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What does your community mean to you? In a strong community I see people who are treating each other peacefully and here in Hawai’i spreading plenty of aloha. It is such an inspiring moment when you see a town come together whether it is for an event, or in the aftermath of a disaster. Hilo and the Big Island as a whole, constantly show me that there is still a sense of community in all of us and when we join together as one ohana, changes can happen.

In the past few weeks I have been fortunate to witness some of this local love first hand. Attending various events on campus and in the community is how I feel connected.

In this issue we have some great examples of how Hilo keeps its community alive. The annual Ho’olaule’a is an event that people look forward to year after year. It features local food and craft vendors and island music that is usually a crowd favorite. The location of Ho’olaule’a is important too because it’s held in the heart of Hilo, downtown. This event then also brings attention to local businesses in the area and creates a memorable atmosphere. One of the newer events to come to Hilo is the Hilo Pride Parade. This event showcases the support and acceptance of the gay community here in Hilo.

Creating a community takes people who not only care for the place they call home but also for themselves. Being happy as an individual is the first step in adding something positive to your community. The articles in this issue on finding peace with yourself and loving yourself, offer some great ideas and simple ways to love yourself a little more. If you need more inspiration to be a little kinder to yourself and make the most of each moment, the inspirational story about one student here at University of Hawaii at Hilo(UH Hilo) will hopefully shed some light on why you should be living each day with a grateful attitude. This story reminded me of how we can not make any assumptions about people because we have no idea the battles they may be fighting.

Getting to know the people in your community and right here on campus can really open your eyes to how much we are all really connected and never alone.

Honestly, when I first started at UH Hilo I was not involved in any campus groups or went to events, I basically came to my classes and then immediately left. I had some friends who weren't college students so I spent most of my time with them. As the years went on and I got a job on campus, starting going to some events and became a member of Ke Kalahea I started to fall in love with my life here even more than I already was. I thought that being involved with activities on campus was for young students fresh outta high school. I was so wrong. Now that I reflect back I see how much better my experience has been since I decided to get involved with UH Hilo and embrace my college days. I am apart of a community right here on campus and it is such a great place to be.

Britni Schock
Editor in Chief
Across the LGBTQIA (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual) community, the message they try to convey is clear: spread awareness, tolerance, respect and understanding. One of the ways the community tries to promote these ideals is to hold a gay pride parade and festival in their town or city. Pride parades started in the summer of 1970 to commemorate the Stonewall riots that occurred in New York the year before. Since 1970, people and allies within the gay community have marched through the streets of their downtown in celebration of who they are. Keeping with the connection these festivals and parades have with the Stonewall riots, they are typically held sometime on the weekend throughout June or July. However, some towns and cities like Hilo will host the festival later in the summer.

On Sept. 19, 2015, Hilo held its third Annual Pride Parade Festival in and around downtown Hilo. From 10 am until 4 pm people were able to view the parade make its way through the streets of downtown as well as listen to live bands and visit booths at Moohau Bandstand and park. The parade started its journey in the commuter parking lot on Kamalama Ave. and snaked its way towards Ponahawai St, making its way towards Kiluaea Ave, all the way towards Waiamanu and back around to Kamalama Ave.

Several prominent business and organizations located in Hilo were spotted supporting the event. These businesses included those such as Lucy’s Taqueria, Paradise Roller Girls, and Pineapples who had their own, Pam Owens, create The Pineapple Mafia, a group of hardcore women riding motorcycles and supporting the LGBTQIA community. When prominent organizations and businesses show their support for the gay community, it radiates an enormous positive energy to those who may feel like their voice is not being heard.

Pride Hilo is an organization on the University of Hawaii at Hilo (UHH) campus that offers an opportunity for LGBTQIA students’ voices to be heard. This Registered Independent Student Organization (RISO) is run by a group of student leaders who create an inclusive atmosphere for both allies and the LGBT community. Under the leadership of the Women’s Center and Pride Hilo, the UH Hilo also offers Safe Zone training. Safe Zone trains students, faculty and administration on the correct vocabulary to use when referring to LGBT members, teaches them how to understand the hardships the community faces and shares different resources that are available for the gay community and their allies to use. Pride Hilo President, Danielle Marruto, who is also the Safe Zone student coordinator gives her opinion on the universities inclusiveness, “I feel that the university is making an effort to support our community with safe zone and other resources on campus. With that said, pride would like to see more participation and support from administration and people who hold higher power at UHH. This added support would help to bring visibility to an invisible community” Marruto said.

One of my proudest moments in life was attending my first pride parade and festival in Denver, Colorado. I can remember the atmosphere being happy, free and one of total and complete acceptance. Crowds of smiling people. Delicious smells from the various food vendors that had set up camp on the streets. Drag queens, musicians and everyone in between on stage at Civic Center as the entertainment. People were wearing everything from just speedos to elaborate costumes with intricate headdresses that physically towered even the tallest of us. Everybody was so welcoming and friendly and I remember thinking “WOW! I’ve never seen this many rainbow related... anything.” There were rainbow balloons, signs, clothes and people who really knew how to be creative when it came to rainbow paint. Being there, you realize that people are there for themselves and it becomes so empowering because you know they’re taking back control of who they are. Growing up in the gay community, you constantly hear nothing but negative and derogatory remarks and it becomes hard to accept who you are. Attending pride can literally be life changing simply because they radiate so much positivity and acceptance. For this reason alone cities and towns need to jump at the opportunity to host a festival and be known as an open and tolerant place to be.

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University of Hawai’i at Hilo was represented in the parade by the Registered Independent Student Organization (RISO) Pride Hilo. In the past year, Pride Hilo struggled with administration leadership as well as student leadership and we finally came together to show that we are still here and now we’re stronger than ever. Both old and new members were incredibly excited to finally be a part of the local gay pride parade. With rainbow tape, cupcakes and the official Pride Hilo sign in hand, the group proudly made it’s way through the streets of downtown giving out smiles and candy to the excited crowd. It was a memorable way to start off the school year and it reminded me of the pride festivals I had attended before; one of joyous celebration with open mindedness and respect for a community that has long fought hard to come out of the darkness.

What Pride Means to Me

An Editorial

Nae Nae Bjelic

Across the LGBTQIA (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual) community, the message they try to convey is clear: spread awareness, tolerance, respect and understanding. One of the ways the community tries to promote these ideals is to hold a gay pride parade and festival in their town or city. Pride parades started in the summer of 1970 to commemorate the Stonewall riots that occurred in New York the year before. Since 1970, people and allies within the gay community have marched through the streets of their downtown in celebration of who they are. Keeping with the connection these festivals and parades have with the Stonewall riots, they are typically held sometime on the weekend throughout June or July. However, some towns and cities like Hilo will host the festival later in the summer.

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Soccer has been her passion since she could remember, although simply remembering was rudimentary in the fatal issue that gripped Jenna Hufford. Hufford, goalkeeper for University of Hawaii at Hilo (UH Hilo) recalls dropping to her floor in disbelief when she heard the news from her mother. “My first thought was death,” Hufford said.

Born August 11, 1995 in Shingle Springs, a small country town in northern California, she has always been cheerful and outgoing. At UH Hilo she is often the center of attention, in a positive way. Her smile and loudlaughter catch people’s attention.

She adores long walks on the beach with her boyfriend as well as singing and dancing with her best friend/teammate Nicole Statham. Hufford did not always have this seemingly picturesque life. After graduating high school, she was committed to continue her soccer career at Cal Poly Pomona.

A month before starting school, her soccer coach was fired. Soon following his firing, Jenna lost her scholarship. This series of events devastated her spirit and was unsure if her soccer career would continue.

But to Hufford’s surprise, Lance Thompson, Director of Soccer at UH Hilo, woke her up with a call offering her a scholarship.

It seemed surreal because school began in three weeks. Never visiting Hawaii before, she took a chance and ultimately the best decision of her life. As freshman season began, it was just too good to be true. A two-time Freshman of the Week winner, Hufford’s confidence was sky high and she was already living the best year of her life.

Suddenly, Hufford started to feel different. She wasn’t the outgoing, loud, and flamboyant Jenna that everyone knew. She felt changes to her body. She felt sluggish and unmotivated.

Her memory began to give out on her. She would forget simple things. Often Hufford felt herself in a bit of a depression. She gave her mother a call after the symptoms would not go away. They began running test to find what was going on with her. The season went on and Hufford kept playing soccer.

Soccer was the only thing that kept her mind off the vulnerable feeling, although the scared feeling of uncertainty remained in the back of her head. One day, Hufford’s mother called her with heart breaking news. The first words out of her mother’s mouth, “I have good news and I have bad news”.

