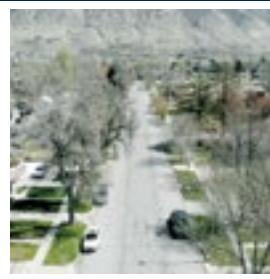


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THE UNIVERSE

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Brigham Young University
Provo, Utah

LGBTQ students, alumni and faculty work for change

By LISI MERKLEY

LGBTQ students at BYU have long struggled with how to feel safe and welcome on a campus that is rooted in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' policies and doctrine.

For many LGBTQ students, BYU's religious environment and cheap tuition are what drew them to attend, just like their straight classmates, but the culture can make their time at BYU a challenge.

A recent study found that 996 out of 7,625 BYU undergraduate students identified as LGBTQ. One of the researchers responsible for the study, David Erickson, told The Daily Universe that these findings should remind the BYU community that LGBTQ students "are likely present in every classroom."

From freshmen to full-time employees, different groups in the BYU community are working to make changes that will help LGBTQ students feel like they belong.

Coming to BYU

Freshmen Madi Hawes and Luka Romney started an Instagram account to connect LGBTQ students on campus before they came to Provo for their first year at BYU.

"We decided that we wanted to be able to help create that community at BYU because that's something we were both nervous about with coming to BYU," said Hawes, a bisexual student.

On the page, called BYUQ, they share submitted stories from other LGBTQ students and allies. The page now has 55 posts and just over one thousand followers. "It's truly a community of people that love each other," said Romney, a non-binary, queer student. "I'm just really proud and happy to see the environment of mutual support that it has created."

Romney said finding the community through the page has been a "sacred experience." "Because at the end of the day, being queer at BYU is incredibly difficult and we go through a lot."

Since creating the account, Hawes and Romney have formed a relationship with several BYU administrators. "We're able to have this relationship with the university and see that the university administration for the most part overall, like President Worthen and the people that he chooses to do things for his students, they want to be supporting everyone," Hawes said.

In their interactions with BYU, Hawes and Romney said they feel like the issues come from a minority of professors, students and the Church



Sydney Gonzalez

BYU students participate in Rainbow Day on March 4. Different groups in the BYU community are working to help LGBTQ students feel like they belong.

Educational System — the organization that helps BYU provide a religious education and determines many policies, like the Honor Code.

"The place where we're gonna have the biggest area of influence is with the students," Romney said. "We're trying to help our own students that are queer, but we're also trying to create cultural shifts in the student body to be more accepting of queer people."

For now, the group is limited in what events it can hold because of COVID-19 restrictions and precautions, but Hawes and Romney are focusing on visibility. On the Instagram page, they host discussions about topics like how queer members feel in the Church or how students can better support transgender people.

Hawes said religion is one of the most unifying things for BYU students, and that's no different for LGBTQ students.

"One of the most important things for us in creating this was showing that it is a false myth that just because someone is queer must mean that they don't have a testimony or relationship with their Heavenly Parents and their Savior," Hawes said.

In fact, the Spirit was what convinced Hawes to attend BYU, even though she never wanted to. "I also realized that I couldn't expect and want change to happen somewhere if I wasn't there to help make it happen," she said.

Romney said their expectations of what BYU would be like have matched up pretty closely with reality. "I knew

that when I was going to come here I was going to experience the very best things and the very worst things."

Some of those best things include the classes and the people, but the bad things are the stares and rude, insensitive comments.

Romney and Hawes have chosen to stay at BYU despite the trials, but they recognize BYU is not the best fit for some LGBTQ students.

"We have a lot of work to do," Romney said.

Graduating from BYU

Recent BYU graduate Ashtin Markowski spent the majority of her BYU career coming to terms with her sexuality and didn't come out publicly as gay until after she graduated and received her diploma.

Students were confused in early 2020 over whether members of the same sex could date after a section of the Honor Code about homosexual behavior was removed. BYU later released a letter from the Church Educational System clarifying that students could not date members of the same sex.

While the Honor Code confusion and other more public incidents made being a gay student at BYU hard, Markowski said some of the smaller things were more challenging for her, like homophobic comments in classes.

"I chose to come to BYU for the same reason everyone else did. I wanted the religious education, and there was,

of course, the family tradition aspect too," Markowski said. "I didn't even know I was gay until I had two semesters left."

Markowski said if the Honor Code had changed in 2020 to allow gay students to date at BYU, she would have felt a lot more welcome on campus. "There are devotionals on campus, the BYU mission statement, all this stuff talks about love and inclusivity, but if you actually ask these minority groups how they feel at BYU, it's not necessarily welcome."

Markowski is now working as a high school teacher after graduation. Looking back, she's not sure whether or not she regrets coming to BYU. "Obviously, I'm the person I am today with BYU," she said. "Maybe a more secular education would have been healthier for me and I wouldn't have felt so much pressure, but at the same time I just wish that BYU would change because I still liked it."

Markowski recently joined a lawsuit with 33 other students from religious U.S. universities in hopes that the U.S. Department of Education will require all schools that receive taxpayer funds to be more inclusive and welcome to LGBTQ students.

The lawsuit claims the Department of Education and other federal agencies gave religious universities \$4.2 billion in 2018, but no specific statistics were given on a school-by-school basis.

"BYU and the Church could afford, if they wanted to, to just reject taxpayer

money, federal funding from the government," she said. "But the thing is, that would also send a message to their students that they're more willing to continue in what they have been doing than make BYU a more welcoming place for all."

Since coming out and joining the lawsuit, Markowski has received many questions from other BYU students asking what kind of harassment she experienced at the school or why she stayed at BYU. "I've had people tell me, 'the gospel is all about love.' Exactly. But that's not happening," she said. "Why are you judging me or telling me I should leave if the gospel teaches love?"

Returning to BYU

Blake Fisher, a gay man, attended BYU as an undergraduate from 2005 to 2011. He is now a full-time BYU employee working as an inclusion adviser in the Office of Student Success and Inclusion.

As an inclusion adviser, Fisher meets with students to talk about their stories, ideas and questions. The office also helps connect students "with their peers and serve those who may be having a tough time," he said.

When he was a student, he said the only time sexual orientation or gender identity were discussed was in 2008 when Californians were voting on Proposition 8 that said marriage was only legal between a man and a woman. "The only people I felt comfortable talking about my own experience being attracted to guys were those in the university counseling center."

From class presentations and student panels on gender and sexuality to more open conversations about these topics across campus, Fisher said things have changed since he was a student. He has even noticed a difference in how he as a gay employee is treated.

"I've had members of President's Council reach out to me on days like Father's Day, just to make sure I felt seen and appreciated on a day that might be challenging otherwise," he said. "I don't think things like that were happening 15 years ago, but they mean the world to me now."

Both Hawes and Romney said they have appreciated the efforts of BYU employees like Fisher who are trying to make the university more welcoming to LGBTQ students. "The administration, at the end of the day, wants to support us," Romney said about their meetings with Fisher and Ben Schilaty, an openly-gay Honor Code administrator. "And they're gonna do whatever they can to help us for the most part."

See CHANGE on Page 8

Zach Wilson leads historic BYU draft class

By CALEB TURNER

Quarterback Zach Wilson became the highest-drafted player in BYU football history after the New York Jets took him with the No. 2 overall pick on the first night of the NFL Draft on Thursday, April 29.

"I'm so excited for the opportunity. This is a dream come true for me," Wilson said on the draft stage. "I wouldn't believe it until the day it happened, but this is exactly what I was hoping for."

The previous highest picks in BYU history were both taken fifth overall: quarterback Jim McMahon in 1982 and defensive end Ezekiel "Ziggy" Ansah in 2013. Wilson is the first BYU player to be taken in the first round since Ansah, and the first quarterback drafted from BYU since John Beck in 2007.

Beck, now a quarterback coach in California, worked with Wilson during the summer of 2020, helping the BYU star take his play to the next level and have a breakout season last fall. Wilson led the Cougars to an 11-1 season and a top-10 ranking in 2020, during which he threw 33 touchdowns and had just three interceptions.

Rumors about Wilson to the Jets began to swirl soon after the end of the Cougars' dominant season but were solidified on BYU's Pro Day in late March when Wilson wowed scouts and coaches with an impressive passing display at the Indoor Practice Facility in Provo.



Zach Wilson (right) poses with NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell on the NFL draft stage after being selected by the New York Jets. Wilson is the highest pick in BYU history at No. 2.

The way was paved for Wilson to be the man in the Big Apple when the Jets traded away their starting quarterback, Sam Darnold, on April 5, just a week after Wilson's Pro Day performance.

Wilson's arm talent has drawn comparisons to perennial MVP candidates Aaron Rodgers and Patrick Mahomes, highlighted by his strength and ability to throw on the run and from tough angles. With an opening at the quarterback position in New York, Wilson will likely be the starter to open the 2021 season.

"These guys need a good quarterback, a good leader, and I think I've got those qualities," Wilson said. "I can't

wait to get to work. I love the coaching staff and everything they have to offer, and I can't wait to get to New York City."

Wilson is the fifth BYU player to be drafted by the New York Jets in the NFL Draft, joining defensive back Chris Farasopoulos in 1971, wide receiver Lloyd Jones in 1981 and offensive linemen Eric Bateman and fullback Dustin Johnson in 1998.

A native of Draper, Wilson was a dual-sport athlete in basketball and football at Corner Canyon High School before graduating early in 2018 and joining BYU for spring ball in what would have been his final semester in high school. He originally committed

to Boise State, but BYU coaches Kalani and Fesi Sitake aggressively recruited Wilson in the final weeks before signing day, and won over the family with BYU's proximity to Draper as a major selling point.

Wilson was named the starting quarterback midway through his freshman season in 2018, the youngest in BYU history, and capped off an exciting opening campaign with a perfect performance in the Famous Idaho Potato Bowl in which he completed 18 of 18 pass attempts. Following the bowl game, BYU receiver Dylan Collie said he believed Wilson would be, "one of, if not the greatest quarterback in BYU history."

Becoming the highest draft pick in BYU history currently helps Wilson's case among the BYU greats, as he looks to become the latest in a long line of Cougar quarterbacks, including McMahon, Steve Young and Ty Detmer, to carve out a successful NFL career.

Five players taken in NFL draft

BYU Football had four players taken after Zach Wilson in the latter rounds of the 2021 NFL Draft to bring this year's total to five, the most since 2002 and tied for the most through seven rounds in program history.

Offensive lineman Brady Christensen was taken on April 30 in the third round by the Carolina Panthers, becoming the first offensive lineman drafted from BYU since Scott Young in 2005, and the highest drafted since John Tait in 1999.

