

ARTS & CULTURE

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Vance creates short film

Theresa Velazquez | Editor-in-Chief

Dallas College professor Sherie Vance hit rock bottom at the age of 42. By 2005, Vance had not completed her college education, her mother had died a few years back, all her children had left home and she was divorced.

Now, Vance has a masters in fine arts and is in her seventh-year teaching at Dallas College North Lake Campus.

In the spring of 2023, Vance's short film "Cleaning" was accepted in the Bare Bones International Film Festival. She won third place in the short film category and received the Louis Webber Legacy Award, an award given to outstanding female directors.

As a film student, Vance worked on numerous short films and documentaries but "Cleaning" marks her debut as an independent filmmaker.

Filmmaker Susan Bohl was the producer for "Cleaning." She has over 15 years of experience in film, commercials and television productions. Bohl said: "Sharie's gift of fantastic storytelling has only just begun to surface with 'Cleaning.' We will be seeing a lot more of Sharie and her future projects, of that I am certain."

The triumph to Vance's accomplishments did not come so easy. 42-year-old Vance had to dwell deeply about her identity, change her beliefs imposed by her blue-collar



News-Register | Theresa Velazquez

Professor Sherie Vance stands in her office surrounded by posters of films and past events.

and middle-class family, and not allow her anxiety to weigh her down.

"At this point in my life I was like, 'what do I really want to do?' and it was scary as hell for me to go to school for something creative," Vance said, in her office filled with movie posters, wearing a

black blouse that revealed the black ink permanently marked on both arms.

Early Days

Vance was born on the cusp between Generation X and the baby boomer generation. Her family owned a

truck stop in Lancaster, Texas, located across a green field from where her childhood home was. "I was left to roam the creeks and go swimming by myself as a very young kid," Vance said.

Growing up Vance enjoyed drawing, writing, sculpting, making dioramas out of

everyday objects and flipping through the pages of her favorite magazine, National Geographic.

At age 15, Vance became pregnant with her first child.

"I basically had to put aside

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News-Register | Theresa Velazquez

Mamava Lactation Pod is located in the A Building next to the food pantry, also near a side entrance and women's bathroom entry way. The pod is located in a high-traffic area.

PUMP Act changes Dallas College

Theresa Velazquez
Editor-in-Chief

Navigating motherhood is changing for Dallas College students, staff and faculty members.

Providing Urgent Maternal Protections for Nursing Mothers Act, or PUMP Act, took effect on April 2023. The Act address the needs of employees transitioning back to work after giving birth. It expands access to salaried workers, like teachers, to have a reasonable break time to nurse, each time they need to pump milk at work for one year after childbirth.

Dallas College full-time employees, employed 36 consecutive months or more, may have up to four consecutive weeks of paid leave to take care of their newborn child and may then return to work as usual.

Carlos Cruz, Associate Vice Chancellor of Well-Being & Social Support, said Dallas College is working on providing

dedicated nursing rooms and a Mamava Lactation Pod at North Lake Campus, on top of the current nursing space located inside the Health Center, C200.

Nursing parents are given a private space inside the Health Center, where they can set up their machines and pump breast milk. They have access to a kitchenette sink, bathroom and electricity plugs when the Health Center is open Monday through Friday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

An employee can now sue their employer under the PUMP Act if their employer fails to provide a place, other than a bathroom, for them to pump each time they must express milk. Employers have 10 days to comply after the first notification.

It is not required to compensate an employee receiving

reasonable break time unless the employee is working while pumping milk.

"Breastfeeding is kind of new but it's not new," Daphne Rodriguez, Dallas College Student, said. So, employers with 50 or more employees are having to catch up with the needs of working parents who want to continue breastfeeding their child far past maternity leave.

Cruz said both the PUMP Act and COVID prompted Dallas College to implement the Mamava Lactation Pod.

The Student Success Division for Well-Being & Social Support, Student Success, and Dallas College Human Resources requested a lactation pod for each campus. The cost of the Mamava Lactation Pods was covered

through the Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds. This was established to assist institutions of higher education to provide emergency grants to students related to the disruption of campus operation.

The NLC pod is located next to the food pantry, A262, across the staircase leading towards the classrooms of North Lake Early College High School.

Dallas College can utilize these lactation pods to provide a healthy and private space to pump for students, faculty and staff. "These spaces will increase our capacity to serve our student parents when they are nursing and ultimately provide them with a hygienic space," Cruz said.

