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# Friends build family away from home

After more than a month of being on campus, I finally went home this weekend.

When I leave campus, I grab my things and leave the second I'm free, the back of my car stuffed with laundry and luggage. I rush home so I can spend as much time there as possible. When it's time to return, I leave at the last possible second.

I'm thankful my hometown is close enough for me to return home every now and then, because some students are left to FaceTimes and phone calls back home. Like many of you, I might have gone home too much as a freshman.

Driving through my hometown is always nostalgic. Seeing the high school that I graduated from, the football stadium that I cheered in and the Casey's that I got my lemonade fix in makes me feel like I'm 16 years old again. Every hometown has these places – places of familiarity, comfort and many memories.

No matter how much comfort we feel about going, visiting home isn't the same as living at home. I'm starting to think that's how it's supposed to be.

Last Friday night, I went to the football game. I walked in with my camera bag on my shoulder and a grin across my face, returning to a stadium that, for me, was once a place of comfort and stability.

While walking through the small sea of navy and Columbia blue of our home team's colors, I was met with both familiar,

friendly faces and the unknown faces of young high school students. Every now and then, I saw someone who was in my graduating class.

It was weird.

Despite the hugs the girls on the cheer squad gave me, despite the waves I received from football moms sitting in the stands, despite the

familiar scent of hamburgers on the grill, I was hit with a melancholic realization: it wasn't mine anymore.

Clearwater High School isn't my school anymore. CHS gave me four years of great memories and education, but it's not my home anymore. Despite the "Once an Indian, Always an Indian" sweatshirt hanging in my closet, the school and town aren't where my heart is anymore. I've moved on, and so has Clearwater.

Some of my favorite high school teachers retired last year, one being the photography teacher. The school doesn't offer their film photography class anymore, the one class I credit for my love of taking photos.

The film darkroom sits unused with aging chemicals sitting on the shelves, and I wonder if I will ever experience the magic of developing film again.

I'm learning more about what home means to me. I'm starting to realize that going home doesn't necessarily mean I'll feel like I belong.

I don't belong at Clearwater High School anymore, and that's how it should be. I won't be hanging around the high school with people, because I have a

new family. I have my Builder family.

Since arriving last year for Builder Camp, I've met people who have chal-

lenged me, strengthened me and loved me unconditionally. I've met people who say hi to me every time they see me. I've met Ms. Kathy and her cookies and smiles. I've had professors whose homework has kept me up until 5 a.m., but I'm still here. I'm still here, and the people around me are helping me survive, and maybe even thrive.

Home isn't necessarily where you're from. Home comes from the people around you, the ones who help you grow to become the person you were meant to be.

We at Southwestern work together to better one another, whether that be through organizations, sports or friendships. We're a small enough school that our relationships with one

**Personal Column**  
Tessa Castor  
Editor in chief





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