

# ***THE VOICE***

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[www.ausu.org/voice](http://www.ausu.org/voice)

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## **A Bug In Your Ear...**

I received this in email the other day, and I really enjoyed the moral and wanted to share it (since I couldn't have said it better myself).

I have a friend who lives by a three-word philosophy: "Seize the moment." Just possibly, she may be the wisest woman on this planet.

Too many people put off something that brings them joy just because they haven't thought about it, don't have it on their schedule, didn't know it was coming or are too rigid to depart from their

routine.

I was thinking, one day, about all those women on the Titanic who passed up dessert at dinner that fateful night in an effort to cut back. From then on, I've tried to be a little more flexible.

How many women out there will eat at home because their husband didn't suggest going out to dinner until after something had been thawed? Does the word "refrigeration" mean nothing to you?

How often have your kids dropped in to talk and sat in silence while you watched Jeopardy! on television?

I cannot count the times I called my sister and said, "How about going to lunch in a half hour?" She would gasp and stammer, "I can't. I have on the line. My hair is dirty. I wish I had known yesterday, I had a late breakfast, It looks like rain." And my personal favourite: "It's Monday." She died a few years ago. We never did have lunch together.

Because Americans cram so much into their lives, we tend to schedule our headaches. We live on a sparse diet of promises we make to ourselves when all the conditions are:  
We'll go back and visit the grandparents when we get Stevie toilet-trained.

We'll entertain-when we replace the living-room carpet.

We'll go on a second honeymoon we get two more kids out of college.

Life has a way of accelerating as we get older. The days get shorter, and the list of promises to ourselves gets longer. One morning, we awaken, and all we have to show for our lives is a litany of "I'm going to," "I plan on" and "Someday, when things are settled down a bit."

When anyone calls my 'seize the moment' friend, she is open to adventure and available for trips. She keeps an open on new ideas. Her enthusiasm for life is contagious. You talk with her for five minutes, and you're ready to trade your bad feet for a pair of Roller blades and skip an elevator for a bungee cord.

My lips have not touched ice cream in 10 years. I love ice cream. It's just that I might as well apply it directly to my hips with a spatula and eliminate the digestive process. The other day, I stopped the car and bought a triple-decker. If my car had hit an iceberg on the way home, I would have died happy.

Now...go on and have a nice day. Do something you WANT to... not something on your SHOULD DO list.

If you were going to die soon and had only one phone call you could make, whom would you call and what would you say? And why are you waiting?



## **NOT IN MY BACKYARD.** **By Tamra Ross Low**

Calgary is considering a bylaw prohibiting the use of pesticides and herbicides on residential properties. A campaign, spearheaded by the naturalists with the local Sierra Club, has apparently prompted these discussions. What is not clear, however, is whether the City itself would be required to stop using pesticides. There is also no word on whether or not controls would be placed on our dozens of local golf courses, though these are some of the worst offenders.

A bylaw like this is too long in coming. Evidence showing the harmful effects of pesticides and herbicides on children and animals, has been available for decades. Each time a chemical is found dangerous, it is replaced with a newer compound. The new product is said to be environmentally safe, since it has not yet been proven harmful. Unfortunately, this proves nothing. So far every poison has ended up causing harm. It is poison, after-all. Companies like Green Drop insist that their product is 100% safe. Safe poison? Is something safe simply because no negative data is yet available?

I find these products very frightening and I don't use them. This really doesn't matter, however. If anyone in my neighbourhood uses them, I am exposed, as are the rest of my family and my pets. I have watched Green Drop spray. On a windy day they cover at least two houses on either side of their client. It is simply not possible to spray an airborne chemical without getting any on adjacent properties. But what if I want to maintain a chemical free lawn?

My neighbours keep their lawn like a golf course. They use fertilizer with pesticides several times a year to kill ants and dew-worms, dandelions and crab grass. We use natural weed control - ie, we dig them up. We occasionally use ant poison, but only localized applications of liquid or traps, never powders or sprays. I make my own wasp traps with liquid dish soap and oranges in an old pop bottle. Still, I know my lawn has loads of chemicals on it. When my neighbours use the hose-attached spray, it appears to only be hitting their lawn, but we are often overcome with the powerful smell wafting over onto our deck. Smell is a chemical sense, meaning that if you can smell a substance, then molecules of that substance must be present.