Hufford opted to hear the bad news first. Her mother then continued on to tell her daughter that the doctors ran test and found a brain tumor.

“My first thought was death,” Hufford said. “I was afraid and it was difficult hearing it over the phone,” Hufford said. “The emotions poured out in a scared feeling of uncertainty and not knowing the severity of the tumor.”

“But we found you the best surgeon in the U.S. and we’re going to get it taken out,” Hufford recounts her mother saying as she tried to calm her daughter down.

But at the time Hufford knew it was not going to be all right. She came to a point in her life where nothing was promised. Her life had changed just like that.

Soccer, the one thing that took her mind off the awful things that this tumor was doing to her, was stripped from her life. For the second time within a year, Hufford’s future in soccer was threatened.

As the weeks went by she felt herself becoming more and more depressed. She watched all her best friends and teammates getting ready for practice and games and wasn’t able to be a part of the fun.

Unlike the rest of the college students who would go out and socialize on the weekends with friends and sometimes complete strangers, Jenna would lay alone in her lonely dorm room, sick and depressed from what this illness that had taken over her life. This became too tough of a battle to fight alone. Scared and uncertain of what road her life was going to take, she felt the best decision was to withdraw from UH Hilo and return home to her loved ones and to have surgery to remove the tumor from her brain.

She finally arrived home to her family’s unconditional love. “I was scared to death, but I knew I had to be strong for my teammates, friends, and especially my family. They all mean the world to me,” Hufford said.

After a few days at home, Hufford and her family traveled to the University of California, San Francisco for her surgery. She was in the hospital for five days due to postoperative complications.

She ended up having diabetes insipidus, which is a rare form of diabetes caused by a deficiency of the pituitary hormone vasopressin, which regulates kidney function.

She then waited for the hole in her head to heal which the recovery time was two months stint at home.

It was difficult for her to walk or even get out of bed because the pain in her head was so excruciating.

Hufford realized a lot while sitting in the hospital as she recovered. “Life is too short. You’re never promised another day,” Hufford said. “I made the decision that day to live every day for the rest of my life happy and put all of my faith in the Lord.”

The surgery was very successful and Hufford was more than thrilled to get back on the field with her teammates after a long recovery.

“I knew I had a lot to prove coming back. I had a new outlook on life and no one was going to stop me from being the best person on and off the field,” Hufford said.

The transition from recovery to getting back onto the field was easy for her. The game is just second nature, as if she never left the field to begin with.

The return had its physical challenges but once she set her mind to achieve her goals, there was no stopping her. She just simply played her game. Training for season was treacherous but she took the challenge head on and crushed it.

The season began and the coach called her name to get the start in the season opener.

“It felt so amazing. There was no better feeling and I will never take soccer for granted ever again,” Hufford said. “Soccer is my passion and I am extremely thankful for the second opportunity. I wouldn’t be here without the love and support from my friends, team and my family.”

Since her surgery, life has taken a positive turn. Hufford was giving a second chance at life and she will not stop until she is the best person she can possibly be.

She met the love of her life, formed a brand new soccer team that is built for success and she is in the process of achieving her lifelong goal—to be a counselor for children with cancer.

Her goal for this year is to lead the team to PacWest Championship. If you see Hufford at school, on the beach or on the soccer field, don’t be shy and give her a quick “hello.” It’s difficult to miss her with her signature pink bow in hair and positive attitude.
I. WATER WATER WATER

It is time to drift away from the brown and tan foods. Lettuce and tomato in a fast food bun of mystery meat is not quite the aura of color we are looking for. And chips are not a vegetable. Try to add some color to your plate. Vegetables and fruits are a great way to get some important vitamins and minerals into your body.

2. REDUCE THE SWEET DRINKS

Try to reduce your intake of soft drinks and other sugary beverages. Soda holds a high amount of sugar that causes high insulin secretion. Insulin blocks your leptin receptors that are in charge of informing your body it is full. Your body responds by going into starvation mode and begins storing the sugar as fat.

3. WALK IT OFF

When you are feeling stressed or overwhelmed, take a step outside. The rain may be an issue but a walk can help clear your mind. Walking can boost endorphins, which are emotion-boosting hormones our body creates during exercise. It is a great way to take your mind off of things and get a little exercise into your routine.

4. EAT MORE!

Remember how I told you our body goes into starvation mode? Those meals you are skipping are aiding in fat storage and I do not think those are the results you imagine. If you truly want to see results, eat! Food is fuel for your metabolism. Your body is telling you to feed it so listen! A growling stomach may also be a sign of dehydration.

