



THE



# REPORTER

*Spring 2025*  
*Issue II*

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*Defying norms, defining self*

# Editorial Yearbook Letter



EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, ALI BURGESS '25

I write this letter to you all as, well, many things; a graduating Hatter, a soon to be former Editor-in-Chief, a former Executive Editor of Touchstone, a goth, a big hearted sentimental and most importantly a different person than when I first entered Stetson four years ago. In the four years here, I expanded my personhood, surpassing ceilings I previously thought to be completely out of my reach, out of my comfort zone and out of my character. I know what it means to be changed by Hatter Network, and the challenges that come with it. From the bottom of my aching heart, every single word I have written, curated and formed for these publications has been a fingerprint of who I am, a little mark to blend who I am and who I have become throughout these years. If you find yourself perusing old copies of *The Reporter*, I encourage you to sit with the editor letters and dance through the editions to watch the growth and flourishing of who we were and who we now are. I always find myself in such a transitional moment in life as I write these letters, so let my overwhelming emo shine as I say that the hidden light in each of you will have its day in the sun. I am undoubtedly grateful I got to soak up the sun so many times with Hatter Network. To Sara, stepping into

this position is scary, truly, but take it as it comes. Walk straight into the fog with courage and love. You will never be led astray if you trust yourself for who you are.

To my future Editorial Board, don't waste your time in the sun and don't lose sight of the powerful underground, your passion. With all my love and adoration, farewell!



EXECUTIVE EDITOR, SARA WARD '27

When I wrote my first letter after stepping into this role, I talked about creating something great, embracing new adventures, and my gratitude to you — the readers — for sticking with me as I figured out how on earth I was supposed to run an entire magazine. But you all stuck with me. This year, we had our adventures — some familiar, some that pushed us beyond our comfort zones. Ultimately, we fused both safety and risk to truly uncover the underground, what lies beneath the surface. As someone who functions on, like... three hours of sleep (which, to be clear, I do **not** recommend — God himself created the universe in six days and still managed to rest on the seventh, you can and should get some sleep), I've learned to notice things. The little things. The overlooked things. The things that make us different — and, often, the same. So, as I take off my Executive Editor hat

and pass the torch, I leave you with this: pay attention. To the people, places, and moments you might normally overlook. You never know what might change your life. For me, it was *The Reporter*. A special thank you to Mrs. P, Eli, Olena, Alex and my super-slay staff for their support on this journey. Well, it's been fun, but I've got to go. Thanks for the mems, I suppose. Signing off.



MANAGING EDITOR, REAGAN SHIVERS '27

The past two years with *The Reporter* have been anything but boring. I started as the News Editor in my sophomore year with no prior knowledge of AP style writing or journalistic flair. Now, as the Managing Editor, I still have to reference the AP Stylebook every time I write a sentence, but I do it with managerial confidence. My journey with *The Reporter* was unexpected—sometimes unhinged—but it has always been interesting. My time on the staff has taught me to explore my interests and learn what feels right. I am grateful for the opportunities to develop my photography skills and showcase my work on some of the magazine covers, to improve my casual writing skills and to learn how to ask the right questions. And, I'm even more grateful to pass the baton to someone who has an overwhelming passion for writing

stories that matter. It's been a bumpy ride, sometimes a slog. Sometimes an endless race to the next deadline, but it's been a formative two years of my life. To you, the reader, your task is to trust yourself, trust your decisions, and learn what feels right for you.



CREATIVE DIRECTOR, MICHELLE MARSHALL '25

During my time at Hatter Network, I've made some incredible connections. The community here is filled with talent, and the environment we've fostered is truly something special. We work as a team to bring ideas to life. As Creative Director, I've had the unique opportunity to collaborate with my peers, shape the layout and design of *The Reporter* magazine, and support the work of our other branches. Now, as I graduate, I find myself reflecting on how newly founded the Creative Team still is—we're just beginning to carve out our own niche in the community. But I have faith in my successor, Maria. Look out, Hatters—she's a designer with passion and will bring her own ideas to the team. She's been a dedicated staff member and consistently brings polished, thoughtful designs to the table. My friends, you are all in good hands. As always, have fun and stay CREATIVE!

