



# The West Georgian

Est. 1934



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# Student by Day, Cop by Night

**Anastasia Zbarazhskaya**

*Contributing Writer*

Drew Gasstien is a full-time student and an undercover police officer at the Georgia University Police Department. He always wanted to maintain order, but his parents forced him to go to school and get a degree. This did not stop him from doing what he loves. It is difficult to study and work at the same time, but not for Gasstien. Responding on emergencies, promoting good community relations and criminal law is an excitement which keeps him on track and makes him follow his dreams

“It was extremely difficult to get into the Georgia University Police Department,” Gasstien said.

“Every future police officer has to pass a training which is around one year, but for me, it was only two months because I have limited responsibilities for now.”

Limited responsibilities, but one step closer to the dream. Not everyone passes training. Usually, the weakest people leave in the beginning, or in the middle of the training course, but the strongest finish it and get all the fireworks.

“As I said, training is exhausting and hard, so only 20 percent of the group out of 100 percent will actually graduate,” Gasstein said.

On a daily basis, police officers do regular responsibilities which are finding violators of the law and checking people on following the law.

“Our daily routine consists from patrolling the territory of campus, giving parking and traffic tickets to violators,” Gasstein said.

Days like these sound easy and not complicated at all. Days like these are common, but there are some days and situations which can be dangerous for their lives. Every shift is unexpected. Police officers always

keep in mind that one shift could be the last one.

“Two months ago I got shot during one of the operations when we were arresting a woman for pointing a gun on her ex-husband and children,” Gasstein said.

Who could expect that a student, who works for Georgia State University Police Department, will be one step in the grave? But this is life, and a job is risky, but it has interesting and exciting opportunities. For example, for Gasstein, an undercover officer.

“Sometimes, whenever we need to stay unrecognized, we work in civil clothes,” Gasstein said. “Most of the time, we do it whenever we need to conduct special operations, such as drug purchasing and arrests of a big group of people which are a danger for our the society.”

This is probably one of the most dangerous parts of a police officer’s routine. That is why people who decide to be a police officer have to be passionate about it.

“I am the first person in my family who fights for civil rights and I am proud of this,” Gasstein said. “I want to be useful for the City of Atlanta and become an officer with full responsibilities, or an investigator.”

# The Perfect Dress Atlanta

**Anastasia Zbarazhskaya**

*Contributing Writer*

Mona Naima Mohammed, UWG alumna, always has been a creative person. She graduated with a Mass Communications major. After graduation, she interned for Q99.7 with Adam Bomb and looking for a job at the same time. She found some interesting positions, but an idea to open her business was still on her mind.

One day, sitting in the car, she decided that she was going to open a clothing store -- *The Perfect Dress Atlanta*. She challenged herself to open a business in 30 days, and she did it.

“I’ve always been into clothes and sewing,” Mona said. “I’ve been sewing since my youth after my parents got me a sewing machine when I was 16. So, opening a clothing business was my childhood dream, but there always had been something which was stopping me from this.”

Sewing is just a hobby, and her parents did not think that their daughter was going to open a store. They have had conversations about Mona’s future business many times, but her parents were asking her to wait.

“I stopped sewing until college,” Mona said. “My friend knew I sew for myself, and she suggested that I can make money with it.”

Mona has a special sense for business because she grew up around businessmen. She has been used to business conversations since her childhood and she knows that she needs to take the risks, but it might work out in something bigger.

“The most challenging thing was to find investors,” Mona said. “I hate asking for money, but I knew that this is a time where there is no place for

my pride.”

She was not scared. She knew she would find someone who would support her ideas. She found two investors who helped her, but she says credit is what really saved her.

“Credit matters because without it, I would not be able to open a store,” Mona said. “It is important to have start-up money because I had to buy merchandise, and goods for the store.”

Every day work was helping her to approach to her goal. She had to work and travel a lot. Everyday shopping and even trip to New York for clothes and jewelry. She bought exclusive merchandise which people would not be able to find in any other stores.

