

# CARDINAL CADENCE

THE MAGAZINE OF LAMAR UNIVERSITY

VOL. 52, NO. 1 | EARLY SPRING 2024



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## | FROM THE **PRESIDENT** |



**A**s we continue our Centennial Celebration this spring and welcome a New Year, I find myself thinking more and more about Lamar University's second century. We will go down in history as the authors of this second chapter, whether we are here to witness the full unfolding or not. And so I urge you to make the time to engage with our vibrant community—our students, faculty, staff, alumni and supporters—and join them

in envisioning how our programs and collaborations with business and community can improve the University, Southeast Texas and beyond.

In this issue, we shine a spotlight on Carolyn Keating's remarkable \$5 million endowment gift, and explore the transformative impact of the new Carolyn J. Keating Center for Academic and Career Success in the College of Engineering. Learning of Mrs. Keating's gift just before our previous issue of *Cardinal Cadence* went to press was a moment of tremendous pride, so I was pleased to be able to include a brief announcement about the gift in my letter to you last time. Our feature story for the current issue, however, delves deeper into this visionary gift, detailing its profound influence on engineering education at Lamar. I hope you'll take the opportunity to read not only about the Keating Center's programs and mission, but also about Carolyn and Tom Keating and their remarkable partnership. Their story explains beautifully why Mrs. Keating framed her major gift in the way she did.

Carole's generosity has already inspired an additional \$1 million gift from Cynthia and Larry Norwood, which will allow us to expand engineering recruiting efforts in targeted areas of Texas. Witnessing this ripple effect of philanthropy is, no doubt, heartening for our community. It provides a strategic model for building donor relationships and running future campaigns that align closely with our unique and evolving mission.

I can't emphasize enough the transformative power of collective giving. Gifts like Mrs. Keating's not only fund specific projects but also create a snowball effect, igniting a spirit of generosity that propels us towards our goals. As we begin our second century, let's work together to continue this legacy of giving and of excellence. Together, we can ensure the next hundred years are marked by even greater achievements and advancements.

With Cardinal Pride,

  
**Jaime R. Taylor**, President



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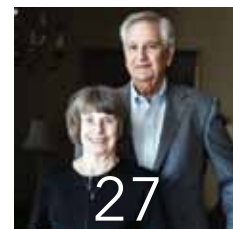
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# Empowering engineers, transforming lives:

THE CAROLYN J. KEATING CENTER FOR ACADEMIC AND CAREER SUCCESS

by Brooke Barnett



Carole Keating and Juan Zabala

**C**arolyn Keating '67 is proud to say that her recent endowment gift, creating the Carolyn J. Keating Center for Academic and Career Success in the College of Engineering, is the perfect combination of her late husband Tom's passion for engineering and her own belief in the importance of good communication.

She is honored to have collaborated with President Jaime Taylor, Vice President of University Advancement and CEO of the Lamar University Foundation Juan Zabala, and leaders in the College of Engineering to create this unique, visionary initiative.

"As we take our first steps in establishing the Center, we're entering a crucial phase in our commitment to engineering education," President Jaime Taylor said. "Mrs. Keating's generous donation is a strategic investment in the enduring success of LU students. By enhancing the national reputation of engineering





education at Lamar, her gift has the power to inspire other significant contributions that will transform the entire university. This initiative is a testament to the forward-thinking spirit of our supporters and underscores the enduring impact of philanthropy on the overall student experience at Lamar University.”

Both Carolyn and Tom Keating are 1967 graduates of Lamar University. Tom graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Industrial Engineering and Carolyn earned a Bachelor of Arts in English.

“This is the very definition of a ground-breaking gift,” said Zabala. “Carolyn is empowering LU to provide our students with an educational experience that otherwise would not be available to them. She wanted to change the world—at Lamar—and she helped us imagine what that would look like.”

The Center is at the intersection of the Keatings’ values and the long-term goals of the University. Lamar has a long-standing commitment to high-quality education for engineering students.

This gift will allow Lamar to reach students earlier in the educational process to provide programming and mentoring to encourage underrepresented middle school students. At the other end of the educational spectrum, it will provide practical learning experiences for Lamar students, including valuable internships and co-op opportunities, allowing them to enter engineering careers fully prepared.

Keating with Larry and Cynthia Norwood

## Strategic gift magnifies opportunity

When Cynthia ’72 and Larry Norwood ’73 decided to support high school graduates from the high schools they each attended, the Carolyn J. Keating Center for Academic and Career Success provided the perfect avenue. The couple recently gave a \$1 million gift in support of the Center, creating an endowment focused on recruiting graduates from Dayton and Liberty high schools with interest in any discipline of engineering offered at Lamar. The scholarships from the endowment will be managed through the new Center for Academic and Career Success.

“This is the second engineering scholarship endowment we have established. The first endowment was established in 2012 for chemical engineering majors. Having an opportunity to meet with chemical engineering scholarship recipients and see the impact of our scholarships, we were interested in trying to do more,” Larry explained.

Larry, a former chair of the College of Engineering Advisory Council (COEAC), currently serves on a COEAC team focused on undergraduate recruiting, so this new endowment provides a way to bring in potential engineering majors specifically from the schools he and Cynthia attended.

“I believe the new Center will have a major impact on the success of future Lamar graduates,” Larry adds. “It is our hope that this endowment, working in conjunction with the Center, will help prepare future Lamar graduates to meet the needs of industry and enable them to make the most of employment opportunities. It will help Lamar students improve their soft skills that are critical to career success in engineering.”

The Norwoods believe that alumni can provide key resources to the University, in terms of donations, volunteering, mentorship and community engagement.

“The thing I have enjoyed most is working with other alumni to make Lamar students and the University more successful,” Larry concludes. “We have over 100,000 alumni. Imagine what could be achieved if we all actively participated in making Lamar more successful.”



The Center also will focus on facilitating the development of essential oral and written communication skills, in collaboration with the Department of English and Modern Languages and Department of Communication and Media.

Zabala agrees that the gift will allow LU to strengthen and expand its engineering programs. "Lamar already provides one of the best education experiences for engineers," he said. "It is the right moment in our history to do something like this. The Center will imbue our graduates with the capacity to communicate, interact and become leaders.

"We aim to change this industry," Zabala added. "Our students will be well prepared to enter the fast-changing world of engineering, ready to work with teams, and equipped to communicate with others, inside and outside the industry."

Keating's desire to support Lamar comes from the knowledge that her gift can have the greatest impact at her alma mater. She hopes her gift will inspire others, including future graduates, to give back to Lamar, so that this becomes a mainstay of University culture: "That's what we do at Lamar—we invest in our future success."



President Jaime Taylor, left, with Juan Zabala and Carole Keating



Carole Keating

## A family business blooms

When Tom Keating and Carolyn "Carole" Johnson were seated across the aisle from each other in Harry Frizzell's freshman English class, no one could have guessed it was a providential moment that would lead to their marriage in September 1966, joint graduation from Lamar in May 1967, and ultimately to a major gift to Lamar University in December 2023.

Following graduation, they moved to Indiana, where Carole taught high school English and Tom earned a master's degree in industrial administration from Purdue University.

After working in industry for several years, Tom and Carole were ready to move back to Texas. With the expertise and guidance of Tom's father, Joe Keating, Tom became the Ford automobile dealer in Tomball, Texas. Their son, Ben, was an infant in 1971 when they packed up their Ford Mustang and drove from Ohio to Tomball, which they would call home for the next 40 years. In time, they were blessed with daughters Laura and Elizabeth. Over many busy years, they nurtured a young family as Tom grew a successful business.

In addition to owning and operating his own business, it had been Tom's long-time dream to plant a pecan orchard. In pursuit of this dream, he obtained soil surveys from the counties around Tomball, perused them, identified the optimum soil, purchased the land, and planted pecan trees on it in 1980.

Carole loved local history. Through her connection to the Tomball Museum Center, she learned of a historic house slated to be sold and moved. The Keatings purchased the house, moved it to the pecan orchard, then restored and transformed it into their treasured home, "Keatingrove," the site of many happy family and community occasions.

The Keatings prospered in the car business. Following the family tradition begun by brothers Joe and Paul Keating, Tom, his siblings and extended family members became automobile dealers in East Texas and the Golden Triangle.

Following Tom's death, Tom and Carole's son, Ben, continued the family legacy. Tomball Ford was recently recognized by Ford Motor Company for the achievement of having been in the same family for 50 years.

Carole's recent endowment gift to Lamar continues the Keating family legacy of growth, hard work and vision.





# Family, friends and community create an inspirational *legacy*

by Lauren Wilson

**A**t just 16 years old, one of the youngest on her high school soccer team, Ashley Brown was the kind of bright spirit that people gravitated toward—someone who could light up a room like sunshine, someone who never failed to make a friend. Her loved ones describe how funny she was, how creative, quick-witted and faithful. “Any parent would say that their daughter was perfect,” said Ashley’s mother, Melanie Psencik, “but she really was.” Now, more than 17 years after the tragic bus accident that took the lives of Ashley and her teammate Alicia Bonura, as Ashley’s mother put it, “She’s still doing great things.” Through the love of her family, friends and community members, Ashley’s legacy continues to burn brightly across Texas and particularly at Lamar University.

Directing the fierce love for Ashley and Alicia into positive change was, in many ways, a challenging journey for the family members and supporters who worked tirelessly to tell the girls’ stories in front of legislators with a mission to create new seatbelt laws for Texas charter and school buses that would prevent tragedies like theirs from happening again. “Telling the story was difficult,” said Ashley’s father, Brad Brown, who helped spearhead these efforts, “but redeeming.” After many dedicated years of testifying, they were ultimately successful; the power of Ashley and her teammates’ story was instrumental in creating a safer Texas for future students.

The impact of Ashley’s story didn’t stop there. Soon after the accident, an incredible outpouring of community support funded the establishment of the Ashley Brown Memorial Regents Scholarship in Soccer at Lamar University. “The giving was inspirational,” said Brad Brown. “It helped us keep Ashley’s memory alive in a meaningful way.”

In the years since, recipients of the scholarship like Dr. Rachelle (Barry) Wilmore ’10, ’12, have come to learn about Ashley through their time at LU and have been forever affected by her legacy. “The scholarship meant so much to me,” says Rachelle, who travelled cross-country to attend LU, became the first in her family to graduate from college and went on to become a Doctor of Physical Therapy. Rachelle describes the impact not only of the financial support from the award, but also of the meaning behind the scholarship, the strong connection she formed with Ashley’s family and the deep inspiration she found in Ashley’s memory. “Hearing about her love for soccer and her family who wanted to honor her—it was emotional,” Rachelle recalled. “That was really powerful. I’m thankful,” she said, “for her love—for that connection.”

Near and far, Ashley continues to spread sunshine—in classrooms, on soccer fields, along journeys, onto new horizons. Her light lives on with every

memory lovingly shared for the first time or the millionth, with every welcome-home hug after a safe bus ride home and with every dream turned into a reality through the support of her scholarship at Lamar University. For students, for parents, for families and friends, the world shines more brightly because Ashley Brown was here.

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**“I’m incredibly honored to be associated with the Ashley Brown Scholarship.”**

—TRINITY CLARK, CURRENT RECIPIENT







# No better experience

by Marilyn Tennissen

**T**o date, more than 1,200 alumni have received superintendent certification or doctoral degrees in educational leadership through LU's programs in the College of Education and Human Development.

Across Texas, LU alumni currently lead more than 93 school districts as superintendents, with more districts each year choosing LU graduates to head their systems, serve in district administration and lead individual schools as principals. One thing area educational leaders agreed on was the impact the faculty had on their experience at Lamar.





## Beaumont Independent School District

"As students, we received so much support from our professors," said **Shannon Allen** '01, '13, superintendent of Beaumont Independent School District. "I use things I learned at the time now in my career." Her career now includes providing support for principals at nearly 30 schools in BISD

but began in a completely different direction. "I wanted to be a medical doctor, and pursued it at Prairie View A&M," Allen said.

But following her mother's advice she became a substitute teacher, and eventually decided to get her teaching certification at Lamar. "Then once I got certified, I decided to get a master's degree," she said. "By that time, I was fully invested in education, I loved every course and loved the professors. Dr. [Elvis] Arterbury was instrumental."

Allen completed her master's degree in education in 2001 and her doctorate in 2013, both at Lamar. As a student she was awarded the W.W. and Hilma R. Breazeale Scholarship in 2012 and was named as Outstanding Doctoral Student. In 2021, she earned the LU Distinguished Alumnae Award.

Allen's career in education has included stints in teaching, school administration as an assistant principal and principal, and service as an assistant superintendent before becoming BISD superintendent in 2019.

She was encouraged by fellow student and now-fellow-superintendent Dwaine Augustine of Hamshire-Fannett school district. "Dwaine was in my class and he said, 'Let's get our doctorates!'" After achieving that milestone and several years in leadership, Allen said serving the community where she grew up is a blessing. "I would never have had this opportunity if it weren't for Lamar.

"It is rare to have a university in your city; we have every opportunity here. There are instructors and students from all over the country. Students at Lamar are exposed to all opportunities available to any college student."



## Port Neches-Groves Independent School District

**Mike Gonzales** '13 has been superintendent of the Port Neches-Groves Independent School District since 2017.

After receiving an undergraduate degree at the University of Texas–Pan American in Edinburg, Gonzales married a Beaumont girl and began

teaching in the area. Before long, he was enrolled in the educational leadership program at Lamar and was awarded a doctorate in 2013. "The program really gave me an upper hand," Gonzales said. "The faculty was outstanding."

In agreement with Allen, he also named Elvis Arterbury as an "awesome professor."

"He made it relevant; it really prepared us," Gonzales said. "The faculty were not just good mentors to us as students but were still available to answer questions or talk even after graduation. When we were well into our careers, they were still willing to talk and listen."

Gonzales must have taken the lessons to heart because in 2021 he was named Region 5 Superintendent of the Year.

He said that people often forget the importance of a university where the student is not just a number. "Our relationships with the professors were unique," he said. "At a bigger university, you blend in. At LU, everyone is respected for who they are." He added that his wife, brother-in-law and sister-in-law all went to LU, and his daughter is about to graduate and carry on the family tradition in education.

## Hamshire-Fannett Independent School District

Hamshire-Fannett district Superintendent **Dwaine Augustine** '95, '97, '01, '09, received his doctorate in education in 2009 after working his way through a bachelor of science in criminal justice, a bachelor of arts in English and a master's in education, all at Lamar.



"Lamar is a family; it's a community," he said, even though there were professors and students from all over the world.

Augustine has been involved in recruiting teachers since 2008, and he has learned that education is what he calls a "local" profession. "You don't generally get recruits from out of the region. You won't get the relocation benefits that a big company can offer. But most of the students I talk to want to stay local.

"I remind them that a local college often doesn't have the same 'glamour' of a big university, but you are still academically competing with them. With today's technology, access to information is the same for everyone. They aren't tethered to Beaumont, the world is wide open," Augustine said.

## Nederland Independent School District

**Stuart Kieschnick** '91, '99, '12, understands about education being "local." The Nederland High School graduate received his undergraduate, master's and doctoral degrees from Lamar and is now superintendent of the district he attended. Superintendent of Nederland school district since 2020, Kieschnick was named 2023 Superintendent of the Year for Region 5.



Kieschnick echoed his peers in stating that his time at Lamar was a "great learning experience. "The professors were excellent and very personable. They created a good learning environment that allowed students to share ideas," he said. The Nederland grad said it is "pretty cool" to be superintendent of the district.

"We want to keep the hometown feeling. We want to go from good to great, which means we don't want to get complacent. I think LU instilled that drive in me."

As for Lamar's record-breaking enrollment this fall, Kieschnick said he believes much of the growth today is due to the ease of online courses. "It has its pluses, the time factor is very important for working men and women. It serves its purpose," he said.

Kieschnick said he would recommend the programs at Lamar to anyone. "I really can't express enough my belief that I could not have had a better experience anywhere," he said.




# Building a legacy through giving:

**GEORGE AND ANN SCHAUMBURG**

*by* Jeff Spoeri





**C**ommitment to Lamar University means something different to everyone. Whether it comes from rooting for Cardinal sports teams; experiences as a student, as a member of the Lamar University community, or perhaps as the parent of a student; or a desire to help students achieve their dreams, those who generously support the university philanthropically have a variety of motivations. When that motivation comes from *employing* Lamar University graduates, though, that is something special indeed, and that spirit is exemplified by the extraordinary estate gift recently made by George Schaumburg Jr. and his wife Ann.

Beaumont natives and childhood sweethearts who have been married for nearly 58 years, neither George nor Ann earned degrees from Lamar University. However, their many years in the community gave them plenty of exposure to the excellent preparation LU provides its students as demonstrated by the oft-cited ability of its graduates to step into professional roles virtually from the day they receive their diplomas. George's father, George J. Schaumburg Sr. (1909-2008), established the firm George J. Schaumburg Consulting Engineers in Beaumont in 1937. "Since then," George Jr. explained, "the firm, renamed as Schaumburg & Polk Inc. upon his retirement in 1973 and led for many years thereafter by me until my own retirement, has provided a variety of civil engineering services throughout Southeast Texas, including Lamar University." George Sr. also was instrumental in the founding of the Lamar University student chapter of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), and George Jr. added, "My dad's commitment to Lamar University also can be seen in the generations of Lamar graduates employed with distinction at his engineering firm over the years." The Schaumburgs' multigenerational appreciation for Lamar University led them to designate an estimated \$2 million portion of their estate to establish the **George J. Schaumburg Jr. and Ann Schaumburg Memorial Scholarship in Civil Engineering**. When it becomes active, the scholarship will assist numerous civil and environmental engineering majors at LU, with a preference for members of the ASCE student chapter and for students hailing from Southeast Texas. "Because of our family's deep respect for and long history with the Civil Engineering program

at Lamar University and our desire to help it continue to produce accomplished and productive graduates for years to come," Ann Schaumburg said, "we are honored to provide this important philanthropic assistance."

