



Photo courtesy of Nathan Posner

Georgia Lifts All COVID-19 Restrictions

By **Brittany Hall**
Contributing Writer

Gov. Brian Kemp recently imposed the lifting of all COVID-19 restrictions in Georgia by April 8 including the requirement of wearing masks and practicing social distancing.

Kemp signed three executive orders concerning the COVID-19 restrictions on March 12. The first executive order extended Georgia's Public Health State of Emergency through April 30. The second executive order extended the current COVID-19 guidance through April 7 which allowed state agency employees to get a COVID-19 vaccine without the use of sick or annual leave. The third executive order went into effect on April 8 and it eliminated the ban and shelter in place requirements. It also eliminated the ability of law enforcement to close an organization for failure to comply with the executive order provision.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) less than half of the Georgia population is fully vaccinated. As of April 19 only 32% of Georgia's population has received at least one dosage of the COVID-19 vaccine and only 18% are fully vaccinated.

Medical experts say that lifting all COVID-19 restrictions without the ma-

jority of Georgia's population being vaccinated will cause the states' cases to rise.

"My guess is that we will see some increase in cases," said the Medical Director of Health Services, Eric Heine. "The cases in Georgia have decreased from the extreme highs of January but have plateaued over the last month so it would be logical to see an increase in cases."

Medical experts also believe the best chance of eliminating the rapid spread of COVID-19 is for everyone to receive the vaccine.

"At this stage in the game, in my opinion, the vaccine is our best chance to suppress the pandemic," said Heine. "However, until the FDA removes the Emergency Use Authorization label to the vaccines, I doubt that the vaccine can be made a requirement."

However, it was revealed that residents should not fully rely on the vaccine and should continue to wear masks and practice social distancing regardless of the restrictions being lifted.

"It is a bit premature to fully rely on the vaccine until we have more data to analyze," said Heine. "The numbers for the COVID-19 vaccines look very good so far, but it may turn out that due to the variants that have developed SARS-CoV-2

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may be like the flu virus.

"We might have to continue to mutate, so we might need a booster dose year to stay protected," continued Heine. "So far now I would recommend that if you are around unvaccinated people that you keep wearing masks and distancing."

Gov. Brian Kemp signed the executive orders to help the state return to normal. However, experts say that instead of being worried about normality we should worry about the health of the residents.

"There is a balancing act that must be done to determine best mitigation efforts," said Heine. "Based on the number of cases and areas of surges in relation to the negative consequences to society by the restrictive measures, it is reasonable to maintain requirements and restrictions in place to minimize the spread of the virus. I would be wary of conveying the message that everything is fine, and we can return to normal because we are not there yet."

NEWS

Careers and Connections Was A Success

By **Brittany Hall**
Contributing Writer

UWG’s Department of Mass Communications hosted Careers and Connections on April 14 and 15 to virtually connect students to professionals in the media industry.

The Department of Mass Communications had to postpone their annual Media Day because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, hosting a virtual networking event was the most efficient way for students to connect with professionals in the media industry.

“Careers and Connections was not a replacement for Media Day,” said Assistant Professor and organizer of the event, Kelly Williams. “But postponing Media Day due to COVID-19 did create this hole in our programming so we decided to fill it.”

There were 19 panelists that attended Careers and Connections. Their occupations ranged from filmmaking, producing, on-air radio talent, PR professionals, broadcasters, entrepreneurs and content creators. All four concentrations in the Mass Communications Department had representation on the panel.

“We were very intentional about trying to get a good cross-section of media industry representation,” said Williams. “That way all of our students could see where their futures may take them.”

“For an event that was slated to talk about careers and making connections we wanted to make sure all of our students across the concentrations could identify with a professional on the panel,” continued Williams. “Therefore, our planning committee worked with the faculty and concentrations to collect names of successful alumni and friends for the students.”

The Careers and Connections panelists were eager to participate in the event because it gave them the opportunity to give students advice and insight of the media industry.

