

January 2022



Pitt State

MAGAZINE

Difference Makers

Gorillas making a difference in communities around the world.



From the editor

The very best part of our jobs in University Marketing & Communication is getting to be there when students, faculty, staff, and alumni are doing interesting, engaging, and important things. That happens daily, and we strive to capture them in video, photos, stories, and graphic designs so that we can share with the masses.



The worst part of our job? Not getting to share every single one of them with you in this magazine. As with any print product, we're limited by space. But, in this edition, you'll notice a change that will help: a return to an advertising-free product, which allows us to share more stories while at the same time streamlining your reading.

For even more, we invite you to check out our new Gorilla Connection online — a portal for features, announcements, and a direct link to two other new products, the weekly Gorilla Connection digital newsletter and the Gorilla Connection podcast. In coming months, you can expect to find photo galleries there (wouldn't it be great to be able to share your "Where in the World is Gus?" photos all year long?!).

In these ways, we hope to reach new audiences and stay connected to current ones. As always, we value your feedback and hope to hear from you. You, and the students we serve, are why we do what we do.

— ANDRA BRYAN STEFANONI
(BA '91, MA '94)

Search underway for next president

After President Steve Scott announced he plans to retire in June 2022, the Kansas Board of Regents appointed 26 members to a committee that will assist and advise the board in the search for the next president. The committee includes representation by university students, faculty, staff, alumni and Southeast Kansas. Rick Webb (BS, '83), executive chair of Watco, LLC, in Pittsburg, was named chair of the search committee. For more information about the process, visit pittstate.edu/presidentialsearch.



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Pitt State

MAGAZINE

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GORILLA CONNECTION

Subscribe to the weekly Gorilla Connection digital newsletter, a snapshot of the inspiring people, innovative projects, and milestone moments that make Pitt State unique. Listen to the Gorilla Connection podcast on Buzzsprout or Spotify.

pittstate.edu/gorillaconnection/

Miss a performance by any of the outstanding PSU music ensembles? You can watch them anytime through our archived livestreams:

bicknellcenter.com

We're convinced we have the prettiest small campus in the land, and photographer Sam Clausen has captured it in every season. Download your favorite view to use as your desktop background:

pittstate.edu/about/backgrounds.html

Many of you have gone on to become published authors, prompting one of our librarians to start an alumni book club! Learn more:

pittstate.edu/alumni/gorilla-alumni-book-club.html

Need a good, old-fashioned Pitt State pick-me-up? Download the fight song to use as your ringtone, played by the PSU Pride of the Plains Marching Band!

pittstate.edu/info/fightsong/index.html

Loved this issue and feeling nostalgic? Find past magazines in our digital archive at:

pittstate.edu/magazine

Check out what campus looks like these days: take a virtual tour!

admission.pittstate.edu/virtual-tour/tour2/english/

Finding Gus

In his entry for the "Finding Gus Gorilla" contest, Tom Hankins (BSED '65, MS '68) noted that the iconic statue's sculptor, Larry Wooster, was his art instructor.

"This sculpture and Larry Wooster are special to me," he wrote. "Thanks for a really grand magazine!"

The Wooster Gorilla has overlooked the Oval from its position at the main south doors of the Overman Student Center since 1965, when it was installed there as a gift from the 1965 Senior Class — Tom's class.

Tom's memory prompted us to ask the rest of you:

What are *your* special memories or photos of Larry Wooster and/or the Wooster Gorilla? Share them with us and they might just appear in our fall edition!

Email: psumag@pittstate.edu

Postal mail: Pitt State Magazine, c/o PSU, 1701 S. Broadway, Pittsburg, KS 66762

And the winner is...

The winner of our popular "Finding Gus" contest for the Spring 2021 edition is David F. Smith (BS '78), of Colorado Springs, Colorado, who spied it on Page 15 in our #OAGAAG cover story. Thanks to each and every Gorilla who entered — we received many entries and we enjoy reading the comments sometimes included with them, including David's: "Thank you for the magazine which keeps us alums up to date on what is happening at PSU!"

Can you find it?

Search this issue and email your guess to psumag@pittstate.edu to be entered in our drawing. Include your first and last name, the year you graduated, and the page number and location you found it. One entry per person. Entries must be received by **June 1**. We'll mail one lucky winner a hardbound copy of "Pittsburg State University: A Photographic History of The First 100 Years."



Enactus strives for impact

Enactus, a student organization in Kelce College of Business, is taking on new projects that will have a lasting impact on the community.

In partnership with Pittsburgh Area Young Professionals, Enactus members used their business principles, pitch skills, and leg work to collect donations to support a Christmas bike drive for children; they raised \$1,500 that helped buy 41 bikes.

In partnership with Communities in Schools and business professionals, Enactus will guide all Pittsburgh High School juniors through a hands-on financial literacy program called Future Now: Finance. To be held in March, it will provide mock experiences in budgeting wisely for adult costs and unexpected expenses.

This spring and through fall, members will organize

volunteer groups to plant, maintain, and harvest a community garden at a local church; produce will be donated to area food banks and meal programs

to promote healthy eating habits and improve access to nutritional foods.

Enactus is advised by Chelsey Decker, the new coordinator of academic support in KCOB.



Spring into performing arts

The spring semester at the Bicknell Family Center for the Arts at Pittsburg State will include a Broadway musical, several national touring acts, and numerous locally produced concerts, plays, art exhibits, and events.

South Pacific Broadway Musical

Feb. 20, 2022 | 7 p.m.

Love transcends the harsh realities of war and prejudice in a sweeping Pulitzer Prize-winning tale centered around two unlikely love affairs. Set on a tropical island during World War II, this timeless Rodgers & Hammerstein classic features some of the most beautiful music ever composed woven into an inspiring story cherished around the world.

Pitt State Theatre presents *The 39 Steps*

Feb. 25-26 | 7:30 p.m. and Feb. 26-27 | 2 p.m.

Mix a Hitchcock masterpiece with a juicy spy novel, add a dash of Monty Python and you have this fast-paced whodunnit for anyone who loves the magic of theatre! This two-time Tony and Drama Desk Award-winning treat is packed with nonstop laughs, over 150 zany characters (played by a ridiculously talented cast of four), an onstage plane crash, handcuffs, missing fingers, and some good old-fashioned romance! Directed by Gil Cooper.

Rodney Marsalis Philadelphia Big Brass Band

April 24 | 7 p.m.

As America's premier large brass ensemble, this group reflects the diverse makeup of American culture and is dedicated to the notion that music is a gift to be enjoyed by everyone.

Darrell Brogden's Retro Cocktail Hour LIVE featuring *The Waitiki 7*

May 1 | 7 p.m.

Make sure you dress up for this 1950's themed cocktail party and lobby concert! Darrell Brogden, from Kansas Public Radio's *The Retro Cocktail Hour*, will host a fun night out filled with costumes and cocktails. Relax and unwind while you listen to *The Waitiki 7* — a band that created a Hawaiian style of music by blending Polynesian music with jazz.

Bicknell Center Art Gallery exhibits:

PSU Athletics Hall of Fame Exhibit: Part 2

Jan. 24 – Feb. 7, 2022

PSU Athletics Retrospective Feb. 17 – May 2022

Pittsburg Music History Summer 2022

OTHER EVENTS:

Jan. 28 | PSU Athletics Hall of Fame Induction (2021 Inductees)

Jan. 29 | Rondelli Vocal Competition, all day

Feb. 11 | PSU Opera and SEK Symphony: Gilbert & Sullivan's "Trial By Jury," 7 p.m.

Feb. 13 | PSU Opera and SEK Symphony: Gilbert & Sullivan's "Trial By Jury," 3 p.m.

Feb. 17 | PSU Wind Ensemble Concert, 7 p.m.

March 4 | PSU Jazz Festival, all day

March 5 | PSU International Student Association & IPSO Presents:

International Food & Culture Fair, 5:30 p.m.

March 22 | PSU Percussion Ensemble Concert, 7 p.m.

March 24 | PSU Symphonic Band Concert, 7 p.m.

April 13 | PSU Dance Research Symposium, 5:30 p.m.

April 14 | State Large Ensembles, all day

April 21 | PSU Wind Ensemble Concert, 7 p.m.

April 27 | PSU Jazz Concert, 7 p.m.

May 1 | Oratorio, 3 p.m.

May 5 | 4-State Band Competition, all day

For continued updates and additional details, follow the Bicknell Center on social media @BicknellCenter and visit bicknellcenter.com. Tickets: in person at the Garfield Weede Building, online at pittstate.edu/office/ticket-office/; or by calling 620-235-4796. Those with a PSU ID are entitled to discounts. Many locally produced concerts are free.

Construction students score national scholarships

Of the national construction scholarships awarded by leading industry organizations, 31 Pittsburg State students came away with the most, to the tune of \$56,600.

An additional \$70,000 by the Pittsburg State Construction Alumni Association means Gorillas have received a total of \$126,600 in scholarships.

“It speaks very well of our program in terms of students being prepared,” said Joe Levens, professor in the School of Construction. “Students who choose Pitt State for their construction degree not only get a superior education, they have incredible internship opportunities and the chance to land scholarships like these.”

Pittsburg State students also have an advantage that larger schools often don’t have.

“We know each of them well enough to be able to write



letters of recommendation for them,” Levens said. “We inform them early in the year — in September — on how to complete the applications and when the deadlines are.”

The news came at the same time the School of Construction was chosen for having one of the Top 50 Construction Management Degree programs in the U.S. by Intelligent.com.



Making history

A small but mighty cohort of students at Pittsburg State made history this fall: they were the first to begin work on two new options for master’s degrees in social work through a unique partnership with the University of Kansas. It offers an MSW for students from fields other than social work, and an MSW for students who already have a bachelor’s in social work, all on the Pittsburg State campus. The degrees will be valuable, says Associate Professor Kristen Humphrey, who directs the program: graduates with those degrees are in high demand.

Honor chair

INSPIRED BY HONOR SEATS at NFL stadiums, a similar tribute to POW/MIA veterans was dedicated at Carnie Smith Stadium during the Nov. 6 Gorilla football game, known as the Military Appreciation Game. The halftime ceremony featured cadets in PSU ROTC who assisted with the unveiling. The black seat with PSU branding will remain empty at every future game.



Telemedicine training

WHEN STUDENTS STARTED courses last fall in the Irene Ransom Bradley School of Nursing, they gained an opportunity to learn how to serve patients via telemedicine equipment and curriculum, thanks to a \$78,000 grant. It also adds another level of distinction to student resumé. Telemedicine can be used for videoconferencing, the remote monitoring of devices such as blood sugar, the sharing of patient documents, discussing a diagnosis and next steps, and more.

Gorilla Advantage expands to include 31 states

Pittsburg State gained approval by the Kansas Board of Regents to significantly expand the Gorilla Advantage program, which now enables non-Kansas undergraduate students in 31 states to pay the equivalent of in-state tuition. It's especially great news for those who come here for a number of truly nationally unique programs from several states away, noted Howard Smith, provost and vice president for Academic Affairs.

"Pitt State is one of the only places in the nation you can earn a four-year automotive technology degree, a four-year plastics engineering technology degree in coordination with our polymer chemistry program, and a four-year architectural manufacturing management degree, among others," he said.

The states included are: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

Royal winners

Sam Eddington, a senior biology major from Columbus, Kansas, representing the Honors College Association, and Becca Brown, a senior nursing major from Joplin, Missouri, representing Alpha Sigma Alpha, were crowned 2021 Homecoming Royalty.

Eddington is the president of the Honors College Association and is described by peers as someone with integrity who is respected by students and faculty alike for his maturity and contributions to campus. He is the vice president of Natural Ties and president of the Biology Club. Brown, who has held multiple chapter positions in her sorority, is described by peers as a crucial member of the organization and a role model whose dedication and a role model whose dedication inspires women. She was praised for



her positive personality and kindness to all.

First attendants were Cale Chapman representing PEERS – Pitt Educational Encouragement and Resource Specialists – Mentoring Program, and Marci Heatherly representing Honors College Association. Second attendants were

Isaias Olson, representing Lambda Chi Alpha, and Sydney Martinez representing Student Government Association.

Listen to “A Conversation with Homecoming Royalty” on the Gorilla Connection podcast on Buzzsprout and Spotify.

Cross Country champs

The men’s cross country team captured the program’s first ever Mid-America Intercollegiate Athletics Association Championship last fall in Kearney, Nebraska.

The men placed four runners in the top 10 individuals as Pitt State posted a low score of 44 points to beat second place Missouri Southern State University, the two-time defending conference champion, by 22 points.

Matthew Oglesby led Pittsburg State’s All-MIAA quartet by placing third overall in the 8K race in 24 minutes, 35.80 seconds. Connor



Southard finished right behind in fourth place in 24:45.35, while Diego Conteras finished seventh (24:51.48) and Bryce Grahn placed 10th (25:02.53). Pittsburg State’s fifth runner, Mason Strader, secured honorable mention All-MIAA honors by placing 20th overall (25:32.75).

The team is coached by Kyle

Rutledge, who was named head coach of both the cross country and track & field programs in June 2021 following the retirement of Russ Jewett. Rutledge, who was an assistant coach with the program for nine years, also was named MIAA Coach of the Year.

Meeting workforce demands

A new state-of-the-art plasma cutter in the College of Technology can be programmed to cleanly and easily cut through a piece of steel as easily as a light saber in Star Wars.

But it's more than just a neat piece of equipment — it's something that is critical to the future of students learning to use it, says Professor of Engineering Phil McNew, who runs the lab in the Department of Engineering Technology.

Local company leaders, including Unique Metal Fabrication and Progressive Products, both in Pittsburg, and Mid-America Pipe Fabricating in nearby Scammon, Kansas, say they're appreciative of Pittsburg State's efforts to train a ready workforce.

The equipment was funded by the U.S. Economic Development Administration with a grant designed to help bolster regional economic development and the workforce.



Apprentice scientists

EIGHT HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS from across the region were chosen to conduct research at the Kansas Polymer Research Center alongside scientists and Associate Professor Ram Gupta. Their goal? To help find renewable energy sources — specifically, low-cost, high-efficiency materials to be used in supercapacitors, batteries, and fuel cells that can power cars. The program was funded by grants through the Polymer Chemistry program at Pittsburg State, as well as NASA Kansas Space Grant and the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

A destination

Built in the heart of campus in 2014, the Bicknell Family Center for the Arts has become a premiere destination for community members and visitors from across the region.

In any given week, patrons can choose from several options. One weekend last fall offered a theatrical comedy, a Diwali celebration by the Indian Student Association, a concert by an internationally known pianist and composer, an art exhibit in the gallery, and a wind ensemble concert — all in a span of 48 hours!

Patron Kathy Stuckey (BSN '78) sometimes has to pinch herself to come to terms with such a venue being a mile from her home. It's where she has crossed things off her bucket list, like getting to hear former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice give a keynote address as part of the H. Lee Scott Speaker Series. She and



her husband, Douglas (BSBA '79, MBA '88), have been wowed by the performances of hit groups like Postmodern Jukebox and Uptown.

Their daughter, Maggie, drove in from out of town to see the Broadway tour of "42nd Street," and Kathy will never forget a special night of seeing the Broadway tour of "Cinderella" with her dad, Bill Baker (BSBA '49).

While it has attracted such A-listers

as a former president, a former first lady, and an NFL legend, it's also a place that has served as an elegant backdrop for life's milestone moments: a wedding on stage. Prom photos on the central staircase. A venue for high school students to compete in music festivals.

Director Joe Firman sums it up for patrons and performers alike:

"This is where memories are made."

Mall Deli changing ownership

The Mall Deli, where generations of college students, faculty, and staff ate and worked, will change ownership this month when longtime owners Jim and Diane Martino retire. The new owner? Former employee and Pittsburg State alumnus Greg Bruce (BBA '98), who started working there at age 14 and continued during college; it was there he met his wife, Kari, also a college student at the time.

The Mall Deli began Dec. 1, 1979, when the Martinos purchased a struggling restaurant at the mall and with very little money, some experience, and a big desire to succeed built it into a Pittsburg icon.

It has since expanded twice, from a 1,000-square foot restaurant and a staff of six to a 5,000-square foot restaurant that employs 70.

And as for that ever-popular Creamy Italian salad dressing (chip dip?), you'll still be able to buy bottles at the counter to take home.

Improved housing options

With ambitious leadership and a strong partnership, the city, Pittsburg State University, and local businesses are driving the greatest investment in economic development the city has ever seen. With this evolution comes a very basic and important need — homes.

In the past four years, Pittsburg has experienced 1,000 new jobs, a 10 percent average wage increase, and \$300 million in infrastructure investment.

As a result, Pittsburg began to focus on revitalizing property, engaging developers to build attractive retirement homes, supporting the building of high-end homes, and seeking partners to develop city-owned property for new neighborhoods of mid-priced homes.

Last year, construction began on two developments near Pittsburg State: Silverback Landing east of campus off of Centennial Drive, and the Villas at Creekside off of West Fourth, near Pittsburg High School, that are designated for people over 55.

Downtown revitalization continues

Downtown Pittsburg has visibly come back to life thanks in part to revitalization efforts that came with financial incentives such as façade grants, and thanks in part to volunteer groups like Pittsburg Beautiful and Pittsburg ArtWalk.

In the past few years several new businesses have opened, many of them owned by Pittsburg State alumni and still others by newcomers attracted to good things happening in the community.

Among them: several new boutiques

and a men’s mercantile, a new bookstore, a new indoor family fun place, two new breweries, a new art gallery/art workshop, a new ballet studio, an axe-throwing business, and new restaurants.

Improved sidewalks, Europe Park, and concrete planters have helped beautify the downtown, and several building owners have renovated storefronts in hopes of attracting new businesses to them.



New Imagine Pittsburg project

A new project to come from the strategic plan, Imagine Pittsburg, in partnership with LimeLight Marketing, has launched: a website dedicated to sharing positive stories about the

people who are helping Pittsburg thrive today — many of them Pittsburg State alumni.

The website, called Pittsburg, Kansas, can be found at www.pittkan.com. Facebook and Instagram accounts also have been launched to share stories, images, and more creative content aimed at promoting Pittsburg. Both accounts can be found at @pittkan.

Abby Fern (BS ‘98), co-chair of Imagine Pittsburg’s marketing committee and the chief marketing officer for Pittsburg State, said the goal is to help instill a new understanding and sense of pride within current Pittsburg residents, and to let those who don’t know what it’s all about in hopes they’ll choose to visit or move here.

To help execute that vision, LimeLight owner Brandee Johnson (BBA ‘01) is overseeing a team that includes several Pittsburg State alumni.



Pittsburg awards

Pittsburg State is proud to be a part of Pittsburg, which has been racking up recognitions in recent years:

- One of the least expensive cities in which to live (Council for Economic and Community Research 2021)
- One of 30 emerging small cities with a growing population (Unacast September 2021)
- Business View Magazine’s “Diamond in the Rough” (January 2021)
- One of the best “work from home” cities in the U.S. (PCMag 2021)
- Ninth best place to retire with \$1 million (SmartAsset 2020)
- Pittsburg Community Middle School ranked in the top 15 percent of middle schools in Kansas (2018-2019)
- The City of Pittsburg and Pittsburg State University received a University Economic Development Association (UEDA) Award of Excellence for the Block 22 project (2018)
- Fourth in the state for number of business openings in a year by (LendEDU 2015-2016)

From Carnie Sm

Four Gorillas have gone from Carnie Smith

HAVING GROWN UP IN TINY ERIE, KANSAS, what Joe Blubaugh (BSET '97) considered a “big time football” atmosphere was at Carnie Smith Stadium.

“I was a fan as a high school student — that’s what hooked me on Pitt State. I’d never been to any other type of collegiate game,” he recalled.

Today, Blubaugh’s concept of a “big time football” atmosphere is a bit different: He’s an NFL official that regularly finds himself in stadiums filled with tens of thousands of fans in the biggest cities in the U.S.

He got his start officiating junior high and high school football and basketball games while a student at Pittsburg State majoring in plastics engineering technology.



From left
Mark Stewart,
Mark Hittner,
Tom Stephan,
Joe Blubaugh.

Smith Stadium to the NFL

Stadium to the NFL — not as players, but as officials.

These days, Blubaugh often is joined on the field by one of his fellow Gorilla NFL officials Tom Stephan (BBA '80) and Mark Hittner (BSBA '79), both down judges, and Mark Stewart (BS '91), a line judge.

Stephan, an accounting major who went on to a 22-year career with the NFL, grew up listening to football games on the radio.

"I would never miss a game," he said. "I had my favorite players, my favorite teams. I've been in love with it ever since."

A dream came true when he started with the NFL; last year marked the end of his 22nd season.

"Even after so many years, there's still so much game day excitement," he said. "There's such a high caliber of players on the field who are making some tremendous plays, and we're trying to do our best to make the right calls. It's a blast."

Hittner, also an accounting major, cherishes his memories playing for the Gorillas and recalls starting to

officiate games after taking a class from Cliff Long.

"The thrill of the game is the challenge — you are out there on the field with those incredible athletes, watching what they do, and sometimes it seems surreal," he said.

Stewart, who came to Pittsburg State as a math and economics major, began officiating after college and would meet the other three in the Kansas City area. They were mentored by many of the same older football officials — people like Phil Laurie (BSEd '70, MS '71), the "godfather" of football officiating in Kansas.

"What makes it fun and awe inspiring is when you get to meet and see the people you grew up idolizing," Stewart said, "like a game in Miami when they were playing the Jets. Terry Bradshaw, Joe Namath, Dan Marino, Don Shula — they were all there and I went up and shook their hands. These are Hall of Famers I watched as a young teen."

"You have to pinch yourself sometimes — you're thinking, 'I'm on this field, doing this with these people, and I'm from a little town like Pittsburg, Kansas.'"

All four agree: officiating at the NFL level requires self-motivation, self-evaluation, a high level of performance, time away from family, hours and hours of off-field preparing for each game and analyzing them afterwards, and clinics in the off season. It also requires mutual support.

"There are 121 of us, and each one of us leans on the other 120," Stewart said.

They'll always be Gorillas, they said: when Carnie Smith Stadium got a makeover a few years back, Athletic Director Jim Johnson ensured their jerseys were hung in the locker room.

Last summer at PSU's Robert W. Plaster Center, the four NFL officials participated in a clinic with Phil Laurie (BSEd '70, MS '71), the "godfather" of football officiating in Kansas.





“Girls don’t do that”

Artist spends lifetime proving them wrong.

THIS MONTH, ONE OF THE NEWEST EDUCATORS at Pittsburg State will give back to a community she’s lived in just six months.

Her focus: using art created by students, alumni, and community artists to help feed those in need.

Last August, Mayumi Kiefer took on the role of heading up the Department of Art’s ceramics program and studio, and wasted no time in kicking off Artists Against Hunger. Sometimes known by the name “Empty Bowls,” the project has been done in communities across the U.S. as a way to benefit food pantries and those who need them.

Kiefer brought it with her from Ohio and Idaho, where she taught prior to coming to Pittsburg.

“I am not from here, and I want to have a good relationship with people,” Kiefer said. “So, I do my thing, which is a little thing. And then I connect with others. Each person can do something small, but together we can do big things.”

Kiefer grew up in Japan, where ceramics were part of everyday life. Even the poorest of homes were full of small, functional pieces of ceramic art. But creating art with clay was something done by men, not women — and certainly not young girls.

“My journey began with the message, ‘Girls don’t do that,’” she said, “and it seems I have spent a lifetime proving ‘them’ wrong.”

When she came to the U.S. after high school in pursuit

of a higher education, she chose to major in mechanical engineering. It was when she discovered an art class in a university catalog that her path veered to include ceramics and she found she loved it. In addition to an associate’s degree in engineering, she went on to earn a bachelor’s of fine arts in 3D studio art and a master’s of fine arts in ceramics.

She has since done artist residencies abroad, and awards she has earned are lengthy and varied. It was while working at a public school that she noticed how hunger among students made it hard for them to focus, and she learned that one in four children don’t have access to food over the weekend. She wanted to be part of a solution and in 2010, started Artists Against Hunger.

Last fall, she invited artists, current students, and alumni to Porter Hall to craft dozens of bowls from lumps of clay. The bowls were then dried and put into a kiln.

Then, a glaze was applied and the bowls were fired.

On Jan. 22, about 500 of them will be sold at Artists Against Hunger at Pittsburg’s Memorial Auditorium for \$10 to \$25; all proceeds will benefit local food banks.

“It sounds like it’s helping other people, but it’s helping me, too — it’s giving me a good feeling,” Kiefer said. “The object is not to

create a great work of art. It is to represent that we want to provide for people. At the same time, it will feed us as artists. It will feed our souls because we are creating.”

“Each person can do something small, but together we can do big things.”



Europe on two wheels

He did it. Nathan Hughes (BST '19) biked across Europe.





A LIFELONG RURAL KANSAN who had never been out of the U.S., he started in Denmark in August and in October finished in Greece.

It was a trip four years in the making, and he carried with him what he learned and experienced as a student.

“This journey combines everything I’ve learned, and everything I love, so far: photography, communications, web design, adventure, fitness, cycling, a curiosity about other places and cultures, with the goal of putting it all in a book I design,” he said.

Hughes grew up in rural Crawford County between McCune (pop. 406) and Girard (pop. 2,707), where the TransAmerican Bike Trail brings riders from east coast and west several times a week throughout the season. As a cross country runner in high school, he bought an old steel bike from a garage sale and found he could go further faster.

He enrolled at Pittsburg State, majoring in graphic communications in the Department of Graphics and Imaging Technologies, where he would begin honing his photography, design, and communication skills. He joined the climbing club and worked out with the cross-country team. In his sophomore year, he and members of the team biked across Missouri.

He loved it.

He began hosting international riders passing through Pittsburg and built a rapport – looked at their bikes, paid attention to their kits and set-ups, asked them about their countries, made note of what challenged them. The summer after his junior year, he and his roommate planned and executed a self-supported 2,000-mile ride on the Pacific Coast Bike Route from Vancouver, Canada, to Tijuana, Mexico.

His goal: to use what he had learned in school to photograph and interview one person every day of the trip. When he returned, he shared the outcome of that trip in a TEDx Talk at Pittsburg State.

Last year he began planning his next ride: Europe.

“Once you tour for awhile, it becomes what you do, who you are,” he said. “You just start peddling. The rest takes care of itself.”

He created a website, The Flatlander Project, which tracked his ride in real time on a map for friends and family back home, as well as Gorilla alumni in Europe planning to connect with him.

He made it through Denmark, Luxembourg, France, Switzerland, Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Albania, and finally, Greece.

“The trip was everything I had wished it to be,” Hughes said.

“In Greece, I saw history that dates back to the very beginning of civilization. I experienced seven languages and ate more cuisines than I can count — raw fish in the Netherlands and pomegranates picked off the trees in Albania. Each country had something unique to offer, showing me people and places that I will carry with me for the rest of my life.”

It wasn’t always easy: he rode through a total of three weeks’ worth of rain.

“But getting out and seeing how other cultures and people live helps make us better, more rounded individuals,” he said.

Next up: sharing his experiences in a book and in-person presentations.



One of a kind

First international student enrolls in world's only Caterpillar ThinkBIGGER program.

THE PANDEMIC CHANGED Juan Cavero's view of life. And now, Pittsburg State's Automotive Technology Department is changing it once again.

After years of working in a variety of fields and roles in his native Peru and in Australia, Cavero decided to pursue a third college degree.

"The pandemic made me change my goals and leave my comfort zone, and I decided to work toward other goals in my life," he said.

Cavero arrived in Pittsburg in August with his family to study in the Caterpillar ThinkBIGGER program, having completed the Caterpillar ThinkBIG program in 2004 at the Tecsup Technological Institute in Lima, the capital city of Peru.

Pittsburg State's program is the only one of its kind worldwide since its inception in the College of Technology in 2001.

According to program advisor Tim Dell, it provides an opportunity for students like Cavero to earn a bachelor's degree in two years: ThinkBIG graduates

who have a minimum 3.0 GPA can automatically transfer up to 64 college credits to Pittsburg State and complete a bachelor's in applied science (Diesel and Heavy Equipment emphasis) in 60 credit hours.

"Prospective students choose the program because it is a tried-and-true program that provides a high-quality education with an efficient path and an opportunity to work with a veteran advisor who can help them navigate their short stay on campus," Dell said.

Cavero is the program's first in-person international student.

"I heard about the option of being able to continue my studies at Pittsburg State University," Cavero

said. "At that time, it seemed like a dream to be able to come to the United States, study at PSU, and have the possibility of being able to work for Caterpillar."

Cavero didn't initially know much about the town or the university, but he has grown to love it and said "it has a great reputation."

"In this short time living here, I love this town; it is the right place to learn and live," he said. "PSU is incredible. I see the quantity of businesses that came in the job fairs from different states of the U.S. looking to recruit new people."

So far, Cavero has been impressed by the program and the faculty.

"I love the Kansas Technology Center. They have modern labs," he said. "The ThinkBIGGER program manager Dr. Tim Dell is an expert in his field, he has many publications and books, and I already understand why Caterpillar asked him to take over the program."

Dell said Cavero has been "a joy to have in class."

"He is one of the hardest working professionals who is focused on his education," Dell said. "It would be a privilege to have an entire classroom full of students exactly like Juan."

Cavero said he would recommend the program to those in a similar field as his.

"I would certainly recommend the program, since it allows you to expand your field of work. With a university degree and even more from a prestigious university like PSU, the possibilities are endless, no matter where you want to work, you will be prepared to face new challenges in your professional life," he said.

*"I love this town;
it is the right
place to learn
and live."*

FAMOUS FACES at PSU

By Steven Cox, Curator,
Special Collections &
University Archives,
Axe Library

Carney Hall



Count Basie



The Mitchell Trio

OVER THE DECADES, many famous individuals have been brought to our campus to perform, present their ideas or creations, or give talks on current events.

In 1915, long-time music professor Walter McCray established a music festival and used it to bring internationally known classical musicians to Pittsburg over the next several decades — from noted violinist Jascha Heifetz to Polish pianist, composer, and former Poland Prime Minister Ignacy Jan Paderewski.

With the construction of Carney Hall in 1919 (where present-day Heckert-Wells is now), the campus had a stage suitable for performances. By the early 1920s, the school was bringing in internationally popular entertainers and gures of their day.

The year 1925 saw what may have been the biggest celebrity yet to come to Pittsburg: American “March King” John Philip Sousa appeared with his band of top-notch musicians to perform a concert of marches and popular classical works. Sousa’s “Stars and Stripes Forever,” composed in 1896, would later become the official national march of the United States.

Not all presentations on campus were musical.

In 1923, Ilya Tolstoy, son of famous Russian author Count Leo Tolstoy (author of “War and Peace” and “Anna Karenina”), came to campus to talk about Russia. Given that this was only six years after the Soviet revolution, he obviously would have had a lot to say!

In 1924, the Denishawn Dancers, a nationally known dance troupe, presented a program in Carney Hall. This performance is noteworthy as future star Louise Brooks — born in Cherryvale, Kansas — was with the troupe. She began her lm career the next year.

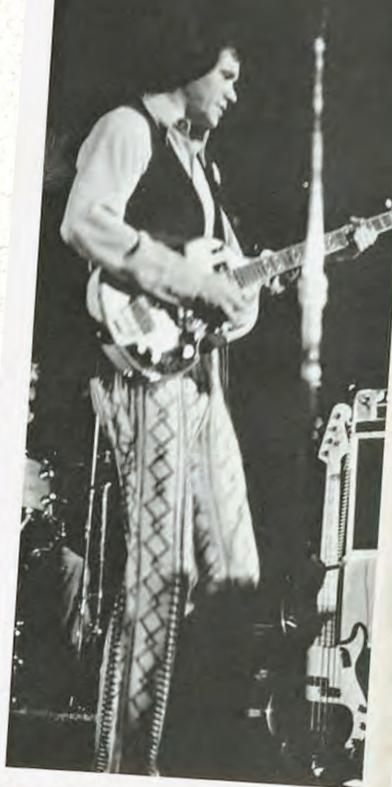
During the Great Depression years, there was a lull. But by 1952, Jimmy Dorsey was playing at the Kanza Ball, and the following year, Woody Herman and His Thundering Herd performed. Another jazz great performed two years later: Stan Kenton (the PSU Jazz Ensemble now plays his works in their concerts!), followed by world-class violinist Isaac Stern in 1957 and William War eld, the baritone singer, in 1960.

The 1960s would draw legends like Duke Ellington and his orchestra, Count Basie and his orchestra, and Broadway show composer Meredith Willson (“The Music Man” and “The Unsinkable Molly Brown”), who came to town and took part in a



Dizzy Gillespie, the pioneer of bebop jazz, talks to reporters and camera crews before the concert. Gillespie played to a nearly full house. •Ragan Todd

Dizzy Gillespie



James Griffin, Bread's lead singer, performs here.

Bread



Donnie Van Zant, lead singer of 38 Special, donned a PSU sweatshirt before performing at PSU's John Lance Arena. The band performed many of their new songs as well as old favorites. •Ragan Todd

.38 Special



Laura Bush

Homecoming parade and festivities.

That decade also saw folk trio The Journeymen perform on campus — a group that included John Phillips, who three years later helped start the popular band, The Mamas and Papas — and the team of Dick and Tom Smothers, aka “The Smothers Brothers” performed; they later would have several hit television shows and appear in movies.

Two growing country music stars, Roy Clark and Glen Campbell, appeared here in 1964 for Homecoming. In 1968, the university brought The Mitchell Trio in to perform, at a time when a young John Denver was singing with the group.

Politicians and activists also have routinely visited PSU, including the most controversial speaker ever in 1967: American Nazi Party founder and leader George Lincoln Rockwell. (Several months later, he was shot and killed by a former follower in Virginia.)

In 1968, British actor Basil Rathbone, best known for playing Sherlock Holmes in movies, came to campus. Civil Rights and social activist Julian Bond spoke here in 1969.

The 1970s saw groups like Bread, REO Speedwagon, Styx, the Ozark Mountain Daredevils, Rare Earth, and The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band.

The 1970s also saw an eclectic group of people and performers on campus, including psychologist and TV personality Dr. Joyce Brothers, French mime Marcel Marceau, and activists Ralph Nader and Betty Friedan. In 1971, writer Alex Haley gave a talk and discussed his genealogy project that became his best-selling book and popular television miniseries, “Roots.”

In 1972, popular American actor Vincent Price, perhaps known best for horror movies and his narration in Michael Jackson’s hit song, Thriller, spoke on campus.

In 1974, American actor, Leonard Nimoy, Star Trek’s “Mr. Spock,” gave a talk, followed by Steve Martin — a rising comedian gaining popularity through appearances on Saturday Night Live — in 1985.

With the razing of Carney Hall in the early 1980s, the campus lost its best venue for performances. Memorial Auditorium in downtown Pittsburg was used for some, as was the Weede

Gymnasium, where Night Ranger performed in 1985.

In June 1987, country music star George Strait played, followed by The Charlie Daniels Band the following year. Long before their lives were presented in the popular “Conjuring” movies, “ghost hunting” couple Ed and Lorraine Warren spoke in October 1988. Jazz great Dizzy Gillespie performed in early 1989, and .38 Special played here just a few months after.

To this day, the university continues to draw world-class performers, Broadway shows, and notable speakers. The Department of Music brings them to campus for the Solo & Chamber Music Series, and the Department of English brings them for the Distinguished Visiting Writer Series.

From painting crosswalks and public murals, to researching cancer-fighting drugs, to providing access to independent living skills, Gorillas are leaving their mark on communities near and far.



PUBLIC ART

Just as economic development, housing growth, downtown revitalization, and community spirit began ramping up in Pittsburg, so, too, did public art.

Several talented students, alumni, and Professor Jamie Oliver have added color to the walls of the campus, to businesses — even crosswalks at four local elementary schools.

If there were an award for the artist who has painted the most murals in Pittsburg, it would go to Spencer. They. Are. Everywhere. Thirteen at last count, and more are planned.

“I love injecting some color and whimsy, as well as some history, into the community,” she said. “It’s rewarding to think that they might bring a smile to the faces of passersby for years to come.”

In fact, they’ve become fun spots for selfies and group photos, according to Chris Wilson at the Convention & Visitors Bureau.

“Jenna’s murals have received a lot of attention, not just from locals, but travelers driving through,” he said. “We’re hoping that as word gets out, they are one more reason for Pittsburg to be a destination.”

Difference Makers

FOR THOSE OF US WHO WORK ON CAMPUS, seeing two-time graduate Jenna Spencer (BFA ‘15, MBA ‘20) climbing up and down ladders with paint brush in hand, adding murals from one end of Pittsburg to the other, is a visible reminder of the difference Gorillas quietly make in their communities each day.

Some, like three brothers researching cancer-fighting drugs, haven’t even left campus yet.

Some, like a business owner who employs those with special needs,

and two company founders who wanted to help female firefighters, think outside the box.

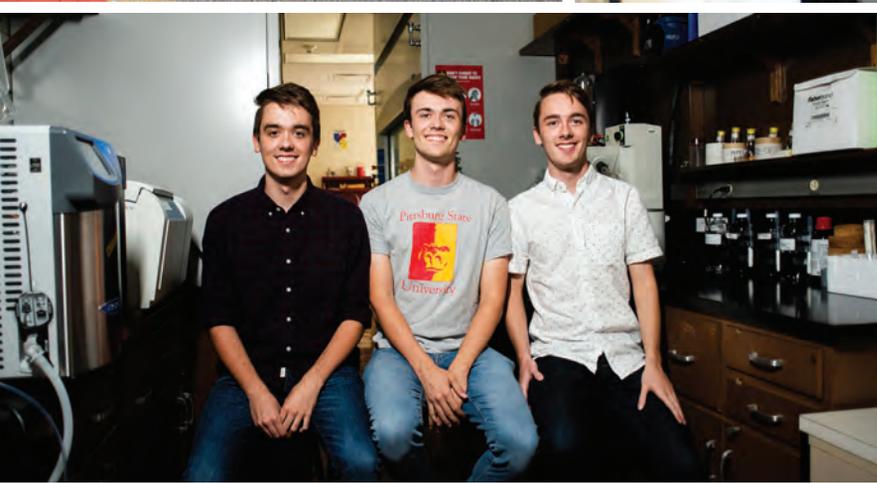
And some, like a unique team of educators who decided to stay in Pittsburg, are making impacts in their community the likes of which will be felt for generations.

Many more “difference makers” can be read about in our Class Notes section in each edition of Pitt State Magazine. We hope to see your name in that section in the future!



The Golden Scoop
 We are a non-profit ice cream shop providing life changing, innovative, & meaningful employment for individuals with developmental disabilities. Our "Super Scoopers" are proud to serve you our artisanal ice cream and custom coffee, along with a scoop of joy!

SCOOPS		SNACKS	
Vanilla	3.50	COOKIE 1.50	
Chocolate	3.50	BROWNIE 2.50	
Cookie Dough	3.50	MUFFIN 2.50	
Apple Cinnamon	3.50	Donut/Biscotti	
COFFEE 2.00		WOOD TREATS	
Espresso	2.00	Big w/ Topp. *1.50	
Latte	3.00	Small w/ Topp. *1.00	
Hot Chocolate	3.00		
AFFOGATO 3.75			



INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS

Two hours to the north, in Overland Park, Kansas, Lindsay Krumholtz (BS '03) founded a business that employs individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In a shop called The Golden Scoop, they serve a menu of culinarily-exquisite homemade ice creams and a signature coffee blend.

It's attracted regional and national media attention.

After earning her degree in early childhood/special education from Pittsburg State, Krumholtz's career included working with students on the autism spectrum, providing in-home services for special needs clients, and working with families on development of independent living skills and preparation for special needs adolescents to gain employment and live independently.

It was while listening to concerns of families she worked with throughout Kansas City that she was inspired to develop a business that would mentor and inspire employees and equip them to succeed in their jobs and lives.

"It's a way for the community to experience how talented they truly are," she said. "If you're ever having a bad day, you walk in and when you leave you will have a smile on your face."

CANCER-FIGHTING DRUGS

In an inconspicuous first-floor lab in Heckert-Wells, Paul Worsley and his twin brothers, Adam and Caleb, are trying to find a better way to help fight cancer.

Worsley, a biology pre-med major, and Adam and Caleb, a biochemistry major and a cellular and molecular biology major, were inspired by other Gorillas: high school teacher Jim Foresman (BSEd '86, MS '93) and Stuart Perez (BSEd '99), who taught their health science classes.

Now, they're completing tedious and methodical steps under the guidance of Associate Professor Santimukul Santra in hopes of using biocompatible polymers to deliver life-saving anti-cancer drugs to cancer patients.

The brothers are using an expensive piece of equipment funded by a grant from K-INBRE — the Kansas Institutional Development Award Network of Biomedical Research Excellence. Soon, they'll do cancer cell culturing to test the synthesized nanomedicines.

"We'll actually grow various cancer cells," Caleb said. "There are live ones upstairs in the Biology Department, frozen in liquid nitrogen. We'll grow them. Then, we put the chemotherapy drug in the polymer as a result of nanoformulation and test it."

With time and patience, in January 2022 they hope to have results to share at a prestigious statewide health science conference.

OUTFITTING FEMALE FIREFIGHTERS

A bit further afield, in Colorado, is the home base to a unique female-owned company founded by two Gorillas, Summer Hurd (BS '03) and Korena Hallam (BS '03).

There are more than 15,000 women career firefighters in the U.S., and women hold about 12 percent of the permanent wild fire suppression jobs at the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and National Park Service.

They need uniforms that fit.

In 2015, Hurd and Hallam co-founded Green Buffalo to address those worn by wildland firefighters — the name was coined from a phrase in an 1804 Lewis and Clark Journal Entry referencing a mother using a buffalo skin to save her son from a wild fire.

They've worked with the National Fire Protection Association to improve sizing for women and create new sizing for men, better equipping fire departments across the country. In 2021, they were named semifinalists for IFundWomen's Entrepreneur of the Year program.

"We are focusing on the best fabric, fit and design to bring about the most ergonomic uniforms available," Hurd said. "Uniforms that will feel great, reduce heat stress and allow the most movement due to our superior design."

Hallam brings to the table a background in business development and Hurd has expertise in apparel technical design.



ENCOURAGING YOUTH

When Eric Wilkinson (BBA '04) came to Pittsburg State to major in business management, he found valuable mentors in the Office of Admission and Office of Student Diversity who provided stepping stones.

"They helped me realize my passion," he said, "and that was helping students figure out what they want to do and where they want to be."

Even then, says Alumni Director Jon Bartlow, Wilkinson was going above and beyond to make a difference for incoming and current PSU students.

Today, he's serving his hometown of Kansas City as the director of operations for Kaufman Scholars, designed to help urban students in Kansas City prepare for and earn a postsecondary credential. Aimed at diversifying the local career-professional pipeline, the organization's support of those students begins in the seventh grade.

Also an active volunteer, Wilkinson serves on the boards of The Kansas City Kansas Education Foundation, where he is board president, and The Family Conservancy, where he influences policy and informs programming for early education endeavors. And, he's continued his connection to Pittsburg State by serving as the national board president for the Alumni Association Board of Directors.

"I believe in the importance of education and its role as a pathway to equitable outcomes for all," he said. "This belief is what both motivates and grounds me in the work I do every day."



Gorillas are thinking outside the box, working collaboratively, and drawing on their passions to make a difference in lives of all ages and backgrounds.

TEAM APPROACH

Making a difference in the lives of youth and community members is a unique department of educators recently recognized with a prestigious statewide award — and every person on the team is a Gorilla.

Pittsburg High School’s Performing Arts Department, which includes instrumental music (Cooper Neil BME ‘10), vocal music (Susan Laushman MM ‘95), theater (Caitie Almond BSED ‘14, MA ‘16 and Chuck Boyles BA ‘95), and debate/forensics (Julie Laen BSEd ‘08, MS ‘10), was awarded the Performing Arts School of Excellence Award by the Kansas State High School Activities Association.

Also recognized were alumni Greg Shaw (MS ‘06), PHS theater teacher until his illness and subsequent death in 2020, and Jason Huffman (BGS ‘03, MS ‘14), who served as the interim theater teacher in 2020.

The team is tight-knit and has collaborated to score exceptionally high marks regionally, nationally, and internationally in debate, forensics, music, and theater

competitions. In the past year, Neil and Laushman have earned individual awards as outstanding music educators — Neil from Pitsco Education and the SEK Music Educators Association, and Laushman from the National Federation of State High School Associations.

They consistently earn the highest ratings at district and statewide music festivals and are known for innovative programs. Of note: 12 years ago, Laushman founded the Pittsburg Multigenerational Choir to bring together community members and high school students to rehearse and perform a concert. It’s now 175 voices strong, includes several Pittsburg State employees and students, and is accompanied by live music that Neil directs. The group will return to the stage at the Bicknell Family Center for the Arts for a concert on Jan. 23, 2022.

“Our team does what we do for the kids and for the community,” Laushman said. “Everyone says they always leave feeling better than they did, and that’s what it’s all about.” ■

Honorary Family

John and Debbie Thompson’s family roots with Pittsburg State run deep.

When John was 18, he moved to Pittsburg from Northwest Arkansas to get a degree in Automotive Technology and then go on his life.

He never dreamed that Pittsburg State, and the community of Pittsburg, would literally BE his life.

Thompson is now a professor in and the chair of the Automotive Technology Department.

Debbie works in the Office of Admission and grew up on campus — her dad, Ken Gordon, started teaching in Automotive Technology in 1966, and she and John met as students. They’re now celebrating 31 years of marriage, and their children are all Gorillas.

Their daughter, Anna, attended Little Gorillas Preschool in the Family & Consumer Sciences building and is now a sophomore majoring in social work and working in the Office of Student Diversity.

Her brothers, Jake and Josh, are alumni, as is her brother Caleb, who is working on his master’s degree and



From left: Jake, Alex, Debbie, John, Caleb, Anna, Josh, and Amy Thompson

has earned numerous leadership awards, and submitted the winning honorary family entry.

Debbie’s parents and siblings also graduated from Pittsburg State, as did many extended family members.

It makes them the perfect choice, said Lance Moser, assistant director of University Development, as the 2021 Honorary Family — an award given at the Family Day football game since 1993, sponsored by Advancement Ambassadors and the PSU Foundation.

“Ever since I was a little boy, and even before that, Pittsburg State has been a home for us all,” Caleb said.



From left, John Oppliger (Chair, PSU Department of Health, Human Performance, & Recreation), John Lair (Special Olympics Kansas CEO), Libby Van Rheen (graduate assistant), Laura Covert-Miller (associate professor), Erin Fletcher (Special Olympics Kansas director of grants and development), Duayne Vaughn (Special Olympic local program coordinator at New Hope Services), and James Truelove (dean of the College of Education).

A special partnership

Special Olympics Kansas chose Pittsburg State University, represented by Associate Professor Laura Covert-Miller, for its 2021 Southeast Kansas Organization of the Year Award in recognition of a 41-year partnership.

Covert-Miller and her students majoring in exercise science and therapeutic recreation assist with multiple events each year including the Special Olympics North America Move Challenge. She also founded the TR-i c Day (Therapeutic Recreation) at Pittsburg State, and a fitness evaluation program for Special Olympics athletes.



Teacher of the Year

Professor Julie Dainty was named Post-Secondary Teacher of the Year by the Kansas Association of Career and Technical Education and by the Kansas Association of Teachers of Family and Consumer Sciences.

Dainty, who teaches in Pittsburg State’s Technical Teacher Education program providing continuing education for high school and postsecondary teachers, also is a family and consumer sciences mentoring coordinator in the Kansas Center for Career & Technical Education.

She is a two-time Pitt State grad: she earned a bachelor of science degree in vocational secondary family and consumer sciences in 1989, and a master of science degree in technical teacher education in 2008. She also earned an Ed.D. from University of Arkansas in 2012.

“It feels very humbling! I feel beyond honored to be recognized for something I love doing,” she said. “Teaching has been my passion since a very young age and to be presented an award for my passion is like a cherry on top!”

Champion coach

Russ Jewett (BS ‘83, MS ‘93) is one of the winningest coaches in Pittsburg State history, racking up 50 MIAA championships in indoor and outdoor track and field and cross country, and two NCAA Division II national championships, in his 36 years at PSU.

In a ceremony at Champions Plaza last fall, he was honored with a medallion in the “Circle of Champions” — bronze medallions of coaches whose teams have achieved the ultimate competitive goal, a national championship.

Jewett guided the women’s outdoor track & field squad to an NCAA Division II national championship in 2016 and the men’s indoor track & field team to an NCAA Division II national title in 2018. His teams combined to win 55 conference championships.

“I am going to be proud to walk by and see my face up there, but I am really proud of what it represents,” said Jewett. “To me, it represents the shared pursuit of excellence. It takes a whole lot of people with different roles to come together. It takes an army to get one face up here.”



About Champions Plaza

Champions Plaza was built east of Carnie Smith Stadium in 2014. At its centerpiece is a larger-than-life gorilla sculpture by world-renowned artist Tom Corbin. It’s part of the Gorilla football team’s famed pre-game “Gorilla Walk” and has become a photo destination for alumni and fans.

In addition to Jewett’s medallion, the site features medallions for former head football coaches Carnie Smith and Chuck Broyles. A medallion honoring former head football coach Tim Beck will be installed at a later date.

The sculpture and medallions are surrounded by more than 1,500 personalized pavers with inscriptions honoring Gorillas around the world. Pavers and miniature versions of the gorilla sculpture can be ordered at pittstate.edu/championsplaza.



Business savvy

Four students in Kelce College of Business earned national recognition at the Future Business Leaders of America leadership conference: Amanda Becker (accounting analysis and decision making), Samuel Holman (programming concepts), and Wyntr Jacobs and Sarah Clausen (desktop publishing).

They were among eight KCOB students who racked up statewide wins that qualified them for nationals — including 18 first place, seven second place, and four third place awards in the Kansas FBL Leadership Conference.



From left
Olivia Mitchell, Samuel Holman, Amanda Becker, Jeremy Walls, Taylor Brynds, Cierra Rose, Sarah Clausen, and Wyntr Jacobs.

Students were required to submit their work, take tests, and present virtually to a panel of judges.

“Achieving this level of success and having these wins on their resumé will definitely give them a

leg up when it comes to landing their first job,” said David Hogard, director of Academic Advising, Career Readiness, and Enactus. “We’re excited for them, and we’re proud of the way they represented PSU.”

Design excellence

Two seniors and two graduates were recognized for outstanding achievement at the regional level for projects they completed in the Graphics and Imaging Technologies Department.

Jalen Dostal, Abigail Mitchell, Clara Gillum, and Olivia Frazier brought home trophies awarded by the Printing Industries of America Midwest Region at the annual Graphic Excellence Awards Gala.

Dostal (BST ‘21) won first place, and Mitchell (BST ‘21), won second.

Gillum, a senior, won third place, and Frazier, also a senior, earned an honorable mention.

Judging was based on technical complexity and the quality of printing of the entry, as well as design features and overall appearance.

Leading entrepreneur

Sophomore Tucker Jessip (Frontenac, Kansas) hopes to one day work in the renewable energy business — perhaps even own one. He’s



Jessip

been given an amazing opportunity: a seat on the national Student Advisory Council for Enactus USA — a prestigious position that will allow him to gain experience on a big scale.

He’s also been invited to participate in the Enactus Entrepreneurial Exchange Program with Morocco. Jessip is a student in the Kelce College of Business, where he is working toward a degree in business administration and a sustainability certificate.

Enactus is an entrepreneurial organization that creates sustainability projects that help the university and community; Jessip serves as the president of the PSU chapter.

Teachers of Promise

The College of Education has chosen Veronica Long and Joshua Jaynes as the fall recipients of the Teachers of Promise Award. Nominations come from cooperating teachers with whom they student teach.

Long is an elementary education major from Baxter Springs, Kansas. Jaynes is a math education major from Seneca, Missouri. Both graduated in December.





Fully funded Capital Campaign transforms lives

The five-year, \$100 million capital campaign, “Proven.Promise.Pitt State.” has officially been fully funded, and then some: more than \$136 million was raised. The biggest beneficiaries of the campaign: students.

“This campaign has focused on four areas: scholarships, faculty support, academic programs, and facilities. One area in particular, scholarships, has changed and will continue to change the course of students’ lives forever,” said Kathleen Flannery, president and CEO of the PSU Foundation.

About a third of the campaign total supports scholarships. To learn more about the campaign, visit: pittstate.edu/foundation/campaign.

CHRIS SCHULTZ

An up-and-coming woodworker, Connor Jennings, of Phoenix, Arizona, is attending Pittsburg State this year at no cost thanks in part to a scholarship given in memory of Chris Schultz, who died in Gilbert, Arizona, last year after a battle with cancer.

The remainder of Jennings’ tuition and housing costs are being covered by industry partners: The Architectural Woodworking Institute and the Woodworking Machining Industry Association.

He’s one of hundreds of students who have such stories.



STU & AMY HITE

Rocky Kyser, a first-generation college student from Erie, Kansas, wants to become a nurse and one day, perhaps, a nurse anesthetist. The Stu & Amy Hite Family Nursing Scholarship is helping him on the path to achieving that dream.

“This scholarship made a great impact on my life and college experience by giving me the funds necessary to purchase most of my books for this semester, which was a huge stress relief,” he said. “I’m grateful to the Hite family for it.”

The Hite Scholarship also made a big impact on Elizabeth Rosenstock, now in her senior year in nursing.

“I was able to afford every single tool I needed to be successful in school, thus allowing me to begin my nursing career path with a strong foundation,” she said. “And, being chosen to receive this scholarship gave me a sense of purpose knowing other people believed in me.”

Rosenstock has dreams of working as an RN in a neonatal intensive care unit or emergency room at a children’s hospital.

“Either way, I plan to work with children and help as many families and kids as possible,” she said.



STEVE SCOTT & CATHY SCOTT

Donors President Steve Scott and his wife, Cathy Scott, see first-hand each day the difference their giving makes.

The couple have given more than \$100,000 since 1989, but their most cherished donations have been to scholarships created in honor of their family: The Avis Parsons Scott Music Scholarship, the Steve & Cathy Scott Scholarship for Mathematics, the Harold L. Scott Memorial Scholarship for Technical Education, and the Phil Scott Special Education Scholarship.

“Behind each gift made to the university is a very personal story just like ours — a story that in many cases is a chapter in someone’s journey through life,” Scott said. “We’re honored that our donors chose to include us in their journey, and in turn they are having a significant impact on someone else’s journey.”

THE SCHNAER FAMILY

Paula Schnaer’s graduating class of 1972 was the first class to experience commencement ceremonies in John Lance Arena in the Weede Building — an improvement over unpredictable outdoor May ceremonies of the past. There was just one drawback.

“The gym wasn’t air conditioned and of course could be brutal on those hot days in May when graduation occurred,” she said.

Schnaer’s husband, Miles (‘71) and daughter, Mandi Schnaer Dow (‘99), also are Gorillas, and when the opportunity arose for them to make a lasting difference — one that would make commencement ceremonies much more comfortable — they all said “Yes!”

The Schnaers, who own Crown Automotive in Lawrence, Kansas, helped to fund a new HVAC system and video board, projects with a combined price tag of \$2.2 million that were installed this summer.

The family has funded scholarships and other Pittsburg State projects over the years, but these two projects are special, Paula said, because of her personal connection at graduation.

Director of Intercollegiate Athletics Jim Johnson said the projects will be valuable beyond graduation: the 3,500-person capacity facility annually hosts more than 50 basketball and volleyball competitions; showcases cheer teams, dance teams, pep band, and community groups during halftime exhibitions and performances; and is home to some of the university’s largest gatherings including career fairs, Rumble in the Jungle, and youth summer camps.

“With the support of the Schnaers and Crown Automotive, Pittsburg State can grow the use of John Lance Arena and transform it into an in-demand showcase venue suitable for use year-round,” Johnson said.



FACILITIES

Other facility improvements in recent years, including projects such as the Robert W. Plaster Center, the Bicknell Family Center for the Arts, the Gene Bicknell Sports Complex, and the soon-to-be-built simulation hospital at the Irene Ransom Bradley School of Nursing, have been funded in large part by donors as part of the campaign.

That list includes the home of the Kelce College of Business; a drive to raise the remaining funds necessary to overhaul the aging building is

nearing completion and Flannery hopes to close the gap soon.

“We’ve certainly seen the impact these facilities



have had on the recruitment of students, and we’ve witnessed the incredible academic, athletic, and artistic experiences students have when they get here as a result,” she said.

The facilities also have been a huge economic driver in the region, according to recent economic surveys.

“They’ve pulled in visitors from across the nation, positively impacted local businesses, and allowed our students to shine doing what they do best,” Flannery said. “They’ve truly changed the landscape of our campus and our community.”

PROGRAM ENHANCEMENTS AND FACULTY SUPPORT

Donors to the campaign also have funded a number of program enhancements as part of the campaign, like the highly impactful H. Lee Scott Speaker Series, which has been bringing to campus speakers including former President Bill Clinton and former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

Dr. Fay Bradley, of Independence, Kansas, a 1960 graduate who went on to become a renowned physician and track athlete, supported the Irene Ransom Bradley School of Nursing wholeheartedly during his lifetime. He left a transformational gift to support the nursing school through his planned gift.

Similarly, Dr. Gail Hoffman, a 1965 graduate of Spring City, Tennessee, created an endowment to support the Department of Physics.

And, Flannery said, the campaign funds additional faculty support in a myriad of ways.

Donors have a variety of reasons for giving back, Flannery noted. Many have given in honor of someone in their family, others feel they want to pay it forward, and still others are interested in providing access to higher education.

“Whatever their reason, they share one thing in common: through their gifts they make a difference in ways we can only begin to imagine,” Flannery said.

Creative giving

BRANDON AND ERIN WEAVER

Donors Brandon and Erin (MS ’15) Weaver are living their motto, “Empowering the next generation through education.”

Erin earned her master’s in psychology from PSU and found a campus of “friendly people and opportunities for growth.”

When the couple chose to give to the university, they visited with the PSU Foundation about ways to make their gift go further. Knowing that sometimes it takes an extra incentive to engage someone for the first time, they made their gift a “match” to encourage other alumni and friends to make their first gift.

Since August, the PSU Foundation has been matching first-time donor gifts up to \$250. The match will continue as funds are available.

Many of these gifts have been made to increase the 2022 annual fund efforts to support the greatest needs of the university.



KATHLEEN DICKERSON

When lifelong Gorilla Kathleen Dickerson, a very engaged alumna, died in August 2020, she left a legacy: she had earmarked a percentage of her estate for the PSU Foundation to

support academic programs.

Dickerson graduated in 1951 and went on to serve the Rogers, Arkansas School District for 40 years as an English

teacher, influencing thousands of students and inspiring many to serve as teachers themselves. Planned gifts like hers are a vital source of support for the university and will ensure that PSU remains strong for generations to come.



Learn how you can make a positive impact on students through planned giving by contacting Erica Martin at ermartin@pittstate.edu or 620-235-4863.

Meritorious Achievement Award winners

Two alumni — an early graduate of Pittsburg State’s nursing program who went on to succeed in the health care field, and one who was discriminated against in the Civil Rights era and went on to become a change agent for people of color — were awarded the university’s Meritorious Achievement Award.

The award is given annually by PSU’s Office of Alumni & Constituent Relations.



Floyd May (BSEd '70, MS '71)

Floyd May, a first-generation Black student from Kansas City, Missouri, faced discrimination, but with the help of a beloved professor, Dale Frihart, learned how to be strategic at making a difference.

“He became my mentor and showed me that before you can make changes, you have to understand how things work,” May said. “You can’t just get angry – you have to develop strategies to address change. He caused me to understand movements.”

Frihart helped May get appointed to the Pittsburg Human Relations Commission to gain experience in fostering relationships and decision-making.

May settled on Civil Rights as a career path and took a job in the Kansas City Regional HUD Office. Over the next three decades, he served in leadership roles at a regional and national level, retiring from HUD as general deputy assistant secretary in the Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity.

He played an instrumental role in requiring performance evaluation standards for all HUD managers, and in 2004, established the nation’s first and only National Fair Housing Training Academy.

His awards include the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Leadership Award and the Presidential Rank Award for Lifetime Achievement from President George W. Bush. In 1999, he was given the key to the City of Kansas City.

He serves on the NAACP’s National Housing Committee and is chair of the Washington, DC NAACP Housing Committee.

His next mission: helping to facilitate Black alumni scholarships at Pitt State.



Janet Houser (BSN '76, MS '80, EdS '93)

Janet Houser, a native of Columbus, Kansas, started her education at Pittsburg State in what at the time was an untested, unaccredited nursing program — the first students graduated in 1973, and she earned her degree just three years later.

Today, she’s the chairman of the board of the \$2.6 billion Colorado Health Foundation, recently retired as provost of Regis University in Denver, Colorado, has written seven books, and has earned numerous awards.

Houser comes from a long line of Gorillas: her grandmother attended PSU when it was known as the Kansas State Normal School. Both of her parents attended, as did both of her sisters, her nephew, and her niece.

After graduating, she went on to teach at the University of Northern Colorado, own and manage a consulting firm focused on education and healthcare, and serve as a director for Mercy Health Partners and St. John’s Regional Health System.

She has served as chair of the Academic Commission for Jesuit Worldwide Learning in Geneva, Switzerland, which provides post-secondary education to refugees in 17 camps around the globe, and did mission work in Ethiopia, Vietnam, Nicaragua, and in Joplin after the 2011 tornado.

She won the Outstanding Administrator Award from Regis University Student Governing Association in 2019 and the Denver Post Strength in Health Award for Administrative Excellence in 2015.

“I will always be grateful for the education I received at PSU, as well as the solid foundation in values that were imparted by the outstanding faculty,” she said. “As a result, I have pursued work that fits my nature in organizations that support my values throughout my career.”

Outstanding Alumni Award winners

Two alumni — one who experienced culture shock at Pittsburg State and went on to become a community leader, and one who attended college later in life and went on to become a leader in health care — were awarded the university’s Outstanding Alumni Award.

The award is given annually by PSU’s Office of Alumni & Constituent Relations.



Michael Gray (BA ‘03)

Most students must acclimate to being at a university that is a few hours — or sometimes a few states — away from home. For Michael Gray, the culture shock was a bit more significant: he came to PSU after spending 11 years of his childhood in Puebla, Mexico, where he attended a high school with a model United Nations.

But, he jumped into student life, serving in Student Government Association, as a resident’s hall assistant in Dellinger and Bowen halls, and as a member of the Christian organization Cross Quest.

“I got to meet people from different walks of life, including a large group of international students that were very engaged,” he said.

He was influenced by professors Bert Patrick and Paul Zagorski, as well as Cross Quest Advisor Mike Trent, with whom he still has a friendship today.

“Being at Pittsburg State strengthened my sense of community, my involvement with the community,” he said. “I began to recognize that we don’t need to live in silos, that the community can support the university and vice versa. In all my travels, I have yet to find an example that’s even close to what we have here...”

After graduating with a degree in political science, international studies, and Spanish, Gray earned his juris doctorate from the University of Tulsa College of Law.

He went on to work for Watco, a global transportation and supply chain services company based in Pittsburg that employs thousands in locations throughout North America and Australia. He also spent two terms on the Pittsburg City Commission and as mayor played a role in the development of joint projects with PSU, including Block22 and the Robert W. Plaster Center.



Shelly Schorer (MBA ‘02)

When Shelly Schorer enrolled, she was about 10 years older than just about everyone in her classes. It didn’t matter.

“I made friends with many of the students and ended up working with a couple of them after we graduated,” she said.

Her experiences were transformational, including engaging group projects, the chance to interact with international students, and the spirit on campus.

“It was a really fun place to attend and learn, and I would not have the job or career I have today without my MBA,” she said.

After spending 12 years at Mercy as a regional CFO, she is the chief financial officer for Common Spirit Health’s Northern California Division. It includes 13 hospitals, \$5 billion in net revenue, 16,000 employees, four medical foundations, and numerous joint venture partners.

She is active in numerous local and regional civic organizations, speaks at the state and national level, and has received several awards.

“At Pittsburg State, there were programs and projects that taught us how to work together as teams to solve issues, problems, and study together. And, I found great leadership in the professors,” she said. “I think going through a program like this builds your confidence as well, preparing you to take on an unknown project and determine a path and approach to success.”

Her son, James “Jake” Hunter, also received an award from Pittsburg State this year: he was chosen as the Outstanding MBA Student by Kelce College of Business.

WHERE IN THE WORLD IS GUS?

Where have you traveled with Gus or wearing your Gorilla gear? Email your photo, a caption, and your degree and graduation year to psumag@pittstate.edu.



Gorilla alumnae took a trip to Garden of the Gods sporting their Pittsburg State gear. Pictured are Cassandra Deforest (BS '99), Mary Maxwell (BS '01), Michelle Basgall (BS '99), Sarah Shaw (BSEd '99, MSED '01), Rachele Blue (BSEd '97), and Rachel Flannery (BSN '02).



Debanjana Ganguly Roy (MS/HRD '15) couldn't resist reminiscing about Pittsburg State as she stood in front of this gorilla statue at Odyssey Aquarium in Arizona. Debanjana, her husband Arnie, and friends visited the aquarium while on holiday. Debanjana, of India, is the talent acquisition coordinator at Intel in Arizona.



Mike Page (BBA in Finance '89) and Julie Page (BSN '89, MSN '11) remembered their Gorilla gear when they traveled to Mount Rushmore on summer vacation.



Gorillas Colleen Stroh (BS '13, MS '16), Melissa Ayers (BS '14), Mitch Ayers (BA '13), and Mary Whitehead (BSEd '15) enjoyed some beach time.



These Gorillas traveled to Cancun to celebrate a Gorilla wedding! Pictured are Stephanie England (BS '02), Bride Amber Hudson (BST '18), Autumn England (current student), and Terry England (BS '96).



Lee Tiberghien (BS '64, MS '68) traveled to Washington, D.C. to see all the beautiful sites in his Gorilla gear.



Michael Kelting (BSEd '68) spent time in Husavik, Iceland, searching without success for Will Farrell — he sang a song named after the Icelandic town. “Ja-ja ding dong!”



Ten Pittsburg State and Tri Sigma alumnae traveled to the Northeast coast for eight days of sightseeing. Stops included Boston and Salem, Massachusetts, Bar Harbor, Acadia National Park, Belfast, and Camden in Maine, where they stopped for this photo at Owl's Head Lighthouse. Pictured back to front: Cathy Walker Hess (BBA '82), Kathy Recker Robbins (BBA '79), Diane Blessant Letner (BBA '80), Cathy Stareck Linaweaver (BSEd '81), Lori Boyajian-O'Neill (BA '83), Janie Hughes Smith (BS '79, MS '84), Brenda Robinson Roberts (BSEd '80, MEd '88), Cathy Duffin Albright (BST '80), and Bette Walker Lessen (BA '80).



Justin Frederick (BS '02), Amy Cadman (BS '07), and Holly Shoaf (BBA '03) snapped a photo in their Gorilla gear while visiting Washington, D.C.



Megan Brown (BS '10) remembered to wear her crimson and gold while skydiving for the first time in Dallas, Texas.



Karl Hassard (MSE '84) splurged at the Big Texan Steakhouse in Amarillo, the home of the 72 oz. steak challenge. Though sporting his favorite PSU Health, Human Performance and Recreation Department hat, he dined on a succulent 16-oz. rib eye.



Ken and Kathy Peak found Gus adorned in gold and resting on a boat in downtown Amsterdam, The Netherlands, during a canal boat cruise. Ken (BS, MS '73) served as a professor at Pittsburg State from 1978-83, and prior to that as chief of University Police.



Erin Walton (BSEd '07, MEd '20) and Future Gorilla Kennedy loved the Atlantic Ocean in Spring Lake, New Jersey.

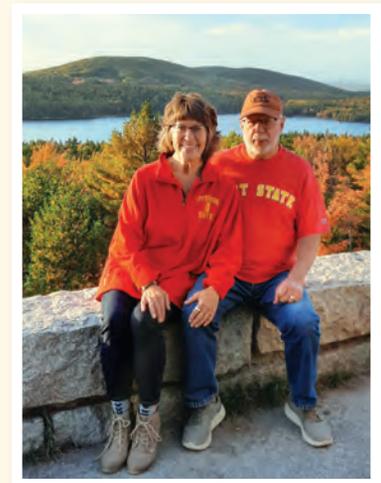


Debbie (BBA '93) and John Thompson (BST '91, MS '07, EdS '12) took a road trip and explored Badlands National Park, Mount Rushmore, Devil's Tower, and more!



Jessica (BS '10) and Grant Gabel (BS '10, MS '12) traveled to Alaska with their children to visit family. During the trip, they camped in Denali National Park, and visited Seward and took a glacier boat tour.

Karen Sullivan Holland (BSEd Art '13) showed her Pittsburg State spirit while fishing in Pensacola Bay, Florida, for sheepshead and Spanish mackerel.



Recently retired professor Becky Brannock (Ed.S. '90) and Jim Brannock (M.S. '03), enjoyed "leaf peeping" on their first trip in retirement, to the New England states in their RV. Their favorite sites were seeing the fall colors (especially in VT and NH), Niagara Falls, and Acadia National Park in Maine (pictured).



Koeta Bryant (BA '65, MA '76), Nancy Bishop (BS '83, MA '84), Cindy Shay (MS '93) and Mary Ann Forbes (BS '66) stopped at Legit Provisions in St. Helena, California, in their Gorilla gear while touring the Napa Valley area last fall.



Mark Sappington (MBA '21) and Stephanie Wolkar (BSEd '91) enjoyed a trip to beautiful St. John in the U.S. Virgin Islands.



Bev Zafuta Burke (BSEd '78, MS '87) made sure her family posed in their Pitt State gear at Mt. Rigi near Lucerne, Switzerland in September. The group includes Dan Burke (BSEd '74), Beverly Dugan Burke (BSEd '71, MS '74), and James Burke (BSEd '72, MS '75). While there, a passerby recognized their shirts, talked to them, and learned they had a mutual connection to Pitt State!

1966

Gene L. Beauchamp (BS), earned a gold certificate from the Missouri Board of Pharmacy for working over 50 years as a pharmacist in the Springfield, Missouri region. A member of the Civil War Roundtable of the Ozarks for over 50 years, he gives talks to groups on Civil War medicine. While at PSU, one of his professors was the noted author Dudley T. Cornish, who wrote "The Sable Arm" — considered one of the 200 Best Civil War books ever published.

1974

Marti Wells-Smith (BA) published a book, "Lamentations of the Heart – Mingled with Peace and Joy." The book combines poetry with nonfictional prose to reach out to others who have experienced loss.

1977

Lon Kruger (MSEd) announced his retirement from coaching after 35 years, having most recently coached men's basketball at the University of Oklahoma. After graduating with his bachelor's degree and playing basketball at K-State, Kruger became a Gorilla while earning his graduate degree and serving as a graduate assistant coach to Pittsburg State men's basketball. He was the first coach to take five different schools to the NCAA Tournament and is the only coach to win an NCAA Tournament game with five programs. Since the NCAA Tournament expanded to 64 teams in 1985, he is the only coach to take four programs to the Sweet 16 or beyond.

1980

Terry C. Higgins (BSEd, MSEd '85) completed his 41st year of teaching social studies at Carl Junction High School in Carl Junction, Mo. In his career, he has taught more than 7,100 students and earned numerous local and state awards for his work both in and out of the classroom. He currently serves as chair of the Social Studies Department and teaches both dual credit U.S. history and dual credit psychology courses. He also serves as the vice president of the local Missouri State Teachers Association. A former coach for many years for boy's basketball, baseball, and softball, he is now widely known for his work as the "Voice of the Bulldogs," serving as the school's PA announcer for home sporting events for more than 30 years.

1981

Catherine Linaweaver (BSEd) was named Volunteer of the Year at the Order of Omega Greek Honor Society Awards Ceremony at Pittsburg State. Linaweaver was nominated by a member of Sigma Sigma Sigma. She serves as the Housing Corporation President for the group.

1982

Cynthia Lane (BSEd, MSEd '87), who also holds a PhD, was appointed to the Kansas Board of Regents by Gov. Laura Kelly. Lane brings 36 years of education experience to the board. She is the current C.E.O. of Evolve Education Leadership, LLC.

1983

Dr. Lori Boyajian-O'Neill (BA), a sports medicine and family medicine physician, was honored as a recipient of the Outstanding

Women of Kansas Award from the Kansas 19th Amendment Centennial Committee. The award was created to honor four Kansas women who have made an impact in service, civics and community, education, and business.

Rick Webb (BS) was named 2021 Influential Leader by the publication, "Railway Age." Magazine subscribers nominated a large group of active people from all areas of the North American railway industry who make a difference and are committed to service. He is the executive chairman at Watco Companies, a global transportation business headquartered in Pittsburg.

1984

Dan Duling (BSEd, MSEd '90) was named vice president of community partnerships for the Community Health Center of Southeast Kansas, which is based in Pittsburg and provides high-quality and affordable medical, dental and behavioral health services in 14 locations across Southeast Kansas.

Mark McFarland (BSEd, MA '06) was named Jasper High School head football coach in Jasper, Mo. He recently retired from the Girard School District in Girard, Kan.

1985

Mindy Cloninger (BS, MS '88) joined Pittsburg Community Schools and Pittsburg Area Chamber of Commerce as director of community partnerships for the Launch Pathways Program. Cloninger retired from her position as director of career services at Pittsburg State in 2021.

1986

Cheryl Gleason (MSEd) retired from the Kansas State High School Activities Association, where she served as assistant executive director for 32 years.

Krina Snider (BST '86) was honored as the 2021 Rising Trendsetter at the 8th Annual STEMMY Awards Gala Luncheon. She is a cybersecurity awareness professional with more than 25 years of experience in strategic marketing, communications, and promotions and serves as senior program manager for T-Mobile's Cybersecurity Awareness & Training Program.

1988

Rhonda Dunn (BBA) was appointed to the Fort Scott Area Community Foundation Board of Directors in Fort Scott, Kan. Additionally, she is the chief financial officer for E3 Ranch and Companies.

1989

Blaise Bauer (BSEd, MSEd '92) was named to Missouri Sports Hall of Fame Elite 11, which recognizes former high school and college standouts. While playing high school football in Monett, Mo., he earned three varsity letters, as well as all-conference and all-district his senior season. At Pittsburg State, Bauer was a two-time NAIA All-America tight end in 1987 and 1988. He was team captain and team MVP in 1988, a three-time all-conference selection and two-time all-district. He finished his career with 1,248 yards receiving on 44 catches and a then-school record with 18 touchdowns. Two averages on yards per catch – 29.2 for his career and 31.4 in a single season – still stand as the highest at Pitt State.

1990

Brett Potts (BSEd), who also holds a PhD, was named assistant superintendent of secondary education for Lee's Summit R-7 School District in Lee's Summit, Mo. He brings more than 30 years of educational experience to the position.

1991

Craig Correll (BSEd, MSEd '02), who also holds a PhD, was named 2022 Kansas Superintendent of the Year. Correll has served as superintendent at Coffeyville USD 445 for the last seven years. He previously served as assistant superintendent in Coffeyville for the seven years prior.

1992

Kenneth Dewlen (BGS, BS '97) was named middle school principal at Weiser Middle School in Weiser, Idaho. Dewlen is a retired Lt. Col. with the U.S. Air Force and a longtime teacher.

Mick Wilson (BSEd) was named athletic director for Tulsa Public Schools in Tulsa, Okla. He brings 31 years of experience in public education to the position, including 12 years working with district coaches and physical education staff.

1994

Steve Chik (BBA) was named fire chief of Johnson County Consolidated Fire District No. 2. He most recently served as deputy chief.

Melanie Elliott (BSEd) joined the Louisburg School District in Louisburg, Kan., as a fourth-grade teacher at Broadmoor Elementary.

Susan Laushman (MM) was selected as the recipient of the 2020-2021 Outstanding Music Educator Award by the National Federation of State High School Associations. She has served as vocal music director at Pittsburg High School for the last 16 years.

1995

Kemba Esmond (MBA) was named executive vice president and chief financial officer at NeighborWorks America in Washington, D.C. She brings more than 25 years of financial experience to the job, most recently working as senior lead in financial planning and analysis at Fannie Mae.

1996

Lori Bolton Fleming (BMed) was appointed by the Kansas Supreme Court as chief judge of the Eleventh Judicial District in Southeast Kansas. Fleming will serve Crawford, Labette, and Cherokee counties. She is the first woman appointed to the bench in the Eleventh Judicial District and is also the first woman chief justice in the district.

Larry Pope (BSEd) published "Early Identification," a suspenseful thriller that examines society's approach to controlling the criminal element within.

Brad Stefanoni (BS) and his wife, Andra (BA '91, MA '94) purchased Root Coffeehouse & Creperie in Block22 in downtown Pittsburg. Stefanoni is the former assistant director of purchasing at Pittsburg State and a former longtime employee of the Education Service Center at Greenbush.

1997

Dana Blubaugh (BA, MSED '03) received the Distinguished Service Award from the Great Plains Association for College Admission and Counseling, awarded to an individual who has provided outstanding service to students, to the admission and counseling profession, and to the goals of the organization. Blubaugh is the director of outreach services and a regional recruiter for PSU, where she's worked for more than 20 years.

Tyleen Caffrey (BS, BM '19) was inducted into her high school Hall of Fame in Golden City, Mo., for her academic success. She teaches social work at Eastern New Mexico University and is pursuing a PhD in social work at Our Lady of the Lake University.

Gerry Carter (BSEd) joined the Louisburg School District in Louisburg, Kan. Gerry will serve as an industrial technology teacher at the middle school.

1999

Pam Henderson (BA) was awarded the Spirit of Pittsburg Award at the annual Pittsburg Area Chamber of Commerce Banquet in May 2021, presented by Sen. Jerry Moran, for whom Henderson has worked as his longtime local district director.

Dale Hoggatt (MSEd) was named 2021 Missouri History Teacher of the Year by Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, an award that honors one K-12 teacher from each state, the District of Columbia, Department of Defense schools and U.S. territories. Parents, students, teachers and administrators nationwide nominated a record 8,510 teachers for this year's award. Hoggatt is a history teacher at Cecil Floyd Elementary School in Joplin, Mo.

Tracy Hutton (BSEd, MA '06) was named virtual school principal for Salina USD 305 School District in Salina, Kan. — a new role implemented after the success of online learning during COVID-19. Hutton brings 21 years of experience in education to the position.

Shally Lundien (MSEd) was named assistant principal at Joplin High School in Joplin, Mo. She previously served as principal at Columbia Elementary School in Joplin.

Kim Vogel (BS, MS '14) was named director of human resources for the City of Pittsburg, Kan., where she has worked for more than 22 years in a variety of roles — most recently, director of Parks and Recreation.

Corey Wiltz (BSEd) was named assistant principal and athletic director at Emporia High School in Emporia, Kan.. He previously served as principal of elementary and junior high schools.

2000

Dr. David Baker (BS) was named chief medical officer at Freeman Health System in Joplin, Mo. Baker also serves as president of Freeman Medical Staff, is board-certified by the American Osteopathic Board of Surgery, and specializes in general and bariatric surgery.

Laura Earl (BSEd, MSEd '08) was named principal at Pittsburg Community Middle School in Pittsburg, Kan., where she has served as assistant principal for the past 10 years.

Casey Schirk (BSEd) was named chief client officer at Complia Health. He brings more than 15 years of experience to the job, having worked at Cerner for the last decade.

2001

Amber Wheeler (BSEd, MSEd '05, EdS '14) was named superintendent at Humboldt School District in Humboldt, Kan. She previously served as the elementary school principal in Columbus, Kan.

Jeff Yartz (BST) has joined Kadean Construction as a senior project manager. He brings more than 20 years of experience of healthcare and education building construction and project management to the position.

2003

Ryan Bartlett (BS) was nominated for an Emmy in the "Virtual Production for Outstanding Digital Innovation" category for his role as a managing producer in leading the NFL Media Digital team through the pandemic. Previously, he has won three Emmy awards. He now serves as senior producer of digital production and storytelling at FOX Sports.

Ashante Everett (MSEd) named director of student services at Newton County Theme School in Covington, Ga.

Justin Robinson (BMEd) was named band director at Fort School High School and Fort Scott Middle School in Fort Scott, Kan. He brings 18 years of experience to the position.

2004

Josh Hays (BA) joined Stewart Realty Company as a realtor in Fort Scott, Kan. In addition to real estate, he also works as a farrier, which is a craftsman who trims and shoes horses' hooves.

Joy McGhee (BSEd, MSEd '16) was named principal at Maynard Early Childhood Center in Emporia, Kan., after serving as an elementary school principal in Fort Scott, Kan., for the past four years.

Wade Welch (BSEd) was named assistant principal at Osawatomie High School in Osawatomie, Kan. He most recently served the district as assistant director of technology and as athletic director.

Eric Wilkinson (BBA) was recognized by Surge Institute with the Kansas City Impact Award for leading transformational work and generating an impact in Kansas City.

2005

Larissa Bowman (BBA) was named finance director for the City of Pittsburg. She previously served as deputy city finance director.

Adam Hull (BSEd, MSEd '19) was named assistant principal at Pittsburg Community Middle School. He served as a math teacher and coach for the past nine years.

Mark LaTurner (BA) was named assistant principal at Joplin High School in Joplin, Mo. He previously served as a social studies teacher for the high school.

2006

Devin Gorman (BBA, MBA '07) was named executive director of the Community Foundation of Southeast Kansas. He most recently served as executive director of the Crawford County Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Matthew Plunkett (MSEd) was named head football coach at Brewer High School in Somerville, Ala.

2007

Romy Paola Gonzalez (BS) created and designed a children's clothing brand called Newborn in Paraguay, based on the philosophy "less is more." The clothing line offers minimalist and unisex designs.

Yasmina Query (BSEd, MSEd '19) was named principal at Eugene Ware Elementary School in Fort Scott, Kan., where she has worked the last five years as a fourth grade teacher.

Marcy Seaman (BSEd, MSEd '09, MSEd '11) was named one of "50 Kansans You Should Know" by Kansas City Ingram's Magazine. She is the principal at Lakemary Center in Paola, Kan., a nonprofit organization that provides educational, mental and behavioral health, and social services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. She led the school and its students through the pandemic with adjustments, but students still were able to mostly be on-site for classes.

2008

Aaron Burns (BST) was honored as one of Oklahoma Magazine's "40 Under 40 Class of 2021." Burns is an area superintendent for the Oklahoma City Division of Crossland Construction Company.

Abby Farabi (BS, MAEd '11) was named 2A Girls Basketball Coach of the Year. Farabi is head coach at St. Mary's-Colgan in Pittsburg, where she led the Panthers to their first state tournament in school history. The team finished as runner-up.

Kelli Winemiller (BSEd, MSEd '15) was named Pitsco Education Educator of the Year at the annual Pittsburg Area Chamber of Commerce Banquet in May. She is a teacher for Pittsburg Community Schools.

2009

Matt Davis (BSEd) was named head football coach at Adrian School District in Adrian, Mo., where he has worked as offensive coordinator for the last seven years. He also teaches math and Project Lead the Way courses.

Ringnolda Tremain (MSEd) was appointed by the Texas Leadership District Administration to the role of K-8 principal of Trinity Leadership Public Schools at the Arlington campus in Arlington, Texas.

2010

Heath Barnes (MS) was elected Burgess (Mayor) of Woodsboro, Md., in May and was sworn into office in June.

Bret Ingle (MSEd) was named head principal for West Central and Columbia Schools in Joplin, Mo. The two schools merged to become Dover Hill Elementary school. He has served the Joplin School District since 2003.

Ryan Sorell (BS, BS '11) joined Freeman Health System Orthopedics & Sports Medicine of Pittsburg as a physician. As a pitcher on the PSU baseball team, he tore a ligament in his elbow and Dr. Michael Zafuta was his surgeon. That surgery and Zafuta influenced Sorell to become a doctor.

Brad Tavener (BS) joined Dunklin R-5 School District in Herculaneum, Mo., as the school resource officer.

2011

Aaron Anders (BST) was named public relations coordinator at Salina Regional Health Center in Salina, Kan. He will design print and digital marketing materials, complete photo/video projects, manage social media, and develop a quarterly magazine.

2012

Ardalan Dehdasht (MA, MEd '14) was named principal at Topeka West High School in Topeka, Kan. He previously served as principal at Osawatomie High School in Osawatomie, Kan.

Zac Dickey (BA, MS '19) was named to Wichita Business Journal's "40 Under 40." Dickey is agency president for AssuredPartners in Wichita, Kan.

Michelle Ducre (MS '12) was named human resources director for the City of Joplin. Ducre most recently served as HR director for the City of Pittsburg.

Ishmael Elkamil (BBA) was named director of Community Partnerships for the Community Health Center of Southeast Kansas.

Stephanie Hallacy (MSN) joined the new Girard Medical Center Uniontown Clinic in Uniontown, Kan., as a nurse practitioner.

2013

Jessica Skoglund (BSEd) was named Olathe School District's Secondary Teacher of the Year in 2020 and was a regional finalist for 2021 Kansas Teacher of the Year. Jessica is an English teacher at Olathe Northwest High School in Olathe, Kan.

Ryan Weir (BS) completed his medical residency with the University of Kansas School of Medicine-Wichita Family Medicine Residency Program. He is now practicing with St. Luke's Medical Clinic in Marion, Kan.

Ryan Woodruff (BS) completed his medical residency with the University of Kansas School of Medicine-Wichita Family Medicine Residency Program. He is now practicing with Agape Direct Primary Care in Andover, Kan.

2014

Matt Brooks (BST) was named 2020 "Living the Values" winner by MW Builders. This award recognizes employees who have gone above and beyond in the areas of integrity, teamwork, quality craftsmanship, and entrepreneurial spirit.

Mannie DeCastro (BS) was honored with the Diamond 9 Award by the Missouri Sports Hall of Fame, which recognizes former softball and baseball players who were standouts in high school and college and made positive impacts in the game. DeCastro went to high school in Carl Junction, Mo., and played softball for the Gorillas.

Denise Lake (BSEd, MEd '18) joined Louisburg Middle School in Louisburg, Kan., as a special education teacher.

Dr. Alyssa LeBoeuf (BS) joined Mint Dental Care as a dentist in Centerton, Ark.

2015

Carlee McCullough (BSEd) was named preschool teacher for the Fort Scott School District in Fort Scott, Kan.

Ryan Robinson (BMEd) was named band director of Grandview Middle School and assistant band director for Grandview High School in Grandview, Mo.

James Saltat (BBA) was named coordinator of alumni and student programs at the University of Missouri in Columbia, Mo.

Stephanie Spitz (BA, MEd '17) was awarded the 2020 SEK Wonder Woman Award by the Southeast Kansas Chapter of the National Organization for Women. The annual award honors a local woman who works to uphold feminist ideals.

2016

Menna Garedeu (BS) was named chief executive officer at Deborah Foundation. The foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of Ethiopian youth with mental disabilities through support in the areas of education, health, and policy advocacy.

Jennifer Whyte (MM) was named the assistant band director at Mill Valley School District in Shawnee, Kan.

2017

Mikaela Burgess (BSEd) returned to Pittsburg State as a member of the women's basketball coaching staff as a graduate assistant. She played for Gorilla women's basketball from 2015-2018.

Maggie Highberger (BST) was named 2021 Rising Star by Plastics News. She is an account manager for M. Holland Co.

Hannah Howard (BBA, MBA '18) was promoted to senior staff accountant of the tax department at Adams Brown Strategic Allies and CPAs in McPherson, Kan.

Josh Lowe (BST) was named Business Education Alliance Jerry Lindberg Volunteer of the Year at the annual Pittsburg Area Chamber of Commerce banquet in May.

2018

Courtney Blankenship (BA) received a 2021 Boren Fellowship sponsored by the National Security Education Program. Blankenship is pursuing a master's degree in International Relations from Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University in Syracuse, New York. She also is pursuing certificates of advanced study in security studies and Middle Eastern affairs, studying Tarifit in Morocco.

Kolleen Gladden (BST) recently completed law school at the University of Virginia. She was the recipient of the school's Pro Bono Award with more than 316 hours of service in the past three years. She was a resident of Joplin, Missouri, and 15 years old when the town was destroyed by a tornado in 2011. The devastation led her to appreciate the value of volunteering and helping those less fortunate. Next up: moving to New York City to be a Robert F. Kennedy '51 Public Service Fellow for Housing Works.

Laura Howard (BSEd) was named Fort Scott Middle School's seventh and eighth grade English and language arts teacher in Fort Scott, Kan.

Jasmine Smith (BBA) was named executive director of the Boys and Girls Club of Atchison in Atchison, Kan.

Cole Stewart (BSN) was named to the list of "30 Under 30 Developers" by the Center for Junior Officers, which honors leaders who excel in developing others. He was one of only three Army Medicine Officers and the only Army Nurse Corps Officer to be recognized.

2019

Ramsey Davis (BSEd) joined the teaching staff at Cottonwood Elementary in Paola, Kan. She is teaching second grade.

2020

Morgan Auman (CERT) earned a spot on the Kansas City Chiefs Cheerleaders for the 2021-2022 season.

Kenneth Griffing (BA) graduated from the Kansas Law Enforcement Training Center. He serves as a university police officer at Pittsburg State.

Madeline Martin (BSEd) was named a gifted teacher at Winfield Scott Elementary and Fort Scott High Schools in Fort Scott, Kan.

Blain Ohlmeier (BSEd) was named a seventh grade interrelated special education teacher at Paola Middle School in Paola, Kan.

Swaden Smith (BBA) became a managing partner and part owner of MultiFamily Cartel, which is a real estate investment firm.

2021

Peyton Guiles (BSEd) was named special education teacher at Eugene Ware Elementary School in Fort Scott, Kan.

Submit Class Notes information online to: psomag@pittstate.edu.



Pittsburg pharmacist Brian Sullivan is proud to have finally become a graduate last year with his MBA. He started at PSU in 1989, then transferred to KU for pharmacy school in 1992. He returned to campus a few years ago to finish up in the Kelce College of Business. It's never too late!

Deaths are listed based on information received from families or reported in local newspapers. They are listed by graduation or attendance date.

1942

Waynona Brown, Champaign, Ill.

1943

Leah J. Thomas, Hannibal, Mo.

1944

Lois E. Harris, Overbrook, Kan.

1945

Willa D. Crowell, Lee's Summit, Mo.
Emily Lu Stocker, Tampa, Fla.

1946

Norma J. Nelson, Glen Mills, Pa.

1949

Dona F. Cooper, Bristow, Okla.

1950

Betty Barber, Frontenac, Kan.
Frank W. Page, Frontenac, Kan.

1951

Mark A. Plummer, Sun City, Ariz.
William B. Stewart, Jr., Port Hueneme, Calif.
Richard A. Woodall, Wa Keeney, Kan.

1952

Darrell E. Smokewood, Weir, Kan.
William H. Vanwinkle, Joplin, Mo.

1953

Jack K. Anderson, Bella Vista, Ark.

1954

Kenneth W. Cansler, Bolivar, Mo.
John F. Flater, Littleton, Colo.
Lucy Macek, Lee's Summit, Mo.
Don E. Wilson, Overland Park, Kan.

1955

Barbara R. Pistole, Pittsburg, Kan.

1956

Delia D. Arnold, Ball, La.
Earline W Bridgewater, Parsons, Kan.
Cecil C. Charles, Amarillo, Texas
Harold E. Lewis, Olathe, Kan.
Jack Strukel, Topeka, Kan.

1957

Vernon D. Plouch, Mount Hope, Kan.

1958

Richard L. Adamson, Girard, Kan.
Robert W. Barclay, Iola, Kan.
Kent T. Holt, Uniontown, Kan.
Harold L. O'Connor, Coffeyville, Kan.
Betty J. Schwarz, Spring, Texas
Marvin D. Towse, Manhattan, Kan.

1959

Gerald L. Duncan, Edmond, Okla.
Cecil W. Flood, Weir, Kan.

1960

Carl T. Borghardt, Topeka, Kan.
Robert L. Crews, Pittsburg, Kan.
Mickey L. Heatherly, Joplin, Mo.
Carter L. Windham, Youngwood, Pa.

1961

Eldon V. Danenhauer, Topeka, Kan.
Sue Gosch, Joplin, Mo.

IN MEMORY

Terry Mendenhall – Business

Terry Mendenhall, a retired dean who helped guide the Kelce College of Business through challenges, died on Oct. 27 in Pittsburg. He was 88.

“He continued to be a big supporter of the college even in retirement, and he and his family contributed to the capital campaign for the Kelce building project,” said current dean Paul Grimes.

Mendenhall served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War. He joined the faculty at Pittsburg State in 1964. He was tasked with helping the Kelce College of Business attain accreditation from the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business after a previous attempt had failed, hiring qualified faculty and ensuring documents and protocols were in order.

When he retired in 2003, he was one of the longest-serving deans of the Kelce College of Business.

Mendenhall was active in the community in Sunflower Kiwanis, SBDC, Delta Mu Delta, and Sigma Phi Epsilon. He is survived by his children, grandchildren, and a great grandchild.

The family suggests sending memorials to the Kelce College of Business for the capital campaign.



William L. Harris, Rossville, Kan.
Bennett B. Johnson, Olathe, Kan.
Billie R. Pitzer, Portland, Ore.
Gary E. Ryan, Joplin, Mo.
Margaret J. Shaw, Moran, Kan.
Maxine L. Kinney-Smith, Manhattan, Kan.
Ralph L. Wilson, Sterling, Kan.

1962

Gary M. Arnett, Huntsville, Ala.
Richard W. Beal, Effingham, Kan.
Carlos Bradfield, Jr., Pittsburg, Kan.
Albert R. Cummings, St. Louis, Mo.
Carrol A. Duffy, Wichita, Kan.
Edward D. Gilham, Wichita, Kan.
Luanna M. Olson, Champaign, Ill.
Lois P. Slater, Chanute, