



PIONEER

Derby *Life*

OCCC student finds friendship, fun in roller derby

Story and photos by Aaron Cardenas

Courtney Cole laces up her neon yellow and blue roller skates. Her blinding skates, bright purple hair, and fuchsia-colored tights make her stand out like a peacock in a sea of black and white. Courtney makes slight adjustments to her elbow and knee pads. Her armband and uniform display the number 40.

She puts her mouth guard in and hits the rink, ready for battle.

They call her Punchy.

And she is a member of the Oklahoma Victory Dolls Roller Derby league.

"I don't know what drew me to derby," Punchy said. "It seemed like it would be fun and a good way to make friends outside of my normal circle."

Practice has started. Punchy joins several others on the rink, a dimly lit place called Star Skate track in Norman. The girls' helmets are plastered with different stickers, which showcase their own individual personalities.

The girls practice hard, zooming around the rink, fighting for real estate.

"It's kinda funny," Punchy said. "I didn't play sports in school. I did PeeWee cheerleading in fourth grade. That was the extent of my sports career."

Punchy, now a 27-year-old biology major at Oklahoma City Community College, has used roller derby as a way for her to "break out of her comfort zone."

Since the 2007 creation of the Oklahoma City Tornado Alley Rollergirls league, Sooner State women have flocked to the sport. Originally the league consisted of four separate teams: Victory Dolls, Valkyrie Vixens, Cell Block 9, and the Home Wrecking Harlots.

Over the years, the league had broken apart, merged, and reformed under new leadership and a highly-debated name.

The Oklahoma Victory Dolls is a recognized member of the Women's Flat Track Derby Association, ranking 64 out of 320 leagues worldwide.

At this practice, skaters scrimmage in preparation for upcoming bouts. They meet three times a week to practice drills and proper falling techniques that prepare them for big hits during matches.

They play against the men, too. Those men include Punchy's husband Travis – also known as Lord Slug. The players practice hard; call it full contact with some boundaries.



Courtney "Punchy" Cole preparing for derby.

See ROLLER DERBY on page 6

EDITORIAL/OPINION

HB 1913: Payday loan bill a path to deeper debt



House Bill 1913 was introduced by Rep. Chris Kannady, R-Oklahoma City, as an avenue toward more payday lending options.

In Oklahoma, payday loans are advertised as a way for people to get emergency funds in the form of a short-term loan. But payday lenders often prey on low-income borrowers, charging high annual interest rates and lending without proper evaluation.

Kannady's bill, also known as "The Oklahoma Small Loan Act," would allow lenders to charge 17 percent interest per month on loans up to \$1,500. The interest paid on the "small loan" proposed by the bill would amount to an annual percentage rate of 204 percent.

This means a borrower would pay \$301 each month on a 12 month loan of \$1,500. By the end of the loan's term, the loan would cost \$2,108.

Oklahomans take out more payday loans per capita than any other state in the country. There are more than 300 payday lending stores in the state – highly concentrated in Oklahoma and Tulsa counties. House Bill 1913 makes it easier for payday lenders to trap consumers in a cycle of increasing debt.

When taking out a payday loan, borrowers must give lenders their bank account information, signing over upcoming deposits into the account. If the borrower has a \$300 payment to make but only a \$200 balance, the lender will attempt a \$300 withdrawal, leaving the borrower with an overdraft fee.

The lender can continue their attempts to withdraw payments, burdening the borrower with a whole line of overdraft fees to repay on top of the loan payment.

Under the current laws governing consumer loans, the maximum interest rate on loans over \$1,470 is 30 percent. Under HB 1913, the rate could jump to 204 percent.

On a \$1,000 loan, existing law allows a maximum charge of \$394 in a year. In comparison, the installment loan proposed by HB 1913 would charge \$1,405 interest. A \$1,011 difference between the loans could be devastating for uninformed borrowers.

David Blatt, of the Oklahoma Policy Institute said there is no real need for HB 1913, and that there are already plenty of sources of credit for poor consumers.

A poor Oklahoman family of four makes an average of \$23,050 a year.

A \$300 payment each month would take more than 15 percent of the family's paycheck, leaving families in much tighter financial straits. A difference of \$300 could mean a decision between buying groceries or paying the utility bill that week.

Blatt wrote on the OK Policy Institute website that payday loan lobbyists believe HB 1913 is necessary to "protect" the payday loan industry from regulations proposed by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

"They claim that the federal reforms, if enacted, would kill the payday loan industry and that the small loans authorized by HB 1913 would serve as a replacement," Blatt said.

"There is nothing in HB 1913 that suggests that small loans would be a replacement for payday loans should those cease to exist. Instead, HB 1913 would create a new high-cost product in addition to payday loans."

