

"The connections between and among women are the most feared, the most problematic, and the most potentially transforming force on the planet."
—Adrienne Rich

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Oh, the wedding woes

I had heard that getting married was an experience that made women feel better than their single friends and having a magic ring and a man that had committed was something to brag about.

Why is getting married still so highly regarded in our society? What is it about wedding gowns, flowers, diamonds and china patterns that get women so worked up?

I got married last summer. The planning of a wedding, rush of an engagement and dealing with the emotions surrounding weddings are something that I was not sure I wanted. I wanted a simple wedding. But I found that changing my relationship status on Facebook, taking engagement pictures, shopping for my gown, and registering at local stores all brought me way more than simple.

All the commotion over my wedding was starting to take a toll on me about six months before the date. Everyday my mother would call with questions about the ceremony and at one point I wasn't sure if I was a daughter anymore or just an object of attention.

My mother and father eloped, so I began to feel like this was my mother's way to live out her own wedding plans through me. How did I become so blessed?

The second that my husband and I were headed toward our honeymoon, we took a sigh of relief. I found it sad that our first marital thought was, "Thank God, it's over!"

Looking back, it was not worth the upheaval it caused. I did not want to be called, fussed over, questioned to the point of near death, hassled with so many decisions, or forced to choose between two pinks that, in fact, looked identical. I really just wanted to enjoy my wedding and spend the rest of my

life with the man I love.

Here are some of my tips to help you remain calm and sane while planning a wedding.

- Breathe. The whole purpose of getting married is to spend the rest of your life with that special someone. Don't get caught up in the planning, it only distracts you from what is really important— your upcoming marriage.

- Do not let others decide for you. If you are like me and have an overbearing mother who thinks that your gown is hideous, your colors are preposterous, and your flowers should have been orchids, just take a step back from frustration and tell her or anyone else that tries to manage your decisions that this is your wedding and YOU will decide what's important enough to be in it.

- Don't forget the groom. Let him help make decisions. While most men don't care if you have roses or your bridesmaid wears truffle, they will care about food, the icing on the cake, and reception entertainment. Let him help make decisions so that he feels involved.

- Plan ahead. Enjoy your engagement for about a month but as soon as your date is set, get the big stuff out of the way. Choose a venue, colors, members of the bridal party, and book a honeymoon (which I think we all can agree is the best part!). All that you want to worry about a month before the wedding, is being a Mrs.

- Enjoy every minute. Make your hair appointment late and sleep in. Get rest and relax. It will be over before you know it, and you will want to say that it was the best day of your life—not the most stressful.

— Keisha Kennedy

From the editor

Regular readers may notice a change in *Attune*: this edition has no set theme.

Although the use of a theme has worked well in the past, we are experimenting with a new approach in hopes of appealing to a larger audience all at once. With the goal of embracing some aspect of every reader's interest, we have included fun articles, educational articles and articles simply meant to make you think.

Our newsletter and our Women's Center are constantly evolving, and we hope that you will stick by us and help us in our attempts to meet the needs of our campus and community. We hope to provide the campus community with the kind of haven of comfort and shared experiences that Dr. Lee Ann Jolley writes about on page 2.

As always, feel free to contact us and let us know what you think of the change and make suggestions for further improvement.

— Bailey Darrow

Exploring the complexity, importance of female friendship

Two women enjoy coffee over a fence that separates their backyards. They share jokes, talk about what they are planting for spring and vent their frustrations over gaining too much weight during the winter months. Across the neighborhood, two women are providing support to each other as they try to figure out the source of the rash on a baby. Next door, another pair of women share their tears as they talk about a crisis that has just occurred. All these women, who have become friends and companions, are providing each other with a sanctuary, a haven of comfort that only women who have shared experiences can.

In the past, the dearth of research on women's female friendships might suggest that a woman's relationships with her girlfriends are less important than her relationships with her partner, children, or parents. Pat O'Conner argues in *Friendships Between Women: A Critical Review* that social science has either idealized or trivialized women's friendships, and for the most part, the study of female friendships has been ignored.

However, studies that have focused on the topic have shown those friendships to be

both significant and valuable. Sandy Sheehy suggests in *Connecting: The Enduring Power of Female Friendships* that female friendship is a primary bond in human relationships and a woman's ability to form those friendships is of great importance to her personal growth and fulfillment and to the health of her sexual and family relationships.