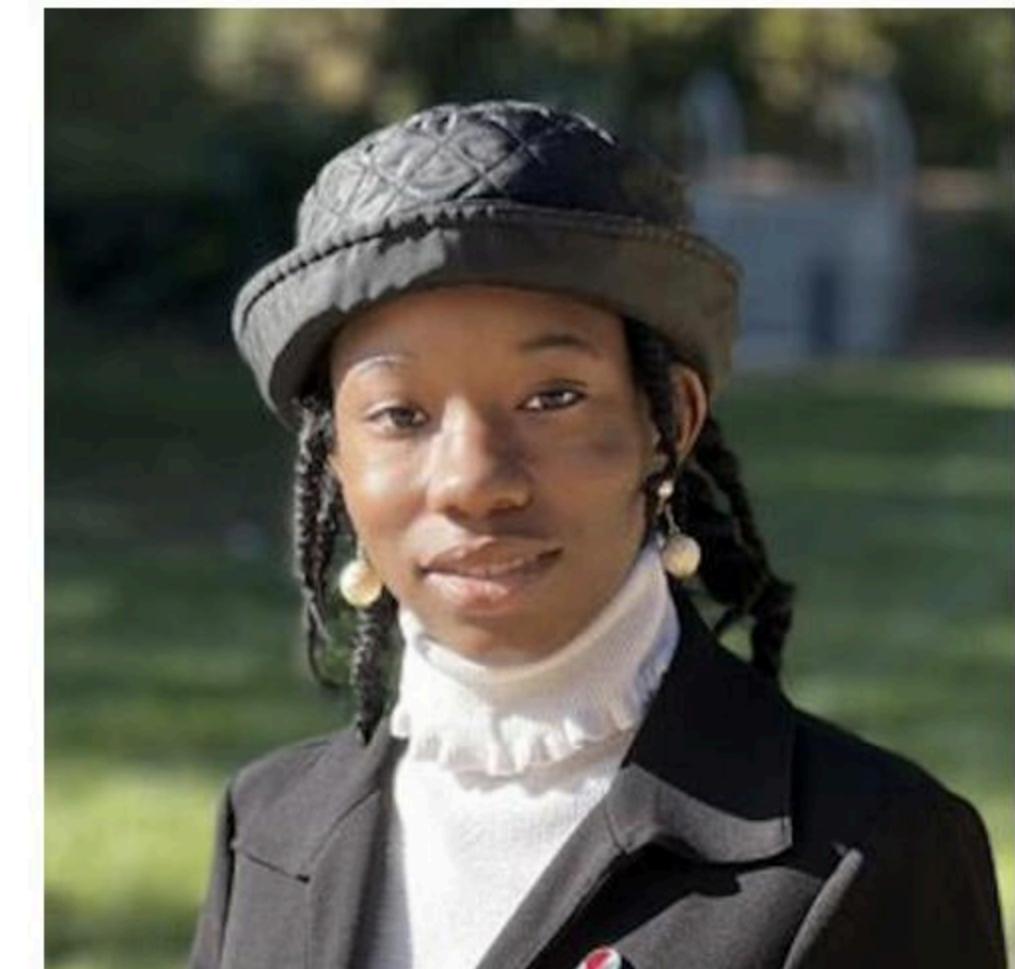
# EDITORS



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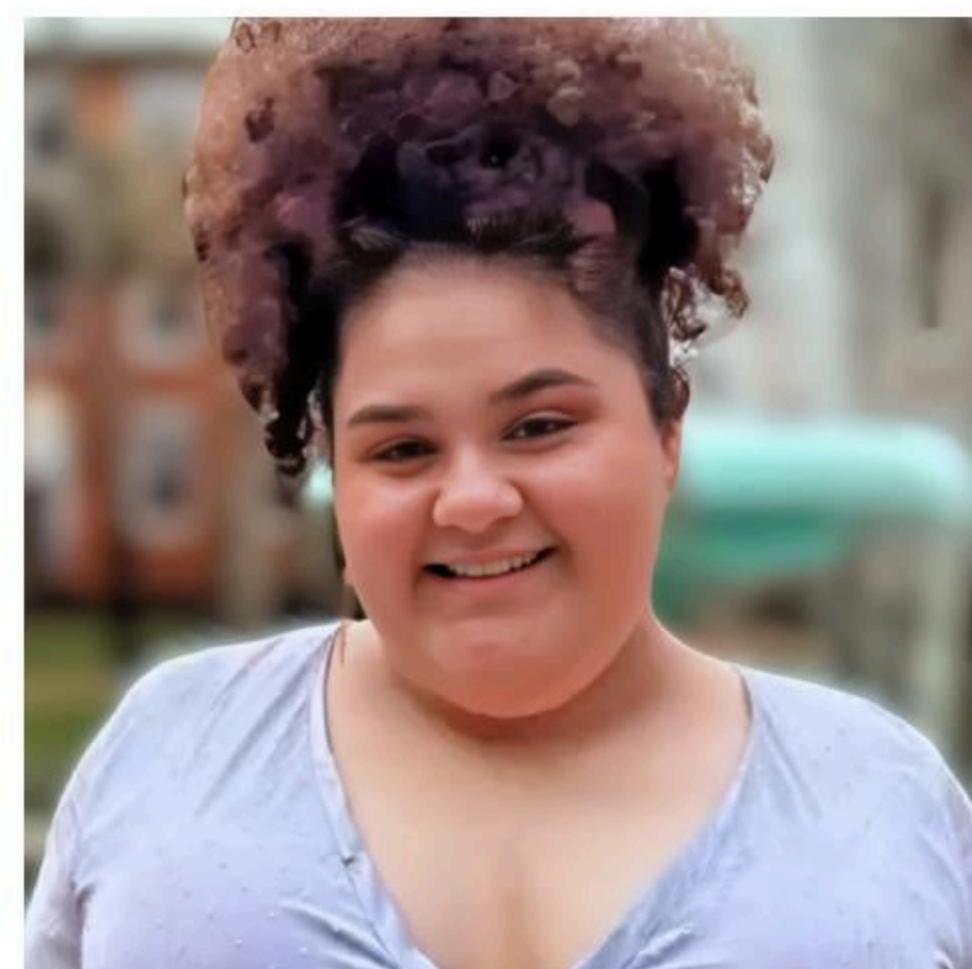
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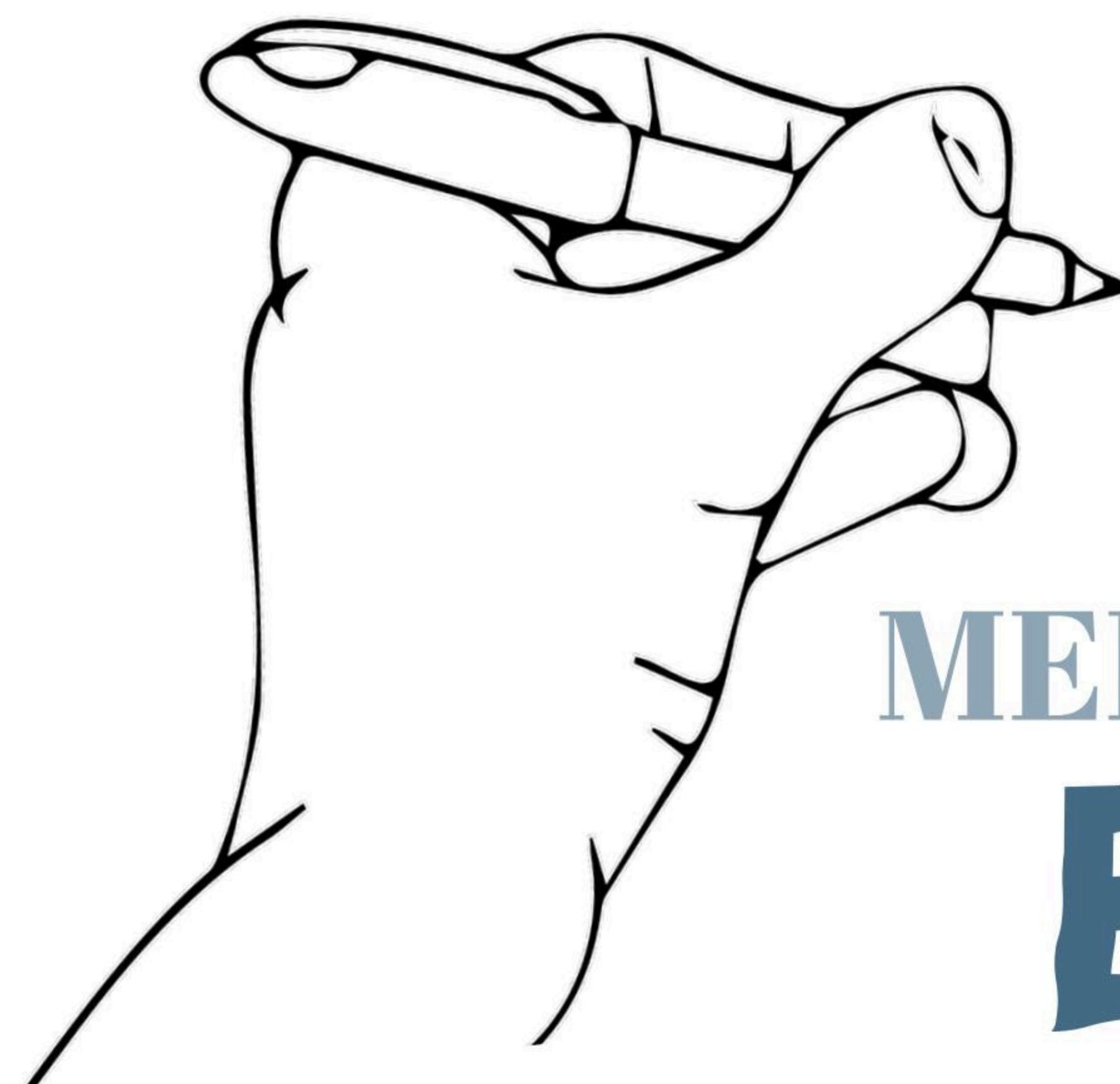
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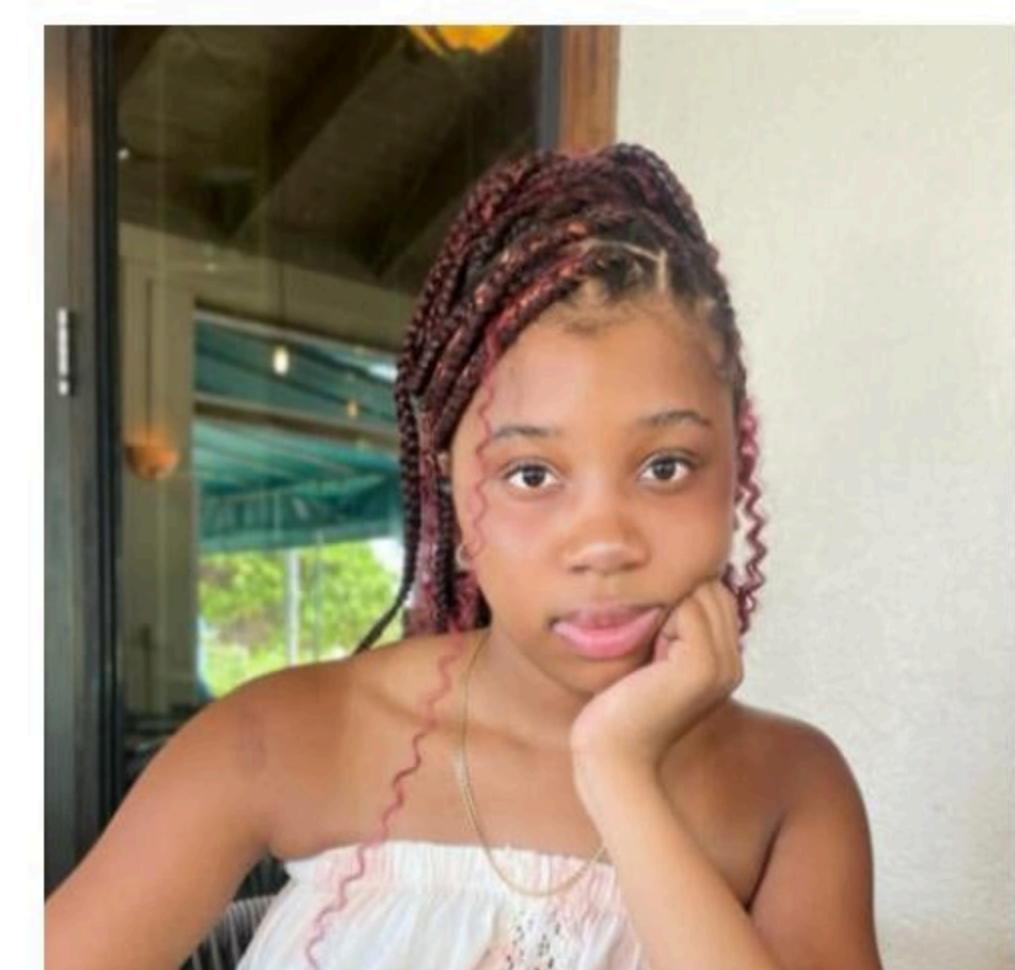
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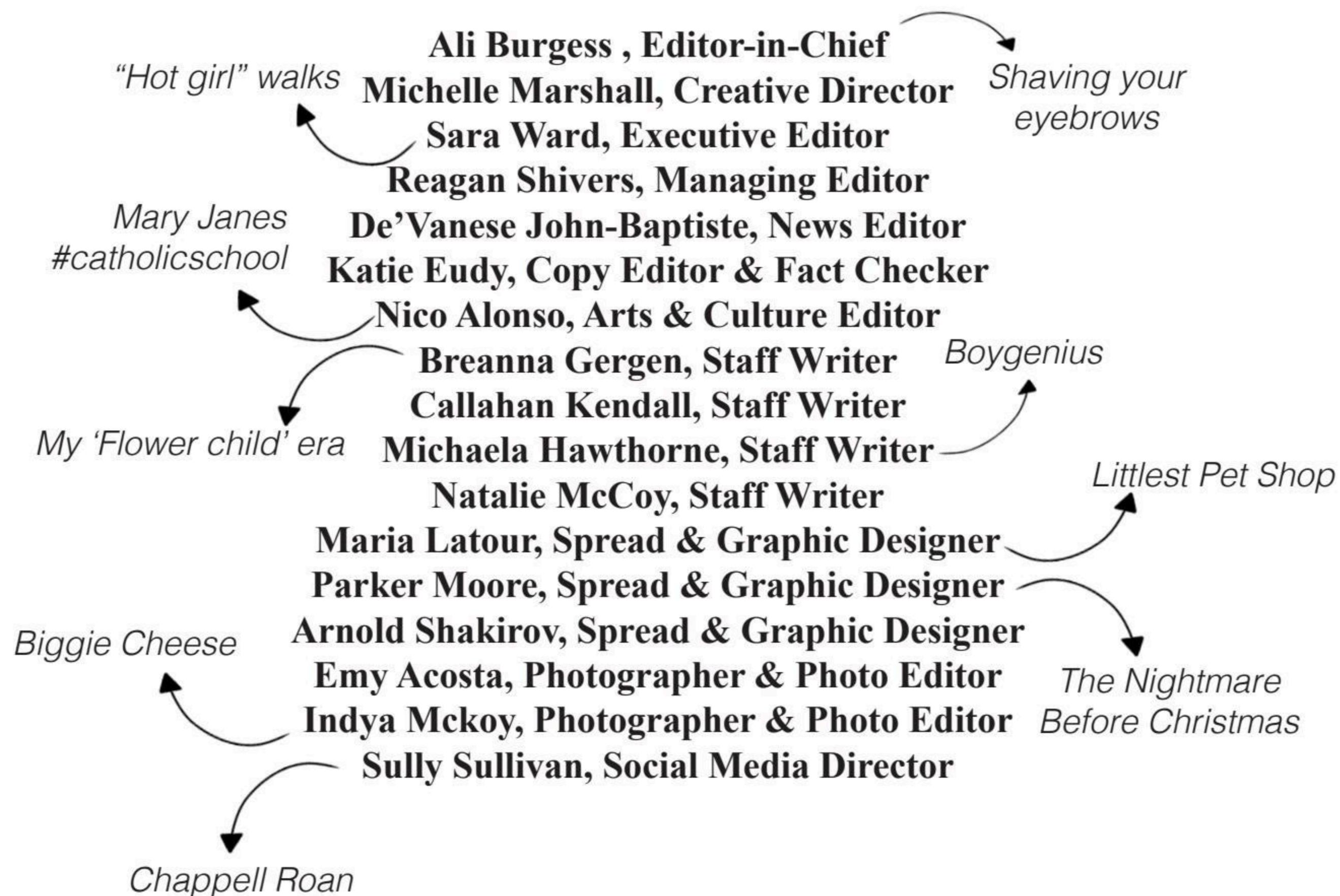
MEET OUR  
**EDITORS**



