Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Utah State University Dining Services were forced to shutter a number of popular dining locations around campus, including Shaw’s 88 Café in Huntsman Hall and the Skyroom located in the Taggart Student Center.

Dining Services is a staple on Logan campus. They serve food and beverages to hundreds of students per day, with options varying from retail dining, such as those found in the Hub at the Taggart Student Center, to buffet style dining like the Junction near Central Suites Student Housing.

Options such as the Skyroom, Luke’s Family Cafe on the Quad, Scotsman’s Corner in the Hub, and the Forum Café — formally the Quadside Café — and multiple stations in USU’s popular dining halls remain unavailable.

With normalcy beginning to return to Logan campus, many students were upset to find their favorite dining locations still closed at the start of fall semester.

While the Forum Cafe has since opened its doors with a limited menu after finishing renovations, the other locations remain temporarily closed for various reasons. The most common reason for the limited availability is staff shortages.

Alan Andersen, the executive director of Dining Services since 2007, has worked with on-campus dining since 1989. He explained the pandemic has also heavily impacted their dining locations.

Andersen said multiple factors of the pandemic have influenced their staff shortage, including wages and massive shutdowns in the food service industry.

“Every restaurant began to open at the same time,” Andersen said. “The ones that were able to offer more desirable pay were the first to become fully staffed. We used to be able to recruit 20 to 30 employees by offering $7.50 an hour.”

Dining Services has since raised its minimum wage to $10 an hour and offers increases to current employees every semester.

Andersen said recruiting also made the hiring process difficult.

Andersen said they tried hiring when Connections classes were meeting before school, sent out emails and held open interviews, all in hopes of becoming fully staffed.

In the past, Dining Services has seen upwards of 50% returning staff. However, because they had a reduced staff during the 2020-21 academic year, they only saw a fraction of the retention.

Andersen said the open on-campus dining locations are back to normal volume.

“The start of the school year is always the busiest for us,” Andersen said. “This was probably the worst prepared we will ever be, and that was mostly due to COVID.”

Just before the start of the semester, Dining Services was faced with either fully opening but with lower quality products, or having limited availability.

They ultimately decided on the latter, resulting in a cut in services such as their “clutch” line of products, limited options in dining halls, and unavailability of locations such as Scotsman’s Corner.

Andersen did assure students they are almost back to 100% staffing, and students can expect to see full availability before the end of the semester.

Those interested in applying with Dining Services can email diningjobs@usu.edu.

Luke’s Family Cafe on the Quad was also temporarily closed, however, for reasons other than employee shortages.

Luke’s is part of what those in Dining Services call the “core four” — the four popular cafes located in central campus. This includes Shaw’s 88 Cafe, the Forum Cafe, Steeped and Luke’s.

Dining Services is in the process of remodeling the core four to provide more diverse dining, including more vegan and vegetarian options.

Steeped, located in the Life Science building, reopened this past summer, and now serves Starbucks Coffee.

Shaw’s 88 Cafe in Huntsman Hall is not expecting any major changes, having just reopened.

The Forum Cafe, located in the library, also received a makeover and recently reopened as well.

Luke’s is the final of the Core Four cafe’s to be restyled and is waiting on a few appliances before its anticipated reopening later this academic year. No official date has been set.

Aubrey Hampton, a junior at USU, is excited for the new dining options.

“I’d love to have more diverse food on campus,” Hampton said. “It’s nice to have more options than what is typically provided on campus.”

At Luke’s, students can expect a new menu complete with street tacos and house-made horchata, as well as tie-dyed uniforms.

The café is also expecting to hand out 300 free tacos on National Mental Health Day, Oct. 11. More information on that event is expected to be released soon.

The only popular dining location with an undetermined fate is the Skyroom, a more formal dining area on the top floor of the TSC.

The Skyroom was closed during the pandemic and is not anticipated to reopen anytime soon.

The large dining room was both a student dining space and event space, and Dining Services is trying to figure out which path the space will take in the future.

Andersen hopes to one day reopen the Skyroom and provide affordable fine dining options for students, but for now it will remain unavailable.
USU hosts Pack It Out Utah event to clear trails and waterways

By Brielle Carr
NEWS STAFF WRITER

USU Water Quality Extension hosted a meet up and clean up called Pack It Out Utah at Adams Park on Sept. 11.

This is Pack It Out Utah’s second annual cleanup event, and there will be more to come. According to a Facebook post from USU Water Extensions, this year more than 6,000 pounds of trash were collected.

This statewide event is designed to bring volunteers in to clean up trash on the trails and waterways in Utah. They provided all the gear to collect trash.

Last year the event was started by Sydney Southers, a senior at Utah State University graduating with a degree in Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences. Southers started this project while doing an internship with USU Water Extensions during the pandemic to get people outside and help the community, while still staying socially distanced.

“I always pick up litter on the trails when I’m hiking,” Southers said, “and I just thought that could be a really good thing and I’d heard about coastal cleanups but never a ton of inland.”