Earlier this year, HB 1404 and HB 1596, authored by Rep. Mickey Dollens, D-Oklahoma City, would regulate payday lending in Oklahoma. Both bills were strongly opposed by payday lending lobbyists at the Oklahoma capitol and each died before reaching committee.

House Bill 1404 would have capped the annual percentage rate of payday loans at 60 percent.

When asked why he wanted stronger regulations for the industry, Dollens explained, "It's expensive to be poor, and unfortunately there are many constituents in my districts who are poor. When I was campaigning and going from door to door, this was one of the stories I kept hearing. Either directly or indirectly,

someone was affected by payday loan debt."

Dollens said impoverished families are looking for a way to pay their loans back. "But it seems like every time they would pay on it, the next month they would owe more. They kept paying more and more, and just couldn't get out of the cycle of debt. They said, 'If I had just known about this, I wouldn't have taken out this loan to pay off the other loan,'" he said.

Dollens said his bills were not written to regulate the payday lending industry out of business. His bills would have allowed those who offer payday loans to still receive their fees while creating a lending environment that is possible for borrowers to climb out of.

Before Dollens' bills died, I spoke to Jamie Fulmer, senior vice president of public affairs at Advance America (the largest payday lending company in America). I asked Fulmer about his opposition to Dollens' HB 1404.

"Consumers speak for themselves by walking into our centers all across Oklahoma everyday, because we provide important access to credit for them when they get caught between paychecks with an unbudgeted or unplanned expense," Fulmer said.

The "unplanned expense" or "emergency" platform that Fulmer argues is directly challenged by numbers found in Oklahoma's Deferred Deposit loan database. The data shows that payday loans are used for recurring expenses more than "emergency situations."

Fulmer explained the demand for payday loans stands by itself.

"In a market based situation, we believe that consumers are smart enough to determine the cost associated with their options when they have a short term credit need, and they can evaluate those options and then make the decision that is best for them and their families given their particular situation."

Blatt believes that payday loan outlets "absolutely" prey on low income families. "We're not really solving one set of problems; we're just creating new ones," he said. "Rather than throwing folks a life preserver, we're just gonna end up pushing their heads even deeper underwater."

When looking at data of who uses payday loans and why, we see that payday loan outlets are clustered around military bases and low income neighborhoods. A Pew Charitable Trust study shows that younger, lower income, immigrant and minority populations are most frequently targeted by payday lenders.

After speaking to Rep. Kannady's assistant about HB 1913, I discovered that Fulmer, representing the nation's largest payday lending company, was instrumental in crafting the language of Kannady's bill.

A quick search of Kannady's campaign donations brought up a 2015 donation of \$500 from Advance America, LLC, the same place Fulmer works. I attempted to reach Fulmer for another interview, but received no reply.

Rep. Kannady's constituents certainly will not benefit from the passing of this bill. Who will?

The bill passed the House last week with a 59-31 vote. The Senate will likely hear HB 1913 in committee between March 27 and April 13.

It is essential that voters inform their legislators about their opposition to HB 1913.

You can contact the Senate author of HB 1913, Sen. James Leewright, and speak to him about your opposition to the bill.

You can also contact your own senator, who you can find with the "Find My Senator" tool at oksenate.gov. Remember to tell them you are a constituent of your senator and ask them to please vote against HB 1913.

The OK Policy Institute offers a "talking points" sheet against the bill, found on their website at okpolicy.org. This fact sheet can help you to inform your legislator about the risks and costs associated with HB 1913.

We must protect the vulnerable borrowers who would be harmed by the harsh interest rates imposed by the bill, and now is the time to speak out against it.

—SOPHIA BABB
EDITOR

COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

MOVIE REVIEW | A LIGHTEARTED FILM THAT CAN'T LIVE UP TO THE HYPE

'Gifted' a cheap disappointment

Not every movie can change the world or even the mind of a viewer.

There are hundreds of films released every year that act as support for those filmmakers making career-defining pieces of work. They just live on the screen and don't try to be anything else.

"Gifted" doesn't try to be anything other than a disposable, lighthearted dramedy with decent-enough characters played by acceptable actors.

“Gifted” is about Frank (Chris Evans), who is the illegitimate father to seven-year-old niece Mary (McKenna Grace) after his math-genius sister takes her own life. They have a quirky neighbor (Octavia Spencer) and a one-eyed cat named Fred. Mary’s grandmother comes back into her life after she finds out that Mary carries the same genius mind as her late mother. However, Frank says that Mary’s mother wanted her to live a normal life outside of dusty chalkboards covered with math equations.

The director of “Gifted,” Marc Webb jumped on the scene in 2009 with the highly acclaimed film “(500) Days of Summer.” It was a clever retelling of early Woody Allen films made for the new generation, with enough variation and channeled direction that it felt fresh.



