



# Life Existing Beyond Earth

*Space station experimenting with life in space*



**(19 Feb. 2010) --- Backdropped by Earth's horizon and the blackness of space, the International Space Station is featured in this image photographed by an STS-130 crew member on space shuttle Endeavour after the station and shuttle began their post-undocking relative separation. Undocking of the two spacecraft occurred at 7:54 p.m. (EST) on Feb. 19, 2010.**

## Reggie Butler

The Signal

The International Space Station is approximately 200 miles away from earth. It's crew members sacrifice their families, friends and comforts of home for the advancement of humankind.

The ISS is a spacecraft that has been flying in low-earth orbit since 1998. Currently hosting a six-person crew, the vehicle operates as a science laboratory built in collaboration with NASA, the Russian Federal Space Agency, the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, the European Space Agency and the Canadian Space Agency.

More than 400 science experiments have been conducted on the ISS thus far and there are hundreds more underway. These experiments research human health and exploration, technology testing, basic life and physical sciences, and earth and space science.

The science conducted in space is much different from the science done on Earth due to the environment.

"Micro-gravity provides an interesting working and operating environment in space," said Jessica Calhoun, safety engineer for the ISS program. "On the

earth, gravity is a huge attracting force of nature and it effects & influences everything. Properties of matter respond differently in a micro-gravity environment and the ISS gives us the opportunities to research and study these differences."

Some experiments currently being done upon the ISS include spinal ultrasound testing to address the accuracy of MRIs, stem cell research in order to estimate space radiation effects on the human body, and the Robonaut that allows for an extended duration in space environments while completing tasks onboard.

"What we're doing up there is a great adventure, but we're also bringing things back to Earth," said Edward Michael Fincke, astronaut, former commander of the ISS and UHCL alum. "The more we understand about life up there, the more we understand life down here. It makes life better."

Crew members on the ISS spend approximately 6.5 hours a day working on various activities in addition to two hours of exercise a day to counter the effects of micro-gravity on their bodies. Every

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## Forgotten Sons and Daughters

Jason Seiel

The Signal

There is an epidemic going on. It claims a life every 65 minutes, 18 people a day. The event in question is the suicide rate of military veterans.

One statistic from the Veterans Administration (VA) shows: for every veteran killed by enemy combatants, 25 veterans kill themselves.

Veterans of modern wars endure multiple combat tours, up to a year in length. They get shot at, blown up, kill enemy combatants, face civilians who don't want them in their county and watch their friends die.

For many, the first funeral they attend in their life is for a fallen comrade.

Combat soldiers are trained to do two things: break things and kill people.

At some point though, soldiers come home. Their enlistment is complete, but for many, the battle has just begun.

Soldiers are asked to exchange their rifles for hammers, briefcases or clipboards and return to being productive members of society. This can be an especially difficult transition for some.

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## The Biggest Pipeline to Hit North America



### Elisa Morales

The Signal

A 1,179-mile pipeline project to transport barrels of Canadian crude oil to refineries in the U.S. is pending Presidential Permit approval amid controversy stemming from environmental concerns, which could affect the

Texas Gulf Coast.

TransCanada applied for the permit for the Keystone XL Pipeline Project May 2012. If approved by President Obama, the permit would allow TransCanada to begin construction of the northern Keystone XL Pipeline leg that extends 875 miles from

Alberta, Canada, into the existing pipeline facilities near Steele City, Neb.

The Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, released by the State Department on March 1, indicated that the pipeline would contribute minimal impact to the environment.

The Gulf Coast portion of the project is already underway. A 435-mile-long pipeline would transport U.S. crude oil to the refineries between Cushing, Okla., and Nederland, Texas. An additional 47-mile-long pipeline, the Houston Lateral Project, is also under development and will transport oil to the refineries in Houston and Port Arthur.

With the proposed project, TransCanada estimates that Keystone would have the potential to transport approximately 830,000 barrels of Canadian oil a day to the refineries in the Gulf Coast and ultimately 1.3 million barrels per day. Pending the approval, Keystone XL project operations would begin in late 2014 or early

2015.

While opponents believe that by stopping the Keystone Project the oil will stay in the ground, the State Department concluded that would never be the case because Canada doesn't need the U.S. to transport oil. The denial of the Presidential Permit would drive Canada to look elsewhere to sell the oil.

David Dodson, spokesperson for TransCanada Gulf Coast Project, says the construction of the southern pipeline would continue regardless, for it would need to support the contracts it currently has to deliver domestic crude oil to the Texas Gulf Coast refineries.

"There is insufficient refinery capacity in the nation's heartland to handle all the domestic crude oil available for refining," Dodson said. "[The] Gulf Coast Project alleviates that backlog."

"I think at the end of the day, common sense is going to trump politics," said Bob Mitchell, president of the Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership

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# Oil Valued Greater than Planet Earth

## EDITORIAL

On the surface, the Keystone XL Pipeline seems like a beneficial proposal.

In a 1- to 2-year period, approximately 3,900 people will be directly employed in the construction of the pipeline. After construction, 35 permanent jobs would remain.

Refining companies pay market prices for crude oil, and would gain significant profit selling into the wholesale market.

Conflictingly, it will be damaging and depleting for the environment.