Southers reached out to other organizations that did the same thing. They helped the Pack It Out Utah team get the project off the ground.

Hope Braithwaite, an assistant professor of Watershed Sciences at USU said anybody in the community can participate by simply picking up trash around their neighborhoods or their local trails and submitting how much trash they collect on the Pack It Out Utah website.

She said anywhere or anytime you collect trash will end up having a positive impact on the waterways and local wildlife. The goal is to keep trash out of the waterways to ensure no wildlife or habitats are harmed, as well as keeping water in Utah clean.

“Trash can also be problematic for wildlife,” Braithwaite said, “I mean we’ve all seen images of things where it’s like trapping an animal or causing it to get tangled up in plastic.”

Braithwaite said UV radiation releases chemical properties in plastic and other trash. Those chemicals can make it into the water local wildlife live in or drink out of.

Braithwaite explained that heavy rainfall water will wash trash into storm drains and the trash will eventually end up in our waterways.

Last year this project was done mainly on an individual level in neighborhoods due to social distancing, but this year they were able to do in-person events and in-person clean ups. Areas targeted for the project were Blacksmith Fork Canyon, Green Canyon and parks all around Cache Valley.

Pack It Out Utah worked with partners such as Tracy Aviary, Friends of Great Salt Lake and Seven Canyons Trust to host clean up events all over Utah.

“For students at the start of the year, it’s kind of a fun thing to do to get to know people too,” Braithwaite said. “It’s nice to be outside. It’s nice to chat with people or get to know other USU students and you are still doing something good.”

Last year they estimated more than 870 pounds of trash were collected and around 350 signed up for the project. This year they have collected around 6,000 pounds of trash and more than 400 people participated.

Braithwaite said they hope to have a bigger turnout every year and hope to collect over 10,000 pounds of trash next year.

Once volunteers were done cleaning up trash, they simply had to weigh the trash they collected and fill out a form on the Pack It Out Utah website. They add all that together to estimate how much trash is collected each year. Some of their partners had weighing stations at the events to collect accurate data.

According to the Utah Water Watch, a citizen science water quality monitoring program, the spring is the primetime when things start to really pick up.

Volunteers across the state collect water quality data. Not only is it a great way to get involved, but Braithwaite added it’s a fantastic resume builder too.

“I have really loved the experience of environmental outreach, that was something you definitely don’t learn in a classroom,” Southers said.

She said they have many volunteers who have covered ground in northern Utah and would love to expand this effort in southern Utah.

“There are 10 major watersheds in Utah, and we hit seven of the 10,” Braithwaite said.

She hopes to hit all of them in the future.

Brielle Carr is a first year student studying journalism. She loves to read and spend a lot of her time at the gym.

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The United States, like many other Western nations, has a history accented with great achievements that broke down barriers to the future. These same histories are also bloated with an array of catastrophic failures that are lessons for the ages.

For centuries, foreign policy has been the cornerstone to America’s prominence on the world stage. What once was a predominantly isolationist precedent has now transformed into an overly hawkish tendency. Whether it be through direct involvement with the enemy or power contests conducted through proxy states, the U.S. has made itself both friend and foe to the nations of the world. While just a minute part of its history, this particular nation has tugged at not only the U.S.’ coffers but also its news channels’ chions and citizens’ attention.

As the doorway from the Middle East to the rest of Southeast Asia, the Afghanistan region has been conquered and reconquered time and time again, dating as far back as Darius I of Babylonia of the fifth century B.C. Alexander the Great, Mahmud of Ghazni and Genghis Khan are other famous conquerors who had their time with the region as well. But it wasn’t until the 19th century that modern relations began to form between the hotly contested region and the West.

Preceding their independence at the conclusion of World War I, Afghanistan was caught in a strenuous series of engagements known as the Anglo-Afghan Wars. The three conflicts, spanning from 1839 to 1842, 1878 to 1880 and half of 1919, were an attempt by the neighboring British to extend their territory beyond India and to prevent Russian influence in the region.

With the impending fall of the First French Empire at the start of the 19th century, Britain watched Russia grow as their largest imperialist competitor during a time where control over Central Asia meant economic domination. Already having control of their much-prized and wealth-producing India, Britain was seeking to bolster their stance against Russian influence seeping into the region.

“Afghanistan is one of these interesting territories in Central Asia as kind of a transit point between the Middle East,” said Austin Knuppe, a professor of political science at USU with a marked expertise in Middle East politics.

“You think of a country like Iran (formerly Persia) to the west, to the north the former Soviet republics and then Russia, and then to the south South Asia, particularly India,” he said, “So as you mentioned in the 19th century — that is the 1800s — the British and Russians engaged in this, what we call a “Great Game” — basically, two empires vying for colonial control. Of course, the British controlled India — that was the crown in their empire — and they were worried about Russian encroachment into Afghanistan because that would provide a transit point into India.”

