

# DATELINE:DOWNTOWN

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## From the editor's desk

by Quintin Coleman

Happiness is something that we talk about a lot in modern society. It almost seems like society is run by the idea of happiness these days. You can throw a rock at any social media profile on any social media platform and you'll see some trite saying along the lines of "YOLO" (you only live once for the older readers of the paper), "living my best life," "#goals," or any number of memes that subtly (if not profanely or crudely) tell the reader that they should remove any and everything that is "toxic" (the most nebulous of modern day buzzwords) out of their lives.

Maybe society is urging people to have too much of a good thing.

I have no intention of being a Debbie Downer here. Being happy and trying to find happiness is, I would argue, one of the defining traits of being alive in the first place. However, it feels like people are being urged to be happy at all costs. You don't have to go far to find examples of that happening either. The world of entertainment (both in fiction and reality) is filled with people looking to find happiness in whatever form it may appear in to varying degrees of success. It's a story almost as old as time itself.

Social media certainly doesn't help with perpetuating the idea that we should always be looking for happiness. You'd be hard pressed to find someone not

smiling, laughing, or presenting an otherwise positive emotion on social media. It certainly makes sense that people show off the best version of themselves online. We all want to see what came of the one minute that it took to get that perfect smiling ear-to-ear selfie, not the other banal 23 hours and 59 minutes that probably consists of some combination of ice cream, Starbucks, and thinking of a plan that will get more social media followers.

To quote Admiral Ackbar, it's a trap.

Not only is it a trap, it's a pretty effective one. We all know that, for some people, perception equals reality. Even those of us who are cognitively aware that social media is a bunch of smoke and mirrors (as well as either a landmine of eerily accurate ads or ads that don't apply to you at all) can get wrapped up in feeling like we're missing something or lacking something in our lives because of something that we see presented on social media. This leads to people either being reminded that they're not as happy as they could be or that they could do more to increase their happiness.

The more I think about the topic, the more that I think that maybe happiness is one of those things that we should look at a little differently. Not radically so, but certainly consider it in a different way. People (your humble editor included) have thought about happiness in terms of what they lacked, whether it

was something material or emotional. It's a logical, though ultimately negative, way of conceiving happiness.

However, I'm not going to give suggestions on how to look at some broad and/or abstract topic in a different light for once. Social media has already done that job for me with the aforementioned positivity memes. What I will leave you all with is a thought: what price are you willing to pay to be as happy as possible? It's something that's worth thinking about because with all of the memes that talk about or suggest people cutting out negativity and living your best life, they never really mention the feasibility or costs of achieving that happiness. It may very well be the case that the price to get that happiness may not be worth it in the long run.

*Quintin Coleman is a graduate student at UHD in the Master's of Rhetoric and Composition (MARC) program. His ultimate goal is to teach writing at the college level. When he's not tutoring at a community college part-time or doing homework, he's spending time with his two dogs that bark a little too much, looking through his cookbook collection, and playing the occasional video game, all of which are things that make him happy.*

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# How listening to podcasts makes people happy

By Joshua Benjamin Williams

Listening to a podcast has many benefits. From gaining knowledge about a person to starting the day off with the Food52's Burnt Toast podcast, this new mode of entertainment has captured the attention of many people. But is it possible that listening to a podcast every day could boost dopamine levels?

Dopamine is one of the brain's

## It is the perfect supplement to doing homework

neurotransmitters associated with movement, attention, learning and emotion. It also plays a part of why so many people are addicted to certain things such as cigarettes. People with low dopamine levels are more prone to addiction since the brain is telling them that they need to seek more pleasure.

Studies have shown listening to music can increase pleasurable feelings and concentration. For many decades, radio was a significant source of music enjoyment, which has now been challenged by the accessibility of portable

devices. With newer devices made each year, the average listener can now have access to their favorite songs whenever and however they want.

The Interactive Advertising Bureau's 2016 study found that 70 percent of listeners use podcasting as a secondary activity. People are listening to podcasts when they are cooking, cleaning, driving and relaxing. It is the perfect supplement to doing homework, or when they are wanting to learn something new.

There is also an intimate aspect while listening to a podcast related to a person's favorite dish or television show. Although not as beneficial as human contact, a strong relationship with a host could bolster a person's confidence. Since podcasting rewards listeners with a variety of topics and shows to choose from, they are more likely to find something more engaging than radio. Similar to on-demand programming, people can play and stop whenever they like without feeling like they are forced to listen.

The benefits of having less limitations and more freedom is too much to pass on, especially in this golden age of television. Streaming services such as Netflix and Hulu produce some of the most thrilling pieces of content in the world, and yet people seemingly are still inundated by annoying ads. Because of

the one-on-one relationship a podcast host has with their viewers, people are more likely to consider purchasing products and services after they hear about them. With so much purchasing confidence, it is no wonder why people seem happy to continue listening.

But there is more to podcasting than just being able to trust who is talking; it is also about liking them. Many of the podcasts found in the Apple iTunes store are independently run by people who have no affiliation with any radio stations. These people are sharing their favorite interests with others who share it, and with no filter there is less of a chance of feeling bored while listening to them.

The personality of the host is also an important factor of why people keep listening. Joe Rogan's comedic timing and personality has made the Joe

Rogan Podcast one of the most popular podcasts in the world, winning Best Comedy Podcast earlier this year.

Much like talking with a best friend or lover, someone listening to what their favorite personality host can turn a bad day into a good day. In fact, studies have shown that being more social can decrease depression. With podcasts, the difference is that the person who is making everything better is not in the same room. It all comes down to how the host speaks and how they are able to create an interactive experience.

So, if eating a piece of chocolate cake can increase dopamine levels, perhaps tuning into a podcast about food culture and community can do the same.