Tar sands will be extracted and transported through the proposed underground pipeline. Environmental groups such as the Sierra Club and Natural Resources Defense Council warn it is the dirtiest source of oil on Earth.

Producing 17 percent more greenhouse gases than an average barrel of crude oil, tar sands are an unconventional petroleum deposit that contains sand, clay, water, and bitumen a heavy black viscous oil.

The U.S. State Department has released their revised environmental impact statement report (EIS).

It determines that Alberta’s tar sand oil will find its way to market one way or another and that the planned pipeline is safer

and cleaner than transporting by rail or tanker.

There is a 45-day comment period. Next, they will review and address all comments. Finally, the President will announce the approval or denial of the Keystone XL Pipeline.

Being a nation dependent on oil, the U.S. is top-ranked in oil consumption annually around the world.

We use more oil in a year than the next top four contenders, China, Japan, India, and Russia, combined. The Keystone XL Pipeline will only add to this number.

Once completed, about 830,000 barrels of Canadian crude oil per day will be transported from Alberta, Canada, to the Gulf Coast. The southern portion, from Cushing, Okla., down to Nederland, Texas, is the Gulf Coast Project, which is already underway.

TransCanada is the company responsible for the construction of the Keystone Pipeline.

A report by Cornell University Global Labor Institute states that since 2010, when the first Keystone Pipeline began operation, 35 spills have occurred in the U.S. and Canada.

Leaks and spills threaten rivers, aquifers and communities all along the route. A break in a pipeline can lead to oil flooding rivers, coating wildlife and spreading to marshlands,

backyards, businesses and farmland.

Because of the diluted bitumen’s toxic, corrosive, and heavy composition, tar sands pipeline spills occur more frequently than spills from pipelines carrying conventional oil.

Besides tar sand, the executive summary written by TransCanada explains in detail other environmental issues associated with the pipeline.

From erosion and/or contamination to the loss and/or compaction of soil will disturb approximately 15,493 acres of land.

Stream sedimentation including 56 perennial rivers and streams as well as roughly 25 miles of floodplains will affect roughly 1,073 water bodies.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service identified 13 federally protected or candidate species that could be impacted due to habitat loss or water contamination.

These are just few damaging environmental effects that this pipeline will cause.

The construction of the northern leg is pending Presidential Permit by President Barack Obama, which would authorize it to cross through the United States-Canadian border.

Allowing the Keystone XL Pipeline to be built would be temporarily beneficial to the economy at the price of permanent destruction of the environment.

A likely reason the U.S. is so



WANTNEEDO

Kalan Lyra

dependent on oil could be lying within the political clout of the oil industries themselves.

Oil and gas companies make high amounts of revenue distributing their products. If business slows down, they lose money. It seems like they aren’t willing to let that happen even to help preserve our environment and non-renewable resources.

Regardless of the Keystone XL Pipeline, demand for oil is not slowing down.

Our reserves will run out eventually and damage to the ozone and climate change will start to catch up with us.

Our continued dependence on high-volume usage of oil and gas continues to pump greenhouse emissions into the atmosphere damaging our ozone layer. Environmental organization in Canada, Pembina Institute, said the Keystone XL Pipeline would cause an additional emission of 22.4 megatons of greenhouse gasses.

Now is the time to start investing and pursue alternate, renewable energy sources.

For comments, questions and concerns about the Keystone XL Pipeline, visit <http://www.keystonepipeline-xl.state.gov/>.

## No one will love you like I do... when my first love turned into a nightmare

Anahid Tapia  
The Signal

“You bitch! Why are you out with your friends? They’re all whores.”

I don’t know why he hated my friends, he just did.

Although my ex-boyfriend never hit me, he constantly belittled me, cursing and yelling at me. He also made sure to remind me that he was the only person who really cared about me. Honestly, I never spoke to anyone about it. I was ashamed of the person I had become in that relationship.

I don’t know why I didn’t leave sooner. I felt like I owed him something; if I broke up with him I would be another person in his life who abandoned him.

He would tell me how his mother left when he was young. He would say that he was trying to better himself, but his manager at work did not like him, so he was stuck in the same posi-

tion. Eventually he got fired; he then accused the car dealership manager of having no compassion because he wanted to repossess the car.

I know now that all this was his way of making sure I felt guilty for wanting to leave. Every time he got mad at me, he would scream and call me every name in the book, and then break down and cry. Then he would tell me that he didn’t mean to yell at me; I should know that it was because he loved me so much.

I finally realized this was not love; I needed to leave the relationship. I was not going to be able to leave as long as he was depending on me. I encouraged him to look for a new job, enroll in school and, after a few months, he bought another car. Last was helping him get his own apartment. He did just that, and then he asked me to move in with him.



## STAFF COLUMN

He said if we both got full-time jobs, even though I was 21 and going to school, we could eventually get a house. I knew then the only way to get away was not to think about his feelings and his happiness; for once I needed to think about my own happiness.

I broke up with him that same week. After I told him it was over, the shouting started. This time, I yelled back. Something inside of me just snapped, and

for every reason he gave for staying together I shouted back 10 reasons why we couldn’t. I think I was yelling the reasons to remind myself why I needed to end this relationship.

I am not sure why he ran in my direction, but out of pure instinct, I grabbed the coffee mug next to me and I threw it at his head. The mug didn’t hit him, but it shattered when it hit the wall next to him. I yelled for him to get out of my house and he did.