I am afraid to allow my cat on my lawn. I don't let her out on her own, of course, but I used to like to sit out with her on her leash. I don't eat on my deck anymore, because last time I tried next-door came out and started spraying something that smelled like liquid mothballs. I have no recourse because they are not breaking any laws.

What is most irritating, are the people telling me how lucky I am to live next to people with such a gorgeous property. I realize that if their home looked shabby, my property value would suffer, but there are limits to how much upkeep is desirable. Sure, my lawn is a bit brown, and theirs is a perfect deep emerald, but I am observing the City's request to conserve water, whereas my neighbours water daily until a river runs down the street. My driveway is clean, but not spotless. Next-door uses the hose to wash their driveway and fence every week. They also paint their driveway black every spring. I guess mine does look sort of grey by comparison.

My lawn needs fertilizer but I prefer natural means. Each year my hedges and lilac give me a nice light coating of leaves, which are a great natural fertilizer if left on over the winter. Unfortunately, leaves are anathema to next-door. Each week they vacuum the dirt under their knife-edged cubic hedges and during autumn, the female half is on her knees every day picking up individual leaves. The hedges are brushed and vacuumed until all the dead leaves are removed. When I have leaves on my property, a few tend to drift over to their side and stick in their bare hedges. They find this unendurable. So, come late September, the male half usually comes over and asks us, politely, when we plan to get rid of our leaves and, guiltily, we usually do.

Now I don't want to sound petty. These are wonderful people, and I know what its like to live next to shabby properties. Still, I worry about the chemicals that we must endure because of their obsession. I wonder why I have had more migraines here than anywhere else in the City. The City also sprays to kill gophers and dandelions on the green-spaces, which border our block. I worry about our health, and the health of the children who live here. Incidentally, next-door has young grandchildren who just love to come over and play on their sumptuous lawn.

The biggest problem I have is that people are so admiring of their property. It is lovely, in a geometric and entirely inorganic way (grass really should not look like Astroturf, and plants do not grow in perfect geometric forms), but it is not a healthy place. I don't like being made to feel bad about not using chemicals. There is pressure for us to follow their lead. We get no support for our attempts to use natural means of fertilizer. This year I am leaving those leaves out no matter what. Right now my lawn is browning from dryness. I know we are short on water, however, so I look at my crispy turf with pride. There are more important things than a pretty lawn. Garden experts have assured me that it will perk up just fine when rain comes. I plan to lobby the City to adopt a rain-barrel program like Vancouver, to encourage people not to use the City water supply for their yard maintenance. This year, I refuse to be shamed into wasting good

organic matter because it does not look tidy. Anyway, digging out the thistles and dandelions by hand makes a good break from homework, and our lawn really is quite neat. I hope that the City will realize that lawn chemicals are simply not a justified risk, and will outlaw their use entirely.



## **From My Perspective: The Night I Met Batwoman By Debbie Jabbour**

When I was a teenager, my dad bought my mom the most incredible car in the world - a 1959 Cadillac Fleetwood - black...with fins! I took my driver's road test in it and the examiner was so awestruck by my ability to parallel park the monster that he granted my license on the spot. Once I had my license, my mom (unbelievable but true) let me drive her car - pure ecstasy! I can still feel the crinkle of the white leather as I would slide into the driver's seat, my hands stretched around the huge steering wheel (I could barely see over the dashboard!)...and everything automatic - press a button and windows went up and down, seat moved up, down, back, forward, lights dimmed automatically. Every weekend I washed it, lovingly polishing the chrome, in awe at the sheer beauty of the beast .

Batman TV series popularity was at its height, and as I would drive down the streets...little kids on the corner would all start chanting: NaaNaaNaaNaaNaaNaaNaaNaaNaa BAAAATMAAAN! as I drove past in my 'Batmobile'. It was a real ego trip when 'hot' guys would beg for a ride in my car. Those WERE the days! There were drawbacks, of course, one of the worst was that in driving such a recognizable vehicle, word would always get back to my parents regarding where I had been!!!

Unfortunately, my mom sold her car in 1980, and I have never fully recovered.

The other night, however, I finally had a chance to meet Batwoman!