## Listening to a favorite personality host can turn a bad day into a good day

*Joshua Williams is a current UHD senior expecting to graduate in the fall of 2019. His passions include playing video games and spending time with his family. He's also a huge fan of online movie talk shows on YouTube.*

# Leisure activities bring happiness in Houston

By Syneetra A. Williams

Is there anyone among us who does not live for happiness? Many people travel the world searching for bliss. For some, happiness is fleeting, while for others, it is in perpetuity. Either way, if

you find yourself in need of a healthy dose of cheerfulness, then please allow the Bayou City to meet your demands. The following suggestions are ideal for UHD students, faculty, staff, and others who crave euphoria on a tight budget. Remember, happiness does not have to

cost a great deal of money. Many people find endless pleasure in the things in life that are free or almost free.

Whether you have a creative spirit or not, artistic activities provide happiness because they allow you to express yourself without limitations.

Your designs, music, prose, or other elements are born in your soul. Therefore, the only boundary is yourself. If you enjoy photography as a profession or a pleasurable hobby, there are free classes for adults all over Houston that can get you started. Consider bringing a friend or two.

One such informal option near Midtown, with a five-star rating, is Houston Center for Photography. They offer free classes for adults and youth. They are located at 1441 West Alabama, 713-529-4755. When you are ready to go shooting to practice and perfect your new skill, consider scenic locations such as Terry Hershey Park and Houston Arboretum & Nature Center. If you prefer cityscapes, Downtown Houston in UHD's neighborhood with its historic buildings, diverse landscape, and the

Buffalo Bayou will allow you to see our great city and backdrop through a lens which will give you an unexpected gratifying perspective. You and your friends can go on photo-walks during the day or at dusk. Houston's skyline is breathtaking.

## Your designs, music, prose or other elements are born in your soul. the only boundary is yourself

ing at night. You can capture her beauty through your camera from the South Deck and other locations.

Is there a painter or sketch artist within that is waiting for your discovery? If so, think about taking a painting or drawing class. Or, you can search and

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## Leisure activities continued from page 3

watch a YouTube video on beginning painting sessions. If you prefer the classroom setting, Honey Art Café at 3516 S. Shepherd Drive offers art lessons for minimal fees. Their most popular is the BYOB painting class which is \$70 for two people. You and a friend can relax, enjoy cocktails, and learn how to paint and sketch.

Now, for those of you who want to be a local celebrity, an open mic poetry reading may be the choice for you. The Avant Garden has an eclectic style that will captivate you at their Midtown location at 411 Westheimer, 832-287-5577. There is more to this place than poetry reading. They feature live music, life drawing, dance, fashion,

### The White Oak and Buffalo Bayous have scenic trails that are safe and fun

and more. They have an outdoor patio for those times when you want to enjoy others entertaining you on stage. For those who want to get married or host a graduation soiree, consider using their facilities.

Another suggestion for a leisurely activity that provides happiness is cycling. Consider joining a club or organizing one. Since riding the Houston city streets can be dangerous, consider off-road riding. The White Oak and Buffalo bayous have scenic trails that are safe and fun. You can start at UHD and head either north or south. Bring plenty of water, snacks, and your favorite music.

Just in case you did not know, Apple Music offers more 50 million songs for Apple and Android users from all genres for a free three-month trial.

After that, you can pay the student rate of \$4.99 per month for unlimited music downloads. No longer do you have to pay \$1.29 per song through iTunes. If you already have iTunes, the music you add will drop into your library on your laptop, phone, watch or iPod Touch device. When you register as a UHD student, be sure to use your Gator email address and your student identification number to take advantage of the lower rate.

Cycling is a way to de-stress, get exercise, and enjoy the outdoors. Cycling alone or with friends is beneficial. Houston's weather is about to transition for some warm days and evenings. As you ride and listen to your favorite tunes, ideas for your school assignments and solutions to dilemmas may begin to flow. Activities such as this are exhilarating because they free your mind of clutter such as worries about your grades, finances, family, and other matters. You will find that the happiness for which have been longing, will be at hand.

*Syneetra A. Williams is a native New Englander and now a Houston resident who read the dictionary for pleasure while growing up. With Gator Pride, she is a candidate for the Master of Science in Technical Communication at The University of Houston-Downtown. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Professional Writing at UHD, and an Associate of Applied Science, AAS, in Digital Communications with a graphic design specialization at Houston Community College. As a graduate writing tutor at the Writing & Reading Center at UHD, she is passionate about teaching. She is convinced that when you educate others, you give a special gift that keeps giving throughout generations.*

## Why Finland is the happiest country on Earth

By Aansa Usmani

Finland has been deemed the "Happiest Country on Earth" for the second year in a row, showing how the country—despite its negative temperatures—has maintained contentment with their citizens and immigrants who reside there.

According to John Helliwell, professor of Economics at the University of British Columbia, "It's not about Finnish DNA. It's the way life is lived in those countries." His statement on the Scandinavian way of life rings true; countries situated in areas with little-to-no sunlight tend to have residents happier than those in other parts of the world. It is partly attributed towards the socialist economic policies implemented, helping everyone regardless of income or status. Another reason for this stems from their

emphasis on healthcare and mental care, providing life-saving treatments at little to no expense. Without these common stressors, there is no doubt in why Finland would be the happiest country on Earth.

*Aansa Usmani is a first-year college student attending the University of Houston-Downtown. She is a Political Science major with plans to run for political office. She identifies herself as a social justice warrior, advocating for women, LGBT, immigration, and other liberal causes. Alongside politics, her passions include photography, writing, and debate.*



The flag of Finland, the happiest country on Earth  
Photo courtesy of Shutterstock



Bicyclists on Houston trails  
Photo courtesy of houstononthecheap.com

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# 6 UHD student photographs action figures, plays with perceptions

By Lissette Perez

Pedro Perez is a UHD student working on obtaining a Master of Science in Criminal Justice. Although his schedule is busy with working two jobs and attending school full-time, whenever he is not hitting the books or working he enjoys a handful of hobbies such as reading comics and books, drawing, watching anime, and playing video games. But perhaps one of his favorite hobbies is collecting and photographing action figures.