Just outside my door he broke down again and begged me to reconsider. He said “no one would ever love you like I do,” and he fainted. I didn’t know if he was just pretending, but I didn’t care anymore.

I walked back into my house and closed the door behind me. I am not sure how long he was out there, but the worst part was over for me.

A friend once saw him parked

outside of my house when she came over to visit. For months, I would wake up to find my car egged, but I didn’t care. I was happy.

Last month I celebrated my 29th birthday with my boyfriend of four years by my side. A man who I know will be happy to sit next to my friends when I graduate this year. A man I know loves me “like no one else.”

Congress recently voted to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). The act has created positive changes since it was first enacted in 1994, by holding tougher provisions for offenders and provides services for victims of such violence. In addition all states have passed laws making stalking a crime.

# THE SIGNAL

<b>EDITOR</b> Ashley Honc	<b>BROADCAST REPORTER</b> Veronica Lopez	<b>STAFF</b> Reggie Butler Trent Gibson Ryan Little Lauren Lowry Elisa Morales Jason Seidel Anahid Tapia Traci Wall	<b>DIRECTOR OF STUDENT PUBLICATIONS</b> Taleen Washington
<b>DESIGN EDITOR</b> Shawn Domingues	<b>PHOTOGRAPHERS</b> Dave Valdez Dorian Valenzuela Lynsie Whitehead	<b>REACH THE STAFF:</b> Phone: 281-283-2570 Fax: 281-283-2569	<b>PUBLICATION SPECIALIST</b> Lindsay Humphrey
<b>DESIGNERS</b> Taylor Clinton Richard Higgins	<b>SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER</b> Christopher Rupley		<b>Address letters to:</b> The Signal Student Publications Office UH-Clear Lake 2700 Bay Area Blvd., Box 456 Houston, TX 77058
<b>VIDEOGRAPHER</b> Graham Clifford		Scan the code to send a letter to the editor.	<b>Visit the website:</b> <a href="http://www.uhclthesignal.com">www.uhclthesignal.com</a> <b>Email the staff:</b> <a href="mailto:thesignal@uhcl.edu">thesignal@uhcl.edu</a> <a href="mailto:thesignalnews@gmail.com">thesignalnews@gmail.com</a>

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# Undervaluing education leads to hard transition after high school

**Traci Wall**  
The Signal

I like to look back on my transition from high school to college as an easy one: I was older, wiser and prepared to conquer the world with the knowledge that the state of Texas deemed satisfactory for a 12th-grade graduate.

In high school, I was used to taking eight classes at a time and cramming every outlined fact provided in my study guide into my brain for safe keeping for the few hours required to ace a test. I would then rush on to the next subject as all of that data dropped like ephemeral fruit flies from my memory.

I was at the top of my game and determined to do whatever it took to succeed, a task I thought was relatively easy for me. Those were the days...

In reality, my first college semester hit me like a ton of bricks. I was enrolled in only half the course load that I was in high school, which I thought would be "easing in" to college life. It didn't take long to figure out that those four classes were truly a full-time commitment that

required tools that I couldn't just find on a class supply list.

Imagine my disenchantment when I received my first ever "C" on an exam for which I had memorized all of the facts and vocabulary. After all, for me, this method of study had never failed to produce straight A's.

As I continued struggling to pass other assignments and exams, I floundered in uncertainty. When I joined a few study groups to relieve my woes, I was surprised to learn that many others were in my same dream-crushing boat.

I found out the hard way that college is about building on your (hopefully) established knowledge, which I had habitually forgotten after each test.

College courses require you

to use the brain you should have been training for the previous 12 years to resourcefully find your

own information, apply lectures to real-life scenarios, and to actually know what you're talking about by retaining the information you've absorbed.

The skills, facts and real-world applications you learn need to stick throughout that class and the other 120 credit hours to come over at least the next four years.

So what happens when you're not prepared to learn this way?

Education was once a keystone of American values. It motivated us as Americans to be innovators and prepared us to lead and compete on a global level. Education is what built America to be, in my opinion, the greatest country in the world.

Standardized testing was

implemented to keep grade-level kids on track in school so that they could still live up to those standards. In hindsight, all it really accomplished was holding kids back by training them not to care about actually earning an education; it taught students to care little about anything else but passing their state-mandated test and the subjects covered on it.

Passing standardized tests was crucial for students to progress to the next grade-level and for educators to preserve their jobs. Because of this, students were taught to reiterate test-focused information instead of learning how to think critically and retain valuable knowledge.

Budget cuts dismantled creative activities like music, theatre and art classes, and nixed field trips and other opportunities to learn. These cuts also left passionate, inspirational teachers in the dust.

This robs kids of the creativity, ingenuity, passion and direction needed to successfully compete in the real world.

The scientists that founded NASA and other visionaries of

the 20th century are at the point of retirement. Our country's young adults are leaving high school without the essential preparation and critical thinking skills necessary to succeed in college-level courses. Instead, they were taught to memorize shortcuts, vocabulary definitions and test-driven facts.

The light bulb taken for granted over many of our heads has been allowed to dim for years.

We cannot expect mediocre education to aid in replacing a legacy of scientists, astronauts, entrepreneurs and other intellectuals that built this powerful nation.

