

# The best place to find friends is not home alone in a room

Hey Harlan,  
It's Friday night, and I'm here in my room. Nobody invites me anywhere. I get along with my roommates, but they don't invite me anywhere, and the people in my hall already have cliques, and I can't fit in. I'm already in a ton of clubs, but my friends in those clubs have lives outside of the clubs. It was like this in high school, too. I didn't have a social life. I just don't understand

why people don't ask me to come along with them when there's a party. I talked to my resident about this, and he said to do what I want to do, and not what other people want (drinking and stuff). Drinking isn't really my thing, but the reason why it isn't is because *nobody invites me to do it in the first place*. I don't know why people just don't invite me anywhere, maybe it's because I'm so plain-looking? Sure,

people acknowledge me and say hi, but nothing more. What can I do?

Lonely

**Dear Lonely,**  
**If all of the people who were alone in their rooms on the weekends had connecting doors, they could open their doors and see each other all alone. Then it wouldn't be so lonely.**  
**The problem isn't your looks — it's that you're looking for some-**

**one to create a social life for you. Unlike life before college (in high school), friends don't spontaneously appear. You have to put yourself in places where friends can happen. The only friends found in your room are MySpace and Facebook friends (they don't count).**

**So, if you aren't getting invitations, do something that doesn't require being invited. Get a job or**

**volunteer as part of the group that plans events on the weekend. Consider working at a restaurant. Experiment with faith-based group activities or Greek life. Finding friends means finding the door and getting out of your room. So get out. Be patient, and go. Now. Seriously. Stop reading and go.**

Hi Harlan,

My boyfriend and I have been

together for a month and a half. I am a virgin, and he's not. We are not planning on having sex anytime soon, but when we are kissing he always wants to get more physical. I've told him that I'm not ready. He's waited, but always wanted to know why I'm not ready, which I honestly don't know the answer to. Recently, I told him I thought I was ready to try things out beyond kissing. But after this, I felt uncomfortable. Now I am stuck having to tell him that even though we've already gone past kissing, I am still not ready. I need help figuring out how to tell him and help making him understand that his questioning makes me frustrated, because I don't know the answer.

Confused and Not Ready

**Dear Not Ready,**  
**The beautiful thing about not being ready is that you don't need to know or explain why. Maybe your being uncomfortable is about him not being the right person to share this with. Maybe being uncomfortable is just you not being emotionally ready. Tell him that when you're ready, you'll let him know. Explain that you don't know when you'll be ready and can't explain it. But when you do know, you'll tell him. Until then, he needs to respect that you don't need to know why. And let him know that if he pressures you, you'll never be ready.**

*Editor's note: Write Harlan at harlan(at)helpmeharlan.com or visit online: www.helpmeharlan.com. All letters submitted become property of the author. Send paper to Help Me, Harlan! 2506 N. Clark St., Ste. 223, Chicago, IL 60614.*

## Plan developed to protect Texas prairie chicken habitat

LUBBOCK, Texas (AP) — Panhandle rancher Jim Bill Anderson has for years been preserving the habitat of the lesser prairie chicken to keep the rare bird from falling onto a federal wildlife watch list. Now he's hoping other Texans follow his lead and participate in a

plan to control brush, manage grazing and conduct planned burns to build and maintain the bird's habitat of low shrub and grasslands. The plan is part of an agreement signed Thursday by state and federal wildlife officials.

"We have the habitat they like ...

maintain it, and they flourish," said Anderson, who opens some of his thousands of acres to bird-watchers each year. Beyond helping to ensure the bird's survival, there is an incentive to landlords to join the conservation effort: avoiding further land use restrictions if the lesser prairie

chicken moves from candidate status to threatened or endangered on the federal Endangered Species List.

The bird has been a candidate for the endangered list since 1998, said John Hughes, a biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

## Group works to restore historic old building

CUNNINGHAM (AP) — Standing on the upstairs floor at the front of the century-old Ratcliff Building, Bob Kerschen was making plans for its transformation into an open deck with a wrought iron railing.

He sees himself perched on a lawn chair watching the tractor-trailers go by on U.S. Highway 54.

"I'll have a bird's-eye view of the traffic and the town," he said. "Of course, that might be 10 years from now."

With Kerschen, 71, directing the job, building owner Jose Silva and volunteers Jerry Glenn and Tom Aschenbrenner worked recently at boarding over the huge gap on the

building's front side — left open after a tornado sucked away the second-story brick facade.

Silva, 50, a San Diego computer technician, bought the historic 65-by-150-foot building with a \$16,000 bid on eBay. His plans call for converting it into his retirement home.

"When I first saw the picture on the computer I thought it was the neatest old building," he said. With 20,000 square feet he'll have plenty of room for himself and his hobby — a collection of vintage cars he restores.

There'll also be space when his three sons, ages 19, 23 and 24, come to visit.

Silva hammered nails with an electric nail gun while Glenn and Aschenbrenner measured and fit 8-by-10-foot sheets of wafer board. Kerschen, Glenn and his wife, Kathy, and Aschenbrenner, an employee at Glenn's Automotive shop across the highway, have pitched in to help Silva in his quest to restore the structure.

Others in the community are also volunteering.

The project appeals to Glenn because the red brick building with its "tons of history," circa 1909, stands as a landmark for the town.

Through the ages it has housed a hotel, bar, grocery, bank, restaurant and several apartments. The Glenns

already have removed enough junk from the interior to fill four tractor-trailer loads.

"He's doing the job with not much money," Jerry Glenn said. "That's why I'm working my tail off."

Until Silva bought the building, its future looked grim. In today's throwaway society, it probably would have been torn down, Glenn said.

After they shore up the outside, paint and stucco the back patio wall and waterproof the roof, he'll tackle the inside, Silva said. Because he's working on a limited budget, the volunteer help from townspeople has been encouraging.

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