Perez has been photographing action figures for almost three years now. He says his interest in figures was sparked by his exposure to pop culture as a child. Perez says, “I was always interested in pop culture – comics, movies... and as a kid I always wanted to own my own versions of those characters.” He wanted to replicate the characters he admired. As he got older, when he started working and earning his own money, he realized there were more toys than Legos for him to collect. He found several toy brands for him to explore.

Action figures vary in size making them ideal for distinctive types of shots. Perez started off with using small, two-inch tall, block-styled action figures. He would place them anywhere he saw fit – on desks, on sidewalks, in the car and more. After photographing them, he would edit the photos and upload them to Instagram. However, as time went on, his interest in small-scale figures shifted, and he moved on to larger action figures. In particular, six-inch scale figures are what he has stuck with so far as he says they are easier to work with as well as being more detailed and

articulated than the smaller ones. Perez also notes that although twelve-inch action figures are highly detailed, they are less convenient to carry around for shoots. Thus, six-inch action figures are the best overall.

Like with all art, there are challenges. Perez states that the most difficult thing about toy photography is having patience. Perez says, “having patience is a big thing with any art form. You’re not always going to get the right pose or the right lighting and for that you will have to keep trying until you think it looks right, and even after the shot is taken, you may face challenges during the editing process.” Sometimes his action figures get knocked down by the wind, or the lighting is too dark or too bright. There are many things that often go wrong when trying to pose them, but Perez does not mind the challenge.

One of the most splendid things about being a toy photographer is the community. Perez says that in the toy community, “there are people who are vested in it for many different reasons, but there will always be a sense of relatability. They give you tips you can use... they are a community that want to help each other grow. It’s not just a toy community, it can stem beyond that,” he adds, “I have made friends that have stuck around during the highs and lows... We talk about things that are about life in general, [our friendship is] unique.”

When asked about what inspires him to bring his concepts to fruition, Perez said, “emotions, media, and imagination.” Perez stated that depending on how lighting is used, it can showcase happiness, sadness, or fear. Media helps



Photo courtesy of Pedro Perez

him with forming ideas of what he wants to photograph, while imagination is what gives his photos his personal touch. He uses his imagination to place himself in the photo as if he were Spiderman fighting a villain.

Perez enjoys toy photography so much because it lets him, “do [his] own thing. It’s very outlandish and you can do whatever you want. You can have Kermit the Frog sitting on a spaceship with Yoda and Captain Kirk from Star Trek and nobody’s going to think anything of it because it’s your imagination.” Furthermore, he states, “I love that there are millions of combinations that you can utilize and it’s all at your disposal. You’re only bound by your imagination and that’s what makes it so unique.” Perez ends by encouraging

those who are interested in toy photography to go for it and not be afraid of starting at the bottom; “Don’t let others’ photos be a deterrent, but a driving force. If you can recreate something you like, there’s a good chance that somebody else will like it and because of that they can help you get better.”

*Lissette Perez is a senior majoring in English-Creative writing. After graduation, she hopes to become an English teacher and continue writing. She has been a Staff Reporter for Dateline for two semesters and is also a Student Supervisor at UHD Sports & Fitness. During her free time, she enjoys drawing, playing video games, watching movies or documentaries, and reading comics.*



Photo courtesy of Pedro Perez

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# Career Development Center hosts professional attire fashion show

By Joshua Williams

Student models showcased professional interview attire during a “Dress to Impress On a Budget” fashion show while Ireina Reeves from Workforce Solutions gave advice at Robertson Auditorium about how to look good while spending less.

Reeves did not shy away from her background as a former graduate looking for work. Starting off in fashion merchandising, Reeves had to impress many employers in her lifetime, not just with her words but also with her looks.



Students model interview wear during ‘Dress to impress on a budget’  
Photo credit: Joshua Williams

“I had to reinvent myself throughout my professional life,” Reeves said before revealing that her wardrobe cost just \$25. Her earrings and necklace all just cost about \$1. Her most expensive piece of clothing were her shoes, which cost just about \$10. “Budget zero,” she repeatedly

said while laughing along with everyone in attendance.

Casual and traditional attire can work for just about anyone with a zero budget. Just by taking off a blazer, someone can go from traditional to casual within seconds. But choosing when to switch is how one can succeed. A traditional business attire would not be appropriate for a retail store. “Keep that jacket in the car,” Reeves joked while saying how it is possible to be overdressed for an interview with Walmart.

When she asked why it was important to pay attention to appearances, a student in the crowd answered strongly, “first impressions.” First impressions are essential in building trust as well as a willingness to adapt. Reeves joked how she had to change her wardrobe from the last time she did a similar presentation fearing her clothes would appear too loose for the formal setting. “Little did I know I’ve lost 50 pounds between then and now.” Everyone clapped out of respect for her dedication and how she adapted.

More and more employers are judging by looks than by words. “When

you are interviewing, 75 percent has nothing to do with what you say,” Reeves said. Employers can understand a person just by how they are dressed, which puts a greater amount of pressure on finding a matching tie for some. Reeves’ word of advice was to pay attention to how a company usually dresses before arriving for an interview.

Some places where it’s possible to be “overdressed” include factory, retail, and the Livestock and Rodeo jobs. Even in healthcare it is possible to wear scrubs, especially since a person is already on the job. “Do you really think they are going make you change during your shift?” Reeves laughed. But for many other jobs it is best to go two steps higher than what’s expected. Hygiene also plays a role in how a employer judges a potential employee. Brushing one’s teeth. Cleaning one’s fingernails. Even researching the interviewee on LinkedIn can go a long way. “You really don’t want to look better than the person who’s interviewing you,” Reeves said.

Reeves also explained how one can go to family when finding appropriate attire. Hand-me-downs are often common clothing to wear when someone cannot purchase the newest brand. One



Ireina Reeves from Workforce Solutions speaks to UHD students about career wear  
Photo credit: Joshua Williams

person in the crowd even mentioned that the suit he was wearing came from the university itself. No matter where someone goes, it is possible to look good while spending less, and sometimes while paying nothing at all.

**Joshua Williams** is a current UHD senior expecting to graduate in the fall of 2019. His passions include playing video games and spending time with his family. He’s also a huge fan of online movie talk shows on YouTube.