**De'Vanese John-Baptiste**  
*News Editor*

# The Reporter

What's something you were  
into before it was cool?



## JOINING US

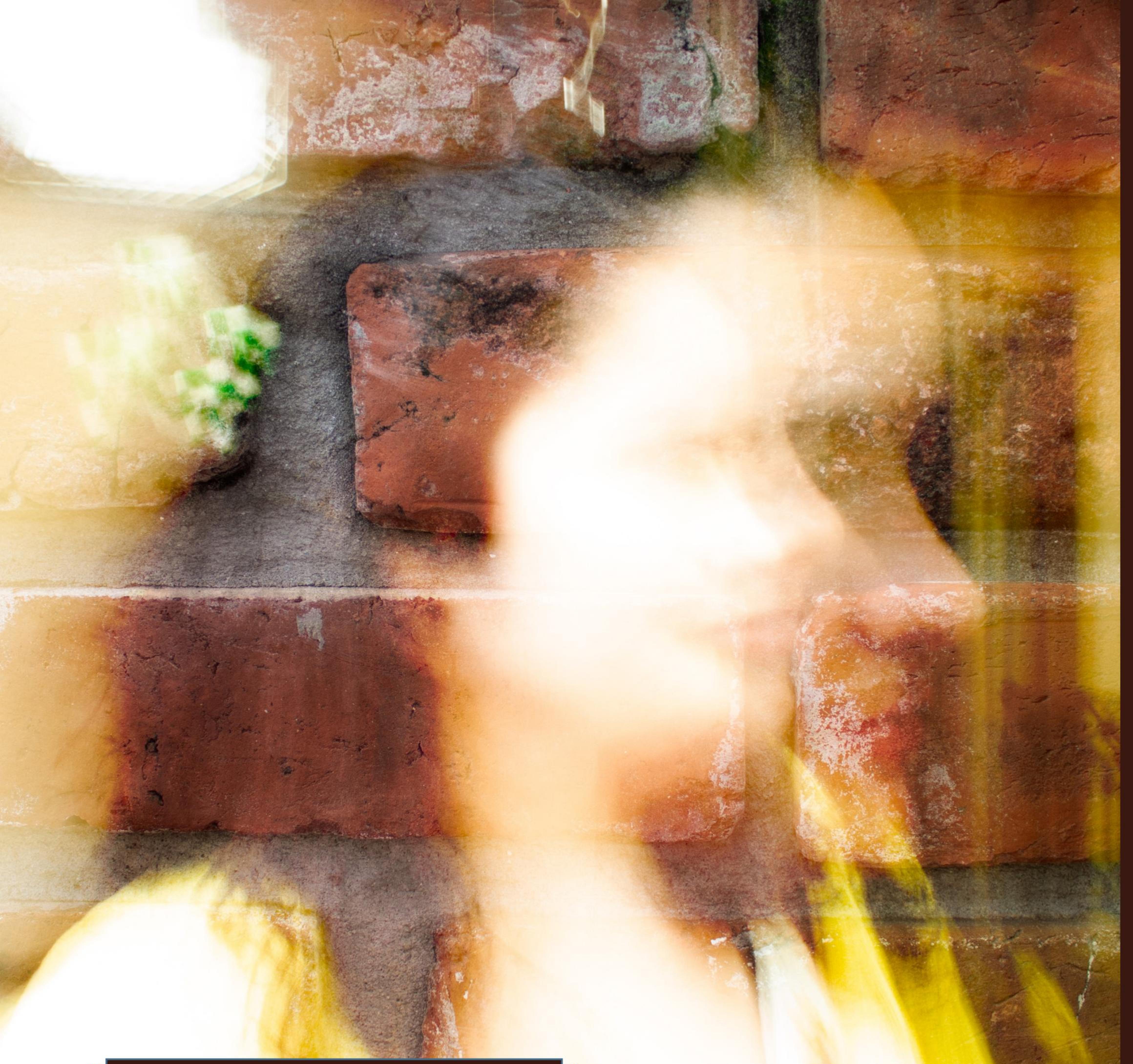
When it comes to joining Hatter Network, we are never not excited about someone wanting to join our ranks. If you want to write, The Reporter is the place. If you like to appreciate art, music and writing, Touchstone Literary Arts Journal is where it's at. If you want to create your own podcast, or learn how to use the tech in our radio station, WHAT Radio is there. Hatter Network is an extracurricular media program run by students, for students, to provide them with the information we think they need to know, or an outlet for their creative endeavors.

If you're interested in getting involved, please email our Editor-in-Chief, Ali Burgess, at [ajburgess@stetson.edu](mailto:ajburgess@stetson.edu) or apply on Engage.

## ABOUT US

The Reporter, as part of Hatter Network, is the oldest collegiate magazine in the state of Florida. We publish four times per year, twice per semester. Florida Sun Printing prints 300 copies per issue on 8.5 x 11 inch, 80# Gloss Test. Most body text is set at 11 point Adobe Garamond Pro or Times New Roman with 13 point leading set with a combination of regular, italic and bold. All pages are designed using Adobe Creative Suite Photoshop, Illustrator, and InDesign. For additional information please visit [hatternetwork.com](http://hatternetwork.com).

