

## **Oxford Free Clinic: Community Help**

By Ying Liang

With the help of some Miami students, Oxford Free Clinic will be hosting its inaugural fundraiser on Friday, May 2. The gala event will take place at the Oxford Community Arts Center from 7-9pm, and will consist of live music, snacks from Kona Bistro, a silent auction, and a raffle, with all proceeds going directly toward the clinic.

The Oxford Free Clinic is a community collaboration that began in 2006 involving over 40 volunteers and serving around 400 people every year, according to executive director Marilyn Sasser. Sasser explained that the clinic has no permanent address; it is set up in donated spaces during the first three Wednesdays of every week, from the McCullough-Hype Medical Building to the First United Presbyterian Church. The clinic treats many patients with chronic conditions such as hypertension and diabetes—it is unique in that patients often have their treatments entirely paid for, or up to 90% covered. Sasser said that the money comes through the state, which has many requirements that have to be met before diagnoses and treatments are covered.

“The most difficult part of the job is that... there is a defined service area,” Sasser said. “Sometimes eligibility requirements aren’t met. In certain cases, we can’t refer them elsewhere—it’s very difficult to turn them away. Healthcare shouldn’t be a sacrifice.”

Sasser, who has been with the clinic for two years, sets appointments, pays bills, and fundraises for diagnostic testing among other responsibilities. Since she began working, the clinic has paired up with Prevent Blindness Ohio to offer free eye exams and glasses to the residents who meet state requirements. Sasser said there are still plenty of programs and expansions for the clinic in the future—they are looking to educate patients about chronic conditions that many have to be treated for, to help them understand their diseases and prevent symptoms. Money donated to the clinic is used for such programs; it helps cover medical costs and diagnoses for patients in need.

“I have a great deal of respect [for patients],” Sasser said. “They’re not people who are hiding from society—they’re just sick. Poverty is a full-time job. [It is] not an easy step to reach out and ask for help.”

For students interested in helping the clinic, Blake Chaffee, a graduate student at Miami University who has been a volunteer for over a year and has recently become a board member, suggests asking around and contacting the Free Clinic for volunteering opportunities.

“One thing I’ve gotten an appreciation for [is] the clinic itself... At first, you feel obligated to volunteer. But then you work there for a while and find a role; you meet a lot of people. It’s rewarding, knowing that you’re part of an organization that really serves the Oxford community.”

As a volunteer, Chaffee said that his responsibilities include checking patients in, filling out their flow charts, organizing paperwork, and working to set up fundraising events for awareness.

“We’re always looking for more people,” he said. “We want students to be aware—right now, we’re pretty small, and this is our first fundraising gala event. If word gets out, and the students and town [are] aware, it could help us financially and support [us] in the future.”

Chaffee said he has met with a Miami marketing class to help advertise the gala. Janice Taylor, who teaches the aforementioned class, originally stumbled upon the opportunity during winter break when a mutual friend connected her to a clinic board member. She has since assigned the inaugural fundraiser and potential work for the clinic to groups in her Consumer Behavior marketing class (MKT 325). Taylor said this is a great opportunity for her students to have real-world experience working with a client and in group models that the marketing field is known for.

“It’s hard not to tell them ‘that’s good, that’s bad’, but students must learn for themselves,” Taylor said. “I have to step back and meet with the groups, allow class time to meet and talk about it. [I avoid] a lot of hands on things—I ask them questions about what they’re thinking, why they’re thinking that, and so on.”

Taylor’s students have worked to market the fundraising event. For the Oxford Free Clinic, Taylor required three deliverables from each group: a mailing list for potential volunteers and donors, a functional website, and a presentation of ideas for the gala event.

“By and large Miami students are good at finding research,” Taylor said. “[The project is] more hands-on right now.” Taylor said that she expects her marketing students to grow with this experience, just as the Oxford Free Clinic grows with their help. For more information about the inaugural fundraiser or the clinic, please visit <http://www.oxfordfreeclinic.org/>.

## **Hit and Runs: Drunk People, Not Cars**

Ying Liang

According to police traffic reports, “hit and run” accidents around campus are fairly uncommon, but “kick and run” incidents are another story altogether. We traditionally think of hit and runs as accidents involving two motor vehicles—the perpetrator specifically—but recent police reports indicate that it’s not people driving behind the wheel who are a threat, but rather the people walking on foot.

