Fall 2020

UA77/1 WKU Spirit

WKU Alumni Relations

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TRANSFORMING LIVES
Jazzlin Hamilton: From trauma to triumph
University Photographer Clinton Lewis ('04) checked an item off his bucket list when he shot these images from inside the cupola at Cherry Hall.
In our special COVID-19 issue that was released this summer, I conveyed to you how we were utilizing virtual and digital channels for new and enhanced ways to connect. One of these new channels is our exciting Digital Experience Officer (DCEO) program. Our DCEOs utilize a technology stack to virtually connect rather than relying on traditional face-to-face meetings. This allows our staff to quickly build purposeful relationships with a broad base of alumni and friends to learn what matters at WKU are most important to them.

The program has been so successful that we have already implemented a Student Donor Experience Officer (SDXO) program. Many of you will have connected with one of our SDXOs and shared your WKU Experience with them. Homecoming 2020 was certainly different from any previous week-long celebration, but the WKU Spirit was safely shared via small gatherings and through virtual mediums. I want to send another heartfelt "Congrulations" to Jack Britt and Travis Hudson and the remarkable work each has done in their field.

I am also delighted to share that more than $44 million in private support has been raised for the WKU Opportunity Fund. First announced during President Caboni's Investiture in April 2017, the Opportunity Fund is a student-centered campaign to raise $50 million to remove barriers to education through needs-based financial assistance to support recruitment, retention and experiences beyond the classroom. The success of the Opportunity Fund shows how dedicated our alumni and friends are to helping our current and future students. Thank you for your support. There's still more work to do.

Finally, WKU has launched an exciting new partnership with FreeWill, a social venture to encourage individuals to write a will at no personal cost in as little as 20 minutes. Whether or not you consider creating a legacy at WKU, the goal of this collaboration is to help our community plan for the future and gain peace of mind in this much-needed moment.

As we celebrate the holiday season, I hope you and your family remain healthy and safe.
WKU increases access with ‘Hilltopper Guarantee,’ other scholarship program changes

Beginning fall 2021, WKU will be tuition free to any freshman from Kentucky who receives Pell Grant assistance and has at least a 3.0 cumulative unweighted high school grade-point average. "Hilltopper Guarantee: WKU's Commitment to the Commonwealth" is a major part of the University's effort to increase access to a WKU education through affordability.

"The WKU experience is transformative, and our mission calls us to provide access to all students, including those who thought a college degree was out of reach," WKU President Timothy C. Caboni ('94) said. "The bold changes we made last year significantly expanded the aid available, and we will allow those students access to the life-changing WKU experience." The amount of the award will be determined by in-state tuition less aid, such as Pell Grants, KEES and other institutional and gift aid with maximum student loan available, an affordability gap still precludes them from continuing their education. As WKU is the largest institution in the Commonwealth to issue a statewide tuition promise, President Caboni said the Hilltopper Guarantee is a significant step forward for access to higher education in Kentucky: "We are taking a leading role in removing the financial barrier, which allows more youth from all across Kentucky to become part of a better-educated workforce. This is key to our state's economic prosperity."

WKU continues to refine its scholarship offerings and remains committed to making higher education "a viable path for all students across the state who desire a college degree, regardless of their economic conditions, including those who felt this path was out of reach," he said. "Our work continues as we develop innovative solutions that make our University affordable to all who want to climb with us." Additional scholarship program changes significantly increase access to WKU for students from outside of Kentucky. The WKU Family Scholarship provides in-state tuition to first-time, full-time freshmen whose parents or grandparents are WKU graduates—no matter where they live. In the past, these students were eligible for the Tuition Incentive Program and the new program will further reduce the cost of tuition by about 22 percent.

The WKU Border State Scholarship provides in-state tuition to first-time, full-time freshmen from the seven states that border Kentucky: Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, Ohio, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia. WKU currently has almost 3,000 students from those states, an increase of 22 percent over the past seven years. WKU also has restored its Tuition Incentive Program, which will reduce out-of-state tuition by about 22 percent for non-resident first-time, full-time freshmen with a 3.0 high school GPA or who qualify for any other scholarship award.

In all cases students can stack scholarships to these awards.

"A college education is important to not only making a good living, but making a good life," President Caboni said. "Education is also key to the economic well-being of our communities. By providing an accessible and affordable college degree opportunity, we expand the talent pipeline that will fuel the future workforce for our broader region." Dr. Ethan Logan, Vice President of Enrollment and Student Experience, said the enhancements are part of an intentional program to increase access and opportunity to the WKU Experience. "The Hilltopper Guarantee focuses on our accessibility and promise to support the students of Kentucky and their goals of achievement in higher education," Dr. Logan said. "And we've expanded this paradigm of access and opportunity to our neighboring communities just across the state lines, our sought-after students across the United States, and our commitment to our alumni and the next generation of Hilltoppers around the globe."

More information about WKU's scholarship programs is available at wku.edu/scholarship.

WKU sets records in freshman class growth, quality

WKU has set a record in the growth of its freshman class and in the quality of students in that class, according to preliminary enrollment data released to the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education.

WKU's freshman class grew by 16.4 percent over fall 2019. The 446-student increase is the largest in more than 30 years. And the average grade-point average of that class is 3.44, the highest on record.

"These are tremendous numbers in normal times, but especially during a pandemic," WKU President Timothy C. Caboni ('94) said. "This shows that the demand for the WKU Experience is there, and the bold changes we made last year in our scholarship program are creating opportunity for more students to afford that experience."

The class of 2024 also includes the highest number of underrepresented minority (URM) students ever at 690 and an increase of 413 students from Kentucky over fall 2019.

Four new members join WKU Board of Regents

The WKU Board of Regents has four new members. Regents W. Currie Milliken, an attorney from Bowling Green, Ky.; Jan M. West ('87), an attorney from Louisville, Ky.; and Student Regent Garrett Edmonds, a senior from Island, Ky., took the oath of office during the October committee meetings.

Dr. Shane Spiller, WKU Professor of Management, was elected as Faculty Regent. He will be sworn in at the board's December meeting.
WKU celebrates World Teachers’ Day by announcing two scholarship programs

On Oct. 5, WKU’s College of Education and Behavioral Sciences announced two new scholarship programs. The programs, coined “WKU Grow Your Own” and “WKU GameChangers Teaching Initiative,” serve to financially support students and community members who, upon graduation from WKU’s undergraduate and graduate teacher education preparation programs, will return to their home districts as classroom teachers.

“In cooperation with our school district partners, WKU students will receive semester grants to be used toward the payment of tuition,” said Dr. Corrine Murphy, Dean of the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences. “Once graduated, the students will then teach in their home districts. These collaborative efforts serve to establish a pipeline that will help districts recruit and hire strong educators to further impact the lives of students in their communities.”

Undergraduate students who participate in the district-based WKU Grow Your Own initiative will complete their foundational studies with their Bowling Green-based peers. The students will then transition to a district-based clinical model, where practicum and student teaching experiences will occur in their home district. Currently, WKU has partnered with the Russellville School District with hopes for expansion to other regional district partners in the coming years.

Similarly, the WKU GameChangers initiative will support current school district staff to attend WKU to earn their teaching credentials through WKU Graduate Education programs. WKU, Warren County Public Schools, Bowling Green Independent Schools and the GameChangers community-based organization centered this collaboration on enhancing the opportunity for black and underrepresented individuals to earn teaching credentials as adult learners currently in the workforce. WKU plans to expand this initiative with other regional school districts with a goal to increase opportunities for district professional staff.

WKU Student Publications earns three national Pacemakers

WKU Student Publications earned three national Pacemaker awards from the Associated Collegiate Press during the organization’s 2020 competition. The College Heights Herald received an Online Pacemaker for its website, WKUHerald.com. The Talisman received a Magazine Pacemaker, its first since changing format from a yearbook to a magazine in 2016. Cherry Creative received an Edition Pacemaker, an award presented for the first time this year, for its WKU Graduate Gallery published in the spring.

The Pacemaker is considered the highest honor for a student-run media operation.

WKU to go test optional for admission

Beginning with the spring 2021 semester, WKU will no longer require standardized test scores, such as the ACT or SAT, for most applicants for admission. Associate Vice President for Enrollment and Student Experience, Ethan Logan said that a number of factors led to this decision. “Numerous national studies have indicated that a student’s high school GPA is a better predictor of college success than performance on a standardized test.” Logan also pointed to bias in standardized tests against students with limited access to test preparation opportunities.

“WKU is an institution of access and opportunity, and the research is clear that standardized tests contain inherent bias against underrepresented, first-generation and low-income students,” he said. “While we have taken significant action to limit the influence of the ACT and SAT in our internal admission and scholarship processes over the past few years, this change represents another important step toward ensuring that WKU is accessible to students who have demonstrated hard work over four years of high school, regardless of their performance on a single test.”
WKU Food Recovery Network redirects 5,000 pounds of surplus food to address food insecurity

Since spring of 2019, students in Western Kentucky University’s Food Recovery Network have kept more than 5,000 pounds of surplus food from landfills and directed it to those who need it. The effort began when WKU senior Elaine Losekamp attended an Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education Conference and brought back a plan to establish WKU’s first food recovery program.

“I’d been aware that food waste was a serious issue before that, but I didn’t really know about what people could do to solve the problem,” she said.

Losekamp mobilized two faculty advisors and almost 50 student volunteers who now collect food from 13 sources across campus and distribute it to 12 nonprofit homeless shelters, soup kitchens and food pantries in the community.

“For a lot of the especially smaller nonprofits, it’s a challenge for them to provide food on a consistent basis, so if we can help support that, it’s a help for them,” she said.

On Oct. 29, WKU President Timothy Caboni (’94) presented the group with a plaque in recognition of “their tremendous success of recovering 5,300 pounds of food since their efforts began last year.”

He said the group has conducted nearly 380 individual food recoveries and that several students have become ServSafe Certified to safely collect and distribute the food. Examples of food collected include bagels, pastries, yogurts and fruit cups from Einstein Bros., Bagels; bread loaves and cookies from Subway; premade sandwiches and fruit cups from PO.D. Market; and Panera Breads.

Among agencies receiving the food are Christ Episcopal Church; Salvation Army of Bowling Green; the Hope House; Hilltopper Spirit in action; and the Salvation Army in the Inn and Hope House Ministries.

Losekamp said she has learned much in class about how to make an impact, “but to go out and do it is really rewarding."

President Caboni said the group’s efforts are evidence of the Hilltopper Spirit in action.

"An important goal of our University is to elevate the communities in which we live, and I think we can all agree that your work is making a difference in our community and in the individual lives of so many,” he said.

In spring 2020, Juan Dozier (’19, ’20) made a gift to WKU to establish the Juan H. D. Dozier II Scholarship in honor of the Black Lives Matter movement. The scholarship will support a diverse WKU freshman or sophomore who is enrolled full time, has been involved in leadership roles in high school or college and aspires to be a leader at WKU.

"The single most important reason for me to establish this scholarship was to honor the Black Lives Matter movement," said Dozier. "I want to assist individuals who seek to become leaders in their field of study and in their community. If they want to see change occur, it must start with us and our ability to lead others.”

Dozier, originally from Riverside, Calif., is the son of two military parents. He earned a Certificate in Applied Data Analytics in 2019 and a Bachelor of Science in Marketing with a concentration in Strategic Marketing in 2020, both from WKU. He said he wanted to help WKU achieve its educational goal of promoting a diverse environment by creating a scholarship to support students who may not be able to afford college without financial assistance.

"College is not the easiest thing to pay for and having the ability to help other students is something I am proud to do," said Dozier.

"WKU has given me a vast amount of opportunities to become an effective leader, and my goal and passion are for individuals to develop their potential and make a difference in the world around them."

"WKU's motto, 'The Spirit Makes the Man,' carries a lot of weight for Dozier.

"We all have days where we want to see change and inspire other individuals, but we also have days where it's hard to get out of bed,” said Dozier. "What drives us each morning when we wake up must be our spirit; whether that is a spirit to succeed at your craft, a spirit to make an impact on the people around you, or just a spirit to be better than you were the day before. You must know what drives your spirit and run with that, because that spirit inside of you makes and shapes who you are.

"The University gifts its students with knowledge, leadership skills and guidance,” added Dozier. "These are three essential tools you need if you want to be successful in life.”

In addition to these skills, Dozier credits his time at WKU for teaching him how to be an effective communicator and to network with people from a variety of backgrounds.

"My time at WKU prepared me to enter the professional world,” he said. "I was able to bring the diverse viewpoints gained from my early childhood as an 'Army brat' and translate them to a professional setting.”

The Juan H. D. Dozier II Scholarship is part of the WKU Opportunity Fund, a donor-driven fundraising campaign to benefit WKU students by removing barriers for access to education through needs-based financial assistance in support of recruitment, retention and educational experiences that might otherwise remain out of students' reach. • DEANNA M. JENKINS (’09, ’17, L)
45 scholarships awarded for the first time in fall 2020

The Kathy Collier Memorial Scholarship, one of the newly awarded scholarships, was established by Kathy’s husband, Mark, and their two daughters, Christy Hall and Lori Wilson.

Scholarships awarded for the first time in fall 2020 include:

- Allen Motor Company, Inc., Student Aid Fund
- John Asher Scholarship Fund
- Brandon Kyle Brown Memorial Scholarship Fund
- Butler County Water District Scholarship Fund
- Carey Family Scholarship Fund
- College of Health and Human Services Opportunity Fund
- Kathy Collier Memorial Scholarship Fund
- Ted M. Cudnick Chinese Flagship Travel Scholarship Fund
- Ted M. Cudnick Outstanding Violinist Scholarship Fund
- Thaddeus M. Cudnick Sr. Horticultural Scholarship Fund
- Juan H.D. Dauier II Scholarship Fund
- Eugene E. Evans Scholarship Fund
- Mildred Kerr Fox Scholarship Fund
- Franklin Favorite - WFNN, Inc., Student Aid Fund
- Gateway Press, Inc., Student Aid Fund
- Bob and Kay Glantz Military Science Scholarship Fund
- Bob and Kay Glantz Regional Student Scholarship Fund
- Gordon Ford College of Business Opportunity Fund
- Taylor Kay Grider Memorial Scholarship Fund
- Paul and Dee Ann Hagemeier Scholarship Fund
- Dr. and Mrs. T.O. Helm - Margie Helm Student Aid Fund
- Julie Harris Hinson Opportunity Fund for ISEC
- Julie Harris Hinson Opportunity Fund for Student Publications
- Wanella and Lavell Huddleston Scholarship Fund
- Derek and Michelle Hall Scholarship Fund
- Mary Kilgore Underrepresented Student Scholarship Fund
- James R. Kimbrell Student Aid Fund
- Betty Jean Little Lewis Scholarship Fund
- Pat Little Scholarship Fund
- George Anne and Morris Love Scholarship Fund
- Mahurin Honors College Opportunity Fund
- James "Mitch" Meyer Memorial Scholarship Fund
- Micatrotto Family Opportunity Fund for Athletics
- Ogden College of Science and Engineering Opportunity Fund
- WKU Opportunity Fund
- Patrick Family Scholarship Fund
- V. Wayne Pedigo Student Aid Fund
- Potter-Nicely Scholarship Fund
- Potter College of Arts & Letters Opportunity Fund
- William and Jennifer Skaggs Scholarship Fund
- Sara Downing Taylor Early Childhood Education Scholarship Fund
- Toppers Assist Scholarship Fund
- Wells Fargo Military Support Scholarship Fund
- Kaci Wilson Memorial Scholarship Fund
- WKU Agriculture and Food Science Opportunity Fund
- WKU Partnership

WKU begins partnership with FreeWill

The University has partnered with FreeWill to provide a new resource to the WKU community: a free tool to write a legal will. FreeWill has empowered more than 160,000 Americans to plan for their futures, and protect the things they love by removing the expensive legal fees often associated with the process. Including WKU in your estate plans is not a requirement to utilize this free service.

