

Culture



# A homeless lifestyle

ISU student details experiences of a 'life of anarchy'

Joseph David Soukup, senior in philosophy, often spends time salvaging useful things from dumpsters. Through a previous bad experience, Soukup does not recommend diving into a dumpster outside of a Chinese restaurant. Photo: David Derong/Iowa State Daily

By Amy Thompson  
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I'm looking at his grandmother's farm, which consists of a silo and a barn. I'm looking at the Rocky Mountains. I'm looking at a path that leads to the mountains. I'm looking at Joseph Soukup's tattoo, which represents more than I will be able to understand.

In honor of Earth Day, I decided to sit down and have coffee with Soukup, a fellow ISU student originally from Boone and senior in liberal studies, who decided to leave Ames and replace the farm life he had known his whole life for a life of anarchy and corybantic homelessness.

He's hopped trains to go panning for gold. He has lived in a squat in Colorado Springs and admitted himself to a mental institution in Des

Moines after he got arrested in Nebraska.

Soukup was raised on a farm in Boone, which his father still farms. He graduated from Gilbert High School in 2005, and went right to Iowa State. While at Iowa State, Soukup owned his own business called College Pro Painters.

He said he was the typical business owner: He wanted materialistic things, had the income and the lifestyle to prove it, but also the greed that comes along with success.

"I felt guilty with how I treated people," Soukup said.

He began to realize that maybe there was more to life than the box he had been living in.

"I've always been an outsider," Soukup said.

He left the life he knew Dec. 27, 2009. There were

multiple reasons for his absence, the most important one being spiritual. His journey started at his cousin's house in Colorado Springs, and then he was booted to the curb.

With limited resources, he ended up in a squat — which is an abandoned house — with a bunch of punk anarchists. The squat had about 20 different kids of different ages. There were parties every night, but usually people only stayed for about a week at a time. For Soukup it was no different.

"I was the rich intellectual. I hadn't had enough experience on the road for people to really respect me," Soukup said.

After his stint in Colorado Springs, Soukup headed to Florida with a friend's mother. He ended up in a homeless camp called Rainbow

Gathering.

While speaking, Soukup detailed the little things of his trip, such as he fell in love with a girl named Rachel that had a purple hat, or he drank a cup of vodka with a man that looked like a pirate.

Rainbow Gathering is one of many homeless camps around the world. The group sets up camp in state parks, which are state property, so it's free game for anyone. The size of the group varied, but Rainbow Gathering was about 1,500 people.

Like in any mass of people, there were cliques. Soukup spoke of the "front gaters," which were the hardcore of the hardcore. This group stayed at the front of the park to keep the police out. Typically there wasn't any alcohol allowed in the camp, because it caused

fight, but the front gaters always had alcohol. They weren't the type you wanted to mix with.

"I went in with no expectations. I always expected to be stabbed with my rusty knife," Soukup said.

Soukup only stayed in the Rainbow Gathering for two months, but some people stayed in the gathering for up to 40 years.

"Some people literally came with nothing; only the shirt on their back and a pair of shorts," he said. "I started off my trip with a backpack, basic food, one pair of pants, two to three shirts and a couple of underwear and socks. By the end I came back with a lot less. I learned quality is better than quantity."

The only stipulation was that every month the gathering relocated to another state park because they could only stay in a park for one month. There was every type of person, from hippies to runaway teens to punk anarchists. No matter who you were or what you had, the Rainbow Gathering would always support you, Soukup said.

"There were lots of different spiritual leaders. I loved it," Soukup said.

In between stays, there were brief stints in Michigan with a favorite mentor of his, or small trips back to Iowa. But none were longer than two weeks. And after a stay in Michigan, Soukup decided to go back to the squat in Colorado. Once back, he got the respect he deserved.

"When I first hit the road, people would just assume that I was stupid; however, the only people that ever helped were illegal immigrants and poor people," he said.

After a few weeks in Colorado, he decided to come back to Ames for a small bout to gather funds for his next escapade. While in Ames, he stayed at the homeless shelter on Duff Avenue for about two weeks.

However, he didn't want to

stay in homeless shelters his entire trip.

"Homeless shelters are so depressing, and really boring," Soukup said.

From there Soukup decided to hop a train in Boone to go panning for gold in Alaska. He met up with a blind man who had been hopping trains for years. However, his excitement was cut short when he only made it to Nebraska and got arrested. It's a felony to hop trains, because the trains are government property. He had a machete on him.