He was then given the reigns of tackling the Spider-Man reboot for Sony to negative results.

If “Gifted” is Webb’s attempt at reentry into the themes of authentic stories, he failed miserably.

Webb's "(500) Days of Summer" felt personal and authentic. "Gifted" feels forced and emotionally manipulative in the way that the majority of plain ABC Family movies feel. The film fills its runtime with blasé heart tugs that could only affect an audience who pines for the return of *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*.

“Gifted” lives on the screen for the sake of filling a slot. It exists to exist. It will be added to the overabundance of films released every year that will be forgotten unless a streaming service picks it up to fill its quota. Its purpose is to add weight to another actor’s resume. It reminds you that film is a business at the end of the day and it’s a bad feeling to experience.

—KEVIN TUDOR
STAFF WRITER

 @KEVTUDOR

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www.facebook.com/OCCCPioneer

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The PIONEER welcomes letters to the editor and encourages the use of this publication as a community forum. All letters must include the author's name, address, phone number and signature.

E-mail letters should include all but the signature. The PIONEER will withhold

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The PIONEER reserves the right to edit all letters and submissions for length, libel and obscenity. Letters should be no more than 250 words. Students must list a major. OCC staff and faculty must list a work title.

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The PIONEER ONLINE also can be accessed at <http://pioneer.occc.edu>.

State Senator resigns amid child prostitution charges

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State senator Ralph Shortey, R-Oklahoma City, resigned Wednesday after being arrested on child prostitution charges.

According to a court affidavit, on March 9, police officers conducted a welfare check at the Super 8 Motel at 1520 N. Service Road in Moore and found Shortey, R-Oklahoma City, alone in a motel room with a 17-year-old juvenile male.

The affidavit said officers smelled marijuana and found a green plastic canister marked “Colorado Retail Marijuana” containing marijuana residue.

Police said that Shortey indicated he had brought one gram of marijuana to the motel room.

In addition to marijuana, officers found an opened box of condoms in Shortey’s backpack and a bottle of lotion in a backpack owned by the juvenile.

During the initial investigation, police discovered a series of online conversations that had taken place between Shortey and the juvenile.

The sexually explicit conversation details the two planning their rendezvous and marijuana use at the motel. In messages, the male juvenile told Shortey, “Hey keep updated cause I want you bad daddy.”

Shortey responded that he would have sex with the minor if he would continue calling him “daddy” and referred to the juvenile as “baby boy.”

The senator asked the juvenile if he could “bring a pipe or something.”

The pair claimed to have met one another approximately one year ago through Craigslist. Since that time, the two had been messaging through the app Kik, on which Shortey used the alias “Jamie Tilley.”

On March 16, one week after police discovered Shortey in the motel, District Attorney Greg Mashburn filed three felony counts and an arrest warrant against the senator. The charges included engaging in child prostitution, engaging in prostitution within 1000 feet of a church, and transporting a minor for prostitution.

The charges did not include possession of marijuana.

After the arrest warrant was issued, the senator turned himself in to the Cleveland County Jail where he was released after posting a \$100,000 bond.



State Senator Ralph Shortey, R - Oklahoma City.
Aaron Cardenas/Pioneer

In the wake of the charges, the Oklahoma Senate voted unanimously to strip Shortey of his legislative benefits and rights including his committee positions, executive assistant, state-owned laptop, expense allowances, Capitol office, and assigned parking space and called for the removal of his name from all Senate-controlled legislation.

Governor Mary Fallin called for the senator’s resignation:

“Ralph Shortey should resign his seat in the Senate. The charges against him do not reflect the character and decorum that we expect of an elected official. It is not acceptable. In the meantime, there’s a criminal justice system in place to review the allegations. We should respect the process and allow it to work as designed.”

Others have also demanded his resignation including Lt. Gov. Todd Lamb, the Oklahoma Democratic Party and the Oklahoma State Senate Democratic caucus.

Senator Shortey’s legislative biography describes him as a South Dakota native who moved to Oklahoma City. He attended Moore Public Schools and Heartland Baptist Bible College. He was preparing for mission work in Uganda. With a wife and children, Shortey decided against pursuing mission work and instead entered the oil and gas industry. This led him into politics, where he lists his legislative priorities as personal liberty, fighting illegal immigration, and strengthening public safety.

Shortey represents District 44. District 44 is also home to Oklahoma City Community College.

On Feb. 13, the senator hosted a controversial town hall meeting on campus. While there, he fervently defended his stance on Senate Bills 512 and 50. According to Shortey, this proposed legislation would make changes to portions of state questions 780 and 781.