5. TASTE THE RAINBOW

If I mentioned water? Water is the best way for you to give back to your body. It makes up about 55-75% of your body and you burn through it quickly. It hydrates your cells, maintains body temperature, regulates metabolism, and removes toxins. Try to intake about 64 ounces of water a day and remember to stay hydrated during and after exercising. First sign of dehydration is thirst!

6. GET MORE REST

As students, we understand the term of a good night rest as maybe 4 hours of sleep. Most of us were informed that we should have about 8 hours of sleep a day but the college life has a tight schedule. Squeezing in your classes, study time, exercising, eating, homework, etc. Where can we squeeze in sleep? I understand sleeping is hard to fit in but let us go back to kindergarten and take naps when we can. Sleep allows our body to recover and maintain functionality in our system. Catch some Zzz’s but make sure you wake up for class.

7. SMILE

I know it is weird, but studies show that smiling can boost your mood and the mood of everyone around you. It can stimulate the stress-reducing hormone that you receive from exercising. When you smile you are better looking and your smile is contagious. So why not spread the happiness? You are beautiful so flaunt it with a smile.

EDITORIAL

Make Peace With Your Body

When I first received the theme of our issue I was a bit nervous. “Peace?” Peace.. What does peace have to do with health and wellness? Exercising can be peaceful, in a way. Yoga is peaceful and centering. But what was really itching at me was the idea of being at peace with your body. It is a bit odd, the idea of being at peace with yourself. You see a lot of shows of women stating they are happy with how they look and how they know they may never change. But this is not the peace I am talking about. The peace I speak of is kind of a peace treaty for our bodies.

How many of you have had your heart broken? How many of you have punished your body with junk food, ice cream, and fast food to cope with heartbreak? How many have stretch marks? Stress lines? Worry lines? Scars? Our body is the representation of our struggles, growth and hardships. And yet some of us demand instant transformation from it. Let us be more understanding to our body. Take a step back and love yourself for once. Your body deserves it. Listen to your body; it is trying to talk to you. Stop forcing it to do things that it does not want to do.

Your body already feels the stress from your environment and it will always be on your side. So it is time to for us make peace with our body and stop abusing it. Allow your body to change over time and not instantly. Eat healthy, but allow for some yummy cheats. Exercise your body, but do not push it past its limits. Stop looking at the mirror every day hoping to see a drastic change. It will come without notice. Asking for instant results will give you temporary bliss, but creating healthy habits will cause everlasting peace.

It’s essential for us to forgive ourselves and to also forgive our bodies. In many cases, we have done, said, and thought really negative and damaging things to and about our bodies over the years. With a sense of healthy remorse and a deep sense of empathy, we can begin to forgive ourselves for how we’ve treated ourselves in the past. At the same time, we can practice forgiving our bodies for not being perfect, which no body ever is or will be. * (Mike Robbins Make Peace with Your Body & Appearance)
Wednesday, Sept. 16, 2015

Wallet Stolen
A black Quicksilver wallet was left on a table in the Edwin H. Mookini Library and then was taken by an unknown person.

Thursday, Sept. 17, 2015

Gas Gone
Owner of a vehicle parked in Zone two by the Bookstore reported that gas had been siphoned from the vehicle.

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2015

Waking Up To Nothing
Complainant said they fell asleep at the table by the free box at Edith Kanakaʻole Hall (E.K.H.) and woke up to all belongings missing.

Campus security can be contacted at: (808) 974-7911, and is located in Room 104 of the Auxiliary Services Building.
The city of Hilo held the twenty-second annual KWXX Hōʻolauleʻa on Sept. 26th, 2015. The wet weather did not keep the Hilo community from flooding the downtown streets to celebrate the festivities. Downtown Hilo was closed off to host 20 reggae bands covering four stages. The drug and alcohol free event was also host to many local food and craft vendors. Some of the amazing bands featured were 'Ekolu, Anuhea, The Steppas, and Positive Motion just to name a few. The coming and going of the rain did not seem to keep the community from enjoying the music, food, and arts. In fact, the rain may have made the crowds pulse even stronger.

