacco is one of the most difficult things you can ask a smoker to do. My family smokes, my friends smoke, eating a large meal makes me want to smoke, as does driving in my car or even sitting outside. Everything you ever did while smoking will remind you of it and make you crave a cigarette because your brain associates them with so many daily activities. It becomes nearly impossible to avoid the urge to light up. No matter where you go, that urge goes with you. I'm fairly skeptical by nature, so when I began vaping, I did my fair share of

research using the AUM library. There have been no conclusive studies to show that vaping has downsides or health risks, especially when compared to cigarettes or the psychoactive ingredients in drugs like Chantix. You can even vape in your home, and the vapor dissipates so quickly it does not leave a smell or residue, unless you are sincerely trying to cloud up a room.

I'm 23 and from the age of 18 to 21, I smoked two packs of American Spirit cigarettes a day. I loved it. But I started having health problems. I had trouble catching my breath, I could not run for more than a minute without wheezing or getting lightheaded, and I started having chest pains when I got nervous or had caffeine. I visited my doctor and was told I was on the fast track for lung and heart problems. I knew I needed to quit and soon. I heeded my doctor's warning and decided to stop smoking.

I tried many different methods of quitting. I supplemented the urge with food and gained weight. I tried the patch and felt sick. I tried the gum and felt so nervous I thought I would be sick. Then, I tried vaping. It worked.

Like most smokers, the thing that held me back the most was the oral fixation on smoking—the urge to bring a cigarette to my lips and inhale that savory tobacco every time I was reminded of it. Many people end up replacing this oral fixation on smoking with foods or drinks to keep their mouth busy. That's why so many smokers tend to start drinking more coffee or soda or start snacking more often when they are trying to quit. This oral fixation is the biggest pitfall for most smokers and it seldom works out in the smoker's favor. However, vaping actually helped me quit simply because it facilitates the urge while letting me gradually reduce my nicotine intake.

Most studies on the effectiveness of vaping as a method of quitting cigarettes show positive results. Smokers can supplement that oral fixation while reducing the amount of tar and carcinogens they expose their bodies to. Many people who vape, like myself, get to a point where they have almost no nicotine in their vape. I still vape to fulfill the oral fixation that makes me crave a cigarette, but it keeps me away from smoking.

It has been two years since I quit cigarettes. I still feel the urge to smoke, but vaping helps me avoid relapsing because it never felt like I was quitting. I reduce nicotine at my own pace while fulfilling the urge to smoke. It is different than smoking and can take some getting used to, but it works. I could list close to fifty people who have a story similar to mine, which is why it is unreasonable for AUM to ban vaping. Auburn main campus is smoke-free and technically prohibits smoking and vaping. However, that campus does not seem to have a problem with vaping. Ask students who go there. I've asked about a dozen students, ranging from sophomores to seniors, and heard that their policy is not strictly enforced when dealing with vapes. A few juniors and seniors even said that their professor did not mind them vaping in the larger lecture halls because it dissipates so

quickly. Most knowledgeable, rational adults understand that vaping is a proven way to stay off cigarettes. It is effective.

There have been assertions that second-hand or third-hand vapor poses some sort of health risk, but I've never had one of these assertions come with a reliable study to back up the claim. Typically, it turns out to be pure speculation or paranoia.

As for second-hand vaping risks, there have been a few studies carried out in recent years. Essentially, researchers had to put participants in very close quarters for extended periods of time for any second-hand absorption to occur. Even so, some researchers speculate that second-hand exposure could be absorbed, but these types of studies are still inconclusive because of the lengths researchers had to go to see an effect.

There has even been speculation that third-hand exposure causes a risk. This refers to residues that the vapor could leave on surfaces and be absorbed through the skin after touching. As previously stated, you would have to actually be trying to cloud a room for a real residue to form, so it is seldom worth mentioning. With this claim, the biggest concern was exposure to children in the home. Naturally, with any nicotine delivery system, you do not want to do it around kids. That seems to go without saying. But, this is a college campus. We are adults, and no one vapes or smokes near the child-care center. The designated smoking areas are not even near nearby.

Most people who have a problem with vaping seem to cherry pick the studies that reinforce their opinions on the matter. There are no conclusive studies that show vaping to be even remotely harmful to anyone but the user. Vaping helps people quit and stay off cigarettes. If AUM wants students to quit cigarettes, I can understand that. But to ban one of the most effective means of quitting smoking, along with cigarettes themselves, is the most counterintuitive and nonsensical suggestions I have ever heard. And I'm a millennial, so I've heard a fair bit of nonsense.

# Warhawk Squawk:

**Free college education is the focus of debates on a national level where parties cannot seem to agree what is better for the country and the people. There are those who believe that it is the public's obligation to invest in the education of citizens of this country. On the other side are those who think that this will only shift the expenses from student to taxpayers and will diminish the value of the degree. Students were asked: Should college education be free?**

**By Dasa Rosca**



## Madison Clark

Junior  
History Major

**"I think college education should definitely be free. Education should not have a price tag, and it is unfair for students enter their career with enormous debt. Everyone should have the opportunity to better themselves and the cost of education often hinders thousands of youths with potential."**



## Matthew Robinson

Senior  
Journalism Major

“Yes education should be free because I think education is a fundamental right for all people and an informed public is paramount to a strong society.”



## Blake Hunter

Senior  
Journalism Major

“I don’t know if I agree with college being completely free but I definitely think it should be more affordable and easier to access.”

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## Meet The Staff

Erin Mills  
emills1@aum.edu  
Editor-In-Chief

Nikki Headley  
sheadle1@aum.edu  
Webmaster

Brittany Roberson  
brobers1@aum.edu  
Graphic Designer

Takeisha Jefferson  
tjeffer7@aum.edu  
Photographer

Rachael Fairchild  
rfairch1@aum.edu

Kalen Huggins  
khuggin2@aum.edu

Dasa Rosca  
frosca@aum.edu

Matthew Robinson  
mrobin29@aum.edu

Nick Manoliu  
nmanoliu@aum.edu

Turner Griffin  
tgriff16@aum.edu

Zachary Ashburn  
zashburn@aum.edu

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