It is crucial to prepare our young adults to continually use the skills they have learned in class to critically think through situations and expose them to different opportunities so they can lead the way into our next chapter of America. We owe it to the future of America, and ourselves, to move forward and away from a standardized, under-budgeted and undervalued education.



## STAFF COLUMN

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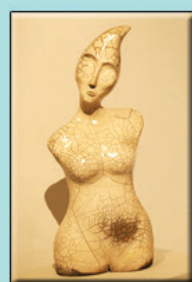
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Laura Clark, "Lady of Fire and Ice"



Shannon Melder, "Anatomy of a Slump Fault"

Sue Ruthstron, "Beyond Primal Matter"

Elizabeth Welch, "Wither"



Christina Carfora, "Subsidence"



Yocasta Gonzalez, "Mother Earth"



Jennifer Windham, Untitled



## A Vibrant Geological Experience

### Lauren Lowry

The Signal

In a landscape speckled with drilling rigs, Houston is known for its oil production. Digging a little deeper, UHCL art students found the geology of the area to be as rich a form of inspiration as the oil itself.

The UHCL Art Gallery is giving students, faculty, staff and residents of the Houston area a chance to experience geology in a unique way. Ceramic art students were given the opportunity to create their own interpretation of Houston's geology and its impact on the environment in the future. The exhibition, *Houston: A Geological Dynamic Wedge*, also provides exposure for the ceramic art program at UHCL.

"I really wanted the Houston community to be aware of what we do out here so it's kind of a way to advertise our program because I think we have one of the best programs in the country as far as ceramics is concerned," said Nick de Vries, professor of ceramics and exhibition curator. "The facilities are just fantastic. You are not going to find many like this."

De Vries created the theme of the exhibition in response to the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts (NCECA) 2013 Conference Earth/Energy that is held in Houston this year. The NCECA conference gives career artists the opportunity to educate other aspiring artists about ceramics.

The art gallery features artwork submitted by 26 students from UHCL. Artists executed their interpretation of the theme while using 100 percent ceramic material. All of the pieces were made in the ceramic studio located on campus.

"I made a table setting that includes four dinner plates, four dessert plates, and a center service plate," said Tess Stilwell, a post-baccalaureate ceramics student at UHCL and featured artist in the exhibit. "These were made on a drop mold – you roll out a slab, place it on top of a piece of wood or foam that has a hole cut in the middle for the shape of your plate, and then the slab slumps downward to make the curve of the plate. After the plates are stiff enough, I paint under glaze on them for the background color and draw my images with a stylus tool. Then the black is inlaid into these drawings so they will show up well. After the final glaze firing, I painted constellations on each plate using white gold luster."

Stilwell shared her thoughts on the exhibition, in which she submitted one piece.

"I really enjoy seeing the many different takes on how each artist approached the general subject," said Stilwell. "Even though there are many different kinds of work, different styles, and different artists, it's a very cohesive show. The land of

Houston itself is varied large and wide – swampy, sandy, forest, urban, etc."

De Vries wanted to incorporate Houston's geology into the theme to represent the area and to bring light to the diverse region in an artistic way. After extensive research, de Vries came up with the title *Houston: A Geological Dynamic Wedge* because the Houston metropolis rests on the flat surface of a coastal plain, which is located on top of a giant wedge. Students could use chosen topics such as subsidence, fossilization, pollution and ossification.

"This exhibition we have in the gallery, I think, is one of the few ceramic

exhibitions in Houston which really focuses on the theme," said De Vries. "A lot of the other exhibitions are more pieces from collections and have nothing to do with the title of the theme. I think that is why ours is very important. I hope a lot of people will come out and there are thousands of people in Houston who are ceramic artists in Houston, so we are trying to get them to come out too."

The exhibition, *Houston: A Geological Dynamic Wedge*, will run through Feb. 21 - April 4 in the UHCL Art Gallery. The closing reception and lecture featuring Don Van Nieuwenhuise, director of the professional geoscience programs in the department of geosciences, will take place March 21, 5-7 p.m. in the Bayou Building, Garden Room. For more information, visit [www.uhcl.edu/artgallery](http://www.uhcl.edu/artgallery).

"THIS EXHIBITION WE HAVE HERE IN THE GALLERY, I THINK, IS ONE OF THE FEW CERAMIC EXHIBITIONS IN HOUSTON WHICH REALLY FOCUSES ON THE THEME."

— Nick de Vries  
professor of ceramics and exhibit curator



Sue Ruthstron, "Beyond Primal Matter"





**VALERIE** – “I am rising because I want to help bring up the conversation of violence against women and girls. I want people to be informed, to be outraged, and to be inspired to act on those feelings and learn to be advocates for women and against violence.”



**EMILY** – “I am rising because every woman deserves to live free of fear and hopelessness and without the assertion of anyone else’s will upon their own personal decisions.”



**SARAH** – “I am rising because V-Day provides a great way to let people become aware of the different issues women face especially those issues that tend to be a little harder to talk about.”

**KENDRA** – “Being involved with the V-Day movement has made me the person I am today. This year I am rising because it is time to end the violence and stop blaming women.”



## Vagina Warriors rise to support worldwide efforts to end violence against women

**Shawn Domingues**

The Signal

The word vagina makes many people uncomfortable.