Since friendship is not a biological relationship, does not determine our economic status and has no evolutionary meanings to examine or explore, the bond between girlfriends may seem inexplicable and mysterious. Relational connectedness may be the key – the mix of give-and-take, talking and listening, allowing friends to reflect one another endlessly – back and forth, layer upon layer, with each iteration weaving the threads that make up the rich tapestry of female friendship.

In a qualitative research study exploring how women make meaning in their lives through female friendships, I examined the meaning of female friendship from the perspective of women who participated in my study. I chose to take a phenomenological approach, because it promised to capture and describe the experiences of the

participants. The intent of the study was to explore with women the experience of female friendship and to understand the meaning of that experience. The central research question was “How do women's experiences of friendship contribute to their lives and the meanings they construct for themselves?”

The conclusions from the study were drawn from the thick, rich descriptions that the women gave as they explained the meaning female friendship have to them as women.

Two overarching themes resonated throughout the study. The first theme focused on the significance of female friendship, or relational connectedness. Included in this theme were stories of how women form friendships, important qualities of a friend, how women celebrate their friendships, and the magic, or unexplainable bond of female friendship.

The second overarching theme focused on something else entirely. Bumbles, boundaries, and betrayals included stories of hurts and disappointments, the crossing of spoken and unspoken boundaries, and betrayal issues that often resulted in an ending of the friendship. This

suggests that female friendships, like all others, are complex. Is female friendship, then, a brimming, gleaming pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, or a “crock” of disappointment and idealization that fails to deliver what it promises?

A favorite poem by Robert Frost comes to mind: “We sit around in a ring and suppose, but the Secret sits in the middle and knows.”

The secret of female friendships may lie somewhere in the middle – neither as an empty, unfulfilling “crock” of disappointment, nor as a brimming, gleaming pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. As women affirm each other's experiences and empathize with each other's feelings, they also are participating actively in each other's growth and development as a woman. As a scholar who has studied female friendship and as a woman who has been a friend, had a friend, loved and lost a friend, I recognize the female friendship experience as a reoccurring and very significant theme in my life and in the lives of the women in my study.

— Lee Ann Jolley, Ph.D.

The Shriver Report, a study done by Maria Shriver and the Center for American Progress, shows that for the first time in history, women make up half of the nation's paid workforce. Sixty-three percent of women identified themselves as breadwinners or as co-breadwinners. Such significant changes in American society could indicate a major reevaluation of public policy toward women and their families is needed.

To learn more about the evolving role of women in society or to read the entire report, visit:

<http://www.awomansnation.com>

Skin cancer directly affects many young women each year

Skin cancer.

Sounds scary, but it won't happen to you, right? Think again. The possibilities are rising.

Studies done by the American Academy of Dermatology show that Melanoma rates have risen 50 percent among young women in the U.S. since 1980. Melanoma is the most commonly diagnosed form of cancer among white females in their 20s.

Bethany Fitzpatrick Nabors was an average young student at Tech when some concerning skin spots convinced her father that she needed to see a dermatologist. To her advantage, she went to see her doctor.

"Technically I had three spots that the dermatologist

called 'severe dysplastic atypia,'" Nabors explains. "He explained to me that my cells were growing very atypically and that if I had waited even a few months I would have had full-blown melanoma.

"I had all three moles removed, one of which was on my foot and grew back and actually became even more dysplastic. That was the really scary part for me."

The news was surprising for Nabors.

"When I first found out, I was terrified. I thought: there is no possible way. I'm only twenty!

"I went through several stages emotionally. My first thought was fear. Next came

fascination. I wanted to learn everything about it that I could so I could fight it better.

"Then I was a little ashamed for a while. My scars really bothered me.



Bethany Nabors

Finally I came to realize that when someone asks me, 'What happened to your back and your foot?' that I need to use it as a way to tell them to protect themselves. I want people to see it and know that it really happens.

"I did ask my dermatologist what I could have done to prevent it. He said that in theory, I could have stayed away from the tanning bed and the sun but there is no way of knowing if I'm just genetically predisposed.

"However, I know what

caused it. I went to the tanning bed religiously for about 6 months. I got really dark. That's when the changes in my skin began.

"My advice to other girls (and guys!) is to accept that pale can be beautiful too. You are the way you are supposed to be. As for practical advice, wear sunscreen daily, all over. Cover up. Stay out of the sun during peak hours. But most importantly, never, ever put off an exam if you have a suspicious mole. If it is caught early, it's so much more treatable."