Data gathered by the Oxford Police Department (OPD) showed there were 40 “hit skip” incidents recorded between January 1 and August 4 of this year. “Hit skip” refers to damage, mostly to vehicles, in which the perpetrator leaves without a note. Of these types of incidents, 65 percent were motor vehicles in traffic lanes, and 30 percent were parked motor vehicles. One incident in this time frame involved a hit pedestrian. These incidents were recorded in the traffic system; in comparison, OPD maintains separate criminal mischief cases in their crimes database. 55 out of the 98 criminal mischief cases in this same time frame involved vehicular damage—some of these 55 entries listed damage to multiple cars.

Among these cases include cars being egged, keyed and having mirrors broken and tires slashed. 45 percent of the “hit-skips” occurred on Saturdays and Thursdays, with the most incidents happening on Sycamore. Thirty eight percent of vehicle-related criminal mischief occurred on Saturdays and Thursdays, with the most incidents happening on Poplar Street.

Abby Cramer, a senior zoology major, had a literal “kick and run” last spring. Cramer said she went to the REC center for an hour-long meeting on a Tuesday night at 9 p.m.

“I parked on Campus at a meter,” Cramer reported. “When I came back out, I instantly noticed a dent in my front bumper... about 10 inches long and 4 inches wide.”

After talking with her father, Cramer did not to file a police report of the incident. She brought her car into a shop to have it evaluated, and left the dent due to repair costs.

“The mechanics decided it was from a foot,” Cramer said. “Someone had simply just kicked my car for seemingly no reason...They were not able to get the dent out, meaning I would have to completely replace [the bumper].”

When asked about parking at Miami, Cramer concluded that it is generally safe to park, though she added uptown parking is often limited.

“Unfortunately, I’ve found that people don’t feel the need to leave notes after they hit a car.” Cramer said.

According to Lieutenant Spilman, an administrative lieutenant at the Miami University Police Department (MUPD), reports like these often go unsolved.

“We record [these incidents] for statistical reporting and insurance claims,” he said. “Hit and runs are fairly uncommon; the most common are damage to vehicle reports, specifically parked vehicles. There are lots of people on foot.”

Lieutenant Spilman stated that these types of crimes—property damage without knowledge or consent from owners—are categorized as criminal mischief, and most are attributed to alcohol. In MUPD’s reports from Jan. 1 to Sept. 22 of this year, there were 28 traffic crashes, none of which were “hit and run” style accidents.

Of the 51 criminal mischief cases MUPD recorded at this same time frame, eight involved damage to parked vehicles, with half of the incidents occurring on outdoor university property. Like OPD’s records, MUPD’s criminal mischief cases involving vehicular damage included eggings and broken glass.

## Howe Writing Center to Help International Students

The Howe Writing Center appeared deserted on a summer Thursday. One writing consultant sat alone in the middle of the center's expansive space in King, the main library of Miami University's Oxford campus. A young man walked over to the front desk, book bag slouched over one shoulder. He pushed the frame of his glasses up his nose as he hastily searched for his student ID. Looking up, he noticed that the consultant—the only student around—had gotten up from her desk to walk toward him.

"Hi Weihao, welcome to the writing center. How are you today?"

"Uhh, good, thank you," he said, quickly gathering up his things.

"What can I do for you?"

"I just have a essay," he said, offering a timid smile. "I want to look at... organization and grammar for my English paper."

"Of course! Let me see how I can help."

Weihao Chen, an international student from China, will be a sophomore at Miami University this fall. As a bioengineering major, he has been to the Howe Writing Center a few times to review his English papers. Like many writers who arrive for consultations, he wanted help on "grammar".

"When writers say 'grammar', they often don't mean it," said Kate Francis, manager of the Howe Writing Center.

Francis has worked in the center since fall 2007, when it first opened through an endowment of \$10.5 million from the Howe family. Having worked with many consultants and writers, Francis stated that she has found many writers, especially international students, will list "grammar" as a main concern, but will arrive with questions about a broad range of topics such as organization or citation.

"Sometimes it's hard to anticipate the students' needs when they don't know it themselves," Francis said with a laugh, "especially given our demographics."

She stated that roughly half of all current consultations are with international students. But it wasn't always this way. According to Francis, a specialist was hired during the early days of the writing center to specifically address international students, because they were getting far fewer than expected. After some brainstorming, Francis stated that they created promotional events and grew through word-of-mouth, testimonies from international students who have used writing center services. According to statistics from Miami University's International Student and Scholar Services, 73.33 percent of international students enrolled during the 2014 school year (1411) were from mainland China. International Chinese students make a significant portion of the clientele at the writing center.