For nearly a century now, the Schaumburg family has been active in Beaumont and throughout the region. George Sr. came to Port Arthur in 1931, fresh out of Lehigh University with a degree in Civil Engineering, to work for the Texas Co. He met his wife Dorothy soon thereafter and they married in 1932. The engineering firm that still bears the Schaumburg name performed a variety of projects in and around Beaumont. George Jr. recalled, "We did work for the Port of Beaumont, we did work for the City of Beaumont, we did roads for Jefferson County." Ann added, "They inspected all the bridges in Texas." The firm also has served private clients, such as subdividers, builders and the like with a broad spectrum of civil engineering services. But engineering was not the catalyst for the family connection to Lamar—at least not directly.

George Jr. noted, "My degree was in architecture at the University of Texas, but I found when you graduate as an architect, you don't know how to do business. I needed to know how to build clients, how to pay employees and so on. So I went to business school at Lamar and from that came my affection for the university." He took several business classes and credits them with developing his ability to lead and build his firm into an industry leader locally and regionally.

Retired now and residing in Galveston for the last decade, the Schaumburgs enjoy living near their son John, who manages the family's real estate holdings after some years working with the Galveston Historical Foundation. Their generosity ensures that their legacy will live on for generations of Lamar University civil and environmental engineering students whose paths to educational and career success will be paved by this extraordinary scholarship opportunity. Lamar University is honored to bestow upon the Schaumburgs membership in both the Legacy Society, open to all those who create charitable gifts to LU through their estate plans, and the Spindletop Society, the university's highest recognition for donors. Ann neatly summed up the couple's desires in establishing this scholarship, expressing the hope that it will "encourage students to consider a fulfilling career in civil engineering"—beginning with a degree from Lamar University.





Strait from the heart:

# Henry Strait's devotion to Lamar University and Cardinal baseball

by Jeff Spoeri

**T**ucked in beside Vincent-Beck Stadium, home of Lamar Cardinals baseball, lies a building whose exterior blends in with its surroundings so well that it rarely attracts attention from those driving past on Jim Gilligan Way. However, it is inside that building where the important activity takes place – where

Cardinal ballplayers hone their skills and prepare for the rigors of the baseball season every spring. The building is the H.D. “Tex” & Emma Strait Baseball Training Facility, which opened in 2011, and it exists because of the generosity of Henry ’74 and Fran ’73 Strait.

Strait describes himself as an ardent baseball fan, particularly of the Houston Astros and Lamar Cardinals – not necessarily in that order. He played some ball in high school but not in college, as his attentions then were on his studies, his off-campus job, and the young woman who eventually became his wife. Henry and Fran Strait met as students at Monsignor Kelly High School in Beaumont before continuing their studies at LU. Strait recalled not being very active on campus during his days as a communication major, but he described Fran being a fellow Lamar student as the “best part” of his college experience. It was that off-campus job with the family business, Southeast Texas Water, that really reinforced his connection to Lamar University and the baseball program.

Strait’s father, H.D. “Tex” Strait, first became involved with the water business when he purchased a Culligan dealership in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1956, when Henry was a toddler. Eventually, the senior Strait moved up the ranks within Culligan, becoming a district manager in the area that included Beaumont, then purchasing the Beaumont dealership in 1968, which began a business connection that is now in its third generation. Henry Strait worked in sales for his father’s business throughout his college years, graduated in 1974 and recalls, “I liked what I was doing, so I continued.” He moved into management in the early 1980s and then purchased the dealership, now known as Southeast Texas Water, from his father in 1994. Since 2011, the dealership has stayed in the family under the ownership of Strait’s daughter and son-in-law, Catherine ’03 and Matthew Gilby.

The Lamar baseball program has been a beneficiary of Strait’s and Southeast Texas Water’s generosity in myriad ways other than the training facility. For many years, Southeast Texas Water provided bottled water and coolers for the team before moving

into more formal sponsorships, including paying for baseballs so that kids could keep foul balls “sponsored by Southeast Texas Water: ‘Hey, Culligan Man!’” Strait’s marketing prowess and persuasive powers led to several other local businesses subsequently sponsoring the foul ball promotion, and he moved his own company into a new sponsorship, the “Hey Culligan Man Chug-a-Lug,” which according to Strait was the brainchild of legendary Cardinal baseball head coach Jim Gilligan. “They’d get three kids out there at random from the people in the stands,” Strait recalled, “and they’d chug-a-lug a half-liter bottle of water. Whoever finished first, we’d give them to tickets to an Astros game.” Through this and other connections, Strait and Gilligan became friends, so when Gilligan and then-assistant head coach Jimmy Ricklefsen approached Strait to provide funds for new foul poles, Strait enthusiastically did so, with “Hey, Culligan Man” appearing on the poles for many years.

Strait’s involvement with Lamar University has gone well beyond baseball sponsorships. Along with Bill Geyser ’72 and others, Strait established the Jim Gilligan Scholarship in Baseball to honor his friend, and he continues to give to the scholarship annually. “We’ve supported it every year thereafter by sponsoring the home runs,” Strait noted, as he gives \$100 for each Cardinal round-tripper at home to the scholarship fund. Strait also served two stints as president of the Cardinal Club (1996-97, 2004-05) along with a year as president of the LU Alumni Advisory Board (2006-07).

Baseball clearly is in Strait’s blood. His father was a second baseman as a young man, although he didn’t play professionally, and his grandfathers on both his mother’s and father’s side were players as well – in fact, his paternal grandfather played on a barnstorming team in the 1930s, earning “something like five dollars a game,” Strait said. The Straits’ youngest son also played baseball at his father’s alma mater, Kelly High School in Beaumont. “My mom and dad both loved baseball,” Strait reflected. “They were appreciative of Lamar University and I thought [the training facility] would be a good way to honor them.” Because of Strait’s love of baseball and of Lamar University and thanks to the family’s exceptional kindness, Cardinal players are better prepared and the legacy of his parents is a fixture on Lamar’s campus today.

# Dream Makers

We express our deep gratitude to the alumni and friends of Lamar University who have recently established endowments or made plans to endow gifts through estate plans. These gifts encourage students to pursue a college education and support faculty in creating innovative learning environments. An endowment creates a legacy that becomes a permanent part of Lamar's history. To learn more about how you can endow a gift to Lamar, we invite you to visit our website at [lamar.edu/development](http://lamar.edu/development) or to start planning a gift through your estate, visit [legacy.lamar.edu](http://legacy.lamar.edu). In this issue of Cardinal Cadence, we are honored to recognize these Dream Makers.

*by* Karen Nichols



Juanita K. Myers was born in Hackberry, La., June 20, 1930, the daughter of Landry Kibodeaux and Azelie Newman Kibodeaux. She was a loving wife, mother, aunt, sister, grandmother, great-grandmother, foster mother, mentor to many, team player, coach and beloved friend. She loved God, her family and living life to its fullest. Juanita contributed her all to her community and above all helped anyone in need with an open mind and open heart. Clevan J. Myers Sr. was born in Orangefield, Texas, Oct. 3, 1929. He was a loving husband, father, uncle, brother, grandfather, great-grandfather, mentor to many and beloved friend. He mentored and helped anyone in need with an open mind and open heart. Clevan enjoyed playing numerous instruments in his country-western band Country Cousins and his Cajun bands, helping many people with hootenannies and fundraisers. Because Juanita and Clevan lived a life of service to others, it is only fitting that their legacies live on through the establishment of the **Juanita and Clevan Myers Sr. and Friends Scholarship** honoring their lifelong friends and benefiting students at Lamar University.

The **Todd and Jennifer Hoffman Scholarship in Business** honoring Drs. Robert and Marleen Swerdlow was established by Todd and Jennifer Hoffman. Todd Hoffman graduated from Lamar University in 1988 with a Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting. He and his wife, Jennifer, consider themselves very blessed to be partners in global accounting firms. They have worked hard and have had many mentors that guided them throughout their life journeys. Drs. Robert and Marleen Swerdlow have had a huge presence in Todd's life, not only in the classroom but since graduation as well. The Swerdlows made themselves available to Todd to bounce ideas, provide perspective and be a helpful ear over the past 30 years. Todd and Jennifer created this

scholarship to help a student not only financially but also to provide mentorship as they prepare themselves for life, both professionally and personally. This scholarship is being endowed as a thank you to the Swerdlows for their mentoring during the years.

Shanna (Bozeman) Alspaugh was born in American Fork, Utah, in 1956. She had worked as a business process analyst at Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. in Beaumont, Texas. During her career at Goodyear, she attended Lamar University. In 1991, she earned a Bachelor of Applied Arts and Sciences and in 2000 earned a Master of Education in Counseling and Development. Shanna and her husband, Bob Alspaugh, were dedicated to all areas of dog rescue. It is because of their love of animals that Bob endowed the **Shanna B. and Robert L. Alspaugh Regents Scholarship for Pre-Veterinary Studies** in Shanna's memory to support students pursuing a career in veterinary medicine.

Mary Jane (Bruton) Garth was raised in Houston, Texas, where she attended Rice University. While a student there, she met Tyrrell Garth, whom she married in 1947. Shortly thereafter, they moved to Beaumont, Texas, where they raised their three children, Terry, Harriet and David. After living in Aspen, Colo., for some years, Mary Jane returned to Beaumont, and her entrepreneurial spirit has inspired her to continue to give many volunteer hours to our community along with her generous charitable support of many deserving organizations in Southeast Texas. Recognized for her work with the Art Museum of Southeast Texas and the Symphony of Southeast Texas, Mary Jane established the **Mary Jane Garth Regents Scholarship** with the intention of continuing a spirit of cultural enrichment and to make a difference in the lives of current and future generations of students.

J. Donald Warren Jr. attended Lamar University from 1959-1963 and was awarded a Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting. After receiving his degree, he was active in the Alumni Association during the 1970s and 1980s prior to relocating to Connecticut. Don served on Lamar University's alumni board and as association president. In 1998, he was recognized as a Distinguished Alumnus. Don's son, Joseph Donald "Trey" Warren III was born in 1978, and as a child would attend Lamar activities with his father. He attended many football games and was often photographed with Big Red. Even in Connecticut, Trey remained a Cardinal fan. When the Lamar basketball team played the University of Hartford in Connecticut, Trey attended the game and obtained the signatures of each member of the team on his Cardinal hat. While he did not attend Lamar, he was always a loyal supporter of Lamar and proud his father was an alumnus. It is in Trey's memory that his parents, J. Donald Warren Jr. and Judith Ann Johnston established the **Joseph Donald "Trey" Warren III Presidential Scholarship**.

Mary Jean (Rogers) Bost was born and raised in Malakoff, Texas, one of nine children born to William E. and Lura Tarrant Rogers. She married David L. Bost Sr. and moved to Beaumont, Texas, where she graduated from Lamar State College of Technology in 1959 with a Bachelor of Science in Secondary Education. Jean taught at French High School for 28 years, then at Central High School and, after a brief retirement, finished her teaching career at Kelly High School. She was very active in her profession and served as president of the Beaumont Classroom Teachers Association as well as the Delta Kappa Gamma Honor Society. Her sons, David and Brent, both graduated from Lamar University: David in 1976 with a Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering and Brent in 1978 with a Bachelor of Science double major in

Chemistry and Biology. Brent went on to earn additional bachelor's degrees in accounting (1992) and economics (1997) as well as an M.B.A. in 1996, all from LU. David and Brent established the **Jean R. Bost Scholarship in Biology** in their mother's memory.

Richard C. Harrel came to Lamar University in 1966 from Oklahoma with Ph.D. in hand and began a storied and lauded career until his retirement in 2013. High on his list of environmental concerns was the Neches River, including associated bayous, creeks and oxbow lakes feeding into Sabine Lake contaminated with industrial and municipal waste. Courses he taught in limnology, ecology, zoology, aquatic entomology and ecology of polluted waters quickly attracted the attention of many undergraduates, encouraging them to continue their studies for advanced degrees and then professional careers in city, county, state and federal government agencies and industry. As principal advisor, he mentored 37 graduate students to earn master's degrees in biology. Many of their theses led to publications (26) in peer-reviewed journals for both him and his students either as principal or co-authors. Colleagues, family and friends funded the **Dr. Richard C. Harrel Endowed Scholarship** in his honor and to ensure that his Lamar University legacy would live on in perpetuity, supporting the students who were so very important to him throughout his career.

Gerry D. Sam grew up in the Pear Orchard neighborhood of Beaumont and graduated in 1981 from Hebert High School, now known as Beaumont United High School. He continued his educational journey at Lamar University, exploring several academic disciplines during his time there. Financial hardship unfortunately forced Gerry to discontinue his studies. This scholarship aims to offer

financial assistance to other Beaumont United High School students by providing hope and financial aid to those who may be facing similar challenges while attending Lamar University. Gerry's wife, Dr. Stephanie Chritton, established the **Gerry D. Sam Memorial Regents Scholarship**. Gerry and Stephanie believed in the value and importance of education at all levels, advocating for both public and higher education. This is just one of the motivations for establishing the scholarship. Dr. Chritton's mother proudly served the Richardson public school system for decades. The Sams' children attended public schools through high school and went on to pursue degrees at Texas universities. The Sams always have appreciated how higher education can foster additional opportunities for personal success.

Since the 1980s, Motiva has owned and operated the original Texas Oil Co. site, also known as Texaco. Motiva is committed to promoting a healthy economy in the Golden Triangle, which includes providing sustainable job opportunities for Southeast Texas residents. Motiva believes global energy impact starts with this community and endures thanks to the ongoing educational and research support of Lamar University. In support of this effort, they established the **Motiva Endowed Scholarship**. This endowment is intended to financially support the educational goals of Golden Triangle residents in need with the scholarship cultivating future generations of industry talent.

Carolyn (Johnson) Keating '67 graduated magna cum laude from Lamar State College of Technology with a Bachelor of Arts in English. Her late husband, Thomas J. Keating '67, graduated cum laude with a Bachelor of Science in Industrial Engineering. The two met in an English class at Lamar. The Keating

family has supported Lamar in countless ways, including the establishment of three endowed scholarships over the years. Carolyn has endowed the **Carolyn J. Keating Center for Academic and Career Success in the College of Engineering**, evincing her passion to inspire and guide current and potential Lamar University students who may not have considered engineering to be a realistic career path. The Keating Center will provide students with support for an academic engineering education, including the development of oral and written communication skills through collaboration with the University's Department of English and Modern Languages and Department of Communication and Media. Additionally, the Keating Center will guide students in experiential learning opportunities with industry to better prepare them for entering the engineering workforce.

Alan '69 and Cherrie '70 (McVey) Hefty have been loyal and generous donors to Lamar University for over 30 years. Their first three endowed scholarships provide funding for students pursuing degrees in chemical engineering, education and accounting. Most recently, they honored two additional family members with new scholarships in their memories. The **Bessie McVey Scholarship in Education** honors Cherrie's mother, Bessie McVey, who was a World War II bride widowed in 1951. She had three small children to support so she enrolled at Port Arthur College and earned a secretarial degree. Working as a secretary, she not only supported her family but also sent all three children to college. Two graduated from Lamar with degrees in education, Judy (McVey) Lee '66 and Cherrie. Bessie was an active member of the Methodist Temple in Port Arthur. She had many interests and participated in activities outside of work and church. Education was very important to Bessie, and she would be pleased to know that young adults are furthering their



education and bettering their futures in her name. The **Hermie “Boots” Hefty Scholarship in Nursing** honors Alan’s mother who, as a young woman, moved to Port Arthur, Texas, and cared for others by working in the Gulf Oil Refinery infirmary until she married Melvin Hefty in 1943 and subsequently raised their two children. When “the nest was empty,” she volunteered at Port Arthur’s Saint Mary’s Hospital in whatever capacity was needed. Her appreciation for the vital care nurses give came full circle in her struggle against cancer in her final years. Always thankful for the care and compassion given to her by the nurses who met her needs, she would be pleased to know this scholarship has been created to help others fully reach their potential as nurses in today’s demanding world.

Jasper “J.T.” Leone ’60 graduated from Lamar State College of Technology with a Bachelor of Science in Geology since Lamar did not offer a degree in petroleum engineering. During his college years, J.T. served in the Naval Reserves and was a proud member of Sigma Nu Fraternity. While attending college he worked for Sun Oil Co. and after graduating accepted a position in South America with Venwell Inc. where he lived and worked for six years in Venezuela and Trinidad. J.T. returned to the U.S. in 1967 and formed his own company, Drilling Well Specialties Inc., with branch offices in Europe. Following the sale of his company in 1986, J.T. retired and returned to Texas. J.T.’s estate provided a bequest to fund the **Jasper T. Leone Scholarship in Engineering**.

There are individuals whose presence leaves an indelible mark on those they encounter. Gemini Jackson, hailing from Atlanta, Georgia, but finding his home in Southeast Texas, was undeniably one of those individuals. The **Gemini Jackson Memorial Scholarship** is a tribute to a man whose impact reached far beyond

his years and was endowed by his friends and colleagues at International Paper’s Orange, Texas, mill. Gemini was well-respected in his field. His work was characterized by dedication and his coworkers recognized him as both a colleague and a friend. His ability to connect on a personal level transcended his technical expertise, making him a cherished member of the workplace community. Despite his relatively brief time in the area, Gemini had a profound impact on the lives of those around him. His kindness, willingness to help, and empathetic nature left a lasting impression. He became a source of positivity for many. The Gemini Jackson Memorial Scholarship symbolizes his enduring influence and a promise of support to future generations. Through this scholarship, his legacy lives on, inspiring others to pursue excellence and give back to their community.

Larry Norwood ’73 was attracted to Lamar University in 1969 by its great engineering college, reasonable tuition and strong co-operative education program. While a chemical engineering student, Larry took full advantage of the co-op program, which led to his very successful career with Lubrizol Corp. Larry is one of several Lubrizol employees who worked his way into senior management by beginning in the company’s co-op program, and he is a true role model for Lamar engineering students today. Many students are following in his educational footsteps by taking advantage of the co-op program. Larry is a member and former chair of the College of Engineering Advisory Council, bringing his wealth of experience and practical knowledge to strengthen Lamar’s engineering program for future generations of students. He has been and continues to be a valued LU Foundation trustee since 2017 and has served as chair of the Investment Committee since 2021. Cynthia (Smesny) Norwood ’72 is a *cum laude* graduate in history who has made a name for herself by transforming

her love for the art of rug hooking into a career as an instructor who teaches rug hooking classes across the country. She has written the definitive book on the art of creating the antique look and has established a very successful business. Larry and Cynthia have supported Lamar through the years in multiple capacities. Their most recent gift, the **Larry and Cynthia Norwood Scholarship for Student Recruitment in the College of Engineering**, will provide funding for recruitment of freshman students with a financial need and a desire to pursue a degree in engineering. As a couple and as individuals, Larry and Cynthia are wonderful examples of Lamar alumni who bring honor to their alma mater by being pace setters.

Micki Carpenter Platt ’07 was a real estate broker and owner of ERA Team Realtors, having entered the real estate profession in 1973. She moved to Beaumont in 1959 and raised her family in Beaumont. After leaving the medical field and entering real estate, she achieved both Salesperson and Realtor of the Year from the Beaumont Board of Realtors, as well as served as president of the BBR. In 1981, Micki went into the management arm of real estate, capitalizing on her experience with other companies before joining MAR-co Real Estate in 1988. Widowed in 2001, Micki married Ronnie Platt, a former acting city manager and assistant city manager for the city of Beaumont who later retired as manager of the Jefferson County Drainage District. Micki served in numerous capacities in her community, including with the Greater Beaumont Chamber of Commerce, the American Red Cross, as a trustee for Baptist Hospitals of Southeast Texas, on the foundation board of Baptist Hospitals of Southeast Texas, and the Lamar Institute of Technology Foundation board. Micki’s estate plan included two charitable gift annuities, which at her passing in 2023 provided the funding to endow the **Micki Carpenter Platt Scholarship**.



VERONICA HAYES GROMADA:

# Overcoming obstacles, opening doors of opportunity

by Brooke Barnett

**T**hroughout her life and successful law career, Veronica Hayes Gromada '96 has been living proof that no obstacle is insurmountable. The Beaumont native entered Lamar University in the early 1990s as a first-generation college student. Graduating in 1996 with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, she says her experiences at LU helped pave the way to her future success.

"As a PoliSci major, I benefited from the fact that the department emphasized both researching and writing," she reflects. "Those are fundamental skills for any lawyer, and my time at Lamar provided an important foundation. Being the first person in my family to earn a college degree was a significant achievement and encouraged me to continue pursuing my dreams."

Gromada then headed to law school at Texas Southern University's Thurgood Marshall School of Law. As a divorced single mother, she overcame the challenge of balancing difficult coursework and the needs of her family. She excelled in law school, ultimately graduating cum laude in 2000. But as a young, black woman eager to begin a law career, she often found herself dissuaded from a career in litigation by advisors and others in the industry.

"I was once chided for wanting to go to law school and was told I should go into public service instead," she recalls. "I have been mistaken for a court reporter and been called diminutive nicknames. But, ultimately, these experiences taught me how to respond when faced with challenges throughout my career."

This perseverance helped Gromada build a successful career in law and corporate America over the past two



decades. She spent 17 years as an in-house lawyer at Walmart's corporate headquarters in Bentonville, Arkansas. Leading a team of 65 attorneys and professional staff, Veronica and her team oversaw the retail giant's tort litigation portfolio, including approximately 5,000 stores, distribution centers and e-commerce. Her team's efforts saved Walmart tens of millions of dollars and led to Gromada being recognized with the company's "Making a Difference" award.

"While at Walmart, I had the opportunity to create diverse, high-functioning teams, while hiring, developing and sponsoring top talent, some of whom are now in C-Suite positions or leaders in their own right," she reflects. "Helping others build their career has been very rewarding."

After building a successful career herself with Walmart, Gromada decided to begin the next chapter of her career as a partner with Shook, Hardy & Bacon in Houston.

"I was attracted to Shook for its reputation in science and technology, and because they work well with other firms," she says. "Professionally, I wanted to take the next step in my career. Personally, I was delighted to return home to Texas."

Currently, she is a partner in Shook's award-winning product liability litigation practice. She is part of a multidisciplinary team of lawyers who focus on automotive, consumer goods, food and beverage, pharmaceutical and medical device, software, and other health, science and technology industries for world-leading brands.

"I love helping companies solve problems for customers, employees, and other stakeholders," she says. "I've used every bit of my education in various ways because my practice has positioned me to be a lawyer, leader, and business woman. So whether clients are facing mass or class litigation, recalls, government investigations, or other legal and reputational risks, I am ready to bring my talents to bear."

Gromada divides her time between Shook's offices in Houston and Washington, D.C., offering insights to clients on a variety of business functions including operations, employment, insurance, logistics and supply chain issues.

"I am so honored to work at a firm with a female chair, one who has achieved Mansfield Certification Plus to ensure all lawyers have a fair and equal opportunity to advance into leadership, and a firm that gives its attorneys meaningful billable hour credit for pro bono and diversity work," she explains. "It is truly unique."

Throughout her career, Gromada has been recognized for her outstanding contributions to the field. In 2022, she was named as a "Woman Who Means Business" by *Houston Business Journal*. She is a 2015 fellow of the Leadership Council on Legal Diversity and was a standout 2014 Lawyer of Color "Hot List" Honoree. She is also a member of the Corporate Counsel Women of Color, serving as both a speaker and mentor.

Having overcome so many obstacles in her career, she now focuses on promoting diversity, equity and inclusion in hopes that the next generations will face fewer roadblocks in their careers. In February, 2022 Gromada served as a "Dinner & Conversation" host at Lamar University, speaking with pre-law students about her career successes. She places great importance on reaching out to the next generation of young professionals to ensure they find similar opportunities for success.

"As a black woman who saw few women of color in leadership positions in corporate America early in my career, I especially appreciated the opportunity to present a career in corporate and litigation work as both a viable option for young women of color and a rich and rewarding path for their future legal careers," she says.

As she continues to enjoy her career success, Gromada plans to invest her time at Lamar by mentoring students, helping to develop professional networks, and serving in advisory positions.

"I've elected to work for companies and firms whose values align with mine, as well as my self-realized purpose in life," she concludes. "I have always found ways to overcome and persevere, and I look forward to helping the next generation. I take pride in helping others succeed. I look forward to being part of the future success of Lamar students."



**"I have always found ways to overcome and persevere, and I look forward to helping the next generation. I take pride in helping others succeed. I look forward to being part of the future success of Lamar students."**

**—VERONICA HAYES GROMADA**





BRANDON MORRELL:

# Talking his way to the stars

by Stephan Malick

**C**all it the “gift of gab,” “a command of the language” or even “a way with words,” but whatever people call it, there is an unmistakable passion that Brandon Morrell ’05 has for talking about sports and music, so much so that it has become his way of life.

The Beaumont native started in his teens and while at Lamar always strove to be a part of broadcasting in any way he could. He has worked in every available capacity: announcing, programming, production, sales and marketing, to now hosting his own sports and music show that spans several radio markets.

The show’s title, “Hustle,” is a great descriptor because in addition to his constant activity on the airwaves and online, he’s also a social studies educator at Port Neches-Groves High School and has coached football, baseball and soccer.

He has become a mainstay in Nashville media with his hit country music show

“The Backstage Pass Powered by The Sports Guys Podcast” alongside his cohost and award-winning singer Kirstie Kraus. He covers sports on state and national levels and has interviewed athletes like Houston Astros legends Craig Biggio and Jeff Bagwell and music stars such as Billy Gibbons of ZZ Top, the Oak Ridge Boys and Don McLean.

His early start, he says, began when a local radio personality gave him a chance to prove himself.

“I started working for Cumulus Radio when I was 18 and Dave Hofferth gave me a chance to work at the station. I hustled to learn as much as I could every chance I got,” Morrell said. “I did anything and everything I could to be around the guys in the booth. There was nothing too small for me to do. I got to learn from some of the best in the business.

“I was very fortunate to have worked around a lot of media greats. Everything was very hands on—I learned by doing the work. It was hard, but I have great memories from then and they helped me

become what I am today.”

Morrell worked in radio all through his time at Lamar from 1999 to 2005 but also made time to work in campus media including the *University Press* student newspaper and KVLU 91.3 FM radio.

“I wanted to learn as much as I could: writing, production, you name it,” he said. “Professor O’Brien Stanley was always very supportive for me to get involved and I enjoyed him and all my professors. I learned a lot at Lamar that I was able to apply working in the industry.”

Morrell says the things he learned prepared him for all the things that go on behind the scenes like writing press releases, conducting interviews and how to create strategies for projects or shows he is working on. “I’m always doing something,” he said. “I’ve always got to be working for the next thing. Whether it’s recording the show or sending out interview requests and emails. I’m always thinking about the next show.”





# It's a Flavour-ful *life*

by Kensi MacCammond

One of the best aspects of Lamar University is that it just so happens to be neatly nestled in a part of the nation that is home to a melting pot of the most uniquely diverse cuisines that the country has to offer, with Southeast Texas producing an amalgamation of flavors that truly sets the area apart from any other. Adding an even more distinctive touch to this area is Charles Anyichie '14, who is making his mark on the Houston food scene by offering his take on "Cajun cuisine with Nigerian influence." His popular catering business, Cooking with Flavour, is an homage to his family's heritages, and he has burgeoning plans for a new restaurant under the same name set to open in spring of 2024.

Native to Houston, Chef Anyichie, who is known to his colleagues and ever-growing customer base as Chef Chike (pronounced "Chee-kay"), enrolled at Lamar in 2008 with initial plans to study mechanical engineering and follow in his sister's footsteps. Her own undergraduate path had inspired him to choose the university for his own academic goals. However, Anyichie soon switched his major to a different field instead as he found an inclination for marketing while taking his initial courses. As he worked towards his degree, it was his personal enjoyment of cooking that really helped him find his own path.

"Food was always near and dear to me. Food always brought friends and family together so it was always at the forefront," he adds when he recalls his time at Cardinal Village. What started out as a focus on nutrition and meal-prepping quickly became more as neighbors realized the delicious smell of good home cooking was coming from his place, which started him on the eventual road to founding his catering business. "I had to tap into my chef skills that I knew I had but I never labeled as 'chef skills,'" he said.

After graduating, Anyichie developed a social media fan base over the next few years that ramped up even more demand for his catering work. He attributes this success not just to his cooking abilities but also to the business and marketing skills he learned at Lamar. He expressed gratitude for the support University faculty

members Kristyn Hunt Cathey and Quentin Ballard gave him, with both playing key roles in getting him started. After realizing that the momentum of this success could upgrade a side gig into an successful business, Chef Chike officially set up shop. Cooking with Flavour was born during his short stint in Los Angeles before he finally moved back home to Houston. What now definitely can be labeled as his "chef skills" led to the boom in business he sees today.

As for his future entrepreneurial plans, the sky's the limit for Charles Anyichie as Cooking with Flavour and the chef behind it are only just getting started. More information about the May 5 grand opening of his restaurant is available at [funtionz.net/cooking-with-flavour](http://funtionz.net/cooking-with-flavour). Southeast Texas can look forward to all the *flavours* Chef Chike will cook up next.





















# *A treasured cap:* **Lost forever?**

by Marilyn Tennissen



**"THE TALE OF THE HAT"** began when Jerry Dunn, a 1962 graduate in mechanical engineering from Lamar State College of Technology, received a red ball cap with "Lamar Football" emblazoned on the front. Where exactly it came from was never clear, but Jerry cherished the hat just as he cherished his time at Lamar.

Even after he received a doctorate in engineering and joined the faculty at Texas Tech University in Lubbock, Jerry established an endowed scholarship in mechanical engineering at his undergraduate alma mater.

The hat traveled with him when he visited his grandson Tait in Connecticut. "Tait was his buddy," said Sandra Dunn, Tait's grandmother.

But when Sandra and Jerry returned to Texas, the hat was accidentally forgotten.

When Jerry passed away in January 2021, 6-year-old Tait put on the red hat that had been left behind and wore it constantly as he grieved for his Papa.

It became his favorite hat and Tait still wore it everywhere in 2023 when he and his family came to visit Sandra in Texas. On their way back east, the Dunns had a flight layover in Dallas. As they boarded the plane, Tait suddenly realized he wasn't wearing the Lamar hat!

It was somewhere in the airport, but it was too late to disembark from the plane and retrace his steps. "Everyone was upset. We knew how special that hat was," Sandra said.

Back home, the family sprang into action and began making phone calls to the Dallas-Fort Worth airport, one of the biggest and busiest in the

nation. "We learned a LOT about airports' lost and found. There is a lost and found for things that have been left on the plane, and there's a different lost and found for things left in the airport," Sandra said. "We had no luck. No one had found the hat."

In the meantime there were searches on the Lamar shopping website and calls to the University, but there were no hats exactly like Jerry's. An LU hat was ordered anyway, and everyone hoped for the best.

But Sandra knew that the airport trashed or donated lost items after 30 days.

"It was about 25 days in, and I was visiting my daughter in Dallas," she said. "My granddaughter said, 'Nana, let's go to the airport and look in person. You will always wonder if we don't!' So we drove all the way to DFW."

They showed an attendant a photo of the cap, and he stepped to the back to search.

"He was gone a little while," Sandra said.

When the attendant reappeared, in his hands he had the familiar red ball cap with "Lamar Football" embroidered on the front.

"I told that man, 'I could just hug you!'" Sandra said. "We never, ever imagined that we would really find it. It was so exciting!"

The treasured cap was quickly sent overnight to Tait in Connecticut.

In a video shot by the family, the 9-year-old opens the box and twirls the bright red hat in the air a few times before putting it on his head and giving his Nana a big smile in the camera.



Sandra Dunn with Tait and sister Tess



# Memories *inspire*

by Uliana Trylowsky

Ask Joe Koshkin '70 what motivates his giving to Lamar University and he can answer with one word: *students*. He worked through school and knows how difficult it can be. He knows that the pressure of a job sometimes leads students to drop out, and in his estimation, if he can make a difference through a scholarship, then it's all worthwhile. He and his wife, Gloria (Brown) '68, who earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education and taught at Frostwood Elementary School in the Spring Branch school district, have established three funds: the Frederick H. Koshkin Regents Scholarship, the J.D. Koshkin Presidential Scholarship in Accounting and the Gloria and Joe Koshkin Presidential Scholarship in Special Education.

Koshkin was raised in Beaumont, Texas, and attended Allen Military Academy in Bryan before returning to Beaumont to attend Lamar University, earning a B.B.A. in accounting in 1970.

Asked to recall cherished memories of Lamar University, Koshkin states unhesitatingly, "The most important was meeting Gloria," his wife of 54 years. He also recalls making lifelong friends, with many of whom he remains close. And finally, he credits LU for opening his eyes to a whole world to explore.

Lamar also provided freedom. After the regimentation of the military academy, Lamar afforded Koshkin the freedom to grow and broaden his knowledge and experiences.

At LU, he gained knowledge not only in accounting and finance but also in the ability to complete projects, to communicate and to resolve

problems. He believes that communication skills—knowing how to communicate effectively with everyone, whether that's with the CEO, board members or employees—are key to succeeding.

Koshkin is sanguine about the ups and downs in his career, saying that most of his career was "ups." Out of college, he began working for Marathon Manufacturing, a large international company. While his official title was staff accountant, he could be tasked with any number of assignments, from a local project to an international jaunt.

After Marathon was sold, Koshkin went into public accounting and joined Lybrand, Ross Bros. & Montgomery, which became Coopers & Lybrand. He enjoyed public accounting and the opportunity to work with many growth-oriented clients, traveling the world with them.

When Coopers & Lybrand merged with PriceWaterhouse in 1998, partners at both firms found themselves unsure of their futures. For Koshkin, it turned out well. He was appointed services industry leader, covering North America. From there, he moved into the role of national office partner, dealing with Securities and Exchange Commission, risk management and Sarbanes-Oxley Act matters, along with serving as an accounting and auditing consultant and quality control regional leader.

While rewarding, the work was very demanding, including phone calls at

3 a.m. and lengthy and extensive travel throughout the country and abroad. At one point, Koshkin recalls, his eldest son asked Gloria whether his father still lived in the house.

Gloria, in Koshkin's words, was the foundation—the bedrock—that held the family together while he worked long and demanding hours at the pinnacle of his career. He fondly recalls that "Gloria was the center of the family without whom I would not have succeeded."

Since retiring, Koshkin's expertise has been sought by many industry leaders, and he has served on public company corporate boards. While more in control of his time, he still follows a busy schedule.

Koshkin's pride in his alma mater remains strong to this day. He has served on the Board of Advisors for the College of Business and is a member of the President's Circle. He is confident in the current leadership of the University knowing it will continue to define priorities and focus on the greatest positive impact it can make.



# CARDINAL love stories

## **Katie (Drake) '13 and Patrick Todd '11, '22**

In summer '09 I started singing at FUMC downtown on scholarship where Patrick played bass in the same program. In August I started freshman year (vocal major) and Patrick started his senior year (instrumental major). We shared many classes and spent every Thursday and Sunday practicing and performing and eventually started dating. We married when I graduated and moved out near San Antonio. We had our beautiful daughter in 2016. Patrick has been teaching high school band for 11 years, and I have taught elementary music for nine years.