Rodriguez said, "As an adult, do you eat in the bathroom? No. So why do we expect mothers to nurse in a bathroom? Like it's unsanitary, it's nasty. That's where people

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NLC offers hope to the community

Heather Sherrill
Layout Editor

Over 49,500 people died by suicide in 2022, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In honor of the friends, families and those who have survived attempts, Dallas College North Lake campus hosts events to help spread awareness during the month of September.

Dalia Blell, North Lake Campus professional counselor is the higher education repre-

sentative for the Texas Suicide Prevention Counsel. Through here she was trained as an ASK instructor.

ASK about Suicide to Save a Life is a 1.5 to 4-hour workshop for adults who interact with youth or adults at risk for suicide. The program provides participants with an overview of the basic signs of suicide and suicidal behavior, including risk and protective factors.

Participants are trained to recognize warning signs—behaviors and characteristics that might indicate elevated risk for suicidal behavior—and how to intervene with a person they think might be at risk for suicide. These people are called gatekeepers.

Blell has trained almost 1,000 gatekeepers through Dallas College. Which includes students, faculty and staff in the student success team, basic needs and connection programs, student organizations and some of the police department.

She hosts one virtual training a month and two in person at various campuses. However, she can host another one if requested by a group.

Marielle McGregor, Assistant Director, Campaign Strategy & Program Management, went through the ASK training

last year. "My interest originally stemmed from having loved ones who were suicidal. I wanted to know how to have conversations with them and what warning signs to look for," she said.

About a month after her training a colleague of hers called. McGregor's colleague said her boyfriend—who was a veteran—was talking about killing himself and she didn't know if she should call the cops, hide his gun, or buy a safe.

"Because I had learned more about suicide, I knew what resources to connect her with," McGregor said. "In the end everyone is alive and healthy, so it was a happy ending. But not

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"I want people to know that people do care and there is help for those struggling."

— Dr. Maya Fernandez
Dean of Academic Compliance & Educational Policy

"They are not online yet. We are waiting on some privacy screens for the lactation pod..."

— Carlos Cruz
Associate Vice Chancellor

The great pumpkin spotted

Theresa Velazquez
Editor-in-Chief

It's a Charlie Brown fall at the Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden.

It's still hot in Texas so put on your least cozy coat, call your Peanuts-loving gang and head over to the 18th annual Autumn at the Arboretum presented by Reliant to see the nationally acclaimed Pumpkin Village. "It's The Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown" is this season's pumpkin festival theme that will run through Nov. 5.

With a garden admission, tickets ranging from \$14 to \$20, visitors may experience Mother Nature's full fall beauty. The Pumpkin Village displays houses inspired by Peanuts characters created using 150,000 autumn flowers, 100,000 pumpkins, gourds and squash.

Will McDaniel, Dallas Arboretum board chair, said, "Our event has something for everyone, from special

children's activities to Senior Thursdays, live music, tastings and more."

At no additional cost, visitors can enjoy fun festival events including live piano music every weekend at Jeanne's Pavilion; Tasteful Tuesday floral demonstrations at A Tasteful Place; Chef-Tastic cooking demonstrations at A Tasteful Place; and Wine Down Wednesday at Three Sisters Overlook for those 21 and over.

Family friendly events, at no additional cost, include Mommy and Me Mondays and Tiny Tot Tuesdays, where kids can enjoy storytelling and fun musical activities.

Every Monday until Oct. 26, at an additional cost, the arboretum features Cool Thursdays Concert Series overlooking White Rock Lake. Tribute bands or orchestras play their instruments as the sun sets.

"It's The Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown" kicked off on Sept. 16.