Jake Grijalva, a first year student of The University of Hawaii at Hilo(UH Hilo), was stunned to be able to watch so many bands in one place for free. “I would never expect an event of this type to be free,” Grijalva said. Many UH Hilo students attend Hōʻolauleʻa every year for just that reason, it is free. It is an opportunity for UH Hilo students to go out and listen to good music with friends and have a great night, while not having to spend a single penny. I guess one could say this event definitely falls under the college budget. It is, however, sometimes hard to escape the night without spending money on the local foods and crafts. While walking from stage to stage your nose could not avoid the superior smell of the local food vendors lined up and down the crowded street. Once your nose led you to the food, your eyes then caught all of the remarkable crafts for sale.

Tasha Meyer, a senior at UH Hilo has been to the event for three straight years. “I like how the whole island comes down and we all can have a good time together as a community,” Meyer said. When asked about her favorite part of the night Meyer simply said, “I love ‘Ekolu.” This comes as no surprise as ‘Ekolu has become very popular and was the band chosen to close out Hōʻolauleʻa. The crowd was wanting more from ‘Ekolu when the last song ended. After a hana hou the band could not resist the crowds want for more and finished the night with a bang. Anuhea also made the crowd buzz with her popular song, Simple Love Song from her album For Love, released in 2012. When she took the stage there seemed to be an overwhelming welcoming from the males in the crowd. It must have been the moving songs that she performed so well, it could possibly have been her looks too. The Steppas and Positive Motion, two homegrown Hawaii reggae bands, seemed to create a large pulse from the crowd. You could feel the hype from the crowd as these two locally grown bands performed their songs that made a connection to the Big Island crowd.

The thousands of people who crowded the streets showed up rain or shine to be apart of an awesome community event and to listen to countless skilled reggae bands. Another successful Hōʻolauleʻa is in the books and the community is already looking forward to the twenty-third annual KWXX Hōʻolauleʻa. Following the event Grijalva said, “I am already looking forward to hearing the line up for next year.” He is not alone as this is one of the biggest events in Hilo for UH Hilo students to look forward to.

Check out www.kwxx.com for a list of upcoming Big Island concerts.

To the right is a list of a few popular artists backgrounds and their top songs from the twenty-second annual Hōʻolauleʻa in downtown Hilo. To get info on more artists who performed check out www.kwxx.com and also check out the Facebook page.

“The vibes were incredible and the people were amazing”
- UHH junior Jake Grijalva
The Steppas
From: Hilo, Hawaii
Members: Star Alaniz, Kekolu Pauao, Makana Rosetti, Samuel Ikeda, Bryan Legaspi
Popular songs: Lost at Sea, Don’t Give Up, Note To Babylon, Hitz
The Steppas have toured in over 22 states and 60 U.S. cities. In 2012 they hit #6 on the iTunes reggae chart. Their album “The Love Shack” was #2 on the iTunes chart. They did not get complacent with this accomplishment and were striving for more. In 2014 the band came out with “To You From We,” the #1 reggae album on iTunes.

Anuhea
From: Maui
Full name: Anuheake’alaokalokelani
Popular songs: Simple Love Song, Higher Than The Clouds, Come Over Love, Only Man In The World
Anuhea is a self-taught guitarist and singer/songwriter. She attended Kamehameha Schools in Honolulu for her High School education. She is fluent in Hawaiian and stays close to her roots when writing her music. It all started for Anuhea in local coffee shops, but she was too talented to fly under the radar and was soon singing the National Anthem at the Golden State Warriors vs Portland Trailblazers game at the Oracle Arena in Oakland. She continues to grow and is currently releasing her new music video “I sland I nside M e.”

Ekolu
From: Maui
Members: Lukela Keala, Shane “Akoni” Dellomes, Makapu Ho’opii
Popular songs: I Love You Girl, Shores of Waiehu, Down in the Valley, She’s Music To Me
Ekolu began as a group in 1994, all three members attended Baldwin High School and were in the same music class. The beginning consisted of little jam sessions after school. Ekolu has since grown to a very popular reggae band and they have traveled all over the United States. They have performed in Alaska, Seattle Washington, Portland Oregon, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Colorado, and even in Japan.