## **Sierra (Haygood) '17 and Jacques Ramirez '17**

Jacques and I met in nursing school the summer of 2016. We supported each other through the intense two years of nursing school, and we both graduated December 2017. We have continued our careers together at Christus St Elizabeth as registered nurses and have been there since. Without going to Lamar and getting into the nursing program when we did I would have never met Jacques!

## **Sandy (Richardson) -79 and Don McLemore -90**

We met in 1979 at the BSU and were married in 1980—42 years and still happy.

## **Cheridan (Bailey) '17 and Lucky Nwaozuru '14, '17**

I met Cheridan my graduating senior year where we had class together with Dr. Meline in speech and hearing, and I couldn't keep my eyes off of her. We both attended a BSA event where I learned we had similar goals we wanted to accomplish in the next five to 10 years. After the event, I gained courage to speak to her, and the rest is history. It's crazy we accomplished those similar goals together—literally. We got engaged in 2018 and married in 2020 two weeks before the world shut down due to COVID. Now we reside in Houston with our son, age 2. We are both working as medical and pediatric speech language pathologists around Houston.

## **Robyn (Calhoun) '87 and Paul Stevens '87**

We met at Leadership Lamar. Both of us were very involved in greek life (AXO and Sig Ep) and various student organizations. We graduated and went our separate ways, living in Texas and Minnesota, but we were reunited by fellow LU grads on a ski trip some nine years later! Twenty-six years later, we are still happily married, have two wonderful boys and enjoy crazy fundraising activities at our sons high school in Houston. Go Big RED!

## **Morgan (McClain) '16 and Austin Greenway '11, '17**

Morgan and I met through mutual friends while attending LU. Morgan was a member of ZTA and so was one of my really good friends. Our mutual friend introduced us, and we started following each other on social media. Eventually I asked her for her number on Twitter so I could tell her happy



STEVENS



ARIAS



GREENWAY



MCNEAL



RAMIREZ



MCLEMORE



YENTZEN





birthday, and not too long after we went on our first date. We started dating in 2014, got engaged in 2018 and married in 2019. She is a registered nurse, and I am a teacher and coach at East Chambers High School. We will celebrate our fifth anniversary March 30! We have two sons, Brees, who will turn 4 in June, and Chance, who will turn 2 in May. We are proud LU alumni! #PeckEm

#### **Taylor (Stockton) '16, '17, and Erman Cihan '15**

We met at Lamar University through mutual friends in spring 2014. I studied accounting and was part of the Lamar women's golf team ('12-'16; graduate assistant coach '17). Erman studied mechanical engineering and played on the Lamar University Rugby Football Club in the 2012-2013 season. We started dating in April 2014 and married in April 2021. We reside in Houston where Erman is an aerospace engineer for NASA and I am an external auditor for Deloitte & Touche.

#### **Natalie (Sfeir) '19 and Carlo Vanz '18, '19**

Our first time meeting was on campus at Tiny BBQ through a mutual friend. We then saw each other again at lunch and then at the ATO tailgate—we quickly became friends! Our time at Lamar consisted of involvement in various organizations and representing our fields in different ways. We reside in San Antonio now.



#### **Christina (McCarty) '99 and David Garrett '11**

My roommate introduced me to David at McDonald Gym in fall 1997. I let him beat me in a game of horse. Six months later we met again while I was leaving the dining hall and we've been inseparable ever since. We have been married 17 years and have two children, Elijah, 16, and Jeremiah, 12. I've been employed by the State of Texas for 23 years and currently work a program specialist for the Texas Workforce Commission. David has been employed by Lamar University for 16 years and currently works as the events and operations coordinator for recreational sports.

#### **Heather (O'Pry) '10, '20, and Jacob Yentzen '12**

We met in the summer of 2007 and started dating in spring of 2008. We both attended Lamar University and graduated in 2010 and 2012. We went on to get married in the spring of 2014 and have since added two little rugrats to our family!



#### **Vanessa (Perry-Tease) '19 and Travon McNeal '14**

During Vanessa's freshman year at Lamar University, we met at the dining hall through mutual friends when I first noticed her and asked around about her. We became friends until I gained enough confidence to ask her out a day after her birthday. Our first date was at the movie theater and Olive Garden restaurant. We've been together since April 6, 2016, and were married May 28, 2022. We live in Beaumont. Vanessa teaches American Sign Language in Port Neches-Groves school district, and I am a mailman at the post office in Groves.

#### **Judith (De La Rosa) '17 and Jesus Perez Arias '19**

We met volunteering at many events while being in different organizations at Lamar. We began dating in fall 2016 and were married in November 2017. In summer 2019 our first son came, and in fall 2021 we welcomed our second son.



Submit your Cardinal Love Story at [alumni@lamar.edu](mailto:alumni@lamar.edu)





### LU celebrates record-breaking enrollment

Lamar University kicked off its centennial year by celebrating record-breaking enrollment numbers, recording a 10% increase over the previous year for new undergraduate and graduate students. Over the past century, LU has evolved from a modest junior college with an enrollment of 125 students to a thriving four-year university with more than 17,500 students, marking the highest fall enrollment in its history in 2023.

"Lamar University's success is attributed to the 'student first' approach undertaken by Lamar University faculty and staff," President Jaime Taylor said.

"We are committed to increasing programs that are attractive to prospective students and that support our growing economy," said Provost Dann Brown. "New programs such as our Master of Science in Computational and Quantitative Methods with a focus on predictive analytics have been approved, and we are preparing to propose a new Doctor of Business Administration that could focus on energy management. We have received [Texas State University System] Board of Regents approval for a new Bachelor of Science in Computer Engineering and are proceeding through final approvals for that new degree program."

In addition to its overall enrollment growth, LU has achieved a remarkable 300% increase in STEM graduate student enrollment and an impressive 118% increase in the College of Business over a five-year period, highlighting its dedication to fostering career-ready graduates in critical fields.

"Over the course of our rich 100-year history, the education we provide is far more versatile, firmly grounded in the humanities and sciences, but with a continued emphasis on practical applications. The result provides a sharp advantage to our graduates as they develop skills for lifelong learning and prepare for the jobs they will have throughout their careers," Brown added.

### Three receive literary awards

Chosen from nominees across the state, Lamar University creative writing students took home three of six categories awarded by the Texas Association of Creative Writing Teachers (TACWT): Mak Campbell, "Gaslight," in undergraduate poetry; Tiffany Charleston, "Lupus," in graduate poetry; and Reilly Smith, "Feed the Baby, Fold the Laundry," in graduate fiction. "Creative writing faculty who are TACWT members are invited to enter select work by students from their courses during a given academic year," said Casey Ford, director of the Writing Center. The authors read their winning manuscripts at the September 2023 TACWT conference at Texas Tech University, and their work is published in the conference journal, *Writing Texas 2023*.

### Speech and Debate Team finds success

The Speech and Debate team celebrated a season of growth and success, achieving multiple national qualifications and impressive rankings in recent tournaments. The team, co-founded by junior accounting student Drake Rothenberger and senior psychology student Kiera Figgins, is making waves



on the competitive speaking circuit. Just one year ago, the team boasted only three consistent speech members, but this season has seen significant expansion, with the roster now featuring eight dedicated members.

"As a student-funded organization, one of our biggest challenges was paying for travel and other expenses, so this semester, we raised \$4,000 to aid in covering those costs, which has helped tremendously with our ability to grow," Figgins said. "We've also been doing our part in promoting the team and getting our names out there, and a lot of that comes from sharing on social media, particularly Instagram."

In terms of national qualifications, the team's progress is equally impressive. Last year, they secured nine national bids among three students, but this season has seen them elevate their performance. "The art of persuasive communication, critical thinking, research, and effective presentation techniques cultivated through speech and debate are skills that transcend the competition arena," Figgins said. "If you're planning on going into any field that is research heavy, being able to present that information effectively is an invaluable skill."

### Rare \$2,100 gold coin used in football flip

Benefactor Michael Fuljenz, president of Universal Coin & Bullion in Beaumont, donated a 1923-dated U.S. double eagle gold coin for the traditional start-of-the-game coin flip between the Lamar Cardinals and McNeese Cowboys Nov. 18, 2023, in honor of the University's centennial year.



"The coin was struck at the Philadelphia Mint and like Lamar University, it is 100 years old this year," Fuljenz said. "I was honored to be asked to do the coin flip for the teams and decided to use the 1923 gold coin, then donate it to Lamar as a symbolic representation of the school's centennial." The coin was designed by acclaimed sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens, whose design was used on U.S. \$20

denomination gold coins from 1907 to 1933. In 1923, three of those gold coins with a combined face value of only \$60 would have paid tuition and books for a semester. Today, 100 years later, the gold value of those same three coins would also pay for tuition and books for a semester.

### AI integration ushered in

The Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering has integrated Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a fundamental technology taught to solve problems in robotics, quality control, reliability, safety and supply chain management. The department has added new graduate coursework: User Experience with Artificial Intelligence and Artificial Intelligence for Industrial Engineering. These classes allow students to learn and explore rapidly evolving AI techniques large language models (LLM), transfer learning and image processing). The department has also added AI to existing courses on machine learning and applied programming courses. Recent doctoral students have used AI to predict equipment failure, analyze free response survey data, and identify the use of PPE. Master's students have explored document generation and natural language processing of text data.



*We hope you enjoy reading about former classmates. If you have news to share—a position announcement, milestone, achievement, wedding, baby—or know the whereabouts of a lost alumnus, we want to hear from you.*

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## 60s

**David Beck** '61, B.S. government, '12, L.H.D., has been named to the Lawdragon 500 Leading Global Litigators list for 2023. He and his wife, Judy, live in Houston.

**Jerrold Pesz** '64, B.S. government, retired as a captain with Initial Security Co. He lives in Leander.

Congratulations to **Jack Gallier** '68, C.C. refrigeration and air conditioning technology, on his marriage to Janice Watkins July 15, 2023. They live in Vidor.

After four decades coaching, **Dianna (Stovall) Caston** '69, B.S. physical education, was inducted into the Texas Tennis Coaches Association Hall of Fame Dec. 8. She has coached at Kirbyville High School since 1989, and her teams advanced to the state tournament 17 times, including 34 individual qualifiers. She coaches girls tennis as well as track and field and lives in Kirbyville.

## 70s

**Daryl Ann (Chris) Borel** '70, B.S. mathematics, '83, M.Ed. supervision, '13, Ed.D. educational leadership, is a clinical professor with Lamar University. She and her husband, Michael, live in Nome.

Rotary Foundation recognized **Becky (Dickson) Mason** '71, B.S. elementary education, and her late husband, **Chuck** '72, as ARCH KLUMPH Society honorees during its donor summit. She lives in Beaumont.

**Judy Hammond** '72, B.S. communication, '82, M.S. speech, received the Pioneer Award from Safe Kids Worldwide for her contributions to child passenger safety. She lives in Lake Frederick, Va.

The International Society of Petroleum Engineers recently honored registered professional engineer **John Jordan** '72, B.S. industrial engineering, as a Legend of Honor for his work in design engineering, manufacturing, international operations and business development. A 32-year Otis Engineering and Haliburton Services employee, he led organizations and thousands of employees in more than 40 countries and has been a consultant for more than 10 years. He and his wife, Mariko, live in Houston.

**Jimmy Allen** '73, B.B.A. accounting, is director of the McCoy College of Business Banking Program at Texas State University. He and his wife, Kathryn, live in San Marcos.

**John Simmons** '73, B.B.A. accounting, is chairman and C.E.O. of W.W. Williams. He and his wife, Lisa, live in Houston.

**Martin Gerdes III** '74, B.S. biology, '78, earned a Ph.D. in anatomy and is professor and department chair of biomedical sciences at the New York Institute of Technology. He and his wife, Bonnie, live in Oyster Bay, N.Y.

Congratulations to **Mary (Weber) Poole** '78, A.A.S. drafting technology, on being named a 2023 Paul Harris Fellow by the Rotary Club of Beaumont. She and her husband, David, live in Beaumont.

## 80s

**Mary Renner** '80, B.S. special education, teaches special education at Orangefield Junior High School. She lives in Beaumont.

The Catholic Diocese of Beaumont named **Susie (Davis) Thompson** '83, B.S. sociology, 2023 Teacher of the Year at St. Mary Catholic School, where she teaches kindergarten. She and her husband, Greg, live in Orange.

**Freddie Titus** '83, B.S. mathematics, '86, B.S. industrial engineering, is vice president for strategic initiatives and community relations at Lamar University. He lives in Beaumont.

**Evita Tezeno** '84, B.S. graphic design, is an artist whose work hangs in the African American Museum of Dallas and had a fourth solo exhibition at Luis De Jesus Los Angeles Sept. 2 to Oct. 28, 2023. She lives in Dallas.

**Richelle Brewster** '85, A.A.S. applied science, earned a master's degree in accounting in 2021 and is an internal revenue agent with the IRS. She lives in Missouri City.

**Kay (Patteson) DeCuir** '85, B.S. elementary education, '09, M.Ed. teacher leadership, owns K DeCuir Properties and is executive director of Nederland Economic Development Corp. She and her husband, Bruce, live in Nederland.

**Brit Featherston** '85, A.A.S. law enforcement, '87, B.S. criminal justice, is the executive assistant attorney with the Jefferson County District Attorney's Office. He and his wife, Amy live in Beaumont.

**Paul Guillotte** '86, B.B.A. marketing, owns Guillotte Law Office. He and his wife, Constance, live in Athens, Texas.

**Sylvia Jenkins** '86, B.S. elementary education, '11, M.Ed. administration, is principal of Odom Academy in Beaumont school district. She lives in Beaumont.

**Ramona Parks** '86, B.S. elementary education, is a counselor at Wilson Early College High School in Port Arthur school district. She lives in Beaumont.

**Doneane Beckcom Reese** '86, B.M. music, '09, M.Ed. administration, serves on Port Arthur City Council for District 3 and owns her own law practice. She and

her husband, Charles, live in Port Arthur.

**James Swinney** '86, B.S. secondary education, retired as principal of Warren High School after many years of service. He and his wife, Elaine, live in Warren.

**Shawn (Rooney) Gray** '88, A.A.S. dental hygiene, '95, B.S. nursing, earned the Texas State University System Regents' Staff Excellence Award. She is assistant vice president of health, wellness and accessibility at Lamar University. She and her husband, **Steve** '88, B.S. communication, who is an audio-video production teacher at Nederland High School, live in Nederland.

**Charles Colvin** '89, B.S. psychology, '90, B.S. sociology, '11, M.Ed. administration, is assistant principal of Odom Academy Middle School in Beaumont school district. He and his wife, Sekeia, live in Beaumont.

**Jorge Lopez** '89, B.S. kinesiology, is the advanced placement Spanish teacher at Langham Creek High School in Cypress-Fairbanks school district. He and his wife, **Kamie (Williams)** '85, B.S. elementary education, live in Houston.

**Gina Mannino** '89, B.S. elementary education, '98, M.Ed. administration, '14, Ed.D. educational leadership, retired from Bridge City school district after 25 years in education. She lives in Bridge City.

## 90s

**Jeff Ayers** '90, B.S. speech communication, works for Generational Equity, and he and his wife, Kimberly, live in Flint.

**Taryn (Miller) Colligan** '90, B.B.A. marketing, is an assistant branch manager of Neches Federal Credit Union. She and her husband, Glenn, live in Beaumont.

**Antionette Kelly** '91, B.S. psychology, is HCS service coordinator for Spindletop Center. She lives in Beaumont.

Region 5 Education Service Center named Nederland school district superintendent **Stuart Kieschnick** '91, B.S. health and kinesiology, '99, M.Ed. administration, '12, Ed.D. educational leadership, regional winner as Texas Association of School Boards 2023 Superintendent of the Year. He and his wife, Jodi, live in Nederland.

Silsbee Chamber of Commerce named **Betsy (Myers) Richter** '91, B.S. elementary education, 2023 Teacher of the Year. She and her husband, **Mark** '94, B.S. criminal justice, live in Silsbee.

**Celeste (King) Feast** '93, B.S. speech, is an extension agent with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service for Better Living for Texas, Fort Bend County. She and her husband, **Hubert** '88, A.A.S. industrial electricity/electronics, live in Richmond.

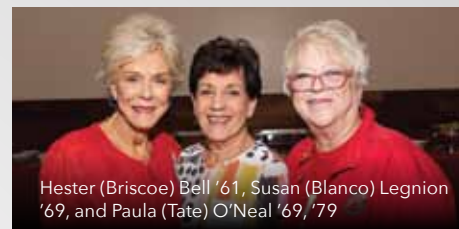




**Class of 1973** - Morris Lee '73, '79, Montie Morgan '73, Jacquelyn (Small) Doyle '73, Jocelyn West '73, Gary Brentlinger '73, Penny (Caffey) Hickman '73, Kathy (Brown) Leonard '73, Dianne (Farnie) Casteel '73, Grace (Silva) Duffy '73, Pete Garza '73 and Harvey Duhaney '73

### Golden Circle

Graduates of the classes of 1924 to 1973 met Oct. 7, 2023, for a Golden Circle Luncheon honoring the 50 year+ graduates, while the Class of 1973 celebrated their 50-year reunion in the Richard W. Setzer Student Center.