“It was an honor to participate in UWG’s Careers and Connections event,” said WGXA News’ Senior Producer, Gabrielle Nelloms. “As a student I was grateful enough to witness Media Day and the panel of professionals. It inspired me to see former students who attended UWG to go and achieve their dreams in the Mass Communications field.”

“It fueled motivation inside me to work hard my last couple of years in college so I could get a job in my field,” continued Nelloms. “Now being an adult and participating as a professional has come full circle because I am able to provide students with advice so they can achieve their goals like me.”

The Department of Mass Communications had a total of 32 students attend the event over the two days, with many of the students attending multiple panels. Williams was elated and pleased with the outcome of the event so much that she is already planning ideas on how to grow the event in the future.

“I was very happy with launching this new event,” said Williams. “Although these events always make me anxious, the payoff was great.”

“I have several ideas on how to grow this event,” continued Williams. “One idea I have is to have a Careers and Connections Workshop and invite alumni and professionals to come and teach a specific skill set to our students that they learned on the job or through their time in the media industry.”

Photo courtesy of Kelley Williams



UWG Takes Back the Night to March for Sexual Assault

By **Abby Grizzard**
Contributing Writer

UWG’s Health Education Center held the annual Take Back The Night event at the Oaks Coliseum on April 21. Take Back The Night is a university event focused on preventing sexual assault and violence and raising awareness. The event featured a number of speakers addressing sexual violence and its role not only on campuses but within society. Attendants participated in a march to Love Valley on campus, accompanied by chants regarding ending sexual assault and signs supporting the movement. After featuring student speakers, the event came to an end for the 2021 year.

“Take Back the Night is an event to raise awareness about sexual assault and violence,” said Jacqueline Stubenraugh, a Graduate Assistant for Health Education. “It is an opportunity for students to learn about the resources on campus and interact with professionals who are here to help.”

“It is also a demonstration where students get to take back the night and have a say in what they want our campus culture to be,” continued Stubenraugh. “It is an event to say and show the student support for ending sexual violence on our campus.”

Several organizations on campus were invited to attend the event. Many of the invited organizations were resources for students to reach out to in relation to sexual assault. Other invited organizations were those involved in daily activities on the university’s campus.

“Health Services and Health Education hosted the event,” said Stubenraugh. “We invited The Counseling Center, SANE Nurses, Student Advocates, Title IX Office, UPD, Office of Community Standards, RX Committee, Athletics and Housing/Residence Life. We also had representatives from the Counseling Cen-

ter, SANE Nurses, Advocates, Title IX, UPD and Office of Community Standards speak at the beginning of the event to explain how they are resources on campus.”

Although Health Education understands how sexual assault can be a difficult subject to discuss, especially around one’s peers and friends, these events are still needed. The event emphasizes the importance of being educated about available legal, mental and emotional resources for those who have experienced sexual violence.

“I know for some people it is uncomfortable to talk about or even triggering to hear about but as a community, we need to be sure we are aware of our resources available and how to take a preventable approach,” said Stubenraugh. “This is our campus and we have the opportunity to shape and change the culture. We need to support and look out for each other to ensure everyone feels safe and accepted on our campus. If you need help there are resources on campus who are dedicated to helping you.”

“Take Back The Night is important to me because as a survivor I want to do what I can to help anyone or prevent any violence,” continued Stubenraugh. “It is important for our community to be aware and talk about sexual assault prevention in hopes to lower the rates of violence.”

Photo: Abby Grizzard, *The West Georgian*



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NEWS

‘Dragzotic’ Takes Over as UWG Hosts its Annual Drag Show

By Abigail Cummings
Contributing Writer

The UWG’s Queer Student Alliance (QSA) held its 11th annual Drag show, featuring talent from professional drag queens on April 22. The Drag Show featured nine drag queens from Atlanta, each lip-syncing to a song of their choice with a choreographed dance accompanying it. The show was titled “Dragzotic” and was hosted by MC Destiny Brooks and featured DJ McIntosh.