Visit freewill.com/wku to learn more.
From small gatherings to athletic games with thousands in attendance, WKU hosts many events each year. In 2020, connecting through technology provided new ways for individuals to safely engage while still celebrating the WKU Spirit. WKU's largest annual donor recognition event, Scholarship Celebration, typically brings together more than 500 scholarship donors and student recipients each spring. Even though gathering together was no longer an option, WKU students and scholarship donors were still able to connect through ThankView, a platform to create and send personalized videos.

“Our scholarship donors truly look forward to Scholarship Celebration," said Jessica Carver (’08, ’14, L), Vice President of the College Heights Foundation, which administers scholarships at WKU. "They love getting to meet their scholarship recipients, and recipients are glad to be able to say ‘thank you’ in person for the scholarship they received.”

In March 2020, scholarship recipients were asked to record a video message to their scholarship donors, thanking them for their support. Students introduced themselves, thanked their donors and shared their future plans. More than 350 videos were sent from student recipients to their scholarship donors.

Dan Troutman (’79, A) of Augusta, Ga., who studied Chemistry at WKU, established the Troutman Scholarship in Chemistry shortly after his graduation as a way to help others, a desire instilled in him by his father, and to give back to his alma mater. Over the years, Troutman has been able to meet several recipients of his scholarship. "I enjoy hearing the students' perspectives and learning who they are and where they are going," said Troutman. "I think the ThankView videos were better than not being able to meet the recipients at all. It is really enjoyable to be able to sit down over dinner and have a conversation and get to know them, but compared to nothing, this was outstanding.

"Troutman and many other scholarship donors even recorded videos to send to their scholarship recipients to offer encouragement and congratulations on completing a tough semester.

"I was able to see a video wishing her the best of luck," said Troutman. "I enjoyed being able to do that, and hopefully we will get to meet at some point. The videos were brief, but really nice.”

Alianna Casas, a sophomore from Harford, Ky., who is pursuing a double major in International Business and Business Economics, was also thankful for the opportunity to meet the scholarship donors.

"Paying for college has been a struggle for me, and the idea of taking out student loans devastated me," said Casas. "With this scholarship, I was able to pay off my debt and am now on a path to graduate debt-free."

Casas, who has faced personal tragedies, says knowing that her scholarship donors believe in her helps her envision a brighter future. "Their support shows me that there is good in the world to offset all the bad," said Casas.

For the Calicos, who live in Cincinnati, Ohio, presenting the scholarship remotely meant they could meet their recipient without traveling to Bowling Green.

"Meeting our scholarship recipients is very important to us and connecting through a socially distanced format was fine this year," said Calico. "As we all become more accustomed to remote meetings, perhaps such interactions will remain a viable option for the future.”
In early 2020, WKU Philanthropy & Alumni Engagement was preparing to launch a Donor Experience Officer (DXO) program where staff could utilize technology to engage with alumni and friends of the University rather than primarily relying on face-to-face meetings. Social distancing requirements increased the need and use of this platform, making the launch of the DXO program timely.

In partnership with EverTrue, a company focused on advancing the nonprofit sector, Philanthropy & Alumni Engagement began the program with three DXOs and have since transitioned three additional positions into this role. Ryan Dearbone ’05, ’14, L, who studied Broadcasting and Communication, joined Philanthropy & Alumni Engagement in 2015 and was one of the first DXOs.

"I think what crystallized the importance of this program for me is that it was a perfect way to reach out and engage our Hilltopper Family even though we were unable to travel to them like in the past," said Dearbone. "We were able to check in on people and create relationships with them even though we may never have met face-to-face."

Dearbone says alumni and friends are responding well to the personalized videos and are open to engaging with the University in new ways.

"Learning about the Donor Experience Officer program was a glimpse into the future of how we are connecting today," said Amanda Trabue ’02, ’04, L, Vice President of Philanthropy & Alumni Engagement. "This program allows us to be more intentional in how we connect with donors, alumni and friends of the University, and we are seeing great results so far. We were one of the first to implement this program, and I am excited to see what comes next."

The success of the DXO initiative has already inspired changes to the University’s Topper Talk program. With social distancing requirements and the majority of WKU students leaving campus in spring 2020, the traditional program through which student callers reach out to alumni and friends was put on hold.

In fall 2020, a Student Donor Experience Officer (SDXO) program launched with eight students. The SDXO program operates much like the DXO program, with students making and sending personalized videos to alumni and friends to build relationships based on their interests.

"We are excited to offer our donors the opportunity to connect with students through the SDXO program," said Aarika Gunn ’11, A, Assistant Director of Integrated Marketing and Appeals. "As fundraising professionals, we always try to bring student stories to our donors. With this new program, we are able to facilitate a connection directly between students and donors. Students will be able to share their WKU Experience, thank donors for their gifts and provide additional opportunities to continue their support."

"For the SDXOs, this is also an opportunity for student employment, networking and gaining professional experience," added Gunn. "I enjoyed working with our talented students to start this program and welcome our alumni and friends to meet them as well."

Eliza Finn, a senior from Evansville, Ind., who is pursuing a major in Strategic Marketing and a Certificate in Applied Data Analytics, enjoys hearing alumni share their memorable moments from the Hill and getting to share hers in return through her role as a SDXO.

"This position provides a unique opportunity for alumni to experience WKU alongside a current student, and I am so excited to be a part of it," said Finn. "In the face of any challenge, the spirit prevails and so does the desire to connect. Through technological advances, it is easier than ever to connect, and Philanthropy & Alumni Engagement and the College Heights Foundation continue to explore new ways to connect alumni and friends with the University."

WKU Spirit remains and so does the desire to connect. Through technological advances, it is easier than ever to connect, and Philanthropy & Alumni Engagement and the College Heights Foundation continue to explore new ways to connect alumni and friends with the University. ELIZA FINN ’09, ’14
AROUND CAMPUS

WKU First Year Village

Two new residence halls under construction in WKU First Year Village

Construction of two new residence halls began last fall to create the cornerstone for the First Year Village at WKU.

The $48 million living learning complex features two new pod-style residence halls, which will house a number of WKU's first year Living Learning Communities. Building One, "Normal Hall," will house 260 students, while Building Two, "Regents Hall," will house 375 students. All students in the new buildings will participate in living learning communities, and each hall will contain unique programming spaces, including classrooms, study rooms and more.

The cost of the project will be funded by WKU Student Life Foundation, which gave its final approval in June 2019.

The new First Year Village area encompasses a number of residence halls in the south end of campus, where focused first-year programming will take place. The initiative has been directed and shaped by the University's Strategic Plan, Climbing to Greater Heights, which states, "in our effort to significantly increase our first to second year retention, we will focus our attention and central resources on a robust and engaging First Year Experience. Each WKU freshman will have the opportunity to reside in Living Learning Communities,"

"LLCs can enrich the student experience by intentionally connecting in and out-of-classroom learning," explains Blair Jensen ('07), who is directing WKU's Living Learning Communities and is an Assistant Director for HRL. "Students participating in Living Learning Communities enroll in at least two linked courses and live together on a residence hall floor."

Current LLCs include majors in Agriculture, Business, Citizenship & Social Justice, Cinema and Popular Culture, Education, Engineering, Pre-Health professionals, Social Work and transfer students. LLCs are not just limited to academics, but have opportunities to connect others with similar interests. In interest-based communities, students benefit from programming intentionally designed to address their needs and interests. Current interest-based communities include Army ROTC, band, Chinese Flagship, wellness, Global Living, ISEC (Intercultural Student Engagement Center), Academy and Stonewall Suites (LGBTQ+).

The First Year Village highlights the Living Learning Program and presents a great opportunity to capture more students and affect first year student persistence rates by implementing a high-impact practice known to drive student success.

Dr. Mike Raagle, Assistant Vice President for Student Engagement, said the new buildings in the First Year Village will connect students with similar interests with classrooms, study rooms, social spaces and living spaces. Two buildings will feature pod-style housing with about 25 students per pod who share amenities such as bathrooms, common spaces and a Resident Assistant. The goal of having a faculty-in-residence is also being explored.

FIRST BITE

Bemis Lawrence Hall was demolished over a 90-day period

To make room for the new buildings and green space within the First Year Village, Bemis Lawrence Hall was demolished over a 90-day period during fall 2019. Prior to the demolition, Bemis Lawrence residents who lived in the building during the 2018-2019 academic year "made their mark" by painting handprints and leaving messages to their WKU home on walls in the lobby and on their respective floors. Other WKU alumni posted memories of their time at Bemis on social media, like former Bemis Resident Assistant Kelly Roseman ('17) who wrote, "I could go on forever about all of the things I love and miss about this building, but suffice it to say that living and working in Bemis helped me realize what I'm capable of and what it means to be part of something bigger than myself. It's a special place filled with countless special people who gave me so much more than I often deserved. And I've been carrying that love with me ever since."

A demolition "first bite" event was held Sept. 9, 2019, for those who wanted to watch the beginning of the demolition process.

Bemis was built in 1966 and underwent a significant renovation in 2003. It was named in honor of Bemis Lawrence, who was the Vice Chairman of the WKU Board of Regents from 1955-1966.
“Students will also have faculty, staff and student mentors to help them navigate through the first year and matriculate successfully to the second, setting them on a path to complete their programs in a timely manner,” Dr. Eagle said. “It is important to connect the time spent in the classroom with the 150 hours students spend outside of the classroom to ensure they take full advantage of the WKU Experience.”

Centralized community-style bathrooms, as well as two private bathrooms, greatly reduces the bed-to-bath ratio and allows for co-ed pods. Each pod will feature a lounge, which serves as the residents’ living room and community connection point.

The design of the new halls features large windows in the community spaces, creating large “lanterns” for the south side of campus. A park-like green space will be located in the former Pearson Ford Tower parking lot, creating a greater community atmosphere. To accommodate those parking spaces, the housing parking lot has been moved to the Normal Street lot, and a communter lot was created with land purchased by the Student Life Foundation closer to the top of the Hill on High Street.

“We’re excited about the opportunities these new buildings will add to our current variety of housing options,” Dr. Eagle said.

“The First Year Village fits well into the University’s Strategic Plan by providing the kind of experience that will make our students successful.”

Learn more about the First Year Village project at www.wku.edu/housing/future.

QUICK FACTS

What will it cost?
$48 million

How will it be funded?
Financing for housing projects is provided through the WKU Student Life Foundation. Student housing rates have seen a slight increase to align with the Kentucky System average, and housing rates do help contribute to housing operations, programming and future projects.

Why is it needed?
The WKU Student Life Foundation renovated every residence hall from 2001 through 2010, helping the University sustain tremendous gains in enrollment. In support of the University’s broader goals for the next 10 years, the Student Life Foundation seeks to make WKU housing a “value-added” asset compared to other institutions. There is also a need for more living options for all classifications of WKU students.

Before implementing the 10-year master plan for housing, a new residence hall had not been built on WKU’s campus since 1992. After an extensive review of the residence hall inventory, it was determined that it would be more cost-effective and conducive to our programming goals to demolish the pre-existing cross-style buildings than to renovate. Hilltopper Hall was the first residence hall built in 2018 to maintain bed space while the First Year Village is constructed.

When will it be ready?
The two new halls in the First Year Village will open in fall 2021. The construction of the green space will be an ongoing process, with new features added over time.

Who are the firms doing the architectural work?
Sewell & Sewell Architects, Mackey Mitchell Architects and SE Engineering.
A Living Legacy

Phillip Hatchett Golf Facility: A promise of continued success for future WKU golfers

A new structure stands at the corner of WKU's South Campus, just across from the University's Parking and Transportation building.

In it are record-filled plaques engraved with names of Hilltopper golfing greats, two hitting bays with tracking devices, a high-tech putting green, a club repair station and the familiar Red Towel logo pressed on everything. But what's inside the walls counts for a lot, the words on the outside of the building represent much more than any piece of golf equipment could.

"PhillyHatchett Golf Facility"

The name of WKU's new indoor golf facility holds so much meaning in the eyes of many, as it represents a dream come true for its namesake, the late Phillip Hatchett ('85).

A golf student-athlete himself at WKU in the early 80s, and a Coach of the Men's Golf Team from 2010 to 2018, Hatchett loved the sport and loved the Hilltoppers. It was his goal to develop the team and his athletes and make them great. As the national landscape of collegiate golf grew, an indoor facility became his dream.

"From the time Phillip started preparing his resume, he had the dream of having a facility like that, and he worked very hard to get it," said Hatchett's wife, Beth. "What he tried to do was change the culture of the golf program, and it took a few years, but he started not only recruiting athletes, but scholars as well. It meant a lot to him for his guys to have their education first, but at the same time, when he was doing his resume, he'd say, 'I've got to have a plan of action,' and this facility was it."

"Coach Hatchett was always a believer that you can't get anywhere without putting in the hard work," said Tom Bevington, a senior from Chesley, England, and a member of the WKU Men's Golf Team. "It's fitting that we can continue his legacy in this way."

This facility was always in Hatchett's vision for the bright future of WKU Men's and Women's Golf. As the first full-time Head Coach of the men's program, he did everything in his power to prepare for this moment that he trusted would be his dream come true. He planned for the opportunity, fundraised for the future facility and had conversations with decision-makers in his first years at the helm.

As Bevington said, Hatchett put in the hard work, and Women's Golf Coach Adam Gary saw the conviction in his plan.

"We were always looking for different avenues and ways to get something started," said Gary, who worked alongside Hatchett for four seasons. "In the meantime, we fundraised, thinking the day is going to come when we'll have an opening and we'll have to just jump on it then, so we want to have the money and everything ready when we do have the opportunity." Then, we finally got the opportunity to have it on campus and the availability of funds to get it done.