Hester (Briscoe) Bell '61, Susan (Blanco) Legnion '69, and Paula (Tate) O'Neal '69, '79



Emma (Victor) Joubert '63 reminisces by looking through her class yearbook



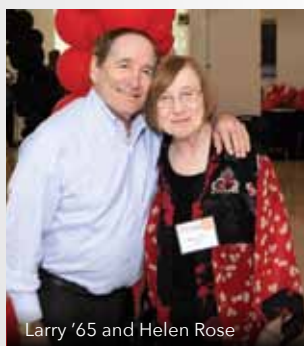
Paulette (Pachuca) Purcell '74, Andrew Purcell '70, Vel (Dailey) Martin '63, '77, Hester (Briscoe) Bell '61



Lena (Mosley) Hurst '72, Barbara Gordon-Mathis '72, Stella Singleton '70



Jackie Colbert '72 and President Jaime Taylor



Larry '65 and Helen Rose



Jay (Eichman) White '74, '76, and Dennis White '68



Bill Kerns and Sena (Walters) Kerns '64



Ellen (Walker) Rienstra '62, '80, Judy (Walker) Linsley '67, '77



Claud Sibert '59, '72, and Alice Sibert



Larry '72 and Lana (Hale) Cowles '68



Jim Cassel '66, Hester (Briscoe) Bell '61, Jo Lynne (Fertitta) Morgan '75, Terry Barrett '68, Marcelle Spell, Robert Spell '63, Judy (Bonvillion) Walker, Perry Walker '70



**Ramona Locke** '93, A.A.S. office technology, '00, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, set a record in 2023 at West Brook High School for games won by the Lady Bruins, and the *Beaumont Enterprise* named her 2023 Super Gold Girls Basketball Coach of the Year. She lives in Beaumont.

**Roger Moye** '93, B.S. computer science, is senior HPC engineer at Quantlab Group. He and his wife, Kathryn, live in New Waverly.

**Byron Terrier** '93, B.S. kinesiology, '05, M.Ed. administration, Ed.D. educational leadership, is executive director of Region 5 Education Service Center. He and his wife, Ann, live in Sour Lake.

**Anthony Iapoco** '94, Cardinal baseball letterman, is manager of the Toledo Mud Hens, a Triple-A affiliate of the Detroit Tigers. He lives in Little Neck, New York.

Brothers **Glin LeBaron** '94, A.A.S. occupational safety and health, and **Danny LeBaron** '85, A.A.S. industrial electricity/electronics, opened Heritage Express Car Wash in Nederland in April 2023. Glin and his wife, Misti, and Danny and his wife, Katy, live in Nederland.

**Ellen Gonzalez** '95, B.G.S. general studies, is 2022-2023 Teacher of the Year at Hardin-Jefferson High School. She is an adaptive behavior teacher at Hardin-Jefferson Junior High School, and she and her husband, **Trini** '96, live in Beaumont.

Congratulations to **Gary Janeczek** '95, B.M. music, on his promotion to Nederland High School director of secondary music education. He has been with the district for 28 years. He and his wife, **Jennifer (Smith)** '06, B.S. studio art, who teaches art at Early College High School in Beaumont school district, live in Beaumont.

**Tracy Knight** '95, M.S. deaf studies/habilitation, '13, Ed.D. deaf studies/deaf education, was promoted to tenured faculty in 2023 and is an associate professor at Sam Houston State University. She and her husband, Howard, live in Houston.

**Mandy (Moorer) Rapa** '95, M.S. psychology, is a REALTOR with Re/Max One. She and her husband, Christopher, live in Beaumont.

**Art Simpson** '95, B.S. kinesiology, '16, Ed.D. educational leadership, teaches career and technical education at Beaumont United High School. He and his wife, **Teresa (Cossey)** '10, M.Ed. supervision, '14, Ed.D. educational leadership, who is assistant vice president of enrollment management for the University of Texas Permian Basin, live in Beaumont.

**Deborah (Healey) Drago** '96, M.B.A. business administration, is an industrial account manager at Entergy Texas Inc. She and her husband, **Philip** '09, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, who owns Drago Industrial Supply, live in Beaumont.

**Lori (Purgahn) Goats** '97, B.S. nursing, is a REALTOR with Re/Max. She and her husband, Kevin, live in Lumberton.

**Joanna (McCuller) Sheppard** '97, B.B.A. accounting, is associate vice president of finance and operations for Lamar Institute of Technology and Lamar State College Port Arthur. She and her husband, **Lance** '96, B.S. kinesiology, live in Beaumont.

**Kimberly (Fittz) Smalley** '97, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, '10, M.Ed. administration, is director of curriculum and instruction for Bridge City school district. She and her husband, **Josh** '99, B.A. history, who is athletic director and head football coach at Orangefield High School, live in Bridge City.

**Brandi (Spoonemore) Wulf** '97, B.S. communication, '13, M.Ed. school counseling, is a campus testing coordinator for West Brook High School in Beaumont school district. She and her husband, Brian, live in Beaumont.

**Tara (Schimkowsch) Fountain** '98, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '01, M.Ed. administration, '14, Ed.D. educational leadership, is assistant superintendent for Bridge City school district. She and her husband, Tip, live in Orange.

Hardin-Jefferson High School named art and yearbook teacher **Casey (Savage) Ochoa** '98, B.F.A. studio art, its 2022-2023 Teacher of the Year. She and her husband, Steven, live in Nome.

**Melissa Cessac** '99, B.B.A. marketing, is a Sister of the Congregation of Divine Providence in San Antonio and director



Brenna (Gordon) Rodriguez '04, B.B.A. marketing, who is vice president of operations for Harbor Hospice, shared a note with the Office of Alumni Affairs after HH conducted a training on emergency procedures with leaders from three Harbor Hospice sites. As they were sitting around the lunch table talking, they discovered that all of them earned their degrees from Lamar University or Lamar State College-Orange. Brenna had this photo taken of them with their L's up: from left, Cindy (Szymaszek) Allen '93, RN; Tangelia Matthews '21, RN, BSN; Brenna (Gordon) Rodriguez '04; Susan Jordan, RN (LSCO); Karla (Foggy) Franklin '13, RN, BSN; Kim Parks '20, RN, BSN; Vicki (Thomas) Watford '08, RN; Ashton (Champagne) Burrell '14, RN, BSN; Melawati Abbasi, RN (LSCO).

of campus ministry and administration at Providence Catholic School. She lives in San Antonio.

Named girls' golf Coach of the Year by Babe Zaharias Junior Golf, **Brandon Prouse** '99, B.S. kinesiology, is head coach and athletics director for Deweyville High School. The Lady Pirates reached the 2A State Tournament for the first time in school history. He lives in Vidor.

**Cheryl (Christ) Spangler** '99, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, was named 2023 Region 5 Elementary School Teacher of the Year. She and her husband, Luke, live in Beaumont.

## 00s

**Melissa (Christian) Martin** '00, B.S. family and consumer sciences, '09, M.Ed. administration, is head of school for Heritage Classical Academy and serves on the boards of the Texas Juvenile Justice Department and Innovative Teachers of Texas. She served in the Air Force and lives in Deer Park.

**Jennifer (King) Welch** '00, B.A. theatre, teaches theatre arts at Silsbee High School. She and her husband, Nathan, live in Silsbee.

**Tessa Humble** '01, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '18, M.Ed. administration, is assistant principal of Little Cypress Junior High School. She lives in Orange.

Congratulations to **Heather Martin** '01, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, who earned her master's in educational leadership in 2023. She and her husband, Michael, live in Kingwood.

*Charm Magazine* featured **Nakisha (Myles) Burns** '02, B.S. political science, '04, M.P.A. public administration, in their "I'm Every Woman" series. She is public and government affairs global operations manager for ExxonMobil Corp. and lives in The Woodlands with

her husband, Horace.

**Angela (Way) Fanette** '02, B.S. health education, is director of the Lamar University Welcome Center. She and her husband, Darin, live in Nederland.

**Greg Jeanis** '02, B.B.A. marketing, is business partner and manager of Frank Pritchard Agency. He and his wife, Carrie, live in Orange.

The Orange Leader named **Christopher Kovatch** '02, B.S. criminal justice, Best of Orange County 2023 Community Activist and School Board Member. He and his wife, Christi, live in Orange.

**Kody Latilais** '02, B.S. kinesiology, is an adaptive behavior unit teacher at Port Neches-Groves Middle School. He and his wife, **Carly (Schildknecht)** '02, B.B.A. marketing, who is the clerk of the court for the Ninth Court of Appeals of the State of Texas Judicial Branch, live in Groves.

**Christopher Moore** '02, B.S. kinesiology, teaches government and U.S. history and is a football and softball coach at Bridge City High School. He and his wife, **Christine** '03, B.S. nursing, live in Orange.

**Jenny Pomeroy** '02, B.S. communication disorders, teaches at Liberty High School in Lubbock-Cooper school district. She lives in Lubbock.

**Monica Reynolds** '02, B.G.S. general studies, '08, M.Ed. administration, is associate principal of curriculum and instruction at Beaumont United High School. She lives in Beaumont.

**Daniella Medley** '03, B.A. English, '05 M.A. English, serves as a Friends of Tonga Inaugural Peace Corps Volunteer Officer and is an English language teacher and facilitator. She lives in Tonga.

**Lori (Johnson) Threats** '03, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, '05, M.Ed. special education, is principal of Beaumont school district's Career and Technical Education Center. She and her husband, Joseph, live in Beaumont.



Three Lamar alumni—two of whom served as LU Ambassadors—became Lockheed Martin employees in Fort Worth and serendipitously realized they shared an alma mater: Samuel Walker '17, Engineering Ambassador; Bra'ah Hamdan '20, '20, '20, LU Success Ambassador; and John Ellis '18, '18, LU Ambassador.





Juan Zabala, vice president for University Advancement, Distinguished Alumnus Orlando Alvarez '87 and President Jaime Taylor



Kelvin Elgar, Cristian Arevalo and Waverlee Cooper



Drake Rothenberger, Jacob Thompson, Jayz'n Robinson and Jacob Smith

### Lamar University Ambassadors

Lamar University Ambassadors attended an executive leadership training with President & CEO of BP America Orlando Alvarez '87 and President Jaime Taylor Oct. 24, 2023. Alvarez shared invaluable insights on leadership, drawing from his remarkable career journey.



Estrella Balderas, Madeline Tzul and Annabelle Broussard



Zuhair Merchant, Sergio Mendez and Luis Arevalo



### New members of the LU Alumni Advisory Board gathered for an orientation and welcome luncheon Aug. 24, 2023.

From left, Yolanda (Johnson) Avery '86, '91; Ryan Dollinger '14; Sam Blanda '08; Juan Zabala '07, vice president of University Advancement; Donta Miller '18, '21; Elohor (Okene) Jackson '20; Lila (Creamer) Stevens '01; President Jaime Taylor; Shawn Webb-Locke '03, '12; Caralee (McDonald) Thompson '95; Alumni Advisory Board President Sharita Gardner '12; Usha (Balaratnam) Beckman '87; Terry Savoy-Hadley '95; and Golden Wright '21, dean of the College of Fine Arts and Communication

**Janeal White** '03, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, '11, M.S. family and consumer sciences, is a facilitator for the South East Texas Regional Planning Commission Coalition for the Homeless. She and her husband, Brian, live in Beaumont.

**Austin Williams** '03, B.B.A. finance, is vice president of marketing and business development at First Security Bank. He and his wife, **Nicole (Lajudes)** '13, B.S. communication disorders, '15, M.S. speech-language pathology, live in Beaumont.

**Lynn (Boudreaux) Burleson** '04, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, retired as kindergarten teacher at Lawtell Elementary School. She and her husband, David, live in Opelousas, La.

**Jenny Hamilton** '04, B.S. communication, '21, M.B.A. business administration, is business manager for the Lamar University College of Fine Arts and Communication. She and her husband, Joseph, live in Port Neches.

**Nautashia (Byrd) Polidore** '04, B.S. psychology, '07, B.S. nursing, is a registered nurse with UnitedHealth. She and her husband, Derric, live in Beaumont.

**Ashley (Burton) Riley** '04, B.S. theatre, '07, M.S. theatre, is vice president of provider sales with IVX Health. She lives in Nederland.

**Kristin (Lené) Camp** '05, B.S. psychology, '08, M.Ed. counseling and development, is the contract administration manager for the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. She and her husband, Phillip, live in Beaumont.

**Donna (Miguez) Cole** '05, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '13, M.Ed. administration, is a reading interventionist at Taft Elementary School in Port Neches-Groves school district. She and her husband, Stephen, live in Groves.

**Tina Gipson-Hickman** '05, B.G.S. general studies, is an educational diagnostician at Hardin-Jefferson Junior High School. She and her husband, **Marlon** '14, B.S. environmental science, who is an environmental and regulatory advisor with Golden Pass LNG, live in Beaumont.

**Haley (Meek) Strahan** '05, B.G.S. general studies, is regulatory project manager at Lanier & Associates Consulting Engineers Inc. She and her husband,

**Benjamin** '08, B.G.S. general studies, '14, B.S. nursing, who is an intensive care unit nurse with St. Elizabeth, live in Beaumont.

**Christopher Trejo** '05, B.B.A. marketing, is credit analyst at Dext Capital. He and his wife, Tamara, live in Spring.

**Savanna Hidalgo** '06, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '18, M.Ed. school counseling, is counselor at Edwards-Johnson Memorial Silsbee Middle School. She lives in Beaumont.

**Laura Hinson** '06, B.G.S. general studies, is head cashier and retail manager at Home Depot and GSI and ecosystem alliance partner sales manager III at Informatica. She lives in Austin.

Congratulations to **Jarrod Rossi** '06, B.S. psychology, '11, M.S. psychology, '16, M.B.A. business administration, on his marriage to Emily Phillips Aug. 5, 2023. He is director of university assessment at Lamar University, and they live in Beaumont.

**Kimberly (Doucet) Sala** '06, B.A.A.S., applied arts and sciences, '14, M.Ed. educational technology, is manager of student engagement and retention at Lamar Institute of Technology. She lives in Beaumont.

**Carrie (Hebert) Strong** '06, B.S. family and consumer sciences-fashion retailing and merchandising, is vice president of human resources for FivePoint Credit Union. She and her husband, Kerry, live in Nederland.

**Jason Wickliff** '06, B.S. communication, is head boys basketball coach at Liberty High School. He and his wife, **Krystal (Cook)** '08, A.A.S. nursing, who is a registered nurse with Neighbors Emergency Center, live in Humble.

**Matt Ellis** '07, B.S. kinesiology, coaches football and basketball at Groves Middle School and track and Port Neches-Groves High School. He and his wife, **Celina** '07, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, who teaches at Groves Primary School, live in Port Neches.

**Julie (Mooneyham) Guidry** '07, B.S. communication, teaches fourth grade English, language arts, reading and social studies at Helena Park Elementary. She and her husband, Cole, live in Groves.

Congratulations to **Andrea (Bost)** '07, B.S. criminal justice, B.S.W. social work, and **Clinton Rawls** '06, B.S. communication, on the birth of their son, Harrison James. Clinton is instructor of humanities at Lamar Institute of Technology, and they live in Beaumont.

Congratulations to **Brittany (Johnson)** '07, B.B.A. finance, and **Eric Simmons** '09, B.S. mechanical engineering, on the birth of their daughter, Brielle Grace. Brittany is an accountant for the Department of Justice and City of Port Arthur planning, and Eric is project manager at Gulf Copper & Manufacturing Corp. They live in Beaumont.

**Constable Chris Bates** '08, B.G.S. general studies, who earned his master's degree in public administration in 2017, is president of the Justices of Peace and Constables Association of Texas. He is also minister of music for New Pilgrim Baptist Church and lives with his wife, **Ariana (Jones)** '17, B.S. communication-broadcasting, '21, M.Ed. administration, who teaches second grade at Travis Elementary School, in Port Arthur.

**Ashley (Richardson) Boone** '08, B.S. political science, is a 504/testing coordinator for Vidor High School. She earned her master's degree in education in 2017 and lives in Lumberton.

**Dakota Doman** '08, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, '11, M.B.A. business administration, earned a doctorate in higher education administration and is the managing principal of TM2 Executive Search. He and his wife, **Ashly (Henson)** '08, B.S. psychology, live in Houston.

Congratulations to **Mallory (Hebert)** '08, B.M. music, and **Robert Rose Jr.** -20 on the birth of their daughter, Rhylin Victoria. Malory teaches music at Highland Park Elementary in Nederland school district, and they live in Port Neches.

**Elizabeth (Hudson) Sutton** '08, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, is co-founder and outreach director of 409 Family. She and her husband, Lloyd, live in Beaumont.

**Tamara (Hobbs) Grumbles** '09, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, owns Grumbles Business Support Services. She and her husband, Michael, live in Bridge City.

Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee appointed **Hash Hashemian** '08, Eng.D. electrical engineering, who earned his Ph.D. in nuclear engineering and applied physics in 2009 and his Ph.D. in electrical and computer engineering in 2011, to the Tennessee Nuclear Energy Advisory Council. He and his wife, Nazzzy, live in Knoxville, Tenn.

**Jarrod Hunter** '09, M.Ed. teacher leadership, is head softball coach at Friendswood High School. He and his wife, Laura, live in Dickinson.

Congratulations to **Connie Martinez** '09, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '17, M.Ed. school counseling, and **William Grogan** '16, B.S. kinesiology, on their marriage. She is librarian at Highland Park Elementary in Nederland school district, and he is a special education teacher for Green Dot Public Schools. They live in Groves.

**Daniel McLeomore** '09, B.S. communication, '21, M.B.A. business administration, is director of marketing communications for Lamar State College-Orange. He and his wife, **Chelsea** '11, B.S. graphic design, who is a graphic artist for Bridge Point Fellowship Church, live in Orange.

**John Newton** '09, B.B.A. finance, is a financial analyst lead at Entergy Texas Inc.

**Kasey (Lawler) Strange** '09, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, teaches pre-k at Happy Harbour. She and her husband, Beau, live in League City.

**Tim Woolley** '09, M.Ed. administration, is chief financial officer for Bridge City school district. He and his wife, Sally, live in Orange.

## 10s

**Grayson Meek** '10, B.A. history, '17, M.A. history, is director of events and external relations oversight for the Lamar University Division of University Advancement. She lives in Windsor, Colo.