It was about 11:30 PM, a sultry hot Wednesday evening, and I was studying in my computer room when my daughter arrived home from a late supper with friends. Moments later she started shrieking. "Mom....MOM!...a BAAAAAAAAT!!!!...there's a BAAAAT in the house!!!!". I ran to the living room in a panic. She was hysterical, barely coherent. "A bat...flying around my head...in my hair...followed me in...and there he is!!!" she screamed, pointing a trembling finger towards the fireplace. Sure enough. There was the little guy, his massive wings tucked around him, now peacefully hanging upside down, taking a nap on the bricks over top of my fireplace.

My daughter was freaking, "get him out...get him OOOUUUT!" I weighed my options. I could go and try and grab him and risk his flying uncontrollably around the house further terrorizing my daughter (and probably myself too, since I'm not all that brave around wild creatures). I thought about Animal Control or SPCA, but I knew they were all closed for the night. So I called the police.

The officer listened very quietly to my story (my daughter was still wailing in the background) and when I finished, calmly said, "Can I just put you on hold for a moment until I can stop laughing?"

A few moments later he came back on and suggested that I should have called Batman!!! By this time I was stifling my own laughter as my daughter continued to freak out, and the officer said to tell her from him to settle down....they would find someone to help....but it was a busy time, so they were unsure when help would arrive.

With the hope of rescue in sight, my daughter calmed down somewhat and finally stopped shaking. As we eyed this unwelcome visitor on the fireplace I decided I should take a few pictures - I didn't think anyone would believe me otherwise! From the camera viewpoint it was hard to believe that this tiny little mouse-like thing sleeping peacefully on the bricks could possibly be such an object of terror. He was barely two inches long - but my daughter assured me that his wings were VERY big!

A half hour later, the police arrived. An attractive young female officer wearing black leather gloves entered the house, stating "I like bats....let me at him!" She asked for a net, and I provided her with my vegetable strainer and a kitchen chair. She deftly climbed up the chair, plucked the bat off the wall, and held him snugly in her hands as he squealed in protest at being woken so abruptly (sounded a bit like my daughter!). Moments later the bat was outside and free again, and we waved a thankful goodbye to 'batwoman' from a safe position behind the screen door.



## **And You Can Quote Me on That!** **By Mark Gueffroy**

The Calgary International Airport was crowded and noisy, and emotion was in the air. People were hugging their close friends and family members and saying goodbye for an undetermined amount of time. For myself, I was getting out on my own, and my parents would not be nearby to help if I should have any problems adjusting to my new life as an independent member of society!

I had successfully completed my driver's exam that Monday and received my Driver's License. I drove my parents to the airport, they went through customs, and I drove away by myself into a strange new world, facing it all alone.

The first problem that I had was trying to find my way from the airport into the Downtown section of Calgary. I drove one way and found myself too far east, then I drove back the other way, and found myself back past the airport. I finally gave up, and decided to head for home...the trip home was uneventful, and I arrived back home... two hours later than it would have taken my dad!

During the long and seemingly uneventful drive, many different thoughts went through my mind. I thought of the new freedom, and responsibility, that I now had as an independent person. I pictured my parents getting onto the airplane for San Francisco, and the week stay in California. I saw my parents getting on another plane and flying to South Korea, where they would be for the next year. The adventure that they faced was, well, adventurous...and a little frightening.

So as this young INDIVIDUAL (very individual, I might add) faces life as an adult, he appreciates the friends that will provide moral support, and the opportunity that is provided by Athabasca University for a successful career and making a contribution to society through professional conduct and educated service.

I would go so far as to say that Athabasca University students are the most intelligent and motivated in Canada (and possibly the world). And you can quote me on that!

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MARK GUEFFROY is a Writer/Reporter for The Voice, and an Athabasca Univ. student. He was born in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan in 1984 (he's 17, for those of you who aren't math majors) and enjoys the Canadian culture and society.

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## **My Pride Hurt More Than My Wounds** **By Wayne Benedict**

The sun was shining and there weren't many mosquitoes out as I stood on the bank of the Fraser River. The mid-summer water wasn't very deep but the river extended 150 yards across to the small parking area where I could see my truck.