The final three Cougars were taken

in the seventh round on May 1, with defensive tackle Khyiris Tonga going to the Chicago Bears, cornerback Chris Wilcox going to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and wide receiver Dax Milne to the Washington Football team with the penultimate pick in the draft.

This year's showing matches the BYU draft classes in 2002 and 1995 as the most players taken in the modern seven-round NFL Draft. There were at least five players from BYU taken four times prior to that, but in drafts with more than seven rounds.

The NFL signings didn't stop for the Cougars after the draft, however, as an additional seven BYU players signed undrafted free agent contracts with teams.

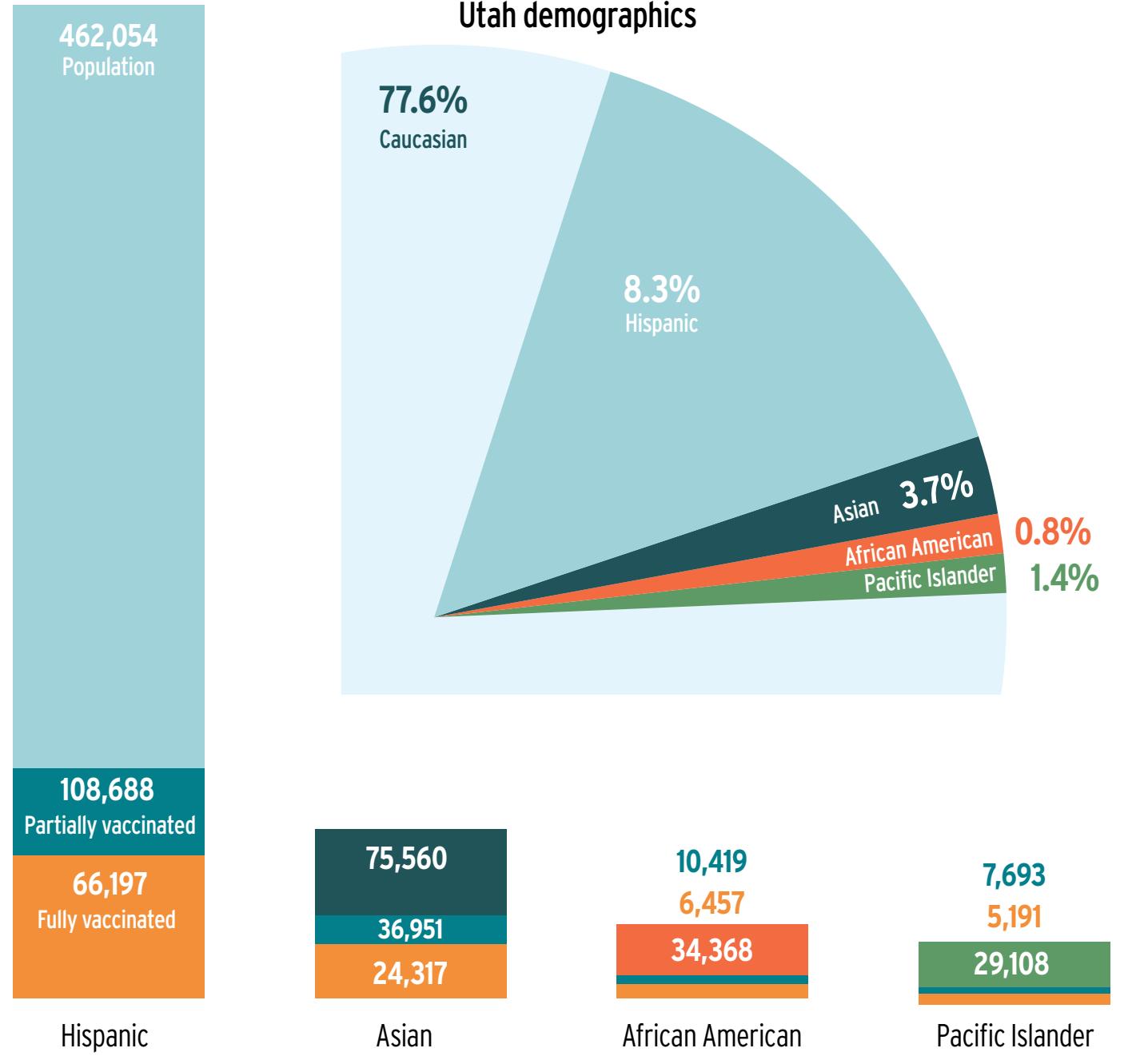
Tight end Matt Bushman signed with the Las Vegas Raiders, offensive lineman Chandon Herring with the Tennessee Titans, linebacker Isaiah Kaufusi with the Indianapolis Colts, safety Zayne Anderson with the Kansas City Chiefs, defensive back Troy Warner with the Los Angeles Rams, defensive tackle Zac Dowe with the Atlanta Falcons and offensive lineman Tristen Hoge with the New York Jets.

BYU's best draft showing in nearly 20 years comes after one of its best seasons in recent memory, with an 11-1 record and top-10 ranking to go along with Heisman Trophy and College Football Playoff hype.

"I love each of these guys and look forward to following their careers in the NFL," BYU head coach Kalani Sitake said after the draft.

COVID-19 OUTBREAK

Progress of vaccinations among Utah ethnic groups



As vaccines roll out, the disparity in distribution between minority and majority groups grows. Of the 2,490,644 whites in Utah, 77.6% of the adult population, 959,712 (49.8%) have been partially vaccinated and 705,495 (36.6%) have been fully vaccinated as recorded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Data provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Census Bureau.

Hungary's poor Roma children struggle with digital education

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Mihaly Horvath, a 12-year-old in a village in northeastern Hungary, can't wait for his school to reopen.

As a devastating COVID-19 surge swept Hungary in the spring, classes were suspended and students were ordered to study online. But Mihaly's family, part of Hungary's large Roma minority, doesn't have a computer or internet access at their home in Bodvaszilas.

"Some students have telephones, some have computers.

But there are others like me who don't have either," he said from the yard of a dilapidated house where he lives with nine other family members. "It's more difficult for Gypsy kids like us. Some don't even have writing utensils or anything else."

His is one of thousands of Roma families in Hungary that have been particularly hard hit by the pandemic. Many already marginalized Roma adults lost work as Hungary's economy buckled under coronavirus lockdowns, pushing their families deeper into poverty. Some have reported selling their belongings, like mobile phones, to make ends meet.

Missionaries encouraged to receive COVID-19 vaccine

By EMMA GADESKI

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is encouraging all missionaries and prospective missionaries to receive a COVID-19 vaccine.

Young missionaries in the United States who will travel to a mission outside their home country should be vaccinated before traveling, according to the April 23 news release.

Under direction of mission leaders, mission medical coordinators are monitoring availability of the vaccine in their mission

and informing missionaries when they may receive it.

Missionaries who choose not to receive the required immunizations — which will now include the COVID-19 vaccination — will be assigned to a mission in their home country in accordance with existing Church policies.

Senior missionaries may also travel to their assigned mission, where visa and travel conditions permit, after they are vaccinated.

The statement reminds members that individuals are responsible to make their own decisions about vaccination, referencing a Jan. 19 First Presidency statement.

Outside the outbreak

From the Associated Press



Arizona farmers to bear brunt of cuts from Colorado River

Arizona is prepared to lose about one-fifth of the water the state gets from the Colorado River in what could be the first federally declared shortage in the river that supplies millions of people in the U.S. West and Mexico, state officials said April 29.

Arizona stands to lose more than any other state in the Colorado River basin that also takes in parts of Wyoming, New Mexico, Utah, Colorado, Nevada and California. That's because Arizona agreed long ago to be the first in line for cuts in exchange for federal funding for a canal system to deliver the water to Arizona's major metropolitan areas.



In Jaffa, gentrification stokes discord as Arabs pushed out

A turreted former Catholic girl's school in Jaffa is being transformed into an exclusive Soho House club. Around the corner, a historic ex-convent is now a five-star hotel. Across the street, the glittering towers of the Andromeda Hill luxury residences overlook the Mediterranean.

But farther down Yefet Street, working class Arabs of Jaffa's Ajami neighborhood face a starkly different reality. With housing prices out of reach, discontent over the city's rapid transformation into a bastion for Israel's ultra-wealthy is reaching a boiling point. The crisis has taken on nationalistic overtones, with some Arab residents accusing the government of trying to push them out to make way for Jews.



No big backlash for states passing anti-transgender laws

Five states have passed laws or implemented executive orders this year limiting the ability of transgender youths to play sports or receive certain medical treatment. There's been a vehement outcry from supporters of transgender rights — but little in the way of tangible repercussions for those states.

It's a striking contrast to the fate of North Carolina a few years ago. When its Legislature passed a bill in March 2016 limiting which public restrooms transgender people could use, there was a swift and powerful backlash. The NBA and NCAA relocated events; some companies scrapped expansion plans. By March 2017, the bill's bathroom provisions were repealed.



Oklahoma House OKs ban on teaching critical race theory

Oklahoma public school teachers would be prohibited from teaching certain concepts of race and racism under a bill given final approval by the state House on April 29.

The GOP-controlled House voted 70-19 for the bill that prohibits teaching of so-called "critical race theory."

"Students are being taught that because they're a certain race or sex, they're inherently superior to others or should feel guilty for something that happened in the past," said Rep. Kevin West, a Moore Republican who sponsored the bill. "We're trying to set boundaries that we as a state say will not be crossed when we're teaching these kinds of subjects."

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Utah has fastest-growing population, 2020 census shows

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Utah's population grew by 18.4% over the past decade, making it the fastest-growing state.

It's now the 30th most populated state, with nearly 3.28 million people, according to U.S. Census Bureau data released Monday. Utah's population growth from 2010 to 2020 far outpaced the national figure of 7.4%.

The census must happen every 10 years under the U.S. Constitution. The latest one was complicated by safety measures during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the need for social distancing, and by last-minute litigation over efforts by President Donald Trump's administration to include a question on citizenship.

Utah's population growth in the previous census was enough to earn it another U.S. House seat. The state grew by 23.8% from 2000 to 2010 and was the third fastest growing at the time, behind Nevada and Arizona, according to census data.

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HIGHLIGHTS FROM BYU COLLEGES

Students lead restoration project for Y Mountain trailhead

By INGRID SAGERS

Students and volunteers have collaborated to embark on a restoration and preservation project on the Y Mountain trailhead.

BYU restoration ecology professor Matthew Madsen oversees a wildlife and wildlands conservation class. A group of his students is leading the way to restore natural plant life at the trailhead on Y Mountain.