# Have fun on a budget in Houston

By Syneetra A. Williams

Too many college students survives at or below the poverty level. The journey toward earning that sheepskin can be emotionally and financially difficult. Investing in education will push many families to their economic limit. Many students feel like they must give up a social life because fun and excitement can be expensive. Social activities are important because they offer a balance between studying, writing, calculating, conducting and composing and finding a way to relax. Everyone needs a social outlet.

As you search for fun, free or almost free events, check out the Miller Outdoor Theatre lineup for the spring and summer. The schedule is ready for your perusal. If you have a family, they have events for children also. For adults, there are concerts, theatre performanc-

es, and movies. All you need are some friends, blankets, snacks, and liquid libations of every sort for your drinking pleasure. Please do not forget your camera. Everyone enjoys taking selfies.

For those of you who have a Netflix subscription, host a movie marathon weekend and then have a roundtable discussion on the film. Make it a potluck event so that everyone can participate. It is intimate times such as these that bring people closer

**Continued on page 8**



Photo courtesy of Miller Outdoor Theater

# Poet and editor Carmen Giménez Smith speaks about poetry, machines, revision

By Christina Loos

On March 25, more than 20 people gathered in the Travis Room to hear Carmen Giménez Smith, a published poet and co-editor for the poetry section of *The Nation* speak. The number of students who showed up to a 10 a.m. talk that was not widely advertised was a testament to how they and their professors valued Giménez Smith's presence at the university.

After a brief introduction by Assistant Professor Daniel Peña, Giménez Smith opened her talk by saying she was going to talk about revision. She said that

as a poetry editor, she views poetry in a different way than many people do and that when she reads a poem, she thinks about how the audience and critics will receive the poem. She added that she also has to think about the poem as "an object."

"There are lots of different reasons why I think being a non-native speaker of English makes me a really good poet. One of them is that when I look at English, I see a system that I have to break down and understand. So when I see a poem, I see the system, how it's working as a machine, how it's

not working, how each of the individual parts lend themselves to the poem's project," she said.

Once she had finished explaining how she looks at poems, she read one of her lyrical essays "Why the Semi-colon." She then discussed what elements of poetry writers should pay attention to when they revised their poems. Giménez Smith spoke with audible passion as she listed the elements of poetry: structural integrity, vivacity, change, unity, and singularity of vision.

This was followed by a Q&A session. One of the audience members asked about how Giménez Smith's background of growing up in New York affected her work and how she got to where she was today. She described moving around a lot as a child and her childhood reading habits.

"My aunt would say...it [reading] would rot your brain so reading was transgressive in certain circles," she explained. Giménez Smith said that she read anything she could find as child, from books about business management to ones about social criticism. Giménez Smith credited her success to hard work, luck and her experiences as a child of two immigrants.

She ended the talk with a reading from her work "Be Recorder"

and discussing her anxieties about and hopes for humanity's future.

"I think my sense is the world is ending. We're at a turning point... So there is a possibility of being kind of nihilistic about it, but as artists there's a weird way in which art has always been alongside massive cultural changes. So I could be kind of Eeyore about it, kind of gloomy about it or I could say I think something else is possible," she said.

Carmen Giménez Smith is a Professor of English at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Along with being the co-editor of the poetry section of *The Nation*, she is also the publisher of Noemi Press and co-director of Cantomundo. She is the author of several works including her 2013 collection "Milk and Filth" which was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. Her next work "Be Recorder" will be published in Fall 2019.

*Christina Loos is a Technical Communication major and an English minor. She is passionate about social justice, horror, writing, and learning about other cultures. In her free time, she enjoys listening to 80s goth rock and New Wave, writing and reading, and watching other people play video games because she isn't very good at them.*



Carmen Giménez Smith  
Photo courtesy of The Poetry Foundation

## Cheap and fun things con't from page 7

together. If no one has Netflix, you can get it free for three months and cancel afterward.


Discovery Green is downtown, and you can take the MetroRail or Uber there for free events all summer. Some of the activities include the Latino ART Now!, kayaks, and R/C Boats. They also offer classes for yoga, Tai Chi, heartfulness meditation and Throwback Thursdays. If you like to get exercise by roller skating or blading, then Discovery Green has skate rentals for nominal fees. Be sure to check out the free evening concerts on stage all summer.

For everyone who enjoys parades and wacky vehicles be sure to check out this year's 32nd Annual Art Car Parade weekend April 11-14. Be sure to bring your camera if you do not want to miss anything. The parade starts on Smith Street and travels down Allen Parkway ending at Waugh Dr. Be sure to wear comfortable clothing, walking shoes and put on sunscreen. You can bring folding chairs and blankets but no pets. If you have never been to this event, you are in for a fantastic spectacle of Houston's creativity.

If you want to leave Houston and take an inexpensive excursion, consider getting together with friends and

making a road trip to Austin, our state's capital. Since Austin likes to keep things weird, you will enjoy the nightlife on 6th Street. Also visit Barton Springs which is situated within 358 acres of Zilker Park. The pool's average temperature is between 68 and 70 degrees. Austin is approximately two and a half hours from Houston. Be sure to visit the state capitol and Lady Bird Lake Hike and Bike Trail. The Crazy Tourist has a fantastic list of free things to do in Austin.

*Syneetra A. Williams is a native New Englander and now a Houston resident who read the dictionary for pleasure while growing up. With Gator Pride, she is a candidate for the Master of Science in Technical Communication at The University of Houston-Downtown. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Professional Writing at UHD, and an Associate of Applied Science, AAS, in Digital Communications with a graphic design specialization at Houston Community College. As a graduate writing tutor at the Writing & Reading Center at UHD, she is passionate about teaching. She is convinced that when you educate others, you give a special gift that keeps giving throughout generations.*



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# Happiness is survival

By Mike Duncan

I was not thinking of happiness in the abstract much this morning when I was sitting in the reception room of a neurologist.

There were fourteen other people there, and they all seemed, in my non-medical-doctor opinion, far closer to death. I started to wonder why I had ever bothered coming. It was just some extra sensitivity in my fingers. The usual Internet diagnosis was dire. I had forgotten to say goodbye to my family. I had even forgotten breakfast.

The doctor didn't take long to figure out I had carpal tunnel, but while I was recovering from this semi-good news, he asked me, hearing that I was an English professor, what it would take to make people "better Americans," in his words. I gave my usual pat answer – curiosity and work ethic. He liked that, but added three things – military service, medical experience, and six months abroad.

I reflected on the interesting contrast between the more abstract qualities (or "integrity" as he put it) that I had offered, and the concrete experiences that he had suggested. I did so while wondering why, during the 57-point electrical shock test that his overtly polite

assistant had performed on me moments before, that I had laughed every time I got shocked.

It's not that I found the experience funny, though humor is often how I react to stress; rather, I found the experience novel, and became chatty. I was curious about how the test worked and kept up a patter with my torturer – "It's good I felt that, right?" and "Do people normally laugh during this?" (they usually curse) and finally "Well, I talked, so I get to go home now, right?"

Seriously, I was worried I wouldn't feel anything somewhere – that something was wrong, deep down in my body, and I had let it go untreated too long, as some males tend to do because we are trained not to complain until we are more or less incapacitated. As the Black Knight said after his second arm was cut off, "it's just a flesh wound." Feeling the shocks was good – it was a relief. So I think that's why I was laughing. I had won.

As I waited for my insurance to cough up some money, I reflected further. Last year, when my fingers were doing just fine, I wasn't nearly as happy as I am right now. I was sort of a wreck, waiting on my second son to be born – again, good news tinged with the possibility of bad news. Is it the escape from anticipat-

ed bad news, the reprieve from danger, then? Does that make being happy always relative, a matter of crunching numbers, or is there an absolute, defined "happy"? Is it a holistic, cumulative feeling depending on a multitude of factors, or purely in the moment, dependent on a particular episode? Furthermore, is it a purely subjective, personal experience, mattering only to the individual? Billy Crystal's Fernando Lamas would say, "It is better to look good than to feel good," of course. The easy answer is a blend of all of these, but in what mix?

For me, at least, happiness waxes and wanes based on the circumstances and has very little to do with severity or logic. If the doctor had told me I was dying, but I had a \$2 coupon at CVS for the related prescription, I would have judged that day about 50/50. This is the sole reason CVS doles out ExtraBucks – they want us to feel good, just for a second or two, about spending money. For me, though, the glow spreads throughout the day like sunlight fills a room. Likewise, a small piece of bad news hits about as hard as a really bad one. This is why, I think, I have historically laughed when struck in the face. I'm always disappointed – and there-

fore relieved – that it didn't hurt more. Or perhaps the nerves to my face are not hooked up properly. In any case, I recommend that prospective enemies aim lower.

Last week in my usually sleepy neighborhood, a house burned down, not five houses away. We watched as firefighters, the best people in the world, put it out. Nothing remained but a smoking ruin for an extended family with three kids (all escaped). I wondered later, as the neighborhood came to their assistance, if the recovery would counter-balance the loss – if survival, indeed, is the purest happiness there is. I wondered what I would say and do if it had been my family left homeless. It would be some smartass remark about how I'd never get to finish installing flooring in the hall closet. A middle finger to fate, a laugh at the expense of the universe, always feels good to me.

*Mike Duncan is an Associate Professor in the English Department and has worked at UHD since 2009. He teaches courses in technical communication, rhetoric, research methods, and other subjects related to writing instruction.*

## A graduate student's perspective on tech-happiness

By Fabian Ramirez

People buy mobile technology because they find it to be useful and certain aspects of it might also make them happy. Social networking sites create applications for these mobile devices specifically designed for parts of the world that have daily access to technology. Metropolitans all over the world benefit from applications of this kind as they allow communities to communicate and conduct business efficiently.

Transportation networking companies like Lyft and Uber are prime examples of applications that help conduct business in heavily populated areas. Transportation networking companies like these two help increase levels of communication, specifically between two different types of users: the driver and the passenger. This example is one of many ways that mobile technology helps making humans happy. Regardless of the application someone uses on their mobile device, the bottom line is that most mobile device users only download applications that provide some level of happiness. Companies know that positive user experiences will encourage the user to return.

Social media networking giants like Facebook spend large amounts of resources on research in order to help determine what makes users happy. Unlike the transportation networking applications, these applications are free and probably the most used of all application types. There are several online networking sites and all of them aim to deliver positive results for subscribers. In fact, applications like the Facebook-owned Instagram seems to be concentrating on that specific user

experience.

Social networking sites like Instagram facilitate communication amongst subscribed users in different ways. Designing a visually appealing interface that promotes a high level of user friendliness are important factors for users. One widespread feature that is used by many social networking sites is the like button. Most applications use unique variants of this social media response. Some use proprietary emojis, others use hearts, and some

use a thumbs up icon as their like button. In this day and age, users are gravitating to the instant response features when responding to peer users, it is a friendly option that does not require any typing and promotes prosocial behavior for both users.

The like button is popular, and users find it to be a fun way to stay in touch with people or communicate with people that they share the same interests with. This is my perspective on how application developers promote happiness to users. So, whether you are using an application to distract your mind for a few minutes, make few dollars, stay organized, or simply stay in touch, just remember to stay happy.