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25

**\_underGROUND: Finding  
Personal Identity in an  
Increasingly Conservative  
College Culture**

*Defying norms, defining self*

Front Cover:  
Photographer, Reagan Shivers ('26)  
Model, Sean Kurtz ('26)

Photographer, Indya Mckoy ('26)  
Model, Maria Latour ('26)

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*Defying norms, defining self*

# GROUND breaking

## THE RECONSTRUCTION OF HULLEY TOWER

Written & Photography by Sara Ward  
Graphics & Layout by Parker Moore

HONORING THE PAST, UNITING THE PRESENT AND  
BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

I know, I know what you're thinking — \$6.7 million for a tower? Seriously?

On Feb. 24, the groundbreaking ceremony for Hulley Tower's reconstruction kicked off, marking the start of a project originally meant to honor Stetson's second president, Lincoln Hulley.

In this photo essay, I won't try to convince you to care

— but I will show you what this reconstruction means to so many, past and present, in both the Stetson and DeLand communities.

This is more than just another study or hangout spot. "This will be a space for us to gather, celebrate, and remember," Chaplain Todd Campbell said at



The ceremony. Among those remembered are Scotty Fenlon, Dennis Long, and Katharine “Katy” Resnik, who lost their lives during a 1979 study abroad trip to Innsbruck, Austria. These individuals (left) Jill Jinks, Mildred Spaulding, Paul Nick, Michelle Blank and Karen Roberts were with Scotty, Dennis, and Katy on that trip. Clay Long (right) was Dennis’ brother. Featured in the Remembering Innsbruck

documentary, this group traveled back to Innsbruck to honor their lost friends last summer and played a key role in making Hulley Tower a reality. In this photo, they take a significant step in preserving their memory by breaking ground on this space of remembrance.

The Innsbruck study abroad program remains a cornerstone of Stetson summers. “It’s about the future,”



Dr. John Tichenor, business professor and current lead of the program said. “It’s about all these students here. It’s about the students that will come beyond.” Among these are Innsbruck program student leaders Joe and John Owen, who helped break ground on the new tower. “I’m so excited to see this tower built, it’s gonna be so awesome,” Joe said.

And if you won’t take my word for it, take John’s: “The foundational element behind it all is the collective sense

of community...we’re all interconnected and building this tower not only affirms Stetson’s commitment to that community, it gives us a chance to recognize our inherent value and to not let our stories be lost in time.” Long story short, this tower matters to people. Just look at how happy President Roellke and his wife, Kim, are — gleefully throwing dirt at this reporter.

Dr. Jill Jinks, an alumna and key advocate for the project, was part of the 1979 Innsbruck trip. Here she is

seen throwing dirt with fellow alumna Michelle Blank. "This is probably my 300th draft at this moment. I don't know how we got here," she said. "We rarely get to be part of something bigger than us—and in this case, much bigger than us."

Three bells will memorialize Dennis, Katy, and Scotty, with others sponsored by Stetson community members, symbolizing unity. "You already know you love everyone in this place," Jinks said. "I hope that will be part of Hulley Tower's story and that those bells last

a thousand years. Love is infinite in all its dimensions. Hulley Tower is our place of love. And yes, everything you need is already inside you... so let's go play in the dirt."

Thus, this project ultimately honors the past and lays the foundation for a future that will soon ring out across campus. Once a beloved gathering place, Hulley Tower's bells echoed through DeLand for generations. Soon, they will again.





Written & Photography by Reagan Shivers  
Graphics & Layout by Maria Latour

# GALLERY DUPONT

Showcases Student Art  
and Curation

In case you haven't looked up during your late-night library lock-ins, Gallery Dupont is dazzling the second floor with student-led art exhibitions. The Gallery Dupont is a space where students, faculty, staff and alumni can display their visual art and even curate exhibits. Although the gallery has been around since 2021, students may have noticed its frequent exhibits this year.

Curator Sierra Rouse '25 talked through some of the exhibitions run during the Spring '25 semester. "We've done one solo exhibition with Arnold Shakirov, a Computer Science and Digital Arts major," Rouse said. "I was able to co-curate, because it was his first time curating an exhibition." The exhibit, which was titled "Elizabeth Hall: Reimagined," was on display from Jan. 28 to Feb. 7. It featured images of a 3D rendering of the iconic Elizabeth Hall, but instead of its usual sunny atmosphere Shakirov gave it a wintery glow, meant to highlight the coziness of the building and its classrooms.

"Then there was Heritage in Color," Rouse continued. "That was the second part of the Heritage in Color series for Black History Month, and that featured alumni, faculty, and current students." For this exhibition, Rouse collaborated with the African Students Union, Black Student Union and the Marchman Program to create the first Black History Month exhibit hosted by Gallery Dupont. The different pieces in the exhibition carried themes of resilience, beauty, injustice and faith. Stetson alumna Jodi-Ann Taylor '24 performed original music at the artist talk, combining the visual and auditory to create a multidimensional experience.

The third exhibition for the Spring semester is "She Creates, She Inspires: A Celebration of Women's History Month." Rouse curated this exhibit in collaboration with Stetson's chapter of Tri Alpha and the Stetson Women's Basketball team. The different pieces on exhibit, such as a portrait of Stetson's women's basketball coach Lynn Bria, are

## GALLERY DUPONT

### SHE CREATES. SHE INSPIRES.



Portrait of Sierra Rouse '25, Curator of the exhibition. Photo: Courtesy of Sierra Rouse '25.



Elizabeth Hall: Reimagined, Arnold Shakirov, 2024  
Oil on Linen, 30x20 in.



Women's Basketball, Sierra Rouse '25  
Oil on Linen, 20x20 in.



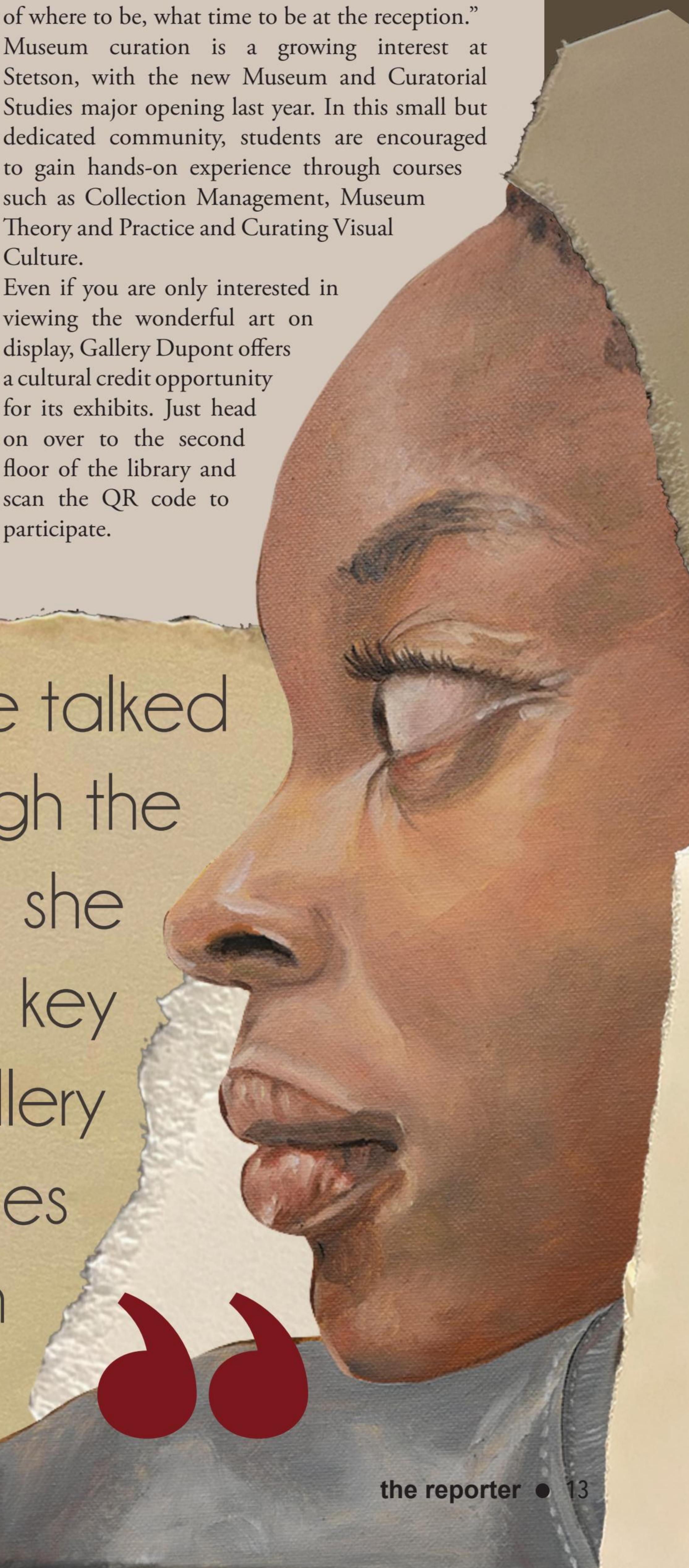
meant to celebrate and inspire women on campus. If you find yourself interested in the exhibits but lacking the artistic skill, there are other ways to get a piece of the action. After Rouse talked through the exhibitions, she underlined a key feature of Gallery Dupont: galleries are more than just the art. As curator, Rouse undergoes a long series of tasks behind the scenes to make things happen.

