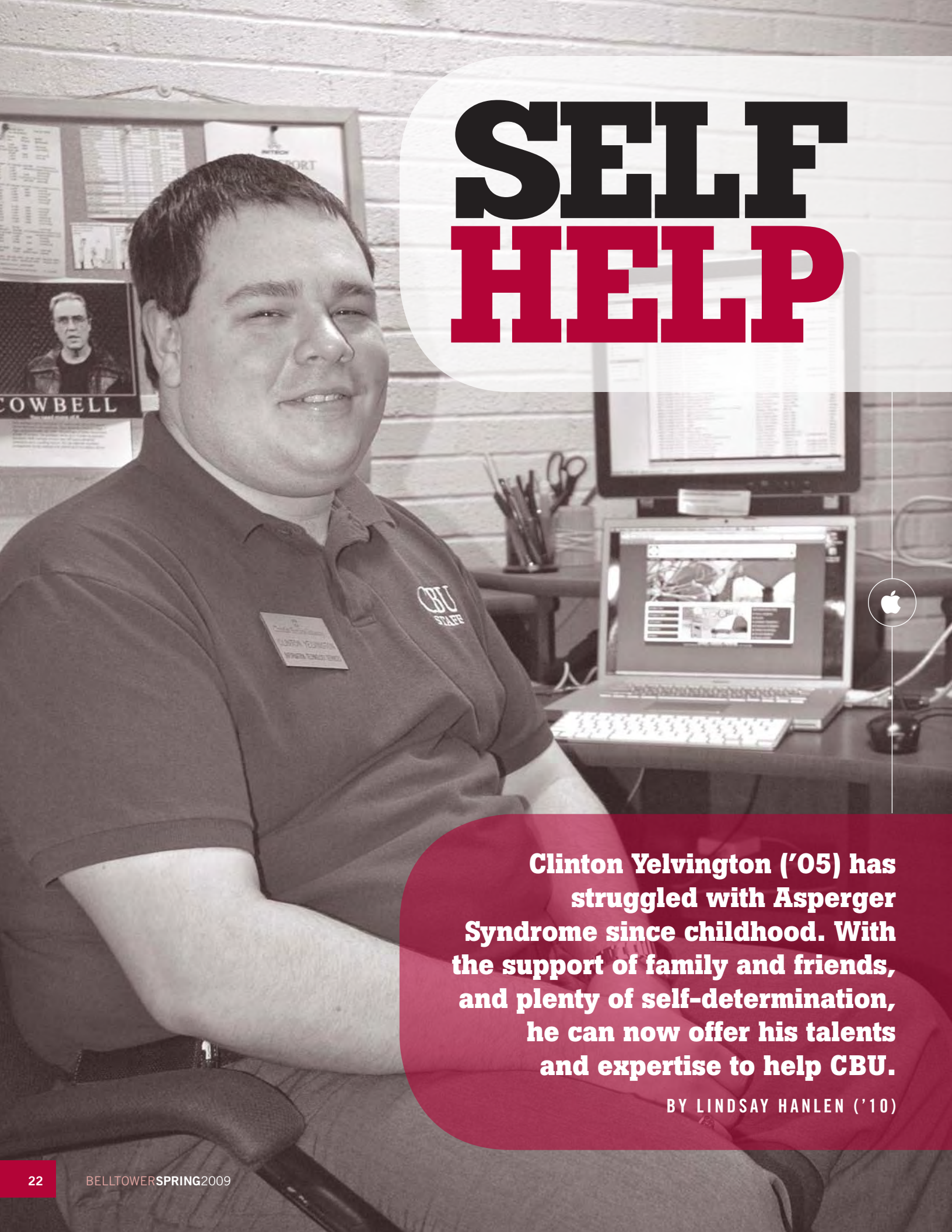


SELF HELP



Clinton Yelvington ('05) has struggled with Asperger Syndrome since childhood. With the support of family and friends, and plenty of self-determination, he can now offer his talents and expertise to help CBU.

