

By GAYNELLE DOLL

Join the Club


*A sampling from
Vanderbilt's abundant
student club and
organization scene*

THREE YEARS AGO HARVARD PROFESSOR ROBERT D. PUTNAM published a groundbreaking book titled *Bowling Alone: The Collapse of American Community*, in which he used extensive data to show a marked trend over the last quarter century of Americans belonging to fewer organizations and participating less in civic affairs.

Vanderbilt students clearly buck the trend. A look at the calendar of student organization activities makes you wonder how students find time for studies and sleep. There are clubs for the political, the theatrical, the philosophical. There are clubs that focus on academic majors or sports, clubs that celebrate ethnic and cultural identities, clubs that help improve life for others. There are clubs whose members are into stuff you never heard of when you were a student: Anyone for Australian rules football, Japanese animation, paintball?

Vanderbilt students can choose from more than 200 student clubs and organizations. And yes, one of them is a bowling club.

Photography by NEIL BRAKE



From the Ground Up

During the past academic year, Vanderbilt students helped Habitat for Humanity build 11 homes in Nashville. “We get dirty,” says Vanderbilt Habitat co-chair Melissa Bates. Some volunteers have spent summers working construction jobs; others have never before held a hammer. One of the things that keeps volunteers coming back is that students like Bates are designated supervisors on site and help control work flow. “Students don’t feel like they’re just standing around without much to do. I make sure we have something to do at all times,” Bates says. “One of the coolest things about Habitat is working side by side with the homeowners and getting to know them. It’s rewarding to come back a year later and walk through the neighborhood and say, ‘I helped build that.’” From left: Courtney Allen, Melissa Bates, Kristin Littleton, Ashley Phillips and Meredith Bates.

Spice of Life



“Masala is a traditional Indian spice used throughout Southeast Asia,” says Heemesh Seth, president of Masala/SACE (South Asian Cultural Exchange). “It symbolizes the variety of students who come together in our activities.” The organization’s 130 members take part in service activities and sponsor cultural events. The biggest, Diwali, attracts about 1,200 attendees. Back row from left: Ashik Jahan, Heemesh Seth, Sonal Patel, Shilpi Roy. Middle row: Pawan Kotini, Rahul Mishra, Sherry Mahomedally, Viral Patel. Front row: Neha Patel, Khushboo Agrawal, Nishy Milekkachalil.



Well Said

Vanderbilt's debate squad has literally talked its way into five top awards in national competition this year. "The squad always does well, but this year has been exceptional," says M.L. Sandoz, director of debate.

Approximately 40 to 50 Vanderbilt students take part in debate activities, many of them behind the scenes doing research, publicity, or even helping local middle and high school programs get debate teams started. "We attract students from almost every major," Sandoz says. "Debate helps them polish skills in critical thinking, research and communication. They learn about issues that cross all majors and areas of interest, from philosophy to politics to linguistics."

Having the gift of gab can actually be a liability. Debaters must stay focused and present arguments that are well researched and well reasoned. Back row from left: Johnathan Lindsey, Susan Mader, Mark Kendall, Kate Ryzoc and Nikhil Perumbeti. Front row: Scott Hangauer, Shaun Mahaffy and India McKinney.



Vanderbilt students started the gospel choir Voices of Praise in 1992. Since then the group has expanded to include acting, dancing and step, as well as singing. The choir usually includes between 20 and 30 students. “Some of us grew up singing, and others don’t have any background in music,” says Tamala Autry, outgoing president. “We come from different faith traditions but we all know something about God.” The choir performs pretty much wherever they’re asked—from residence halls on campus to churches in the Nashville community, and beyond. “We’ve traveled as far as Virginia and Wisconsin to perform,” says Autry. No auditions are required to join. “For freshmen who have just come from home and are looking for a place where they can feel comfortable and also have a family environment, Voices of Praise is a great place.” Back row from left: Rose Johnson, Alexandria Duncan, Petra Rauenbusch, Erin Boyd, Renauld Clarke, Tiffany Huggins, Erin Shepherd, Latoya Elder. Front row: Shandia DeLoach, Kristen Trulear, Audrey Austrie, LaTannia Ellerbe and Rikki Mack.

Lift Every Voice

A group of five diverse Vanderbilt University students are posed on the stone steps of a large, arched doorway. They are all holding laptops. The students are arranged as follows: one standing on the far left, one standing in the middle background, one sitting on the steps in the center, one sitting on the steps in the foreground on the right, and one standing on the far right. The scene is set in a classic, stone-arched building entrance.

Saturday Surfers

Vanderbilt is just blocks from the Nashville inner city communities of Edgehill and Preston Taylor, yet worlds apart in terms of opportunities. Vanderbilt students who volunteer for Kids and Computers help bridge the gap by teaching middle school youngsters from the two neighborhoods. Saturday mornings after brunch with their Vanderbilt mentors, the kids learn to type, research the Internet for class reports, send and receive e-mail, and even prepare PowerPoint presentations. At the end of the semester, kids who pass a touch typing test get to take home used computers, donated from the Vanderbilt and Nashville community and refurbished by Vanderbilt students. Founded through a partnership with the Edgehill Community Center and the Nashville Mayor's Office, Kids and Computers has graduated more than 100 Nashville youth. Clockwise from upper left: Vanderbilt students Viral Patel, Matt Stevens, Alice Davenport, Charles Mak and Rahul Mishra.



Martial Artistry

“In karate, we don’t try to hurt other people, but rather to learn,” says Matt Deepe, last year’s president of the Vanderbilt Goju-Ryu Karate-Do Club. Vanderbilt’s karate club draws both undergraduate and graduate students. For student Emily Mowry, self-defense is definitely part of the appeal. “As an entering freshman, I knew I would be going dark places at night sometimes. Karate has made me feel safer, partly because it’s taught me to be more aware of my surroundings.” Sensei Roberto Schipp, the club’s instructor, says over many years of teaching karate, he’s observed that “students change every 10 years or so. Today’s students have spent too much time at the computer and too little time in physical exercise. But within a few minutes of starting karate, they’re much more physically adept.” From left: Kathleen Ayers, Sonia Patel, Emily Mowry, Roberto Schipp, David Reif, Dr. Kenneth Ayers and Surya Dev Pathak.

Loud & Proud

Part cheering section, part shameless muckrakers, the Memorial Maniacs take basketball—and fun—seriously. Begun a few years ago as an offshoot of the Open Dores, Vanderbilt's official student pep squad, the Memorial Maniacs now number more than 300 students. In their 100-seat "Pit," the primo section of Memorial Gymnasium reserved for these boisterous basketball boosters, Vanderbilt students—often wearing wigs and latex masks—cheer on the Dores and dish out the dirt on opposing teams. Members can only miss two games per season or they're out of the group. But being a Maniac means perks like a visit to the chancellor's suite, game passes, and free food from local restaurants.

From left: Mark Holling, Anna Habash, Dabney Lipscomb and Alex White.