"You first have to create a timeline of when an exhibit will be aligning with the Hand Art Center's current schedules and the library's schedule, then I pick partners to collaborate with," Rouse explained. "Then I reach out to people that I know may be interested in participating in an exhibit. So, there's a lot of back and forth with emails, then creating a flyer, booking the gallery, booking the place where the artist talk will take place, and making sure that all stakeholders are well informed

of where to be, what time to be at the reception." Museum curation is a growing interest at Stetson, with the new Museum and Curatorial Studies major opening last year. In this small but dedicated community, students are encouraged to gain hands-on experience through courses such as Collection Management, Museum Theory and Practice and Curating Visual Culture.

Even if you are only interested in viewing the wonderful art on display, Gallery Dupont offers a cultural credit opportunity for its exhibits. Just head on over to the second floor of the library and scan the QR code to participate.

“After Rouse talked through the exhibitions, she underlined a key feature of Gallery Dupont: galleries are more than just the art.”





Written by Natalie Reese McCoy  
Graphics & Layout by Arnold Shakirov

## **Down the Rabbit Hole: Burrow Press Helps Stetson Students Unearth the Publishing Wonderland**

Burrow Press is the March Hare to Stetson University's Mad Hatters. Founded in 2010 by Stetson University Master of Fine Arts (MFA) alumnus, Ryan Rivas, this literary publisher produces award-winning collections of poetry and prose which, in the words of Rivas, include, but are certainly not limited to, "absurdist short stories about fatherhood, retellings of fairy tales in Florida folklore, the queering of the Florida man myth in poetry form," in print and online through the BP Review. Burrow Press partners with

Stetson University by providing MFA and undergraduate students a comprehensive overview of the literary publishing industry, what it looks like to edit a manuscript and publish a book, and how to participate in the local literary community as educated literary citizens through readings, discussions and creative writing publishing projects. These experiential learning opportunities patch the educational gap between the theory and the practice of publishing at Stetson University.

## **Curiouser and Curiouser**

In 2019, Burrow Press was in search of a new home, fresh soil to settle in where the literary publisher could focus on publishing while continuing to serve the larger literary community. As an alumnus, Rivas swiftly recognized that Stetson's MFA program "did not have a literary magazine or literary press at all," Rivas said, "and so we kind of were fit into a missing piece that was waiting to be filled" Rivas said. Now, Burrow Press's affiliation with Stetson University allows students who are curious about publishing firsthand learning opportunities in abundance.

"One of the values of the press being at the university isn't to publish students or faculty," Rivas specified, "but to be, particularly for

the MFA program... a publishing resource." Students in the MFA program attend quarterly panels on publishing where they may engage with guest professionals and ask questions about publishing in their field of focus, poetry or prose. Burrow Press also hosts an annual "submission party" for creative writing-inclined students who are not necessarily looking to publish but hoping to learn etiquette for submitting pieces to the publishing world. "Students can come and ask questions about what editors are looking for, how they submit their work, and how they figure out where they want to send their work," Rivas said. For intrigued undergraduates, Rivas teaches a class called Workshop in Literary Citizenship and Publishing, every fall semester.



## **Going Back to Burrow Press's Roots**

A little over 15 years ago, "Burrow Press started as a publisher that became more responsive to the local literary community," Rivas said. He and co-founder Jana Waring originally hoped that Burrow Press would help them to meet like-minded writers from Central Florida. Even the literary publisher's name had what Rivas described as a "mundane and silly" origin story. Amidst a brainstorm of other ideas, Rivas "asked Jana what her favorite writer was... and she said, 'Augustine Burroughs,' who was a memoirist at the time, [and] had a popular book out," Rivas began. "I was like, 'Okay, Burroughs... Well, what about Burrow [Press]? ...And we'll spell it like 'burrow'?'"

It was not until Rivas and Waring decided they would publish an anthology of ten fictional short stories by Florida writers and host an event celebrating that Burrow Press

blossomed into so much more. "A bunch of people came out. We did not expect that," Rivas admitted with a chuckle. "Writers came out, their friends came out - their friends happened to also be writers. They understood what a literary press did, and there really wasn't one in Orlando and there hadn't really been one, and so this community formed around this first book." Inspired by this community, Rivas invented a retrospective rationale for Burrow Press's name: "Writers are known to kind of burrow themselves away. Reading and writing are both solitary practices, but we were so community engaged. I always thought, 'well, you can't burrow very far in Florida before hitting water,' so you're forced out into the world... creating this literary community and these events and things around the publishing company as well."

## Sowing Seeds at Stetson University

Not only has Burrow Press' collaboration with Stetson University fostered flowering relationships with the Master of Fine Arts program, English and Creative Writing departments and the Homer and Dolly Hand Art Center, but it has also created a literary community of knowledge amongst students and professors that Rivas confessed was lacking in his education.

"Many, many, many years ago, I felt the 'what to do after graduating with my creative writing degree'" angst, "and what the publishing world looked like was very opaque and mysterious. I didn't get any practical

real-world experience or advice," Rivas said. "With Burrow Press being at Stetson, I really get to, in a more consistent and formal way, peel back the curtain of what publishing is to both the MFA and the undergraduate students via my class, and that's really rewarding to me because it is something I never felt I had when I was an undergrad."

Rivas's philosophy for students interested in publishing is simple: "You have to start somewhere, right? And you should probably start where you're at." Unearth the publishing wonderland at Stetson University with Burrow Press.



# CRAMMING ISN'T JUST FOR ESSAYS

Written by De'Vanese John-Baptiste  
Graphics & Layout by Maria Latour

Fusing work, hobbies and academics is an intimidating task for even the most disciplined of academics. With 24 hours in a day, Stetson makes the temptation to get overloaded



## 60 SECONDS, 20 CALLS,

## AND 15 HOURS ON-DUTY

A ton can happen between sunrise and sunset. Few people know this better than Stetson's Resident Assistants (RAs). Clocking in at 4:30p.m. and staying on edge until 8:00a.m. the next day. Bruno Soto '26, a lead RA reflected, "My favorite thing about being an RA is working with the people on the team because RA teams are pretty close. There's a lot of solidarity amongst having to put up with the same kind of nonsense." Soto however is not ignorant to the role's

**I THINK THE LEAST FAVORITE PART [OF BEING AN RA] IS THAT NONSENSE. SOMETIMES RESIDENTS CAN BE A LITTLE UNPREDICTABLE**

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inherent challenges, he conceded "I think the least favorite part [of being an RA] is that nonsense. Sometimes residents can be a little unpredictable. Some of them may have medical emergencies, others might...have lockouts at 3 am when you're sleeping for an exam tomorrow."

Mia Woollens '27, an RA for Area 4 on-

campus, adds insight into the experience. "I think that both positions really teach you skills in different areas." Woollens further elaborated, "I know, for RA, [the position is], it's very focused on like time management and, you know, caring for others, [and] with intramurals [there is a focus on] humility, assertiveness, confidence." Not only does Woollens take on the task of RA on Sunday night, but on Mondays through Thursdays she takes on the task of intramural referee.

## LATE NIGHTS AT RINKER

Being an intramural referee can be a daunting task to take on at the beginning of your college career. When asked what sparked this decision Woollens shared, "I did the summer orientation with Stetson in...Summer 2023, and I went to, like, a little info session, and they had intramurals there. And I was like, 'Oh, this looks really fun...How can I get involved?" She took the initiative of reaching out to the Assistant Director of Wellness and Recreation, Travis Potter, who agreed to set up a time for her to interview. The rest is Hatter History. Lauren Atkins '25 is also familiar with

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the busy lives of Wellness and Recreation employees. As one of the Hollis Center's building managers. Atkins said, "During intramural games, there's probably more than 80 people, 90 people, inside the field house every night." She admitted that the balance can be difficult to find. "I've had to completely flip my schedule around... to fit all of the time I need to study, do homework," Atkins shared. "I'm up pretty early in the morning, and then when you work late at night, it's like you're going to bed at 11, 12, o'clock."

## BAKING OUR CAKE AND DROPPING IT TOO

When people ask, "How do you get it all done?" the appropriate response is humble platitudes and general advice. However, appropriateness has never been the niche of college students. Instead when faced with this question, we may be tempted to flash a mile-long to-do list or recount the last time we slept. In the middle of "the grind", temporary reprieves may come in the form

of sweet treats from the coffee shop or in the case of Aviv Maddron '26, a Publix cake.

After a difficult stint at a fast food chain, he had to learn some difficult lessons about the ways the night shift and academics can intertwine. "The store would close at either 2 or 3 am," Maddron said, "but like, cleaning staff, we'd be leaving after that, like, four

sometimes five o'clock in the morning." Due to early morning classes, this schedule did not set him up for success. He confided, "Every other week I was sick because I wasn't sleeping enough, wasn't eating enough." This is only one testament to how this schedule negatively impacted both their health and GPA.