After a decade-long civil war, Afghanistan was under new rule with Dost Mohammad Khan establishing the Barakzay Dynasty and declaring himself “emir,” or king, of Afghanistan in 1826. Britain, recognizing that the new, weak government wouldn’t be able to defend itself from a Russian annexation, wanted to put a buffer between itself and a growing Russian ally: Iran. In 1837, the British sent an envoy to the new emir to seek allyship against the Russians, but negotiations failed at the table.

By this point, Britain determined Khan would need to be ousted. Shah Shuja, the ruler over Afghanistan from 1803 to 1809, had made it well-known he would be a good friend to the idea of British trade routes through Afghanistan if he were to be emir again, and Britain saw Shuja as the solution to their troubles. Just a few years later in 1838, British troops moved into Afghanistan under the guise of aiding Shuja to regain his place on the throne, starting the First Anglo-Afghan War.

The combined British-Afghan army took Afghanistan with minimal trouble and Shuja saw his throne in Kabul return within the year. After spending his exile in British India, however, Shah Shuja took to ruling the country in a way that offended many of the Afghanistan’s peoples. They also saw the large presence of British forces as a threat of a metastasizing British Indian empire.

Upset rebels and a changing political tide in Britain’s 1841 elections began troop withdrawals and loss of funding from the British Indian empire. With a weakened position and an enraged citizenry on their hands, the British saw Shuja as the solution to their troubles. Just a few years later in 1838, British troops moved into Afghanistan under the guise of aiding Shuja to regain his place on the throne, starting the First Anglo-Afghan War.

Outmanned and outgunned, the British army was completely destroyed, also desecrating the legend of an invincible British military. But even with the British gone, things were not settled in Afghanistan.

Read the rest of this story at usustatesman.com.

Michael Popa II is a sophomore at USU studying human biology, statistics and mathematics, and also serves as a combat medic for the United States Army. He has a podcast called Deep Roots that you can find on Aggie Radio.

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A new study from a group based at Utah State University found a connection between political views and the COVID-19 case rates. As an organization, the Western Rural Development Center’s goal is to assist rural development. There are four regional development centers that cover all 50 states and to assist economic development efforts. The western center covers 13 states in the west, including Utah.

Don Albrecht, the executive director of WRDC, was originally interested in the possibility of people moving to rural areas as a result of the pandemic, since more people were able to work remotely, and the danger of the virus seemed to be lessened in the rural communities. However, this turned out not to be the case.

Albrecht said both case rates and death rates started increasing much faster in rural areas than they were in urban areas.

“In cities people are crowded together, it’s harder to social distance, they use mass transit, all of these kinds of stuff,” Albrecht said. “You should be safer, and so the question was why, why, why are there more cases and deaths in rural America.”

After eliminating variables like ethnicity, education level and poverty, the study found politics to be the best indicator of a rise in COVID-19 cases and deaths. Counties where Donald Trump led in the 2020 election were also experiencing higher rates of COVID-19.

Michael Lyons, a professor in the Department of Political Science, wasn’t surprised by the findings.

“Here I am at my age, I never lived through anything like this before,” Lyons said. “And people resist change, they resist breaking their habits. And you know, rural people and conservative people resist change more than liberal people do. So, I’m not saying any of this is justified, but it’s not a shock either.”

The WRDC study ended in March in order to eliminate the vaccine as a potential variable. According to Albrecht, they are currently collecting data on vaccinations as part of a follow up study.

“What the preliminary data shows is not surprisingly that political views are influencing who gets vaccinated, and where a lot of people get vaccinated, they are safer from the virus,” Albrecht said.

Since the vaccine became widely available, and especially since mandates began, some people have resisted getting vaccinated.

“Why the anti-vaccination movement grew so much at this particular time is a bit unclear to me,” Lyons said. “The Trump presidency probably had something to do with it. But ultimately, Trump got vaccinated, and most of those top political leaders, I think, have been vaccinated. So why their followers haven’t gone with them and gotten vaccinated, at least in a lot of cases, is a little bit confusing to me.”

USU student Meg Smedley agreed, “I think Trump and our current president have a lot of influence on what happens, but there are also some things they can’t control.”

From his research, Albrecht has found much of the spread of COVID-19 can be controlled if people will follow the science and listen to experts.

Albrecht didn’t doubt pro-Trump counties were hit harder from COVID-19 because they, largely, didn’t take the pandemic seriously.

“There are consequences if you don’t follow the advice of health and medical experts who have spent their entire lives studying this kind of stuff and they know what they’re talking about better than the rest of us,” he said. “I’m hoping this will contribute to what a lot of other people are saying, be careful and listen to the experts and follow their advice.”

Maggie Erekson is a first year student at Utah State and a first year writer for the Statesman. She is working on earning her associates degree, but also finds time to enjoy her favorite TV shows, spend time outside and eat lots of ice cream.