Technology can facilitate happiness  
Photo courtesy of thoughtco.com

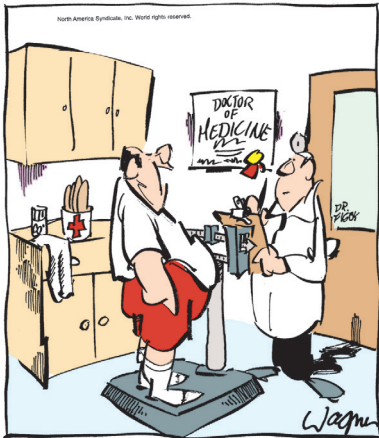
*Fabian Ramirez is a graduate student pursuing a Master of Science in Technical communications (MSTC) degree. He was born and raised in Houston and is a UHD College of Sciences and Technology alumnus. He has a passion for design and engineering. His favorite hobbies include laying on a beach, listening to live latin-jazz, and practicing his photography. He also enjoys weekend road trips to Austin Texas, where he can see live Formula 1 racing.*

## Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



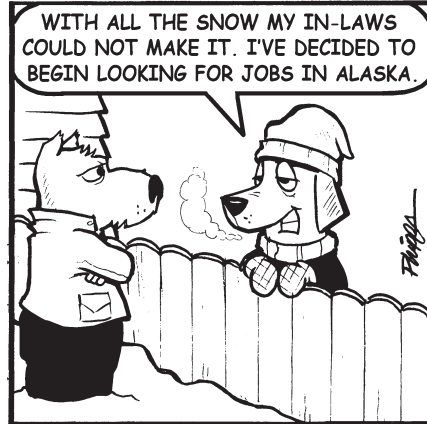
## GRIN and BEAR IT



"Well, no wonder ... these are my heavy socks!"

## Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



## Weekly SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

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

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

### DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ♦♦

♦ Moderate ♦♦ Challenging  
♦♦♦ HOO BOY!

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## MAGIC MAZE ● PORT CITIES IN AUSTRALIA

U T Q O L I G D B Y W T R P Y  
M K W I F D Y E N D Y S B N Y  
W E O U S Q O M K I I F A D R  
B Z L X T R A B O H W B L W E  
U E L T S A C W E N L R L N I  
S Q O N N A H T A R R A K P  
L S N R I A C J D H F B Y D M  
D C G A Y W M V T E S S H Q A  
G N O L E E G E P I R N W L D  
E I N R U B E N R U O B L E M  
K I G H F E C B B F Z Y Y W V

Find the listed words in the diagram. They run in all directions forward, backward, up, down and diagonally

Albany      Dampier      Geelong      Newcastle  
Brisbane    Darwin      Hobart      Whyalla  
Burnie      Derby      Karratha    Wollongong  
Cairns      Fremantle   Melbourne

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## King Crossword

### ACROSS

- 1 \$ dispenser
- 4 " — Miserables"
- 7 Trounce
- 12 Commonest English word
- 13 Matterhorn
- 14 Worn unevenly
- 15 2012 movie bear
- 16 Savage
- 18 Midafternoon, in a way
- 19 Long-legged shorebird
- 20 Pull an all-nighter
- 22 Freudian concept
- 23 Use a keyboard
- 27 Moreover
- 29 Rodeo outcries
- 31 Strong adhesive
- 34 Meal for Oliver Twist
- 35 Moral principles
- 37 Larry's pal
- 38 Runs from the fuzz
- 39 Shooter ammo
- 41 Sharpen
- 45 Tureen accessory
- 47 Inseparable
- 48 Marian, in "The Music Man"

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
12			13			14					
15			16			17					
18			19								
20			21		22			23	24	25	26
			27	28			29	30			
31	32	33					34				
35				36		37					
38				39	40			41	42	43	44
				45				46		47	
48	49	50	51							52	
53						54				55	
56						57				58	

- 52 "Monty Python" opener
- 53 Wanted-poster datum
- 54 Hi-tech SFX
- 55 Prepared
- 56 Thick-soled shoes
- 57 Slight amount
- 58 Attempt
- 7 Vegan's no-no
- 8 Bobby of hockey
- 9 Luau side dish
- 10 "Born in the —"
- 11 Corral
- 17 Huff and puff
- 21 Long skirts
- 23 Pitched
- 24 Second person
- 25 "Ulalume" writer
- 26 Immigrant's study (Abbr.)
- 28 Big Apple letters
- 30 Past
- 31 Moray or conger
- 32 Sch. org.
- 33 Resistance measure
- 36 Practice pugilism
- 37 Sweet
- 40 Proclamation
- 42 Jack
- 43 Go in
- 44 Irritable
- 45 Glaswegian girl
- 46 Novelist
- 48 Varnish ingredient
- 49 Under the weather
- 50 Life story, for short
- 51 Tatter

### DOWN

- 1 Storage story
- 2 " — Finest Hour"
- 3 TV, radio, etc.
- 4 Chemistry classrooms
- 5 On cloud nine
- 6 Parsley serving

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## Strange but true

by Samantha Weaver

It was 20th-century American writer, publisher, artist and philosopher Elbert Hubbard who made the following sage observation: "Genius may have its limitations, but stupidity is not thus handicapped."

According to historical reports, in 1877 snakes fell from the sky in Memphis, Tennessee.

When the bubonic plague, more commonly known as the Black Death, was at its peak in Europe in the 14th century, a wide variety of remedies was prescribed, including smoking tobacco, bringing spiders into the household, inhaling the stench from a latrine, sitting between two large fires, drinking red wine in which new steel had been cooled, and bathing in goat urine.

Successful inventor and businessman Thomas Alva Edison received only three months of formal education, at a public school in Michigan.

The first photograph of a United States citizen was taken in 1839. The subject was Samuel F.B. Morse, a painter who also happened to be the inventor of a single-wire telegraph system and developer of the Morse Code.

You probably are aware of the fact that slugger Babe Ruth held the record for the most home runs; you might not know, though, that he also held the record for the most strike-outs.

Those who speak English call it a French kiss, but those who speak French call it an English kiss.

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## GO FIGURE! by Linda Thistle

The idea of Go Figure is to arrive at the figures given at the bottom and right-hand columns of the diagram by following the arithmetic signs in the order they are given (that is, from left to right and top to bottom). Use only the numbers below the diagram to complete its blank squares and use each of the nine numbers only once.

	+		×		9
×		+		×	
	×		-		29
+		×		-	
	×		-		29
24		25		20	

1 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 9

### DIFFICULTY: ★

★ Moderate ★★ Difficult  
★★★ GO FIGURE!

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## Solutions to last week's puzzles

### King Crossword

Answers

Solution time: 21 mins.