UH Hilo Ho‘olaule‘a
I f you missed out on Hoolaule‘a and are hoping for another chance to hear good music, or if Ho‘olaule‘a left you craving more, you are in luck! The University of Hawaii at Hilo will be hosting the twenty-first annual Hoolaule‘a on campus. This is another free event put on for the students of UH Hilo and the public. UH Hilo’s Hoolaule‘a takes place in the performing arts center parking lot on the lower end of campus. It is set for Jan. 16, 2016. This yearly event always has a great turnout and also many fun booths that give you a chance to take home some worthy prizes! The food and crafts are also a must and the music is obviously the main event. Don’t think this is a mini Hoolaule‘a; it is top notch with great reggae bands performing annually. Don’t miss out on this chance to listen to outstanding reggae jams, eat some delicious food and maybe even take home some free prizes! Stay up to date with the UH Hilo website as a list of performers and activities will be posted closer to the concert date. Also follow Ke Kalahea on Instagram to find out what is coming up on the UH Hilo campus.
Take a #selfie with the latest issue of Ke Kalahea and you could win some cool prizes! Contest starts on Oct. 12, 2015 and runs until Oct. 23, 2015 for issue 4. When the new issue hits stands grab the hard copy and take a selfie with the issue, post it to Instagram, tag @kekalahea, and hashtag #kekalaheaselfie. You are then entered to win awesome prizes!

CONTEST DATES:
ISSUE 4 - 10/12/15-10/23/15
ISSUE 5 - 10/26/15-11/6/15
ISSUE 6 - 11/9/15-11/20/15
ISSUE 7 - 11/23/15-10/4/15

Keep calm and selfie on

Must be UH Hilo student with valid ID.
Must follow all steps to be entered into contest.

#KEKALAHEASELFIE
According to the most recent survey by the NCAA, 184,080 girls participate in high school level tennis in the United States; less than 5 percent of those females continue on to play collegiately. Only 1.1 percent play at a Division II level. Bianca Novotna, UHH women's tennis player, equates to be finer than the 1.1 percent due to her expansive athletic journey.

Born and raised in the Czech Republic until age 10, Novotna grew up with tennis as a staple part of her family lifestyle.

Her father, Petr Novotny, not only played tennis but also was a coach and owner of a large tennis complex holding indoor courts and a restaurant within the facility. This was the reason Novotna and family moved to Germany.

"When I was 4 or 5 I watched my [older] sister [Dominika] play tennis and compete in tournaments," Novotna said. "I told my parents 'this looks like so much fun! I want to play!' So they put me in tennis when I was seven."

Novotna instantly took a liking to the sport and found her drive to play tennis was greater than most any other extracurricular activity. As she grew older, she became more dedicated and self-disciplined.

"I would wake up at 7 a.m. everyday and started hitting on my own using the ball machine," Novotna said. She endured two-hour practices each day during the week with tournaments on the weekends.

After moving to Germany at age ten, Novotna continued playing tennis for four more years. The hard work paid off as both her and her sister made their names known in the tennis world.

"We were really good. We were ranked in Germany and in the Czech Republic," Novotna said. "I believe we could have gone pro if we would have stuck with it…"

Unfortunately, both of the Novotna girls gave up their tennis careers during their adolescent years. The continuous monotony of practice and tournaments became too much for Novotna. After seeing her sister quit tennis in order to have a stronger social life, Novotna decided to do the same.

"I am thankful my parents invested so much time and everything into me but at that age I was not really able to appreciate it. I was seeing it as torture. I was tired of it," Novotna said.

After seven years of prominent play, she turned her back on tennis. From age 14 to age 18, Novotna scarcely touched a tennis racquet. Only once every couple months did she play for pleasure. Instead, she used this time to work and save money for her other passion in life: American culture immersion.

"I love the United States. I would watch American movies in English instead of German. I would listen to American songs, I would dream about going there someday," Novotna said.

Upon telling her parents about her desire to go to the U.S., Novotna was struck with the $10,000 reality of moving to another country for school. Her parents told her she must pay for it herself so Novotna was challenged with raising that kind of money in one year.

"I worked every single day after school and on the weekends from early in the mornings to late in the evenings. I worked so hard but I saved up enough money to go to America as a foreign exchange student." Novotna said.

Novotna's desire was to attend a high school in Florida or California however it was pre-determined she would attend a school in Texas.

"The agency called me and they were like 'oh yeah Bianca, we found you a family…in Texas…Dickens, Texas…' and I'm like 'where's that at?' so I googled "Dickens" and there is like nothing there, like three miles of nothing," Novotna said.

According to the United States Census Bureau, in 2013 the population of Dickens, Texas was 267 people.

Less than willing, Novotna packed her belongings and moved across the Atlantic Ocean, where she was introduced to her host family.

