



## In Praise of Students

Sometimes, on those infrequent occasions when I have to pick beer bottles and cups off my front lawn, I forget that the majority of IU students are serious about their education, that they are hard working, and that they make an immeasurable contribution to the quality of life we enjoy in Bloomington.

Ashley Thursby and Thomas Penman are two such exemplary students. They are the young woman and man featured in our story “For the Love of Dance” (page 68).

In addition to managing a full schedule of classes, rehearsals, and performances, Tom works two jobs at College Mall—one at a shoe store, the other at a clothing store. Ashley earns her keep as a resident advisor and also teaches ballet classes for children ages 3 to 6. If you were fortunate enough to have seen the music school’s production of *The Nutcracker*, you might have seen Ashley and Tom starring as the Sugarplum Fairy and Cavalier. And someday, you may be paying to see them dance with one of the country’s premier ballet companies.

Ben Weller is another student I have come to know and admire. Hailing from the hamlet of North Manchester, Indiana, he wants to become a photojournalist and foreign correspondent. Right now, he is a master’s candidate at the IU School of Journalism and does work for *Bloom*. His excellent photographs are scattered throughout the magazine and in two feature stories, “Businesses that Give Back” (page 88) and “120 Great Holiday Gifts” (page 80).

This is what is so amazing to me: The students you pass on Kirkwood today, looking oh-so-young and frivolous, may tomorrow be making major contributions to our larger society in any number of ways.

Back in the early ’70s, Will Shortz, the subject of our 20 Questions feature (page 57), must have

been such a student. Skinny, a bit gawky, he came to Bloomington from Crawfordsville, Indiana, with the wild idea that he wanted to earn his living making puzzles. IU generously allowed him to create his own degree program in “enigmatology.”

Today Will is an international expert on puzzles and the crossword editor for *The New York Times*. In May, he will be IU’s commencement speaker.

How many students at IU are passionate about their studies, work a job or two to help pay their way, and will someday accomplish great things? While Ashley, Tom, and Ben are visible because of their chosen fields, countless others are plugging away to become physicists, mathematicians, teachers, engineers, lawyers, and maybe even, like Will Shortz, specialists in subjects we haven’t yet heard of.

So if, like me, you have to pick the occasional beer bottle off your front lawn, consider it a small price to pay for all that students do for us today and all that they will contribute in the future.

**Malcolm Abrams**  
editor and publisher



Ashley Thursby and Tom Penman.  
Photo by Steve Raymer