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FURRY FRIENDS

South Carolina teenagers Caroline and Tegan find relief through their anthropomorphic animal suits and corresponding characters.



Most people listen to music, work out or meditate to relieve their stress and anxiety. These 13-year-old girls from Columbia, South Carolina dress up as their fursonas.

“Furries” are a fandom of people that enjoy wearing costumes of anthropomorphic animals. When the fursuit comes on, the autonomous personas, referred to as “fursonas,” come out.

Caroline and Tegan (last names omitted) walk confidently down Main St. through the Soda City Market as their fursonas, taking pictures and interacting with children. Caroline’s fursona is a blank named Pancake and Tegan dresses as a blank named Regal. Caroline roped Tegan into the Furry fandom after discovering the subculture online.

“When I was little I thought that animals were really cool and I always wanted to be one,” Caroline said. “I saw this stuff on YouTube and I was like ‘Woah! I want to be one! That’s really cool!’”

The pair received a few judgmental looks from parents and pedestrians, but had many positive exchanges as well.

“Some people are scared or they’re like ‘Oh my gosh, I need to hug it!’” Tegan said. “Sometimes we get mixed reactions.”

Market attendee Tatyana Gallon was elated to see the girls dressed as their fursona characters.

“It may make a lot of people happy to see new characters that’s like when you go to Disney World and they see all the famous characters,” Gallon said. “It makes them excited. They could make their day. They could be mad and now they’re happy.”

There are many misconceptions about the Furry fandom, such as Furries being inherently sexual. However, the subculture mainly focuses on being creative and escaping yourself and your worries through becoming something comforting: Animals.

Caroline and Tegan have found that creating and becoming Regal and Pancake has helped them be more adventurous, more uninhibited and more themselves.

“It’s kind of like you become a different person. You can be whoever you want and you can do whatever you want,” Caroline said. “I’m kind of shy. I wouldn’t

really do this stuff without the suit. Seeing people and talking to people, I wouldn’t do this myself. (Pancake) helps me do this. You can be a whole different person and it’s like letting yourself out in an expressive way.”

Tegan believes she can be more outgoing as Regal rather than herself.

“I enjoy being in a suit. It’s a nice way to get out and goof around with no one knowing who you actually are because you’ve got the mask on,” Tegan said. “It’s a really good break from everything else. If you’re stressed all the time, whenever you’re able to get into the suit you’re allowed to just be free if you’re a fluffy animal.”

Despite the misconceptions about the Furry subculture, Caroline and Tegan are fulfilled by going out in public as Pancake and Regal.

“We’re just going around in costume making people’s day and making kids happy.”

Opposite page: BEHIND THE MASKS: 13-year-olds Tegan (left) and Caroline (right) pose with their fursuit heads on Main Street on March 2. The suit helmet provides moderate visibility for Tegan. “I have a very thin blind spot in the middle and I can’t see to the sides, but the vision is pretty nice,” Tegan said. Below: FURSONA: Caroline (left) and Tegan (right) pose in their fursuits, named Pancake and Regal, on March 2 at the Soda City Market. The two came to the event to show off their “fursonas” for people. “We’ve been wanting to (come to the Soda City Market) for a while and we haven’t had the chance to come out yet and we thought ‘Hey! Why not today?’” Caroline said. Photos by Luna Reichert

