Cultural Identity Lost in Local Music Venue Closures

Alison Alessi
Feature Editor

Past the checker board floor of the entry hall and into the dimly lit main room there are people packed in front of a small stage, like moths drawn to the white christmas lights that glitter behind the band, making the stage the brightest place in Kraftbrau Brewery. Most eyes are on The Glowfriends, who are the third band to play out of the five band line up. People are dancing as energy flies back and forth between the performers and the audience. In a couple months, Kraftbrau will never again see a performance like this, or for that matter any performance at all. At the end of November, Kraftbrau Brewery will be closing its doors for good after 11 years of buisness.

"Kalamazoo has its own character and it's losing it."
-Samantha Russ

Sean Smith, who owns the building that Kraftbrau is located in, wants to renovate the upper two stories of the three story building and rent them out to tenants. Fear that new tenants would clash with the loud music venue on the first floor has contributed to the decision that Kraftbrau must go. But this is only one of the reasons Kraftbrau is closing. The land that the building is on is worth a lot more now than years before when Kraftbrau first started renting. Smith decided to more than double the price of rent to keep up with the price of the neighborhood and Kraftbrau cannot afford the new rent.

"It's upsetting because... they were building a reputation," said April Morris who is a member of The Glowfriends and has been playing music at Kraftbrau for nine years. Morris said that the venue was beginning to draw more bands from around the country in addition to the local bands that often play there. It takes a long time to build a good reputation and a name means a lot when attracting performers to a certain city.

Samantha Russ, a junior at Loy Norrix said that Kraftbrau was important because it was identified as a music venue. "It was a solid venue," said Russ. It was not part of a shop or part of a bowling alley like Nite Moves which is the place that Russ usually goes to see local bands play. "It [Kraftbrau] had its own culture...its own feel," said Russ.

Though Kraftbrau was identified as a music venue for most, Kalamazoo is also losing one of its local breweries. Aaron Young, who has worked at Kraftbrau for four years, said that they do not distribute the beer, they just sell it at that location.

Young is not sure yet what he will be doing once Kraftbrau closes for good but he is sure that "something'll pop up." Working somewhere else will be different for Young, "...nine to five is not something I'm looking for right now," said Young.

As upsetting as these circumstances may be to the community, Kraftbrau is not the first music venue to be lost to renovations. Recently Club Soda was forced to close because its rent was raised for the same reason as Kraftbrau's. The owner of the building that Club Soda was located in wants to renovate the upper floors and rent to new tenants. The most noticeable thing about the closing of these two venues is that they are shutting down within a few months of each other.

SEAN STOTO/ KNIGHT LIFE

Kraftbrau Brewery has many events lined up before they close, including the Glowfriends on Friday November 23,2007.

Kalamazoo lost Club Soda in February, but Morris remembers another venue that used to be downtown. It was an all ages co-op called The Space.

Morris said The Space usually had a really good turn out before it was shut down to make way for a parking lot. The closing of The Space, "devastated so many people," said Morris. Despite the plans to tear down the building that The Space was in, the parking lot was never built.

"Now I drive by the place and the building is standing there empty," said Morris who used to see bands play there almost three times a week.

Morris said that when it comes to music venues, the people running it really have to own the building or it could get "ripped out from under you."

Kraftbrau does not have any plans to relocate once it shuts down, but Morris is confident that a new venue will open up at some point.

Russ feels that Kalamazoo is losing more than just music venues with the closing of these businesses. "Kalamazoo has its own character and it's losing it."

Generates Mixed Results

Madison Kay
Web Master

Being a freshman can be very intimidating. High school administrators at Loy Norrix realized that the freshmen were experiencing issues that couldn't be addressed in classrooms full of upper classmen. The answer to this problem became the Freshmen Academy .

What makes the Freshmen Academy so unique is that only freshman can be in it. It is designed much like the Kalamazoo middle schools so that each and every student is part of a team. Also, even though there are over 400 students in the Freshmen Academy, the average class size is around 20 students.

There are four houses (or teams) in the academy. These houses are called Lion Hearted, Claymore, Bushido, and Excalibur. Sally Wagenaar, English teacher and team leader of Excalibur, is a big believer in the power of the Freshman Academy.

She says, "Students aren't always ready for high school; the team approach really works, because we have the students in our class the whole year. I had one of the best years in my career while teaching at Loy Norrix[with the academy]."