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Who wouldn’t want to camp out on their college campus? Well at Utah State University, you can. On Sept. 24, the Hurd put on an activity called Campout on the Quad.

“We have free food, a bunch of fun games and you get to just camp out and hang with a bunch of friends,” said Taylor Sampson, the vice president of Athletics and Campus Recreation.

They offered hamburgers and hot dogs and had a dance party. There was no shortage of activities to take part in including Spikeball, volleyball and cornhole. There was a special guest appearance as well.

Utah State University’s new football coach, Blake Anderson, came to the campout, along with the entire football team. They were there to thank the students for their support this year and get them excited for the game the next morning.

The students had the freedom to choose which activities they wanted to be a part of and where they wanted to set up their tents. The HURD, a student-led USU Athletics organization, said they made sure there was something for everybody to enjoy, wanting to make the experience one to remember.

“We have a few events that we put on every year to try and get people excited for the games,” Sampson said. “The fun thing about the campout, we’re not watching a football game. We’re coming together to play games, watch a movie and just have fun. It’s geared towards sports, but we’re just there to hang out and have fun.”

After the dance party, the students got to wind down and watch a movie together. The students gathered in front of the big screen with fire pits going and watched “The Blind Side.”

“The Blind Side got me in a football mood,” said Aaron Ellefson, a USU junior. “The school spirit that was there and the overall atmosphere was great.”

After the activities were done, people turned in for the night, but that wasn’t the end. The HURD offered students at the campout early-entry wristbands for the football game. They had a siren go off to alert everybody in the middle of the night that they were starting to hand them out, keeping that fun energy going even after everything had ended.

“It’s a college experience that you can’t get anywhere else,” said Kate Gibby, a USU junior. “There’s no other time in your life that you get to camp out on a school campus before a football game.”

Ultimately, through this activity and many more to come, The HURD said their goal is to get the students involved and excited in the athletics going on around campus. One way they’ve been trying to do that is through their new app, Utah State Aggies.

Read the rest of this story at usustatesman.com.
Veteran drives military truck to school

By Natalie Rust
LIFESTYLES STAFF WRITER

Students at Utah State University get around its 400-acre campus in a variety of ways. Some just walk. Others ride bikes or take the Aggie Shuttle.

Seth Newman drives a military transport truck.

The truck looks like something out of a World War II movie. Usually parked by Maverik Stadium, the 6x6 tan truck takes up two parking spots. It's cavernous bed, which can hold up to 5 tons, sits on wheels measuring four and one-half feet tall.

Newman, a senior studying communications, bought the truck from a man who rebuilds engines and who originally got it from a government auction. Newman had always dreamed of owning a large truck so when he saw the vehicle for sale, he jumped at the opportunity.

The truck means more than a realized childhood fantasy, however, it represents his inner strength and pride for his accomplishments.

Newman is a Marine Corps veteran. He served from 2012 to 2017 in a variety of capacities: career planner, platoon sergeant and air traffic control, to name a few.

Newman’s time in the military affected him deeply, leaving him with new perspectives and struggling to readapt to society. These experiences, both positive and negative, have helped shape the direction of his life now.

“It’s been a huge impact in my life,” Newman said. “It’s created habits, abilities, perspectives that I would have gotten no other way.”

Newman struggled with extreme culture shock when returning from active duty. In the military, everyone has each other's back. Everyone has the same objective.

Newman had to learn to reconcile everything he experienced and learned in the military with a society focused on other values.

“We had to learn how to adjust back into a society where the guy to your left and right isn’t looking out for your well-being and they’re concerned about their own,” Newman said, “And so sometimes we feel like we get let down and hanging out to dry.”

Newman turned to several outlets to cope. One of which has been starting his own business. Newman’s business teaches leadership skills and confidence through the careful application of firearms.

“It helps people kind of create confidence in themselves and see the leadership within, so that they can apply that to their lives in areas that they want to improve,” Newman said.

The business helps provide solace for Newman in that he’s able to share his passions with others. It allows him to utilize the skills he’s developed in the military to help others take control of their life.

“I have a passion for serving people and, you know, helping them talk through situations or helping them influence their life choices of where they want to be and what they want to do and helping them kind of embrace who they are and that uniqueness that they have,” he said.

Other times, Newman bottles up his emotions to cope.

“A lot of times I go seek solitude, and just want to be alone,” he said. “Other times you cope with anger, and sometimes you got to go out and scream or break something or build something.”

Newman’s truck represents what he’s been through. It represents the uniqueness of who he is and what he’s survived.

“I personally believe that it represents my inner strength,” he said, “the strength I have and the confidence that I have and what I’ve been through. Even though I struggle I still see myself as a strong, capable human being.”

Newman’s truck has also made an impact on the community. According to Newman, some have even used it as a landmark. One of his neighbors used his truck to describe where he lived to someone in Moab who was also attending Utah State University.

Newman receives a variety of comments on his truck. This has provided him with the opportunity to meet lots of new people.

“I get to interact with a lot of people wherever I go because it does stand out,” Newman said.

People's reactions range from awed children staring up at the huge truck, to clusters of people admiring its uniqueness, to people asking him questions about its practicality.

Strangers aren’t the only ones who question the truck’s practicality. Newman’s friend Jon Gutierrez describes riding in the passenger seat as something akin to “re-entering the atmosphere even at low speeds.”

“It’s pretty rough, although it’s not the worst thing I’ve ridden,” Gutierrez said.

For Newman, the only real obstacle to driving the truck is finding parking, as it takes up two spots. It can also take a while to speed up, making it hard to weave through traffic. However, Newman is willing to deal with these challenges.

For him, the truck means much more than small practicalities. It’s a form of self-expression. Going forward, he encourages everyone else to do the same: to accept what makes them, them.

“Your uniqueness and your weirdness is your strength, because no one else is like you,” Newman said. “And you know, if you live at a point where you can be you, that’s when your potential can do amazing things.”

Natalie Rust is a freshman interested in studying international studies at Utah State University. In her free time, she loves to read, thrift and explore the great outdoors.

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Being inspired to major in engineering as a woman is unheard of, but some women at USU are determined to break that stereotype.

“While I was in the National Air and Space Museum in Washington D.C. the spring of my senior year, I saw the short film “Dream Big,” which highlights a few engineers and the contributions they make to society,” said Kate Christiansen, a junior in Utah State Universities civil engineering program. “That film inspired me — I walked out of the theater and knew that I wanted to become an engineer so I could help change the world too.”

Christiansen took that inspiration and is now studying engineering at Utah State University. Her experience in USU’s engineering program — along with a number of other women — has not come without its challenges.

Along with all other STEM subjects, engineering is a male-dominated field. This dominance takes a huge role in USU’s engineering program.

Christiansen said there are about five to eight girls out of the 50 to 60 students in her engineering courses — an experience she said can be isolating. She was able to make close friends with these few girls in her classes.

“I feel like we were able to get so close because of the fact that we were some of the rare few girls in our classes,” Christiansen said. “I don’t think I would’ve been able to get through most of my engineering classes without them. It’s very important for everyone, not just women, to have that strong support group to help encourage each other to keep going and to work hard.”

Though these girls are able to come together — despite being few in numbers — the isolation of being a woman pursuing engineering continues outside of the classroom.

In Christiansen’s experience, women in engineering have to work twice as hard to receive the same amount of respect as a man in the field.

“At my internship over the summer, I worked with a woman who is a licensed civil engineer,” Christiansen said. “People often gave her tasks fit for a regular drafter though, because they didn’t realize she was a licensed engineer. This made it hard for her to enjoy being at work, because it showed people’s lack of respect for women in engineering.”

Allison Bernhardt, a junior in the mechanical engineering program pursuing an aerospace emphasis, also relates to this feeling of having to prove oneself. According to her, most of the boys in her program are already ahead because of the way they were raised. She said the boys in her courses primarily grew up playing with LEGOS and helping their dads fix things.

“I have to prove that I can do it just as much as the boys,” Bernhardt said. “Sometimes they’re like, ‘How’d you figure out that answer?’ and I’m like, ‘I’m in engineering. I’m smart.’ I think they forget that I know just as much as them.”

While many women in engineering feel they need to prove their intelligence to others, these women said, the majority of the time, their hardest critic is themselves. Bernhardt said this might stem from the higher expectations that fall on women.

“Boys have a lot of role models to turn to, while the girls have less women role models in STEM fields,” Bernhardt said. “I think this leads women to wondering if this is the right place for them.”

Ellarose Leonelli, a student studying environmental engineering with a focus on hydrology, mentioned she suffers from imposter syndrome as a woman pursuing a STEM degree. She battles thoughts of “you aren’t smart
enough” or “aren’t qualified enough” or “you would be much better suited for an easier job.”

“My own worst critic is myself,” Leonelli said. “I often think to myself that I am not good enough for an engineering degree, but it is those around me who remind me why I’m here. I want to be a part of the solution and get more women involved with engineering. I want to make change for the good.”

This self-doubt often times leads women to switch out of engineering degrees — even if they are excelling in their programs.

“The beginning of almost every semester I usually have a breakdown and almost decide to switch my major,” Christiansen said. “This is usually after I get an eight out of 10 on a quiz. It seems silly, but I put a lot of pressure on myself to exceed all expectations, just so I can be taken seriously.”

Women often times do exceed expectations, but self-limiting due to societal norms still gets in the way.

“It’s crazy to me though,” Christiansen said, “because I know guys who do terrible in their classes and have GPAs down in the 2.0s, but they are more confident in their engineering abilities than some of the girls I know who have 3.5 GPAs. It’s just easier for the guys to fit in and feel comfortable in their classes I guess.”