Congratulations to **Bethany Aiena** '11, B.S. psychology, on her marriage to Arulrajah Namasivayam. She is associate director of the behavioral health program at Michael E. DeBakey Veteran Affairs Medical Center. They live in Houston.

Congratulations to **Briana (Gattis)** '11, B.S. family and consumer science-food and nutrition, B.S. exercise science and fitness management, '13, M.S. family and consumer science, and **Trace Baker** '13, B.S. kinesiology, on the birth of their son, Tate George. She is a dietitian with QuadMed Onsite, and they live in Missouri City.

**Dennis Gilliam** '11, Ed.D. deaf studies/deaf education, is president of the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind. He lives in Alpine, Ala.

**Kristi Lewis** '11, M.Ed. administration, '18, Ed.D. educational leadership, is principal of Thomas Jefferson Middle School in Port Arthur school district. She lives in Port Arthur.

Congratulations to **Maily (Tran)** '11, B.S. psychology, '13, A.A.S. nursing, and Phuc Van Pham on the birth of their daughter, Aspen Everly. They live in Groves.

Congratulations to **Crissa (Taylor) Vallery** '11, B.S. psychology, '16, M.Ed. clinical mental health counseling, and her husband, Derril, on the birth of their daughter, Zuri Wynter. They live in Beaumont.

**Amanda (Ginn) Braxton** '12, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, owns Happily Ever Magical Vacations Travel Agency. She and her husband, Brandon, live in Orange.

**Camille (Eaton) Briggs** '12, M.A. English, is public and government affairs manager at ExxonMobil. She and her husband, Lionel, live in Beaumont.

**Ryan Kelly** '12, B.A. history, teaches math at Bridge City High School. He and his wife, **Susan (Gray)** '84, B.S. chemical engineering, who is a waste and water manager for INVISTA, live in Bridge City.

The Teachers College at Emporia State University named **Damara (Goff) Paris** '12, Ed.D. deaf studies/deaf education, the 2023-2024 John E. King Endowed Professor. She is a professor of counselor education in the School of Applied Health Sciences. She lives in Salem, Ore.

**Blake Peveto** '12, B.S. kinesiology, '23, M.Ed. administration, is assistant principal at Bridge City High School. He and his wife, **Katy (Stewart)** '12, B.S. kinesiology, '21, M.Ed. administration, live in Orange.

**Asha Winfield** '12, B.S. communication, earned her doctorate in communication in 2021 and is an assistant professor at Louisiana State University. She lives in Baton Rouge.

**Karen Brown** '13, M.Ed. administration, is assistant principal of Brenham Middle School. She lives in Montgomery.

**Victor Bunner Jr.** '13, B.S. kinesiology, '15, M.S. kinesiology, is head baseball coach at Tyler Legacy High School and was named 21-3A Coach of the Year in 2022. He and his wife, **Stefanie (Miroballi)** '14, B.S. nursing, live in Tyler.

**Brooke (O'Neal) Kalnbach** '13, M.Ed. administration, is director of elementary curriculum and instruction for San Angelo school district. She and her husband, **Michael** '12, M.Ed. administration, who is assistant principal at Glenn Middle School, live in San Angelo.

**Kevin King** '13, B.A. English, is director of operation at Workforce Solutions of Southeast Texas. He lives in Vidor.

**Megan (Fournierat) Mistic** '13, B.G.S. general studies, teaches English at West Brook High School. She and her husband, **Nathan** '13, B.B.A. entrepreneurship, B.B.A. management, B.B.A. general business, '21, M.B.A. business administration, who is technical account manager with AWC Inc., live in Nederland.

Congratulations to **Sarah (DeRouen)** '13, B.B.A. accounting, '15, M.S. accounting, and **Mason Mounkes** '17, B.G.S. general studies, on the birth of their son, Finnick Jack. She is a staff accountant with Mitchell T. Fontenote CPA, and they live in Nederland.

**Christopher Oldham** '13, M.Ed. administration, is principal of Waller High School. He lives in Waller.

**Jaye (Faccenda) Schaffer** '13, M.Ed. educational technology leadership, is assistant principal of Wayne Valley High School. She and her husband, Gregory, live in Wayne, N.J.

**Danielle (Sonier) Breland** '14, B.S. family and consumer sciences-nutrition, dietetics and hospitality, is special education intervention educator at Etoile Academy Charter School. She and her husband, Cameron, live in Katy.

Congratulations to **Natalie (Rhodes)** '14, B.S. dance, and Chase Butaud on the birth of their daughter, Riley Renee. Natalie is assistant director of customer service for Lamar University. They live in Port Neches.

The Executive Commissioner for Texas Health and Human Services appointed **Ryan Dollinger** '14, B.S.W. social work, who earned his master's degree in public administration in 2017 and his master's degree in social work in 2018, to the Policy Council for Children and Families. Dollinger is a licensed clinical social worker for the United States Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center and is an on-line instructor for Texas Southern University. He and his wife, **Amber (Chase)** '22, B.S. nursing, live in Plano.

**JoAnn Fey** '14, Ed.D. educational leadership, is superintendent of Killeen school district. She lives in La Coste.

**Matthew Glaze** '14, B.G.S. general studies, earned a master's degree in divinity in 2022 and is director of housing operations for Blinn College District. He and his wife, Victoria, live in Brenham.

Congratulations to **Lauren (Barbeaud) Hillyer** '14, B.S. communication, '23, M.Ed. teacher leadership, on being named a 2022 Outstanding Educator by the Anahuac Area Chamber of Commerce. She teaches ninth grade at Goose Creek Memorial High School. She and her husband, Brandon, live in Wallisville.





Terry Savoy-Hadley '95 and Robert Turner



LU Alumni Advisory Board President Sharita Gardner '12 and Gail (Ford) Castille '77



Naomi (Showers) Doyle '10, '12, and Yolanda (Johnson) Avery '86, '91

Aug. 20, 2023, at BLU Bar and Grill in Port Arthur

## Lamar University Black Alumni Network Mixers

Members of the Lamar University Black Alumni Network gathered



Rebecca Jean '83 and Kris Reynolds '16, '17



Elohor (Okene) Jackson '20 and Terry Savoy-Hadley '95



Antionette Kelly '91

Sept. 13, 2023, at Nell's Place in Beaumont



## Cardinal Adventures: Cape Cod and Nordic marvels

Karen and Mike Fuljenz traveled with Cardinal Adventures on the Quintessential Cape Code trip through travel partner TRIPS Inc. Sept. 8-14, 2023. They visited Nantucket, Martha's Vineyard, National Seashore with a dune tour and lobster bake, as well as Newport and Providence, RI.

Marita (Mueller) Duesler '72 and Donald Duesler -71 traveled with Cardinal Adventures on the Nordic Marvels and Mysteries Above the Arctic Circle trip through travel partner TRIPS Inc. Aug. 2-16, 2023. They cruised amongst the deep blue fjords, flowing waterfalls, and sharp, snow-capped mountains of Norway. They visited ten rare ports in Greenland, Iceland and Norway.



## Fall meeting

LU Alumni Advisory Board members gathered for their fall meeting and social Sept. 21, 2023, in the Lamar University Theatre where they learned the latest about the College of Fine Arts and Communication from Dean Golden Wright '21 and later attended opening of the play *Athena*.

**Dominique Johnson** '14, B.A. chemistry, is a research assistant at MD Anderson Cancer Center. He and his wife, **Jasmine** '16, B.B.A. marketing, B.B.A. management, live in Missouri City.

**Shawn Maxwell** '14, M.Ed. administration, is principal of Kyle Elementary School. He lives in Buda.

**Lindsey Sorrell** '14, B.S. speech and hearing sciences, '16, M.S. speech-language pathology, is a speech-language pathologist at 212 Therapy. She lives in Beaumont.

Congratulations to **Jamerica (Malbrough)** '15, B.S. communication, and **Morgan Bacon** '15, B.S. exercise science and fitness management, on the birth of their son, Kenneth Elijah. Morgan teaches physical education for Wharton school district, and they live in Spring.

Congratulations to **Lillian (Rodriguez)** '15, B.S. family and consumer sciences-family studies, and **Chase Cobb** '14, B.B.A. general business, on the birth of their daughter, Reyna. Lillian is a customer service representative with Small Town Vinyl, and Chase is a band director. They live in Nederland.

**Taylor (Thurman) McDonald** '14, B.S. speech and hearing sciences, '18, M.Ed. school counseling, is a school counselor at Smith Elementary School in Magnolia school district. She and her husband, Jake, live in Montgomery.

**Brandon Aldrich** '15, B.S. communication, is creative director for Rave Financial. He and his wife, **Sheri** '15, B.S. communication, who is a digital marketing specialist for Education First Federal Credit Union, live in Beaumont.

**Brittney (Ard) Bazar** '15, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, owns and is an agent with Texas Farm Bureau. She and her husband, Ryan, live in Lumberton.

**Shelby Davidson** '15, Ed.D. educational leadership, is superintendent of Alba-Golden school district. He and his wife, Amanda, live in Van.

**Rudy Gonzalez** '15, M.Ed. administration, is principal of Marble Falls Middle School. He and his wife, **Jennifer (Burris)** '13, M.Ed. administration, who is principal of Bonham Pre-K, live in Marble Falls.

**Megan (Ogden) Hanks** '15, B.S. exercise science and fitness management, is business and community development supervisor at Neches Federal Credit Union. She and her husband, **Alan** '18, B.B.A. management information systems, who is a senior data engineer for Teradata, live in Port Neches.

**Rebecca Hering** '15, M.Ed. school counseling, is director of career and technical education. She and her husband, Keith, live in Godley.

INVISTA promoted **Cody Kutach** '15, B.S. mechanical engineering, to engineering manager. He lives in Kilgore.

Congratulations to **Britni (Jackson) Laird** '15, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, and **Cody** '15, B.B.A. management information systems, on the birth of their son, Arthur Patrick. Britni teaches kindergarten at Travis Elementary, and Cody is assistant manager at Sherwin-Williams and owns Hangout Gaming Center. They live in Groves.

**Chelsea (Wagner) Lee** '15, criminal justice, is an advising coordinator for Lamar University and earned a master's degree in investigative psychology in 2017. She and her husband, Tom, live in Nederland.

**Cyndee Patterson** '15, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, earned her doctorate in global leadership and change in 2023. She is program manager for the City of Houston and lives in Houston.

**Charity Ogbeide** '15, B.S. communication, who earned his law degree in 2018, married Olamide Korede Fadahunsi July 1, 2023. Charity is a privacy compliance manager for Amazon and adjunct assistant professor at the University of Maryland. They live in Alexandria, Va.

**Lashonda (Woodkins) Pernetter** '15, M.Ed. administration, is principal of C.J. Harris Elementary School in Pearland school district. She and her husband, Roderick, live in Pearland.

Building Interdisciplinary Research in Women's Health selected **Dr. Lauren (Stafford) Richardson** '15, B.S. biology, as one of its 76 research scholars in the U.S. and one of four podium speakers at its annual meeting. She and her husband, Alex, live in Winnie.

**Stephanie (Bermudez) Richings** '15, B.S. psychology, '18, M.S. speech-language pathology, is director of rehabilitation at Paradigm in the Pines. She and her husband, **Cody** '14, B.S. criminal justice, live in Beaumont.

Congratulations to **Kylie Robinett** '15, B.S. industrial engineering, '22, M.S. management information systems, M.B.A. business administration, on her marriage to Wes Johnson June 3, 2023. She is senior consultant with The Hackett Group Inc., and they live in Arlington.

**Gordon Weintraub** '15, B.S. chemical engineering, is sportsbook assistant manager at Caesars Sportsbook and Casino. He lives in Lake Charles.

**Bernard "Ben" Yett III** '15, B.S. mathematics, B.S. electrical engineering, earned his Ph.D. in electrical engineering May 13, 2023, and is a teaching assistant professor at Stevens Institute of Technology. He and his wife, Amanda, live in Union City, N.J.

**Michelle Amajirionwu** '16, B.S. nursing, is a nurse practitioner at Houston Methodist Hospital and recently earned her nurse practitioner

master's degree in adult-genontology acute care. She lives in Houston.

**Zane Anderson** '16, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, is head baseball coach and assistant football coach for Hamshire-Fannett high school. He lives in Bon Wier.

Congratulations to **Holden Butler** '16, B.S. environmental science, and his wife, Karington, on the birth of their daughter, Vivienne Brooke. He is an environmental field specialist with Motiva Enterprises, and they live in Nederland.

Congratulations to **Jessieca (Brock)** '16, B.B.A. human resource management, who earned her M.B.A. in human resource management in 2019, and Corday Clark on the birth of their son. Jessieca is a human resource generalist for Langan Engineering & Environmental Services, and they live in Katy.

**Shelby Clements** '16, B.G.S. general studies, teaches at West Brook High School. She lives in Sour Lake.

Congratulations to **Ta'quisha (Radford)** '16, B.B.A. economics, B.B.A. finance, '20, M.B.A. business administration, and **Scorpio Collins** '16, B.S. industrial engineering, on the birth of their daughter, Atlas Alani. Ta'quisha is a logistics coordinator with BDP International, and Scorpio earned an M.B.A. and is a STEM professional with the Naval Surface Warfare Center. They live in Philadelphia.

**Melonee (Hargrave) Fife** '16, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, is student success advisor and director of career and technical education at Kountze High School. She and her husband, Brian, live in Kountze.

Ector County school district awarded **Melissa (Bozkurt) Garcia** '16, M.Ed. school counseling, the Counselor of the Year Award. She is a counselor at Crockett Middle School and lives with her husband, Anthony, in Odessa.

Redwater school district **Jakeb Goff** '16, M. Ed. educational technology leadership, is the 2023 Texas Association of Secondary School Principals Region 8 Educational Service Center Middle School Principal of the Year. He and his wife, Lacey, live in Texarkana.

**DeMark'o Grant** '16, M.Ed. administration, is principal of Wilkinson Middle School in Mesquite school district. He and his wife, Jordyn, live in Midlothian.

**Austin Hall** '16, M.Ed. administration, is supervisor of transportation services for Carthage school district. He and his wife, Abby, live in Carthage.

Congratulations to **Tempist Haywood** '16, B.S. sociology, and **De'Undra Byrd** -23, on the birth of their daughter, Zara Sage. Tempist earned a master's degree in sociology in 2021 and owns StormiCreations Co. and StormMoon Studio. They live in Katy.

**Donald Heseman** '16, M.Ed. administration, is superintendent of West Hardin County school district. He and his wife, Autumn, live in Saratoga.

**Tory Hoecker** '16, B.S. biology, earned her doctorate in 2020 and is the pharmacy manager at Brookshire Brothers-Newton. She lives in Vidor.

Angelo State University appointed **Sandra (Dorr) Mohr** '16, Ed.D. educational leadership, as the first dean of its new digital education center. She and her husband, David, live in San Angelo.

**Jael (Spencer) Moody** '16, M.Ed. teacher leadership, is director of the Texas Statewide Network of Assessment Professionals. She and her husband, D.J., live in Beaumont.

**Portia Okeke** '16, B.S. exercise science and fitness management, '21, M.S. nutrition, earned her doctorate in physical therapy. She lives in Sugar Land.

Congratulations to **Chelsea (Creekmore) Sistrunk** '16, B.A. English, and her husband, Casey, on the adoption of their son Theo. They live in Kountze.

**Ashton (Wagner) Voight** '16, B.S. psychology, '19, M.Ed. clinical mental health counseling, teaches seventh grade math at Little Cypress Junior High School. She and her husband, Spencer, live in Orange.

**Amanda Walden** '16, B.G.S. general studies, teaches first grade at Little Cypress Elementary School. She lives in Vidor.

**Jeffrey Westmoreland** '16, B.M. music, is band director at Vidor High School and lives in Deer Park.

Congratulations to **Alyssa (Hancock) Wilson** '16, B.S. speech and hearing sciences, '21, M.B.A. business administration, and her husband, Keene, on the birth of their son, James Robert. She is president of the Southeast Texas Greater Golden Triangle BNI Group, and they live in Beaumont.

**Michelle Cease** '17, B.B.A. retail management, is operations manager at Family First Insurance Agency. She and her husband, J.T., live in Wylie.

**Hannah Clark** '17, B.S.W. social work, is a site coordinator with Communities in Schools at West Brook High School. She lives in Alvin.

**Macy (Morehead) Daimler** '17, B.S. nursing, is a board certified neonatal nurse practitioner and NICU nurse at Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital. She earned her master's degree in 2023, and she and her husband, Christian, live in Anahuac.

**Michael Dutson** '17, M.Ed. administration, retired in May 2023 as coach at Johnson High School in Northeast school district. He lives in San Antonio.

Congratulations to **Andrea (Rugg)** '17, B.B.A. economics, B.B.A. finance, '18, M.B.A. business administration, and **Christopher Lee** '15, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, on the birth of their son, Christopher Thomas. Christopher is a teacher and coach for Sartartia Middle School in Fort Bend school district and Andrea is a growth team support analyst for Botkeeper. They live in Richmond.

**Holley (Legendre) Leon** '17, B.S. family and consumer science-fashion retailing/merchandising, is a real estate agent with EXIT Realty Property Pros. She and her husband, Dale, live in Kountze.

Congratulations to **Travis Miller** '17, B.S. mechanical engineering, and his wife, Lauren, on the birth of their daughter, Clara Mae. They live in Groves.

Congratulations to **Micah** '17, B.S. chemistry, and Olivia Murdock on the birth of their daughter, Catherine Judith. Micah is a product manager for GEON Performance Solutions. They live in Cleveland, Ohio.

**Christy Perez** '17, M.Ed. school counseling, '22, M.Ed. administration, is principal of Uvalde Elementary School. She lives in Uvalde.