After the coaches had found their big break—the perfect storm for their new indoor facility to come to life—tragically struck when Phillip Hatchett passed away on Father's Day in June 2018 in a bicycling accident. Suddenly, the man who had the long-losing vision for WKU Golf, the man who helped lay the foundation, was gone.

"I think it shows the commitment that [Director of Athletics Todd Stewart] and the donors made to the golf programs," said third-year Men's Golf Head Coach Chan Metts. "To have an AD that would come in and make a huge deal out of building something for a golf team that maybe hadn't had the ability to have a facility before is significant, and it's not on our programs."

Without an indoor facility, weather, daylight and sharing space were all limiting growth factors on the men's and women's golf programs. But with the help and support of generous donations and private funds, Hatchett's vision was realized and the student-athletes will have nothing holding back their potential success on the golf course.

In addition to the basic utilities that come along with an indoor golf facility, WKU took it one step further. The hitting bays feature the ForeSight GCQuad Launch Monitor, which has the ability to simulate famous golf courses around the world, including Arnold Palmer's Bay Hill and Pebble Beach. The putting green includes the PureView system, a light projection that shows slope and breaks on the surface. The club regipping station sits next to the club repair area that includes a Mitchell loft/lie machine for club spec adjusmenr. The facility isn't just a weather-proof space with Autorescent lighting—it's a game-changer in world of WKU Golf.

"The biggest thing is having a place of our own. It's ours, our home, no matter what," Metts said. "We can be there 24 hours a day if we want to, and that really gives the kids something else to buy into and gives them some ownership. Our student athletes have never had that before."

The Phillip Hatchett Golf Facility sits just a building, it's a home for the programs for years to come. And it holds the promise of continued success for future WKU golfers, while keeping a great man's legacy living and lasting.

DANA BROWN (20) with BRYAN YALOWSKI and ZACH GREENWELL (11, 19)
Living on a prayer

Two alumni experience teaching in Spain

Blake Pawley ('18) and Trevor Hoffman ('19) started their global learning experiences when they studied abroad during college, but their desire to pursue international experiences didn't end with graduation. In October 2019, they both moved to Madrid, Spain, to start jobs teaching English in public schools. Once abroad, Pawley, who earned an International Business degree, studied abroad twice during his WKU experience: at Harvard College during spring 2016 and in Prague, Czech Republic, during spring 2017. As part of his degree, he was required to study abroad at least once, but the first experience did not satisfy his global learning ambitions. "My love for other cultures, languages and places kept me hungry for new experiences to fulfill and enjoy the many opportunities college had to offer," Pawley explained.

"I believe respecting local customs, meeting people from all facets of life, and familiarizing yourself with various political, economic and other pressing world issues mentally prepares you for an international career," Pawley said.

During his time in England and Prague, Pawley grew academically, professionally and personally, preparing him for a future in international business. He said living and studying in an environment with languages and cultures outside his own is "of utmost importance with international business," and studying abroad provided him with this opportunity.

"My heart eventually persuaded my hard-headed mind to trade my desk job into a new career and start another exciting adventure," Pawley said.

Pawley's decision to apply to teach English in Spain inspired Hoffman, who had earned degrees in Biology and Spanish, to apply for a 10-month contract during his gap year before medical school. Previously, Hoffman studied abroad with Sol Education Abroad in Buenos Aires, Argentina, during the 2017 winter term and in Segovia, Spain, through the Kentucky Institute for International Studies (KIIS) consortium during the 2017 summer term. He stayed with a host family during both programs, which helped him improve his Spanish-language skills. In Argentina, he shadowed nurses and doctors at a local hospital, learned about medical procedures and spoke with patients in Spanish.

After graduation, Pawley accepted a job at HealthStream in Nashville, Tenn., but he soon grew "restless" in an office job. He realized he could not stay with the company if he wanted to "live [his] dreams of working abroad long-term."

After a study abroad friend informed him of a job teaching English in Spain, Pawley initially considered keeping his job in Nashville to see what the future could hold there, but he ultimately decided to take the opportunity in Spain.

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"I have been embarrassed on many occasions, making a fool of myself for using incorrect words or completely misinterpreting a question," Pawley said. "It has taken a lot of patience and hard work and will take so much more to eventually achieve fluency. In a way, it has humbled me and made me stop using incorrect words or completely repeating old things."

"It was a really good feeling to be mistaken for a local because it reminded me that I was truly living in another country," Hoffman said. "It was the best feeling when I actually knew the answer to the question and could help them get somewhere in a huge place like Madrid, even though I had only been living there for a few months."

Like others abroad this spring, Pawley's and Hoffman's experiences abroad shifted because of COVID-19. While Hoffman returned to the U.S. in March and Pawley stayed in Spain, both worked remotely.

"I was so excited to finally have a job where I wasn't sitting all day and staring at a computer," Pawley said. For Hoffman, having tourists approach him and ask questions were confidence-building moments that proved how much he has grown.

"I know many things will likely change after this crisis, but I will be heartbroken if the world is forever scared to leave home, get out of their comfort zone and go," Hoffman said.

"I sincerely hope these rough times and the fallout from COVID-19 won't heavily impact people's desire or ability to explore, travel and see the world in the long term," he said. "I know many things will likely change after this crisis, but I will be heartbroken if the world is forever scared to leave home, get out of their comfort zone and go." - Adriana Writers

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"I know I am different from many of my peers, and I know that if people truly want to understand each other we need to understand each other's identities," Thomas said. "Most of all, I want people abroad to know this is what it means to be American—to be so different from your fellow citizens that being identical is absurd. Our differences make our country strong." - Jayden Thomas

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"Most of all, I want people abroad to know this is what it means to be American—to be so different from your fellow citizens that being identical is absurd. Our differences make our country strong." - Jayden Thomas
WKU succeeds during a semester like no other

I t began in late 2019 with concerns about students studying abroad, especially those in China. The focus was on returning them to the United States before they were exposed to a novel coronavirus, potentially developing COVID-19. There was also concern about WKU students from those countries who either could not go home or return for classes because of the outbreak.

But as the virus made its way across the globe and into the U.S., concern escalated quickly. At WKU: President Timothy C. Caboni ('94) pulled together a COVID-19 Task Force, composed of cabinet members, subject matter experts and shared governance leadership, to form mitigation plans and guide the University community through what was coming.

The Task Force moved quickly, and on March 11, President Caboni announced an extension of spring break by a week to give faculty time to move all classes from face-to-face to an alternate delivery through April 5. Events of more than 50 participants were canceled. Most travel was suspended, and telecommuting was encouraged.

By March 17, face-to-face classes were canceled for the rest of the semester, residence halls were being closed and all in-person events, including Commencement, were canceled, rescheduled or virtualized.

Amid the upheaval of normal university life, one thing became clear: Even though the WKU Family was forced apart, we came together.

SWITCHING INSTRUCTINOAL DELIVERY

As instruction moved out of the classroom and into the virtual realm, faculty had to rethink their curriculum and find creative ways to deliver their lessons. WKU's Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning stepped up with webinars and provided instructional designers. Faculty already versed in online delivery mentored their colleagues.

Technologies such as Zoom and Blackboard became a part of everyday life.

The next Herdman shift involved more than 2,500 face-to-face course sections, 2,500 micro-lecture videos created and more than 700 hours of Zoom and Blackboard training. In all, faculty worked more than 20,000 overtime hours to make the transition.

TAKING CARE OF STUDENTS

The focus at WKU is on students. Mitigation plans designed for their safety, as well as the safety of the entire community, also created an unprecedented disruption in their educational experience. The WKU Community stepped up to help ease the stress caused by the pandemic.

- Information Technology Services (ITS) purchased more than 200 laptops to loan to students and faculty who did not have the necessary technology to participate in online learning.
- ITS created Internet hotspots in two of the larger parking lots for students and the community in general who needed access for online learning.
- Alumnae adopted about 50 WKU students who were granted exemptions to remain on campus for a variety of personal reasons and provided letters and care packages to help students feel less isolated.
- Enrollment and Student Experience coordinated a postcard campaign to check in on students and provide reassurance.
- The WKU Food Pantry remained open, and is still open, to assist students and any in the community who were food insecure.
- Staff in the Gordon Food College of Business used Zoom to assist students with interview preparation and job search questions.

THE BIG RED RESTART

Even as WKU worked to mitigate the disruption to the spring and summer semesters, the focus turned to preparing for the fall semester. Members of the COVID-19 Task Force were joined by others from the campus community to form four restart committees: Academics and Inquiry; Student Experience and Engagement; Environment, Operations and Physical Plant; and Athletics. These committees took the lessons learned from the spring and summer and consulted with state and federal resources as they developed WKU’s plan for the fall, the Big Red Restart.

The guiding principles of the Big Red Restart are the health and safety of all of our campus communities, maintaining academic quality and integrity, preserving the WKU Experience and remaining flexible to adapt as our situation changes. The committee plans were brought to the Task Force, which assembled additional members to suggest overall restart document, presented to the public on May 28.

"The uncertainty of the pandemic now, and in the weeks and months ahead, complicate the planning process," President Caboni said. "We must, now more than ever before, be increasingly nimble and flexible as we work through this time together."

Work continued throughout the summer to prepare the campus for the return of students, faculty and staff, many of whom had been working remotely since spring break. "Healthy on the Hill" provided the overall guidelines.

Signage was installed to provide guidance; classrooms were measured and rearranged to provide physical distancing; faculty developed a range of teaching modalities from in-person to fully remote and plexiglass barriers were installed to allow for safer interactions. Plans were developed for testing and the isolation of those who tested positive or were deemed to be contacts. And while the University had a couple of months to prepare for the fall, unlike the weeks to prepare for the spring semester shift, there was a large amount of work that needed to be accomplished.
A SEMESTER LIKE NO OTHER

Fall 2020 has been a semester like no other. Fewer people are on campus as those who could work remotely continued to do so. Classes were presented in a variety of modalities with about half fully in-person or in a hybrid format while others were taught remotely. There were no large gatherings, such as performances, tailgating or large club meetings. Attendance at athletic events was kept small to allow for distancing and many Homecoming events were canceled or virtualized. Commencement and graduate recognition ceremonies have been rescheduled.

Other changes included eliminating fall break, but taking the full week off at Thanksgiving. Also, in-person classes ended Nov. 20, and the final weeks of instruction and final exams were conducted remotely. These measures were all part of the plan to keep the virus at bay and was in concert with the WKU Family SAFE. While there were positive cases and close contacts among faculty, staff and outside contractors, swift action to isolate those cases, and campus compliance with safety protocols, kept these cases from becoming larger outbreaks. In a few cases, as patterns emerged, University officials moved quickly to mandate additional testing and contact tracing to stop the spread.

"I am proud of the efforts across the University to practice our Health on the Hill guidelines, catch early cases, and quarantine and contact trace quickly to minimize spread of the virus. We had no evidence of transmission occurring in any classroom at WKU," President Caboni said. "It is critical that we continue to embrace the practices that we know work—physical distancing, wearing masks and washing our hands often. We have proven that together we can navigate successfully the challenges presented by this pandemic. However, we must remain vigilant, especially as cases across the state and nation rise."

NEW LOOK FOR STUDENT RECRUITMENT

Student recruitment faced particular challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic in the spring. The Office of Admissions relies heavily on face-to-face programming, all of which had to transition quickly to a virtual format.

"The pandemic forced our office to adopt new delivery modalities for traditional programming and to significantly enhance existing digital marketing and recruitment efforts," said Admissions Director Dr. Jace Lux ('06, '09, '12, L). "We quickly developed and hosted a number of virtual recruitment events for prospective and admitted students and their families. We also worked with others on campus to develop a revamped virtual tour, since for a significant period of time we were unable to host campus visits. We invested heavily in digital and social media recruitment efforts, and we enhanced our use of text messaging, live chat on the Admissions website and Zoom meeting opportunities."

The Office of Admissions is also tasked with new student orientations, which are still in-person, on-campus events, and the pandemic hit about two weeks before the first scheduled orientation.

"We quickly shifted those to a virtual format, and we actually had higher rates of participation than our traditional in-person orientations," Lux said. "Students and their families were willing to accept that the world had changed quickly and they were very willing to work with us through these new modalities."

SHIFTS FOR STUDENT ACTIVITIES

A big part of student life is participation in groups and organizations. With the pandemic groups have been creative to replace much of the customary face-to-face activity with safer alternatives.

"Our groups have become masters of Zoom," said Dr. Charley Pride ('87, '90, '96, L), Director of Student Activities, Organizations, and Leadership. "Clubs and organizations have been working to define safe spaces and protocols."

Even though sorority and fraternity recruitment was virtual, numbers remained strong and social media recruitment efforts, and we enhanced our use of text messaging, live chat on the Admissions website and Zoom meeting opportunities.

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LOOKING AHEAD TO SPRING 2021

The vigilance will need to continue as students return to the Hill in January for the spring semester. Faculty continue to review teaching modalities, using the fall experience to build their spring courses. Schedule adjustments continue as spring break has been canceled, and the semester will end a week early with the goal of keeping students close to campus and limiting the spread from popular vacation destinations. Much like football attendance at basketball games will be limited and schedules revised to limit the potential impact of the virus on student-athletes and fans.

"We are all working through circumstances for which none of us was fully prepared. Yet our campuses, and our communities, have pulled together, exhibiting the creativity, expertise, determination and dedication—grit if you will—necessary for success," President Caboni said. "It remains up to each of us to take, and continue, the actions needed to make that success happen."

"Adversity is defining, for good and bad. At WKU, working with our constituents and communities, we will shine above this adversity for the betterment of us all."

A NEW SEASON FOR WKU ATHLETICS

From reduced fan capacity at games to frequent testing of student-athletes and staff, WKU Athletics has implemented significant changes for safety.

Fan capacity at football games was reduced to 20 percent and seating assignments changed to adhere to physical distancing guidelines, according to Zach Greenwell ('11, '19), Director of Communications and Media Relations for WKU Athletics. Other game-day changes have included significant restrictions on tailgating, temperature/symptoms screenings and mask requirements in venues, mobile ticketing, changes to concessions and greatly increased cleaning and sanitization before, during and after events.

"We have frequent testing for all student-athletes and staff, ranging from three times a week for high-contact sports to weekly surveillance testing for programs out of season," Greenwell said.

"Adversity is defining, for good and bad. At WKU, working with our constituents and communities, we will shine above this adversity for the betterment of us all."
Inspiring Innovation
The Center for Energy Systems

BY AURELIA SPAULDING ('06, '10, '12)

"Our Center is about the students. It is all about the students," said Dr. Farhad Ashrafzadeh, Associate Professor in Engineering & Applied Sciences and founder of the WKU Center for Energy Systems (CES).