According to Christiansen, another frustration women in STEM often have to overcome is the stereotypes associated with women who are in STEM degrees. Often times women feel they don’t fit the stereotype or “mold” of an engineer.

“Sure, I may be smart, but I’m not a nerd,” Christiansen said. “I may have a lot of homework to work on, but that doesn’t mean I’m anti-social. I may be an engineering student, but that doesn’t mean I don’t like to go to parties. Just because I’m studying engineering doesn’t mean I can’t also be musical, sporty, social, friendly and fun.”

Though there are many challenges associated with being a woman pursuing a degree in engineering — or any STEM field — women have proved time and time again that they can overcome these outdated issues. Christiansen has overcome the challenges of stereotypes by changing her mindset when someone puts her in a box.

“I know that every conversation I have with someone about engineering is a way to promote women in engineering,” Christiansen said, “so I continue to have those difficult conversations so eventually the stigma surrounding women in engineering can change.”

Bernhardt has overcome feeling like she was behind the boys in her classes by creating opportunities for herself.

“I worked really hard and I got an internship this past summer,” Bernhardt said. “I’ve also joined clubs like the Engineering Council. These things have helped me realize I do belong here. Just because I didn’t have as many opportunities in high school, doesn’t mean I can’t make up for that now. This has helped me reach the level where I feel like I can be an engineer.”

These women are all attempting to push stigmas about women in engineering down the drain. Perhaps one day they will be the role model that they never had.

Clarissa Casper is a sophomore studying journalism and aquatic science at Utah State University. Outside of writing for the Statesman, she loves to hike, write poetry and watch whales.

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Diverse is a simple way to describe Utah State’s men’s tennis team. Their roster features nine players from eight countries, speaking more than five languages. They say their differences increase the strength of their bond.

“I think the differences in culture we have, we use them to keep us even closer. We all have different perspectives on other stuff and we are all courageous enough to open about it and talk about it from our perspectives,” said junior transfer Bodin Zarkovic.

“I think we are doing a really good job of being empathetic towards each other and listening and accepting those different cultures and then showing our cultures. And I think that creates a very strong bond in this team.”

Zarkovic is originally from Belgrade, Serbia, but he transferred to Utah State from Minnesota this year when Minnesota shut down their men’s tennis program. While considering joining Utah State, Zarkovic talked with Roko Savin, a junior from Zagreb, Croatia, about the team.

“He told me great stuff about the team, about the program, about the school,” Zarkovic said. “I really believe I picked the right school.”

Head Coach Aaron Paajanen explained that having diverse, international rosters is not uncommon in collegiate tennis.

“Across the country, tennis rosters are much more international,” Paajanen said. “You’re typically going to find better tennis players internationally just because the sport’s a bit more popular in other places than it is here.”

Paajanen believes that his players’ prior experiences competing and travelling internationally have helped them come together and avoid culture shock.

“These guys have had the opportunity to travel around [different parts of the world] and they’ve already experienced a lot of different cultures,” Paajanen said. “So coming here is just another culture that they’re getting to experience. I think they do a good job of embracing it and appreciating something new, something different. All the guys are really good friends. They’re really close off the court.”

Team captain Felipe Acosta believes the team has developed a strong bond because of the environment of international tennis and the team.

“We are used to [traveling] all over the country or all over the world to compete and then get to know new people,” Acosta said. “Also, when you come from outside of the United States, and you come here, the tennis team is your family. So that’s why we are so bonded together.”

Acosta has played for Utah State tennis since the 2017-18 season when the Aggies won the regular season and conference tournament titles. Acosta is a graduate student from Chascomus, Argentina, which is a neighborhood in Buenos Aires. He said the main difference between tennis in his home country — where athletes have to choose between going pro or going to school — and the United States is the college structure.

“The system in the United States is really convenient for good athletes that don’t feel ready to go pro, and want to become better throughout those four years and then

PHOTO BY Edward Harimoto
Mountain West announces new initiative to promote women’s sports

By Mark Greenwood
SPORTS STAFF WRITER

On Sept. 21, the Mountain West Conference announced a new initiative and social media campaign entitled “Making Her Mark.” Chosen and voted on in August by female student-athletes in the conference, the campaign aims to highlight and empower Mountain West female student-athletes.

The social media hashtag #MakingHerMark will run throughout the 2021-2022 academic year as the Mountain West looks to capitalize on a current wave of higher recognition and viewership of women’s college sports.

Although women’s athletics have not historically garnered the same media coverage as men’s competitions, the conference told The Statesman its own Mountain West Network has seen viewership at an all-time high through 2020 and 2021.

Similar to the Mountain West, ESPN has also reported that women’s athletics, and college competitions in particular, have seen viewership rising significantly this year.

According to ESPN, the Women’s College World Series viewership was up over 10% for the 17-game tournament compared to 2019. The Women’s Final Four viewership was also up 14% from 2019.