In November, Oklahoma voters approved 780 and 781. The two state questions lessen the penalties associated with some schedule I and II drugs like marijuana. It reduces some felony drug charges to a less severe misdemeanor charge. Money saved as a result is redirected to drug treatment programs.

Among a barrage of yelling and tough questions, Shortey addressed his concerns with lessening the penalty of drug offenses. He explained that Oklahoma voters did not understand the state questions they had voted on.

A room of approximately 200 constituents disagreed.

On March 20, six days after charges were filed against him, Shortey retained attorney Ed Blau. Two days later, the senator, in letters to Gov. Fallin and Senate President Pro Tempore Mike Shultz, R-Altus, officially submitted his resignation from office.

“Earlier today, I submitted my resignation, effective immediately, to the President Pro Tempore of the Oklahoma Senate, as well as to Gov. Mary Fallin. I thank the constituents of Senate District 44 for the opportunity they provided to serve. Because I take that responsibility seriously, I recognize that the charges against me are a distraction to their interests and the remaining legislative session, which should serve all Oklahomans. My resignation is evidence of my respect for public service and the duties of our elected officials. I ask respect for the privacy of my family – my wife and four daughters – as I defend myself of these charges.”

If convicted of charges, Shortey could face jail time and fines. Oklahoma law would still allow Shortey to receive \$9,000 a year in state retirement, even if convicted.

According to the Oklahoma Constitution, retirement funds can only be denied if a lawmaker is convicted of felony bribery, corruption, forgery, perjury or a felony related to campaign finance or duties of office.



The Moore hotel where Sen. Shortey was found with a 17-year-old boy by police conducting a welfare check. Derek Scarsella/Pioneer



Photo by Phil Goodwin/Unsplash.com

AL East teams prepped for season

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Baseball season is upon us and all 30 clubs are going through Spring training, making adjustments for the upcoming season.

In the American League East, Boston and Toronto will be competing for the division crown with Baltimore looking forward to a possible wildcard.

New York will be looking to make some major strides after going through a youth movement a few seasons ago, while Tampa will be on the outside, looking in from the division cellar.

Boston Red Sox - 2016 saw the Red Sox make the postseason for the first time in three seasons. Taking the division crown following a 93-69 record, Boston will be eyeing a deep postseason run in 2017. This follows an early exit last year in the American League Division Series (ALDS) to the Cleveland Indians four games to none.

The Sox have spent the past three years putting together a young roster with loads of talent, but Boston President of Baseball Operations Dave Dombrowski has made moves indicating that the clubs want to win now rather than later. During the offseason, Boston left fans scratching their heads by trading away long time starting pitcher Clay Buchholz, who ended the 2016 campaign with a 81-61 record, 3.96 ERA, and 899 strikeouts, to the Philadelphia Phillies for minor league 2B Josh Tobias.

Boston also added starting left hander Chris Sale to the rotation after trading two top prospects, Yoan Moncada and Michael Kopech, to the Chicago White Sox to get him. The 2017 campaign for Boston should be a successful one, but the pitching rotation remains a question mark. Via ESPN, starting ace David Price received news that he won't need elbow surgery but there is no time table for when he'll be ready to go.

Projection: 92-70

Toronto Blue Jays - The Jays have improved upon their win totals the past five seasons and are coming off consecutive trips to the American League Championship Series. During the offseason, the Jays revamped the offense with notable reinforcements in switch-hitter Kendrys Morales and outfielder Steve Pearce to better support their returning pitching staff who'll need a repeat of the dominant performance from a year ago if Toronto wants to make the postseason for the third consecutive season.

Projection: 89-73

Baltimore Orioles - Despite projections to finish in the division cellar nearly every offseason since 2012, the O's have found a way to defy those odds and stay among the better half of the league in that span. Since finishing dead last in 2011, Baltimore has made the postseason three times and hasn't finished worse than third place in the AL East division. The Os enter 2017

following an 89-73 season that ended with a disappointing 5-2 loss to Toronto in the AL Wildcard round.

2017 should be much of the same old, same old for the Orioles, who are led by a fantastic bullpen and an underrated offense that has been nearly perfect for them the past five seasons. 1B Chris Davis, who's had a mediocre career, has become a key player for the Baltimore offense and Mark Trumbo has set a career high in home runs since joining Baltimore last season. Expect the Os to be in the thick of things entering October.

Projection: 84-78

New York Yankees - The Yankees are a team of transition, hanging around the .500 mark for the past four seasons and 2017 should be no different. New York is working out of their old ways of signing old players and instead developing their own home-grown talent. Guys like Greg Sanchez, who became one of the league's best young power hitters during his rookie campaign in 2016 with a .299 average, 60 hits, 34 runs and 20 home runs.