By "students," Dr. Ashrafzadeh means the team of 20 undergraduate students, the Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science student intern and the one high school student who work in the Center for Energy Systems. Full-time research engineers and professors dedicate their time and knowledge at the Center, while the students work as research assistants in the lab throughout the year.

According to Dr. Ashrafzadeh, operating a research lab with only undergraduate students is unique, because most engineering research labs on college campuses consist of graduate students also.

"We are a pure undergraduate research center," Dr. Ashrafzadeh said. "The Center remains a 100 percent undergraduate research center and also a 100 percent undergraduate applied research center."

From the University side, we are a student-centered applied research center. From the outside, we are the engine of workforce development for engineering for southern Kentucky industries.

DR. FARHAD ASHRFAZADEH
FOUNDER OF THE WKU CENTER FOR ENERGY SYSTEMS
When a guest walks into the CES lab in College Hall, they see the expected computers, but those computers face whiteboard walls filled with writings and computations from the student researchers. Guests may see a Samsung washing machine lying on its side in one corner, a dryer in another corner and a refrigerator close by. If not for the autonomous systems projects on the tables and desks, one may mistake this lab for home. Each of these items are projects CES students are contracted to work on throughout the year, and the lab space is intentionally created to provide a multidisciplinary, inviting and engaging environment in which students develop skills through the successful delivery of industrial projects, as the CES mission describes.

"Education does not make a change. The application of education makes a change," Dr. Ashrafzadeh said. "When CES receives the product from an industrial company, CES members see it as an opportunity to learn. We work on this interface, and that is the way we develop a skill. We develop a skill through an execution of a real project in which our hands, our eyes, our minds and our air is truly engaged."

According to Dr. Ashrafzadeh, 80 percent of the students who have worked in the Center for Energy Systems have been hired in Kentucky immediately upon graduation. The other 20 percent go on to a graduate program to continue their education.

"From the University side, we are a student-centered applied research center. From outside, we are the engine of workforce development for engineering for southern Kentucky industries," Ashrafzadeh said, explaining the up to three years of experience students receive from real-world problem solving at the CES.

Timothy Goodwin ('20) of Bowling Green, Ky., graduated in May with a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering. As a student, he served in a position similar to a project lead in the CES, guiding the younger students and helping to bridge the gap between their current knowledge base and what they need to know for a project.

"The first thing we do is get you prepared to be utilised on a project," he explained. "When I started, the first month, I studied coding. Then, I got put on a project with all seniors and me. I was not exactly thrown into the deep end, but I was immediately getting into what a project was like and how to work with a team."

The student researchers come from multiple academic disciplines including Electrical, Mechanical and Civil Engineering. They also serve in a variety of ways. While one student may look at the potential for drones to help smart agriculture, another student searches for research grant funding while a third one prepares a white paper for an upcoming conference.

The research Center values integrity, proactiveness, project ownership, embracing unknowns, perseverance and effective communication, and students’ performances are assessed against these values.
Transforming Lives

Jazzlin Hamilton: From trauma to triumph

BY CAROL CUMMINGS (’92, L)

Jazzlin Hamilton is no stranger to challenge, hard work and determination. When the Louisville, Ky., senior was just 8 years old, she suffered a traumatic brain injury when she fell head-first onto concrete and fractured her skull.

"After my accident, I was rushed to Kosair Children’s Hospital, where the doctors told my parents that I had less than a 30 percent chance of living, let alone walking or talking," Hamilton explained. "I was immediately taken into surgery where my medical team placed a titanium plate in my skull to reform my skull and put me into a medically induced coma. The doctors didn’t know if I would ever wake up."

Two weeks later, Hamilton did wake up and was able to say a few words, and she spent another few weeks in the hospital healing and regaining the strength to walk.

"The doctors were unsure if I would be able to remember things or if those memories would last," she explained. "Going through those obstacles was a hard experience for a child. Not only did I have to walk and talk again and remember my family again, I had to relearn my place in the world again. How many 8-year-olds think about life? They think about playing on the playground. I was thinking about what my purpose was."
That determination and sense of purpose has led her to where she is today—a Broadcasting major with a minor in Musical Theater who is pursuing her dreams and using her platform as Miss Western Kentucky to champion others with traumatic brain injuries (TBIs).

"I was never a pageant girl, but I competed in and won Miss Black Western as a freshman in 2018," she said. "It's not common for a freshman to win something like that, but I was by telling my story. As a child, I never told anyone that I had a disability. I never told anyone that I had a traumatic brain injury, because I didn't want them to look at me as weak or different. At that pageant when I told my story, I realized it was impacting people's lives and it was inspirational."

That realization took Hamilton to other pageants, and she joined the Miss America scholarship program and competed in 2019 for first Miss Western Kentucky—which she lost—and then as Miss Historic Mill Springs—which she won.

"I didn't win Miss Kentucky that year, but I learned a lot of lessons about what I needed to do next time," Hamilton said. "In 2020, for me to be eligible to compete in Miss Kentucky again, I had to win another local pageant, so I competed for the one that I lost the previous year, which was Miss Western Kentucky. I won under my platform, which was 'the ability in disability.'"

Due to COVID-19, Miss America gave 2020 local and state-level pageant winners an extra year with their current titles, so Hamilton will compete for Miss Kentucky as Miss Western Kentucky 2020 and 2021 next summer. She has great hopes for the future—not only for her future pageant competitions, but for fulfilling her life's work.

"I chose my platform, 'the ability in disability,' because I realized I could make a difference bigger than me, bigger than this platform, bigger than the crown, bigger than the educational system," she said. "I have also founded a related non-profit called 'The Ability in Disability.'"

According to Hamilton, traumatic brain injury is the leading cause of death in the nation and also the leading disability.

"Every 15 seconds, someone sustains a traumatic brain injury, and 155 people die each day because of traumatic brain injuries, yet there's no representation for them in higher education," Hamilton shared. "I'm one of 10 students here at WKU with this disability, and that's a huge problem. There are so many more, but they're not getting here. They're not thriving in school, because they don't think they can. That's a confidence issue. I want to tell my story and impact people's lives and tell them there's truth in disabilities, there's truth in abilities, and that's the ability in disability."

As Hamilton began the long recovery from her childhood injuries, she soon realized she was different. The doctors had shaved her hair, she had rashes up her nose, had a brace and would need to wear a special-needs helmet everywhere she went.

"The doctor told me that life as I knew it had changed forever and that it would take four years for my brain to heal," she said. "In those four years, I couldn't dance. I couldn't play on the playground. I couldn't run. I couldn't be a normal kid. My childhood was ripped from me. It was very depressing to me as a child because I felt that my innocence was taken from me—that wonder and adventure. I just really struggled with finding my place."

Early on in her recovery, Hamilton wanted to dance, but her parents were afraid for her. She passed a math placement test and got into advanced math, but her parents and teachers didn't want her to struggle, so they took her out of that class.

"I realized then that they didn't see what I saw," Hamilton explained. "I knew this wasn't my life—I wasn't supposed to just have a brain injury as 8 years old and stay home and do nothing. I think maybe that's what pushed me to be a better version of myself and work harder. That's what made me vow that I would do great things."
When she entered high school, Hamilton joined the dance team and had a role in all the high school musicals. She was vice president of her senior class and graduated as valedictorian with a 4.2 GPA.

"Even with those accomplishments, I still didn’t think I was smart," she shared. "I wondered if I was really smart or if I was just hard working. I didn’t prove that and understand that until I got to college at WKU, where I met phenomenal people who have helped me on my journey."

A first-generation college student, Hamilton found encouragement through her professors, WKU’s Student Support Services, the Office of Scholar Development and the Intercultural Student Engagement Center (ISEC) Academy. She currently has a 3.8 cumulative GPA.

"I could not have done this by myself," she said. "It’s hard work and talent, but you have to have those connections and networks. I’ve made those connections, and they all believe in me. I don’t think I would have found that at any other university."

According to Dr. Martha Sales (’92, ’96, ’08, ’15), Executive Director of ISEC and the WKU TRIO Programs, the ISEC Academy is a four-year recruitment, retention and graduation program for students of color enrolled at WKU.

"It is a multi-faceted student success program that has several high-impact practices," Dr. Sales explained. "We spend time equipping students for success not only in the first year, but in all four years. During the first year we deal with transition. The second year, we deal with student engagement and involvement, and the third year we focus on career success and preparation for careers. The fourth year, their senior year, we focus on graduation, ensuring that they graduate on time in four years and also that they are equipped to be successful after they leave the hill."

Regardless of their race, gender or ethnicity, Dr. Sales said most students come to WKU with some dream in mind.

"What the ISEC Academy does for students of color is to assist them not only in reaching their dreams but in developing their dreams," she said. "We are able to do that daily by listening to students, by allowing students to talk through and see their dreams. Sometimes when we think of dreaming, we think of our eyes being shut. ISEC Academy allows students to see their dreams, to see themselves operating in successful avenues and successful venues."

Dr. Sales says listening is key to everything they do.

"Sometimes students just want to be heard," she said. "They want to be able to share their dreams with administrators, faculty and staff and be validated—not to be told that it’s impossible or that they can’t reach that dream, but to help them."

It’s all about eliminating barriers and breaking down obstacles to students can achieve those dreams.

"There’s probably not one student I’ve come into contact with in my 23 years of higher education who didn’t have some potential, and that potential has to be cultivated," Dr. Sales said. "Sometimes that potential has been damaged through words, experiences, exposure, heartache and pain. What ISEC does is to make students realize how great they are—no give them the courage and empower them to operate in their greatness and not apologize for their greatness, even though it may be uniquely different than society tells them it should be."

For Hamilton, the ISEC Academy is a place where she is welcomed.

"WKU is a primarily white university," Hamilton explained. "There are more than 20,000 students here, and fewer than 2,000 of them are African American. There’s an even smaller number of students from Hispanic cultures. This organization makes them feel at home."

"In your first year with ISEC, you stand on a pedestal or orientation and you say, ‘I am a scholar, and I’m going to be great.’ It’s meant to be long-lasting and for you to remember that and believe that. That really is my most memorable moment here at WKU. I knew then that I was going to be a scholar, and I was going to make it."

Hamilton loved ISEC so much that she chose to be a mentor and a navigator for the organization.

"Since my sophomore year, I’ve helped students younger than me, showing them the ropes about WKU, just like someone did for me, because it’s all about helping each other up the ladder and over the mountains," she said. "It’s all about who you know, about the networks."

That supportive spirit is the heart of ISEC.

"I tell students every day that it’s not about you," Dr. Sales said. "It’s about you accomplishing your greatness. You can then assist others in accomplishing theirs. The ISEC Academy is important because it assists those students who may come from backgrounds that may have impeded their success at any higher education institution. It’s not just an orientation program or one for students who are struggling or for students of color who may be deemed unsuccessful. Occasionally, when we deal with students of color in success metrics, we think of them as being unprepared or low-income or being ‘less than.’ With ISEC Academy, we look at students where they are and assist them in developing their greatness so they can succeed at WKU."

For Hamilton, she wants to develop her greatness to make a difference for people who have faced the same struggles she has.

"Just last year, a 19-year-old African American boy committed suicide because he had a learning disability and was bullied," she explained. "I couldn’t help but feel as if that boy, I just wish he would have heard my story and seen himself in me. Maybe he would be here today if he had had someplace to turn."

Dr. Sales says Hamilton is in the epitome of ISEC.

"She is respectful and respected," she said. "She is beautiful by nature, classy in character, excellent in scholarship and bold in leadership. Jazzlin is ISEC because she exemplifies and has proven that ISEC is the place where scholars are made.”

"Here I am, a person with a disability—several disabilities—determined, an African American, and I am thriving in higher education," Hamilton said. "I’m doing the things that people said I wouldn’t do. I’m doing all of that because I believed in myself and worked hard. Life is full of challenges, and you can’t let a disability stop you."

"This all ties back to how Dr. Sales teaches students to fulfill their dreams. "Teach them how to replicate themselves," she said. "They need to replicate the greatness they possess so they can assist others in reaching their full potential.""

For Hamilton, her next chapter is still a work in progress, but her dreams are big.

"As a Broadcasting major, I would love to work in the news or entertainment industry, uncovering the truth and being the voice for the voiceless," she said. "As a Musical Theater minor, my passion is the arts, singing, dancing and acting. I want to continue to act in movies and perform."

Besides that, Hamilton is working on Institute of Research Board (IRB)-approved research on traumatic brain injuries, and she will present and publish “Inside the Mind of Persons with TBIs” at WKU’s undergraduate research conference in the spring of 2021. With that research, which has the goal of increasing the TBI populations in higher education, she hopes to be nominated for a TED Talk so she can make an impact on the 3.3 million people struggling with TBIs.

"I don’t regret having a traumatic brain injury or anything else that has happened to me," she concluded. "This is bigger than me. This is my purpose. Who knows where that will go! I would love to write a book about my life. I would love to create grants for the other students at WKU. I would love to just give back to the organizations that have helped me this far. Who knows? Maybe I’ll be Miss America."
Elevating Communities

LifeWorks at WKU

BY ALICIA CARTER ('07)

The Suzanne Vitale Clinical Education Complex at WKU (CEC) has been transforming lives and elevating the local community and beyond since its inception in 2006. Offering services to individuals and families impacted by autism spectrum disorder and developmental delays and disabilities, the CEC specializes in enhancing socialization and communication skills. A new program, LifeWorks at WKU, launched in September and is increasing the CEC’s reach by expanding services to young adults on the autism spectrum who are over the age of 21.

LifeWorks at WKU is a two-year residential program that helps bridge gaps and build relationships. The program provides living, working, and recreation support for individuals on the autism spectrum who are 21 years of age and older and are ready to enter the workforce. LifeWorks at WKU was made possible through generous support from the community and strengthens a longstanding University-community partnership to support individuals and families and educate students in best clinical practices.

Wabuck Development, a development company based in Leitchfield, Ky., partnered with LifeWorks at WKU in the renovation of apartments at 1328 Adams Street to provide accommodations for up to 26 individuals.

Dr. Mary Lloyd Moore ('86, '92, '13, L), Executive Director of the CEC, said there is a large service delivery gap for individuals on the autism spectrum who are over the age of 21.

“The number of individuals diagnosed on the autism spectrum is about one in 54 according to 2020 data from the Centers for Disease Control, so we know there is a large need for services,” Dr. Moore said. “From day one, we wanted to provide programming to support individuals and families from 12 months of age through adulthood. We have offered services for a wide variety of ages, but services stopped after college. At age 21, services to support individuals on the autism spectrum are very hard to find. We saw a need within our community to provide these services, and we’ve worked hard to make that happen.”

David Wheeler ('99), Executive Director for LifeWorks at WKU, said the program is for adults on the autism spectrum who have completed their education, whether that be high school or college.

“The program is designed for people who are interested in entering the workforce, have completed their education, and have the desire and potential to live independently,” Wheeler said.

