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# UWG PR Students Score a Georgia Power Tour at Atlanta Corporate Office

Cindy Martinez *Feature Editor* 

On April 15, Public Relations and Communications students from the University of West Georgia took a field trip to Atlanta for an exclusive behind-the-scenes experience at Georgia Power's corporate headquarters. The visit, led by UWG alum and Georgia Power's Director of Communications, Jacob Hawkins, offered students a look into how strategic communications operate within one of the state's largest and most regulated industries.

This field trip followed Georgia Power's \$25,000 donation to UWG's student-run PR firm, bluestone, a partnership that underscores the company's ongoing investment in the future of communications. The donation, presented earlier in the semester by Hawkins and his team on behalf of Georgia Power, laid the groundwork for a hands-on learning opportunity that blended academics with real-world practice.

were Students welcomed by members of Georgia Power's communications department, including Lionel Hernandez and Andy Huff, the company's Director of Executive Communication and Visual Storytelling. Huff shared his unconventional career path, which began with a passion for journalism, detoured into nonprofit work and ultimately led to corporate storytelling.

"You don't have to gain every skill in school or on the job, you can gain just as much by volunteering," Huff told the group, reflecting on how his college volunteer work for Relay for Life led to a career-shaping opportunity at the American Cancer Society.

His story served as both inspiration

and advice for students preparing to step into the professional world.

The visit provided a firsthand look at how Georgia Power's communications team supports both internal and external messaging across the state. From simplifying the complexities of power generation and grid management to supporting reallife crisis communication, the team demonstrated how storytelling drives understanding and trust across diverse audiences.

Huff, who manages communication strategy for CEO Kim Greene, explained how his team uses a structured approach to map out the CEO's engagement across six core stakeholder groups.

"There's a real strategy behind where she shows up, how often, and what she says," Huff explained. "It's not just about showing up, it's about being intentional."

Throughout the day, students saw firsthand how public relations plays a critical role in crisis communications within a regulated industry by building public trust and connecting employees to mission-driven work. Whether through engaging town halls, strategic stakeholder messaging or simply translating complex data into easy to read language, Georgia Power's communication professionals made one thing clear: effective storytelling is essential to powering a modern utility.

For the UWG students in the room, it was more than a tour. It was a glimpse into what's possible when curiosity, strategy and purpose come together in one of Georgia's most impactful industries.

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Photo: Cindy Martinez, The West Georgian

# QSA Annual Drag Show Entertains Eager, Diverse Crowd

Logan Bradd Contributing Writer

UWG's Queer Student Alliance (QSA) hosted its annual drag show on April 10 at UWG's Campus Center Ballroom. Professional drag performers, including one who is also a UWG student, took to the stage with a variety of fashionable, fun and sometimes funny acts. The event featured solo and duet performances. And all the drag queens got a chance to perform multiple times throughout the show, which lasted over two hours.

"It's a mix between theatrics and vogue," says drag performer Kitty Love Antoinette. "It's important because it's one way for people to express themselves."

People from all over the school and nearby public, all from different backgrounds, sexual orientations, ethnicities and ages excitedly watched the animated and theatrical performance. The show started at 7:30 p.m., continuing until around 10. Almost all of the 200 plus seats in the ballroom were filled.

Exaggerated and outlandishly bedazzled costumes, sexually charged body movements, comedy, and acrobatics performed to the accompaniment of recorded music are typical elements of a drag show. And the performers at last week's QSA show were especially flamboyant, punctuating their acts with lip synching, splits, flips and cheeky comic bits.

"It gives them {drag performers} the ability to be the writer, the actor, the director, and the producer all in one," says Antoinette.

Much of the time, drag queens took turns distracting the audience with comedy during the breaks between acts, usually after their own performances. Whether it be interacting with and pointing out a particular audience member, making jokes about how far out in the middle of nowhere compared to Atlanta UWG is, or wondering about where the best place to party in Carrollton might



Photo: Logan Bradd, The West Georgian

be, the performers never failed to entertain.

By requiring interaction from the audience, drag performances "go both ways," so to speak. These interactions include clapping to the beat of the music, cheering when an impressive display of acrobatics is performed, and tipping the drag queens for especially inspired and/or outrageous acts. The drag queens have a much better likelihood to interact with you if you are tipping them and sitting closer to the stage.