R	A	J	A	S	H	A	H	V	I	P
E	L	A	N	P	O	L	O	E	D	O
V	E	N	T	R	I	C	L	E	N	E
		H	U	N	K	C	U	G	A	T
S	E	V	E	N		C	A	M	E	
I	T	E	M	C	O	O	K	W	A	R
B	U	N		T	H	I	N	E	N	O
S	I	D	E	W	A	L	K	S	C	A
		E	V	E	R		V	E	E	R
H	O	T	E	L	A	R	I	D		
E	S	T		V	E	N	E	Z	U	E
A	L	A		E	R	O	S	C	L	A
D	O	S		S	E	N	T	E	M	M

### Weekly SUDOKU

Answer

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

### Go Figure!

answers

9	-	2	×	3	21
÷		×		×	
1	+	4	×	5	25
+		+		+	
8	+	6	+	1	15
17		14		16	

## Insightful Awareness

By Aansa Usmani

*As a mental health advocate, my mission is to educate others on mental disorders, helping to remove the stigma surrounding those suffering from these issues.*

*The more we educate ourselves on these issues, the more likely we will be able to understand those suffering from them around us. DISCLAIMER: I am not a licensed psychologist; the facts and figures are from the internet. If there are any serious concerns, please visit your local therapist.*

For the past twelve years, the second day of April has been known as World Autism Awareness Day. In honor of that tradition, this bi-week's edition will cover autism.

Autism—also known as Autism Spectrum Disorder—is a disorder that can impede cognitive skills such as communication (verbal or non-verbal), social skills, and certain behaviors.

According to the “National Institute of Mental Health,” autism is characterized as a spectrum disorder because of the wide range of symptom severity. Autism can range from mild to severe symptoms depending on the person and their neurocognitive development. Statistically speaking, roughly one in 59 children have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, (one in 37 boys and one in 151 girls), with boys being four times more likely to develop this compared to girls. Autism is typically diagnosed during a child's early years, but it can be detected at any age, regardless of gender or racial identity. According to Autism Today, it affects all social classes and ethnicities, yet those within the “minority” groups tend to be diagnosed at a much later rate compared to Caucasians.

Although the exact cause of autism is unknown, scientists have

gathered risk factors in determining its development; certain influences/behaviors may be attributed towards environmental or other socialization causes. According to the “National Institute of Mental Health”, genetic factors such as having fragile X syndrome or Down Syndrome may play a role in developing this disorder. Other familial factors include starting a family at a later age or having autistic family members. Although these risk factors may not contribute towards one's autism, it gives an idea of how it may have developed. However, the idea that vaccines is an attribution to autism is a complete falsehood as there is no evidence to prove this heavily-promoted “anti-vaxxer” theory.

According to “The National Institute of Mental Health” there are attributing factors that can potentially develop this disorder. These behaviors is based from the “spectrum theory” ranging from mild to severe in addition to the person's neurocognitive development Social communication / interaction behaviors may include (source: The National Institute of Mental Health):

- Making little or inconsistent eye contact
- Tending not to look at or listen to people
- Rarely sharing enjoyment of objects or activities by pointing or showing things to others
- Failing to, or being slow to, respond to someone calling their name or to other verbal attempts to gain attention
- Having difficulties with the back and forth of conversation
- Often talking at length about a favorite subject without noticing that others are not interested or without giving others a chance to respond
- Having facial expressions, movements, and gestures that do not match what is being said
- Having an unusual tone of voice that

may sound sing-song or flat and robot-like

- Having trouble understanding another person's point of view or being unable to predict or understand other people's actions

Alongside social communicative issues, there are also underlying issues that may arise. These behaviors include having repetitive tendencies (also known as echolalia), a heavily invested interest in certain topics (i.e. trivia, numbers, dates, etc), having sensitivity towards the sensory input (i.e. certain colors, temperatures, noises, etc) or having difficulty adjusting to changes within a set routine. Again, these symptoms are part of the spectrum, ranging from minimal to extreme; every person with autism may not have the same type, yet it is important to understand how there may be overlapping of certain symptoms or behaviors. Besides the social/repetitive issues, there are also learning strengths within this disorder; autistic individuals are able to learn subjects such as math, science, or art at a much more rapid rate compared to those without autism.

They also have academic strengths when learning new skills, as they may have either strong visual, auditory, or tactical learning mannerisms. These skills may also contribute towards

their ability to remember details and information for long period of time.

A common treatment option for this disorder is long-term psychotherapy. This intends to reduce one's symptoms and have fewer problems within their social, academic, or personal lives.

Medication is often prescribed to treat this disorder, with common forms being anti-depressants/anti-anxiety, tranquilizers, or attentive medications.

How did a puzzle piece become the symbol for autism?

In the early 1960s, Gerald Gasson, a board member of the National Autistic Society, believed that those suffering from autism have a “puzzling” condition, adopting the logo for their society. Since then it has been deemed the symbol for autism, understanding how the spectrum for some may be puzzling to those non-autistic individuals. In celebration of this month, I end this piece with an image of the puzzle piece.

If you or someone you know needs to talk to someone regarding mental health issues confidentially, here are some useful phone numbers to call/text: Suicide Hotline: 1-800-784-8433 Depression Hotline: 1-630-482-9696 Grief Support: 1-650-321-5272

*Aansa Usmani is a first-year college student attending the University of Houston-Downtown. She is a Political Science major with plans to run for political office. She identifies herself as a social justice warrior, advocating for women, LGBT, immigration, and other liberal causes. Alongside politics, her passions include photography, writing, and debate.*



## Mercer's wine nice cream

By Kelsi Rios

Mercer Dairy Inc. has done the unthinkable with their ice cream. In 2006, the dairy company decided to infuse their famously delicious ice cream with hand-picked wines. The types of wines range from a sweet blush to not-so-sweet reds. Personally, my recommendation would be the Red Raspberry Chardonnay. This flavor has the perfect mix of Chardonnay and ice cream. The flavor is not too sweet nor is it bitter in any way. Do not worry about getting drunk. There is only 5 percent of alcohol in this pint-sized product. You can purchase Mercer's wine ice cream at Spec's for \$8. Please keep in mind that not all Spec's have them in stock, so call before you drive to the closest one.