Two Utah State female student-athletes were willing to share their thoughts about the new campaign, and the uptrend in promoting women’s athletics.

“I feel like any action and any effort to increase visibility for women and female athletes is awesome, and it’s needed,” said Taylor Franson, a senior forward and key contributor for USU’s women’s basketball team. “It means a lot to us female athletes that we get that recognition and that we have the opportunity to promote ourselves and to gain recognition for ourselves.”

“I mean, us women do the same amount of work that men do for their sports, and it’s just super nice to be recognized,” said Tatum Stall, a sophomore outside hitter for USU volleyball.

Although student-athletes within the conference chose the hashtag, there were hashtags some of the Aggies presented that didn’t get chosen.

“Other than getting a little bit sad that my hashtag didn’t get picked up, it is a beautiful hashtag,” Stall said. “It flows really well, it gets to the point, and I’m excited to get to use it and get to see what the Mountain West does with it.”

Another leap in student-athlete recognition comes from a recent change in NCAA policy that allows NCAA athletes to profit from endorsements from their name, image and likeness from sponsors outside the university.

This opens the door for an increase in sponsorships for female student-athletes nation-wide. Stall confirmed these thoughts.

“I’ve also seen girls in our conference like the Cavinder twins [a basketball duo from Fresno State] that have half a million followers on Instagram, and they’re building a fantastic name for themselves, which is amazing,” Stall said. “Girls are just climbing to the top, and the NIL just creates more opportunities for women to get their name out there.”

“Tennis” FROM PAGE 10

jump into a professional tennis career,” Acosta said.

Zarkovic has noticed a bigger difference in the style of play in the United States, especially at higher elevations.

“We’re playing here on a pretty high altitude, so the style’s a little bit different,” Zarkovic said. “The players are a little bit more aggressive, they come to the net more often, the points are a little bit shorter. So it’s definitely different from Europe. I would always play on clay which is really slow, long points, a little more physical. So there’s a lot of differences.”

Right now, the Aggies are playing in individual tournaments. Their next one is the Utah Invitational on Oct. 10. The main focus though, is team play, which starts in January. Coach Paajanen feels his team has an opportunity to do well in the Mountain West Conference.

“I think the conference is going to be very competitive again this year like it was last year,” Paajanen said. “The opportunity is there for us, as it is for a few other teams.”

Acosta wants to win another conference championship before his time is over in Logan.

“My personal goal is to win the conference,” Acosta said. “I just want to retire from college tennis with a win in the conference. We won it back in my freshman year and then we were close a few more times, but it will be nice to finish my college career with that.”

Both Acosta and Coach Paajanen encourage people to come and support the squad when the team meets start next year. On Jan. 23, the Aggies host Idaho State in their first home match.

“Please come and support us,” Acosta said. “We play at Sports Academy on the indoor court. The environment over there is really fun. It’s not a classic tennis match, it’s way more interactive, people are cheering for each other. I think the students will like it.”

“It would be great if we could pack our facility out and get as many people here as possible to support the team,” Paajanen said. “It really is non-stop action from the doubles at the very beginning and then when we transition to singles.”

@md_greenwood

@JakeEllisonair

Freshman Jessica Myers pitches in a softball game against UVU on March 30.
Utah State University is a predominately white institution (PWI) in a predominantly white state that has a population that is less than 2% black according to the U.S. census. This creates an environment that may be uncomfortable to anyone who walks into a room and doesn’t see anyone else who looks like them. I know it makes me feel uncomfortable.

Hi, I’m Emilee Harmon, and I’m many things. I am a Black woman. I am a first-generation college student. I am a transracial adoptee. My identity is complex and I’m proud of all these things — however, they don’t define me. I grew up in Layton, Utah, and I’ve pretty much lived there my entire life. I distinctly remember never having a teacher in school that was a person of color.

This trend has persisted here at Utah State. I spent three years in a certain college where I was met with many micro- and macroaggressions from professors and students — for example, being asked, “No, where are you really from?” by a professor (that same professor also said slavery was “economically attractive”) as well as being talked over by my white male counterparts. I switched majors to focus on bigger goals, which are getting admitted to law school and then becoming an attorney. I’ve had a much better experience since switching colleges, and I admire the conversations we’ve had surrounding the challenges BIPOC face specifically in these spaces.

My experiences of feeling othered and less than have driven me to be the person I am today. I am so passionate about fostering a community of understanding and allyship on our campus. We as students have the power to create a campus culture where students with marginalized identities feel safe.

The recent passing of USUSA Executive Council Bill 2022-01, which established a standing inclusion statement for the organization, is a step in the right direction. This statement is our commitment to the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion. I’m very proud that this bill passed unanimously, but I’m also aware that is just the beginning. As a student leader, I think it is incredibly important for students to hold us accountable. We are here to serve you, and if you have concerns, please bring them to our attention!

I’m very pleased to announce that this week is Diversity Week! Activities start Monday, Oct. 4 and run through Oct. 11. USU’s annual Diversity Week aims to celebrate the different identities and experiences present on our campus. Our focus is to create a space that provides the Aggie Family, including students, faculty and staff, the opportunity to explore different cultures, engage in conversations that bring new perspectives, and celebrate the presence of and contributions made by people of all identities and experiences. It’s a time for us to celebrate while also looking forward to a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive future.
DIVERSITY WEEK
OCTOBER 4TH - 9TH, 11TH
Alyssa was in her second year of study at her university when she had to stop when she got pregnant. Her relationship was non-consensual and coerced. She did not feel safe but felt unable to reach out to her family due to their strong religious beliefs and their lack of support for her decisions. Two weeks before the due date, she died due to complications with her pregnancy. Had she felt comfortable with her family, had sex before marriage not been a taboo topic and had she had proper resources offered to her, the outcome could have been drastically different.

Her situation is similar to other university students who come from religious backgrounds but differentiate in beliefs and/or morals from their parental figures. Because of this, USU should be using anonymous distribution for contraceptives, thus decreasing the risk of unplanned pregnancy and allowing for opportunities to continue education here at USU.

Currently, the resources are in very public locations. For example, the Campus Cash Coupons booklet has a free pregnancy test inside from the Center for Pregnancy Choices. The booklet was supplied in the Taggart Student Center on campus. These are easily accessible resources, with one even being free.

The resources are, however, not anonymous. The religious and social scrutiny is not just applicable to families; it applies to all those we interact with. Individuals purchasing these items can even feel scrutiny from strangers, even if it is just a figment of their imagination.

The fact that USU is one of the most conservative colleges in the U.S. makes it more disapproving for such methods, more so than other universities. If USU claims to be accepting to all students no matter their race, religion, ethnicity and disability, they should also be accepting to all students, no matter their social anxieties and pressure to live a certain lifestyle.

That is not to say there is not an abundance of discrete resources accessible to students. There are a variety of resources currently available through the Student Health and Wellness Center: IUD placement, implants, natural family planning, emergency contraception and testing for STI, to name a few. Contraceptive counseling with one of two female nurse practitioners is available for free (covered by student fees). The university also offers inexpensive generic birth control, as low as $15 a month, with the prescription available for pickup at a local pharmacy.

However, IUDs are considered more effective. One out of 100 women get pregnant with an IUD in place as opposed to the pill which is 6 to 9 women out of 100, according to Debbie Friedli, a medical assistant at the USU Student Health Center.

Friedli also said the Bayer Medical Group is a patient assistance program covered by grants that — if a USU student has no medical insurance and has a low income — will cover the cost of an IUD for the student.

There are many caring organizations and compassionate people at work here at USU to help. When Debbie Friedli was asked what she would want the students of USU to know about the resources available to them, she said, “We are here and happy to find what works best for them.”

A problem for students who may want to use contraceptives is that a statement is released to the parents on the use of insurance for IUD. Many insurance companies cover IUD and therefore alternative methods are not available. Planned Parenthood is under similar limitations where the prices without insurance are too high, therefore insurance must be used. Planned Parenthood does have its own select resources and exceptions, but is not affiliated with Utah State University.

No matter your political stance, your religious stance or even your stance on how the student fee board should distribute student fees, there is no question every student at Utah State University should feel they have proper access to medical care.

Every student should feel they can come to this university and get their education. They should also feel they are a person with their individual problems, their individual backgrounds and should not be judged for them. Not being in the predominant religion, or even political party, can be daunting. It can make their decisions feel unwelcomed, their way of life feel wrong. Striving for continual improvement in resources, including those for safe sex, is a part of the safety and security our university can offer us.

*Editor’s note: Names have been changed to protect their identity.

Read the rest of this story at usustatesman.com
A MARVELOUS WORK
Reading Mormonism in West Africa

Two decades before the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints began official missionary work in West Africa, pamphlets, books, and other church materials had been circulating among Christians in Nigeria and Ghana.

This talk explores the circulation and interpretation of this homegrown Mormon faith in the 1960s and 1970s, and concludes with the dilemmas raised by this religious self-fashioning for LDS Church establishment after 1978.

Sudoku

9 2 4 1
2 7 8 3
8 5 3 6
4 2 9 5
6 3 5 1
5 8 6 9
2 4 5 3
1 6 5 9
8 7 1 4

Last week’s solution:

1 8 7 9 6 5 2 3 4
5 6 2 4 1 3 8 9 7
3 9 4 7 2 8 1 6 5
7 4 6 5 9 1 3 8 2
9 1 3 8 7 2 5 4 6
2 5 8 3 4 6 7 1 9
4 2 9 1 3 7 6 5 8
6 3 5 2 8 4 9 7 1
8 7 1 6 5 9 4 2 3

Sudoku puzzles are provided by www.sudokuoftheday.com.
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