"But [in the beginning] we only knew the numbers," Francis said. "We didn't know what it meant, what impact it would have culturally, or how the writing center should respond."

Previously, writing centers gained momentum in America around the time of college open admissions in the 1970s. Students from lower-income families, many of the immigrants, required help to learn and write at the collegiate level. Thus, these early writing centers (often referred to as writing "labs") were able to offer remedial writing support. At the time, writing labs focused on "lower-order concerns", teaching basic grammar and syntax to students with underprivileged backgrounds who may

not have received formal English education. (Source: Elizabeth H. Boquetwere, "Our Little Secret": A History of Writing Centers, Pre- to Post-Open Admissions, 1999)

However, national attention shifted in the 1980s to focus on "higher-order concerns" in the writing center. An article written by the well-known educator Stephen North declared that more academic recognition should be placed on writing centers, as they are no longer just remedial. Instead of focusing on "lower-order concerns" such as grammar, North urged writing centers to help students at a "higher level of cognition", helping writers with content, organization, and brainstorming. (Source: Stephen North, "The Idea of a Writing Center", 1984)

With the influx of international students, Francis acknowledged that there is a natural tension between "lower-order concerns" and "higher-order concerns" in the Howe Writing Center. She stated that international students will often state they need grammar help, but the consultants working with them will find higher concerns that they believe threaten a paper's integrity. Because of this contrast, Francis believes the way consultants and writers interact with each other must be careful and considerate of culture. Culture plays an important role in how international students interact with others, and a consultation in the writing center is no exception.

Enrique Paz, an assistant director who has worked extensively with international students, stated that it's important to place these conversations in a cultural context—for example, essay-writing is less direct in Chinese.

"Many Chinese students come with vague argument papers because they've been taught to be indirect in their writing," Paz said. "They get frustrated, and we must learn to address this different perspective so we can help them succeed in their assignments."

This indirect approach is also sometimes observed in mannerisms. Having consulted many international students, Paz found that most adopt a hesitant, polite manner during consultations when really they know what they want. Paz stated that when given more time and less pressure, students often know exactly what they struggle with, and will direct the consultant accordingly.

"They are vulnerable, and incredibly brave...," Paz said. "As consultants, we can't get too pushy...we must respect their ideas and take care not to overshadow them."

Many international students like Chen arrive soft-spoken, with talkative hand gestures that help convey the writer's message to the consultant. For Chen, it's much easier to verbally communicate his ideas than it is to write them on paper.

"Some professors will mark off points for grammar mistake," Chen said, "We work so hard but they cannot read our essays, and they will not help us. These professors, they break our hearts."

Chen stated that the first time he arrived at the writing center, he was self-conscious and shy about his writing. But Chen relaxed after a while, and said that he was thankful for how patient his consultant was.

Indeed, Sam Papa, a student manager who has helped train over a hundred undergraduate writing consultants at Howe, stated that patience is an emphasis during consultant training.

"Above all, we must always defer to the writer," Papa said, "Go at the writer's own pace. Writers must feel like they have ownership of their work, so we celebrate their successes."

Papa has helped change the ENG 359 curriculum (a 3-credit hour, semester long course all new consultants must take) by adding international student training. In seminar-type discussions, Papa

stated students were asked for their strengths and weaknesses in consulting international students, then given advice and techniques. In addition, Papa implemented on-the-job training that required new consultants observe three consultations between international student writers and seasoned consultants. This past fall, Papa also worked with other writing center staff to create consultant workshops that revolved around the theme of international students—all consultants were required to type up a transcript of a consultation they had with an international student, and were asked to write weekly reflections and discuss among themselves.

“We’re making consultants more comfortable working with non-native English speakers,” Papa said, “and while progress has been made, I’m not sure we’re doing everything we can yet. There is still some frustration and fear in consultants themselves.”

Still, Papa has acknowledged that the shift in curriculum has helped many consultants, as well as many writers.

“It’s rewarding to see the impact we have,” Papa said, “especially when we see these students coming back week after week.”

Papa stated that the Howe Writing Center will continue to pursue its commitment toward international students. For students like Chen, it is an invaluable learning resource.

“[Howe writing center] really helped me pull back, and I can focus on parts of my writing to keep or throw away,” Chen said. “I like it here because I think they understand me. And everyone I meet here help me grow.”