Mona’s store had been opened less than a month, but it functioned as it was supposed to. She is thinking about new ways to improve it, and make it more profitable because she knows that she can not rest on what she had reached already.

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The University of West Georgia  
University Community Center, Room 111

Carrollton, GA, 30118-0070  
Editorial Line: (678) 839-6527  
Advertising Manager: (678) 839-6588  
Editorial E-mail: uwgeditorinchief@gmail.com  
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# FORMER UWG STUDENT SWORN IN AS POLICE OFFICER

**Conrad Mears**

*Contributing Writer*

Recent UWG graduate Trevor Mears was sworn in as a Henry County police officer on March 22. Now reflecting upon his journey, Mears appreciates the trials and tribulations that have made him into the man he is today.

Trevor Mears majored in criminology at UWG from 2013 to 2018, when he graduated. Upon graduating, Mears' main goal has always remained the same, make a positive impact on people's lives.

"I always knew I wanted to help people but never in a million years did I think that I would be a police officer," said Mears. "My goal was always to be a detective but like anything else in life, I have to start at the bottom first."

However, working hard is something Mears has been accustomed to as he did it throughout his time at UWG.

"My first year at UWG I did terrible academically and I had really put myself in a bad spot," said Mears. "Yet what I gained from that is how to work hard for what I wanted. So, me starting as a police officer and having to work my way up the chain to become a detective is not a problem at all."

Mears' work ethic will surely take him far. Normally people are inspired by something that drives them toward their success. Unsurprisingly, Mears has his own motivational moments in his life that led him on his career path.

"I remember when I was younger my father was involved in a serious car accident and he ended up being pulled from the car by a police officer," said Mears. "It may not sound too impactful, but for some reason, that moment has always stuck with me because it was the first time I had really

seen someone save a life."

Now armed with a degree in his field, Mears has put himself in position to take charge of his dreams. His is a position many current students at UWG are striving for. Less than a year removed from his time at UWG, Mears has some advice for those students.

"My biggest piece of advice is to trust what you learned," said Mears. "I know it may sound cliché, but UWG really did prepare me for life after school. Now when I'm on duty and go out on calls, I refer back to my classes at UWG that taught me about all the different laws."

Although learning in the classroom is a valuable experience there truly is nothing like learning from real experience. Mears knows this all too well.

"I learned so much about life from my first couple weeks on the job," said Mears. "One of the best things about being a police officer is what I learn on the job can be used in my life outside of work as well. Things such as effective communication are often taken for granted but the little things like that are what confirms that I'm in the right profession."

Mears is a product of hard work and education. Both of which were skills honed at UWG.

## WRAPPING THINGS UP: THE WOLF AND WUTV PERSONALITY PREPARES TO GRADUATE

**Victoria Chaney**

*Contributing Writer*

Senior Bode Brooks has made quite a few memorable accomplishments during his time at UWG. As a journalist of the Mass Communications Department, Brooks has used his skills in news reporting to contribute to the university's own television station, WUTV, where he is the director of news.

Brooks also hosts a show at the school's radio station, The WOLF, called *The Power Hour* that is dedicated to news reporting where he is director of news as well. Although Brooks' involvement at The WOLF and WUTV keep him busy, he remains a dedicated source for reporting quality content.

"I'm more focused on wrapping things up and trying to graduate," Brooks said. "But outside of classes, I'm spending a lot of time either at WUTV or at The WOLF. I'm either at one of the two and usually I don't leave campus until late in the afternoon."

Although his work in news is extensive, this does not mean that Brooks is not actively participating in work outside of what he does at both stations. He is still a senior who is making the most of his remaining time at the university.

"In addition to what I do professionally, as far as news-wise, I do have somewhat of a life," Brooks said. "I'm a member of Greek life and I'm actively at any events my fraternity has going on. Although work kind of gets in the way, I try to stay social."

