

WHO'S IN THE SUIT?

The many faces of Howl and Scarlet

LAILA CASIANO

SOCIAL MEDIA EDITOR

RACHEL RUDD

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Beneath the red fur, oversized heads and playful attitudes are five students who devote their time to boosting Arkansas State University's school spirit.

Slipping into the costume, each one engages with the community as they entertain and perform.

For some, mascotting is a chance for kindling friendships and second chances.

Shaila Dawson, a first-year graphic design major from Fort Smith, Arkansas, became a mascot when her older sister, who once was Scarlet, convinced her to try mascotting after Dawson quit cheer.

"She's like, 'You should do it!' I wanted to be involved because I can't do cheer no more, so it was like, mascot's thing for me because I can still be out there but I don't like being in front of huge crowds," Dawson said.

Dawson described Scarlet as being the "friendly one," adding that Scarlet loves interacting with children.

"That's probably the best part, is just talking to kids," Dawson said. "She's the one who's known to do things that the kids, hang out with the girls, be girly."

Dawson said mascotting creates an understanding among the A-State community.

"If you don't have friends, it's a good way to make friends," Dawson said. "It's kind of a system of branching out, but also making friends while doing it."

Mascotting gives a chance for students in the suit to create first experiences and lasting memories.

Winston "Drae" Busselle, a sophomore English education major from Bald Knob, Arkansas, said his first experience in the suit was when Howl



PHOTO COURTESY OF APPLYBOARD.COM

Howl (left) and Scarlet, the A-State mascots, posing for a picture.

slow me down because I was completely out of control."

Busselle said meeting the now-deceased country star Toby Keith was his favorite memory since being Howl.

"We got to take a photo with Toby Keith. Looking back, that's really, really neat for me because I didn't take a picture with Toby Keith, Howl took a picture with Toby Keith. But when I was there, I shook his hand," Busselle said.

For others, mascotting defined their college experience.

Alex Jones, a senior theatre major from Russellville,

Jones has been Howl for four years.

Jones said being Howl has helped when he's on the theatre stage.

Being Howl and Scarlet comes with their challenges such as the overheating in the suit and the difficulty of seeing anything through the

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"When you're in the suit, you can't talk because you have to like mime," Jones said. "I guess it does help me on the stage, where if I'm trying to convey an emotion or whatnot, I can use a more physical gesture to convey that emotion or whatever feeling that I have to portray."

Jones said his favorite memory was when he attended a cheer event for second to sixth grade cheerleaders.

"The second Howl and Scarlet came out, they just got swarmed. There were hundreds of little kids around me and I couldn't walk for a bit," Jones said. "They were holding me, holding my legs and it was a nice, sweet moment that shows how much Howl and Scarlet mean to all the kids in the community."

helmet, however, through it all, each one said mascotting creates a deeper sense of community for the university.

Coach Ryan Salami, director of spirit programs, said those mascotting now do it for the "pride" on behalf of the university.

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drove a zero-turn lawnmower for a Greenway Tractor ad.

"The Howl suit, it's pretty hard to see out of," Busselle said. "I just pushed forward and it took off and I was headed straight into traffic. I just remember my coach yelling, 'Someone will stop him, stop Howl!' All these people were running everywhere, jumping on this lawnmower, trying to

Arkansas, said he'd always been interested in mascotting in high school. When he got to A-State, he decided to try out and contacted the former director of the spirit program about the role.

"One Zoom meeting later and I was on the squad," Jones said. "I just thought it'd be fun because you get to be silly in public basically while hiding your face."

Siblings or Dating?



PHOTO COURTESY OF A-STATE STUDENT LIFE'S FACEBOOK
A Valentine's Day card of Howl and Scarlet made by A-State.

- **Ryan Salami:** "I wouldn't say that they are boyfriend girlfriend. They definitely love each other. You know that you can love a friend, you can love your girlfriend, or anything like that. Just a partner in crime in a sense."
- **Winston "Drae" Busselle:** "I'm going to assume that Howl and Scarlet are a couple. That's what I've always seen them as, Mickey and Minnie. To me, they've always been in a relationship. She mothers him in a way that a sister never would."
- **Shaila Dawson:** "Definitely dating, because I feel like we'd have a mom and dad mascot too if they were siblings."
- **Alex Jones:** "A lot of people think that they're siblings but they're really supposed to be dating. Scarlet was made for Howl as a partner for Howl. So, I think they're dating."