Luckily, the judge seemed to take a liking to him.

"The judge really appreciated that I got dressed up, and showed up for court. A lot of homeless people just leave as soon as they get out," Soukup said.

Soukup got off with a \$140 fine. He still wants to travel via train to Alaska to pan for gold some day.

Following his arrest, he decided it was time to call it good and head back to Iowa. It wasn't an easy adjustment. Most of his family had practically disowned him. His relationship with his parents was strained, and the only family he relates with are his grandparents, who he eats with every Friday.

"I wanted to prove something to my family," Soukup said.

"When I first started on the road, I felt that I had to share everything," Soukup said. "After Nebraska, I came back to Ames pretty much alone."

All in all, Soukup wants people to know that he's still alive. He had his doubts while on the road.

"I was either going to find God or I was going to die. I didn't think that I was going to come back," he said.

When asked how he likes living in Ames now, he said society is plastic comfortability. It's like living from box to box; everything is in boxes.

Soukup hopes that his next adventure will be abroad with his band, Peace, Love & Stuff.

Furniture

# Designer manifests green concept

By Katherine.Klingseis  
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Furniture designer Peter Danko spent a week at Iowa State lecturing on the importance of being environmentally-friendly.

"Everyone says that they want to be green, but no one really does it," Danko said. "I guess my whole belief is that there are an awful lot of things we can do."

In his quest to make America more "green," Danko designs furniture out of molded plywood and other environmentally-friendly materials. He challenges himself to make furniture from materials that Obviously Manifest Green, which are materials that can be easily seen to be "green."

"When people buy things, we buy it because of the emotional connection," Danko said. "My whole thing is about making a style change toward something more environmentally friendly."

Although he is a furniture designer now, Danko originally went to college to become an illustrator. He earned a bachelor's degree in fine arts and art history from the University of Maryland.

After college, Danko began carving claws for coat racks in a clothing store.

"That's how I started woodworking, and I perfectly loved it," Danko said. "I was really attracted to the smell of the wood and the smell of the woodshop."

Danko soon became interested in designing chairs. He said his fascination with chairs is due to their complexity.

"You've got structure, and then you've got of course aesthetics," Danko said. "You've got economics because, you know, you've got to make it."

Eventually, Danko opened up his own shop near Georgetown University in Washington D.C. While there, he visited a factory that made things out of molded plywood.

"They would make these big sheets of plywood out of this beautiful material, and then they would cut it up into little pieces, and put it together like they put together solid wood chairs," Danko said. "This kind of plywood is not at all like the kind of plywood you buy at Home Depot or Lowes, this is really fine quality wood."

Danko decided to start making chairs out of molded plywood. The molded plywood is made of thin layers of laminated wood glued together with environmentally-friendly adhesives. He said molded plywood uses resources nine times more efficiently than solid wood.

"Molded plywood is sort of a relatively new medium," Danko said. "They've only been making furniture out of it until, well really, less than a hundred years, and solid wood has been around for thousands of years."

Architects and interior designers are Danko's main market. He said he has designs in hotels, schools and dorms.

"I've done a lot of university work," Danko said. "I'd like to do the University of Iowa, but I guess I should show them my work first."

Although his favorite chairs are the ones he constructs with molded plywood, Danko said his most popular chairs are the ones that he makes with solid plywood and recycled seatbelts.

"I think that the reason [why they're the most popular] is because people like solid plywood," Danko said. "They just don't consider [molded

plywood]."

Danko is currently working on his NoCO2 design, which is furniture made from automobile tires. He is also working on a machine that puts edges on plastic quickly and easily.

In the future, Danko plans on finishing his kitchen, which he has been working on for about a dozen years. He said his kitchen uses 20 percent of the wood used in a normal kitchen and is 30 percent of what a normal kitchen weighs.

"There's less than half of the material used in a normal kitchen, and everything is recyclable," Danko said. "It's just totally different as far as resource consciousness; it's really different."

Danko said he believes people will eventually become more sustainable and environmentally-friendly. This belief is due to the fact that people today are much more aware of their environmental impact.

"We want everybody to have a higher standard of living, but we have to change how we use resources," Danko said. "It just makes sense."