Brooks' ability to juggle his social and professional life have allowed him to stay on par as a wonderful journalist. One of his most memorable reports even gained national recognition. The report covered a Nazi Rally that took place in Newnan, GA. The story earned Brooks an award in the

Radio Hard News category from the Broadcast Education Association for his coverage of the event.

"The reason why I entered coverage of the rally was because we want to have [The WOLF] recognized for producing quality work here," said Brooks. "When it comes for things to be submitted we look at what really shines and obviously the Nazi story really jumped out. It was one of the most memorable times I've had as a journalist as well."

Although the award gained Brooks a lot of attention, he still remains humble in his career. The recognition he has for quality work in the Department of Mass Communications has not deterred him from wanting to learn all he can to continue to advance in his career.

"I'm just like any other journalist who started off and didn't know what they were doing, but I love what I do," Brooks said. "Anyone can do what I do with hard work and the right mindset."

Brooks will certainly be missed by those he is inspired and helped during his time at UWG. However, before he leaves people can still tune in to listen to his show *The Power Hour* on The WOLF and see his news coverage and reporting on WUTV.



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# CHS LITERARY TEAM CROWNED STATE CHAMPIONS

**Conrad Mears**

*Contributing Writer*

Carrollton is now home to another state championship as Carrollton High School's (CHS) girl's trio literary team won a five A state championship.

The long journey to the state championship was not an easy one. Weekly practices and long hours have propelled the Trojans as the class of literary competitions which include singing, extemporaneous speaking and oral interpretation. Singing seems to be the strength of the team, which can be attributed to the support the CHS team receives behind closed doors.

Choral director and voice teacher Julie Lowry played a role in the championship as well as she helped construct the team. This cannot be understated as each member on the team was handpicked by her. Determined to secure a championship, Lowry even held auditions in which students sang various music excerpts.

Lowry delved deeper than simply choosing the students with the best voice but instead constructed the team based on whose voices meshed well together. Although Lowry's requirements seem steep, the recent state title reaffirms that she is the right person to lead the CHS literary team.

Although the entire team will be crowned as champions, three members of the team provided spectacular performances that secured the win for CHS.

"Emily Patterson, Rachael Skinner, and Maddie Steed represented us in the trio," said Lowry.

The journey of the CHS literary team began weeks before they were crowned champions. CHS forced their way through a regional tournament before they could take their shot at the trophy.

"We start our competition season really in November," said Lowry. "It's a really rigorous process and then with our performing arts they also go to One Act and that is even earlier in October. Then they go to a college run nation association teachers of the singing competition.

CHS literary team has built a strong reputation for continually producing good literary teams which surely brings plenty of pride and pressure. The latter of which is often felt by CHS.

"There's lots of pressure but that's good in a way because it keeps us on our toes and raises our level of play," said Lowry. "It is pressure when I find myself thinking, 'okay, we did this great last year are we going to be able to do it again this year?' but I think it makes us better each time."

Confidence is key when dealing with such pressures. Confidence starts with the leaders and fortunately for CHS Lowry's was never in doubt.

"I was confident that we were going to win this year," said Lowry. "I knew we were up against some great singers from other schools, but I just had a feeling about this trio. Their voices complemented each other's, and they really sang and performed well."

Often people look for a star player when teams win championships. However, CHS chooses to find its strength in unity.

"The star players are really the ones who participate in the solo events," said Lowry. "The objective of the trio is to make sure everyone blends and nothing stands out. So, they all have to be strong players."

The joy and satisfaction that comes with winning a championship is often accompanied by trophies. Now victorious the CHS literary team will have plenty of hardware to show off.

"We received medals as a result of our victory," said Lowry. "We also got a trophy but this year we will receive state championship rings also."

Materialistic earnings aside the CHS literary team has plenty to be proud about. Champions are forever remembered as Lowry and the 2019 CHS literary team is now etched in school history.