Senior Alyssa Brown said Madsen led the students in choosing and preparing plots of land at the Y Mountain trailhead to restore some of its natural plant life that has been destroyed or degraded by fires and toxic weeds.

Brown explained that the team focuses on restoration ecology; the Y trailhead and the Provo foothills have been historically overgrazed by humans since Utah's pioneer ancestors, invasion of noxious weeds and chronic wildfires. The native ecosystems have not stayed established in the area and compete with the newer toxic weeds. She said the group prepared carefully chosen plots of land to install some of the natural plant life.

Senior Emily Thueson is another one of Madsen's students and said they had the task of planting three main plant species: shrubs, grasses and forbs. The main shrub is sagebrush (specifically Wyoming big sagebrush) and the main grass is bluebunch wheatgrass.

Thueson explained the class "broke dormancy" in the prepared seeds so the seeds were ready to germinate the best they could once planted. One method of breaking dormancy is called chemical scarification. Seeds are put in seed strainers, then soaked in concentrated sulfuric acid to make the seed coat permeable to water.

Students used the Life Sciences Building's greenhouse to make "cone-tainers" (cone-shaped containers) in which they planted some seedlings in preparation to install at the restoration site, Thueson said.

Another team member, BYU law student Eric Lemus, said the BYU Grounds Office and its director, Glen Wear, have been extremely supportive of the class's efforts. That support was crucial to the approval of a restoration undertaking like this, as BYU owns the Y trailhead and trail itself.

Lemus said the team is



Eric Lemus

From left, Erik Kemp, Eric Lemus, Morgan Hinton, Emily Thueson and Alyssa Brown demonstrate their cone-shaped containers in which they planted seedlings in preparation to plant at the Y Mountain trailhead.

excited to see what support and interest the public shows in the project because of the Y trail being a beloved Provo attraction. He said the team wants to increase the general public's participation in restoring the trailhead plant life.

The students have installed a 270-gallon water tank near the restoration site. This water tank will have watering cans nearby so anyone who visits the trailhead can water these newly planted seeds and plants. A sheet will be posted on the water tank for people to write which plot they watered, Lemus said.

BYU Student Sustainability Initiative

Lemus said the student team has partnered up with the BYU Associate Director of Sustainability and Continuity, Bremen Leak. Leak is heavily involved with the BYU Student Sustainability Initiative, a student-led organization that aims to increase sustainable practices at BYU on an institutional level and create a campus culture more focused on environmental sustainability."

The initiative is a self-governed and self-funded group that works to conduct research, raise awareness and facilitate different eco-friendly projects. Leak said BYU students, faculty and staff care deeply about sustainability.

An example Leak used to highlight the university's eco-friendliness was BYU Dining Services. "Eighty percent of its food waste is collected and composted for campus landscaping, which is exceptional. That's literally tons of food waste every day that won't end up in landfills," he said.

It's impressive for a university as large as BYU to source

more than a fourth of its food from local businesses, Leak said. Using these local businesses cuts down on shipping, storage and production costs; it also lowers emissions because of fewer trucks being used for delivery.

After 60 years, BYU switched from a high-carbon, coal-fired power plant to a low-carbon, natural gas-powered cogeneration plant that produces heat and electricity at the same time — reducing carbon emissions for both BYU and Provo, Leak said.

He looks forward to what he considers the next step: zero-carbon energy sources like solar and wind power. Leak said that will require costing these power sources out, talking with experts and figuring out what makes sense for the campus.

The BYU Sustainability Office has prepared a calendar with 30 simple steps students can take to live more sustainably. "These won't change the world overnight, but over a lifetime, they'll make a huge difference," Leak said.

Leak suggested if students would like to start their sustainable lifestyle in small ways, they can study the issues, get involved, vote, eat less meat and buy local.

"Build healthy habits: reduce, reuse, recycle — in that order. There's so much we can do, and sometimes a dialogue like this is all we need to get started," Leak said.

He urged anyone to share ideas with BYU's sustainability program on "long-term sustainability strategies that consider the environmental and social challenges of our day and provide solutions on an institutional level." These ideas can be emailed to sustainability@byu.edu.

DAVID O. MCKAY SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Richard Osguthorpe chosen as new dean of the School of Education



Richard Osguthorpe

Richard Osguthorpe will be the new dean of the David O. McKay School of Education on July 1. He will be taking over the position of Mary Anne Prater who will retire after working 20 years for the college, including eight years as the dean. Osguthorpe previously taught as a professor in the Department of Teacher Education and the Center for the Improvement of Teacher Education and Schooling at the McKay school. Prior

to working at BYU he worked as a professor, department chair and dean of the College of Education at Boise State University.

"Rich's leadership traits of thoughtful perspective on the moral foundations of education and a desire to help colleagues succeed will be a blessing to the McKay School," said BYU Academic Vice President C. Shane Reese.

COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

BYU student goes on to win America's most prestigious piano competition



Ariel Wong

A BYU piano performance major won the top prize in one of America's most prestigious piano competitions: the Music Teachers National Association. To qualify, sophomore Ariel Wong won first place in the state of Utah and then went on to win the 2021 Southwest regional division competition. This was her second year making the cut for the national competition. She prepared 30 minutes of music to present,

including pieces from Liszt, Mendelssohn and Dutilleux.

Wong has played piano since age four. She practices three to four hours a day unless she is preparing for a contest, at which point she practices for six or seven hours. Wong's parents sent her from Hong Kong to America at age 14 so she could have more learning experiences with music. She auditioned with BYU piano professor Scott Holden and has studied with him since then.

"Music is such a huge part of my being. I cannot imagine life without it," Wong said. "Music is such a gift from God and I love to share it so that some might be inspired, energized, touched or comforted."

COLLEGE OF LIFE SCIENCES

BYU professor publishes 10-year cognitive study about epilepsy



Evan Thacker

Evan Thacker, a public health professor at BYU, recently published a 10-year-long study that shows cognitive decline after experiencing epilepsy in older adults. He along with professors from Columbia University and the University of Washington studied

5,000 adults over 65 years old who took cognitive tests once a year every 10 years. Those with epilepsy were shown to have their average cognitive test score decrease over the years, with 200 of the subjects with epilepsy declining faster than those without. They hope to expand the study to 40,000 subjects.

"The health of our brain matters," he said. "Our research is aimed at trying to understand the connections between these different brain diseases."

COLLEGE OF FAMILY, HOME AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

BYU graduate opens first food pantry in Springville



Jordan Etherington (second from left)

A 2021 BYU graduate opened Springville's first food pantry. Jordan Etherington graduated with a degree in family life and an emphasis in human development. He organized the Springfield Food Pantry as part of a capstone project for his civic engagement leadership minor. Etherington worked with local organizations and donors including Mountainland Head Start, the Community Action Services and Food Bank of Provo and the Springville Kiwanis Club to make the pantry a reality.

"I hope this local resource will help individuals and families get through difficult times by providing food and reassurance about where their next meal is coming from," Etherington said. "If there is a cause you want to be involved in, just reach out to the organization and see what opportunities they have. They won't turn you away."

Post-graduation, Etherington plans to pursue a Ph.D. in school psychology from the University of Southern Mississippi. He hopes to become a therapist for autistic individuals.

BYU INTEX project plans to help burial excavators in Egypt

By INGRID SAGERS

Once a mummified body is dug up, it can't be dug up again.

"No one can ever excavate the same site twice, so the information learned on-site when excavating graves needs to be recorded immediately," said Kerry Muhlestein, director of the BYU excavation project.

BYU's excavation team in Egypt has been excavating tombs and burial sites for over 40 years. Muhlestein said it has always been extremely difficult to manage the amount of data the excavation team has gathered in the last 40 years.

The BYU information systems program hosts INTEX, an incredibly rigorous week-long final project, each semester. The information systems students are tasked with creating a high-functioning web application for the excavators' data.

Muhlestein said.

Muhlestein feels this project has a real obligation to make its findings available to people around the world. The excavation team has essentially tried everything from handwriting all data to creating endless spreadsheets.

"We've just ended up with volumes and volumes of information that no one can easily piece together," he said.

Previously, Muhlestein said the department worked with biology, archaeology and ancient scripture students to undergo this data-collecting task. However, he said they finally recognized that they needed to work with students who deal with large amounts of data as a specialty or a career.

INTEX: an "interactive experience"

Professor Greg Anderson has been a leader in the BYU information systems program for 10 years. "INTEX takes everything the students have learned throughout the semester and applies it into one culminating experience," Anderson said.

INTEX is a comprehensive project serving as the final for information systems students in the junior core in the fall and winter, with a different project each semester.

There are 46 teams of four students; INTEX begins with a kick-off meeting where a client explains what problem needs solving. The teams are given five to six days to create a solution to a problem. Winter semester's



The BYU Egypt excavation team collaborated with the information systems program to gather all the tomb and burial site data in a new web application.

client was Muhlestein's team in Egypt.

Information systems junior Isaac Dayley said the excavators require a website that gives on-site excavators and scientists the ability to add new information into the system on the spot. The system needs to be easy to use and run analytics instantaneously. The website gives researchers on-site and in-labs access to all past data.

"It's really hard to understand what data is telling you when the data isn't standardized or in one accessible spot," Dayley said. "Our solution for the Egypt excavators will be about putting data together and learning something from it later."

Information systems junior

Anthony Sharp said the creation of a high-performing database like this requires the teams to meet every single day, all day, during the given week before presentation day.

Sharp said his team always has a Zoom room open that a member can join at any point. The team meets every day for an average of 12 to 15 hours straight to make sure everything is on track.

Information systems junior Matt Jenson said it's interesting to see how all of the different teams approach the project in different ways. It's important to know what everyone's strengths are so that the group can work cohesively, he said.

"I know that I'm nothing

without my group; I depend on them so much," Jenson said. A lot of learning happens from listening to his teammates and he feels lucky to work alongside them.

Andrew Kimball, a teammate of Jenson, said with the given time constraints, the team aspect of INTEX is essential. "If we didn't work on a team, the project would be so big it would be impossible to do," Kimball said.

Sharp said this semester professors, members of Muhlestein's excavation board and members of the information systems board of directors will be some of the judges of the team's presentations this semester.

"They'll be given 20 minutes to demonstrate their project and what they've done to solve the problem," Anderson said.

The panel will be paying attention to their communication skills, sound logic and if they have truly found a solution to the problem. How the team members interact with their teammates during the presentation is a key indicator of their professional skills, Anderson said.

Anderson emphasized the importance of the team aspect of the INTEX experience by saying that collaboration is a huge part of future careers in the information systems industry.

"You can be the smartest person in the world, but if you can't work with others, companies will never want you," he said.

