

OPINION

WHINES & GRIPES

Now that Cornhuskin' is over, the season for wearing bows should end.

I thought sideways ponytails were only cool in kindergarten?

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

From the Office of Research, Planning and Assessment in response to a Whine and Gripe from the last issue,

Each semester students are asked by different groups on campus to complete a range of surveys. The information obtained from these surveys is very important for assessing various programs and activities on campus. We take student input very seriously and their participation helps us identify areas of strength, as well as areas that need improvement, so that we can improve delivery of programs and services.

In spring 2012, the following student's names were randomly drawn to win a gift card worth at least \$25 for participating in one of the surveys conducted.

Rodda Ouma
Kris York
Maria Idis Garcia Martinez
Allison DuPont
Denise Moncol
Jennifer Cash
Wendy Zuluaga
Sarah Crinkley
Michelle Llana
Megan Bridgers
April Strader
Brionna Owens
Ashley Thomas
Jordan Stewart
Katie Riggs
Mary Rawls
Sarah Johnson
Jessica Dzeskewicz
Katy Browning
Mara Davis
Allison Pappas
Lindsay Faith Fields
Andrea McKerlie
Allison May
Elizabeth Marshall
Hannah Palko
Jessica Griffin
Jessica Allen,
Collins Crowe
Dana Barrentine
Alyssa Villaseñor
Michelle Henderson
Tierra Morrisey

Education Is Key to Effecting Change for Women

Sally McCormick, Adjunct Faculty, Department of Communication and Performing Arts

As I am writing this, the Nov. 6 general election is still a few days away, so I don't know the outcome of the national, state and local races. I don't have the opportunity to encourage you to vote. I can't try to influence your opinions in any way. But what I can do is tell you how important it is for women to be educated on the issues – whether it's an election year or not.

About a year and a half ago, I helped form an organization called TrustWomenNC. Our mission is to educate, engage and advocate for women on the issues that unite us. Part of the impetus for starting TrustWomenNC was realizing that many women are unaware of or uneducated about the issues, especially at the state level, that personally affect them.

TrustWomenNC was formed by women for women. We recognize that many women aren't interested in partisan politics and just want a source of information on issues that are important to them. Our goal is to be that trusted source.

While every issue is a woman's issue – from the economy to the environ-

ment to education—TrustWomenNC chooses only a few issues to highlight at any given time on our website, www.trustwomennc.org. Currently, we are featuring reproductive health care, voter rights, human rights and marriage equality, and budget cuts. For each issue, we discuss legislation that has been introduced related to these issues in North Carolina. We include suggested action items and related articles of interest.

In addition to our website, we use "house parties" to provide comfortable environments where women can talk about issues with each other and with N.C. policymakers.

While TrustWomenNC is nonpartisan – meaning we don't endorse specific candidates or political parties – we do have opinions about what we think is in the best overall interest for women. We trust women to make the right choices for themselves – the male-dominated government should not be making some of our most personal decisions for us or dictating the decision-making process.

We recognize that women represent

54 percent of the registered voters in North Carolina. We have the numbers to make a real difference for women – from nondiscrimination in the workplace to the ability to make our own health-care decisions to ensuring our children have access to health insurance and a good education.

Regardless of the outcome of this week's elections, I encourage you to become more engaged in learning about the issues that are important to you. Whether it's access to contraceptives or legal recognition of your committed relationship or getting paid the same as your male counterparts, education is key to effecting change.

Don't be lulled into thinking you only need to be watching out for the best interests of yourself and other women in election years – this is an ongoing effort that requires diligence, perseverance and education.

Remember, we have the power to make a difference on policies that affect women in North Carolina and across the country. Exercise it!

Cousin Lost: Facebook Found

Lindsey Skowron, contributing writer

My mother is one of 5 children. Out of those 5, there are only 4 children. I am one of the 4. I grew up knowing that I had 3 first cousins but had only known one. My mother's oldest brother suffered from alcoholism and had lived on the West Coast for many years. I had only met him once that I remembered and when he died a year later, I thought my chances of ever meeting my cousins had died with him. I knew the name of my cousins and thought on a whim that I would look up the one closest in age to myself: Chris. Well facebook came through and I found him and we started to communicate through messages over about 2 years. We had so much to talk about and catch up on. He was a pilot in the Air Force like his father and met the love of his life in training. She too was a pilot and they became engaged. When I was invited to the wedding I was excited, but nervous. Not only would I be meeting my first cousins for the first time but also my uncle's ex wife. There was a whole branch of the family that I had never known and it made me feel sad and as if many years were lost.

I could not let an opportunity like this pass me by so I knew that I had to go to the wedding, and thankfully my mother, her sister and brother could go as well to represent our side of the family. I found out shortly before the wedding that since my uncle lived in Littleton, Colorado, my cousin at-

tended the infamous Columbine High School. He had gone home for lunch that fateful day and that is what most likely saved his life. At the wedding we were sitting behind a couple that we learned were the parents of my cousin's best friend who was killed in Columbine. They kept in touch with Chris over the years and wanted to share in his joys the way their son would have. It was touching and heartbreaking at the same time. The first time my cousin and I spoke was after he had taken his vows and was in his Air Force uniform. He was choking and I offered him my drink which he not only accepted but asked to keep. It was obvious we were family since he was already comfortable enough to drink after me! He had a son from a previous marriage whom I also met. I was seated at a table with my mother and her family and my other first cousin, Chris' older sister. We had years to catch up on talked all through dinner.

Chris had honored the memory of his father by displaying his picture and the flag that was placed on his casket. It was a beautiful tribute and we all felt that he would have been so proud of his son. When our Grandmother died more than 10 years ago and we were cleaning out her stuff, I found a letter that his father wrote more than 40 years ago about meeting his mother. It seemed odd that I kept the letter but now I know that I was supposed

to hold on to it until I would meet my cousin and present him with it. He did not have many memories of his father and it felt wonderful to be able to give him something of his father's. It was truly amazing the way everything came together in way that no one could have predicted 10 years ago. When Chris and his new wife Paige had their first dance, my mother and her sister had tears in their eyes because Chris looked so handsome and happy, just like their brother Danny did.

**Have an
opinion?
Story idea?
Gripe?**

Submit to the Herald.

herald@email.meredith.edu