Maddron, a fairly recent Publix hire in December of 2023, has been reaping the benefits of good management. With this

new leadership Maddron expressed that his concerns were heard, which is not something he experienced under prior employment. He recommended that other full-time students not be afraid to communicate their workload to employers. In fact, "communicate with your management on getting better hours for the weeks you have tests or finals," Maddron suggested.



## SMALL FINANCIAL LINE BETWEEN LOVE AND HATE

Regardless of whether you can take the late-night hours head-on or if you need to depend on a strong dose of caffeine, it's clear college students run on an unusual biological clock. Many of us may be like Maddron, who said, "If I had it my way, I would be in bed at eight o'clock every night." Despite this, we recognize that college is a part of our formative years, and the pressure is on. Part of this pressure is financial. "If you're like, trying to pay through college, you gotta pass college to actually get a real job... [or] a better job at least," Maddron said. It's easy to forget in the middle of the chaos that if our goal is to physically walk the stage and receive the diploma we worked so hard for, we will have to do more than keep ourselves together academically.

Finding ways to care for our physical and mental health, in the midst of a crazy collegiate schedule, may be one of the last things on your to-do list. The great thing is that they can be incorporated into your must-do's! This can look like taking a break in between classes to yourself or can look like Woollens' Sunday nights. "I have a lot of free time but I have to stay on campus when I'm on duty. So I take that time to,

you know, like reset for the week," Woollens shared. "You know, clean up my room, clean up my space, make sure that all my academics are done."

Atkins also highlights a way that you can take a breather, within the work itself, stating, "I really enjoy my morning and afternoon shifts. Normally, those are the times when everybody is in class, or...you have your same people who come in every day, so you know that ...nothing bad is gonna ultimately happen. So there's a little bit of peace during those shifts." Regardless of whether you're on the clock or on your second Celsius, finding the right schedule and time to breathe is key to after-hours success.

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Written & Photography by Breanna Gergen  
Graphics & Layout by Michelle Marshall

# Side Quest at Sidecar: Ampersand with Professor Leah Sandler

Located in downtown DeLand, ‘Sidecar’ is a hidden gem. Half coffee shop, half lounge, the space is decked in colorful wallpaper and cozy reading nooks — even offering jewelry, clothes and trinkets for sale. After stumbling upon the shop, Professor Leah Sandler, who teaches a culmination of arts classes at Stetson, made it her go-to spot. I sat down with her at Sidecar to get her perspective on how local hangouts can be vital for both professors and students—and how these shared spaces form the lifeblood of small communities.

## **HOW DID YOU DISCOVER SIDECAR, AND HOW IS IT AN OUTLET FOR YOU?**

I actually came to Sidecar on one of my very first trips to DeLand when I knew I would be moving here, before I even started working at Stetson. I had just picked up the keys to my new rental house, and [I] walked along Woodland, [I] stumbled upon it and happened to walk in. That first time [I] dropped in spontaneously and thought it was a cute place. I always have my eyes out for cute spots like this one.

## **IN WHAT WAYS, AS A PROFESSOR HERE AT STETSON, DO YOU UTILIZE “UNDERGROUND” SPOTS LIKE SIDECAR? WOULD YOU SAY IT AIDS YOU IN LESSON PLANNING?**

As an art professor specifically, a big part of my pedagogical approach is community building. I don't like to view students as being completely separated or isolated for myself as a professor, so it was really important for me to find a





gathering place that felt democratic in that way. In the classroom, it's designed so that there is an obvious hierarchy. Whereas in a coffee shop, everyone can sit in a circle or at tables and communicate as equals without that hierarchical structure. Approaching the arts and creating things, I think being able to communicate like that is really valuable. I come here to work on lesson plans and occasionally grade, but I feel like most of the time it's to gather with friends and other professors. I meet with other professors here pretty frequently. One of the cool things is that Deland is small and fairly walkable. So a lot of the time, I'll drop by and see people spontaneously. I think that is a really special thing about this part of town.

***ARE THERE ANY OTHER HIDDEN GEMS ON OR NEAR CAMPUS WHERE YOU ENJOY PERSONAL R&R?***

For food, I would say Pervaf's Kitchen is amazing and somewhat new. It is in the Artisan Alley area and it's a

takeout kitchen with unique hours. There is a nice sitting area next to it, which you find a lot of in Deland. It has some outdoor spaces where people can gather and not be compelled to behave in a particular way; there can be organic interaction. Another gathering place that doesn't force you to consume or spend money is the Chess courtyard. It is meant for people just to exist and be present without any restraint. Even if it is just something as simple as a couple tables, there needs to be more of that. Steve's Records is also fantastic; I love going in there and looking through the record crates. The collage of posters on the walls is an archive of the live music history in Deland, and it's really worth looking at.

***HOW DO THESE PLACES ADD COLOR TO THE DELAND COMMUNITY?***

Going back to the idea of a third place, a place where people can gather and not be compelled to behave in a particular way. There can be organic interaction. With the town being the size that it is, it does create the sense that as you walk through it, you already know all the hangout spots. There is something very surreal about the way people interact in Deland. I've only lived here two years now...but there is always something going on here, and it really contributes to the color of Deland. It is beautiful to see that type of communication happening between the people in town.

***WHY WOULD YOU ARGUE THERE IS IMPORTANCE IN FINDING PERSONAL RECREATION AND STUDY SPOTS? WHY IS IT SO VITAL?***

Being able to have a place in common with your community, having a shared stake in a place. Especially if that space is something that can help break down hierarchies and create a more level playing field for different values. It is a forum for seeing where the people in your community stand.



Written by Michaela Hawthorne  
Photography by Indya Mckoy  
Graphics & Layout by Maria Latour

# 3 DELAND TATTOO SHOPS will give you a LATE NIGHT BUZZ

Stetson students who enjoy getting tattoos might be looking for an after-hours fix. Whether their packed schedule prevents them from getting a

tattoo during the day, they're simply looking for a late-night thrill, or are somewhere in-between, these three DeLand tattoo shops can hook you up:

## ELECTRIC TRADITION TATTOO

Electric Tradition Tattoo is about an 11 minute drive from campus. On weekdays, the shop is open until 10 p.m. Hours are extended until midnight on Fridays and Saturdays with available walk-in appointments until they close.

Greg Tilson started tattooing around 2016. He currently owns Electric Tradition with his spouse, Kaila Sheppard, who is also a tattoo artist. "It's

not only a lifestyle or a job, it's a craft, and it's something that you never stop growing at," Tilson says. "You never get to be the best. Even the best isn't the best."

The shop offers "a little bit of everything," Tilson says. This includes, traditional Japanese, American traditional, neo-traditional, black and gray, fine-line and illustrative realism.



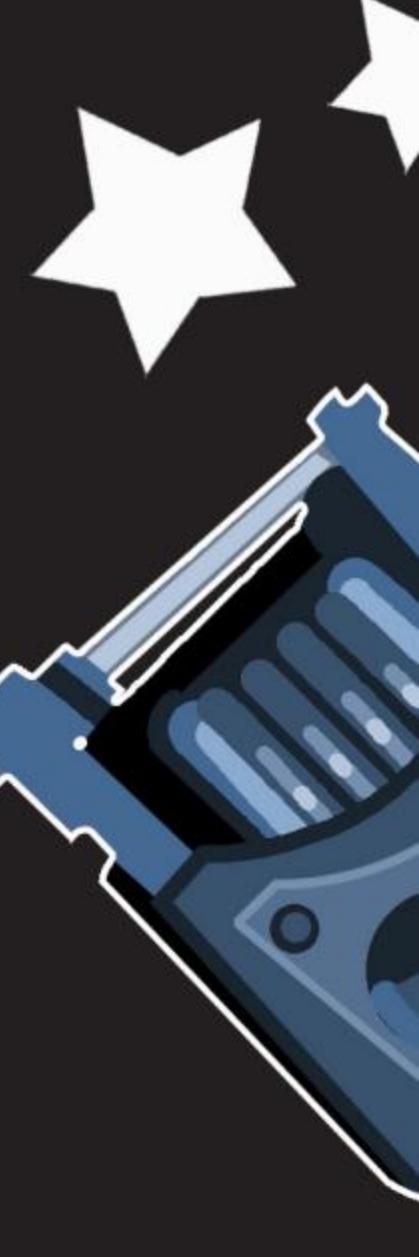
Tilson describes the shop's open floor concept as allowing for open dialogue; with artists and clients intermingling. "Everybody's part of the atmosphere," Tilson says. Sheppard details the shop as, "Laid back, cozy, lounge-y."

Tilson, Sheppard and their apprentices exemplify a large sense of camaraderie and playful conversation. The shop's dark walls pop with the framed collages and flash sheets covering them. Cut-outs of sketches are taped and pinned to walls, creating a charmingly underground, spontaneous feel.