Since there will be so many

different presentations for a solution, Muhlestein said the panel will choose the best parts of many.

The excavation project will then hire some of these information systems students to continue refining and analyzing the website alongside his own program's employees. Muhlestein said the database will only grow from there.

Looking toward the future

A research experiment was recently done in 2020 to evaluate the effectiveness of the INTEX experience. Two information systems students were personally asked by Anderson to complete an intense and extensive survey experience for several students, alumni and professors. The data gathered showed that over 97 percent of the contributors believed INTEX benefited them later on in their careers.

Anderson believes INTEX is strenuous and stressful, but an extremely rewarding experience. The professors wouldn't want it any other way.

"We want our IS students to understand: if you can do something this hard, you can prove to yourself that anything is possible and change the world with what you've learned," he said.

Jenson agreed with Anderson's sentiment about INTEX's value and intensity. He said real learning is more often than not inside classrooms, but what students struggle with on their own and how they figure it out.

How will development in Provo impact the homeless?

By KARINA ANDREW

Utah County's population is increasing, and its cities are bracing for continued development. As Provo officials plan for growth, what will happen to the city's homeless population?

Provo is home to at least 100 unsheltered people, according to Karen McCandless, executive director of nonprofit Community Action Services. As Provo's population grows over the next three decades, McCandless said its homeless population will likely increase as well, and different development objectives could have an impact on them.

For example, Provo residents and developers alike consider nature and open space a top priority for the city. As plans for future development get underway, City Council member Shannon Ellsworth has created an initiative to enhance Slate Canyon.

Ellsworth told The Daily Universe that Slate Canyon has received the least attention — and the least funding — of Provo's three major canyons. Because of the neglect, Slate Canyon has been a site for mass garbage dumping including drug paraphernalia, and isn't safe for women or children.

Slate Canyon has also played host to some Provo residents experiencing homelessness, who have used the canyon as a long-term camping site.

Development in Slate Canyon kicked off April 24 with a clean-up project organized by Conserve Utah Valley. More community projects will occur every fourth Saturday of the month for the rest of the summer.

Ellsworth said in an email that projects will include "removing graffiti, trash, and noxious weeds, appropriating funds to develop a multi-phase park that is planned for the mouth of the canyon, and acquiring properties that will allow



Karina Andrew
A sign at the Slate Canyon trailhead prohibits garbage dumping. Uncleanliness and other factors have made the canyon a focal point for clean-up this summer.

us to expand the Bonneville Shoreline Trail." Ellsworth said she isn't sure whether development in the canyon will displace anyone experiencing homelessness.

It is illegal to camp on city property that isn't designated as a campground, Ellsworth said, but the city of Provo has no official resources for people experiencing homelessness; rather, Provo city officials direct those in need to county or nonprofit resources.

While there aren't any homeless shelters in Utah County, McCandless said Community Action Services contracts with motels in Provo to provide short-term emergency shelter. There is also long-term housing, or permanent supportive housing, for people who are chronically homeless or have been homeless for more than a month.

However, there is a gap, McCandless said, between emergency and long-term housing for the homeless. People experiencing homelessness in Provo for between eight and 30 days often have nowhere to go.

Another development initiative that could have a big impact on people experiencing homelessness is increasing transit options.

"Transportation is crucial for

those experiencing homelessness," McCandless said, adding that continuing to increase public transit availability, accessibility and connectivity will greatly benefit Provo's homeless population.

The nonprofit director also identified an increase in housing variety as a potential boon to those struggling to afford shelter. By including less expensive studio and one-bedroom apartments in residential development, developers could help more Provo residents avoid the devastating impact of Utah's housing crisis.

"There are a variety of different ways that development can be incentivized to provide housing that is affordable, and I would love to see that as we grow in the community," McCandless said.

She added she's hopeful that continued growth will result in heightened awareness of the issues that cause homelessness and an increase in resources for Provo residents with nowhere to go.

"I'm seeing an increase in awareness, and I'm seeing the development of champions in the community for these housing issues," she said. "And I think that will continue to grow as our county grows."

Provo designing new plan to guide rapid development

By KARINA ANDREW

As the population along the Wasatch Front shoots upward, leaders and residents have their eyes on sustainable development. Projects such as the Daybreak community in South Jordan and The Point in Draper demonstrate stakeholders' interest in walkability, preserving open spaces, green infrastructure and a modern, urban lifestyle.

Utah County is one of the areas expected to see the most growth. The county's population is projected to double in the next three decades, with Provo seeing an increase of nearly 40,000 residents by 2050. To plan and prepare for sustainable growth, Provo city is updating its general plan.

The general plan is a guiding document for policy and development in the city. Provo's current general plan was written in 1997 and hasn't received an update since 2009. City Council member Shannon Ellsworth said she initiated the plan update process because the previous plan was too outdated to be helpful to the City Council when they make decisions about land use in Provo.

"Those decisions should be based not on how we feel on Tuesday night, but they should be based on the merits of the project, the needs of the community and the general plan," Ellsworth said in an interview with The Daily Universe.

Urban and outdoor design studio Design Workshop is taking the lead in creating Provo's new general plan. Community engagement has been a key part of every phase of the design process so far.

"This is the community's plan. This is not our plan," said Design Workshop president Becky Zimmerman. "We are listening."

Phase one of the design process was to "explore and



Karina Andrew
The "Provo Strong" sign sits outside the Provo Recreation Center. The city of Provo is updating its general plan to prepare for future growth and development.

engage," Zimmerman said. They began the design process last fall by researching previous iterations of the general plan and surveying Provo residents about the needs they see in the community and what they think should be included in the new plan.

Ellsworth said the data from this initial research yielded six main themes: sustainability, stewardship of the outdoors, a welcoming community, a resilient and viable economy, safe and connected streets and trail networks, and promoting a high quality of life through city resources.

While these themes aren't yet set in stone as part of the final version of the plan, Ellsworth said they are guiding further community outreach as Design Workshop continues to seek feedback.

Now, the designers are in the middle of phase two: synthesize and prioritize. This phase is also engagement-heavy, as the city has already hosted three open houses to solicit more feedback from the community about which themes to prioritize and how residents would like to see their vision for the city realized.

In a March 31 virtual

open house geared toward north Provo residents, attendees identified housing variety, walkability and bikeability, nature access and preservation, and small business growth as some of their top priorities for the city moving forward. A second open house for south Provo residents yielded similar results.

The next step in the process, Zimmerman said, will be to draft a general plan using all the input from Provo residents and move into phase three: finalize and implement. Once the plan is finalized, the City Council and other Provo government officials and developers will be obligated to show how any rezoning or land use decisions advance the plan's goals.

The general plan update isn't the only way Provo is adapting to growth. Ellsworth said she and fellow City Council members George Handley and Bill Fillmore have enacted policies to "dictate development in the foothills of Provo" and are working on guidelines "about how to preserve trails, how to improve canyons and open space." The Provo Parks and Recreation department is also developing a new master plan.

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Good morning,

Today's newsletter covers a look at the first Black faculty member to give a BYU devotional in over a decade, the Tweet Bear and an overview of news from the field of education.

News



First Black faculty member in 14 years to give devotional

By Holly Cluff

A Black BYU faculty member will give a campus devotional for the first time in fourteen years on April 6.

Ryan Gabriel, a professor specializing in urban sociology, will give an address titled, "Healing Racism through Jesus Christ." He said he hopes his address can play a small role in helping people better understand Jesus Christ's atonement and its power to unite people of different races and ethnicities in a Zion community.

"It is pointing to Christ and thus not about the individual (giving the address), but who the individual is will shape how that message comes across," he said.

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End of an era: The Daily Universe to print final weekly paper April

THE DAILY UNIVERSE

The Call to fight: A BYU student steps into the Octagon

By MITCHEL PHIPPS

Tyler Call stepped into the Octagon and the cage closed. The arena lights were on him, and then the PA announcer called their names. The bell rang. After two years of training, eight weeks of prepping, dieting, watching tape and cutting weight, the moment was finally here.

Call often dreamed about this moment. He felt ready and prepared, but most of all he was nervous. He recognized the nervous feelings. He felt them often as he walked into the Testing Center as a cybersecurity student at BYU.

Since starting school at BYU in 2017, something was missing in his weekly routine. Something felt off. He felt uninspired.

Call would walk to class, pull out his laptop and take notes. But his mind wandered off while the professor was lecturing. He had trouble concentrating.

He thought often about his high school days and what it was like to strap up the football pads, go head to head with his teammates at practice and later come home bruised and in pain, but absolutely filled with joy. He cherished those memories, and he craved to have that feeling of out-toughing his opponent and doing what others didn't want to do.

Call looked for something new. He needed that physicality that came with sports. He wasn't talented enough to play Division I football and BYU didn't have a wrestling program. After seeing his brother train in jiu-jitsu for a few months at Wasatch Fight Camp in Orem, he decided to give it a go and signed up to train with his brother. He immediately fell in love with it. He found what was missing: his finish line, his goal. He wanted to be a professional fighter.

In July 2019, Call enlisted the help of coach Dayne Aristizabal. Aristizabal opened and owns the fight camp Agema Jiu-Jitsu and previously worked with Call as a jiu-jitsu coach at Wasatch Fight Camp before opening his own. Coach Aristizabal and Agema Jiu-Jitsu allowed Call to take amateur fights, helping him toward his dream of being a professional fighter, an opportunity that wasn't an option at his other fight camp.

Hundreds of hopeful fighters step into local fight schools across the country, but most never advance past the first few weeks of training.

Most aspiring fighters don't



actually fights," Abernethy said. "The connections that improve your fighting are the ones you want."

Building connections is about improving as a fighter: learning from those who have many years of experience and applying it to prove why you belong in the Octagon. The right connections can lead someone to a better coach, bigger gym or even a more experienced fighting partner.

Call's connections brought him to the Agema Fight School, where he was able to get his first amateur fight.

Call remembers only a little bit of that night. He remembers the bright lights, loud crowd, and it being over in a flash.

"It's a little bit fuzzy," Call said. "A lot of knees, and a lot of wrestling."

Call recalls shoving Barber against the cage multiple times, taking him down, and connecting multiple blows, then taking a deep breath, shaking the sweat off, and repeating.

"I remember it was a brawl. I remember they both rocked each other and hurt each other a couple times," Aristizabal said.

When it came down to the final round, Aristizabal believed the conditioning work Call had put in is what led him to beat his opponent.

Call won his debut fight by unanimous decision.

"He put on a show," teammate David Kim said. "His fight was amazing."

"It was tough. It was a test," Aristizabal said.

Aristizabal and Call's teammates were impressed with how he handled himself in his debut fight.