Greg Bird, Aaron Judge, and Luis Severino are also young prospects who have fit well into what the Yankees are trying to do. New York also acquired minor league shortstop Gleyber Torres from the Chicago Cubs for bullpen pitcher Aroldis Chapman who later resigned with the Yankees five months after they traded him.

The rebuild will continue as New

York's youth develops into a solid unit in 2017. As long as the Yanks finish at or above .500, then the 2017 campaign should be deemed a successful one.

Projection: 81-81

Tampa Bay Rays - 2016 saw the Rays finish with less than 70 wins for the first time since 2007. Looking back at their 68-94 season a year ago, Tampa Bay refrains from the use of the words 'bad luck', admitting that anything that could've gone wrong did go wrong. Suffering from the likes of an untalented roster, the Rays consistently found themselves falling behind on the scoreboard thanks to a leaky defense, spotty rotation, a burned out bullpen and poor offensive support. The nightmare continued when Kevin Kiermaier as well as other key players went down due to injury. Needless to say, 2016 was bad and 2017 doesn't look much brighter as indicated by Tampa Bay President of Baseball Operations Matt Silverman via the Tampa Bay Times, "We don't and we can't and we won't, as people say, 'go all in.' That means you're trading away your future." Tampa Bay made little to no moves during the offseason and some of their best talent is still developing through the farm system. Don't expect the Rays to compete for at least a few more seasons.

Projection: 73-89

See more MLB analysis from Travis Forsyth at pioneer.occc.edu and in the next print issue of the Pioneer.



Courtney “Punchy” Cole leads the pack during an Oklahoma Victory Dolls team scrimmage at Star Skate in Norman.

Roller Derby: Not for the faint of heart

continued from page 6

“We have a mutual respect for each other,” Punchy said. “Is it rough? Yes, but we have a different style of playing when we face off. We are a big family. We know what each other can handle on the track.”

For these teams, roller derby is as real as it gets. The hits are 100 percent and most teams practice between six to eight hours a week, unpaid.

This league encourages sportsmanship and athleticism over showmanship.

A collision of bodies echoes across the rink. A skater falls to her knees and pushes herself back up into the fight with teammates clearing the way.

“I think part of the draw for women is they will get out aggression when they join up, but it’s more than that to me,” Punchy said.

Former OKVD president Jessica “Lucy Deuce” Welp said the league is composed of everyone from “students, doctors, realtors, (and) others, who find comfort in learning and playing roller derby.”

The bonds between women in the league are evident. In the military, the term “battle buddy” signifies the close-knit relationship between two

soldiers, in roller derby, that same relationship is known as the “derby wife.”

With her noble height and prowess, Brittani “Betch” Brown, a 24 year-old from Mustang, practices with Punchy. Brown towers over most other players. Brown said she and Punchy have developed a close bond.

“My girlfriend calls her ‘our girlfriend.’ It’s quite comical, but that’s just the closeness we have. It’s a true bond we have developed through the love of derby,” Brown said.

Brown said she and Punchy became friends because of a carpool. After Punchy’s first “derby wife” (and a member of the carpool) moved to the United Kingdom, Punchy and Brown grew close.

“She was my recruit instructor and we quickly became friends,” Brown said. “I’m her ‘derby little secret.’”

Deuce said the friendship Betch and Punchy share is commonplace within the roller derby community. Women in leagues across the globe establish familial connections with their teammates.

“So many women have found acceptance in derby where they have never found acceptance before,” she said, “Outcasts, rejects, black sheep all

find a home in derby.”

An eight-year veteran of OKVD, Tina “T-Pain” Vanwinkle said empowerment was not what she was looking for when she joined the sport – but she soon found it.

Derby has equipped her, she said, to overcome obstacles in her own life. “I have felt empowered at different obstacles because of the sport and the people in it.”

Punchy agreed. “There is definitely an empowerment aspect to it,” she said. “If someone tells me that I can’t do something, I’m more likely to go and do it.”

Punchy whips around the track.

She knocks other skaters out of the way, pushing her way around the track with confidence. With the support of her teammates, husband, and friends, she’s quickly becoming a star in the tough, neon-colored sport known as roller derby.

“(Punchy) is a dedicated skater and pays attention to detail,” Vanwinkle said. “She doesn’t anger easily and is very level-headed in my opinion.”

Punchy may be small, but according to Deuce, she’s also quick and agile.

“She’s slippery,” Deuce said.



For more information about the league or how to join, contact the Oklahoma Victory Dolls at okvd.net or via Facebook/Twitter/Instagram @OKVictoryDolls.

Upcoming double header "Home Team Hostilities" bout March 26 at Star Skate in Norman:

Doors open at 5:30 p.m. / Whistle blows at 6 p.m. \$10 in advance at brownpapertickets.com. \$15 at the door. Kids under twelve get in free with paid adult entry.