For more information about Melanoma detection and protection, visit <http://www.skincancer.org/melanoma>.

— Bailey Darrow

Campus Health Services offers options for female students

Classes, work, homework and extracurricular activities don't often leave much time for a trip to the doctor's office. Fortunately, Tech Health Services offers a variety of medical services for women at rates meant to fit a tight budget. Since 2007, they have been providing women services from basic physicals to STD testing at low costs to students, often charging less than an insurance co-pay.

If sports activities require you to get a physical examination, or you are getting one for personal reasons, Health Services can help. They provide full physical examinations, and Nancy Richardson, the nurse practitioner, has special training in giving breast examinations. The cost is \$25. During the examination, young women are encouraged to get multivitamins which cost only \$3 for a three month supply.

Health Services can provide students with many different forms of birth control as well. Their pharmacy supplies Tri-Sprintec birth control pills for \$11 per month. They also provide Vaginal Contraceptive Film, paper-thin, translucent film that contains a spermicide, at \$2 for a box of nine. They also supply other contraceptives such as condoms, Nuva Rings, and Depo shots.

Plan B is available as an emergency contraceptive to be taken within seventy-two hours of unprotected sex or birth control failure. It works primarily by stopping the release of an egg from the ovary. Despite what some may think, the Plan B pill is not an abortion pill but a way to prevent conception from happening. However, if a woman does become pregnant, the Plan B pill will be ineffective. The pill is normally around \$60 in drug

stores, but Health Services provides the Plan B pill for only \$33. The generic version of the Plan B pill, the "Next Choice" pill, will be available soon for about \$20.

Another service the university provides is STD testing. Anyone, female or male, can be tested for Chlamydia, gonorrhea and syphilis at no charge. HIV tests, however, cost \$20.

Pap smears are also available to women at low costs. If you are 21 or younger, a pap smear is \$14; \$20 if you are 22 or older.

Education and counseling regarding birth control methods and STD concerns are also provided.

Some may be nervous about using campus health services for fear that others may find out about their medical problems, but Health Services has a strict policy on confidentiality. The only way

anyone other than the patient can find out information is if the patient signs a form releasing information to someone else. If she does not do that, no one will ever know the reasons why she entered the Health Services building.

Women's health services are available every Tuesday, and an appointment is required. Walk-ins are accommodated if space is available. Follow-up visits for supplies can be done any day. Health Services is located in the Nursing and Health Services Building near the railroad tracks facing Mahler Avenue. For more information, call 931-372-3320.

There is no excuse for avoiding taking great care of your body during your time at Tech. Visit Health Services, and see what they can do for you.

— Hilary Barker

Council on Women and Girls created to aid federal decisions

At Tech, the Commission on the Status of Women works to ensure that women are being considered fairly in the university's policies and programs. The Commission also works to establish programs and initiatives in order to create a positive and supportive atmosphere for women at the university. Much like the Commission on the Status of Women at Tech, the White House Council on Women and Girls, created in March by President Barack Obama, hopes to do the same thing on a national level.

"The purpose of this Council is to ensure that American women and girls are treated fairly in all matters of public policy," President

Obama said in an official press release. "I want to be clear that issues like equal pay, family leave, child care and others are not just women's issues, they are family issues and economic issues."

The council will work to ensure that agencies within the federal government consider how new and existing policies will affect the lives of women and girls.

First Lady Michelle Obama has been supportive of the Council thus far. On Sept. 18, Mrs. Obama spoke at an event sponsored by the Council which discussed how health care reform will affect women.

"The status quo is unacceptable," she said at the event. "It is holding women

and families back, and we know it."

Health care for women and their families is not the only topic the Council hopes to address in the coming months. Some specifically named goals for the Council include improving women's economic security, ensuring that policies are established to build a balance between work and family, and finding ways to prevent violence against women.

Valerie Jarrett, assistant to the president and senior advisor, has been appointed chair of the committee and Tina Tchen, deputy assistant to the president and director of the office of public liaison, is the executive director of the Council.

"I am confident that Val-

erie Jarrett and Tina Tchen will guide the Council wisely as its members address these important issues," the president said of the two women.

Similar agencies, like the White House Office for Women's Initiatives and Outreach and the President's Inter-Agency Council on Women of the Clinton administration, were done away with during George W. Bush's tenure as president.