Teammate Zac Hamilton was in the back preparing for his upcoming fight that night when he saw Call come back from his victory.

"It was the most awesome thing. He was crying. He had the medal around his neck," Hamilton said.

Call can still recall the feelings he had that night. "I was as tired as I've ever been. I was as excited as I've ever been. I was emotionally drained. I was crying. It was just an adrenaline, emotional dump. I was pretty much feeling about every emotion you can feel at once."

Call currently holds an undefeated record at 1-0-0. He'd like to get a few more amateur fights in before he tries to turn pro.

For the moment, COVID-19 and other priorities have taken precedent in his life. He is getting married later this year and finishing classes at BYU.

Call hopes it isn't long before he can step into the Octagon again. And soon, he hopes to get paid to do it.

BYU student Tyler Call walks into the arena prior to his debut fight. Call is just beginning his journey in the world of MMA.

understand the daily grind that fighting requires, the relentlessness of putting your body through a physical beating. They come into the gym with all the excitement and energy but it quickly vanishes when they take an uppercut to the head that leaves them lying in their own blood. That is often the last time you will see them step into the gym.

"Everybody says they want to be a fighter, you know, but very few guys actually put in the effort," Aristizabal said.

Fighting is a very physical sport and few people make a career of it. Most fighters won't make any real money unless they turn professional. Amateur fighter Boyd Abernethy, a teammate of Call, pocketed less than \$100 in his first amateur fight.

"I made \$54 in my fight, and I broke my hand on the guy's face. That doesn't cover anything. That covered my dinner and half a tank of gas for the next week," Abernethy said. "Some people don't continue because it just isn't fun to get hit in the head that much or they are not making any money. It's a huge commitment for a long time. And the average fighter never makes any real money."

Abernethy lost a lot from his fight. He couldn't go to work for an entire week because of his broken hand and concussion that he suffered in

his fight. This is why so many people never walk back into the fight camp or Octagon.

Call's day usually starts with him arriving at the gym by 5:30 p.m. He will spend a few minutes warming up and then move to white belts to improve his offensive moves. By 6:30 p.m., he transitions to higher-level fighters and practices his jiu-jitsu and all-around skills. By 7:30 p.m., he works exclusively on MMA work, such as cage wrestling and striking. They strap on the gloves and shin guards and actually fight, applying what they practiced earlier in the evening. At this point, Call discovers if he's mastered the skill either by a successful move or, if not, by taking a bloody hit or a takedown.

After sparring for a while, Aristizabal and others on the coaching staff help with extra pad time, perfecting each skill. The coaches pick at each small detail to make sure Call doesn't have to pay for it in the Octagon.

Fighting is a grind and an even tougher grind to make it as a professional fighter. The UFC is unlike other sports organizations. Athletes don't get drafted. They don't develop in a rookie league. To punch people for a living, fighters have to make a name for themselves and then apply to promoters, which will help them get the bigger fights. Yes, fighters have to

apply just like any other job.

Often fighters will take amateur fights before trying to go professional. Call made his amateur fighting debut on Feb. 21, 2020 in Salt Lake City. He fought another amateur fighter, Dyqwhon Barber, from Wyoming, who also was debuting that night.

These fights help them build their resume. The better the resume, the better chance they have to land a job as a professional fighter. An amateur fighter will generally have at least four to eight amateur fights on their resume before advancing.

Once a fighter's resume is built, they apply to be seen by promotional organizations. These promoters will then help the fighter get exposure by getting them into big events.

Strangely, amateur records don't really matter that much. Amateur fights are about potential and development, but once a professional, that is when the win-loss record really matters.

Another path to going pro is having connections. Just like in the real world, connections can help someone get a job that they might not be qualified for. However, that doesn't always mean it isn't deserved.

One of the most important connections a fighter can have is trainers.

"You can't fake fighting. You can have great connections but can only go so far once people see how a person

How Shawn Olmstead brought BYU men's volleyball back as national championship contenders

By JEFF SALCEDO

Seventeen years ago, BYU men's volleyball head coach Shawn Olmstead lifted the men's volleyball NCAA National Championship trophy as a libero for the Cougars.

In the 10-year gap between the national championship win and Olmstead being named head coach, BYU made the NCAA Championship game once in its two NCAA tournament appearances and won one MPSF Championship.

Now, Olmstead has brought BYU men's volleyball back to glory as the Cougars have made the NCAA Championship game and won an MPSF Tournament title twice during his five-year tenure.

Olmstead and company assembled a team capable of ending the 17-year national championship drought with four 2020 AVCA All-Americans in the lineup, but Olmstead knows they still have to earn everything this year.

"We recognize nothing has been given to us and nothing has been proven this year," Olmstead said earlier this year. "We believe we have a pretty high level of young guys and old guys."

The jump from high school and club volleyball to Division I volleyball is a steep one for players, but BYU has done a great job of developing players early on into their careers.

Senior opposite hitter Gabi Garcia Fernandez made great strides during his freshman year as he was named to the 2018 AVCA All-America Second Team, the only freshman to be named to the second team or higher.

The Puerto Rican was snubbed from the top five in his recruiting class by volleyballmag.org, but played the best out of anyone in his class coming out of high school.

"Gabi came to the program ready to play right off the bat," Olmstead said. "Every single day, he focuses on just a few things he can improve and things coaches believe he can improve on."

Garcia Fernandez's improvement was on full display in 2020 as he was named 2020 AVCA Player of the Year



2020 AVCA Player of the Year Gabi Garcia Fernandez goes for a kill against Pepperdine. BYU men's volleyball head coach Shawn Olmstead has led the team to national success in just six seasons at the helm.

as a junior.

Even with all the accolades he has collected, Garcia Fernandez strives to grow as a player in his final season as a Cougar, a testament to BYU's player development. "I'll for sure go for more. If for sure will try to be better than I am."

Garcia Fernandez feels that learning from mistakes and sticking to the grind have had the greatest impact on his growth during his four-year career.

"A lot of mistakes were done, for sure in my four years, but I am not even close to the person I was back then," Garcia Fernandez said. "So for that I thank BYU and I'm super blessed they gave me those lessons along the way."

No player can attest to sticking to the grind more than senior outside hitter Zach Eschenberg.

Eschenberg struggled to get playing time in his first three years as he sat behind All-American Brenden Sander.

Eschenberg's struggles got so bad that he didn't practice on the main court with the senior squad and didn't travel with the team for away games.

"Playing behind those big-name outside hitters, I thought, 'I'd be lucky to see the court sometime,'" Eschenberg said.

His early struggles did not deter Eschenberg as he continued to grow as a player with the help of coaches and teammates.

"I feel like I blossomed as a player," Eschenberg said. "That speaks to my teammates and coaches, who've given me pointers along the way."

Then everything clicked in

Eschenberg's senior year in 2020 as he started every game except one and tallied 132 kills in 55 sets. Eschenberg's rise did not go unnoticed, as he earned AVCA All-American Honorable Mention and

All-MPSF Second Team honors.

"He never, not once, complained. He never worried about himself. He never had a gripe. He continued to grind and grind. Look at that kid now," Olmstead said of Eschenberg's growth over the years. "For years and years, I'm going to talk about Zach Eschenberg being a team player."

Now, "the forgotten man" is a mainstay for the Cougars and makes sure his opponents and fans remember his name with his play.

Coaching

Atop a successful program is an experienced coaching staff Olmstead has constructed over the years.

With Olmstead at the helm, the Cougars have posted an average of 22 wins per season. In Olmstead's best season in 2020, he guided BYU to a .944 win percentage, which was cut short due to COVID-19.

Even with all the success Olmstead has had on the court, his impact as a coach goes far beyond volleyball for each BYU player.

"Shawn is like my dad. He's always giving me life lessons and trying to make me a better person every day," Garcia Fernandez said. "He doesn't forget about us, he's not that type of coach. He cares about all 21 or 22 players on the team."

On top of Olmstead's coaching, assistant coaches Devin Young and Micah Naone, who both were hired in the 2018 season, have had a profound impact on BYU players.

The pair have been key in the development of several stand-out Cougars.

"(Devin) has improved my blocking like no other. Micah has improved my offensive side. He's always giving me tips," Garcia Fernandez said.

"It was helpful to get Devin as a coach, he's helped develop my game," senior middle blocker Miki Jauhainen said.

The trio's impact on the team and players is well recognized by those within the program.

"All of them helped me be the player I am today. I owe them a great debt. I owe them almost my life,"

Garcia Fernandez said.

Team chemistry

The Cougars have built up a bond over the years so every player feels like they're a part of a family when they step on the court together.

"I feel like we've gotten so close, especially after all these years. I love all those guys so much. We're a family," Eschenberg said.

Each time BYU takes the court, the Cougars enjoy the company of those playing alongside them as they try to beat their opponent.

"It's awesome to have such a fun group of guys to play volleyball with," Eschenberg said.

The team chemistry built by BYU improved its play on the court as each player knows they can rely on the man next to them.

Fan support

Even the fans, Cougar Nation, can take credit for BYU's success as their energy and noise make the Smith Fieldhouse one of the toughest places for opponents to play in the nation.

"Being able to have fans in the (Smith) Fieldhouse makes it so hard to play in," senior setter Wil Stanley said of having fans in the Smith Fieldhouse for the first time in over a year. "We missed them."

Cougar fans were recently allowed back following the pandemic to attend home volleyball games on March 12 in the Smith Fieldhouse, with a limited capacity of 500.

"It felt awesome. There was a lot of noise, I wasn't expecting all that noise. I did get goosebumps," Olmstead said of playing in front of fans.

Olmstead has brought BYU back as national championship contenders during his five-year tenure. He will try to recreate a memory 17 years in the making by lifting a national championship trophy once again as a Cougar — this time as a head coach.

BYU won the MPSF Championship and received the No. 2 seed and a bye to the semifinal in the 2021 NCAA men's volleyball championship May 6-8 in Columbus, Ohio.

How digital natives navigate parenting in the internet age



Illustration by Decker Westenborg

Increased screen time during the COVID-19 pandemic has caused many parents and families to reflect on their own digital media usage and behavior.

By DECKER WESTENBURG

Parents of all ages often express concern for the safety of their children. Many teach children at an early age about "stranger danger" and the importance of wearing seatbelts and helmets.

While these types of admonitions have helped children stay safe in the real world for decades, the 21st century has new challenges for parents raising their children in an ever-changing digital world. Now, as some of the older digital natives (often dubbed Gen Z) are becoming parents themselves, many are searching for ways to control how digital media can and will impact their children.

With recent studies linking media consumption to a growing number of real-world problems, it's not surprising that some parents wish the internet didn't exist — or at least that they had better control over how their children use it.