It makes people so uncomfortable, in fact, they will not say the word out loud, preferring instead to say “the v-word” or use one of the many nicknames that have been given to the female body part “down below” such as “va-jay-jay” or “hoo-ha” or “cookie” to name a few.

Many young girls have grown up thinking they should be ashamed of their “private parts” and vaginas are rarely discussed. This had been the case for ages and was still true in 1990 when Eve Ensler, an American playwright and activist, started a conversation with women around the world that lasted five years and opened a dialogue on a subject that, for so long, had been taboo — vaginas.

Ensler went around the globe conducting more than 200 interviews with women about their sexuality, their insecurities and their vaginas. Giving a much-needed voice to the often-silent issues of violence against women, Ensler wrote *The Vagina Monologues* to capture the essence of the wide array of stories the women had told her. With themes such as rape, love, cruelty and self-discovery, the monologues offer an intimate glimpse inside the hearts and minds of women from every walk of life.

What started as a one-woman play in the basement of a small café in New York City has become a phenomenon that has been performed by many of the most respected actresses in the business, as well as hundreds of thousands of students, members of activist groups and women worldwide, all of whom consider themselves “vagina warriors.”

On Valentine’s Day 1998, Ensler, with a group of women in New York City, established V-Day, a global activist movement to end violence against women and girls. Every year, hundreds of college campuses and communities worldwide perform the play and host benefit events during and leading up to V-Season, which is Feb. 1 – April 30. The purpose of these events is to raise money and awareness about violence against women and, as long as 100 percent of the proceeds are donated to a local charity, Ensler allows the groups to perform her play or host movie screenings without paying any royalties.

The University of Houston-Clear Lake has participated in V-day activities since 2008, and this year’s performance marked the 5th anniversary of the *Vagina Monologues*. Jennifer Clark, assistant director of student life, has participated as a director in every production and has seen the powerful impact these events have had on the Vagina Warriors involved in the performance, as well as those in the audience.

“I have witnessed women discover their voices and speak up more about experi-

ences they have had, abuse they have experienced, confront stigmas and stereotypes, and become empowered and more confident in themselves,” Clark said. “It is difficult to be a part of this show and not be changed in some way.”

This year, the performance and events were produced entirely by student organizations. Students from PAVE (People Against Violence Everywhere), WSSA (Women’s Studies Student Association), and BSA (Black Students Association) all worked together to raise money for the production of the monologues, which was held in the Bayou Theater March 16. There were 38 Vagina Warriors involved in putting on this event, which included students, UHCL staff and members of the community.

The student organizations held fundraising events on campus, including a bake sale on Valentine’s Day where the students sold baked goods, flowers and, oh yes...chocolate vagina-shaped pops. Delta Xi Nu, the only sorority at UHCL, also held a bake sale to help raise funds for the production.

Kendra Riney, the co-president of PAVE and president of WSSA, has been involved in the UHCL V-Day events for the past four years, and undertook the role of producer for this year’s performance.

“The greatest challenge this year has been balancing being in charge of the production, working part time, being a part-time student, and a full-time mother to a 16-year-old boy,” Riney said. “It became a second job, but I am glad that our organizations put it together. Through participating in the production, I have met some really incredible women. Many who have been victims themselves, including me, and it has kept me coming back each year.”

The proceeds from the performance and V-Day events will benefit Bay Area Turning Point, a local organization that provides shelter, counseling and a multitude of services to victims of sexual abuse and domestic violence.

While V-Day events typically take place on or around Valentine’s Day, this year’s later performance fits in well with March being National Women’s History Month and Congress’ recent passage of the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act.

This year’s V-Day launched a new campaign, One Billion Rising, which came from the staggering statistic that 1 out of every 3 women will experience violence in her lifetime, which means more than one billion women worldwide will be impacted by violence. To counteract that statistic, V-Day invited ONE BILLION women and those who love them to WALK OUT, DANCE, RISE UP and DEMAND an end to this violence.

For more information on the V-Day organization, visit the website [www.vday.org](http://www.vday.org).

**COLDEN** – “I am rising because I want my niece to grow up in a better world than my mother and sisters did.”



**JULIE** – “I am rising because V-Day UHCL has been one of the greatest things to ever happen to me.”



**ONE BILLION RISING IS:**  
A global strike  
An invitation to dance  
An act of solidarity, demonstrating to women the commonality of their struggles and their power in numbers  
A new time and a new way of being





# I Am Still Here: One Soldier’s Story

**Jason Seidel**  
The Signal

A lot of things change when you accept the fact that you are going to die.

We had less than two hours to go before we could head home for the night.

I just remember thinking about how hot it was when suddenly this massive force slammed against my team’s vehicle. I remember bashing my head against the driver side door and then trying to control the vehicle while getting it to stop.

The next thing I recall was helping others out of the vehicle. The dust and debris floating in the air made it hard to see. Rusty’s leg looked pretty bad and kept spurting blood. Todd was holding his neck. I remember Kevin, who was in another vehicle, came over to check on me... and then nothing. It is a blank slate after that.

My next memory was lying awake in my bed back at base later that night, ears still ringing and head pounding. I was a specialist in the Army. It was June 20, 2004. It was only my fourth month in Iraq when I accepted the fact that I would not be going home alive. I was 24.