Interested in journalism?

Sign up for TCOM 4360: Publication Workshop and work with Dateline: Downtown.

# 12

## Nearby bakery offers food to make *abuelita* proud

By Janet Salas

A short walk from the university, up North Main Street and right on Hogan Street is a family-owned restaurant that offers you the chance to eat a meal made with love and care. Mom-and-pop establishments like La Casa Bakery have the heart and soul that provide customers with the familiar sights, sounds, smells and smiles of home. And the tortilla chips are bomb.

The bakery and cafe are both small but they have everything. Upon

arrival you are immediately greeted with the aroma of *pan dulce*. You will set eyes on glass doors that display numerous amounts of sweet breads. You can find *empanadas*, *bolillos* and *conchas*, the sugar-covered sweet bread molded like a seashell. If you cannot decide on which to choose I recommend the *marra-concha* which is a combination of two sweet breads, a *marranito* which is a Mexican pig-shaped bread flavored with molasses and a *concha*.

Bakery items are made daily from scratch by owner Don Trinidad “Trini” Garza. He has been baking bread

for over 60 years now. At the age of 12, he began baking with his brothers in Monterrey, Mexico. What started off as a bonding experience with his three brothers lead to an artistry that helped establish his business. During an interview, Trini assured me that he introduced *empanadas* to the Northside of Houston. The delicious taste of his *empanadas* proves it.

Do not spoil your appetite by going straight to dessert though. I recommend you sit down and indulge on a meal, whether breakfast or lunch, first. Once you are seated you will be greeted with a smile, fried corn tortilla chips and spicy salsa. These tortilla chips are crisp and crunchy but be careful because they are served piping hot. Free, fresh corn tortilla chips *para todos!*

The tables are covered with bright tablecloths and the walls were decorated with a variety of pictures including Elvis Presley, a neon beer sign and even a Godfather poster. In the background, a *canción ranchera* played, which is traditional music of Mexico. This reminded me of my grandmother’s kitchen on an early Sunday morning.

La Casa Bakery and Cafe offers high quality food and service. The waiters are attentive and eager to offer suggestions, nurturing a family-like atmosphere. Half of the items on the menu are under \$10, a broke college student heaven. Do not think that reasonable prices mean small servings; at La Casa low prices are paired with good sized portions.

Meals consist of tacos with freshly made tortillas, Mexican style sandwich on a *bolillo* with your choice of fajita or chicken and bacon and shrimp quesadillas. While the menu offers predominantly Mexican food, there are other items such as the seafood platter or La Garza Original Burger which is a juicy,

double meat burger with bacon, cheese and avocado with a side of home-style fries.

Mom-and-pop restaurants typically rely on word of mouth and reviews. After Hurricane Harvey in 2017, Trini noticed a plummet in business. The decrease in sales was a disappointment that led to him discussing with his daughter, Jackie, that he was considering closing down. Trini’s daughter could not let that happen because she knew how hard her father worked to accomplish the dream of owning his own business.

Jackie, who was a senior at Heights High School, felt heartbroken after seeing that her father had to throw away all the freshly made breads he had spent all morning making. So she decided to reach out via Twitter for her friends to come visit La Casa. The one tweet to a few friends ended up with four million impressions. Within 48 hours, new customers filled the restaurant and helped keep her father’s dream alive.

If you would like to “treat yo’ self” make sure you head on over to La Casa Bakery located on 1002 Hogan Street. This hidden gem is open 7 days a week, from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Go ahead and eat up without feeling guilty, not only will you be supporting a small business, but you have a healthy walk back to campus once you are done.

If you need more convincing, visit their Instagram page @lacasabakeryandcafe to help increase your appetite.

*Janet Salas is currently a senior working towards her Bachelor of English. She is a first-generation college student as well as a Navy veteran. Once she graduates, she plans to pursue a career as a paralegal. When she is not in school she enjoys working out, volunteering, hiking, and kayaking.*



Freshly baked conchas at La Casa Bakery  
Photo courtesy of La Casa Bakery

## Life is short, eat what makes you happy

By Naomi Cardwell

There is an exhausting rhetoric rising from the people of today behind all the popular diets, that shouts “No!” to people. They promise people if they say no to food, they will be happy. What if we started saying yes to food-would we be happy?

Saying yes to food is a big part of being happy and loving the self. Everybody has different versions of that. Loving the self may include a juice after yoga for one person and a burger after a long day of work for another person. The act of saying yes to food can look different for different people.

The “treat yo’ self” attitude relates to this ‘say yes to food’ idea. Treats can be associated with a happy memory. A lot of comfort food does this for people, especially in the south. It reminds them of loved ones, old times and just the joy they experienced eating it.

A lot of the times when people are seen eating something that is not healthy, they are perceived as if they do not love themselves or that they do not take care of their body.

This is frustrating, because who is the one not taking care of themselves, if someone is focusing on other people’s food preference and judging them for it?

Many claim that a healthy diet plays a big role in happiness and I agree with that statement. But a healthy diet for me consists of an occasional dessert and number one from Whataburger from time to time. Healthy is about balance- no, my diet does not consist of dessert and Whataburger. I do have a balanced diet and try to space out the amount of times I treat myself. But with that being said, I do not completely deny myself from ever eating the foods that I enjoy.

If the goal is happiness (which is a goal for most), why are people attempting diets that take away all their favorite foods that bring them happiness or contentment? Why are they saying no?

Saying no to food is not the answer to a happy life or a healthy life. Say yes to foods that make you strong, healthy and happy. Say yes and “treat yo’ self.” Life is short and you deserve to eat the things that make you happy.

*Naomi Cardwell is a Technical Communications major. Her career interests are in social media and mass communications. She believes in the city of Houston and wants to use her degree to help Houstonians be better informed. In her free time she loves being with family, friends and binge watching above average television.*