**Quade Roberson** '17, B.S. mechanical engineering, is associate project manager at Hanson Professional Services Inc. He and his wife, **Rebecca** '16, B.B.A. marketing, who is a liability claims adjuster for Farmer's Group Inc., live in Hockley.

**Ryan Romero** '17, B.A. history, '19, M.A. history, teaches history at Bob Hope High School. He lives in Port Neches.

**Stormy Semich** '17, B.M. music education, is director of bands at Whitney High School and has had three UIL State Marching Band Championship finalist appearances in six years. She lives in Waco.

**Alexis Smith** '17, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, teaches first grade at Little Cypress Elementary School. She and her husband, **Nate** '10, B.S. kinesiology, who is a teacher and basketball coach at Little Cypress-Mauriceville High School, live in Vidor.

**Katie Stout** '17, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, '23, M.Ed. school counseling, is a school counselor at Little Cypress Junior High School. She and her husband, Hunter, live in Orange.

**Brittany Sumner** '17, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, is athletic coordinator for Copperas Cove Junior High School. She lives in Livingston.

**Reyna (Gomez) Tippetts** '17, M.B.A. business administration, is dean of East Aldine Center at Lone Star College. She and her husband, Roscoe, live in Splendor.

**Sam Williams** '17, B.B.A. accounting, is senior accountant for the Lamar University Foundation Inc. He lives in Beaumont.

Congratulations to **Rachel (Thompson)** '17, B.S. chemical engineering, and **Cory Wyborney** '16, B.B.A. management information systems, on the birth of their daughter, Elaine Paige. He is a business analyst with HEB Houston Public Affairs, and she is an associate consultant with WiPro. They live in Kingwood.

**Breanne Bell** '18, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, teaches kindergarten at Helena Park Elementary School in Nederland school district, where she lives.

**Kimberly Boase** '18, B.S. speech and hearing sciences, '23, Au.D. audiology, is an audiologist with UTMB-Galveston. She lives in Houston.

**Shelby Brannan** '18, B.S. theatre and dance, earned a master's degree in strategic communication and innovation and is executive director of the Beaumont Heritage Society. She and her husband, Rodney, live in Beaumont. Congratulations to them on the birth of their daughter, Ivy Caroline.

Congratulations to **Ben Bulgherini** '18, B.S. electrical engineering, on his marriage to Katie McMahan June 17, 2023. He teaches biology at Port Neches-Groves High School, and they live in Groves.

**Charlee Chelette** '18, B.B.A. marketing, '19, M.B.A. business administration, is the community impact officer at Neches Federal Credit Union. She lives in Port Neches.

**Destin Corley** '18, B.S. nursing, earned her certification as a registered nurse anesthetist and her Doctor of Nursing Practice-Nurse Anesthesia in 2023. She lives in Lumberton.

Congratulations to **Ely (Garcia) Deharo** '18, M.Ed. digital learning and leading, and her husband, Pedro, on the birth of their daughter, Sofia. They live in Houston.

**Celine Do** '18, B.B.A. management information systems, '22, M.B.A. business administration, is human resources recruiter for Provost Umphrey Law Firm. She lives in Groves.

Congratulations to **Demi (Laney)** '18, M.P.A. public administration, and **Chase Engman** '15, B.S. political science, on the birth of their daughter, Laney Mae, May 18, 2023. Demi is the planning manager for the City of Beaumont, where they live.

**Aaron Gaskill** '18, B.S. biology, earned his doctorate in health promotion and community health services in 2023. He is a health economist with the Texas Department of State Health Services and lives in Port Arthur.

**Garrett Gaspard** '18, B.S. communication-corporate, is an insurance agent and owns G&T Insurance Agency. He also owns Avenue Axe, voted 2023 best family entertainment by Port Arthur News readers. He and his wife, Taylor live in Port Neches.



**Krysten (Harvey) Graves** '18, B.G.S. general studies, teaches English at Bridge City High School. She and her husband, Ethan, live in Bridge City.

**Aaron Lemelle** '18, B.S. nursing, received the Daisy Award at the University of Vermont Health Network. He is a nurse at the Kate Dishman Rehabilitation Hospital and lives in Beaumont.

**Lauren (Hale) Louviere** '18, B.G.S. general studies, and her husband, Lance, on the birth of their daughter, Liv Bren, Aug. 5, 2023. Lauren teaches eight grade science at Marshall Middle School in Beaumont school district. They live in Beaumont.

**Alvin Lugod** '18, M.S. criminal justice, is the diversion officer with Sarpy County Attorney's Office. He and his wife, Julia, live in Omaha, Neb.

**Trent McGee** '18, B.M. music education, is assistant band director and director of percussion for Greenville High School. He lives in Greenville.

**Torea Nolen** '18, B.S. nursing, is an registered nurse with Baptist Hospitals of Southeast Texas. She lives in Beaumont.

**Karlee (Wilkes) Ogden** '18, B.S. psychology, is associate director of operations for student aid at Lamar University. She and her husband, Garrett, live in Sour Lake.

**Tracy (Harris) Rieger** '18, M.Ed. administration, is director of curriculum and instructional design for Belton school district. She and her husband, Timothy, live in Round Rock.

**Victoria Rocha** '18, B.S. exercise science and fitness management, '21, M.B.A. business administration, is human resources generalist at Shady Rays Polarized Sunglasses. She lives in Beaumont.

Congratulations to **Shelby (Whitehead)** '18, B.S. chemical engineering, and **Calvin Smylie** '20, B.S. industrial engineering, on the birth of their daughter, Charlotte Rose. Shelby is an FCC contact engineer at ExxonMobil Corp., and they live in Lumberton.

Congratulations to **Brooke (Nash) Swate** '18, B.S.W. social work, and Brandon, on the birth of their son, Sorin Samuel. Brooke is director of disaster response with Catholic Charities of Central Texas, and they live in Austin.

Congratulations to **Autumn (Harris) Taylor** '18, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, and Zac on the birth of their daughter, Harper Maeve. She teaches first grad at Vidor Elementary School, and they live in Vidor.

Congratulations to **Allie Valentine** '18, B.S. biology, and her fiancé, Ryan, on the birth of their son, Reece Christian. They live in Beaumont.

**Zeila Wittke** '18, M.Ed. administration, is principal of Lancaster Elementary School. She lives in El Paso.

**Adrian Woodard** '18, B.M. music education, is assistant director of bands at Magnolia High School. He and his wife, **Bekah (Wells)** '17, B.S. communication—corporate, '21, M.B.A. business administration, who is an admissions counselor for the University of Alabama at Birmingham, live in New Caney.

**Tristen Anding** '19, B.A. political science, is a law clerk for Germer, PLLC. He lives in Port Arthur.

**Daniel Bacchiocchi** '19, B.S. criminal justice, is an officer with the Beaumont Police Department and earned the Rotary Club of Beaumont Beyond the Badge Award in 2023. He lives in Lumberton.

**Kendall (Ellenbarger) Berry** '19, M.Ed. administration, is principal of Austin Elementary. She and her husband, Bryan, live in Poolville.

Congratulations to **Taylor Britton** '19, B.S.W. criminal justice, on the birth of her daughter Bryttin Janae Kennon. Taylor earned her master's degree in social work in 2021, and they live in Beaumont.

**Alexandria Gregoire** '19, M.Ed. administration, is principal of Worthing Early College High School in Houston school district. She lives in Humble.

Congratulations to **Taylor (Ray) Jacobs** '19, B.S. criminal justice, '20, M.S. criminal justice, and her partner Kohen on the birth of their son, Kaizen Gene. She is a pretrial service officer for Travis County, and they live in Jarrell.

**Kionne Kemp** '19, M.Ed. clinical mental health counseling, is a therapist at Idea Charter School. She lives in Houston.

**Kyndel (Spoonmore) Kyler** '19, B.G.S. general studies, is a board certified behavior analyst at Lights on ABA Services. She and her husband, Garrett, live in Beaumont.

Congratulations to **Jayna Lacy** '19, B.S. communication—corporate, and **Josh Bonnette** '19, B.S. mechanical engineering, on their marriage Aug. 5, 2023. Jayna is health education program coordinator for the Student Health Center at Lamar University, and Josh is an engineer with Scallon Controls. They live in Beaumont.

**Emily Lawrence** '19, B.S. political science, earned her law degree in 2022 and is an attorney with Dunham & Jones Law Firm. She lives in Bryan.

**Yi Liu** '19, M.E. electrical engineering, '22, Eng.D. industrial engineering, is a technical engineer with Fuyao Glass Co. He lives in Plymouth, Mich.

Congratulations to **Emily (McCurley)** '19, B.S. communication—speech education, '22, M.Ed. digital learning and leading, and **Gerald Duhon** '19, B.S. criminal justice, on their marriage

Aug. 5, 2023. She teaches theatre arts and communication at Smith Middle School in Beaumont school district, and they live in Beaumont.

**Connor Raborn** '19, B.S. political science, earned her law degree May 13, 2023. She is a law clerk with Shackelford, Bowen, McKinley & Norton and lives in Houston.

Licensed psychological associate **Darby Reed-Pilant** '19, B.S. psychology, '22, M.S. applied psychology, founded Resilient Minds and is a care coordination supervisor with Spindletop Center. She and her husband, Caleb, live in Vidor.

**Carly (Duplant) Rose** '19, B.M. music education, is head band director at Central Middle School in Nederland school district. She and her husband, **Eric** '13, B.M. music, '21, M.Ed. administration, who is director of bands at Nederland High School, live in Nederland.

Congratulations to **Natalie (Sfeir)** '19, B.S. speech and hearing sciences, and **Carlo Vanz** '18, B.S. biology, '19, M.B.A. business administration, on their marriage June 24, 2023. Congratulations also to Carlo, on earning his Ph.D. in integrated biomedical sciences in May. Natalie is a speech language pathologist with Tufts Medical Center, and Carlo is a life sciences consultant at EY-Parthenon. They live in Boston.

## 20s

**Clarence Anderson** '20, B.S. communication, who earned his master's degree in business administration in 2022, co-owns Moments, Memories N Such. He lives in Houston.

The Plymouth City Patriots signed second year pro shooting guard **T.J. Atwood** '20, B.G.S. general studies, for the 2023-2024 British Basketball League season. Last year, he led BK Iskra Svit in the Slovakian Extraliga in steals and minutes.

**Candace (Hebert) Baumgardner** '20, B.S. exercise science and fitness management, earned her doctorate in occupational therapy Aug. 18, 2023. She is an occupational therapist with Texas Children's Hospital, and she and her husband, **Brandon** '21, B.S. exercise science and fitness management, who is an officer with the Houston Police Department, live in Spring.

**McKenna (Baker) Bertrand** '20, B.G.S. general studies, '22, B.B.A. human resource management, is membership co-chair for Southeast Texas Human Resource Association and is a senior human resource generalist at Jefferson County. She and her husband, Cade, live in Buna.

**Chassadi Decker-Cude** '20, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, teaches English and is the Strutters Dance Team Director at Bridge City High School. She and her husband, Eric, live in Bridge City.

**Ashlyn Ellison** '20, B.B.A. marketing, '23, M.B.A. business administration, is a marketing coordinator for admissions at Lamar University. She lives in Port Neches.

Congratulations to **Sarah (Truncali)** '20, B.S. mathematics, and **Gavin Gilbreath** '20, B.S. electrical engineering, on the birth of their daughter, Hayden Elizabeth. Sarah teaches at Bridge City High School, and Gavin is a control system engineer for Motiva Enterprises. They live in Orange.

Congratulations to **Lauren (Dean) Guillory** '20, B.S. sociology, and her husband Colton on the birth of their daughter, Dean Harper. Lauren is business office manager for Pucci Chateau, and they live in Nederland.

**Osha Jones** '20, B.S. speech and hearing sciences, earned her master's degree in communication science disorders and is a CF-speech language pathologist with MedCare Pediatric Group. She lives in Sugar Land.

**Makenzie (Kelly)** '20, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, married Mitchell Simmons July 15, 2023. Makenzie teaches kindergarten at St. Anne Catholic School, and they live in Nederland.

Congratulations to **Kayla (Painter) Robertson** '20, B.A. American Sign Language, on her marriage to Joshua "Josh" Robertson June 24, 2023. She earned her master's degree in Christian ministry from the Deaf Theological Center in Nashville. They live in Antioch, Tenn.

**Noel Perez** '20, B.S. criminal justice, earned his law degree in May. He lives in Orange.

**Aaron Porter** '20, B.M. music, is assistant band director at Anahuac Middle School. Texas Music Educators Association named the band its 1C Honor Band. He and his wife, **Melanie (Champagne)** '22, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, who is youth minister for Kenefick Southern Baptist Church, live in Port Neches.

Congratulations to **Madi (Reich) Emerson** '20, B.S. nursing, on her marriage to Austin June 25, 2023. They live in Beaumont.

Congratulations to **Maegan (Myers)** '20, B.B.A. accounting, '22, M.B.A. business administration, and **Cody Sasser** '21, B.S. chemical engineering, on the birth of their daughter, Lily Elizabeth Marie. Maegan is an accountant with Indorama Ventures Integrated Oxides and Derivatives, and Cody is a production engineer with Indorama Ventures Oxides. They live in Groves.

Ector County school district named Buice Elementary principal **Sally (Ham) Smith** '20, M.Ed. administration, as elementary assistant 2023 Principal of the Year. She and her husband, Anthony, live in Odessa.

**Colton Wright** '20, B.M. music performance, '23, M.M. music, teaches choir and piano at Bridge City High School. He and his wife, **Emily** '14, B.S. environmental science, who is an environmental investigator for Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, live in Nederland.

**Jay Yoder** '20, M.Ed. educational technology and leadership, is director of the American Comedy Institute and a stand-up comedian who can be booked at jayyodercomedy.com. He teaches world language at Owen J. Roberts Middle School. He and his wife, Amanda, live in Spring City, Pa.

Congratulations to **Hannah (Abdullah) Khalifa** '21, B.A. chemistry, and Moustafa on their marriage July 29, 2023. They live in Houston.

**Brandon Baumgardner** '21, B.S. exercise science and fitness management, was named class leader and top shot in his class. He is a patrol division officer with the Houston Police Department. He and his wife, **Candace (Hebert)** '20, B.S. exercise science and fitness management, who earned her doctorate in occupational therapy and is a doctor with Texas Children's Hospital, live in Humble.

Congratulations to **Jordan (Knight) Chatagnier** '21, B.S. university studies, and her husband, Blake, on the birth of their daughter, Rivie Joyce. Jordan is an interior designer with Surfaces Design Studio, and they live in Beaumont.

Congratulations to **Tori (Downs)** '21, B.B.A. marketing, and **Zachary Clark** '21, B.S. mechanical engineering, on the birth of their daughter, Ella Rose. They live in Nederland.

Congratulations to **Makayla (Brown) Corbello** '21, B.S. nursing, and her husband, Alex, on the birth of their daughter, Camden "Cammie" Hope. They live in Orange.

Congratulations to **Candice (Trevino)** '21, M.Ed. administration, and **David Garza** '21, M.Ed. administration, on the birth of their daughter, Charlotte Belle. They live in Edinburg.

**Marine (Dermadzhyan) Kitka** '21, M.S. criminal justice, earned her law degree and has been appointed to serve as judge in the Ventura County Superior Court. She served as Ventura County's deputy district attorney since 2014 and as an adjunct professor at Ventura College of Law since 2022. She and her husband, James, live in Newbury Park, Calif.

**Sierra Kondos** '21, B.A. history, is a digital media producer with 12 News-KBMT/K-JAC. She lives in Port Arthur.

Congratulations to **Madison (Foster)** '21, B.S. nursing, and **Austin Krautz** '20, B.S. construction management, on the birth of their son, Mac James. They live in Port Neches.

**Dominique Leh** '21, B.S. communication-broadcasting, is a multimedia journalist with KXXV 25 News-ABC. She lives in Kirbyville.

**Olivia Malick** '21, B.S. communication-journalism, is public and government affairs coordinator at Kent for Exxon Mobil. She lives in Beaumont.

Congratulations to **Kaitlyn (Harvey)** '21, B.S. university studies multidisciplinary, and **Chaston Miller** '20, B.S. communication studies, on the birth of their daughter Olivia Jane. Kaitlyn teaches English at Bridge City Intermediate School, and they live in Bridge City.

**Dustin Nessel** '21, M.Ed. administration, is assistant principal of Edna Junior High School. He and his wife, Rachel, live in Cuero.

**Troy Petty** '21, M.Ed. administration, is educational administrator at Cleburne High School. He and his wife, Lisa, live in Cleburne.

**Vianna Posadas** '21, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, teaches English, reading and language arts at Central Middle School in Nederland school district. She lives in Nederland.

**Ethan Scroggs** '21, B.S. communication-film studies, is owner of Run Picture Run Productions and is assistant production office coordinator for Hulu's *Secrets & Sisterhood: The Sozhdahs*. He lives in Los Angeles, Calif.

**Alexis Sturrock** '21, B.S.W. social work, who earned her master's degree in social work in 2023, is executive director of Inspire, Encourage, Achieve (IEA). She lives in Orange.

Germany's Dragons Rhondorf signed power-forward/center **Avery Sullivan** '21, B.B.A. general business, B.B.A. management. He lives in Round Rock.

**Monae (Hubbard) Thompson** '21, M.Ed. school counseling, is principal of Glenn C. Moore Elementary. She and her husband, Marques, live in Owasso, Okla.

**Golden Wright** '21, Ed.D. educational leadership, is dean of the College of Fine Arts and Communication at Lamar University. He and his wife, Angie, live in Beaumont.

**Emily Alvarez** '22, B.B.A. advertising communication, is content team member with the Beaumont Convention and Visitors Bureau. She lives in Beaumont.