President Obama also showed his support for women in January by signing into law the Lilly Ledbetter Act for fair pay.

It seems that the federal government is making strides in its efforts to expand the rights of women.

— Katey Perkins

Act would provide help for women and girls of Afghanistan

Tech students were offered a firsthand glimpse of the atrocities committed by the Afghani government through the presentation of guest speaker Farooka Gauhari on Sept. 22. She detailed her story as a citizen of Afghanistan and the obstacles she faced daily as a woman in a country in turmoil. It now seems possible that the other women of Afghanistan may have a chance to receive aid with the introduction of the Afghan Woman's Empowerment Act.

Introduced by Sen. Barbara Boxer and Rep. Carolyn Maloney of the House, the act is supported largely by those who believe its necessity for the rebuilding of Afghanistan. The act focuses on providing aid and provisions to the women and girls of Afghanistan. The supporters of the bill hold that in such a crucial period for this country, every step toward democracy is a laborious yet important one. The passing of the Afghan Women's Empowerment Act and subsequent support could mark another milestone for a country whose history shows an ugly past of oppression.

The bill is currently set to provide \$30 million in funds for non-profit organizations that will provide education, occupational training and health care to the women of Afghanistan. The money would also further the role of Afghani women in the new government by allotting a percentage to advancing the rights of women in the country.

The Afghan government has included women's rights in the constitution, but application of the law has been difficult. Reports of beatings and oppression, as well as required restrictive clothing persist, indicating, say the bill's supporters, that

these new laws require better enforcement.

Gauhari's book, *Searching for Saleem: An Afghan Woman's Odyssey*, is a firsthand account of the state of civil rights in Afghanistan. She writes of her past as a professional woman working at the University of Kabul. Though she held professional position, her rights were slowly stripped and she was ultimately forced to flee.

Gauhari's tumultuous life in Afghanistan also exposed her to another public concern: the children. Students attending the lecture were able to view Afghani orphanages where, according to Gauhari, some children were likely to be molested as they had no parents. Funding from this act would provide protection for women and girls from violence and sexual abuse which appears to run rampant in Afghanistan.

Oppression isn't always of a violent nature. Women and girls are required to wear burkas in public and are restricted to the sphere of private lives. Life beyond the home is not for women, according to social rule in Afghanistan. Neither is education as most girls are kept from publically available schools.

These socially accepted ideas in Afghanistan are indicative of a society that isn't necessarily ready for a leap to an equalized state between the sexes. With a society deeply rooted in religion, even the smallest changes are hard battles. Supporters of this bill, including *New York Times* columnist Nicholas D. Kristof, argue that equity is a common characteristic of major democracies in the world today, thus the empowerment of women in Afghanistan is a needed step in rehabilitating a broken country.

— Will Huffman

Gender segregation in the classroom brings new arguments

On Sept. 8, 2009, the American Civil Liberties Union, on behalf of an anonymous parent of two unnamed students, filed suit against the Vermillion Parish School District in Louisiana after the students claimed they were placed in single-sex classrooms. According to the two female students, when they tried to enroll in co-educational classes, they were told that the "classes would be held with the 'special needs' section, which is not being segregated on the basis of sex" and that co-ed classes were "full." Single-sex classrooms are not just being debated in Louisiana, however. The question of gender segregation in the classroom is being discussed across the country with people on both sides of the issue.

Proponents of the single-sex learning environment list a variety of reasons for their

manner of thinking. Some believe that these types of environments allow students of different genders to learn in environments that are suited to their "nature." Since some studies have shown that males are more kinesthetic learners, the male classroom environment encourages movement, play, and hands-on activities. Alternatively, studies show that girls work better in group environments where they are allowed to talk, so the female classroom might be filled with small, grouped work areas. Advocates of gender-segregated classrooms also believe that there are fewer distractions in this type of environment, especially in middle school where there is an emphasis on social interaction with the opposite sex. In addition, supporters of sex-separated schools feel that this atmosphere breeds more confident students. Girls might not be afraid of

being considered "too smart" in front of boys, and males might be less likely to slack off to seem "cool" in front of girls.