# ROOPVILLE TO RENOVATE ENTERTAINMENT CENTER

**Aurie Johnson**

*Contributing Writer*

Residents in the city of Roopville, Ga will soon see brand new changes in their small but quaint entertainment center. The facility will be renovated in order to accommodate more of Roopville's citizens. The local pavilion will be befitted with a new wheelchair ramp in order to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (A.D.A.), as well as the addition of bathrooms and plumbing. Previously, the facility had no restrooms at all. To go along with the restrooms, the city is planning to add a new septic tank, draining and pipes.

"It's a very, very nice facility. The problem is it does not have any public restrooms around it," said Lee Powers, Commissioner for Carroll County's 5th District.

The pavilion, which is located in downtown Roopville, is used for a variety of events. The city hosts the annual Roopville Homecoming Festival every third Saturday in September. The event includes multiple food vendors, a car show and even a parade. It is known to draw a sizeable crowd which can usually crawl up into the thousands, so having public restrooms on the premises would better accommodate larger amounts of people.

The city is also wanting to build a wheelchair ramp for the stage at the pavilion so that the stage would be accessible to

handicapped visitors. ADA regulations require that wheelchair ramps have a slope with a ratio of 1:12. The ramp should also be equal to the height. According to the ADA, it should be one foot of ramp for every inch in height.

The city of Roopville is asking Carroll County to give them Special Purpose Local Action Sales Tax (SPLOST) funds to help pay for the improvements. The county is prepared to allot \$50,000 to the city of Roopville in order to help cover the cost of the upgrades. Even though Carroll County is giving Roopville money for this project, that is the only step they will take and the County won't be involved much further.

"The commission board just allocated the money to the city of Roopville," Powers said. "It would be up to the city council to get bids; get that process started. We were just helping them out with the funds."

"It's been a real joy to help them out while I've been on the commission board," said Powers. "I love that they bring so much to Carroll County, especially the events they have down there."

The city hopes that the upgrades will be complete by the next Roopville Homecoming Festival on Sept. 21 of this year.

# Free Spirit Review

**Ariana Carter**

Contributing Writer

Singer and songwriter Khalid hit the music scene in 2016 when his hit single “Location” blew up across the nation and reached number 16 on the Billboard Top 100. His debut album *American Teen* was released two years ago, and over the years Khalid has reached mega-stardom.

Khalid’s sophomore album, *Free Spirit*, was released on April 5, 2019. The Billboard winning artist battles bad situations or bad feelings and good intentions on the 17-track album that continues the seamless blend of pop with R&B vibes from his *American Teen* days. Now at 21 years old, Khalid’s *Free Spirit* has a more mature sound and shares experiences from both failed relationships and friendships.

“Intro” is a vibrant track that lays out the entire vibe for the album. The song is a full three minutes which differs from typical album intros. He sets the scene for the first half of the album all about failed relationships. In “Intro” he sings about his stage of grief after the relationship goes south. “I can’t even live with being by myself/ That’s the part of me that really needs your help.” The honesty in his lyrics on this song meshes well with the meaning behind the song and gives a familiar feel to how relationships pan out.

On “Bad Luck”, the second track off of the album, the song feels like the theme song for what it is like to date as a millennial. “ ‘Cause I’m in love with bad luck I’m in love with bad luck move too close, get caught up.” The singer showcases the trials and tribulations of dating multiple people and

not “catching feelings” in the time of social media.

The lead single off of *Free Spirit*, “Talk” is simply about just wanting to communicate which Khalid is known to sing about. Dating in the digital age has made communication about feelings more complex than ever before. The beat has an R&B vibe with hints of Dance thanks to the duo Disclosure being featured on the track. “Talk” is a fun song about determining a relationship by just communicating to one another.

*Free Spirit* has an array of songs but for the same mood. Khalid embodies the title of the album very well, you can see it in his personality when he performs and feel it through each song and lyric. The album also has an accompanying 45-minute short film by the same name. He is honest with his lyrics and lives a truth many young adults live but he has the platform to share his ideas and stories with millions of people. Khalid has shown that he is on a path to freedom and has a love for the music and living his best life.