LifeWorks at WKU’s inaugural group consists of two residents with the goal to grow to 26 over the next four years.

“It’s an exciting time,” Wheeler said. “We are thrilled to begin this new journey with our residents.”

Andy Arnold ('19), a LifeWorks at WKU participant, said he is excited to be in the inaugural group this fall.

Arnold knows the positive impact a support program like this can have for individuals on the autism spectrum. He participated in the Kelly Autism Program (KAP) Circle of Support as an undergraduate student at WKU. He said that program was a pivotal point in his life.

Prior to his involvement in KAP, he struggled socially and academically, having to drop out of college for a period of time. Upon returning to his studies, he connected with KAP and there found the tools and support necessary to successfully complete college.

“This program is going to change my life,” Arnold said. “Receiving the training to become more independent with life in general, becoming able to stand up on my own two feet, and having the opportunity to live on my own, in my own apartment, will help me grow and mature.”

Dr. Moore said that from the beginning the CEC’s mission has been twofold: to provide services to clients and to provide opportunities for WKU students to participate in applied research and professional experiences. LifeWorks at WKU is likewise designed to advance the CEC’s mission.

“The program utilizes WKU students to offer services,” Dr. Moore said. “There are opportunities for WKU students from graduate and professional programs to work at LifeWorks at WKU as residential advisors. WKU undergraduate students from a variety of related academic programs also assist with the administration of the program.”

LifeWorks at WKU utilizes a curriculum called Launch independence, which teaches independent living through a four-tiered program: supported living, supported employment, community engagement, and relationship building.

The concept of the CEC began in 2001 when several community leaders gathered to discuss their dream of an umbrella agency that could serve individuals on the autism spectrum and their families from infancy through adulthood. They initially focused on young adults, as programming for young children was already available through other community programs. Shortly thereafter, in 2003, a community programming for young children ceased to exist due to lack of funding. At that point, a group of concerned parents and grandparents banded together to forge a University-community partnership. Leadership at WKU added their vision to the concept, which included a push for WKU students to enter a training ground by offering services in the fields of Early Childhood Education, Communication Disorders, Special Education, Psychology, Social Work, Nursing, and other related disciplines.

The CEC is comprised of four main programs that include the New Hope Early Childhood Center, otherwise known as Big Red School; the Communication Disorders Clinic; the Family Resource Program; and the Kelly Autism Program (KAP). Additionally, the KAP Circle of Support Program was added and has grown to provide support to around 60 WKU college students. Programming for individuals with autism who are ready to enter the workforce and are over the age of 21 has been largely unavailable within the community until now.

For more information about LifeWorks at WKU, visit LIFEWORKSATWKU.ORG.

ANDY ARNOLD ('19)
LIFEWORKS AT WKU PARTICIPANT

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HOMECOMING
Learn about the details of the 2020 "Masquerade" Homecoming festivities

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John Aher, Dr. Jack Birtz and Travis Hudson were honored on Oct. 9

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Steven C. Barber ('84)

Filmmaker and producer takes his career to new heights with Apollo project

Steven C. Barber ('84) of Santa Monica, Calif., has been in the entertainment business as a writer and filmmaker for more than 30 years. Recently, however, he has focused his efforts on a different type of high-flying project to honor the Apollo 11 space launch with a 50th anniversary monument.

“My interest in space goes all the way back to the 1960s. My father worked for General Motors as an engineer, and the U.S. was engaged with the Mercury, Gemini and Apollo programs,” said Barber. “I remember being amazed and in awe of what man was doing at that specific time.”

The idea for a monument was sparked after a planned documentary project with Buzz Aldrin fell through due to Aldrin leaving for personal matters. Aldrin had always been one of Barber's heroes and he still wanted to honor him in some way. "I actually came up with the idea for the Apollo 11 monument on a bike ride about a year ago," explained Barber. "I had done some research and nobody had ever made a significant monument to the greatest technological achievement in the history of mankind. I pitched it to NASA at the Kennedy Space Center and they loved the idea."

However, it wasn't an easy project to get off the ground, as it required an investment of $750,000 and needed to be completed in time for the 50th anniversary of the mission. After commissioning Lundeen Sculpture to build the monument, Barber contacted more than 400 prospects before Quicken Loans agreed to sponsor the monument.

Due to the tight schedule, the sculpture makers only had around three months to finish the monument.

On July 20, 2019, the 50th anniversary of Apollo 11, the hard work came to life as the Kennedy Space Center unveiled the bronze statue of Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin and Michael Collins.

Barber says it's really quite surreal to know that more than 10,000 people pass the statue each day. "I really felt like I've left something behind to inspire future generations," said Barber. "I have all of my films, but you can't really touch a film and get the kind of inspiration you do from a beautiful, 12-foot, 1,400-pound monument of the men who went to the moon." After the unveiling, Barber reflected on WKU's role in his success. In 1984, he left WKU and headed to Los Angeles to chase his dreams as a filmmaker. Since then, he has produced eight full-length documentaries, has made the Oscar shortlist three times and is CEO of his own company, Vanilla Fizz.

Western Kentucky University was more instrumental in the years and years after I left than it was while I was there. It was the foundation that was central in the life that I'm living now. Without it, I don't think I would have much of anything.”

STEVEN C. BARBER ('84)
It wasn't a traditional Homecoming. We missed having the opportunity to celebrate the WKU Spirit in person with all members of the WKU Family. However, 2020 has taught us to adapt, so Homecoming continued, "WKU Maskerade" style. We hosted virtual events and competitions. We learned to livestream activities to allow alumni and fans to watch from home. We ran races in the name of WKU. We hosted virtual reunions and shared stories on social media. It was a different Homecoming, but the reason we celebrate Homecoming remained.

Thank you for your unwavering Spirit and devotion to WKU!

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**HALL OF DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI**
The 2020 luncheon continued with a private, in-person event with 50 guests versus the typical 500+ in-person attendance. However, we added a livestream of the event for 2020, which has achieved more than 1,800 views to date.

**MONDAY MEMORIES**
Mr. Western Lee Robertson ('50, '57, L) kicked off Homecoming Week with a video on social channels that achieved more than 6,300 views.

**HOMECOMING THEME BRACKET CHALLENGE**
Sixteen logos from 2001-2019 competed in the WKU Homecoming Theme Bracket Challenge. With 841 online votes over four days, the 2010 "Thrill on the Hill" theme edged out the 2016 "Oh, The Places You'll Go!" (56 percent to 44 percent) to be the champion.

**CHILI AND CHEESE LUNCHEON**
A community partnership with Junior Achievement of South Central Kentucky, the Chili and Cheese Luncheon became a tradition only for 2020, instead of the official kick-off pep rally for Homecoming Week. Still, 561 orders were made, and $3,000 was raised to support Junior Achievement of South Central Kentucky—a total that was comparable to past years.

**GREATER LOUISVILLE ALUMNI CHAPTER**
The GLAC Virtual Homecoming 5K raised more than $1,000 for the GLAC Scholarship Fund.

**SOCIETY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN ALUMNI**
The Society of African American Alumni (SAAA) hosted 73 registered guests for their Woodford and Western Zoom event, with more than $2,000 raised toward the SAAA Scholarship Fund. The evening included a virtual tour of the distillery, discussion about the history of bourbon and tips to properly taste and enjoy Woodford Reserve.

**STUDENT ALUMNI AMBASSADORS**
The Student Alumni Ambassadors hosted a Virtual Campus Scavenger Hunt, as well as an "Ask a Student" Video Series that achieved more than 19,000 impressions and 1,000 views on Instagram.
Matthew (Gerbig) Alan ('00)

From the Hill to Hollywood

T
decision actor Matthew Gerbig ('00), now known professionally as Matthew Alan, grew up with dreams of
being a teacher. Just as his father had before him, he enrolled
at WKU, but he didn’t know that life had other plans for him.

Alan received a Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communication
and started graduate school, still on track to become a teacher.

“I think I was about four or five classes shy of gaining my master’s
time when I last started during his time at WKU when he auditioned for a
play in Nashville called The Laramie Project.

“I was hooked,” he said. “Not long after, and much to my parents’
concern, I left graduate school and auditioned for the Academy of
Dramatic Arts in Los Angeles. I had no idea what I was doing at the
time, but I knew I wanted to give acting a shot.”

He took that first step and hasn’t looked back.

“My first acting role was on a medical reenactment show called
Untold Stories of the ER,” Alan said. “I remember being so excited when
I booked that job. I played a guy in a ski accident, and spent the whole
day in a full-body cast.”

Since his first role, he has been in various shows including Lost, Sons of Anarchy, 13 Reasons Why. Most recently, Alan completed
season two of Hulu’s Castle Rock. Created by Sam Shaw and Dustin
Thompson, Castle Rock is inspired by the stories of Stephen King. Many
of King’s iconic characters come from the fictional town of Castle Rock,
Maine, and the series weaves in these characters as they cross
paths in a modern world. For diehard King fans, season two is heavily
influenced by Salem’s Lot and Misery. The cast includes Bill Skarsgard,
André Holland, Melanie Lynskey and Lizzy Caplan. Alan plays the role
of Chris Merrill, the nephew of infamous crime boss Pop Merrill. Pop
is played by Tim Robbins, who marks his return to the Stephen King
world 25 years after The Shawshank Redemption.

“I’ve always been a big fan of weird and immersive material, and
the Stephen King world is all about that,” Alan explained. “It was an
amazing experience working with some of my favorite actors.”

However, his success has not come without challenges. Alan has
learned that the business is more difficult than people often see from
the other side of the screen.

“I’ve found myself unable to deal with the droughts of
unemployment and constant rejections,” Alan shared. “Auditions are
intimidating, and I have to remind myself of that sometimes. It’s a
head game, and I’m still trying to figure it all out.”

Alan credits the WKU Forensics Team for teaching him about
hard work and focus, both of which are skills required to make it in
this business.

“Speech and debate were a huge part of my time at Western,” he said.
“I owe a lot to the Forensics Program. I wouldn’t be here without it.”

The WKU Forensics Team also provided some of his favorite
memories on the Hill.

“I was lucky enough to be part of the Forensics Team when we won
our first national title,” Alan shared. “I was helping coach an incredibly
talented team with some of my best friends. It was a very special time for
everyone involved. It still gives me goosebumps to think about it.”

When he isn’t working, Alan enjoys spending time with his family. He recently married his long-time partner, actress Camilla
Luddington. Together they have a daughter, Hayden; an infant son,
Lucas; and two rescue dogs.

“We have a 3-year-old, so I am really into Frozen right now,” he said. “Hayden has changed my name to Kristoff, I love being a
father. It’s nice to have that balance.”

Alan’s advice to those wanting to get into acting is to remember to
have fun and not be too hard on yourself.

“I have found myself at many crossroads, but taking a chance
on acting was definitely the right decision,” he said. “I think I’ve
made every mistake possible. For me, it’s been all about learning
from those mistakes, I feel like each new job is a step in the
right direction.” — KRIS STARRS (’20)
12 new members to serve on WKU Alumni Association Board, retiring members recognized

The WKU Alumni Association recently elected nine new board members for 2020-2021 and recognized three members who will serve in one-year appointments. The following new members will serve for three-year terms:

- Leslie Bedo Carter (02, L) of Nashville, Tenn., is Sales Lead for Eastern U.S. Inovate.
- Joy Wheeley Church (96, 98, A) of Gallatin, Tenn., is a Vehicle Plant Planner for General Motors.
- Joe Cross (01, 02, 19, L) of Elizabethtown, Ky., serves as Chief of Education and Curriculum for Army JROTC.
- Dottie Geoghegan (69, L) of Louisville, Ky., is a retired substitute teacher for the Jefferson County Board of Education.
- Jason Loehr (97, L) of Louisville, Ky., serves as SVP of Strategy for Tracer, a VaynerX Company.
- Stephanie Martin (84, 98, L) of Bowling Green, Ky., is Director of Professional Educator Services at WKU.
- Sedrick Newbern (93, L) of Hendersonville, Tenn., serves as Operations Director for the NASBA Center for Public Trust.
- Ameerah Palacios (05, L) of Louisville, Ky., is Senior Strategic Communications Coordinator for HUD.
- Cheryl Payne (98, A) of Bowling Green, Ky., serves as Director of Account Management for XPO Logistics.

In addition, the following three board members will serve one-year terms as representatives of affiliated organizations:

- Reggie Glass (73, L) of Louisville, Ky., will represent the Society of African American Alumni. He is Principal of Glass Brothers & Associates Media/Marketing Consultancy.
- Reginald Lane (70, L) of Bradenton, Fla., will represent the Young Alumni Council (YAC). He is Director of Public Affairs at the University of Florida.
- Taylor-Grace Mingo of Stanford, Ky., a WKU senior who is majoring in Marketing, will represent the Student Alumni Ambassadors (SAA).

“These new members of the Alumni Association National Board of Directors are joining us at an important time in the Association’s history,” said Dr. Anthony McAdoo (L), Executive Director of the WKU Alumni Association. “Through their service on the Board, they will help lead our organization through the current pandemic and help ensure that all members of our WKU Family are supported and engaged. We appreciate each of these Hilltoppers committing to serve WKU through their Board service.”

In addition, the Board recognized 11 retiring Board members:

- Claude Bacon (94, 91, L) of Owensboro, Ky.
- Deb Filman (82, 85, L) of Owensboro, Ky.
- Jonny Garcia (16, A) of Hermitage, Tenn., who was the Young Alumni Council ex-officio representative.
- Tori Gehig (09, L) of Bowling Green, Ky.
- Marshall Gray (92, L) of Bowling Green, Ky., who was the Society of African American Alumni ex-officio representative.
- Lucas Hackmann (20) of O’Fallon, Ill., who was the Student Alumni Ambassador ex-officio representative.
- Will Lamborn (90, A) of Franklin, Ky.
- Charles Lovett (10, L) of Dayton, Ohio.
- Joe Micaelst&W (11, L) of Las Vegas, Nev.
- Jeremy Shubert (94, L) of Louisville, Ky.
- Al Tucker (73, 79, L) of Union, Ky., who was Immediate Past President in 2019-2020, President of the Board in 2018-2019 and served a total of six years.

“We are grateful for the time all of these loyal alumni have contributed as members of the Board of Directors,” Dr. McAdoo said. “Our Board members not only help lead the Association through governance, but each of these retiring members brought their unique insights, perspectives and skills to our organization. We are a better organization today because of their contributions to our work.”

\[CURRENT\ BOARD\]

\[President\ Joe\ Morel\ (02, L)\]
\[Immediate\ Past\ President\ R.\ Barkley\ Payne\ (16, L)\]
\[President-Elect\ Donna\ Lemaster\ Breidenberg\ (18, 19, L)\]
\[Secretary\ Georgiana\ Brackett\ (17, 11, L)\]
\[Treasurer\ Joe\ Dan\ Beavers\ (00, L)\]

WKU SPIRIT
John ASHER ('90)

Journalist, spokesman, storyteller, family man, Hilltopper. Words that describe the life and career of John Asher ('90, L). But for many people, including those in the horse racing industry, Asher was known as “Mr. Derby.”