(Top) Krista "Lil Shanksta" Young with the star on her helmet to signify she is the jammer. (Bottom Left) Punchy sets up the block. (Bottom Right) Punchy's arm band.

CAMPUS HIGHLIGHTS

BIBLE STUDY

Christians on Campus at OCCC will host Bible studies Mondays from noon to 12:45 p.m. and Tuesdays from 12:30 p.m. to 1:15 p.m. in room 1C5 of the Arts and Humanities building.

SUMMER/FALL REGISTRATION

March 27: Beginning of Open Registration for Summer and Fall 2017 semesters

JAZZ PERFORMANCE

March 30: Join the OCCC Music department for Side by Side, a collaboration between OCCC's Jazz Ensemble and South East High School's Jazz Band. They will perform at 7:30 p.m. in Bruce Owen Theater. Admission is free.

BLOOD DRIVE

APRIL 4 - 5: In the cafeteria

STUDENT ROCK BAND

April 11: OCCC Music presents the student Rock Band at 7:30 p.m. in the Bruce Owen Theater. Admission is free. Oklahoma City Community College Main Campus - Arts and Humanities Center in the Bruce Owen Theater.

COMMENCEMENT

MAY 5: Graduation ceremonies will take place on Friday.

The official end of the semester is May 26.

Discussing gender at OCCC

GRACE BABB

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Students filtered into the room, filling their coffee cups and preparing to talk about one of the biggest influences in everyone's life: gender. Before the discussion even began, the room was full. Students and faculty members leaned against the wall, still hoping to join despite the lack of space.

Dr. Jennifer Allen began with an introduction of herself, followed by sociology professor LiErin Probasco. Other members of the panel included Aubrey Meneses, co-founder of the Sexuality and Gender Alliance club, and Director of Public Relations Deirdre Steiner.

"First off, let me ask, do you have a good understanding of what gender is?" Allen asked the room.

One student responded, "I'm going to be honest and say no."

Probasco explained the biology of intersex conditions, and how common it really is.

"You may have someone who has the male XY chromosomes, but somewhere between what the DNA is telling their body and their hormones, the message gets blurred. So you may have the XY chromosomes, but your body doesn't start to produce the amount of testosterone that typical men have, and you're born looking like a little girl," Probasco said. "You may be raised your whole life as a little girl, and you may find out later on that you don't have a uterus."

According to the Intersex Society of North America, the total number of people whose bodies differ from standard male or female is one in every 100 births.

"If you take every intersex condition that's possible, we're talking about it being almost as common as having naturally red hair," said Probasco.

So, what is gender?

"The shortest description of gender is who you say you are. Are you feminine, or masculine? Do you identify as a male or female?" Probasco said.

Dr. Allen added, "It's always a spectrum. It's never black or white. Gender is socially constructed; it's what society dictates. Gender identity is my personal sense of being a female. It's based on characteristics and expectations in our society, and those vary around the world. In the United States, we tend to have two genders, and in other parts of the world, they have three genders."

"It's a bundle of behaviors, attitudes, ways of talking, ways of thinking, ways of embodying being masculine or feminine," said Probasco.

A poll by Fusion that surveyed 1,000 people between the ages of 18 and 34 found that half of all millennials believe that gender exists on a spectrum and shouldn't be limited to the categories of male and female. This is evidence of an increasing challenge to stereotypical gender norms. Social media sites now offer custom gender identities and some universities are accepting "they" as a pronoun. Gender fluidity is slowly infiltrating mainstream culture.

The earliness of when we start gender socialization as a society is a problem for those who may grow up not iden-

tifying with their assigned gender.

"At what point do we start gendering people?" Probasco asked the room.

Multiple voices chimed, "Birth."

Unsatisfied with this answer, Probasco turned to Steiner and asked, "What question did people ask you the most when you were pregnant?"

"Is it a boy or girl?" Steiner responded.

Steiner felt the effects of gendering early in her pregnancy.

"As a parent, when you're raising a child, very early on are you told, 'Don't get that, it's girly!' and 'A boy will love this!' You start thinking about how your child is going to fit into the world, and more importantly, how they're going to think about himself or herself as they grow up. Having a son, I really don't want him to feel like anything is just one way," said Steiner.

Student Andrew Yoon added, "I mean, George W. Bush was a cheerleader..."

"Exactly! There are older folks who had more rounded out experiences, and others who bought straight into the system of what boys do and what girls do," Steiner said.

People in older generations did exactly that; hiding their true feelings and thoughts to avoid the negativity that would come with coming out as transgender. In a study by the National Center for Transgender Equality and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 71 percent of transgender people said they hid their gender in an attempt to avoid discrimination.