**Tyler Bates** '22, M.S. nutrition, is assistant football coach at East Texas Baptist University. He lives in Longview.

**Taylor Carter** '22, B.S. university studies multidisciplinary, teaches kindergarten in Port Arthur school district and lives in Port Neches.



LU Ambassadors Dennis Tran, Zaid Mohammed, Alumni Affairs Coordinator Evie Clifton, Alumni Affairs Director Shannon (Copeland) Figueroa '02, '03, '07, and LU Ambassadors Annabelle Broussard and Amarie Guillory



#### Centennial Fest

Faculty, staff, students, alumni and the community gathered on campus Sept. 17, 2023, for Centennial Fest to celebrate LU's 100th birthday.



Red Allen '90, Shannon (Pier) Allen '01, '13, Leslie Perkins and Regina Rogers '14



LU Alumni Advisory Board Members Terry Savoy-Hadley '99 and Elohor (Okene) Jackson '20



Christi Grudier '10, LU Alumni Advisory Board member John Rollins '12, Shannon (Copeland) Figueroa '02, '03, '07, LU Alumni Advisory Board President Sharita Gardner '12, and Evie Clifton



Brandon Willis '13, Kate Willis and Ashley Willis



Wilma (Stewart) Gibbs '67, '75, First Lady Stacy Taylor, Valarie Daniels, LaWanda (Black) Finney '84

#### Alumni Past President's Council luncheon

Past Presidents of both the former Lamar University Alumni Association and the current Lamar University Alumni Advisory Board gathered for lunch with President Jaime Taylor.

Front row from left, Martin Benoit '88; Carol (Patteson) Hebert '89, '90; Sharita Gardner '12; Tea (Nguyen) Do '08; Lila (Cramer) Stevens '01; Jake Tortorice '76; Paula (Tate) O'Neal '69, '79; Gina (Guidry) Hale '92, '04; second row from left, Laurie (House) Ritchel '85; Vernon Durden '69, '04; Trent Devenzio '90; Clayton Lau '69; Frank Messina '71; Brad Brown '81; Fred Vernon '12, '13; J. Don Warren Jr. '63; Gilbert Adams Jr. '64; back row from left, LU Ambassador Jacob Smith; Chris Bates '08; President Jaime Taylor; Evie Clifton, coordinator of Alumni Affairs; Shannon (Copeland) Figueroa '02, '03, '07, director of Alumni Affairs; back row on stairs, Juan Zabala '07, vice president for University Advancement; and LU Ambassadors Mary Wernig, Tomisin Egbewale, Jacob Thompson, Isaac Moreno, and Kelvin Elgar (TSUS Student Regent)





## CLASS NOTES

**Remington Connell** '22, B.S. exercise science and fitness management, teaches world geography and coaches at Orangefield High School. He lives in Buna.

**Jack Dallas** '22, M.S. mechanical engineering, moved from Single-A to High-A to play with the Jersey Shore BlueClaws affiliate of the Philadelphia Phillies. He lives in Orange.

**Lionso Gomez Jr.** '22, B.B.A. management, '23, M.B.A. business administration, is regional director of patient access for Christus Health. He and his wife, **Zaira** '20, M.Ed. special education, who is a teacher, live in Rowlett.

**Ali Hamza** '22, B.S. political science, was named to the Texas Law Review. He lives in Houston.

**Brianne (Lafitte) Ivy** '22, B.S.W. social work, earned her master's degree in 2023 and is a licensed master social worker at Harbor Hospice of Beaumont. She and her husband, **Dexter** '14, B.A. mathematics, live in China.

**Tiana Johnson** '22, B.S. communication-journalism education, is the website/digital contest manager for the city of Port Arthur. She lives in Beaumont.

**Heather (Smith) Kugler** '22, B.S. university studies, teaches fifth grade math at Travis Elementary School in Port Arthur school district. She and her husband, Kris, live in Nederland.

**Sarah Majors** '22, B.S. studio art-education, teaches art at Bridge City High School. She lives in Vidor.

**Caden Moran** '22, B.S. communication film studies, is a workforce analyst at Workforce Solutions of Southeast Texas. He and his wife, **Brittani (Bulgherini)** '21, B.S. speech and hearing sciences, who is a registered behavior technician for Lights on ABA Services Inc., live in Beaumont.

**Micayla Orsak** '22, M.B.A. business administration, is resourcing and deployment manager at PWC. She lives in Alvin.

**Abigail Paredes** '22, B.S. nursing, is a registered nurse with Memorial Hermann Hospitals. She lives in Missouri City.

**Melissa (David) Rodriguez** '22, Ed.D. educational leadership, is regional admissions counselor for Texas A&M University-Kingsville. She and her husband, Ruben, live in Houston.

**Logan Sells** '22, B.M. music education, is head band director at Vidor High School. He lives in Vidor.

The American Baseball Coaches Association, named **Ryan Snell** '22, B.S. university studies multidisciplinary, third-team All-American last June. He is catcher for the Washington Nationals Baseball Club and lives in Hardin.

**Jacob Wills** '22, B.S. university studies multidisciplinary, is vice president of business development and project management with Cy-Fair Federal Credit Union. He lives in Houston.

Congratulations to **Amber Wilson** '22, B.S. university studies, on the birth of her daughter, Saylor Blake. She teaches fifth grade English language arts and social studies and lives in Nederland.

**Andrew Zinck** '22, B.B.A. finance, '23, M.B.A. business administration, is a financial analyst at Freudenberg Oil and Gas Technologies. He lives in Houston.

**Kalan Bonnette** '23, B.S. computer science, B.S. mathematics, is a full-stack developer at Becht Engineering Solutions. He lives in Orange.

**Tommy Byers** '23, B.S. communication-broadcasting, is the public health emergency preparedness planner for Orange County Health Services. He lives in Vidor.

**Gabby Gaspard** '23, B.S. communication, is a digital producer at KBMT/K-JAC 12 News. She lives in Nederland.

**Kaylee Goodspeed** '23, B.S. psychology, received a national scholarship from Omicron Delta Kappa for 2023-2024 and attends law school at the University of Houston. She lives in Beaumont.

**Amanda Merchant** '23, M.S. management information systems, is an information technology senior business analyst for Vanderbilt University. She and her husband, Edward Warga, live in Austin.

**Alexis Miller** '23, B.S. communication-broadcasting, is outreach liaison for Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas. She lives in Beaumont.

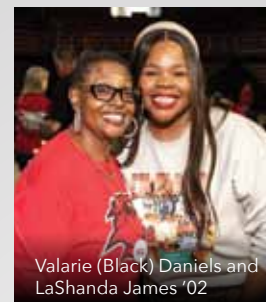
**Nelda (Gordon) Sangwin** '23, B.S. political science, is a coordinator with Communities in Schools at Bob Hope High School. She and her husband, Jared, live in Nederland.

**Kelly (Green) Stapleton** '23, M.Ed. administration, is the director of career and technology education at Paris High School. She and her husband, Josh, live in Detroit, Texas.

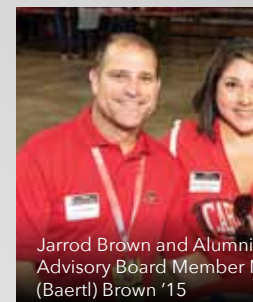
**Quinn Stevenson** '23, B.B.A. finance, is financial analyst lead at HCA Healthcare. He lives in Dallas.

### Alumni Homecoming Pre-Game Party LU vs. Texas A&M University-Commerce

LU Alumni and Friends celebrate Homecoming during LU's Centennial Nov. 4, 2023, in Neches Federal Credit Union Arena at the Montagne Center.



Valarie (Black) Daniels and LaShanda James '02



Jarrod Brown and Alumna Advisory Board Member (Baertl) Brown '15



JT Beckman '82, '87 and Alumna Advisory Board Member Usha (Balaratnam) Beckman '87



Brandon Still '06, Randy Still '80, Maridale (Adams) Still '79, '12, '17, Joseph and Jonathan Still



Chris Bates, S. Chris Bates, J.



DeMonica Gladney '90, Alumna Advisory Board Members JR Richardson '92, Tea (Nguyen) Do '08, and Yolanda (Johnson) Avery '86, '91



Cindy Heckaman, Alton Heckaman '78, AVP for University Advancement Jeff Spoeri, Lisa (Golemon) Vise '79 and Mark Vise '78



Connie (Martinez) Grogan '09, '17 and Billy Grogan '16





Meg



Alumni Advisory Board Member Thad Green '11 and Christi Grudier '10



David Corbello '76 and Karen (Roork) Corbello '16



Denalerie Duriso-Segura '09, Gwen (Cantue) Sharp '99, '20, and CaTina (Hearld) Gilmore '04



LU Alumni Advisory Board Member Shawn Webb-Locke '03, '12, LU Alumni Advisory Board President Sharita Gardner '12, and Rishauna Harrison



r. '08 and r.



Cheryl (Boyd) Linscomb '79, '84 and Walker Linscomb '77, '81



Danielle (Hudson) Sutton '08, and children Elle and Luke Sutton



LU Alumni Advisory Board Member Caralee (McDonald) Thompson '95, David Thompson '07, and Taryn (Robinson) Bienvenu



Jerry Creamer, LU Alumni Advisory Board Member Lila (Creamer) Stevens '01, and Margeaux Stevens



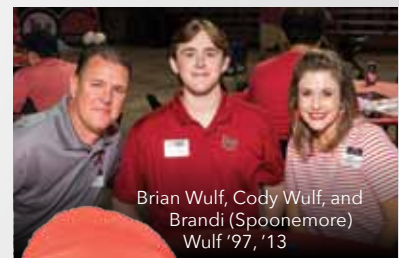
LU Alumni Advisory Board Member Thomas Davis '15, First Lady Stacy Taylor, and Josh Davis '11, '15, '19



Jeff Spoeri, Milton Dunnam, and Myrna (Pirnack) Dunnam '67



Aaron Allen, Alumni Advisory Board President-Elect Emily (Everett) Allen '98, '04, Andrew Allen, and Chris Allen



Brian Wulf, Cody Wulf, and Brandi (Spoonmore) Wulf '97, '13



Bob Freasier, Judy Hammond '72, '82, Peggy Zabala, VP for University Advancement Juan Zabala '07, and Becky (Stephens) Zikes '70



Uliana Trylowsky, Edwin Vallery '79



Antoinette (Espritt) Mays '07, '12, '16, Jeff Allen, Linda (Seay) Allen '02



Judy (Appling) Bettis '84, DeMonica Gladney '90, and Anita (Goodman) Berry '74



Big Red with Butch Henderson '88





# AFTER THE STORM

by Allison Lennartz

In May of 2023, Super Typhoon Mawar formed in the western Pacific Ocean before passing over the northern tip of Guam late in the evening on the 24th. At the time, Lt. Christopher “Chris” Bishop ‘18 was stationed at U.S. Naval Hospital Guam, one of three medical centers located on the island. Once the typhoon’s heavy rains and category 5 winds subsided, Lt. Bishop led a 10-person team in an immediate effort to mitigate the resulting damage. He also played a key role in keeping the naval hospital up and running in the superstorm’s aftermath. He recalled: “For four straight weeks, the hospital and the whole island were without power, leaving myself and my team to prioritize ordering fuel for our backup generators.” Water from the storm compromised certain motors that left the facility without air conditioning for four days, ruining over a half million dollars in sterile supplies. Additionally, road closures caused by Typhoon Mawar prevented the hospital from transporting soiled linen and uniform scrubs through its prime contractor. However, Bishop was instrumental in finding solutions to these problems quickly. While waiting for restoration of the island’s infrastructure, he coordinated replacement of the damaged motors with backup motors he had available on site and he employed





the use of a helicopter from a local U.S. naval ship to remove, clean and return soiled linens to the hospital. In a time of great need, Bishop's quick thinking and effective solutions kept the facility operating and enabled it to continue offering services to more than 30,000 beneficiaries.

A graduate of Nederland High School, Bishop decided to pursue an engineering degree at Lamar University. His status as a Smith-Hutson Scholar played no small part in this decision, since it afforded him the opportunity to earn his degree without added financial stress. Of the opportunity to become a Smith-Hutson Scholar, Bishop said, "I would like to say thank you from the bottom of my heart. Being a son of two disabled parents, money was tight, and college was either not an option or would have meant taking out loans throughout my college career." During his time as a student at Lamar, he was heavily involved in the Reaud Honors College, played intramural tennis and graduated *magna cum laude* in May 2018. In the fall of his junior

year at Lamar, Bishop attended a career fair where he met a Navy recruiter and learned about a career option that proved to be life-changing for him. The recruiter introduced him to the Civil Engineer Corps, a group that commissions certain professionals as naval officers and entrusts them with duties related to managing and maintaining naval shore facilities. Regarding this experience, he recalls, "I immediately fell in love with the idea of serving my country along with utilizing my engineering degree."

After his graduation from Lamar, Bishop joined the Navy and was first assigned to work at its base in Guam once he was commissioned as a naval officer in October of 2018. There, he oversaw construction projects worth nearly \$90 million for the

Public Works Department.

Two years later, he assumed the role of facilities manager at Naval Hospital Guam where he led a team of more than 50 civilians and contractors in responding to the evolving needs of healthcare on the island. In March of 2023, Bishop was commissioned as the facilities manager for the Apra Harbor Branch Health Clinic. A state-of-the-art facility, the 52,000-square-foot project was funded by the Japanese government to help transition 15,000 Marines and their dependents from Okinawa to Guam.

Bishop believes that his experience as an engineering student at Lamar helped him develop greater levels of confidence, maturity and competence. These characteristics have enabled him to lead those under his command well and to ensure their safety. When asked to reflect upon how his time in the engineering program prepared him for success in his naval career, he said, "I had no doubts an engineering education from Lamar would be tough and stressful. As a Smith-Hutson Scholar, I was able to form study groups that resulted in friends that will last me a lifetime. With our trials and tribulations, I developed the dedication and determination to keep motivated to push through to graduation. My engineering education at Lamar provided me with the fundamentals needed to analyze a situation, break down the various components and develop a solution." Later, as a Navy recruit training to be a commissioned officer, he recalls his Marine gunnery sergeant drill instructor "telling us to 'embrace the suck.' There's always light at the end of the tunnel!" Thankfully, his perseverance and outstanding performance have not gone unnoticed. He was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant in November 2022 and has been awarded several service and campaign medals, including the personal decorations of the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal as well as the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medals.

Bishop currently is assigned to Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Five in

California where he serves as a company commander supervising more than 100 naval construction workers. Apart from his impressive resume as a naval officer, he has achieved additional success by completing his MBA with the University



of Maryland Global Campus in September 2023. Bishop also has earned additional certifications for contracting and project management and is a member of several esteemed engineering societies. He and his wife Bree have two daughters, Anslee and Savanna. He continues to play tennis and enjoys traveling in his free time. As a third-generation military officer, Bishop takes pride in continuing his family's tradition of service to their nation. In one of his responses to a questionnaire for Smith-Hutson scholars, Bishop reflected on a quote from Abraham Lincoln who said, "And in the end, it's not the years in your life that count. It's the life in your years." Considering everything he has already accomplished and the bright future he has ahead of him, it looks like Bishop has taken these words to heart.





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# SUPPORTING STUDENTS THROUGH THE ULTIMATE *Gift*

by Jeff Spoeri



From left, Alan Hefty '69, David Heinz '96, Floyd McSpadden, Jean Moncla, Richard Funchess, Mark Browning, Chuck Heare '77, Brad Brown '81, Troy Fontenote '85. Not pictured, James Black, Zach Celeste '11, Rocky Chase, R.J. Demahy '68, Michael Kiefer '91

Lamar University is fortunate to have so many generous, supportive alumni and friends. Philanthropy continues to be a critical source of funding for student scholarships, faculty and research projects, athletics equipment and facilities, and virtually every need one can imagine on a college campus today. Increasingly, though, as American society enters into a period of unprecedented intergenerational wealth transfer—an estimated \$84 trillion will be passed down to heirs in the United States by 2045, \$16 trillion of which will occur in the next ten years, according to *The New York Times*—donors are seeking ways to avoid tax exposure and provide charitable funding for causes in which they believe strongly. Making a provision for philanthropic giving through one's estate is known as "planned giving," and Lamar University has a number of sophisticated resources available to those interested in learning more.

The main repository for planned giving information at Lamar University is through the website [legacy.lamar.edu](http://legacy.lamar.edu). There, you

can explore a variety of planned giving vehicles, read stories about Lamar alumni and friends who have made estate gift commitments, and download a free Estate Planning Guide with worksheets that will help you map out your estate plans in plain, easy-to-understand language. Ranging from a simple bequest in a will ("I leave \$X to Lamar University") to more complex transactions involving trusts, retirement assets, appreciated securities, or property, to name a few, there are innumerable ways to invest in the future of Lamar University through your estate. While you should consult your own attorney or financial planner about your specific situation, Lamar University personnel can guide you through the process, help you identify the designations for your gifts, and provide examples that may give you an idea of what you would like to do and the impact you would like to make.

The website also contains information about the Lamar University Legacy Society, the members of which have documented

their estate commitments to Lamar University. Members are invited to regular special events and receive personalized communication throughout the year, as well as a commemorative lapel pin and other materials. Also found on the website is information about the Planned Giving Advisory Council, a volunteer group of attorneys, estate planners and financial advisors, many of whom are Lamar graduates, who meet twice a year to learn about activities and programs at LU and glean information that they then can share with clients who may be interested in supporting the university philanthropically.

If you would like to learn more about how you can direct assets from your estate to support the students and programs of Lamar University, or if you already have made a provision in your estate to benefit LU but have not yet reported it to the university, please contact Jeff Spoeri, Associate Vice President for University Advancement, by email at [jspoeri@lamar.edu](mailto:jspoeri@lamar.edu) or by phone at (409) 880-2229.