In his two decades as Vice President of Racing Communications at Churchill Downs, Asher became synonymous with the Kentucky Derby. A lifelong horse racing fan, Asher was a walking encyclopedia of horse racing and the Kentucky Derby.

His booming baritone voice coupled with keen insight, quick wit and heartfelt words could captivate an audience. The man who never met a stranger easily related to billionaire horse owners, workers in the stables and fans in the grandstands.

Asher, who grew up near Leitchfield in Grayson County, covered the Kentucky Derby as an award-winning radio journalist for WHAS and WAVC in Louisville, where he earned five Eclipse Awards for “Outstanding National Radio Coverage of Thoroughbred Racing” as well as other honors from the Society of Professional Journalists, Radio and Television News Directors Association, Kentucky Broadcasters Association and The Associated Press.

He landed his dream job at Churchill Downs in 1997 and became Vice President of Racing Communications in 1999. As publicist for the track, Asher was charged with promoting and protecting its legacy. In 2001, he helped lead the $126 million renovation of the historic facility.

Asher’s horse industry honors include the Kentucky Thoroughbred Owners’ Warner L. Jones Jr. Horseman of the Year award; the Charles W. Englebardt Award for excellence in media coverage from the Kentucky Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders; the Dean Eagle Award from the Knights of Columbus; and a media award from the Kentucky Horsemen’s Benevolent and Protective Association.

Asher received a bachelor’s degree in Journalism from WKU and was well-known for his support of and enthusiasm for his alma mater. A Lifetime Member of the WKU Alumni Association, he was a member of the WKU Greater Louisville Alumni Chapter and a member of both the Maharian Honors College at WKU Parents Advisory Council and the WKU Alumni Association Board of Directors, where he served as President in 2007-2008. Asher also received a Volunteer of the Year Award from WKU and was honored by the WKU School of Media.

Asher died Aug. 27, 2018, at the age of 62. He is survived by his wife, Dee, and three daughters.

Among the tributes after his death: The John Asher Scholarship Fund was established at WKU, a portion of Kentucky 299 near Leitchfield was renamed as the “John Stephen Asher Memorial Highway”; and a section of Central Avenue near Churchill Downs was renamed as “John S. Asher Way.”

Dr. Jack BRITT ('66)

Dr. Jack Britt ('66) has been making a difference in the fields of agriculture, education, research and entrepreneurship since his days on the family farm in Warren County.

As a consultant on animal agriculture and as a visionary for the dairy industry. He leads a team of experts from around the world who have been studying what dairy farming may look like in the future.

As a researcher in reproductive physiology, Dr. Britt’s work on compromised ovarian function of dairy cows during reduced nutrition, known as the “Britt Hypothesis,” is still being studied by graduate students worldwide. As an author, he has had 720 technical articles, papers and more published in numerous journals.

Dr. Britt has received numerous awards and recognition for his teaching, research and service.

He remains a supporter of WKU, where he established the Jack and Frances Britt Fund for Innovation and Learning in 2018.

Dr. Britt lives in Etowah, N.C. He and his late wife, Frances, had two daughters, Heather and Stephanie.
In the past 25 years, Travis Hudson ('94) has turned the WKU Volleyball program into a consistent conference champion and a player on the national stage.

Hudson, who grew up in Bee Spring in Edmonson County, came to WKU with a goal of becoming the first person in his family to earn a college degree. He worked two jobs while pursuing a bachelor’s degree in Business Management with a Marketing emphasis. He graduated in 1994.

Hudson joined the WKU Volleyball program in the early 1990s, served as an Assistant Coach for three years and was Interim Head Coach on two occasions. In 1995, Hudson was named Head Coach at the age of 24, making him the nation’s youngest head coach at the time. His first team finished with a 7-26 record and the next two teams went 18-17 and 9-22. Then in 1998, the team posted a 26-10 record and has never finished below .500 since, as Hudson has built WKU into a championship-caliber program that has appeared in 12 NCAA Tournaments.

Hudson’s Lady Toppers earned 10 Sun Belt Conference regular-season championships and five conference tournament championships. Since joining Conference USA in 2014, WKU Volleyball has won five of six possible regular season and tournament championships.

In 2018, WKU Volleyball posted its 19th straight 20-win season, and Hudson earned his 600th win as Head Coach. In 2019 the team made history again by reaching the 30-win mark for the eighth time in 18 seasons and earning the No. 15 national seed. More than 9,500 fans attended the first-ever NCAA Volleyball Tournament matches held in Diddle Arena. WKU closed with a 32-2 record to secure the team’s best-ever season winning percentage of .941.

After the 2019 season, Hudson was named the AVCA South Region Coach of the Year for the sixth time of his career and won conference Coach of the Year honors for the eighth time. Hudson has also worked with USA Volleyball, helping guide the USA Women’s Junior National Training Team in 2017 and the U.S. Women’s Collegiate National Team in 2019.

Hudson continues to push his players to climb higher on the court and in the classroom. The Lady Toppers boast a 100 percent graduation rate in Hudson’s tenure and have earned numerous academic awards. The program also supports Hope for Harlie and the Friends of Jaclyn Foundation, a charitable, non-profit organization that strives to enhance and strengthen the support system built around children with pediatric brain tumors. Hudson and his wife, Cindy, live in Bowling Green. They have two sons, Andrew and Tyler, an incoming WKU freshman.

Elizabeth ('10, '14, '19) and Matt Groves ('11) of Bowling Green, Ky., announce the birth of their son, Micah Charles, on Sept. 11, 2019.
For love of the story

S

he’s already found great success as a producer for both small- and large-screen productions, but one WKU alumna is branching out with her first foray into fiction writing.

Deb Spera (’83) of North Hollywood, Calif.—who has produced iconic shows such as Criminal Minds, and Army Wives—published her first novel, Call Your Daughter Home, last year.

Set in South Carolina in 1924, the novel shares the voices of three women, Annie Cates in the midst of an influential southern family and a businesswoman in her own right; Reta Biddles is the first-generation daughter of slaves who works for the Cates—the same family who once owned her. And Gertrude Pardue is a mother of four and a woman who said she didn’t think my works were shore stories. She said they were novels in disguise and wanted me to begin with the first story, originally titled Alligator, and expand from there. That story became Call Your Daughter Home."

Her first reaction was to "cry on the couch for two weeks," but then she took a deep breath, envisioned the story and simply began. Even though she was afraid to fail, Spera gave herself permission to "write badly" for one hour every day.

"Giving myself permission to fail freed me," she noted. "It allowed me to take chances and follow my inner voice. It allowed me the freedom to rewrite and discover the story and characters as I went. Allowing for failure was liberating."

At a producer, Spera said she was a "middlewriter," as she helped them give birth to their own vision for a show or a movie.

"Being on the flip side was not only enlightening, it was breathtaking," she said. "I love the notes process, and I had really smart people helping me along the way. I found I loved rewriting. As importantly, I’ve learned in a much deeper way how to work with other writers."

Spera’s love for a good story has always been key to her success as a producer.

"Working as an executive producer is a big job," she said. "I’ve learned an enormous amount from him. I call him my secret weapon and the love of my life.”

Today, her community includes her three “remarkable” children: Rachel, 27, Nick, 24, and Ruth, 18, as well as her husband of 31 years, Rob, a teacher and director at the American Film Institute.

"Rob and I share a passion for story and adventure," she said. "I’ve learned an enormous amount from him. I call him my secret weapon and the love of my life.“

As for what’s next, Spera is currently writing her second novel and has a few television shows in development with AMC.

"I’m doing something a few of pieces I’d love to get my hands on," she said. "There is a book I’ve loved for more than 30 years that I want to produce as a show, and I believe there is a show in the work I’m doing. We shall see. Those things take time."

Time and tenacity are the largest components of advice Spera gives to students who are looking for success in similar fields.

"My advice is: you will always be, follow your curiosity and read. You can’t just ‘like’ to read, find another profession. Reading and being able to analyze and dissect a story is the cornerstone of produciing. If you have a piece of material you want to do, then do it. Don’t wait for permission. Raise the funds, gather your friends, create a web series or make a short film.

"I’ve said two web series I’ve found because the voice was so unique and refreshing," she continued. "Begin. You aren’t too young or too old. Age is only a three-letter word. The entertainment business is rapidly changing, and the need for original and regional voices is stronger than ever. Don’t need to go to Hollywood to make it. Let Hollywood come to you. Just keep reading, creating and learning.” • CAROL CUMMINGS (’92, MA)
Class Notes allow alumni to update fellow classmates on significant accomplishments and events in their lives. If you wish to publish announcements in Class Notes, please submit them by mail to WKU Alumni Association, 292 Alumni Ave., Suite 309, Bowling Green, KY 42101 or via email at alumni@wku.edu.

1930s
Kathryn Gilbert ('39) of Bowling Green, Ky., celebrated her 90th birthday on Nov. 30, 2009.

1940s
Noble Mock (46, 61, 73) of Whitleyville, Ky., celebrated his 100th birthday on Aug. 30, 2019, with festivities planned by his local community and American Legion.

1950s
Former WKU Alumni Association Executive Director Leo Robertson ('56, 57, 58) of Bowling Green, Ky., celebrated his 90th birthday on a socially distanced parade at his home on June 16, 2020. Robertson still works as Special Assistant to the Vice President for Philanthropy and Alumni Engagement at WKU.

Keni Hendricks ('53) of Hisdon, Tenn., was inducted by the Chattanooga-Central High Alumni Association Sports Hall of Fame.

Guy Newton ('56, 63) of Jefferson, Ind., was recently recognized for his work as Columbus Head Football Coach with a field named in his honor. In 1977, Newton was also honored by the Indiana Football Coaches Association on the occasion of his 100th football coaching win. At that time, Sharon Lee Miller ('65, A) WKU Athletic Hall of Fame inductee, was a member of Newton's coaching staff. Newton also a member of the 1952 WKU football team that was inducted into the WKU Athletic Hall of Fame last fall.

1960s
Rev. Harry Todd ('42) of Cadiz, Ky., has been named Pastor of Herons United Methodist Church.

Charles Medley ('64) of Overbrooks, Ky., was inducted into the Kentucky Bourbon Hall of Fame. He also recently retired as Master Distiller at Medley Distillery Co., Charles Medley Distillery.

The 1965 Homecoming Queen was unpublished at the fall 2019 issue of WKU Spirit. Linda Joyce Thomas ('66, 68, A), who now lives in Lexington, Ky., was crowned Homecoming Queen on Oct. 23, 1965. We regret the error.

Romeo Crennel ('68, 70, L) of Houston, Texas, was named the "Dr. O." Ziemer Award from the Pro Football Writers Association (PFWA) for lifetime achievement as an assistant coach.

1970s
Former Football Huggins-John Bargh of Madisonville, Ky., was inducted into the 2019 class of the WKU Athletic Hall of Fame.

Dr. Stephen Greiner ('71) of Winton, W.Va., was inducted into the 2019 class of the University of Kentucky Athletic Hall of Fame.

Leonard Pyszynski Jr. ('72, L) of Synopsis, N.Y., a Professor of Geography at Douglass Community College, is serving a third term on the College's Faculty Senate.

Sister Marie Carol Cecil ('73), an Ursuline Sister of Mount St. Joseph, at Maple Mount, Ky., celebrated her 70th year of religious life with Mount Saint Joseph in Maple Mount. She was an American Worker in Overbrooks from 1997-2000 and provided clerical assistance and transportation at the Motherhouse in Maple Mount. She is active in the American Legion.

Chief Justice John Dean Minton Jr. ('74, L) of Bowling Green, Ky., was inducted into the Kentucky Legal Aid Ambassadors Circle for his dedication to improving the justice system and equal access to legal services. He was also re-elected as Kentucky Supreme Court Chief Justice.

Kenny Scymanski ('76) of Charlotte, N.C., received the 2018 Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Association of Apartment Associations. He is Executive Director of the Apartment Association of North Carolina and the Greater Charlotte Apartment Association.

Doyle Cunningham ('76, 77, A) of Prospect, Ky., and his wife, Kathy Lenz Bicknell Cunningham, are enjoying retirement. Together, the couple has four children and four grandchildren. Originally from Lexington, Ky., Cunningham is an alumnus of Alpha Gamma Rho fraternity at WKU.

Beth Grant ('76) of Louisville, Ky., was promoted from Vice President of Operations to Chief Financial Officer of the Bank of Columbia.

1980s
Dan Lee ('80) of Elizabethtown, Ky., published his sixth book of Civil War History, General Lee's War (2019). A Kentucky Confederate and a Civil War in the West. Lee, whose mentor was the late Dr. Lowell H. Harrison ('46), is currently working on a history of the Mobile & Ohio Railroad in the Civil War.

Denise Baker ('81) of Raleigh, N.C., has been selected to participate in the Leadership Institute Master Class (LINC), a year-long program with Project Management Institute (PMI). Baker currently serves as a Chapter President of North Carolina Project Management Institute (NCPMI) with more than 1,900 members in Research Triangle Park, N.C.

Greg Billingsley ('81) of Robinson, Ill., retired as Editor of the Robinson Daily News after a 37-year journalism career.

Nick Howe ('81) of Lexington, Ky., has been elected as the 2021 Chairman of the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce. He is Senior Vice President of American Water Services Southeast Division and President of KY-American Water in Lexington.

Susan Hinton Creek ('79, 85, L) of Portland, Tenn., has retired as Librarian at Portland High School after a 40 year career in education.

Jeff Taylor ('82) of Hopkinsville, Ky., was appointed by Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear as Commissioner for Business Development. Taylor has more than 35 years of experience in the economic development profession, including 11 years with Tennessee Valley Authority, where he retired as a Senior Project Manager in Economic Development. Most recently, he served as President and CEO of Logan County Economic Development in Eugeneus, Ala.

George Nichols III ('83, L) of Florence, M.D., was honored as Alice Lloyd College's Alumnus of the Year. Nichols is also a WKU Regents.

Dr. Terry Daniels ('84) of Bowling Green, Ky., was appointed to the Board of Directors of Bowling Green Municipal Utilities.

Cindy Dodd ('84) of Franklin, Ky., was named the 2019 Midmer Private Company winner of Nashville Business Journal's CFO of the Year award.

Nick Lowe ('85) of Hopkinsville, Ky., has been elected as the 2021 Chairman of the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce. He retired from Kentucky High School Basketball Hall of Fame in Elizabethtown, Ky.