The two men who received shrapnel wounds were Staff Sergeant Todd Hines and Sergeant Rusty Aldrich. Both men recovered from their wounds.

Our unit’s mission was to sweep and clear a length of heavily traveled highway of Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) and ambushes.

Enduring nearly 500 significant contacts, including 83 IED attacks, we often joked, “we found them all, one way or another.”

It was a long year. Twenty-six of the Troop’s 74 soldiers

received wounds from enemy action and two soldiers made the ultimate sacrifice.

The first funeral I ever went to was for Specialist (SPC) Justin Johnson. I remember seeing his helmet resting on his rifle in typical military funeral fashion. I tried to keep it together but could not. When the bagpipes began to play, I started crying hysterically and had to leave the auditorium.

At the end of our tour, I returned home without a scratch on me. Physically. I went through all of the evaluations, but no red flags were raised.

Life at home was difficult. I began to withdraw from the things I used to find fun. I avoided being around busy places. I always had to have a

“I made the conscience decision that I was not going to kill myself. I had lived through 13 IED attacks on my convoy, three direct hits to my vehicle, one fire fight, a divorce, a betrayal by a trusted friend and I was still here.Ten fingers, 10 toes and everything in between.”

view of the door and I would give a threat assessment to anyone who walked through it.

My now ex-wife felt the distance growing between us; she began having an affair with one of my “battle buddies” only six months after I returned home.

I discovered the affair just months before I was to “out-process” from the Army. It was the ultimate betrayal.

I now lovingly refer to her as my “Army-issued wife,” as our time together started just after

completing Airborne training, which was part of my initial training upon entering the military, and ended shortly after my departure from the Army.

With my post-Army plans in shambles, my mental well-being in question and my faith in humanity destroyed, I returned home to my parents.

I was in a terrible place for months.

I made the conscience decision that I was not going to kill myself. I had lived through 13 IED attacks on my convoy, three direct hits to my vehicle, one fire fight, a divorce, a betrayal by a trusted friend and I was still here. Ten fingers, 10 toes and everything in between.

That was seven years ago. Since then, I have relocated to Texas. I can’t explain why but I find the big open sky to be very therapeutic. I took a few odd jobs here and there but struggled to find a decent job.

I decided four years ago that I would put the G.I. Bill to good use and return to school to further my education. I was also recently diagnosed by the Veterans Affairs with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) at a disability rate of 50 percent.

It hasn’t been easy, and some days are harder than others. I keep an eye on how much I’m drinking. My doormat reads “GO AWAY,” and I still don’t like being in crowds, but I’m still here.

I also met a girl, but that’s another story for another time.

There is a quote that I find gives me peace and a sense of justification: “People sleep peacefully in their beds at night only because rough men stand ready to do violence on their behalf.”

I am still proud to have been one of those rough men.

## Vets: continued from page 1

“Most supervisors, employees or fellow students have not travelled down the same road that a veteran has,” said Daniel Turner, author of “Post Traumatic Shame Disorder: A Manual for Undoing Amerika’s Torment of Vietnam Veterans” and counselor at the Texas City VA outpatient clinic. “Understandably, sometimes the veteran may feel that even his spiritual foundation has been shaken by war. All of these issues must be addressed in helping veterans become reintegrated into his community.”

Suicide among veterans isn’t a new problem. Suicide rates among veterans have been steadily increasing since 2001, when the Pentagon began to actively track the statistics. Suicides claimed 309 service members in 2009 (includes active duty), up from 267 in 2008, according to Pentagon numbers.

Today, returning combat veterans run through a psychological questionnaire within the first few months of being home to evaluate if there is any mental trauma, and if no signs are indicated, they are returned to duty.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) may not fully manifest itself for months or even years. From the National Institute for Mental Health, Symptoms of PTSD include: reliving the trauma through flashbacks and nightmares; anxiety, emotional numbness or detachment; avoiding situations that may relate to the event; and hyper-vigilance, high startle reflex, the inability to concentrate on tasks, or becoming

easily irritable.

Medical research has started to turn its focus on studying PTSD and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) in an effort to help veterans facing these mental illnesses.

“Veterans’ experiences have prompted veteran-specific prevalence studies, treatment studies, and polytrauma studies,” said Rachel Chase, PhD candidate at Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health. “TBI, PTSD, depression, and chronic pain are often studied in some combination among vets.”

Once a veteran becomes diagnosed with a disability, they may become eligible for benefits through the VA. To help assist with the process, a student veterans office (SVO) opened on campus March 1.

“This office will provide certification of federal VA education benefits as well as state benefits,” said Trish Ruiz, veteran’s coordinator of the new SVO. “Students using any type of veteran related benefits will be processed in this office.”

Turner provided the following advice on how civilians can help a veteran on a personal level.

“It behooves civilians to learn about our military, its purpose, its branches, its missions and especially its culture,” said Turner. “The more educated a civilian becomes about the military, the more he or she can converse with the veteran and express appreciation and respect.”

The Defense Department’s toll-free military crisis number is 800-273-8255.



PHOTO COURTESY OF JASON SEIDEL.

Jason Seidel in the gunner’s chair on a humvee, during his deployment, Baghdad 2004.

## Station: continued from page 1

minute is scheduled including meals, sleep and personal time. The crew is usually off weekends and U.S. and Russian government holidays. On off days the crew spends their free time taking pictures of earth, relaxing and communicating with family via email and telephone.