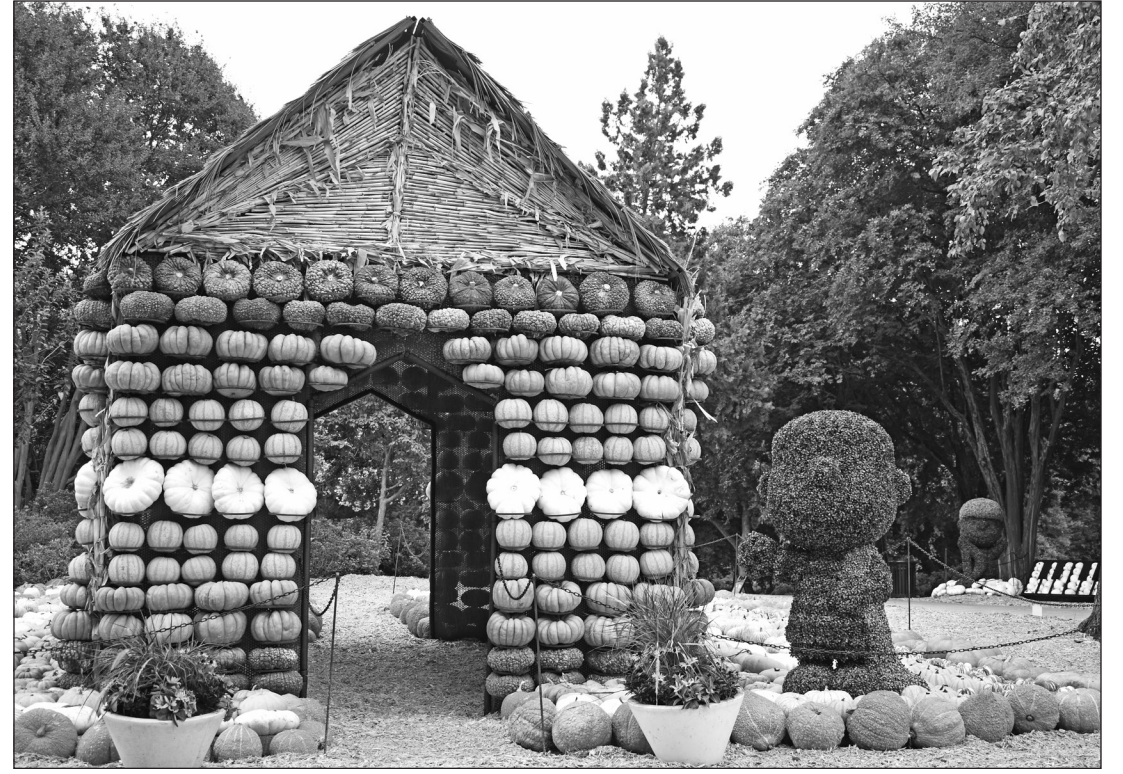
On Sept. 18 and 25, Chef Lisa Roark, Dallas College

faculty member, hosted the reoccurring Dallas College Cooks event at the Dallas Arboretum. She created healthy Mediterranean dishes at A Tasteful Place. The past monthly healthy recipes can be found online at the Dallas Arboretum website.

Dallas Arboretum Chairs, Judy Sosbee, Greg Sosbee and David Sharpe, are overseeing this year's fall pumpkin festival. 400 volunteers helped weekly at the Dallas Arboretum to help build the Pumpkin Village.

"Seeing the delight in guests' faces and enjoying the time spent with other volunteers is a rewarding experience," Greg said. He and his wife Judy first signed up to volunteer in Nov. 2020.

Throughout the years, Greg and Judy have amassed 2,500 hours volunteering at the Dallas Arboretum. Judy said, "We love indulging our gardening passion at the Arboretum, especially by working with visitors to the Rory Meyers Children's Adventure Garden."



News-Register | Faith Lungu

A Charlie Brown shaped shrub stands outside a pumpkin structure at the Dallas Arboretum.

Volunteers are needed all year round to maintain the gardens, guide visitors, work at events, support staff at the gift store and transport mobility-im-

paired guests and companions throughout the gardens.

College students who want to gain leadership experience may volunteer by joining the

Collegiate Leadership Council.

Students may email volunteers@dallasarboretum.org or contact the Volunteer Office at 214-515-6561 to learn more.

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anything that I wanted to do so I could take care of my kids," Vance said. "It wasn't their fault that I didn't get my education before they were born, and they deserved my full attention."

Vance had to work to help raise her four kids so going to school was practically impossible.

She attempted to take a few classes in her late 20s but during that chapter in her life even one class was too much to manage with a partner, children and a job.

The wild-life and nature photography featured in National Geographic fostered Vance interest in photography and painting at the age of 28. She took a photography course to learn how to compose images because she wanted to take pictures of things she wanted to paint.

Vance said all her pictures sucked, but that did not discourage her, she practiced and practiced more. "I got pretty good at it," Vance said with

a smile that shined brighter than the jewel pierced on her right nostril.

"You can't just go 'Oh I'm not any good at it' and stop," she said. "If you really want to do it, you have got to do it, and you're going to suck so, you got to keep doing it, because you are only going to get better."