The event was created by QSA, the University’s LGBTQ student organization, for the purposes of entertainment for students on campus. It allows students to attend and learn more about queer culture as well as see what a real drag show looks like.

“We advocate for queer students on campus, educate the university population about LGBTQ issues, and provide safe space for members,” said QSA President, Christopher Brackett. “We intend to make UWG a welcoming, supportive environment for everyone associated with the queer community, including those of us who are trans, non-binary, asexual, intersex, pansexual and allies.”

The QSA has two events that they host every year, one being the Drag Show in the spring and the other being Pride Week in the fall. Due to the pandemic last year, the Drag Show was broadcasted virtually for students to attend. This year, students attended in person while complying with COVID-19 regulations or virtually through a Zoom link.

“Normally we expect in excess of 300 people to attend,” said Brackett. “However, this year we are scaling back and only allowing just over 100 people to attend due to the ongoing pandemic.”

The COVID-19 guidelines are mandated by the University System of Georgia and include mask wearing as well as social distancing by separating the chairs six feet apart. The show was held in the Campus Cen-

ter Ballroom to accommodate the social distancing required. The drag queens also wore face shields when in the audience to ensure the safety of themselves and others.

During the show, the drag queens have complete control over what happens. The show consisted of solo acts as well as duets and coordinated dance numbers. Many of the performances featured hit songs, such as “Rain on Me” by Ariana Grande and Lady Gaga and “Don’t Call Me Angel” by Ariana Grande, Miley Cyrus and Lana Del Rey. Not only did they perform these songs, but they also coordinated their apparel to look like the actual singers. Along with lip-syncing, the queens also went into the crowd and interacted with the audience.

The entirety of the evening, the audience could be seen singing along with the drag queens, as well as going up to the stage to give their praise. The queens created a comradery with the audience, much like a comedy show where they would make jabs at audience members. The audience played into the performance, finding the interactions entertaining.

“This was the first time I’ve been to a drag show,” said attendee, Mary Ellen Masters. “I did not know what to expect, but overall had an exciting experience and thought that the performers really engaged with the audience.”

Photo: Abby Cummings, The West Georgian



Sororities Lip Sync for Battle of the Boy Bands

By Madison Creech
Contributing Writer

Alpha Gamma Delta Sorority held their annual Alpha Gam Lip Jam in the Hanger Gym at UWG on March 27. Alpha Gam Lip Jam is a lip syncing and dance competition between all fraternities on campus. Because of COVID-19 restrictions in the fall, the sisters of this chapter did not think they would be able to hold the successful competition. The minute they got the okay to have events, immediately they started planning Alpha Gam Lip Jam.

Two or three sisters of Alpha Gamma Delta each volunteer to help a fraternity they would like to coach. The sisters of each team then choreograph a dance and teach it to the team up to two to three weeks prior to the actual competition. Each year, Lip Jam has a theme. Some past themes include, cities and decades.

This year’s theme was the battle of the boy bands. Each team decided on which boy band they would like to lip sync and dance to. At the event, the teams performed one by one in no particular order and then were judged by a panel of judges. Teams were judged by a score sheet with different categories, such as originality, choreography, how well they lip sync and more.

“Our sisters really were adamant about wanting to do Lip Jam,” said Alpha Gamma Delta’s Sorority VP of Philanthropy, Zowie McCarty. “When the restrictions were changed in the early part of spring semester, I asked my sisters which event they all wanted to do and it was a unanimous decision. Lip Jam it was.”

“In years past we have earned a lot of money to help our philanthropy which is the Alpha Gamma Delta Foundation,” continued McCarty. “The Alpha Gamma Delta foundation is an umbrella organization that helps Fighting Hunger and also sisters in our sorority all around our nation that are in need. These are called ‘Sis Grants.’ We all love our philanthropy because we get to be very hands-on by holding these events, going to the community garden at UWG and also going to the Carrollton Soup Kitchen. It allows us to make an impact and see how much of an impact we’re actually making.”