In recent years, the estimated number of transgender adults were in the U.S. doubled from 700,000 to 1.4 million, according to an analysis based on federal and state data. Federal researchers said that the new estimates reflect a growing awareness of transgender identity, noting that younger adults ages 18 to 24 were more likely to say they were transgender than older ones.

A population based survey by the Williams Institute reports that Oklahoma has an estimated 18,350 transgender residents. 18-year-old Aubrey Meneses is one of them. Meneses believe that the recent political climate, while tense, is bringing up conversations that need to be had.

"People are starting to realize who we are and our narratives, and it's important," Meneses said.

Jason Reid, computer science major, is also transgender. He encourages allies to do their part for those at risk of discrimination.

"Be prepared, and fight with us. We're trying to stand up for our rights. Stand up with us. The more of you there are, the more people we bring in," Reid said.

On how her hopes and fears have changed in this time, Probasco said, "I don't know that they have, but they are more specific. I've always known that [hate] exists in the world and that as progress gets made, there's going to be a lot more over-corrections. Though I do believe the MLK quote, that the moral arch of the universe bends towards justice, I forget that it's not day to day, but rather in the long term," Probasco said.

Student Life will continue holding the "Coffee and ____" series throughout the rest of the school year. For suggestions on more conversation topics, contact Director of Student Life Erin Logan at elogan@occc.edu.



Dear society, I am a transgender student

RAVEN DIAZ
Staff Writer
staffwriter@occc.edu

Ryan Middleton is a transgender student at Oklahoma City Community College – but he didn't discover who he was until high school.

"I didn't even know what transgender was until I was 16 years old," Middleton said.

He said he remembers gravitating toward things that were considered masculine.

"I wanted my hair short, Spider-Man shirts, the Hot Wheels shoes and I never wanted to wear dresses or play with Barbies," he said. "It felt uncomfortable for me to be a girl and that discomfort only grew when I started to hit puberty."

The National Center for Transgender Equality defines transgender as, "people whose gender identity is different from the gender they were thought to be at birth."

Middleton told himself that it was normal for him to hate his body because all teens dislike their body at some point.

He thought hating his body was a part of teen angst.

"As I got older and started expressing myself more, I decided to come out as a lesbian," Middleton said.

Even after he decided he was lesbian, he was still not content with life.

"I couldn't figure out what it was that was making me feel so unhappy," he said.

During his junior year of high school, he was online and ran across a picture of someone who was transgender. And after seeing that photo, Middleton said he spent a week researching transgender issues and then "came out a week later because it explained everything I felt."

He said he was fearful about telling his family that he was transgender because he knew they would not accept him.

"It was painful and scary to think that I may be kicked out or disowned for me trying to be true to who I feel I am," he said.

Middleton told his father he'd have to choose between having a happy son or a dead daughter.

The National Transgender Discrimination Survey states that 43 percent of transgender people remain connected to their family, while 57 percent are re-

jected by their family.

Aubrey Meneses, also a transgender student at OCCC, said society has made progress, but it's still very closed.

"Being transgender is very stigmatized because society is very binary," - Aubrey Meneses

"When we are born, we are put into this box where we are assigned female or male," Meneses said. "And we are expected to follow those genders. Whenever we realize our authentic life, there is a lot of discrimination that we face."

Regina Switzer, Equal Opportunities Director at OCCC, said federal law prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender. However, efforts by the President Donald Trump could roll back some of those protections.

Last year the Obama Administration issued a "Dear Colleague" letter to "provide instruction to the institutions with regard to their requirements under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972."

But this year, the Trump administration has pushed a retraction of those guidelines that allow transgender students to use restrooms that correlate with their gender identity.

Paula Sophia Schonauer, an advocate for transgender rights and adjunct professor at Rose State College said that "taking back a Dear Colleague does not take back the law. It does not essentially change anything except that it is a signal to transgender people and students that the Trump administration will not support us."

"The most recent administration action has not changed anything on OCCC's campus," Switzer said.

She said if there were to be any challenge of transgender students using the restrooms, the college would have to ensure that no one is being discriminated against or harassed on the basis of gender identity.

Meneses said it is hurtful when politicians have discriminatory beliefs and pass laws based upon those beliefs. She said transgender people should be able to go to the bathroom in peace.

"I would never be okay with using the men's restroom because that would put me in a position that could make me experience violence," she said. "We are people, just like everyone else. I am a human being, and I have a lot more to offer than just being transgender. I have hobbies, interests, and a sense of humor. Being transgender is a part of me, but not all of me."