This primary experience of America was quite unfavorable for the foreigner. First of all, the host family did not allow her to wear shorts or tank tops due to religious standards even though it was often over 100 degrees on any given day. The host family also treated her cruelly after she requested to be picked up from school early one day because she was feeling ill.

"The school called my host dad and he came and picked me up and he was so mad. He took me back home, turned off the phone, turned off the Internet, turned off the TV and locked the office because he thought I was just faking it to get out of school."

"I was freaking out. I asked to call my parents and he said no and I asked again, 'can I please call my parents?' I want to talk to my parents.' A second time he said no because he thought I would tell them how bad he was treating me."

Everything happens for a reason. I gave up tennis in the past; I was not going to give it up again. This is my sport. This is my dream. I want to play tennis.

-Bianca Novotna, UHH HiLo women's tennis player
Bianca Novotna’s journey across oceans to fulfill the dream she thought she had lost

“...I asked to call my parents and he said no and I asked again, ‘can I please call my parents? I want to talk to my parents. ‘ A second time he said no because he thought I was just faking it to get out of school.

They helped Novotna find a different host family. This second family was much more suitable for her to adapt and finish the school year with.

While attending high school in Texas as a senior [even though she had already graduated in Germany, to repeat this final year was the only way she could come on a foreign exchange program] Novotna discovered the high school tennis program.

“When I transferred to the second family, I was allowed to play tennis for my high school,” Novotna said. “It was the first time I really played in years. The team was no good but I still played.”

Upon finishing her year in high school, Novotna attended South Plains College in Levelland, Texas where no collegiate tennis program was present. At this time, Novotna was unaware there might be other colleges that actually had tennis programs [Europe has no high school or college athletics attached to schools or institutions]. She was also misinformed of the financial situation and steps of paying for college in America that awaited her.

“I didn't have any money. The first bill was like $2,000 and I was overwhelmed with anxiety of what to do,” Novotna said.

She worked and saved money and eventually made payments in order to stay in school.

“When I finally got my Associate's degree it felt so amazing like ‘this is what I paid for myself. This is what I worked so hard for.”

Though a seemingly irreversible and detrimental decision made when she was 14 to walk away from tennis, Novotna returned to the sport she so dearly loved.

At age 21, seven years later, she had an opportunity to play tennis for the University of Hawaii at Hilo.

While a in junior college, she started thinking about where to continue her education and perhaps play tennis.

“I started making a video of me playing tennis, though it wasn't much,” Novotna said.

Upon seeing the video, a coach in California was interested and wanted her to play for him. She came very close to signing the letter of intent, however—call it life circumstances, call it a gut feeling...Novotna just knew this wasn't the right path to commit to.

“Everything happens for a reason. I gave up tennis in the past; I was not going to give it up again. This is my sport. This is my dream. I want to play tennis,” Novotna said.

So she made another video of her playing and sent it to over 200 schools national wide.

“I had some feedback so I took the best ones and was trying to choose between Baltimore and Hawai'i. My parents said 'Bianca, you are going to regret it for the rest of your life if you don't go to Hawaii,'” Novotna said.

She chose Hawaii although the decision was anything but easy. The transfer was only given a partial scholarship her first year and had to pay several thousands of dollars again out of her own pocket. She worked extremely hard and was able to pay the excess finances through academic scholarships.

She is currently taking 19 credits, working two jobs, participating in an internship, playing tennis and upholding a phenominal GPA. She is proud to say she will graduate from UHH in the spring debt-free.

Her future aspirations entail law school perhaps at University of Hawaii at Manoa, with definite focus on immigration law.

“I want to be an immigration lawyer because I want to help people. I had those same problems and I want to be able to help people where they are at because I believe I can,' Novotna said.

Novotna realizes that life is not always easy especially with her schedule however she encourages others through her personal perspective.

“Whenever I am stressed or mad I always think ‘I am healthy, I have a house. I have food. There are people out there who have it worse than me,'” Novotna said. "It is very important to do little things for people because sometimes the little things make the biggest difference.”

Bianca Novotna is more than a number or statistic. She may be a part of the 1.1 percent of women who play Division II college tennis, but she is one who has made and will continue to make a difference in the lives of people around her.

Although her journey consisted of hardship and adversity, she has shown people to never discredit what you once had a passion for as she decided to rekindle the sport she left seven years ago because the love for some things never dies. It is just simply hidden in life.