The six-person crews rotate on and off the ISS every six months. The next few months will be especially busy for the ISS and the agencies involved. The events will begin with the current ISS commander for Expedition 34, Kevin Ford, and his two flight engineers, Oleg Novitskiy and Evgeny Tarelkin, making their journey home in mid-March.

Chris Hadfield will take over as ISS commander for Expedition 35 and will continue his journey on the ISS with his two flight engineers, Tom Marshburn and

Roman Romanenko, until they fly home in May. To complete Expedition 35, three new crew members will arrive at the ISS in late March.

These crew members are human and have lives back here on Earth. They sacrifice themselves in order to further the science of humanity. For example, Fincke missed the birth of one of his children while he was on his first expedition to the ISS.

Fincke earned his second Master of Science in physical sciences (planetary geology) from UHCL in 2001.

“I want everyone graduating from UHCL to have the same feeling I’ve had of being lucky,” Finke said. “Whether it is getting on a space ship to go up to low-earth orbit or to get that dream job that they want, I want that feeling for everyone.”

## Keystone: continued from page 1

(BAHEP). “And I think that this president is going to understand that he is holding back America’s energy independence and he is holding back creating a lot of high paying jobs. Let’s hope that he will see the light of day and let this move forward.”

Environmental organizations and community groups such as the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Sierra Club, generally oppose the Keystone XL Pipeline. The main concerns stemming from the northern extension of the pipeline includes the following examples of environmental impact: climate change, ground water contamination and oil spills.

Communities along the pipeline route have raised concerns about the potential affects the construction would have on the land and its agriculture, especially the ability to respond to potential crude oil leaks.

“Tar sands requires a

destructive, energy intensive process to extract,” said Anthony Swift, an attorney in the international program for the NRDC. “It’s not like Texas crude – it’s a nearly solid substance that must either be strip mined or melted out of gravelly rock. Producing tar sands generates up to 4.5 times as many climate emissions as conventional crude. Replacing 830,000 bpd of conventional crude in Houston with 830,000 bpd creates the same amount of emissions as adding over 6 million cars on the road for as long as the pipeline operates.”

Supporters of the Keystone Pipeline state the project would not only benefit the economy, but also it would cause a significant increase in long-term jobs that include the manufacturing, construction, and maintenance of the pipeline.

“It is not only going to impact the economy in our area greatly, it will impact the economy all

the way from here to Canada,” Mitchell said. “We need to be energy independent and this is another way of becoming energy independent. It also creates high-paying jobs, long-term, high-paying jobs, and hopefully it will drive down the cost of gas.”


“The standard here is whether it’s in the interest of the American people and this pipeline doesn’t meet that standard. Tar sands doesn’t meet that standard,” said Eddie Scher, spokesperson for the Sierra Club. “We’re going to fight it to the nail, to the end. We’re not giving up on this pipeline. We’re not giving up on the fight against tar sands.”

TransCanada stated that no time limit was set to obtain a decision for the Presidential Permit.


To raise comments, questions or concerns about the Keystone XL Project visit: <http://www.keystonepipeline-xl.state.gov>.



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 Any one requiring an accommodation in order to participate in these events should contact the Student Life Office, 281-283-2560 at least two weeks before the event. Visit our website at [www.uhcl.edu/studentlife](http://www.uhcl.edu/studentlife).



STUDENT  
GOVERNMENT  
ASSOCIATION

INVITES ALL UHCL STUDENTS TO ATTEND

TOWNHALL MEETINGS

MARCH 26th AT 6:00p.m. & MARCH 27th AT 12:00p.m.

IN THE BAYOU BLDG, ATRIUM 2

TUITION & FEES MEETINGS

APRIL 2nd AT 11:30a.m. & APRIL 9th AT 11:30a.m.

IN THE SSCB LECTURE HALL (1.100)

For more information, e-mail us at [sga@uhcl.edu](mailto:sga@uhcl.edu), call us at (281) 283-2556 or via Facebook at [www.facebook.com/SGA.UHCL](http://www.facebook.com/SGA.UHCL)

Any individual who required a special accommodation for a disability to participate should contact the Student Life Office at (281) 283-2560 one week prior to the events.



# UHCL Working to Change the Community

**Trent Gibson**

The Signal

Nails are driven. Meals are prepared. Trash is removed. Sometimes, we all just need a helping hand.

On March 2, 2013, University of Houston-Clear Lake held its 11th annual Day of Service. Sponsored by Student Leadership, Involvement, and Community Engagement (SLICE), the Day of Service has allowed students to get involved in the community since 2002.

The event, originally called Community Outreach Day used to be included as a part of Welcome Week and held during the first week of classes. As it became apparent that one week was not enough time to promote the event, it was moved to later in the semester and held once a year.

With the fall semester already heavily booked with other leadership events, the Community Outreach Day was set as a springtime community service extravaganza. The name was changed last year to Day Of Service to appeal more to student organizations who could sponsor

events and eventually get more people involved with the event.

The event involved several student sponsored projects, including: Habitat for Humanity, Houston Food Bank, UHCL Campus Clean Up, Bibleway Fellowship Baptist Church's One Powerful Movement Food Pantry, Armand Bayou Nature Center, Interfaith Caring Ministries Resale Shop, Bay Area Turning Point, and Descendants of Olivewood Cemetery, Inc. While the event had 153 registered, by the end of the day, 111 community driven volunteers arrived to help.