Tilson recommends young adults looking to get

their first tattoo to save space, rather than getting "a bunch of small tattoos that take up all your real estate."

When foregoing this, one can take time to think of Sheppard's recommendation to get timeless tattoos instead of getting pop-culture tattoos and getting too caught up in their meaning. "Traditional tattoos are timeless. They're going to look good over time," Tilson says. "You're not going to look at it 40 years from now and be like, 'Why do I have Lil Wayne on my arm?'"



**TRADITIONAL TATTOOS ARE  
TIMELESS. THEY'RE GOING  
TO LOOK GOOD OVER TIME**



## FLO GROWN TATTOO

Flo Grown Tattoo is about a seven-minute walk from campus. While they are available for walk-in appointments until midnight, it is advised to make an appointment ahead of time as their hours vary.

Brian Taylor, an artist at Flo Grown, was inspired by his tattoo-artist father and uncle to pursue the profession at 16 years old. "[Tattooing] got me into a better world in my mind," Taylor says. He has studied many different tattoo styles and the shop overall offers many styles and forms.

Taylor expresses his desire to create a comfortable

atmosphere for customers. He lets customers choose music to listen to or something to watch on TV, for those who need a distraction from the pain of a tattoo or simply a form of entertainment.

The exterior is adorned with warm, yellow hanging lights, seamlessly blending into the downtown strip of DeLand. The interior has a cooler color scheme, embodying the vibe of tattoo art; the decor, furniture and walls containing black-and-white gradients. Artists have individual rooms to tattoo customers. Taylor decorated his space with things





like a hanging cotton cloud, a Marvel-themed stool and a spray-painted mural he adds to in his free time.

Taylor advises anyone getting a tattoo to “hold onto the design for an entire year” before putting it on your body, and to ensure it is meaningful.

# Liquid Gold Tattoo



Liquid Gold Tattoo is open seven days a week from noon to midnight, about an eight-minute walk from campus.

Eli Tobias, owner of Liquid Gold, says the shop takes pride in providing custom tattoos and walk-ins simultaneously. Tobias says that they can do everything; from black and gray to color, traditional, new school, etc. “That’s kind of the vibe that I wanted this place to have. Somewhere where you could have an itch, [make a] spontaneous trip, find quality, custom artists who could extract ideas out of your mind, bring your vision to life and tattoo you all in one trip.” You can also make an appointment and return later.

“Friendly, inviting, outgoing, and personable are the pillars that I would like this business to always stand on,” Tobias says. His experience owning tattoo shops dates back to 2006, when he opened Black Chapel in Winter Park.

The shop has a vibrant urban design. The brick exterior calls to the downtown environment, while the open interior combines sleek hardwood floors, plush couches and black ceilings with yellow walls covered by colorful art. The art covering the walls is by local artists of central Florida and is all for sale. Tobias says the intention is for the space to partially be an art gallery in the future, and they hope to do monthly artist installations.

Tobias advises young adults to put thought and research into their first tattoo. He recommends students try to consider their potential career paths when getting a tattoo despite the tendency of career paths to change. Though he recommends careful consideration, he sees his tattoos as a page in his life’s history, “Those pages turn, so those pages are behind me. Living with regrets of tattoos is something I don’t really feel.”

In a world where tattoos are less taboo but still have an inherent edge, these shops are the hub for Stetson students wanting to fulfill their indie/underground desires.



# **Underground:** — **Finding Personal Identity** **in an Increasingly** **Conservative College Culture**

Written & Photography by Nico Alonso  
Graphics & Layout by Parker Moore

**B**efore trends hit the mainstream, fashion gets co-opted, concerts sell out, and thrifty trinkets get resold online, there's the underground. The ones who liked it before it was cool — at Stetson, this network of students can seem infinitely large and small, but all exist independently of each other while still being networked through shared interests and hobbies.

From jam sessions to thrifted fits, Stetson's underground scene doesn't wait for permission to express itself and permeate the norm. But in a world where counterculture is always at the teetering edge of becoming the next big thing, cringy or cool, what does it mean to be underground and stay underground?

## ★ Sub, Alt and Counter: What's in your culture?

**S**ubculture, as defined by Merriam-Webster, is “[a] social group exhibiting characteristic patterns of behavior sufficient to distinguish it from others within an embracing culture or society.” In many instances, it is in the interest of artistic expression and separating from norms in fashion and action. Moving away from the boxed-in categories of jocky, preppy and normie, “alt” Hatters will surely be loud and proud of their differences.

While Stetson's alternative community may not be as populous as larger universities, it exists in pockets

across campus where local and campus culture allow these communities to thrive and grow. These small patches of students differ from other universities, however. They do not reside in select cliques of people in the same subculture, but they allow their shared interests to bridge gaps between subcultures from modern indie to goth and Y2k alt, creating a beautiful amalgam for students to jump into these welcoming groups to stand out from the cookie-cutter norm of Lily Pulitzer puffy dresses and Vineyard Vines boatwear.

## ★ Dissonance in Action: The Difference Between the Mainstream and Off-Beat

**B**un Shamsidin '27 posits that this “Southern Belle” aesthetic is not only prominent among the student body but also perpetuated in the university's marketing itself. “Stetson, in its advertising, both online and in person, kind of try and keep that ‘Southern vibe,’ especially being in DeLand,” Shamsidin said. With Stetson's roots deeply set in the culture of the surrounding area—a quaint, airy, and historical southern town — Shamsidin understands

that Stetson is commodifying and profiting from the use of this aesthetic while not giving much focus to students of alternative interests or modes of expression. “I can feel the Southern influence,” Shamsidin admitted, “at Stetson, especially because a lot of people that come here to tour the campus [...] it'll be older people. So, you know, noticeably, Stetson does try to appease ... I guess sometimes older conservative people.”

Many people give different numbers regarding the general alternative population, depending on what circles they run in, although the numbers are pretty low no matter what. Shamsidin gave the largest population estimate of “a good 40%,” a rather large number, to which they elaborated that it “depends on what you consider alternative.”

Bray Kloznick ‘26 echoed this statement, explaining, “I feel like ‘alternative’ is like a very umbrella term, but I think that [...] it’s a pretty large part of the demographic of Stetson.” Since a large population of campus has at least one aspect of their lives—be it music, fashion or otherwise—that is different from the norm, you could technically qualify it as “alternative.” However, this is not the case for Ali Burgess ‘25 and Michael Terezakis ‘27,

who harbor opposite beliefs from Shamsidin and Kloznick.

Burgess’s interpretation of the alternative Stetson population was along the lines of, “small or medium-sized.” Terezakis shared a similar sentiment, saying that the alternative population was, “in general, quite small.”

So where do we consolidate this difference of perspective amongst alternative people at Stetson? Burgess provided a very insightful solution to this paradox. “Most of us who identify outwardly as alternative kind of know each other in some way, shape or form,” they began. “It could be that alternative people tend to orient themselves towards specific majors.” From this logic, it’s clear that the underground scene could seem big or small, depending on what circles you run in.

## ★ No One Knows What it Means - But it's PROVOCATIVE!

As humans, we are all meaning-making animals, driven by the development of labels and categories all for the express purpose of figuring out what we are and everything that isn’t us. For example, raised in the wake of the post-punk movement of the ’80s and ’90s, Burgess claims the label of goth in all aspects: politically, musically, aesthetics, etc. However, if they had to describe their outward appearance properly, Burgess would choose “post-punk romantic goth.”

For Kloznick, he describes a brighter side of the alternative scene, staking claim to “shoegaze and noise rock.”

Especially interested in fashion and music, he finds joy in the self-expression of his tastes and the performance of his own music as a drummer.

Now, for more longstanding and traditional forms of alternative expression, like goth or punk, it is much easier to form a label.



However, in the scope of more independent movements— which seem to be the most popular form of alternative expression on campus— many people opt out of choosing a label. In many spaces, it would make the most sense to just adopt the broader, umbrella label of “alternative,” especially since that encompasses all of the moving parts under it like grunge/sleaze revival, y2K nostalgia, pin-up culture and many more.

Terezakis expresses his lack of label as, somewhat of an amalgam. “I don’t think I have a specific subculture subgroup that I run into, you know, it’s mostly just an [...] amalgamation of things that I find interesting and cool, right?”

Similarly, in Shamsidin’s case, they are very “into the punk scene,” but “not super outward about it.” From collecting music to making art, Shamsidin loves to express themselves but has never really put a label on it.

## ★“It’s Not a Phase!” - Resistance from the Mainstream

**N**ot only are humans meaning-making animals, but we are often fearful of the unknown. Alternative expression and deviance from the norm is confusing to those who are out of the loop, and some may respond negatively to it.

Incredibly enough, although they all had differences in their expressive identity, all interviewees all shared similar sentiments of negative experiences of external backlash.