Sigma Chi Fraternity received third place for their performance as the band New Kids on the Block. Sigma Nu Fraternity came in second with their performance as the band Big Time Rush. The Phi Delta Theta Fraternity performed with a mix of old and new Jonas Brothers songs and came home with the first place trophy. This is the second consecutive year Phi Delta Theta has won Alpha Gam Lip Jam.

Sisters of Alpha Gamma Delta sold the tickets to anyone interested in attending the event. Anyone that wanted to attend the event had the option to bring five canned food items, which will be donated to the Carrollton Soup Kitchen. This year seats were limited because of COVID-19 guidelines and approximately 250 people were able to attend this year’s event. The last Alpha Gam Lip Jam took place in the fall of 2019. This year Alpha Gamma Delta was able to raise about \$1,000 for the Alpha Gamma Delta Foundation.



Photo courtesy of Alpha Gamma Delta Society

NEWS

AAMI Scholarship Created in Remembrance of UWG Alumnus

By Kayla Henderson
Contributing Writer

The Kevon DeAndra Wheeler Award is a scholarship that has been created in remembrance of UWG alumnus Kevon Wheeler. The scholarship was started through his family as a part of the African-American Male Initiative (AAMI), a first-year program for freshmen, to help continue Kevon's legacy and support of future UWG students.

Kevon graduated in 2013 with a Bachelor of Science in Criminology and passed away in 2018. The Kevon DeAndra Wheeler Award is given to a student who is a part of the AAMI program and demonstrates volunteer services in tutoring, mentoring and coaching.

UWG was one of the leading institutions to create an AAMI program in the state of Georgia. AAMI has been established at UWG since 2002, and since has been an important aspect of the retention, progression and graduation of African-American male students at UWG, according to the program's mission statement.

"We match funds that are provided by USG that are intended to provide programming that centers on academic excellence, support services, peer and professional mentoring, professional development and cultural enrichment targeting students who are African-American male," said Dr. Michael Hester who serves as the Coordinator of AAMI.

AAMI was originally created as a first-year program for incoming freshmen. The program allowed students to attend core academic classes together as a cohort to create friendships, establish study partners and develop positive connections with faculty. AAMI was recently expanded to include not only the first-year experience but opportunities for sophomores, juniors and seniors that allows a continuation of learning and opportunities within AAMI.

"UWG was approached by the family of Kevon Wheeler two years ago and they wanted to create a scholarship in his memory," said Hester. "He had been a student at UWG and he had participated in the organization Black Men with Ini-

Photo courtesy of Michael Hester




tiative which is a program affiliated with AAMI.

"Kevon's parents were interested in setting up a scholarship in his memory that would be awarded to a student who participates in the AAMI and the \$500 scholarship was created," continued Hester. "The scholarship is intended to go to an AAMI student who is engaged on campus, while maintaining high academics and serving others. What we view this award as is our top scholarship going towards our top student."


The scholarship has been awarded to two students within AAMI since it began in 2018. The first recipient was Quintibius Johnson, an art major, who graduated magna cum laude in 2020. This year's recipient was Travious Couch, a sports management major, who will be graduating cum laude this spring. AAMI is extremely grateful for the Wheeler family's support and contribution to the AAMI program and its students to continue to help continue the work Kevon had started.

"We will most likely continue to recognize juniors and seniors who have proven through years of success here at West Georgia that they are exemplary when it comes to showcasing the characteristics that AAMI is looking for," says Hester. "These are students who are both academically successful, engaged on campus and giving back to their communities."