And while there is definitely a sexual nature to drag shows, the human connection is also very important to a successful performance. "It's a way to get people outside of their everyday stress," says Antionette. "And it's a way to connect with people and bring a little happiness to the world."

# UWG's Art Atelier Creates Interactive Mural for the Children of the Early Learning Center

Arrianah Jones Contributing Writer

In collaboration with the College of Education, the Art Atelier, a professional program within the University of West Georgia's art department, completed a mural for UWG's Early Learning Center. Guided by Art Professor Ryan Lamfers, students Caleb Nase, Jacey Singleton and now alumna, Sarah Gailey, designed a texture wall featuring interactive elements and depictions of local animals to help children learn about the world around them. The mural highlights the power of creativity in educational environments and equips students with skills they can use in their future careers.

"The mural isn't just something to look at, it's something to explore," said Lamfers. "Interaction is a powerful learning tool."

The mural, themed around Georgia wildlife, features 3D and textural elements that encourage children to learn through touch and sensory exploration. From an ant hill they can climb over, to a racoon with a puzzle for a tail, these features create a space that invites children

to learn through play and curiosity.

"Seeing the Pre-K students interact with the imagery and 3D elements was a joy," said Lamfers.

The creation of the mural was not only a learning experience for the children of UWG, it was also a career-building opportunity for the artists. The students had to problem-solve, develop a cohesive theme, and find ways to create interactive components for the wall that were both functional and visually appealing.

"For our students, this was a chance to apply everything they've learned in their art courses to a real world project," said Lamfers. "Watching them bring an idea to life through their artistic lens was incredibly inspiring."

Each student had the opportunity to showcase their own strengths while learning how to work as a team. They collaborated with Dr. Laura Smith, Associate Dean of the COE, and Dr. Melanie Brooks, the ELC Director, to form creative concepts for the wall. After receiving feedback, the students brain-



Photo: Arrianah Jones, The West Georgian

stormed and sketched ideas until they came to a consensus and began creating.

"Both sides were excited about what had been developed," said Lamfers. "It really shows the power of cross-departmental collaboration."

Projects like this provide students with valuable hands-on experience they can carry into real world settings. Through working with clients, developing proposals and managing budgets, students Nace, Singleton and Gailey have practical skills that extend beyond the classroom.

"The UWG Art Atelier functions as a professional entity within the art department, and our mission is to give students real-world experience by working directly with clients," said Lamfers.

The Art Atelier continues to make an impact on campus, as well as the Carrollton community through creative projects. With the team currently building a gear wall for the ELC's makerspace room, they're proving to be a dynamic force for artistic innovation and community engagement through developing a variety of proposals for public art projects in their local community.

"These opportunities are so special," said Lamfers. "I feel very lucky to be a part of them."

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### **UWG Hosts Rapha Clinic Annual 5K Fundraiser**

Abbie Klein News Editor

Rapha Clinic of West Georgia is having their 9th annual 5K event on April 19, organized by UWG's Emerging Healthcare Leaders. The 5k is a fundraiser event for the clinic and will begin at 10 a.m. at the Greenbelt Hobbs Farm. Registration opens 30 minutes before the 5k and requires a \$25 registration fee, or \$20 for participants who register early. All proceeds go to support the clinic.

Rapha Clinic is a faith-based nonprofit clinic offering low-cost health and dental care to uninsured adults who are at or below the federal poverty level. The clinic hosts multiple fundraiser events a year to raise awareness and bring in funding to help continue their work.

"The funds we [generate] go general operations," said to Developmental Patrick Director, Calvillo. "We're a nonprofit health and dental clinic, so anytime that we do fundraisers it kind of just goes to general operations. Just kind of keeping the place going and programming."

So far, Rapha has raised over \$250 from the 5k with a general goal of \$3000.

"We usually raise a few thousand and it's always nice to get a little bit extra," said Cavillo. "I think the main goal is just to have more exposure and more participants in the 5K.

While the 5k registration fee is a donation, anyone can donate at any time as much or as little as they would like. There is no requirement for donations or involvement.

"If they just want to donate, they can always just donate," said Cavillo. "There is a QR code on our website... so they can always just donate on our website and don't necessarily have to participate in the 5K."