Students Aubrey Meneses (left) and Ryan Middleton (Right). *Melissa Sue Lopez/Pioneer Archives*

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and visit our Facebook page at [Facebook.com/OCCCPioneer](https://www.facebook.com/OCCCPioneer)



Creativity is *nothing* to be afraid of

VICTOR A. POZADAS
Art & Music Writer
artwriter@occc.edu

The theatrical and musical troupe known as Artrageous has made their stand at the Visual and Performing Arts Center Theater. The group performed a short preview for students with singing, dancing, painting, and a bit of fun.

Founded in 1980, Artrageous has performed shows on a national level and abroad. Their current tour, spanning more than fifty dates, has landed them at OCCC.

Their preview had members singing pop tunes with the accompaniment of a live band behind a set of canvases. As they sang, other members, such as choreographer and costume designer Lauri Francis, walked up to the canvases and created elaborate art pieces.

"I'm feeling really great. Kind of excited. It was a good starter to get the energy going for tonight, so yeah, excited," she said.

She led the conversation at one point of the presentation, asking the group of students attending "Who likes music? Who likes art? It's such an important part of us, and we want to share it with you."

Students raised their hands and cheered at the passing movements of the elaborate preview. Some were asked to come on stage to sing and dance. The room's energy and charm complemented the performers and by the end, everyone invited on stage had inflatable guitars and microphones and were dancing to "Satisfaction" by The Rolling Stones.

John de Wolf, president of Celebrity Enterprises Inc., the management company for the group, played the bass on stage and has been involved with the troupe since its inception.

Hailing from Vancouver, his goal for the show is

to be inclusive and create an experience for those attending.

"Art is how we help connect the dots. What we want to do is get people up, and ideally on stage, because they'll probably remember that for the rest of their lives, and we think it's more fun than just watching," he said. "Everything you see is because we are able to be a good team."

Francis said the key to an artistic life is to build a team, and not be afraid to fail.

"Get on stage and fail. That is the best learning experience," Wolf echoed.

"To us, how the components are, this is really how it works. You have to be the best character you can be. You have to be the kind of person, and kind of people, that other high-quality people want to be around," Wolf said.

"Be a good person, build a team and don't be afraid to fail. Anything is possible after that."



Audience members take part in the art, dancing and music of Artrageous. Victor A. Pozadas/Pioneer

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LAST ISSUE'S SOLUTION

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WEEKLY CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1. Not drunk
6. Liturgy
10. Young bears
14. Small egg
15. Brother of Jacob
16. Double-reed woodwind
17. The language of Persia
18. Offensively malodorous
19. Standard
20. A moderately quick tempo
22. Rational
23. Roman emperor
24. Causes wheat allergies
26. Scoundrels
30. Cool, once
31. Sweet potato
32. Border
33. Again
35. Fungal diseases of plants
39. Stronghold
41. Inability to understand language
43. Strict
44. Satisfy
46. T T T T
47. French for "Summer"
49. Married
50. Makes a mistake
51. A way of doing something
54. A social club for male undergraduates
56. Chocolate cookie
57. Enthusiasm
63. Two-toed sloth
64. Infiltrator
65. Gloomy, in poetry
66. Collections
67. Ailments
68. A long-legged S. American bird
69. Anagram of "Sees"
70. Low islands
71. Runs

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DOWN

13. Seminal fluid
21. Rehabilitation
25. Whip
26. Automobiles
27. Foment
28. Guy
29. Warehouse
34. Arid
36. End ____
37. Layer
38. Back talk
40. "Do ____ others..."
42. Foot lever
45. Appallingly
48. Bloated
51. Rodent
52. Sea eagles
53. Nipples
55. Related to tides
58. South American weapon
59. Therefore
60. Half-moon tide
61. Arrived
62. Twin sister of Ares

OKLAHOMA VICTORY DOLLS
ROLLER DERBY
2017 Home SCHEDULE

JAN 15 HOME TEAM DOUBLE HEADER
NORMAN STARS SKATES

FEB 12 ALL STARS VS. OKMRD
NORMAN STARS SKATES & TORNADO ALLEY VS. TULSA COUNTY

MAR 26 HOME TEAM DOUBLE HEADER
NORMAN STARS SKATES

APR 22 ALL STARS & TORNADO ALLEY (OPPOSITIONS TBD)
EDMOND LARCTIC EDGED

MAY 19-21 SOONER SKATE TOURNAMENT
EDMOND LARCTIC EDGED

JUL 15 HOME TEAM DOUBLE HEADER
EDMOND LARCTIC EDGED

AUG 5 HOME TEAM CHAMPS
EDMOND LARCTIC EDGED



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de force**

that doubles as a
primer on acting...."

— *The New York Times*

John Lithgow. PHOTO BY NIGEL PARRY.

**JOHN
LITHGOW**

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Friday, March 31, 8:00 PM

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