Photo courtesy of Michael Hester




Kevon DeAndra Wheeler Award



Established in 2020 to honor the life of service and commitment by Alumnus Kevon DeAndra Wheeler, 2013 Bachelor of Science in Criminology, to the student body at the University of West Georgia.

The award recipient(s) is a member of the African American Male Initiative and demonstrates volunteer services at the University that are directed towards tutoring, mentoring, coaching, and offering a helping hand to fellow students.



NEWS

The Table West: A Community for Young Adults

By Samara Marshall
Contributing Writer

When driving down Maple Street there is a blue building right behind CVS Pharmacy called City Station. This building holds many different things including a daycare facility, student housing and church services. It also hosts a unique organization called The Table West. The Table West is a religious organization for 22-35 year-olds who are seeking community and friendship, while also participating in weekly worship services. This organization has not been operating long but upon first launching the program things were put to a pause.

“We started in January of 2020 and our goal was to launch our first program in April of 2020 but when COVID-19 hit it put everything on hold,” said Keith Trollinger, the Pastor and leader of The Table West. “We continued to meet through Zoom during the pandemic and rescheduled the launch date for the end of June and since then we have been meeting every Tuesday night.

“Our programming will have services where I teach or we will have a guest speaker where we will teach through the Bible and we will do worship,” continued Trollinger. “Sometimes we will also have small groups as well where the speaker will come up with ten questions and then the members will break out into small groups and talk through scripture and life.”

Along with meeting Tuesday nights, The Table West engages in other activities as well. These activities allow for their members to have fun and grow together as a community.

“If we don’t do small groups we will do a lot of yard games that young adults love to play,” said Trollinger. “We also have Butter’ Dudder and AGW come or some sort of food truck come out and just music playing to provide a cool vibe for young adults to be in.”

There are not many organizations that cater towards 22-35 year olds, and since they are fresh out of college and getting into the world, community is highly important.

“In this age range you have the millennials and the Gen Z’s that once this group gets out of college there is nothing much that a lot of churches offer for them,” said Trollinger. “In the church world there is usually something for junior high, elementary and high school kids and college, but when you get out of college there is nothing really available for you.

“We found that a lot of young adults are looking for community and looking for a place to belong but don’t know how to communicate,” continued Trollinger. “We thought that we have an incredible opportunity to provide a healthy community to them while drawing them back into the local church.”

With their mission in mind, they have been able to provide a sense of community for many young adults in Carrollton. The Table West has also been able to provide long lasting memories for the members and the staff workers.

“The conversations that I get to have with these young adults and just talking through the word of God is definitely something that I love to do,” said Trollinger. “It has also been so fun being able to see a community of people hang out together and watch them mature in faith.”

Patchwork Stories: A Creative Outlet for Writers

By Samara Marshall
Contributing Writer

At UWG there are many programs for students to minor in, including Creative Writing. Creative Writing allows students to write fictional stories, poetry and so much more. Many times students are given creative projects to further embark in their creative writing to which Patchwork Stories came about.

Based on the idea of popcorn writing, Patchwork Stories is an online Google Drive document where students can write part of the story following the prompt that is already provided and then the next person can write. The story continues and anyone is able to write more of the story to their liking.

“Right now we have a young adult romance story going as well as a crime and horror story going,” said Karlee Demmer, a music major with a minor in Creative Writing. “Whoever is interested can go in and continue the story by adding in their own paragraph and you can add on to as many as you want to.”

The idea of making Patchwork Stories came to Demmer and her team through their Creative Writing class. In their class they were assigned a literary citizenship project where they were able to celebrate writing with the community during the pandemic.

“The one that is off to a good start is the young adult romance as it already has around three or four paragraphs, which is pretty cool,” said Deemer.

Creative writing is an outlet for people to express themselves through their writing. Patchwork Stories allows students to input their own thoughts and opinions in the stories.

“My favorite part of Patchwork Stories is how interested people are in it,” said Demmer. “We came

up with this idea for a project, and we didn’t expect it to go anywhere but there are people who are liking it.