Shamsidin, often dressed in a graphic tee, big pants, cool makeup and funky jewelry, laments that people have made assumptions about them that paint them poorly. “I do think that sometimes, whether they mean it or not, students on campus can be discriminatory to one another based on appearance and stuff like, ‘Oh my god, they have like, dyed

hair and pronouns,’ or whatever,” Shamsidin said. Although the “dyed-hair-and-pronouns” has become a joke in certain circles, it is easy to see how the generalization of political indicators can negatively impact one’s identity and expression.

Burgess, a bit darker in aesthetics, is typically found with “big eyeliner,” lashes, dark lipstick and a pale face, draped in blacks, dark reds and Deep Purple (pun intended). They recounted a run-in with DeLand’s more conservative circles as they were just minding their business downtown. “My freshman year, I was walking downtown and there were a couple of protesters who told me I was going to hell or um, told me that I needed to strengthen my relationship with a higher being,” Burgess said. “I’ve definitely been [in] instances where I’ve been a bit ostracized or seen as weird. Often the presumption of alternative people is that we’re all Satanists or atheists or just anti-religion, etc, which, personally, I don’t practice any sort of religion.”

Kloznick, despite his brighter aesthetic of cozy layers and vintage vibes, expressed a similar lamentation of standing out from the conservative Christian zeitgeist of Central Florida — even despite being Christian himself. “Throughout high school and middle school, and I grew up in very conservative Christian environments, and I always was very expressive and enjoyed, wearing different things and styling my hair a certain way ... having jewelry, like earrings and stuff like that. It was very abnormal for the space I was in. So I definitely just had a lot of like assumptions made about me... I’ve had people thinking that I was, like, not straight a lot of time.”



Terezakis, a cool middle ground between vintage aesthetics and indie vibes, expressed a similar sentiment. “I’ve had people think, you know, ‘yeah, this guy’s a little weird,’ [or,] why are ‘you listening to this stuff?’ ... [I’ve] had people call me gay,

which is interesting, it's an interesting take, yeah?" Terezakis said, laughing it off. Is it really funny, though? After experiencing repeated backlash, some may decide to just laugh to cope with it, others may not take it in such stride.

# ★Weird? That's The Whole Point.★

**S**hould you even care about backlash, though? It may be best to take it all with a grain of salt; why be miserable being someone else when you could be happy being yourself? Terezakis said, “Once you truly internalize it and just realize, ‘dude, it is not that big of a deal,’ [and] just keep doing whatever, you’ll be a lot more happy and free as a person... only focus on the important things, then you’ll be

good.” Burgess surmises this point beautifully. “Never, ever possess regrets about how you’ve wanted to express yourself ... Change cannot come if you don’t partake in it,” they said. Self-expression isn’t just about fashion or rebellion — it’s about claiming your space, unapologetically, in a world that too often tries to shrink you. If you’re reading this, don’t let them put you in a box, you’re great just the way you are.



**"Never, ever possess  
regrets about how you've  
wanted to express yourself  
... Change cannot come if  
you don't partake in it,"**

# Underground Playlist

LOSER - BECK  
THE LAST TIME I DID ACID I WENT INSANE - JEFFREY LEWIS  
MEMORY MACHINE - DISMEMBERMENT PLAN  
O2 - SHOOKS  
CACTUS MAN - THE DEPARTURES  
SCENTLESS PRINCESS - RESIDUAL KID  
PEPPER - BUTTHOLE SURFERS  
COMA - SACRED SPIRITS  
PAJAMA SAM - LOVESEAT PETE  
CIGARETTES IN A DARK ROOM - GARDEN GIRL  
JESUS FREAK - BLOODLOSS  
WIDE ZERO - SPRINKLER  
HALLOWED GROUND - SKIN YARD  
BLACK TUNNEL - HEDDY EDWARDS  
LIBRARY OF YOUR LOVE - COLIN JAMES AND NATALIE REESE  
BUILDING MOMENTUM - LIAM PEARCE  
SAFE AND SOUND - SAM WALL  
HOLLOW HEART - TO/DIE/FOR  
ALL I WANT - DIVA DESTRUCTION  
INSECT - SWITCHBLADE SYMPHONY

20 songs, 1 hour 15 min



The writers and editors of *The Reporter* have a tradition of including a playlist along with each magazine issue. The songs on the playlist reflect both the theme of the issue and the mood of the team while creating this issue. This page includes a selection of the songs on the playlist; head over to Spotify to listen to the full playlist.

# Incoming Letters

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, SARA WARD '27

You didn't think that was it, did you? PUH-LEASE. You can't get rid of me that easily. But seriously, let me get back on my soapbox. When we step outside ourselves, we notice things — stories, people, perspectives — we might have otherwise missed. And for those who feel a little different, what makes you different is what makes you special. As "for KING & COUNTRY" puts it, I don't know what it's like to be you, and you don't know what it's like to be me. What if we're all the same in different kinds of ways? That's what I love about Hatter Network. It's a home for those who may have ever felt unnoticed, forgotten or maybe even a little lost. No matter your background, beliefs or creative passion, there's a place for you here. This next year is for anyone, including myself, who's ever felt like they aren't enough. Ali, you left enormous, gargantuan shoes to fill. You did an incredible job building the foundation — now it's time to keep building. I know what it's like to wonder if your voice matters. But when I stepped into Hatter Network I was met by people who didn't just read my work — they encouraged me, challenged me, and changed everything. So here's my task for you: notice the unnoticed, uplift the unheard and take up space where you once thought you didn't belong. Because trust me — you belong. Till next time...

EXECUTIVE EDITOR, NICO ALONSO '26

The underground scene has always been such a welcoming place for me, nurturing my artistic abilities and passions in a way that no other outlet has. From honing my writing skills in childhood to sharpening them in adulthood, the underground has been my creative sandbox—providing everything I need, free of judgment. My efforts have only been met with curiosity and support for all forms of expression, whether through poetry, DIY projects, art and now my journalistic writing. Now as I step into my senior year and take on the role of Executive Editor at The Reporter, I look back fondly at all of the creations that have flourished from my time in underground spaces. I am eternally grateful to these scenes and to the Hatter Network team for making sure that there would always be a place for my curiosity and creativity. I'm so happy for The Reporter to have been and continue to be that place for me to thrive. I know that, alongside Sara (shoutout to our new EIC), I can lead the incoming editorial board to not only make The Reporter into the best magazine that it can be, but to allow it to continue to be an expressive outlet for anyone who seeks it out. Especially as I graduate after next year and move on into my post-graduate studies and career.

MANAGING EDITOR, DEVANESE JOHN-BAPTISTE '27

I have always admired the underground. It feels like straddling the line and tasting the best of both worlds. Underground voices get to reap the glory of fame while maintaining the intimacy of a small audience. Being an underground voice lacks some of the risk, which is why I've always hidden in *The Reporter's* pages. However, transitioning into the Managing Editor position, I hope I can write stories as bold as the light rays that break the darkness when you're below ground or as bold as the strokes that my predecessor, Reagan Shivers, has left on *The Reporter*.

# From our Editors

CREATIVE DIRECTOR, MARIA LATOUR '26

As the incoming Creative Director of *The Reporter* I feel I ought to warn you that I'm much better at expressing myself through visuals rather than words but I'll do my best! In my time working as a staff designer on the Creative Team I feel as though I've truly come out from underground, if you will. During my time here I've watched our branch grow and evolve. I've seen the love and care that past directors have infused into these publications. I've watched our wonderful team go through so many changes, and I am more than honored to be a part of its legacy. The Creative Team is all about lifting up talented artists of all trades and giving them a chance to shine. This position is truly so much more than just me, this team is built on the talent and skill of artists who've had the courage to make their way aboveground. As Creative Director, I for one am very excited to see what our team digs up next. I could not be prouder of what our Creative Team has accomplished, and I'm so excited to be a part of its next chapter. To anyone who feels as though they have something to share, something just beneath the surface, I implore you to let it out. I can guarantee that your community will be all the better for it.

PHOTO EDITOR, INDYA MCKOY '26

Hi, I am Indya Mckoy, the incoming Photo Editor of *The Reporter*! I have been part of the Creative Team for almost two years, and have enjoyed every second of it. It has allowed me to grow creatively, and also encouraged me to become more confident in my photography skills. I have felt so supported throughout the time I have spent on the team, and want to return the love. I am so glad that the Photo Editor position has come back, and I hope to help lessen the amount of hard work the incoming Creative Director has to do! As Photo Editor, I want to promote creativity in any sort of artistic medium! When I was a Freshman at Stetson, I did not have any photography or photo editing experience whatsoever. My Sophomore year, I decided to take a photography course and purchase a camera, out of casual interest. I ended up enjoying it a lot, and wanted to continue creating all the time, but, outside of digital art class, did not know where to begin. Then I heard about the Creative Team, and decided to apply. Don't get me wrong, I was very nervous and there was a lot of hesitation and doubt, but everyone was extremely welcoming. As the reader/viewer, I encourage you to dive into your interests! You are always going to be your own worst critic.



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