"Day of Service projects challenge our students to step out of their comfort zone," said Jennifer Clark, assistant director of student life. "We challenge our volunteers to reflect on the service they are engaging in – to look beyond the tasks they are performing and to ask themselves what the bigger picture is."

Clark goes on to say that the Day of Service is about leadership, and leaders are those who serve others, and therefore, those who are served are better able to serve others themselves.

These community service events are designed to help students become more involved in their community. It helps build their teamwork, communication and problem-solving skills.

"What I liked most about the event was the fact that all of these students, teachers, and even children, came out to help improve the community" said Jeremy Mejia, a UHCL graduate student and volunteer at the Houston Food Bank. "There was this strong sense of togetherness."

In addition to helping students become more engaged in their community, it also helps the students feel a sense of community amongst themselves. These events help build relationships between the students, as well as with staff and faculty.

"The act of giving back to society is also a way to build community among our students," Clark said. They get to work alongside their peers and other staff and faculty in ways they do not get to when they are in the classroom. They build relationships with one another.



JUSTIN MEDELLIN: HOUSTON FOOD BANK

Members of the national Society of Leadership and Success, and Omicron Delta Kappa volunteering at the Houston Food Bank on the UHCL Day of Service.

They become more connected to the university.

"We hope that everyone who participates in Day of Service comes away with a desire to 'do more.' We are helping them to make hose connections, and encouraging them to make a lifelong commitment to service and to being servant leaders."

Yoko Ono, John Lennon's widow and long-time activist

for peace and human rights, once pointed out that the key to making a difference in the world is to think global, but to act local, or as former President Ronald Reagan once said, "We can't help everyone, but everyone can help someone".

For more information about upcoming SLICE events, visit <http://www.uhcl.edu/slice>.

## The Hawks Advantage

**Ryan Little**

The Signal

Movie theaters give discounts to students with a valid student ID. Did you know that with your University of Houston - Clear Lake student ID and Student Advantage Card, you could receive many other discounts?

The Student Advantage Card program, which allows UHCL students to enjoy savings at various locations, was started by the Student Government Association. Doreen Bridges, vice president – committee coordinator of SGA, wanted to make a Student Savers Card with many universities involved. Even though that program fell through, she had seven local businesses already signed up on the program. Bridges changed the name of the card to the Student Advantage Card and solicited more local vendors with students' help. There are now 20 vendors with some having multiple locations students are eligible to receive discounts.

A few of the vendors include Denny's, where you can receive 20 percent off, and Wings and More, and Tutti Frutti Yogurt, both of which offer 10 percent off your total. Another vendor, Discount Inspection & Brakes, gives 20 percent off any service. There is even a discount for 20 percent off a haircut at Salon Ambience. These are just a few of the discounts available to UHCL students with your Student Advantage Card.

"I will definitely use it because I have a pretty tight budget and can use all the help I can get to save money," said Kellie Keener, psychology major.

SGA has the current discounts

listed online. However, it can be tricky to find the discounts on the UHCL website. First, you must click on Students tab at the top of the home page. Then scroll down the page to click on the Student Government (SGA) tab on the left on the screen. Finally, click on the Student Advantage Card tab on the left side of your screen. The direct address to the Student Advantage Card website is <http://prtl.uhcl.edu/portal/page/portal/SLO/SGA/AdvantageCard>.

At some of the stores you will be required to show the Student

Advantage Card along with your student ID in order to receive discounts. The Student Advantage Card will help remind some of the employees from the various vendors that a

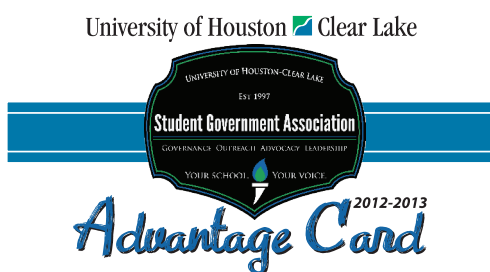
discount is offered to UHCL students. Student Advantage Cards are available in the Student Life Office, the same office where you get your student ID.

"I did not know there were student advantage cards," said Chris Corey, fitness major. "I only knew of the higher one card for tuition refunds and yes, now that I know I can get discounts, I would use it."

The SGA is always looking for new businesses to add to the advantage card. Students are encouraged to promote the card to their favorite local business and encourage them to join. Advantage card businesses receive free advertisement on the SGA website, Facebook and flyers.

New cards with participating businesses are printed at the beginning of every semester. Go pick up your Student Advantage Card today and start saving.

IMAGE COURTESY OF UHCL SGA.



## National Survey of Student Engagement

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**Check your UHCL or personal e-mail from NSSE.  
Please complete the survey as soon as possible.**

In appreciation for participating, students who complete the survey by May 1, 2013, will be automatically entered in a random drawing to win 1 of 50 Barnes and Noble Gift Cards (\$10 value each) or 1 of 2 Nook Tablets (\$200 value each). Approximately 400 students will be eligible to win 1 of 52 drawings. Based on this estimate, your odds of winning are 1 in 8.

Thanks,

Dr. Darlene Biggers  
281-281-3037

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