According to a Common Sense Media report, teenagers are spending upwards of nine hours a day consuming digital media, with nearly 30% of that time being spent on social media. A JAMA Psychiatry study have found that teenagers who spend more than three hours a day on social media are more likely to develop mental health problems such as depression, aggression and anxiety. A 2018 federal human trafficking report documented that the internet was the dominant business model used to lure sex trafficking victims.

Online programs such as Zoom and Google Hangouts have become common vernacular during the pandemic. Young children, students and adults alike have been subjected to remote attendance for classes, meetings and even religious services.

This increased screen time has caused many parents and families to reflect on their own digital media usage and behavior.

Navigating social media and privacy

BYU graduate and mother of four Stephanie McNairy started a personal blog 13 years ago, like many other people she knew at the time. McNairy did not grow up as a digital native, but technology has been present for the entire time she has been a parent. Historically McNairy didn't use her kids' first names in her blog posts as a way to keep some privacy, but her position on privacy changed over time.

"Today, I'm less concerned with privacy because if you really wanted to figure out where I live it can easily be found online," McNairy said.

McNairy is not alone in her assessment. Nearly 91% of adults "agree" or "strongly agree" that digital users have "lost control over how personal information is collected and used by companies," according to a study from the Pew Research Center.

McNairy teaches college students online, which has forced her to balance her professional

interests with her social interests of not sharing too much.

"I've been 'drunk emailed' in the middle of the night by students, and that is part of the reason I don't share a lot of personal stuff online, but I still want an online presence for other jobs I'm pursuing," McNairy said.

McNairy, whose oldest child is 14, said she can understand why some parents who identify as digital natives would share life updates on social media.

"They may be more interested in using social media as a tool for updates because it has always been part of their youth and adult life, while it was only part of my adult life after I started having kids."

Because of this age gap, McNairy is not inclined to share life updates on social media.

"I text photos privately to family members," McNairy said. "I don't consider my social media accounts as a place for family to find my updates. My family and in-laws live far away and we text photos or FaceTime to say hi on birthdays."

Savannah Riley, a mother of two and small-business owner, grew up in the digital age but still shared sentiments similar to McNairy's. Recent online articles have stopped her from sharing photos of her children online.

"I do not feel super comfortable sharing a lot of photos of my kids online," Riley said. "I used to share more, but read a few too many articles about children's photos being used for heinous purposes. I just share occasionally now, and sometimes end up deleting them later anyway."

Riley no longer posts photos of her children's faces on public pages, but she remains active on her business account which she uses to create connections. "I keep it separate from what I'm doing as a mom, but I also share a little bit of myself and I explain to my kiddos what I'm doing when I take and post pictures of the things I make," she said.

Jessica Mulder is a BYU-Idaho graduate, stay-at-home mother and digital native with a lot of family in different states. She said with certain safety measures in place, she is comfortable posting on social media.

"I usually share photos and life updates through Facebook. With my parents and siblings, I will share photos and videos through a texting chain. With my husband's family we just share pictures and updates on Facebook."

Mulder feels comfortable using Facebook. "I am very comfortable because I have security measures in place, such as only adding people I know, blocking certain people, and changing privacy settings," Mulder said. "I care about my family's safety, and the internet can be full of people who might try to take those photos and use them inappropriately or take advantage of my family."

Although older digital natives have found various ways to stay connected using media while protecting their families and children, many are still searching for ways to stay safe

as online tools change.

Other ways to stay safe

New apps have become common ways to stay connected for families who don't want to use public social media. Apps such as Marco Polo and Google Photos allow photos to be shared with private and specific audiences. These are popular alternatives for people who don't feel safe on public social media accounts.

These applications have seen a rise in usage as the pandemic has kept many families separate for the last year. At the beginning of the pandemic, Marco Polo saw a 1,147% increase in new signups. Marco Polo allows users to connect in a walkie-talkie style of communication. One person sends a video message and the message is saved and can be replied to whenever the respondent wants to reply. The message can only be viewed by those it is sent to.

Similar to Marco Polo, Apple iCloud photo sharing allows users to create shared albums with families and allows anyone to comment on the photos and videos at their convenience.

Even with these new technologies, many people still prefer traditional forms of communication like phone calls to stay connected with loved ones.

BYU student Lauren Hutchings has young siblings in four different states. "I would just say my advice is to make an effort to communicate with others in any way," Hutchings said. "Phone calls are how I stay connected with my brothers. They are horrible at texting, but they actually love it when I take the time to call them. I think they appreciate it especially because I'm so far away."

Riley said she uses a variety of ways to stay in touch with family and friends who live farther away. After relocating to a new state during the pandemic, she has found creative ways to stay connected without posting on social media. For example, Riley has designed photo books and printed batches of pictures that she sends in the mail.

"We have a few group texts, one with my immediate family and one with my husband's, and then a couple smaller group texts with just our parents, and I send a few pictures to the bigger group, then more to just our parents," Riley said. "The kids FaceTime their grandparents pretty regularly, and their cousins every once in a while, about once a month or so."

Riley said there are still ways to connect safely without having to post pictures on social media. "It's pretty easy when you snap a picture to just text it to family. When we have a family adventure day where I take a lot of pictures, I select the best ones and send those to parents at the end of the day," Riley said.

Riley still uses social media to update distant family members, but she does not share pictures of her children's faces. She will sometimes post photos of the backs of them or just their feet in a photo on public social media.

Too good to be true? How scammers target BYU's married student housing market

By DECKER WESTENBURG

On the brink of winter semester midterms and in preparation for marriage to his fiancee, Baylee Dowdle, BYU student Tyler Van Patten found himself scouring the Provo housing market for a home to live in.

After finding the perfect place, he grabbed the opportunity to rent it and began jumping through the many hoops required by the owner. Both he and his fiancee provided references from ecclesiastical and workplace leaders, and even answered questions about whether or not they smoked or drank. After just a few days, Van Patten was scammed out of \$1,000.

Despite not being shown the property, the couple still went and toured the outside of the home when they saw a "for sale" sign out front. The owner promised it would be taken down immediately after claiming that the realtor was unable to sell the house.

"If the person is not there to meet you, it is just not worth it," Van Patten said.

The couple tried to call the owner, but she claimed she was deaf. After texting back and forth for a few days, the owner requested that Van Patten use a variety of payment methods. She asked if he could wire the money or use Zelle, a money transfer app. After realizing that Zelle would not send the money instantly, she requested that they pay her immediately with two Nordstrom gift cards sent over text.

Van Patten is not alone in his experience. Shannon Blanchard and her husband, Spencer, were just a few minutes away from putting a deposit down on a similar house in Provo when they received a call back from a local realtor explaining they were being scammed.

Blanchard said the scammers only communicated over email because they also claimed to be deaf. Despite being wary of the situation, she still filled out an application.

Blanchard noticed some of the warning signs and even asked for identification that matched the Utah County



Decker Westenborg
BYU students are at an increased risk of being targeted by housing scammers because they are statistically younger and inexperienced at renting properties.

property records website.

"They sent us a picture of their passport and while the name on the passport matched the name on the website, when we compared the picture to our real passports, we realized tiny details that made it seem like the passport was fake. Lines were in the wrong place and some of the fonts looked slightly off," Blanchard said.

Although she never lost any money, Blanchard has become wary of renting through the online platforms many now use to hunt for housing, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Blanchard also shared how important it is for her now to feel like she trusts a landlord despite the fact that this makes it even harder to find housing.

In an effort to help people avoid fraud in the state and to help track people charged with fraud, the Utah Attorney General created a White Collar Crime Offender Registry.

Although the tool can be helpful in identifying white collar crime originating in Utah, many scammers are located in other states and countries.

Van Patten said there is an easy way to tell if something is a scam.

"If it is too good to be true, it's not true. That is 100% always true," Van Patten said.

Is the fraud capital of the U.S. getting worse?

The Daily Universe has been documenting housing scams in Provo since 2015.

That year, the paper published a story about a couple who was scammed by what they believed to be an LDS couple leaving on a church mission. In the years since that report, the circumstances of the scams and their occurrences have skyrocketed.

BYU students are at an increased risk of being targeted because they are statistically younger and inexperienced at renting properties.

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigations Internet Crime Complaint Center, over the last four years, there has been an increase from \$76,795 to \$1,960,429 in the amount of money lost per year due specifically to rental and real estate fraud in Utah.

The state is notorious for having been the fraud capital of the U.S. for decades. The BYU Off-Campus Student Housing office does not have resources for married students regarding scams, but they do acknowledge the possibility of fraudulent activity on their own housing listings page by stating that the facility has no affiliation with BYU.

Anyone interested in reporting housing and rental fraud in Utah can do so by contacting the FBI IC3 division or the City of Provo.

BYU student finds love of creativity starting her own business

By LINDSEY REESE

For Tayla Chapa, life has been an extensive twist and turn she's never been able to fully predict. Starting her own business is something she's grown to be passionate about, but she never expected it to take off and become such a big part of her life.

Chapa launched her jewelry business, Feminiscence, in January 2020. It originally started as a way to make extra cash while she was doing clinics in BYU's nursing school. The business began small, making clay earrings she would sell to friends or locals in the area. She launched an Instagram account not much later, where the business originally began as "Forever Faye Jewelry."

The jewelry is released in collections, where each piece is handcrafted by Chapa herself and inspired by historical women who inspire her. The business has evolved over the past year, amassing over 5,000 followers on social media. Chapa renamed Forever Faye to Feminiscence in January, looking for a name that better fit the message of the business. Still, starting a business wasn't always something Chapa had planned for herself.

Nursing dreams and setback

During her freshman year, Chapa spent much of her time on rigid study schedules to keep herself on track for nursing school. Chapa still uses social media to update distant family members, but she does not share pictures of her children's faces. She will sometimes post photos of the backs of them or just their feet in a photo on public social media.

The hard work continued throughout the rest of the school year until she applied for nursing school. It was



Abbey Raynor
Tayla Chapa (center) poses with models at a Feminiscence photoshoot. Chapa opened her small jewelry business in 2020.

grueling, and the heartbreak that came after was devastating. Chapa was rejected from BYU's nursing school on her first try, missing admission by only half a point.

At that point, Chapa wondered what she was going to do for an entire semester as she prepared to apply to the program one last time in the winter. That's when she decided to make more time for personal things, such as dating. She met her husband, Daniel Woodfield, by chance on Mutual.

"We meshed really well together," Woodfield said. "When we first met, it just fell together naturally."