“For me when I was in grade school, I was a part of a similar community and by doing Patchwork Stories everything is just very nostalgic,” continued Demmer. It is exciting to see people wanting to add on to the same thing in a positive way.”

Patchwork Stories has only been around for this semester but Demmer and her team hope to keep the project alive in the coming semesters.

“As far as keeping the project afloat we are not really sure what might happen but I would kind of like to keep it going,” said Demmer. “If people are interested we don’t want to cut a story off halfway through, so we will see what happens.”

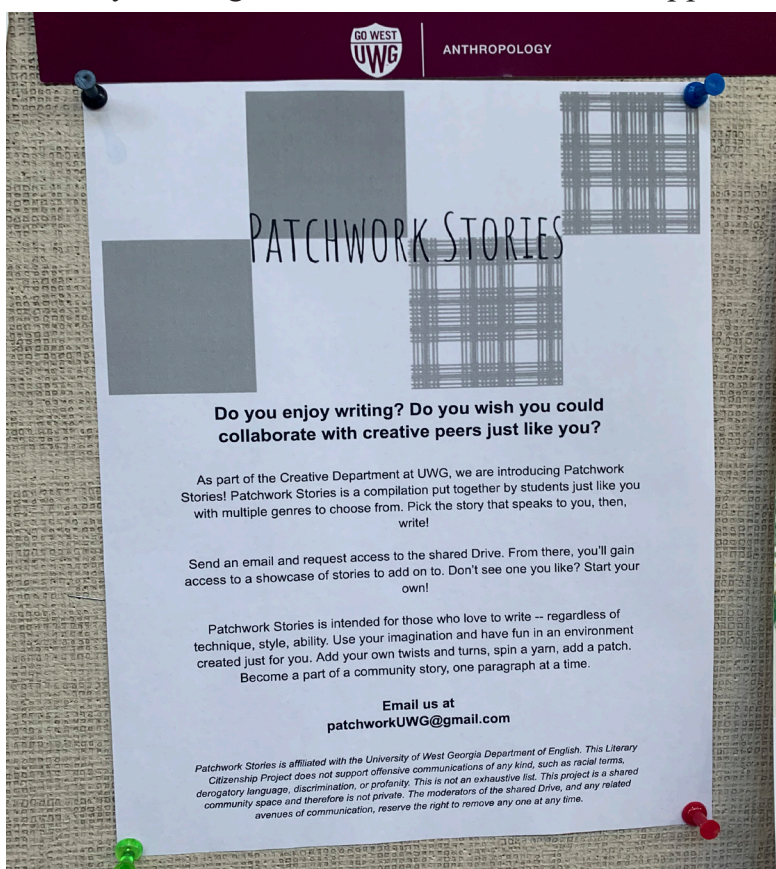


Photo courtesy of Samara Marshall

ENTERTAINMENT

Tom Holland is Unrecognizable in ‘Cherry’

By **Abigail Cummings**
Contributing Writer

Apple TV has been hit or miss in the past when it comes to original content, but Cherry does not disappoint. Tom Holland is unrecognizable as a war veteran turned addict in this drama filled film. Cherry is one rollercoaster after the next as the film navigates through Holland’s character.

Cherry was adapted from a book of the same name that is semi-autobiographical and based on the life of veteran Nico Walker. The film follows the life of an unnamed college student, dubbed “Cherry,” who enlists in the army and the effects that war has on his life following his discharge. In the beginning of the film, we meet a young Cherry in college where he meets the love of his life Emily. He and Emily enter a whirlwind period in which they are head over heels for each other, but Emily breaks up with Cherry because she is afraid of commitment.

In the cloud of his breakup, Cherry enlists in the army as a medic to find his purpose. Before his deployment, the two reunite and get married. During his military tour, Cherry sees the horrors that war offers. After his discharge, he begins to suffer from PTSD and results in becoming a drug addict to cope. Cherry then unintentionally gets his girlfriend into the drug addiction as well and begins robbing banks to pay for his costly habit.