Alternatively, many feel gender segregation in the classroom is unfair and even unlawful. According to some, including the ACLU, this type of classroom goes against the Federal Title IX education act, making it illegal. Those against single-sex programs also feel that gender segregation can deny equal educational opportunities to students of both genders, especially when funding and resources are limited, and may further extend archaic stereotypes which declare all people of a certain gender learn and act a certain general way. They argue that gender segregation does not help children learn skills about how to interact with others, regardless of their gender.

Some educators are trying to reach a middle ground. Dr. Lorin Anderson, professor of

educational leadership and policies at the University of South Carolina, explains that he wouldn't advise students to go the single-sex classroom route unless they were "failing miserably" in a co-educational setting. Anderson encourages parents to speak with their children about what the best decision is for their student as an individual. While some students may perform well in single-sex environments, others do much better in a co-ed atmosphere. Also, teachers might instruct students using a variety of learning styles rather than an assumed, predetermined method of instruction based on the student's sex.

It seems that, if given a choice, the decision is best based on the needs of individual students rather than a blanket approach.

— Katey Perkins

Putnam County Habitat for Humanity hosts Women's Build

Putnam County Habitat for Humanity recently broke ground on a special Women Build. Only the third Women Build home in Putnam County, the build is meant to empower women.

"The Women Build is special because it's women helping women," said Amy Jennings, volunteer coordinator. "The house recipient this year is a single mother with four children. Who else knows the struggles of being a mother in our society than other women?"

The first Habitat Women Build was held in 1991 in Charlotte, N.C. Today more than 1,400 homes have been completed by Women Build volunteers.

"Another great thing about the Women Build is that it empowers women to learn skills that they cannot get anywhere else," Jennings said.

"If I want to learn how to shingle a roof, I would need to get a job with a roofer. At Habitat, I can walk on site and learn from beginning to end how to shingle in a safe environment. Crew leaders are very patient with all of the volunteers and teach them the skills they need to build the home and then go out and use them on their own homes."

Habitat for Humanity builds basic, affordable homes that

are safe for families to live in and raise a family. The homes are made to fit the needs of the individual families in terms of size and homeowners are able to pick out various finishes for their home such as siding color, carpet and light fixtures. Interested volunteers are encouraged to take part in this unique experience.

"You need no experience or construction knowledge, most of our volunteers who come on site have never built anything before, but are eager to learn," Jennings said. "It's a lot of fun and you don't realize, until you see the tears in the homeowner's eyes, what an impact you are making in someone's life."

Volunteers must be at least 16 years old and are being accepted throughout the build which is scheduled to be complete sometime in December.

There is usually a waiting list to volunteer on Saturdays because it is the busiest day, but most other days are open. Interested individuals should call ahead so that organizers can insure that there is something for all volunteers to work on and provisions can be made. For more information or to volunteer, contact Amy Jennings at 931-528-1711, ext. 2, or e-mail amy@pchabitat.org.

— Bailey Darrow



***Attune* Spring 2010 Call for Submissions**

We want *Attune* to be relevant and interesting for our readers and are seeking fact-based articles on any topic profiling and empowering the lives of women. Students, staff, and faculty of all backgrounds are encouraged to submit articles of 600 words or less.

If you have an idea for an article but are not sure that you would like to write about it, send us your topic suggestions. We may be able to help you develop your ideas or do research of our own. Or, if you would like to write but do not have a topic selected, we usually have plenty of ideas to share!

E-mail submissions to womenscenter@tntech.edu
or drop them off at the center.

Submission Deadline: February 5, 2010

Items submitted early provide the best opportunity for editing and publication.

New books at the Women's Center

She's a Rebel: The History of Women in Rock & Roll by Gillian Gaar

Well-behaved Women Seldom Make History by Laurel Ulrich

The Complete Persepolis by Marjane Satrapi

Ida, a Sword Among Lions: Ida B. Wells and the Campaign against Lynching

by P. Giddings

The Collected Poetry of Nikki Giovanni

Supergirls Speak Out : Inside the Secret Crisis of Overachieving Girls by Liz Funk

God's Brothel (contemporary fundamentalist U.S. polygamy groups and stories of women who escaped) by Andrea Moore-Emmett

Vagina Warriors by Eve Ensler

...and many more.

Books are available for checkout with valid Eagle Card.

Get Connected to your Women's Center. Join us on facebook!

Check out upcoming events and links to news affecting women nationally and internationally.

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=141764045318>

Or search Women's Center at TTU

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Many thanks to all who contributed to this issue.

**Visit our website:
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