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Cocooners: This is your Wake-up Call

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Cocooners: This is your Wake-up Call

7:00 AM: Beep! Beep! Beep! I don't want to get up. Beep! Beep! Beep! Smack! It's not 8:20 already!? Down the hall to the shower, and skip breakfast.

10:30 AM: Well I have an hour; I'll be productive and do some studying in the library. 3:30 PM: Beep! Beep! Smack! Time to go to work.

Uhh. 7:00 PM: Hey some of the dorm guys are playing Mech Warrior 2. I'll go join them. 11:00 PM: Time to write that literature assignment that's late. 12:30 PM: Ahh, this bed is so comfortable.

7:00 AM: Beep! Beep! Beep! Smack! The days continue on and run into weeks. The weeks pour into months, and on we go in our cocooned lives. We wrap ourselves in this safe wall of people, never to rub shoulders with anyone we don't know. Except for the occasional trip to the store, on-campus students can relate exclusively with their classmates, teachers and the Internet. Isolated in my own world, I don't even hear about Portland news if someone in school doesn't tell me.

So there we sit. We've spun our cocoon, climbed in and shut the door. Now we are only affected by our immediate surroundings. We can go days and months without meeting new people. Who cares about the rest of the world, as long as I'm warm and safe in my cocooning?

Before you off-campus readers get too pious, let's think about the off-campus cocoon. We keep the same schedule: the only difference is that we get into our cars, turn on the radio, and drive past hundreds of other cocooners while we drive to

campus. After classes we go to work and then home. Yet we insist that we're not like those on-campus cocooners: "I waved at my neighbors three times in the last six months! So what if I don't know their names?"

As a part of Portland, can we even say that we are part of a community? Instead of being a V of flying geese we are a bunch of ostriches. We would rather stick our heads in the sand and ignore others than take part in a greater community effort. It's amazing how we wrap ourselves in our non-relational world and then wonder why we're so lonely!

So when was the last time you met the neighbors who live next door? When was the last time you did more than show up to Sunday morning worship service? Do you even know the family across the street? Did you vote this November?

You might object to all this, arguing that once we're out of college, we'll relate and become involved members of society. Nice try. What's more likely is that we'll just unload our possessions from our present cocoon and find another one.

To be fair to those insects who might be offended by the negative connotation of their cocooning process, let me explain myself. Insects who cocoon are not like us humans. They go into their cocoons as a slimy larva for a specific purpose. We go into lifelong hibernation, while larva turn into colorful butterflies who fly away and join their community, leaving their cocoons behind. So maybe cocooning isn't so bad after all. That is, of course, if we cocoon as insects do.

K.C. O'Keefe