That semester allowed her a freedom she hadn't had before. Instead of declining doing things she loved in favor of studying, she allowed herself to take more fun classes and fall in love with her husband. By the time she applied for the program a second time, she was admitted. Chapa was ecstatic.

Of course, the roadblocks didn't end there.

Chapa spent much of 2019 enjoying a long engagement

period while working through school. While she had finally been admitted into nursing school, the work inside the program meant long hours and difficult classes.

A new creative outlet turned business

Making clay earrings started as a hobby just for herself, something fun she could do that allowed her to relax and take time away from school. As Chapa felt more comfortable with the work she was creating, she started to wonder if selling them might be a little more profitable.

The business began as a showcase for something she was passionate about. As a creative and a women's studies minor, Chapa wanted to combine both into a business that was distinctly her. When the idea came to honor historical women, it was a no-brainer.

Despite her life taking a path that has become new to her, Chapa still feels excited and hopeful for the future of her business and her life. Nursing isn't out of the picture, but Feminiscence has opened many more doors.

Vatican pronouncement highlights clash between gay marriage and religious freedom

By CASSIDY WIXOM

The Roman Catholic Church's doctrinal authority recently decreed that the Church cannot bless gay marriages because God cannot "bless sin."

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, a group of cardinals, bishops and other church officials charged with defending Catholic doctrine since 1542, made this announcement on March 15 in response to questions on whether Catholic clergy are authorized to bless gay unions. The answer from the Congregation was "negative" and an explanatory note was published by approval from Pope Francis.

According to the Associated Press, this statement affirmed the church's doctrine for same-sex individuals where gay people are welcome in the church, but their unions are not.

Tricia Bruce is a sociologist of religion affiliated with the University of Notre Dame and University of Texas San Antonio who has expertise in Catholicism and social movements. She said because of earlier progressive comments by Pope Francis to the gay community, many Catholics were anticipating a change in position, or perceived the Catholic Church as moving to be more open on its position opposing gay marriage.

The Vatican's announcement, however, was "ultimately affirmation of what in fact, is the current teaching" of the Catholic Church, she said.

The Catholic Church defends marriage between a man and a woman due to it being instated by God on Adam and Eve during the creation of the world. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states "the union of man and woman in marriage is a way of imitating in the flesh the Creator's generosity and fecundity."

In the explanatory note on not blessing same-sex marriage, the doctrinal authority said "it is necessary that what is blessed be objectively and positively ordered to receive and express grace, according to the designs of God inscribed in creation."

So although the Catholic Church recognizes the valuable, positive elements in same-sex relationships, the church "cannot justify these relationships and render them legitimate objects of an ecclesial blessing, since the positive elements exist within the context of a union not ordered to the Creator's plan."

Rising acceptance of gay marriage

Although the Catholic Church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and other churches have not changed their positions on gay marriage, acceptance of such unions in wider American society has been rising in the last few decades.

"That's not to say that there aren't Americans who disagree vehemently with it, but as a trend, that's the direction it's going," Bruce said.

Part of this change has occurred because of differences between generational values. Bruce attributed this to

a generational replacement, where the younger generation's views start to replace the older generation's world views and attitudes.

"There's a real stark divide generationally. Younger Americans are more accepting and open to issues related to homosexuality and gay marriages than older Americans," Bruce said. "It makes the overall view look, in this case, more liberal or accepting vis-a-vis gay marriage. I think that probably will continue."

There are still large pockets of resistance to approval of gay marriage, she said, but overall there is a cultural climate saying gay marriage is acceptable. Whenever someone counters that public voice, it seems like they are "entering a firing squad" because it is such a contested sphere.

University of Cincinnati political science professor Andrew Lewis guesses religious bodies will try to be more respectful of gay rights, but "they may not go as far as some gay rights advocates want them (to)."

Lewis said there are individuals who want to support religious freedom and gay rights broadly, but because of current partisanship, "that combination of things is difficult in our political arena to achieve."

He said when gay rights are expanded in the public sphere, some religious people feel there is a conflict between their faith and what is required of them in the public sphere. That's how many "end up with these conflicts," Lewis said.

Despite the rising acceptance of gay marriage, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of freedom of religion in the 2018 Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission case. The prospective future of which rights — gay marriage or religious freedom — will take priority is unclear.

What is freedom of religion?

Religious freedom has been a guaranteed right in the U.S. since the Constitution was established by the Founding Fathers. Freedom of religion secures individuals' right to practice their preferred religion and also ensures the government cannot force them to adopt any religious faith.

Bruce said colloquially, Americans take pride in being grounded in the separation of church and state, but sometimes the practical implications of the separation of church and state get lost.

Generally, Bruce said Americans should not, and are not, trying to legislate morality through their religious freedom. Individuals, however, have and continue to lobby and advocate for religious freedom as a way "ultimately to be lobbying for and advocating for broader cultural issues," she said.

University of Tampa sociology professor Ryan Cragun has a sociological emphasis on religion and worldviews. His research focuses on macro and micro factors in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as well as the growing movement of non-religion.

Cragun said religions in

America and around the world, function in a "marketplace." People who want a religion, can "shop around" and decide which church or institution they want to be associated with.

Religions carve out niches in the marketplace and individuals find "welcome homes" in religions that have similar beliefs. This is validating for those adhering to the religion, Cragun said. It makes people feel like they are not a "weirdo" because those in their faith tradition hold the same beliefs they do.

Cragun said this also means people don't feel comfortable in a religious institution that doesn't accept their values. This can cause members to leave a church if changes are made they do not agree with.

Many churches can help people find a "prescriptive vision and articulation of morality" to navigate the difficulties of life, Bruce said. Religions are also seen by many as stabilizing or traditionalizing voices in a rapidly changing world.

Religious freedom in institutions

A debate lies in whether freedom of religion applies solely to individuals or if it also applies institutionally.

Throughout America, various groups differ on the institutional versus individual interpretation of religious freedom. Cragun said most governments around the world lean toward an individual conception for freedom of religion but America has interpreted freedom of religion both individually and institutionally.

He thinks freedom of religion will increasingly be defined at the individual level instead of as something that protects institutions.

Some major religious groups in the U.S. though — the Catholic Church and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints included — interpret freedom of religion to be applied at an institutional level in addition to the individual aspect.

At the institutional level, these churches want freedom of religion to say that they get to have and practice their own beliefs, rituals and policies, Cragun said.

This institutional religious freedom also means churches reserve the right to restrict people from participating in certain rituals or practices. "What this ultimately means," Cragun said, is he thinks church institutions "can choose to discriminate."

Churches would never use the term "discriminate" to describe what they are doing and instead believe they are protecting the sanctity of their beliefs, "but functionally, (discrimination) exactly is what's happening," Cragun said.

If a religion came out today and said it would not allow Black individuals to participate as full members of the church because that religion sees them as unworthy, "people would lose their minds," Cragun said. Being Black is not a choice, he said, and therefore that church policy would be "clearly discriminatory."

The Pope's explanatory note explains the Catholic Church is



The Catholic Church's doctrinal authority recently decreed that the Church cannot bless gay marriages because God cannot "bless sin." This announcement is one of many examples where freedom and religious institutions come into conflict with gay rights.

not being discriminatory in regards to gay marriage because it is carrying out God's will.

"The declaration of the unlawfulness of blessings of unions between persons of the same sex is not therefore, and is not intended to be, a form of unjust discrimination, but rather a reminder of the truth of the liturgical rite and of the very nature of the sacraments, as the Church understands them," the statement reads.

For most people in the U.S. today, there is no difference between race and sexual orientation as two aspects of identity, Cragun said. "They see LGBTQ individuals as the exact same as Black individuals. This is not a choice, so if (churches) are choosing to not allow them full participation, even if it's on the grounds of freedom of religion, then you are using freedom of religion to justify discrimination."

He said this explains why many leaders in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints continue to emphasize that being lesbian or gay is not a problem because individuals can't choose if they are gay or not. Individuals can, however, choose whether they act on it.

The Church's website says, "People who experience same-sex attraction or identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual can make and keep covenants with God and fully and worthily participate in the Church. Identifying as gay, lesbian or bisexual or experiencing same-sex attraction is not a sin and does not prohibit one from participating in the Church, holding callings, or attending the temple."

Acting on same-sex attraction is the Church's "fine line distinction," Cragun said, which makes this issue different from race because there is choice involved. The Church has the ability to restrict full religious membership when it is dependent on the member choosing to live a certain lifestyle, such as participating in homosexual behavior.

The Church also insists that members should treat all people with civility and kindness even if they disagree. "We affirm that those who avail themselves of

laws or court rulings authorizing same-sex marriage should not be treated disrespectfully," the Church said on its same-sex marriage webpage.

In his opinion, Cragun said, "In some ways, the LDS Church is OK with allowing lesbian and gay individuals to have some rights. But it's still not — I think it's safe to say — not allowing true equality."

The Church maintains that because its members choose their personal behavior and lifestyle, anyone who chooses to marry someone of the same sex is responsible for how that choice impacts membership in the faith based on God's law for marriage, not on academic or societal definitions of "equality."

Pressure to change

The Catholic Church is "very slow" to change, Bruce said. Because of this, "when it does change, people know. People listen. People hear."

The Catholic Church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and other Christian denominations listen to each other and sometimes even "mirror" each other on policies and stances, Bruce said.

The Catholic Church and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' policy positions are "almost exactly the same," Cragun said. This similarity provides validation on both sides. If the Catholic Church says it isn't blessing gay marriages, then The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will feel validated in also not sanctioning gay marriage.

If the Catholic Church had said it would bless gay marriages, it could've caused many members to leave because they no longer share the same beliefs, Cragun said. Hypothetically, he said this could have "bolstered the ranks" of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints because those who left Catholicism might have joined the Church.

The Church believes marriage between a man and a woman is "instituted by God and is central to His plan for His children and for the well-being of society." Because of this, the Church does not allow Church officers to perform same-sex marriages or any ceremonies associated with same-sex marriages to be held at Church meetinghouses.

is there and I'm sure they feel it."

Because gay marriage is increasingly accepted in America and around the world, Cragun said he believes that pressure will eventually cause The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to change its position on gay marriage.

"I think the pressure is going to get so strong, they are going to have to. That's gonna be a huge, huge change because of the massive doctrinal implications. I don't know how they're going to resolve those, but they're going to have to," Cragun said.

In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, particularly among young members, many don't agree with the Church's position on gay individuals, Cragun said. If the Church doesn't change, he said they could end up alienating young members and more progressive members who believe gay members deserve greater recognition and rights.

All religions change. They have to adjust to changing social values and morals. It's just a matter of how far they are going to lag behind," Cragun said.