Turning Point

Her children eventually departed to build a life of their own. In the wake of her divorce, Vance received unexpected news at a time when she was deeply struggling to find a new purpose.

Vance was left with an inheritance of \$10,000 from a long-lost uncle in 2005.

"Sounds like a monopoly game," Vance said, "but I got this inheritance, so I was like, 'What am I going to do with this money?'"

After paying off her car debt, Vance pondered what do with the surplus of money and time. Would she return to school to become a graphic designer?

Or would Vance delve into the medical profession because her deceased mother had always dreamed of her becoming a doctor? Neither option felt right to her.

Before choosing a major and returning to school, Vance said she had to dismiss the engraved thoughts that going to school for a creative degree was impractical and dumb. She had been raised by her working-class family to value a practical school education that would earn her a job that paid the bills.

"This was an extremely creative but also volatile moment in time for me," Vance said about her educational expedition.

"I was embarking on this huge journey, intellectual journey, creative journey and it was very scary ... I had a storm of ideas and things that I could do, [but] I wasn't quite sure if I could actually make it happen."

A new world of possibilities came about when Vance finally decided to bravely step toward the path of returning to school for something that felt congruent to who she was. Although she was met with challenges, Vance found the strength within herself to overcome them.

"If you're being untrue to who you are as a person, it's almost as if you subconsciously throw up barriers and you're constantly running into brick walls," Vance said. "Nothing seems to be working ... because maybe that's not where you should be going."

School Education

Vance decided to register for classes in the video technology program at NLC because she wanted to make music videos and short films. Vance became a

student of Andy Childs, retired NLC professor and coordinator of the video technology program.

Childs said Vance was a non-traditional student with a background in art and writing, who was determined and eager to learn. "I believe she was looking for something different in her life and wanted to find a creative way to express herself," Childs said. "All of which worked out very well for her."

Filmmaking is a freelance profession, so due to Vance's upbringing and age, she yearned for a secure profession that would pay for the food on her table but would also feed her creative soul.

Vance earned her associate degree at Dallas College, formally known as North Lake College as part of Dallas County Community College District. Afterwards, Vance attended the University of Texas at Arlington and completed her bachelor's in interdisciplinary studies. Then Vance went to the University of North Texas where she completed the courses for her masters in fine arts degree in 2015.

Teaching

In 2015, while in graduate school, Vance received a call from Childs offering her a position as an adjunct instructor to teach multiple production classes at NLC. He said Vance would be a powerful mentor and resource for students in the video technology program.

Childs said: "I was familiar with her work ethic, production skills and dedication. She was a

really hard worker and got along well with people. With a masters degree and work experience, I felt she was more than qualified for the job."

Vance was then offered a full-time position after one year of teaching, a very rare occurrence.

Filmmaking Debut

In 2020, Vance's father died. "He had what I call a good death," Vance said. "He was home surrounded by his loved ones, and I was holding his hand when he passed away."

Vance had written a script in graduate school for a short film titled "Noise." It was inspired by her complicated relationship with her father. It was a dramatic story with an ending with a first-degree murder, but the ending to "Noise" never felt right so the film never came into existence.

As she mourned the death of her father, Vance was inspired to grab story elements of "Noise" and write "Cleaning." Vance said it was cathartic to write about the traumatic event.

"Cleaning" is about the sufferings in life that nobody talks about. It follows the story of Lisa who is the caregiver for her elderly father. The film explores the themes of family dynamics, communication barriers and the emotional challenges of caregiving.

When Bohl read the script, she knew "Cleaning" had to be made into a film. "Sharie's script included all of the key elements of great storytelling: real people, real dialogue, real situations,"

Bohl said. "We all believed in Sharie, and in this story and wanted it to come to fruition."

The bitter ending of Vance's era as a daughter became the sweet beginning of her filmmaking vocation. The almost 12-minute film was shot within a 12-hour workday.

Vance said they accidentally left out a shot during production, which made her feel very angry, but she couldn't allow that missing footage to destroy her opportunity in creating this film. Vance had to make the story work during post-production. "I couldn't just let it die on the vine," she said.

"Cleaning" was a USA Film Festival Finalist and was part of the official selection for the Burbank International Film Festival.

Present Days

"Over the years, Sharie has grown more confident and secure in not only her teaching abilities, but she has blossomed into an incredibly creative and influential figure in the North Texas area, women in film scene," Childs said.

Vance's professional plans are to continue promoting "Cleaning," and finish the three scripts she has in the works and to get one made before 2025.

In the meantime, her personal goal is to ski on a difficult trail. Skiing down a mountain brings joy to Vance's heart as much as getting hugs from her grandbabies or having a student tell her that she has inspired them.

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[deleted expletive], you know." So, Rodriguez is happy Dallas College is working on providing the lactation pod at NLC, as a place for students to lactate away from the public eye.

She said being a mother is one of the hardest things she experienced in life, despite having served in the Marine Corp.

It was stressful for Rodriguez to keep up with her breastfeeding schedule, eat healthy to lactate, wear breast pumps, make sure her baby was healthy and take care of her own mental health, all while also ignoring the parental judgements of other people.

As of Sept. 21, the \$25,000 extra-large lactation pod is

missing a privacy screen on top its roof.

Cruz said, "They are not online yet, as we are waiting on some privacy screens for the lactation pods that were not originally sent with our order."

Dallas College will be launching a campaign once the Mamava Lactation Pods are fully installed to run as designed.

Currently, the NLC pod is accessible online and may be unlocked by downloading the Mamava Lactation App.

Dallas College Human Resources office oversees maintenance for the lactation pods. Rebecca Tuerk, Senior Director Employee Relations at HR, was unable to provide immediate answers for this story prior its print deadline.

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every story ends that way you know?"

Doing this program can give you the tools to offer up a lot of hope to someone who may need it to not consider suicide. Blell said: "Most people don't want to say the word suicide much less ask the question. Words can activate you."

During the training session, participants will learn about the new safe language around talking to someone about suicide. Words and phrases like — that person committed suicide or that person was unsuccessful with suicide — is outdated language.

Other phrases that may be less triggering are — that person thought about suicide; that person ended their life by suicide; or had an attempt at suicide.

Blell said, people who have thoughts of suicide don't necessarily want to end their life, so we really want to offer hope. As a suicide gatekeeper understanding your role, being an active listener, being able to not pass judgement and picking up on warning signs and risk factors is what this training is about.

"The more people in the community that are gatekeepers, the more people we can save," Blell said. "Most people that die by suicide do not come to the clinician, so we want more people in the community to help prevent suicides."

Blell said anyone can be a gatekeeper, not just therapists. Ordinary people may

learn about local resources and assist by connecting them to someone who can help. It is like mental health CPR.

Blell is not the only one on campus that wishes to help spread awareness. During Septembers National Suicide Prevention Month, Dallas College participates in Cycle Around the Globe. This event is held by the International Association for suicide prevention. It is their tenth year running, cycling and walking to raise awareness.

People who wanted to participate in this event joined the Dallas College team page and created their own Cycle Around the Globe website to input their mileage.

The event is held from Sept. 10 to Oct. 10 and the goal is to collectively cycle or walk around the globe at least once. That is 24,901 miles in one month.

Dr. Maya Fernandez, Dean of Academic Compliance and Educational Policy at Dallas College said, "I participated in the event because I have lost friends to suicide, and I want people to know that people do care and there is help for those struggling."

As of Sept. 19, the Dallas College team has completed 256.3 km out of the 475 km goal and raised \$955 for suicide awareness. Other participants like Adam Einsohn a student success coach at NLC, partake in events like these for more personal reasons.

"I've lost family to suicide in recent years, and I've had my own struggles with it," Einsohn said. "I've been hospitalized a couple times, the last time was 20 years ago. I have severe major depressive disorder. I

take my medication and I go to therapy, and do all the self-care stuff that I need to."

These events are important to Einsohn for that reason, and he understands that for some people it is hard to be a part of these events. He sometimes feels like this himself.

"Every time I get on the bike or every time I post about suicide, or someone donates to my page or whatever, it's like you're thinking about suicide," he said. "You know, you can't really avoid that part of it. For me, I am in a place where I can talk about it and be a part of it. So, it's important for me to do that for those who can't and for those we've lost, and hopefully try to prevent as many as possible."

While North Lake Campus has a lot of events for National Suicide Awareness Month, Einsohn believes that more can be done. He said: "It is like pride month; it is important that month, but it is also important year-round. So, we can always do more. It can be difficult for people in other months, so we just need to be sure that we are being vocal about it year-round."

There are online resources such as the ASK App that is designed to teach the warning signs, and how to ask if someone is considering suicide or The Hope Box App that is an interactive tool for youth to collect and store messages and images of help and hope.

The National Suicide Prevention lifeline is 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or text the Crisis line at 988.



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