I looked down at the Yamaha Big Bear ATV that I had to get into the back of my truck. No easy job for a man by himself. "It won't get done unless I do it" I thought to myself and reached for the 6' lengths of 2" X 6" planking that were lying in the silt.

I nailed two of the planks across the midsection of my father's 19' wooden riverboat and running two more of them up to the side of the boat from the beach, drove the ATV up the boards and onto the makeshift parking berth. I knew that the load was dangerously top-heavy but I had no other way to get it across the river. After securing the ATV to the boat, I started out into the current.

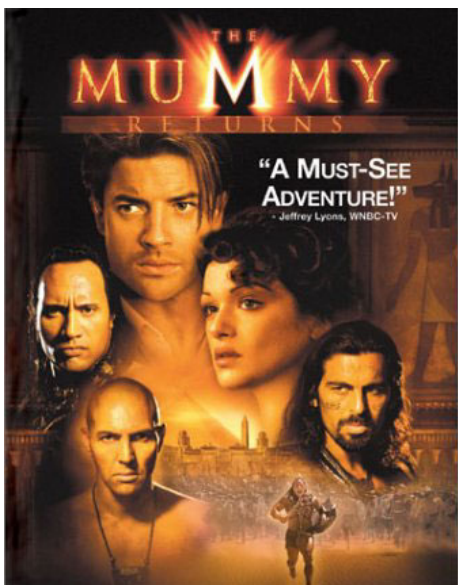
As soon as I was away from the shore, I knew that I was in trouble. Even operating the boat at an idle, it was swaying side to side and I feared that the ATV would roll the boat over, causing me to lose it, the boat and possibly my life. After several moments of near terror, I managed to work

out a tenuous truce with the unwieldy craft. Through the use of very wide turns and almost no speed, I managed to make land on the south shore of the river.

I untied the ATV and rode it down the wooden ramps and onto the sandy beach. I felt relieved that I had the machine at my truck, but I still needed to get it up into the back. Spying a bank of dirt that was about the same height off the ground as the box of my pickup truck, I decided that I could place two planks between it and my truck.

With all in place, I sat atop the ATV and gingerly began to ride it across the unsound bridge. I soon realized that the handlebars of the machine were not going to fit under the canopy that covered the box of my truck. Removing the bag of tools from its receptacle under the seat of the quad, I used a crescent wrench to loosen the handlebar, and rotated it downward. It looked as though it would fit under so I started the motor, put the transmission in gear, and attempted to tickle the throttle.

I had unknowingly kinked the throttle-cable when I repositioned the handlebars and the engine roared—the throttle stuck open—launching the ATV forward at great speed. The machine shot under the canopy, compressing the springs and pinning me between the two. The motor was racing and a sheet of plywood that was on the bed of the pickup box flew out of the back, landing several yards away. The wheels stopped rotating at that point but the motor was still racing. I was laying face-up on the seat with my feet at the front of the ATV and no way to reach the key to turn off the motor. My knuckles were torn open to the bones from the impact with the top of the canopy and I looked around helplessly for assistance that was not forthcoming. Blood dripped from my hands and I knew that it would be hours or days before anyone might come along to free me. I was becoming lightheaded from the carbon monoxide cloud that was accumulating about the truck and I knew that it was now or never. I grasped the opening of the canopy with my bloody hands and using a bench-press technique, pushed until the ATV springs compressed. I wiggled wormlike until my strength gave out and after a short rest, began again. It took approximately twenty minutes for me to free myself but I finally managed. Sick from the fumes and sore all over, it took weeks before I saw the humor of the situation. Looking back, I wish it were on video, I might have won \$10,000 for the World's Funnies Video.



## **Movie Review: The Mummy Returns** **By: Patricia Bjornson**

Invariably the sequel to a movie is not as good as the first instalment. This was definitely not true in the case of "The Mummy Returns". This movie was filled with action, humour and special effects from the beginning to end.

Director Stephen Sommers returns, as does Brendan Fraser, Rachel Weisz, John Hannah, and Arnold Vosloo (the Mummy). There is also an appearance of the well-known wrestler "The Rock" who plays the Scorpion King.

The best thing about this movie (other than the special effects, of course) was the fact that it is very clean from beginning to end. The people responsible for this film seem to be among the select population in Hollywood that have realized that bare breasts and steamy sex scenes do not, in fact, make a plot. You can go as a family, or even on your own and receive the same quality on action-filled fun adventure without your ears or your eyes being scalded by things best left to the imagination.