"Last year was like fixing an airplane while it was in flight."
-Jeff Boggan

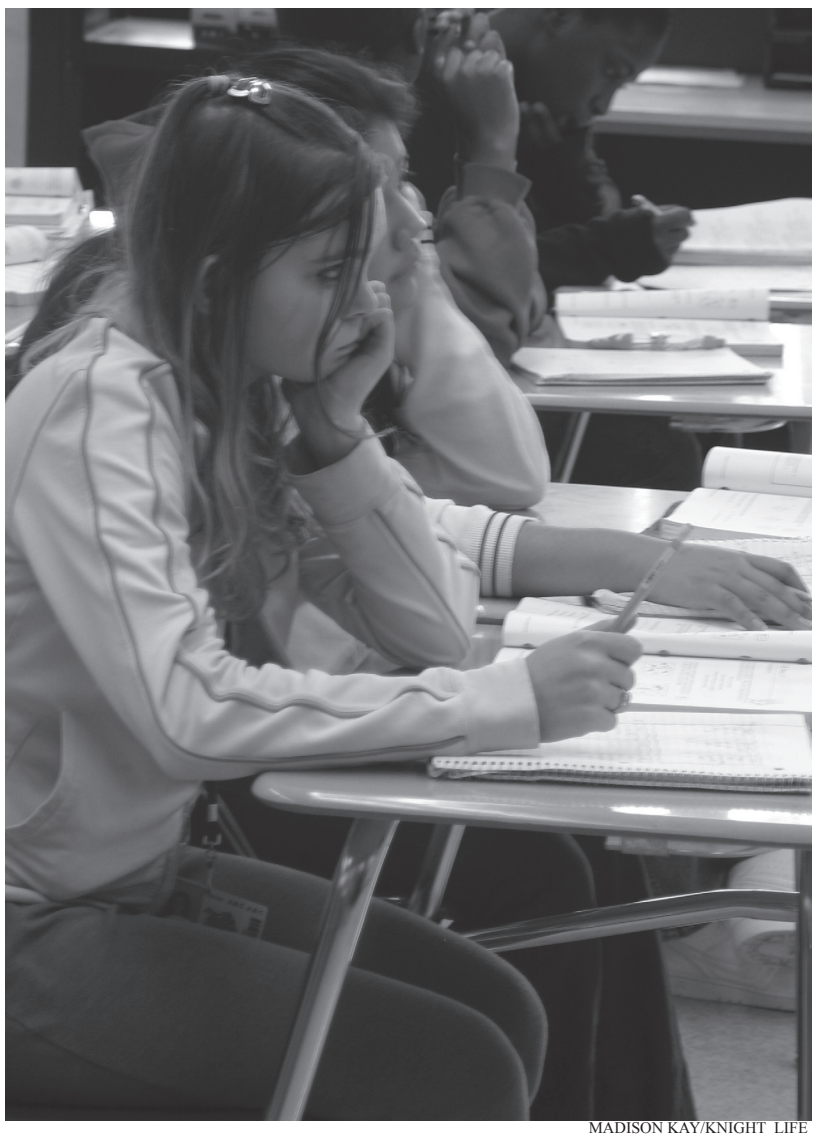
Jeff Boggan, principal of the Freshmen Academy, believes that freshmen need more individual attention to acclimate to the high school environment.

The teachers had put a lot of time and effort into forming the structure of the academy and introducing it at LN. Boggan had limited time with the academy staff before the school year started, and during the school year as issues arose and reform occurred Boggan had to work to fix these issues while also leading the academy.

"Last year was like fixing an airplane while it was in flight," Boggan said, referring to the fact that the program was already up and running when the administration realized that major changes were necessary to make the program successful.

Not everyone is convinced of the academies effectiveness. For the 2006-2007 school year, 180 students did not complete their freshmen year and are now considered second year freshmen.

Some students who were in the academy last year had a problem with it because they were not given the opportunity to test out and also because they were only able to earn six credits instead of eight. during a regular school year.



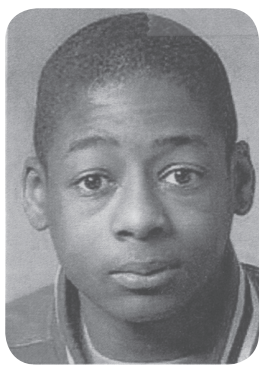
MADISON KAY/KNIGHT LIFE

Kristen Bowers a student in the Freshmen Academy listens intensively to her intergated math teacher Elizabeth Chau's.

Tressa Greschak, a sophomore at Loy Norrix said, "I didn't like the academy because I was cut off from the whole school, and felt like I was still in middle school."

However, there are some students who liked that academy. Sixtine Berquist, sophomore, is one of them.

"The Freshmen Academy wasn't a bad idea, but it was executed poorly. I enjoyed my teachers, but it did not seem that our personal welfare was cared for as well as it should have been."



Timothy Palmer, Former Loy Norrix Student Dies at Age 18

Timothy Terrell Palmer, 18, died on July 9, 2007 at Bronson Methodist Hospital. He was born on January 22, 1989 and was the son of Tasha Palmer and stepson of Eddie Hegwood.

Timothy was a student at Greenwood Elementary, Milwood Elementary, and Milwood Middle School before attending Loy Norrix High School. He attended LN until January of his senior year when he transferred to Phoenix High School. He graduated from Phoenix in June 2007.

During his freshmen and sophomore years at LN, Timothy was a highly accomplished wrestler. In his sophomore year Timothy went to the state finals for wrestling in the 112 pound weight division. He was also an All-Conference wrestler during his sophomore year.

Tom Barnum, Timothy's wrestling coach during his time on the team, has established a scholarship in Timothy's name through the Loy Norrix High School Athletic Department. This scholarship will be given annually to a senior wrestler who has exhibited athletic success despite having to overcome adversity in their life.

In his spare time Timothy enjoyed playing basketball with his friends and listening to music. He also liked to walk around with people and go to parties.

After graduating from high school Timothy had dreamed of attending Michigan State University to wrestle for the Spartans.

Timothy is survived by his mother Tasha Palmer, stepfather Eddie Hegwood, sisters Tamara and Tabitha Palmer, brother Ty Hegwood, grandmother Maggie Atkinson, as well as many aunts, uncles, friends, coaches and teachers who were a part of his life.

"Timothy had a great smile and a great sense of humor. He loved to wrestle. He was very good at it, and he knew he was good at it. He would always tell me, 'I'm gonna graduate Mrs. Boggan,' and he did."
-Valerie Boggan

"I want people to remember him as the good wrestler and student he was. I want him to be remembered as him being himself, just goofy and fun."
-Tamara Palmer

"He was a very genuine and nice person. He would always stop by the athletic office just to say hi. He was compassionate about others and overall a good person."
-Andrew Laboe