The album and short film together are a perfect reflection of the amazing artistry that Khalid has to offer and wants to share what he loves and feels. *Free Spirit* deserves a five star rating because honesty and truth speaks volume through more than one medium. As a young man who has this content out for fans of all ages and races and backgrounds, Khalid finds some kind of common ground to stay relatable and it is a beautiful thing to watch and enjoy.



# THE JOURNEY TO BECOMING A PRO

## Amir Sports

Contributing Writer

Success can be defined by some people as making a lot of money, having a nice house, having a nice car or having a great job. For Smyrna, Ga. resident Ali Sports success is more than material items and a great career.

Sports grew up in Conyers, Ga., where he found his love for baseball at an early age. As a child he would stay outside in his back yard for hours hitting balls off a tee and throwing tennis balls at a brick wall pretending he was fielding ground balls. Sports was willing to do whatever it took to be the best he could be. He grew up as the skinniest one of all his friends, and his grandmother would call him a “string-bean” because he was so small.

In high school, his “string-bean” figure quickly changed and he became one of the most muscular athletes in his school. He would spend multiple hours every day in the gym, trying to become faster, stronger and better for his love for baseball. He led his high school team with the highest batting average his junior year and became athlete of the year his senior year from hitting a game-winning walk-off in the playoffs. Unfortunately, his baseball career ended in his early years of college due to injuries. The one thing that stayed with him though was his desire to work out and train himself to be the best.

Sports always found time to go to the gym. Even if it meant that he had to work out at one or two a.m. Then on Oct. 29, 2017, working out became more than his way of escaping reality.

“I never wanted to be a bodybuilder, especially a professional at it,” said Sports. “I just worked out in high school to be the best I could be playing baseball. Then after college I kept working out because it became my escape from reality. People in the gym would always assume I was training for a big competition, but I always told them, nah that’s not for me.”

Sports was asked multiple times by trainers and other professional bodybuilders if they could coach him and they would ensure him that he would win. But Sports always turned them down until the summer of 2017 when former professional bodybuilder Lee “Hercules” Haney persuaded him into doing just one show.

“Former bodybuilding pros and coaches would ask me all the time if I would do a show for them, and I always told them that I’m either too busy, or I love to eat too much to do that,” said Sports. “Honestly, I never liked bodybuilding because I didn’t want an award because of my body, nobody needs that, everyone has their own unique body. But Haney really did

change my mind. I just couldn’t believe that guy believed in me so much, like he is known as one of the greatest, up there with Arnold. I was in great shape, but I wasn’t one of those monster bodybuilders you see on tv.”

Sports agreed to compete in the bathing suit competition at the Georgia Intel Convention Center because he was willing to allow himself to have three months of strict dieting and full commitment to the competition.

“Sports was like a walking machine when he was preparing for that show,” said Christian Fryslie, Sports’ long-time friend and roommate. “He was on this constant routine where he would wake up and go do cardio, go to work and then work out again. All while he was basically living off of rice and chicken.”

Everyday Sports became weary if the competition was right for him. He had doubts fill his head of him being embarrassed that he would not come close to winning or would look silly on stage in front of his dearest friends that were going to watch him.

“When I went to the competition it was definitely more than what I expected,” said Jake Gresham, Sports’ childhood friend. “The first set of guys on the stage were a bunch of old buff men in thongs dancing and flexing their muscles. Then the bathing suit competition started, and Sports came out there and killed it. He blew everyone away.”

Sports won the competition winning every award, including best abs, best physique and overall best competitor. Those victories promoted him to be a professional bodybuilder and it was unheard of for someone to win every award and become a pro that fast.

“If you told me in high school, that I would become a professional bodybuilder one day, I would have probably laughed at you,” said Sports. “Even though I am a pro now and have been asked to compete in shows where I could win some serious money, I still don’t have the desire to do it. I’m happy with my current job, body and life right now. But I am thankful for all the lessons that I learned from that event. I pushed myself farther than I ever thought I could. It showed me that if you do whatever it is the best you possibly can, I mean the full 110 percent, then you will be successful no matter what, even if you lose.”



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