Overall it is well worth the price of admission to go and see it on the silver screen. If you want to know more about the movie, you can visit the website at [www.themummy.com](http://www.themummy.com).



## **FED WATCH**

### **By Karl Low**

### **I Spoke Too Soon**

In my column a couple of weeks ago, I commented on Athabasca University's neglect to send us as students any kind of specific notice detailing that the new AU Calendars were available. It seems I jumped the gun some. A couple of days ago, I received a return addressed postcard in the mail telling me about the new calendar and inviting me to send in for one.

Now I'd love to claim that it was my column that prompted this, but that's quite unlikely. Considering that the postcard was professionally printed and having a general idea of how long it takes to design, print, and mail something like this, it was obviously well in the works before I wrote my piece. So, apologies and congratulations to the AU folks for at least doing that.

I'm still not sure about this plan to increase tuition fees by the maximum amount allowed by the Alberta Government though. For some interesting reasons why, check out [one of the things](#) these increases will be going to, courtesy the AUSU discussion boards. Then when you return here, consider how many books and subscriptions the AU library could pick up for the 1.5 million mentioned there.

## **Blame the Parents**

British Columbia has just passed legislation that will make parents accountable for vandalism that their children do. Before a property owner not only had to prove that the child damaged the property, but that the parents were negligent in their attempts to control the child's behavior. The new legislation assumes that the parents were negligent and leaves it to them to prove that they weren't.

I'm not sure where I stand on this issue. On the one hand, I applaud the idea of making it easier for victims of property crimes to collect damages, and I do tend to believe that if a child breaks the law, it is at some level the fault of the parents. On the other hand, I'm a little worried at what this legislation does to the innocent until proven guilty concept that our justice system is based upon.

I'd rather avoid the thorny issue entirely by making it mandatory that potential parents take some courses on how to raise children. After all, aren't our children a resource that is simply too important to leave to the "learn as you go" method that most parents have to endure?

At any rate, you can learn more about the BC Legislation at [this link](#).

## **It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas**

The National Liberal Conference is being held in Edmonton this year, and with that comes some good news for Alberta. First on the list is the sixty million dollars the government is kicking in to develop a nanotechnology research institute at the University of Alberta. Nanotechnology is the science of building machines that are 1/10,000<sup>th</sup> the width of a human hair, and are widely believed to be the key to the next big technological revolution, not unlike the computer revolution. Since many of the research being done on nanotechnology is done in the areas of health or computing science, this seems to be a great time for Athabasca to start playing up its Masters of Health and Masters of Computing Science degrees. The news release about the research institute can be found [here](#).

On top of that, the Honourable Minister of State Hedy Fry is giving a grant of \$84,400 to the Alberta Association of Sexual Assault Centres to help them raise awareness of sexual assault in Alberta as well as create programs to create awareness and prevention in our public schools. You can see the full release for yourself at [this link](#).

## **COUNSELLING SERVICES AT ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY**

The student life is not an easy one, particularly for AU students who are often working full or part-time and/or trying to raise a family while squeezing out blocks of study time where possible. AU recognizes the challenges facing its students and provides a variety of support services through its counsellors - Julia McDonald, Julia Nielsen, and Ken Dickson, as well as through its other Student Services areas.

When students have been out of school for many years or even decades, the return to formal learning can be confusing and overwhelming at times. Counselling Services has a number of Study Skills resources, which it makes available through AUSU. Students can also book an appointment with a counsellor to work through specific difficulties they are experiencing in their studies. This can be done by contacting Rhonda Guay or Monica Wolanuk in the Counselling Services intake unit either by phone (1-800-788-9041, extension 6723), by e-mail ([counselling@athabascau.ca](mailto:counselling@athabascau.ca)), or by using the Online Counselling Appointment Form on the AU Student Services web site (<http://www.athabascau.ca/html/services/counselling/apptForm.htm>).

In addition to helping students strengthen their study skills, counsellor also offer learning support in exam preparation, reducing exam anxiety, time management, overcoming procrastination and other areas of a student's life that may be interfering with greater academic success.