Furniture designer Peter Danko, who spent a week at Iowa State as a lecturer, stresses the importance of being environmentally friendly, stretching the concept further than most designers. Courtesy photo: Peter Danko



Danko's unique chair design is made of molded plywood that uses thin layers of laminated wood glued together with environmentally-friendly adhesives along with recycled seatbelts. Courtesy photo: Peter Danko



Danko's table designs also uniquely combine form with function. Without losing his design creativity, Danko manages to create green-friendly concepts. Courtesy photo: Peter Danko

## Did you know?

By Joy.Wessels  
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• If 25 percent of U.S. households used 10 fewer plastic bags a month, we would save more than 2.5 billion bags a year.

So: after you go grocery shopping, save those bags and use them next time you go.

• More than 200 million gallons of gasoline are used every day in the U.S.

So: leave your car at your apartment or house and bike in. If you don't have a bike, jump on one of CyRide's Cybrid buses.

• Americans throw away enough glass in a month to fill an entire sky scraper.

So: take your glass bottles to the Ames Resource Recovery Plant. They accept glass items for free.

• About half of all rainforests are already gone.

So: email assignments to professors and don't print off all of your syllabi. Recycle your newspapers and try to use a notebook for more than just one class.

• A giant "island" of trash floats near Hawaii where few people travel. The island is called Great Pacific Garbage Patch and is made up of mostly plastic items broken down to their smallest form. This patch is estimated to be twice the size of Texas.

So: recycle your plastic items so they don't end up in the oceans.

## Campus

# Dining halls strive for sustainability

*ISU Dining uses local food to help reduce impact*

By Joy.Wessels  
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As thousands of students pass through Iowa State's dining halls each day the only thing on their minds is satisfying an appetite. But for those who are responsible for providing that service, they're thinking about how to get the food and if they can do it in a sustainable way.

**Local food:** Five years ago Iowa State coordinated a small program with local farms that would provide different kinds of produce to ISU dining halls. Today, \$600,000 of ISU's dining budget goes toward purchasing food from those farms. Nancy Levandowski, director of ISU dining, said they're still shooting for a higher goal of incorporating locally



Reusable To-Go containers, which cost \$6, are a greener alternative to disposable containers. Used containers can be returned to the dining centers and exchanged for clean ones. Photo: Julie Vujnovich/Iowa State Daily

grown food into the menus.

"Right now 5 to 10 percent of our food comes from local places," Levandowski said. "But we'd like to get that up to 35 percent."

The food bought from local farms ranges from fruits, vegetables, dairy and meat. Some of the local farms include Onion Creek Farms by North Dakota St. and The Berry Patch Farm in Nevada,

but all of the farms are within Iowa's borders.

**Trayless dining:** The dining program is also trying to be more sustainable in other ways outside of food specifically. Three and a half years ago the idea of going "trayless" was introduced by a group of students. The concept was created to attempt to find a way to waste less food. In fall 2009, ISU Dining

made the renovated Season's Marketplace a completely trayless dining hall. The difference in waste was drastic between Season's and Union Drive Marketplace.

"The waste was twice as much at Union Drive per person than it was at Season's in 2009," Levandowski said.

Today, all of the dining halls have gone trayless. She also said that on average, Union Drive Marketplace and Seasons save 2,060 pounds of food per week.

**Food donations:** While dealing with waste issues has shown to be successful, ISU Dining has also found a way to make use of food that is still edible. If the dining halls have leftover food, it's taken to Food at First, a soup kitchen located on Kellogg Avenue.

"Food at First offers eight free meals per week as well as a 'Free Market' that gives away perishable goods on Monday and Thursday nights," Levandowski said.

To-Go containers: Chantal Roberts, senior in agronomy and the ISU Dining sustainability coordinator, helps come up with other "go green" initiatives. One of these initiatives is the To-Go Container available at dining halls, which came about in a conversation among students.

"Some of the dining halls used to offer disposable containers that students could put food into and eat at a later time," Roberts said. "The problem was that these disposable boxes would build up in the trash at residence halls."

Roberts, along with others decided they needed to have a To-Go Container program that was consistent with all three dining centers. They also wanted it to be sustainable.

"We decided to go with a reusable container," Roberts said. "Students pay \$6 for it

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Recycling

# Local program lessens waste

*Ames plant sorts recyclables for higher efficiency*

By Joy Wessels  
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When students come to Iowa State, many are perplexed by the lack of recycling containers.

Ames has a different system for waste management than many towns, and since students aren't given separate containers for recycling, some question if Ames does any type of recycling at all. On the contrary, Ames has a 78 percent rate of recovering items and finding a way to reuse them.