Eisenmann ('85, L) of Bowling Green-Warren County Chamber of Commerce was elected as the 2020 Chairman of the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce. He is President of Parthenon LLC in Lexington, Ky.

Thomas Powell ('85) of Fayetteville, N.C., has been appointed Chief Legal Officer for Cape Fear Valley Health System. A native of Louisville, Ky., he has 25 years of legal experience and previously served as Assistant Vice President and Assistant General Counsel for Norton Healthcare. Prior to that, he served as Assistant General Counsel for the Hospital Division for Kindred Healthcare. Powell earned a Juris Doctorate degree with High Distinction from the University of Nebraska College of Law in Lincoln, Neb.

Ben Baldwin ('86) of Bowling Green, Ky., has been named Vice President for Sales at Old American Insurance Co.

Claudia Eisenmann ('86) of Willow Park, Ky., President and CEO of Gibson General Hospital, will take on the additional role as CEO of Methodist Health Union County.

Jeff Taylor ('82) of Hopkinsville, Ky., was appointed by Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear as Commissioner for Business Development. Taylor has more than 35 years of experience in the economic development profession, including 11 years with Tennessee Valley Authority, where he retired as a Senior Project Manager in Economic Development. Most recently, he served as President and CEO of Logan County Economic Development.

Dale Cardwell ('85) of Atlanta, Ga., recently authored Don't Get Screwed: Get Smart, a book designed to help readers learn to identify a scam and avoid getting involved. Cardwell is Owner/Consumer Investigator with TrustDale.com.

D. Neil Brady ('86) of Jasper, Ind., has been named President and Chief Operating Officer at German American Bank.

Retired Army Gen. Jack Keane (76, 80) of McLean, Va., received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor.

THUMBS-UP! George Meyers ('66, 67)


THUMBS-UP! Larry Goldersheimer ('71, L)

Larry Goldersheimer ('71, L) of Bowling Green, Ky., released his third novel, The Girl on the Bench, which shares how a chance encounter can change two lives in ways they never expected.
FILLIO
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California, has been named Vice President of commercial litigation and litigation-Executive Law, which helps clients who have made significant contributions to advancing policy within the workplace or in the Chicago area. Payne serves as Executive Director of the American Medical Association Foundation before a 30-year career in health law. Since 2012, he has also been Immediate Past President of the AMA Association Board of Directors.

Jeff Phillips (’94, ’96) of Hendersonville, NC, has been named the Hendersonville School Board Director of the Hendersonville High School Band.

Cynthia Williams Beauv (’90, ’95) of Lancaster, Ky., was awarded the 2019-2020 Foundation Professorship, the highest honor for excellence bestowed by Eastern Kentucky University. The annual award recognizes those who demonstrate outstanding abilities in the three primary roles of faculty members: teaching, service, and research. Beauv’s third book was recently published, Developing Young Voices, and Inventions: Modern Lessons from Historical Themes is the third in a series of books educating exploring visual history themes through time.

Joe Vitale (’42) of Irving, Texas, has joined Extensive Networks as Chief Revenue Officer.

Retired Col. Richard Parker (’86) of Lexington, Ky., was named to the U.S. News & World Report 2020 Hiltop Nation. Parker was killed in a 15-car crash in Turn 3. “Continued Stilley. “Even though we didn’t shake hands or talk to each other the next morning or the next day, she’s never been mundane to cover,” he said.

Governing my first 500 in 1968 was my most memorable,” said Stilley. “Back then, motorists writers covered the race from an under-hang section near the penhouse seats and facing the pits. I had an awesome view of the parade laps, but on the final pace lap and looking toward Turn 4, the crowd would gas as the cars came into view — the flying start one of the most colorful, but extremely dangerous starts I’ve ever witnessed in motorsports.”

Stilley’s work has won awards over the years that have included a UPI Indiana News Editors Award for a two-part feature on Kwaluwke Bucks star Joni McCool, an Indiana Society of Professional Journalists Award and an American Speed Association Award, among others. “Each 500 writes its own history,” continued Stilley. “It is called the greatest spectacle in racing because of its pre-race ceremonies of marching bands, patriotic salute to U.S. armed forces, the traditional singing of Back Home Again in Indiana and the military plane flyover. Indeed, it’s a tradition that is unsurpassed in the world of sports.”

As part of the Stilley’s W主角 in Indianapolis 500 for 53 consecutive years

For as long as Al Stilley (’67) can remember, sports and racing have always fascinated him.

As Editor of The Southside Voice in Indianapolis, Ind., the 76-year-old recently covered his 53rd consecutive Indianapolis 500 race, and he doesn’t plan on stopping there.

Stilley grew up in Speedway, Ind., and racing is an important part of his childhood memories.

“I’m a cars kind of guy. I like to know what’s going on with my family’s cars, and I’ve always been fascinated by racing. I’ve been interested in it since I was young.”

Since 1967, Stilley has been covering the Indianapolis 500, once the world’s largest and most prestigious motorsport event. He has interviewed drivers, drivers’ families, team members, and other industry leaders, capturing the excitement and history of this iconic race.

“I’ve been covering the 500 for over 50 years now,” said Stilley. “It’s been an incredible experience, and I’m excited to continue covering it for many more years to come.”

Stilley’s work has been recognized with numerous awards, including the National Association of Automobile Journalists’ “Best Motorsports Writer” award.

The Indianapolis 500 is one of the most anticipated events in motorsports, with millions of fans tuning in to watch the race.

“Stilley’s coverage of the 500 has been exceptional,” said Gordon Jones, a leading motorsports journalist. “He’s truly captured the spirit of the race and the people who make it happen.”

Stilley’s commitment to covering the Indianapolis 500 has earned him a devoted following among fans of motorsports.

“I look forward to Stilley’s coverage of the 500 every year,” said Jennifer Chambers, a long-time fan of the race. “He’s a true expert on the subject, and his writing is always spot-on.”

As Stilley continues to cover the Indianapolis 500, he remains dedicated to capturing the excitement and history of this iconic race, and he looks forward to many more years of covering the race for his fans around the world.

Meet Al Stilley (’67): Journalist who has covered the Indianapolis 500 for 53 consecutive years.
Bryan Everett ('95) of Mechanicsburg, Ky., has been named Chief Executive Officer of MobilityWorks, a leading provider of commercial wheelchair vans with lifts.

Michael Hicks ('95) of Owensboro, Ky., celebrated 25 years of his business for his company, A Unique Video.

Rebecca Adams Simpson ('95) of Bowling Green, Ky., has been appointed by the board of Governors of the Kentucky Bar Association to serve a three-year term on the Board of Trustees for KLAU (Law Student Trustee). Representing Kentucky's Second Supreme Court District, Simpson will help administer the fund that dispenses grants in the form of legal aid to poor persons, local pro bono programs and other initiatives that improve the administration of justice in Kentucky. She is a partner in English, Lucas, Fitts & O'Dwyer, LLP.

Brad Wheeler ('95, '96, '06) of Bowling Green, Ky., was named a Wealth Advisor to provide brokerage and advisory services for Level Wealth Management.

Dr. Wendy Wilkerson ('95) of Richmond, Ky., has been named Director of Special Education at Talawanda City Schools in Tullahoma, Tenn.

Drobie Wyatt ('95) of Somerset, Ky., has been named Director of Federal Programs and Leadership Development at Harrodsburg Schools.

Suzanne Brodman ('94) of Morgantown, Ky., was inducted into the Montgomery Care & Rehab Hall of Fame.

Col. Edward Chilton III ('94) of Elisabethown, Ky., was promoted to the rank of Colonel with the U.S. Army.

FALL 2020

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Col. Edward Chilton III ('94) of Elisabethown, Ky., was promoted to the rank of Colonel with the U.S. Army.
Broderick Davis ('01) of Glasgow, Ky., who teaches at Austin-Tracy Elementary, was named Barren County Elementary Teacher of the Year by the Barren County School Board.

Andy Tauer ('01) of Monrovia, Ind., has been named Public Policy Director for Indiana Farm Bureau.

Tammy Haggard ('02) of Nicholasville, Ky., was named Chief Executive Officer of Bourbon Community Hospital in Paris.

Rod Harkleroad ('02) of Nickery, N.C., was named Distinguished Educator at the University of Southern Indiana, appointed by the Utah Attorney General.

Joy Knight ('02, '05) of Bowling Green, Ky., was named Family and Consumer Sciences Teacher of the Year by the Kentucky Farm Bureau.

Tommy Haggard ('02) of Bowling Green, Ky., was named Principal of Bowling Green-Warren County Regional Airport.

Ryan Emerick ('02) of Louisville, Ky., has been named President of the University of Pikeville.

Joyce Kelly ('02) of Glasgow, Ky., was included in Marquis Who's Who.

Sheryl McDaniels ('02) of Owensboro, Ky., has accepted a position as Daviess County High School Principal.

Broderick Davis ('01) of Bowling Green, Ky., has been promoted to Chief Financial Officer of First National Bank in New Bremen.

The University of Pikeville. For information on upcoming events at the University of Pikeville, please visit www.upike.edu.

Andrea Anderson ('03) of Bowling Green, Ky., has transitioned to the role of UW General Counsel.

Michael R. Park ('03) of Bowling Green, Ky., was honored as outstanding member of the U.S. Navy.

Teresa Herms ('04) of Bowling Green, Ky., has been named Assistant Principal at First Baptist Morehead.

Amanda Jones ('04) of Bowling Green, Ky., has been named Principal of North Hardin High School.

Lauren Armstrong Parsons ('04) of Louisville, Ky., has been elected National President.

Andrea Anderson ('03) of Bowling Green, Ky., has been named Director of Career and Technical Education.

Barb Slavin ('04) of Bowling Green, Ky., has been named Assistant Principal at First Baptist Morehead.

Sarah Vannoost ('04) of Bowling Green, Ky., has been named Assistant Principal at Bowling Green High School.

Jennifer Brooks ('04) of Bowling Green, Ky., has been named Principal of Warren East High School in Bowling Green.

Juliette Jackson ('04) of Bowling Green, Ky., has been named Assistant Principal at First Baptist Morehead.

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**THUMBS-UP! Chris Kramer ('98)\**

**THE GOOD THINGS IN LIFE: A Nurse's Story of Connection.** Published by Cincinnati Book Publishing, the book offers life lessons in good nursing practice and true stories that illuminate the healing powers of human connection. Kramer, a Pediatric Nurse and Clinical Quality Specialist, has previously published peer-reviewed articles that focus on clinical intervention and improvement.

Linda Steed ('12, '15) of Bowling Green, Ky., was promoted to Executive Vice President of Marketing and Advertising at Service One Credit Union. She began her Service One career in 2002 as a Teller and later served as Head Teller, Marketing Director and, most recently, as Marketing and Member Development Specialist.

Calie Cessna ('13) of Henderson, Ky., has joined the staff of WSHK FM in Nashville, Tenn., as a Fax Manager.

Amy Correll-Reid ('13, '14) of Senertex, Ky., received the Global Citizenship Award at the seventh annual Mohammad Ali Humanitarian Awards program for her work as CEO and Founder of ON (Children's Hospital) in Kenya.

Tessa Dull ('13) of Louisville, Ky., was part of the Courier-Journal news staff that won the 2020 Pulitzer Prize for Breaking News Reporting.

Dr. Brittany Evans Hamilton ('13) of Stearns Corp., Ky., has opened Maple Family Dentistry in Morgantown.

Rachel McDrinn ('13, '15) of Birmingham, Ala., has joined the Habitat City Corporate team as an Event Marketing Specialist.

Adam Olte ('13) of Gervilleton, Ky., was appointed by Kentucky Gov. Matt Bevin last year as a commissioner on the Kentucky Board of Nursing.

Brian Uphus ('13) of Smiths Grove, Ky., has joined the Fullerton Family Dentistry in Maysville.

Dana Freeman ('14) of Washington, D.C., has joined the Washington Post as a Staff Photographer.

Grant Hughes ('14, '16, '19) of Owensboro, Ky., was hired as a Preparatory Sports Nutritionist.

Hell Shah ('14) of Smyrna, Ga., was one of 16 architects and designers selected to participate in AIA Georgia's Christopher Kelly Leadership Development Program 2019-2020 Class.

Alice Storm ('14) of Detroit, Mich., has been named Principal at New Belgium Brewing Co.

Jon Goudreau ('14) of North Bergen, N.J., has joined the Fullerton Family Dentistry in Maysville.

Brandon Jones ('14) of Bowling Green, Ky., has been named to the Zionsville Board of Education.

Brian Johnson ('15) of Bowling Green, Ky., has been named Principal at St. John the Baptist School.

Jennifer McMann ('15) of Evansville, Ind., has been named Development Director of St. Joseph Peace House.

Jason Ross ('15) of Bowling Green, Ky., has been promoted to Senior Branch Manager at Service One Credit Union.

Dr. Ellen Voss White ('15) of Farmington, Ky., joined the practice of Lake Pendleton Dental Care in Somerset. Lake Pendleton Care was featured in the Winter 2020 issue of 101 Foothills magazine, a quarterly dental business publication. This is only the second time a Kentucky practice has been featured in that publication.

Hunter Burd ('16) of Waycross, Ga., was hired for the new NFL Convention of Simpson County.

Brian Choin ('16) of Branson, Mo., has been promoted to National Account Manager for Bigamoy Auctions Company.

Collins Cooper ('16) of Louisville, Ky., has joined the Kentucky's American Soybean Association Greener Young Leaders.

Grant Hughes ('16, '19) of Owensboro, Ky., has joined the Team at Progressor Rehab Sports Therapy.

Gerron Hart ('16) of Louisville, Ky., has joined the Kentucky's American Soybean Association Greener Young Leaders.

Brian Johnson ('16) of Bowling Green, Ky., has been named Principle at Zionsville Board of Education.

Kevin Haggard ('12) of Louisville, Tenn., has been named Assistant Professor of Social Work in the College of Public Service at Tennessee State University.

James Howard ('12) of Owensboro, Ky., was selected as the Fire Chief for the City of Owensboro.

Tyler Jary ('12) of Louisville, Ky., opened a new brick-and-mortar store for their leather business, Daze & Ceyne.

Jonathan Lister ('12) of Louisville, Ky., has been named Senior Director of Public Relations and Communications at Louisville City Football Club.

Luke Stewart ('12, '15) of Bowling Green, Ky., has been named Executive Vice President of Marketing and Advertising at Service One Credit Union. She began her Service One career in 2002 as a Teller and later served as Head Teller, Marketing Director and, most recently, as Marketing and Member Development Specialist.
Saeed Jones ('08) of Newark, N.J., released a memoir, How We Fight for Our Lives. The book was recognized as one of The New York Times’ "100 Notable Books of 2019" and was a winner of the 2019 Kirkkus Prize in Nonfiction and the 2020 Stonewall Book Award-Israel Fishman Nonfiction Award.

**ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT**

Jessica Baladad (‘07): “Feel for your life”

Baladad had breast cancer, which led her to develop the habit of doing monthly breast self-exams.

“While I was going through treatment, I felt fortunate that I found my cancer by doing a breast self-exam,” she said. “As I told my friends about how I found it, I learned that they weren’t doing self-exams, mostly because they didn’t know how.”

Concerned, Baladad began working on a special social media project, "Feel for Your Life," after her second round of chemotherapy.

"Through this project, I share my story, give facts about breast cancer, talk about the importance of doing self-exams and getting screened, and discuss how to advocate for yourself," she explained.

Baladad is encouraged by the stories she hears as a result of her social media campaign.

"I just heard from a young woman who told me she didn’t know how to do a self-exam before finding a lump. She followed the instructions in the app, and went to the doctor, had a biopsy, and pre-cancerous cells were found. Her doctor said if she had waited a year, they would have been a different conversation."

"Breast cancer isn’t just your grandmas or your auntie’s disease," Baladad noted. "Talk to your doctor about your concerns, your family history, and a screening plan that fits your needs. Speak up and let your voice be heard!"

Baladad is Director of Marketing at Cloud Productions, Inc. She and her husband live in Nashville, Tennessee, and just celebrated five years of marriage. To learn more, visit feelforyourlife.com.

Casey Birge (‘10, ‘14) of Madison, Tennessee, was hired as a faculty member of Visalia Academy of South Central Kentucky.

Katie Bouchard (‘15) of Owensboro, Kentucky, was hired as the Family Resource Coordinator at Early Learning Village, which serves preschool and kindergarteners.

Courtney Bridges (‘18) of Owensboro, Kentucky, was named Artistic Director of the Pathfinder One, a new student success center at Owensboro Community & Technical College.

We Caldwell (‘10) of Williamsburg, Kentucky, has been named Athletic Director at Highlands High School in Fort Thomas.

Kathryn Dispenzette (‘10) of Columbus, Ohio, was inducted into the Northeastern P.C. (N.C.) High School Athletics Hall of Fame.

Trevor Edwards (‘10) of Glasgow, Kentucky, and Abbey Lottes (‘10) of Knoxville, Tennessee, opened SMOA Center for Dance in Glasgow.

Sarah Hardison (‘18) of Hopkinsville, Kentucky, was named Coordinator of the new Daily Porter Imagineation Library at Hopkinsville-Christian County Public Library.

Former Lady Topper Dee Gowers (‘18, ‘19) of Lexington, Kentucky, has signed with Club Baloncesto Bembibre out of Liga Femenina Caja Rural, the top women's basketball league in Spain.

Joseph Barksfield (‘19) of Bowling Green, Kentucky, has been hired as an assistant baseball coach at James I. Altman Middle School in Vine Grove.

Bailey Dahlquist (‘17) of Bowling Green, Kentucky, received the WKU Baseball coaching staff for the 2021 season.

Sam McKeen (‘19) of Okemos, Michigan, has joined the WKU Baseball coaching staff for the 2021 season.

Former Hilltopper Jarred Savage (‘19) has signed with Gympulse Sylvan Laura Basketball Club of Greece's top Greek Basketball League.

Eric Scott (‘19) of Richmond, Kentucky, was hired as Director of Police for the City of Bump, Kentucky.

George Smith (‘19) of Owensboro, Kentucky, has been hired at Regenerative Health Sports Therapies.

Halle Black (‘20) of Elizabethtown, Kentucky, has been named a Second-Grade Teacher at Lincoln Trail Elementary School.

Michael Blackshire (‘20) of Louisville, Kentucky, recently received a 2020 inaugural Getty Images-Inclusion Scholarship in partnership with the National Association of Black Journalists. He is pursuing further education at Syracuse University’s Newhouse School of Public Communications.

Joseph Barkoff (‘19) of Bowling Green, Kentucky, has been hired as an assistant coach at Central Hardin Tennis team.

Emily Fabica (‘20) of Bowling Green, Kentucky, has been accepted to the Council on International Education Exchange to teach in South Korea.

Dr. Tara Hewitt (‘20) of Bowling Green, Kentucky, has joined the staff of Dr. Gharab Hummus's office in Meigstoun as a Nurse Practitioner.

Former Hilltopper Cameron Justice (‘20) recently opened Legends Skills Academy with two other former Mr. Basketball honorees. They provide skills training in small group, individual and camp settings.

Ty Storey (‘20) of Fort Smith, Arkansas, has been named Head Coach of Seventh-Grade Football and Basketball at Grimsley Junior High School.

Silas Walker (‘20) of Portland, Oregon, joined the Lee University Lady Logger staff.

Miranda Boy (‘20) of Elizabethtown, Kentucky, has been named an Eight-Grade Teacher at James I. Altman Middle School in Vine Grove.

Kayla Bitto (‘20) of Elizabethtown, Kentucky, has been named Assistant Coach of the Central Hardin Tennis team.

Elizabeth (‘10, ‘14, ‘19) and Matt Brown (‘09) of Bowling Green, Kentucky, announce the birth of their son, Micah Charles, on September 19, 2019.

Liz Lage (‘19) and Alan Brown (‘09) of Bowling Green, Kentucky, announce the birth of their daughter, Julia June, on July 12, 2020. Weighting 7 pounds, 6 ounces and measuring 19 inches long. Julia was welcomed by her sister, Bennett Elizabeth, age 2.

**THUMBS-UP! How We Fight for Our Lives**

Saeed Jones (‘08)
Linda Dennin ('70)

Capturing the spirit of others through portrait paintings

Linda Dennin ('70) of Merchantville, N.J., spends her days working as a Fellow at Studio Incamminati School for Contemporary Realist Art in Philadelphia, Pa. The Fellows program gives graduates, such as Dennin, the opportunity to transition from student to working artist. Fellows also provide training for other artists and perform other school duties in exchange for their own studio space and other benefits.

"Being awarded the fellowship has provided me with opportunities to exhibit my artwork, give demonstrations of my painting and continue my art education, as well as a support system to continue nurturing my career," explained Dennin.

Dennin didn't study art while at WKU. She studied what she calls the abstract format of art at the time was not my taste—I was interested in realism, which wasn't studied then," noted Dennin. "Having a foundation of written art as well, I chose to study journalism and French. As College Heights Herald Assistant Editor and a writer, I pursued verbal creativity and verbal portraits. Bob Adams ('64, '65, L), known affectionately as 'Mr. A.' was instrumental in encouraging and mentoring so many aspiring journalists. He helped students, including me, believe in themselves."

Dennin graduated from Studio Incamminati School for Contemporary Realist Art in 2018 with a Diploma of Fine Art. It took her five years and several summer classes to complete, but she decided it was better late than never to study her true passion of art.

"I realized the benefit of academic structural and classical training," explained Dennin. "I wanted to be a better artist, so I decided to go back to school.

"Now Dennin paints still life, figure, landscape and equine subjects with the goal of portraying what can't be spoken.

"I try to show the beauty, joy and pathos of our world since I can't articulate what surrounds us," said Dennin. "Nature and humanity are direct reflections of God's profundity. I believe we need to reach out to each other in any way possible. Traditional realistic art opens doors for communication."

Last year, her artwork was featured at "The Age of Beauty"—a fundraiser to benefit the Senior Ministry of St. Peter Roman Catholic Church. At the sold-out event, she unveiled 60 portraits of South Jersey senior citizens that she painted using oil paints. Dennin painted the portraits alla prima—meaning she would paint the senior citizens in a three-hour time slot using a one-layer painting technique.

"The purpose of the alla prima is to capture the subjects' indelible spirits," added Dennin.

Dennin is now using the same alla prima style to capture portraits of handicapped individuals.

"I am currently painting a group of handicapped persons employed by Inspirez, which is a call center that employs about 200 people and provides help for Fort Knox veterans, ACA members and other entities," said Dennin.

Dennin says her goal with these alla prima series paintings is to capture the essence of her subjects on canvas.

"I have always had a passion for communicating what I observe," noted Dennin. "It is my desire that viewers of my art see and take time to see again. There's so much beauty and emotion to share and feel."

Dennin does sell her artwork, but she says the art itself is the most important part of her work.

"I am receiving portrait commissions, but the most important objective is to continue creating art," Dennin concluded. "I will keep exhibiting, entering competitions and selling."

To see more of Dennin's artwork visit ldennin.com • ROSE REMENDER
Mr. Robert Wells Adams, ’66
Mrs. Patricia (Dana) Adams, ’75, ’77
Mrs. Dorothy (Ek) Alexander, ’45
Dr. Henry Graf ’R. C. Abbott Jr., ’87
Mr. Richard Dale Adams, ’80, ’83
Mr. Dan Arne,’72
Mr. Jerry D. Anderson, ’50
Mr. Kerrell F. Anderson Jr.
Mr. Lawrence A. Laney, ’49
Mr. Allen Anthony, ’53
Mrs. Dan Anthony Armit, ’70
Mrs. Carol Ann Auvens, ’71
Dr. Martin L. Arnold, ’95
Mr. John A. Arnold, ’70
Mr. Donald F. Amos, ’20
Mr. Don F. Amos, ’20
Ms. Mary Alice Arterburn, ’74
Mr. John Edward Atkinson, ’77
Mr. Stuart Augur, ’72
Ms. Emily Katherine Bailey, ’67
Mr. Samuel C. Baker, ’61
Mr. Paul C. Barr, ’60
Mr. Howard T. Barlow, ’43
Mr. C. D. Barlow, ’54
Mr. Warren B. Bartlett, ’51
Mr. Harry E. Bartlett Jr., ’70
Mr. Nathan Bartlett, ’43
Mr. W. L. Barton Jr.
Mr. Homer I. Barton Jr.
Mr. Elmo M. Barry, ’50
Ms. Ellen Mason Banks, ’76
Mr. G. Burch, ’59, ’69
Mr. Carl J. Arnold, ’51
Mrs. Eleanor Jenkins Bale, ’51
Ms. Emily Katherine Baity, ’74
Mr. William T. Ash, ’41
Mr. Robert Redford Bates, ’64
Dr. Marion E. "Gene" Arnold, ’47
Mr. James Horace Bradley
Mr. W. H. Barron, ’49
Mr. James S. Barksdale, ’51
Mr. James W. Brantley
Mrs. Mary Frances Barlow, ’60
Ms. Ruby Bjolobok
Mr. Robert E. Bartlett
Mrs. Sara Myers, ’50, ’64
Mr. James Robert Barrow, ’52
Mr. Robert F. McAlister
Mr. Donald Lee "Don" Davis, ’48
Mr. Donald Davis, ’48
Mr. Donald L. Davis
Mr. Donald Davis, ’48
Dr. Barbara G. Burch,
Ms. Martha Web Bledsoe,
Ms. Jeanette Burke,
Mr. Bruce R. Blevenger,
Mrs. Dulcie (Keith) Blackwell,
Mr. Joe Bilox,
Dr. William M. Borden Jr.
Mr. Daniel N. Cisco,
Mrs. Tina Renee Cordwell
Mrs. Margaret Roberts Brandon,
Mrs. Nancy Jo (Schermerhorn) Brady,
Mr. James Horace Bradley
Ms. Helen (Schneiter) Coldwell,
Mrs. Martina J. "Toni" Craft
Ms. Ilene "Coti" Craft
Ms. Phyllis Glover Bunnell
Mr. Harold R. Clark,
Ms. Martha Carmel Carrera
Mrs. Barbara Ann Cawley,
Ms. Linda (Phillips) Creel,
Mrs. Martha J. "Toni" Craft
Mrs. Susan Krueger, ’97
Mr. Joseph Ryan Cruise,
Mrs. Martino J. "Tino" Craft
Mrs. Linda (Phelps) Cowles,
Mrs. June l. Cooper,
Mr. Cory R. Cooper,
Mr. W. W. Hardin Field McChesney Jr.
Mr. Perry Eugene "Gene" England
Mrs. Sandra Denton
Mr. Loren Middleton
Mr. Kelly E. Dossey
Dr. David F. Davis, ’79
Mr. Perry Eugene "Gene" England
Dr. Barry F. DeHaan,
Mr. John F. DeHaan,
Mr. Robert M. Davis,
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Mr. Anthony J. Graves, ’58
Ms. Toni M. Kamer, ’51, BU
Mr. Gerald Lance Ryan
Ms. Melissa R. F. Reinke
Mr. Paul A. Feuer
Mr. Ann Frick
Lt. Col. Fredric Fish (Ret.), ’61
Mr. William Bedford Kirk, ’47
Mr. Jack Gottke
Mrs. Nancy Atkins Heldman
Mr. Jeffrey Davis Johnson, ’98
Ms. Pamela A. (Krebs) Grimsley-
Griffin, ’74
Mr. Joseph W. Adams
Mr. Harold A. heating, Sr.
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After World War I, a local oil boom brought speculators and workers to Bowling Green and created a housing shortage. In response, WKU President Henry Hartlin Cherry had architect Henry Wright design a campus community of small cottages for rental by students and faculty. Dubbed "Cherryton" or simply "the Village," the development, located in the area now occupied by Bates-Runner and McLean Halls, grew to 76 houses with a commissary, post office, streetlights, mayor and council. WKU athletes were the last occupants before the Village gave way to new construction in the 1950s.

**Cherryton**

To accommodate a tide of ex-servicemen seeking to continue their education after World War II, WKU hastily procured an assemblage of trailers, barracks and other prefabricated structures formerly used by defense workers around the country. Bound by what is now Regents Avenue, Normal Drive and Avenue of Champions, Veterans Village offered cramped facilities and basic amenities, but the community included study rooms, apartments for married veterans and a day care center for more than 100 resident children. The Veterans Village Council looked after community affairs. Married students continued to live here until the last of the structures disappeared in the 1970s.

**Rock House**

Its facing of large, irregular stones made it one of WKU's most unique structures. Located at the corner of College and 15th streets, the Rock House was variously a private residence, meeting house, music studio, men's residence hall, international student office and anthropology lab. In the 1950s, it was home to a close-knit group of women students and a house mother. Enjoying their proximity to Cherry Hall and the Goal Post campus hangout, some of the women lived in this "Little Dorm" over their entire college careers. The Rock House was demolished in 2012.

**Diddle Dorm**

Purchased by WKU in 1926, this once-private residence on State Street behind what is now College High Hall was used for music instruction and as student housing. In 1950, Basketball Coach E.A. Diddle moved in and invited his players to accompany him. The athletes moved out when Diddle retired in 1964, but returned in 1979 after the house was renovated to continue their tradition of retreat, study and team bonding. Diddle Dorm was razed in 1994, but the home's archway and stone steps survive as part of Diddle Park.

**Veterans Village**

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We love to showcase our alumni who share their WKU spirit! Use #WKUALUMNI and tag us @wkualumni.