Proper alignment between program choice and career aspiration is important if a student is to maintain a strong sense of purpose and motivation in their studies. Career interest exploration and testing, career vision re-evaluation, appropriate program choice, and occupational information and awareness are other areas where AU's counsellors can assist students in a more rewarding AU experience.

The problems that students run into often become more difficult to resolve successfully because students do not access the learning support services available to them while there is still enough time remaining. Counselling Services is raising its profile through articles like this so students will have a greater chance of academic success by using our services as soon as the need arises. Don't ignore the problems that obstruct your academic progress. Such problems typically do not go away. Rather, they tend to get worse as less and less time remains to resolve them or learn new skills to overcome them. Call us as soon as you recognize that our learning support services could benefit you.

So, check out the Counselling Services web site at <http://www.athabascau.ca/html/services/advise/conserv.html> or contact us by phone or e-mail if we can assist you in achieving greater academic success, because your success is our goal.

Phone: 1-800-788-9041, extension 6723

E-mail: [counselling@athabascau.ca](mailto:counselling@athabascau.ca)

## ENLIGHTENING INFORMATION:



### **\$7,000 in scholarships to be awarded to Métis students at Athabasca University**

Edmonton, July 24, 2001 -- The competition is now open for seven \$1,000 scholarships to be awarded this fall to Métis students who have demonstrated scholarly merit in studies at Athabasca University.

The awards, funded by Canative Housing Corporation, are available to Métis students who have completed at least three credits (normally, one course) through Athabasca University. Canative Housing Corporation director Herb Belcourt presented the University with the scholarship monies -- and a commitment to fund the new awards for at least 10 years -- two years ago.

The application deadline is October 31, 2001. To apply, contact:

Janice De Girolamo  
Office of the Registrar  
1 University Drive  
Athabasca, AB, T9S 3A3

T: 1-800-788-9041 (ext. 6249)

E: [janiced@athabascau.ca](mailto:janiced@athabascau.ca)

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Are you an Artist? AUSU supports the arts!

AUSU is interested in purchasing original works of art from students for use in promotional purposes. These promotions may include: gifts from AUSU to graduates at convocation, tokens of appreciation for volunteers, special presentations, etc.

The works of art must:

- be created by an AU Student
- be within a value range \$0-\$500.
- be accessible or easily transportable to Alberta

If you are an artist of any kind who creates a product you feel we would be able to use for such a purpose, please contact [djabbour@ausu.org](mailto:djabbour@ausu.org). Supply a brief description of the art object, a picture if you have it, and its market value.

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The Voice is proud to announce the upcoming arrival of the Dear Jerome column. Jerome (pronounced Jair-o-me) will offer sincere and completely honest advice. In order to protect the identity of those requesting advice, names may be changed. For further information, or for advice, please send your question or comment to [advice75@hotmail.com](mailto:advice75@hotmail.com) ATTN: Dear Jerome.

The Dear Jerome column is authored by an Athabasca University student who, at the present time, will remain anonymous. "Jerome" is currently enrolled in the Univ. Cert. in Administration program at AU, but plans to enrol in the BA-Psychology program in January 2002. The Dear Jerome column is printed bi-weekly in The Voice, and your comments are invited at [advice75@hotmail.com](mailto:advice75@hotmail.com)! Questions and requests for advice can be regarding any topic, and selected letters may be printed in this column, but the author's name and identifying details will not be revealed to protect their identity.

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## **International Year of the Volunteer**

2001 is the International Year of the Volunteer, and the title recognizes the contribution that volunteers make to our lives every day. Our communities would not be whole without volunteers.

As a Writer/Reporter for The Voice, I would like to include a profile of a worthy volunteer in each week's issue of this newsletter. I invite you to contact me by email at [markgueffroy@hotmail.com](mailto:markgueffroy@hotmail.com) if you know someone who has made a contribution to their community, or to the AU community, by volunteering their time. This person may receive an honorarium for their volunteer efforts, but cannot be a paid staff member or considered an employee.

Celebrate Volunteers with the staff and volunteers at The Voice!

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## **WRITE FOR THE VOICE!**

Fill on our online application at [www.ausu.org/voice/write.html](http://www.ausu.org/voice/write.html) or contact Tammy Moore at [tmoore@ausu.org](mailto:tmoore@ausu.org).