Though some academics and scholars may share Cragun's view, Church leaders have remained firm in the face of increasing societal pressure for such change, and there is no indication in doctrinal and policy statements that such pressure will have any impact. In a document on the Church website from 2015, leaders state definitively that "same-sex marriage will not become a part of Church doctrine or practice."

The Church's website explains "changes in the civil law do not, indeed cannot, change the moral law that God has established. God expects us to uphold and keep His commandments regardless of divergent opinions or trends in society."

The Church believes marriage between a man and a woman is "instituted by God and is central to His plan for His children and for the well-being of society."

Because of this, the Church does not allow Church officers to perform same-sex marriages or any ceremonies associated with same-sex marriages to be held at Church meetinghouses.

Therapists use skills they teach in their own lives

their relationships and within themselves.

Like Holyoak, many therapists find their passion for helping people through experiences where friends, family or they themselves, had mental health struggles. Holyoak said she thinks many therapists go through anxiety or stress, especially when first starting out, but the skills they teach clients can be applied to stressful situations in their own lives.

Psychologists and their mental health

BYU psychology professor Chad Jensen said there are many mental health professionals who have had their own struggles. But he said when managed well, therapists' mental health problems do not affect their ability to help others.

"When mental illness is well-managed, people can still be very functional, very productive citizens," he said.

"That suggests that there is not a limitation on who can become a psychotherapist or a clinical psychologist depending on their mental health."

Data suggests that many mental health professionals deal with burnout or even with their own psychological struggles. However, clinical mental health counseling student at Gonzaga University Landon Toth said he has seen many students become therapists who have enjoyed therapy themselves.

"You don't have to be a perfect counselor that knows exactly what to say," Toth said. "But at the same time, you need to have a good enough grip on your emotions and the stuff you have going on to handle others as well."

Neuropsychologist Keith McGoldrick said any career can be exhausting, including psychology. Communicating with others when he needs time to relax is, for him, part of

coming home from work and decompressing in a healthy manner. "Being on top of that is really important," he said.

Jensen said developing the skill of separating work and home life is like building a muscle in that it takes practice.

Rita Gardner has had plenty of time to practice her skills as a therapist. She spent 17 years working as a therapist for inmates and is currently the Asia area mission therapist. When asked if her work in mental health exhausts her, she said, "Nope, it energizes me. I really enjoy helping people. It makes me feel good because I'm helping someone."

Holyoak also said she can separate her work from her home life. When she feels anxious, she said she recognizes her thoughts and questions them, advising future therapists and psychologists to do the same. "Be compassionate with yourself," she said. "It's really normal for all of us to

feel anxious at times and feel depressed."

Tips for improving mental health

Psychology students and professionals learn tools to improve their mental health, including physical, emotional and spiritual coping mechanisms. For example, Toth initially felt drawn to counseling because of a Church leader who taught healthy physical habits as a tool to study better.

"I think that sometimes we discount the importance of actual brain health," Toth said. "That is making sure that you're taking care of your brain, making sure that you're sleeping, making sure that you're eating."

Jensen also said a healthy lifestyle can prevent or treat mental health issues. Exercise, sleep and healthy relationships are all components of mental health. Exercise, for example, can have as much of an anti-depressant effect as

anti-depressant medication.

As a mission therapist, Gardner focuses on the spiritual and mental factors of improving mental health. She said people get stressed about things they think about often. She also said anyone can tell their brain to stop thinking negative thoughts and replace them with good ones.

"Changing the way we think is very, "Changing the way we think is very, very important," Gardner said. "Worrying is wasted energy because you can't do anything about it."

To change the way she thinks, Holyoak said she often uses the phrase "It makes sense..." to validate her own feelings. She learns to recognize cognitive distortions such as black-and-white thinking or generalizations that lead to anxiety.

"I want my clients to know that they're strong and capable and that they don't have to be stuck in a box," Holyoak said. "People really are resilient."

COVID-19 creates unique pandemic weddings

By VERONICA MACIEL

BYU student Rachel Ballard never cared about having an extravagant wedding. However, that didn't make it hurt any less when the COVID-19 pandemic upended her plans and she had to cut her guest list down from 50 to just eight people in a matter of hours.

Many young couples planning to be married over the last year faced challenging circumstances because of COVID-19. Some of those couples had something unique at their wedding and said they would change very little about their pandemic weddings.

Since Rachel Ballard is from Utah and her husband, Tanner, is from Minnesota, they had many family members traveling to Draper for their wedding on March 21, 2020. They were grateful they didn't have to change their wedding day, but they did have to cancel their reception at the last minute.

One of the biggest hurdles for members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints wanting to get married during the pandemic was scheduling a temple sealing.

Temple sealer and former temple presidency member David Bean from Provo explained that a temple sealing is more than just a marriage ceremony. Rather, a temple sealing is an ordinance that members of the Church make to progress on the covenant path.

Canceled temple sealings

On March 13, 2020, the Church announced a stop to all proxy ordinances and that only those with an appointment could do live ordinances. Just nine days later on March 23, the first person in Utah died from COVID-19 after attending the Bountiful Utah Temple. The Church then announced the closure of all temples worldwide on March 25, canceling many weddings and other ordinances.

San Diego natives and BYU students Audrey and Jacob Ahlstrom found themselves

having their sealing date canceled and rescheduled multiple times as the San Diego California Temple opened and closed again throughout 2020. Six weeks after their original sealing date they were married civilly in an intimate wedding ceremony and reception with a limited amount of friends and family.

"My husband and I prioritized having bridesmaids and groomsmen at our wedding. Our friends are especially important to us and we couldn't have imagined not having them there," Audrey Ahlstrom said.

They also hosted a drive-by reception for those who could not attend their wedding ceremony. When the San Diego California Temple opened again in September, the Ahlstroms decided to drive from Provo to San Diego on March 21, 2020. They were grateful they didn't have to change their wedding day, but they did have to cancel their reception at the last minute.

Civil marriages during the pandemic

Another couple who decided to get married civilly and sealed later was Garrett and Amy Griffin. The temples closed the day before their scheduled sealing.

"We went several months not knowing when we could finally be sealed and also weren't sure if or when having a reception was a good idea. We just decided that we had to do the best we could given the circumstances and move forward," Garrett Griffin said. They were later sealed in the Provo City Center Temple after the initial surge of sealings died down.

BYU students Hannah and Aaron Pfost chose to move their wedding from June to April and decided on an elopement instead of a ceremony. Hannah Pfost said they planned the whole wedding in three days and only had seven guests because COVID-19 restrictions were so intense. They were then sealed in the Gilbert Arizona Temple after it opened again for live sealings.

Church policy changes

Before May 2019, these



Megan Morris McDonald

Tatum Sammons and Garrett Jensen wear masks before their wedding reception. The COVID-19 pandemic created challenges for wedding planning, but also unique experiences.

couples would've had to wait a full year to be sealed after their civil marriage. However, on May 6, 2019, the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints sent a letter to the leadership of the Church announcing an end to the one-year waiting period.

In the letter, the First Presidency emphasized the importance of the temple sealing while acknowledging that this may not be possible for many couples who don't live near a temple. The change can also help family members who would feel excluded since they may not be able to enter the temple.

While this policy change was not a direct result of the pandemic, it has allowed hundreds of couples to make the most of the challenging circumstances brought by COVID-19. Bean said he has found no adverse effects that might lessen the spiritual experiences of a temple sealing

in the situations outlined by the First Presidency in their letter.

"However, when conditions are right that the couple is able to be sealed in the temple for their marriage, doing so shows a spiritual understanding and faith, which does enhance the spiritual experience of the sealing ceremony," Bean said.

Downsizing expectations

Similar to the many couples who had their plans uprooted by the COVID-19 pandemic, Tatum Sammons and Garrett Jensen changed their wedding plans many times. They had originally planned to be married and sealed in the Laie Hawaii Temple, which is the city where they met.

Instead of flying to Hawaii or opting for a civil ceremony, Sammons and Jensen were married and sealed in the Provo Utah Temple when their families found themselves by chance in the state at the same time.

"At one point last year both of our families ended up in Utah unexpectedly and they were both planning on being there for at least two months so we decided and felt that it was the right time and place to get sealed," Sammons said.

With a loosely Ratatouille-themed reception and a surprise flash mob band, Sammons said their reception was an interesting mix of family and friends that wouldn't have been able to come had it not been hosted in Utah.

Planning a pandemic wedding

Since the pandemic is not yet over, there are still many couples planning weddings with COVID-19 restrictions in place. BYU students and Dallas natives Annie Hutton and Cale Kimball chose to have an eight-month engagement in hopes that some of the restrictions in place would be lifted.

While more temples are now open for sealings, Hutton said it was still tough to find a temple that had time available on the day they were hoping to be married. They talked to three or four temples before finding an availability at the Jordan River Utah Temple.

Hutton also said COVID-19 vaccines played a small role in them feeling comfortable having a reception with a small guest list. She said they would also be hosting an outdoor reception in their hometown with masks requirements to keep everyone safe.

For James McKenzie and his wife Emma O'Barr, the biggest expectation change was to limit the number of people allowed at their temple sealing and reception. While McKenzie said he was personally glad a few of their guests would be vaccinated, vaccines did not play a role in their decision to have a reception.

Even though there were many challenges for young couples planning and having their weddings this past year, these pandemic-related challenges have led to unique experiences these couples will have to share and cherish forever.

CHANGE

How to promote LGBTQ inclusion

Continued from Page 1

However, Fisher recognized that there's still work to be done. "With more productive conversations happening about these topics on campus, we also see more painful mistakes, miscommunications and mischaracterizations being shared," he said. "We still have a lot of work to do."

Fisher said he thinks BYU administrators, employees and students can better support LGBTQ students by being more proactive.

"I think official, proactive statements of love and compassion will go a long way in helping LGBTQ students feel like they belong, especially when paired with proactive, visible outreach efforts," he said.

Markowski echoed this suggestion. When the Y was lit in rainbow colors on Rainbow Day, BYU tweeted saying it didn't authorize the lighting. Markowski said she wished BYU would have said that although it wasn't authorized, the university stood with its LGBTQ students.

Fisher also suggested that individual students and employees should work to get "more proximate to LGBTQ people in their networks."

As far as helping LGBTQ students feel safer on campus, Fisher said, "we need a clear, advertised process established for students who have experienced any kind of discrimination to find institutional support in addressing the situation, even if the discrimination isn't considered illegal."

For any current LGBTQ BYU students, Fisher said it's OK to still be figuring things out. "On your journey you may have difficult questions," he said. "Please know that you don't have to go through this process alone. Find those people who will mourn with you when you're mourning and celebrate with you when you're celebrating."

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