



Chris Crutcher

Chris Crutcher, a 1968 graduate of Eastern Washington University, was the 2001 recipient of the Alumni Achievement Award.

The 55-year-old author of eight books for young adults and one for adults has received several national awards for writing, including the National Council of Teachers of English Intellectual Freedom Award for his defense of young adult literature against censorship challenges, and the American Library Association's Margaret A. Edwards Award for Outstanding Literature for Young Adults. His 1991 story collection "Athletic Shorts" was made into the movie "Angus" starring Kathy Bates, George C. Scott and Charlie Talbert.

Crutcher does primarily pro bono work in Spokane as a child and family therapist, often with difficult cases of abuse and neglect, and is chairman of Spokane's original child protection team.

He recently wrote about his experiences at Eastern for Perspective.

I was never much one for formal education. The reason I chose Eastern Washington State College back in 1964 was because their catalog was red and white, while the rest of the catalogs on the shelf in the library of my 103-student high school were either black or blue and white. I made the decision and the application in the space of about two hours and was amazed when I was accepted, given I came from out of state with a 2.73 grade point average and had recycled my brother's homework to come up with *that*. But it turned out Eastern was perfect for me. They had a budding swim team at the time, and what little athletic talent I had came out best in the water. So I swam for the "Savages" and that helped give me focus to get grades. I would probably have qualified as slightly "ADHD" (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) had the diagnosis been invented back then, so I considered C's to be satisfactory. They would keep me eligible and out of the draft.

But a few things happened at Eastern that changed my life. Maybe one out of five classes (usually in philosophy, sociology or psychology) totally captivated me and I began to appreciate the value of knowledge. And I had a sense of community there. I lived on the seventh floor of Pearce Hall during the first few years it was in operation, and some of the people who lived on that floor with me are still my close friends. I didn't get focused from an academic point of view until long after I'd graduated, but when I did get focused, I was able to take my heart and mind back to some of those classes and some of those friendships and start getting a direction for my life. I suppose if I had it to do over again, I'd pay better attention, but I'm glad there was a place for me to carve out a niche. Today I go back to Eastern at least once a quarter and share some of the expertise I have gained as a therapist and as a writer with the idea I can give back some of what I got there. I have to say "Distinguished Alumnus" is not a title I would have ever expected to return with, but hey, stranger things have happened. I just don't know what they are.

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This month's cover depicts the **Spirit of the Eagle** – a bronze sculpture dedicated last fall and placed in front of Monroe Hall.

The eagle symbolizes many things - freedom, liberty, and the principles of democracy. It is also, of course, the symbol of our university. "Spirit of the Eagle"

The Bronze Eagle Fund - Thank you for your commitment and support!

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