The structure of the film allows the audience to clearly see how Cherry’s life spirals. The film is separated into six parts and depending on which part of his life, the viewing dimensions change. Cherry starts with the prologue which focuses on his college life and moves through other parts which are basic training, Cherry, home, dope life and finishes with the epilogue. The viewing dimension changes to a small square when Cherry is in basic training because he feels small and insignificant there. The rest of the film is seen in a wide-angle perspective to show the audience just how much the actions in those parts affected the outcome of Cherry’s life.

Part of the success of the film can be attributed to the sarcasm and satire that Cherry delivers to the audience. All through-

out the movie, Cherry is constantly breaking the fourth wall to tell the viewers how he really feels during the scenes. This adds comedic relief to the heavier content in Cherry. It allows the audience to skim over the bad things happening to Cherry throughout his life.

What I find interesting about the film is that the audience never learns Cherry’s real name and we never see anyone address him as Cherry. Cherry goes through the film nameless because he doesn’t feel his life is meaningful enough to have a title. We also only see the true names of characters that Cherry has a real connection with, such as his wife Emily and his fellow soldier Jimenez, who he sees die in combat. Along with this, we see Cherry give nicknames to those that have a negative impact on his life such as Dr. Whomever, who gives him his first OxyContin prescription, and Pills and Coke who becomes his dealer. This helps the audience to differentiate the good and the bad people in Cherry’s life.

Overall Cherry delivers a new perspective to the life of a soldier after war. One could say that this movie is a commentary on how little America does for its soldiers once they come home. The movie conveys the tragedies that can befall those with undiagnosed mental illness. After watching Cherry in its entirety, there is certain not to be a dry eye in the room.

Photo courtesy of Apple TV



An Unlikely Superhero Duo in ‘Thunder Force’

By **Madison Creech**
Contributing Writer

Thunder Force is Netflix’s new superhero, action, comedy movie for the family that will be able to make everyone laugh. Thunder Force came out on Netflix on April 9 and is at number four in “Movies Today” on Netflix as of April 29.

The movie is a great watch with two amazing heroines as the main characters. The characters of the movie are two average everyday women with two different distinct personalities. The film then follows their journey through their friendship as they discover who and what they want to become.

The cast is phenomenal with Melissa McCarthy playing Lydia Berman and Octavia Spencer playing Emily Stanton as the two heroines within the film. The two main characters met each other back in middle school. Emily’s parents were killed by villains when she was in middle school. At that time, Emily swore she would be able to come up with serum that could turn anyone into a superhero to help people that did not have that ability.

Later on in high school, the two best friends had a falling out in their relationship and they did not talk to each other for a very long time. When it was time for their high school reunion, Lydia reaches out and asks to attend the

reunion with Emily. After Emily is a no show, Lydia goes to Emily’s workplace to see what is going on. During their conversation, Emily explains that throughout their time apart she has been working to develop a genetic platform that allows her team to give ordinary people super powers. During this conversation, Lydia spills beer on Emily’s outfit causing her to leave and deal with the incident. While Lydia is alone, Emily gets accidentally injected with the new serum and gains access to becoming a superhero.

Emily’s new powers give her the ability of super strength, and she starts to train and hone her power under Lydia’s guidance. Lydia explains that she has gained superpowers as well, showing off her new ability of invisibility. The two friends then decide to team up and create a superhero team known as Thunder Force.

The vibrant, feel good, comedy creates an enjoyable atmosphere for the viewer. Both leads of the movie are amazing actresses that bring the characters to life.

I did not expect much of this movie after watching the trailer which contained a lot of dry humor. However, the trailer did not do the movie justice, and I ended up being very happy with the film. Netflix did an amazing job at creating a film that was light hearted and fun to watch.

Photo courtesy of Netflix