Gary Freel, assistant superintendent at the Ames Resource Recovery Plant, said

the "large single stream recycling system" that Ames uses is actually a lot more efficient than most recycling initiatives in other towns. It's also all done locally.

Here's what happens to your trash after you toss it:

People are able to put all of their trash into one garbage can. That includes plastic bottles, tin and aluminum cans, paper, etc.

Private haulers come and pick it up, where it's taken to the Resource Recovery Plant.

If there's anything bulky in the trash like carpet, chairs or sofas they are taken out of the mix and disposed of at the landfill.

After the bulky items are taken out, the rest of the trash goes through a shredder.

Magnets cover the walls

and pull out ferrous metals like tin cans and steel. Ninety-nine percent of this is recovered and reused and taken to a scrap metal dealer.

Then non ferrous metals like aluminum cans and brass are pulled out by a separate set of magnets. This has a 93 percent rate of recovery and reuse.

Papers and plastic are sorted out at a recovery rate of 96 percent. Paper is taken to the Ames power plant to burn with the coal to reduce fossil fuel consumption.

The city of Ames Resource Recovery Plant is located at 110 Center Ave. and accepts garbage disposal as well as other recyclable items at a fee. But Saturday they will have a free day where people can bring in whatever items they need disposed at no charge.



Illustration: Samantha Barbour/Iowa State Daily

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and use it whenever they want." Students don't even have to clean it themselves.

Whenever they want to use it again, they can take it in and exchange it for a clean one. Its sustainability appeal and convenience have already made it a popular item, even with its short time of being around.

"Within two months 10 percent of students had purchased one of the containers," Roberts said.

Though sustainability is a good thing, the dining halls do face some obstacles.

"Part of sustainability is looking at the seasonality of food," Roberts said. "People want strawberries in the middle of winter, but that's hard to find when you live in Iowa."

Finding more sustainability trends while meeting students' needs has pushed ISU Dining to further develop more options for ISU students. Levandowski said a lot of this development comes from students themselves.

"We owe a lot of these new ideas to students," Levandowski said. "Their participation helps us figure out what our focus should be and how we can become more sustainable."

Ames

# Community gardening space grows 'more than food'

*Garden offers interaction, donates food*

By Katherine Klingseis  
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The Service Patch offers its volunteers a lot more than just gardening space. The motto of the garden is: "Growing More than Food."

"The reason why we started the Service Patch is we wanted to create a place where we could get individuals who typically don't interact with one another to do so, so they could start a diverse community of members we have here in Ames," said Josh Kriz, coordinator of the garden for United Ames.

"And, in the meantime, as



The Service Patch, a community garden located on Ontario Street in Ames, offers residents a chance to interact with one another and contribute to Ames' diverse community. Courtesy photo: Wikimedia Commons

we were doing that, doing a good cause, and growing food, producing food that's 100 percent donated to food pantries and homeless shelters in the

community," Kriz said.

Located next to the Trinity Christian Reformed Church on Ontario Street in Ames, the Service Patch is a 50 by 50

foot plot of land that includes a shed, compost bin, and two rain barrels.

The garden was inspired and created by AmeZone, a youth service group aided by the Volunteer Center of Story County and United Ames.

"The volunteer center takes care of kind of the volunteer recruitment and the managing of the volunteers," Kriz said.

"And, I kind of take of community engagement and organizing social events, other events at the garden other than just gardening," he said.

Last year, the garden raised about \$10,000 in grants through both local and national organizations.

It also received donations from various companies in Ames.

"Lowes did a 10 percent discount on everything we purchased," Kriz said. "Construction companies came out, and roofed and shingled the roof of the shed for free."

Since its creation, the Service Patch has had 200 unique volunteers.

These volunteers visited the garden 616 times for a total of 850 hours. Of the 200 volunteers, 113 were at-risk youth who either resided in the Youth and Shelter Services shelter or were through the Juvenile Court System.

"We have a close relationship with YSS - providing volunteer opportunities and engaging them to come out," Kriz said.

"We wanted to do it to give the kids more of a voice and let

them see leaders in the community, and YSS sees it as an important thing to get those kids back integrated with the community," he said.

Kriz explained that the Service Patch attracted a wide range of different volunteers. He said that some volunteers were affiliated with: 4-H; various churches; Mainstream Living, an organization that works with people with disabilities; and ISU students.



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