People who are interested in the 5K but hesitant about running the full distance can still participate in Rapha's fundraiser. Instead of being a competitive race, it's an opportunity for the community to participate in a healthy event that goes toward a good cause. There is no pressure to perform in any specific way, just come as you are.

It is a run-and-walk 5K so you don't necessarily have to run," said Calvillo. "I think that was one of the main things a lot of people were like 'Well I don't really want to do a 5k' and it's like 'Oh well you can walk it."

Clinic has Rapha several opportunities for the community to show support year round including volunteer options and other events. Just recently, Rapha hosted their 5th annual Fore Your Health Golf



Photo courtesy of UWG

Tournament on April 4, raising just over \$6000. More information on upcoming fundraising events, like self-defense classes and music festivals are posted on WWW. raphaclinic.org.

"Our next big fundraiser is The Sound of Medicine which will be on University of West Georgia's campus in September or October," said Calvillo. "That's open to students as well and it's a music fundraiser. A bunch of bands play, and we have food and a silent auction, so that's a lot of fun and it's targeted for anybody and everybody."

#### UWG Theatre Breathes New Life into a Beloved Classic

Breanna Tillie Editor-In-Chief

Watching a production come to life on stage is an experience deeply appreciated by individuals who hold a passionate respect for art, storytelling and performance. The University of West Georgia's Theatre Department plans to both entertain and inspire the community with its production of The Sound of Music on April 24-26 at 7:30 p.m. and April 26-27 at 2:00 p.m.

The Sound of Music is a musical following a woman named Maria who becomes a governess for seven children and their widowed father, Captain Von Trapp. She slowly but surely gains the love and trust of the children, but matters become complicated as Maria and Captain Von Trapp begin to develop feelings for one another.

"The music is actually what brings the family together," said Austin Sharpe, an actor in The Sound of Music. "Maria, in order to get the kids to trust her, starts teaching them all these songs. You find out through the older kids that the captain also used to love singing. However, whenever his wife died, he pretty much banned singing and music altogether. But as he starts to open his heart up and become more vulnerable, you can hear him singing more and more and building that connection with his children.

Sharpe is honored to contribute to the telling of this story with his role as Butler Franz in the production. Butler Franz is portrayed as loyal to the captain in the beginning of the show, but it is soon revealed that he has an alliance to the Nazi party, which creates a tension in the household.

"It's definitely a different role for me, I can't say I've played anything quite like it. But it's interesting because throughout theatre classes we're told you cannot judge your character," said Sharpe. "Instead you have to find the reasonings of 'why.' So I'm sitting



there thinking 'What happened in his childhood?' or 'What was he promised that made him want to join this side and essentially do these awful, terrible things?' It's been a bit of a challenge to say the least but I get to interact with all of the children a bunch."

Sharpe says having children in the production has been enjoyable for all of the cast and crew.

"Having been in Cinderella as well, where we also worked with children in the community, they are just the sometimes funniest, cutest, sweetest things," said Sharpe. "Other times, they're hyper and full of energy and we need to calm them down a bit. But I think by partnering with the children in the community, it really just brings together that sense of family.

The children in the production also bring nostalgia and remembrance of

doing theatre at a younger age, which has served as a humbling and heartwarming reminder "I started doing theatre in second grade," said Sharpe. "Seeing them experience all of these things for the

first time kind of brings back that sense

of wonder and joy that sometimes you

don't even realize that you've lost.

Photo courtesy of Austin Sharpe

In addition to the main cast and crew of The Sound of Music, Sharpe also seeks to recognize the hard work of the understudies in the production as well.

"It's hard being an understudy because you don't always get all of the credit that the main cast gets," said Sharpe. "You're there as kind of a shoe-in, but you still have to learn everything. So having them just be there and supporting and always having such a positive attitude really helps all of us.

Sharpe states the UWG theatre program as a whole has helped nurture his talent and passion in meaningful ways, and The Sound of Music is just one example of that

"I love being on the stage and performing and bringing these characters to life," said Sharpe. "There's so much that goes into theatre to create a beautiful performance. There's a lot of research, a lot of context, a lot of experimenting and play. It's building a show. It's that sense of community and family you create with those around you. You have to be able to build those connections with people. It's a little scary sometimes, but I know that if I'm

doing what I love, it can't go wrong."