BY LINDSAY HANLEN ('10)

He could read at 18 months. He wasn't taught; he just *could*. As a child, he could match every nation's name to its corresponding flag. He has composed music and can identify notes as they are played. Today, he is the shy face sitting behind CBU's Help Desk in Information Technology Services (ITS), and for most of the campus, Clinton Yelvington ('05) is the face of a technological redeemer. As Help Desk coordinator, he manages to revive laptops, rescue lost files, and reconfigure elements of computers most of us never knew were important (or even existed).

Yelvington's experience at CBU began in 1990. His mother, Tommie Yelvington, worked in the Grants office at the time, and he first came to campus during Christmas break with her. As Clint remembers, "CBU had just become a University. Buckman Hall was still under construction." He would sit with his mother in the office, kept company by Dr. Emily Mathis Forsdick and Brother Edward Doody.

Brother Edward's computer intrigued Yelvington at this young age and spurred his fascination with computers in general. "Brother Edward had an Apple computer with an enormous screen," he recalls. "It was the top of the line at the time. [He] would put a screensaver on which displayed a bouncing ball." This screensaver entertained Yelvington for hours on end. When Brother Edward passed away a few years ago, Yelvington retrieved it as a memento. That computer and those hours spent in his mother's office helped him to make the decision to attend CBU.

In 1999, when Yelvington matriculated at CBU, he enrolled as a computer science major. Through the advisement of Dr. Arthur Yanushka, he changed to information technology management. In this field, he solidified his love for computers.

He began work study in ITS in the fall of 1999, beginning as the night and weekend assistant and spending much of his free time in the Computer Center. "When he wasn't in class, he was covering for us in ITS," notes Jackie Jacobs, director of technology support services. She noticed Yelvington's love for everything Mac and dubbed him the "Apple Guru."

Though work in the computer center as a Help Desk assistant allowed Yelvington to be surrounded by computers, it was also a learning experience. His constant contact with the public was a challenge while he tried to cope with the social tension associated with Asperger Syndrome (AS).

Asperger Syndrome is a mild, high-functioning form of autism that includes increased sensitivity, lack of social skills, and a sort of obsession over small things.

Yelvington had experienced the problems of AS since childhood when, as he puts it, "I would do outlandish things to try and get attention, only to be ridiculed." Finally diagnosed in 10th grade, Yelvington realized that he would have many struggles but continued to push harder than even he thought he could.

He remained solitary for most of his college career, but as a senior he felt more people accepted him. His graduation helped him to conquer some of his social anxieties. "Many people didn't think I could complete college, and it was a nice feeling to prove them wrong," Yelvington says.

He also moved from a part-time work study in ITS to working full-time as the Help Desk coordinator. When the position was first offered he told his mother that he was not going to apply because, as Mrs. Yelvington remembers, "He was afraid of interviewing in front of so many people at one time. But Emily and Jackie made a point to push him and were a large influence on challenging him for the job."

This role forced him to struggle with his social skills. "I often come across as apathetic or irritated when asked for help even though I'm not trying to be that way," Yelvington explains. "I've been trying to work past all of that and be a better person."

His mother believes that he often worries about offending people when he is only trying to help, but when someone is patient and understanding, Yelvington is often elated by the joint satisfaction of the process. Also in charge of the ITS work-study students now, he sometimes finds obstacles in this task due to his severe introversion. In the process of overcoming his difficulties, he is pleased to have found and inspired a group of students as devoted to the job as he is.

Mrs. Yelvington underlines the exceptional role that CBU has played in his life. "I truly believe that the structure of CBU has been a great factor in Clinton's ability to come such a long way since his diagnosis." He has grown and thrived on the small campus, learning to work with his symptoms rather than against them.

His devotion to his job keeps Yelvington tied to CBU. "If the heart to do a good job was the criteria for what makes a good employee, Clinton would be at the top of the list," Jacobs states.

Yelvington hopes to continue at CBU as long as possible—even though, as the son of two teachers, he swore he would never end up in the education field. He has worked hard and though the going has often been difficult, Yelvington feels he is making a life, rather than just a living, at CBU. ■

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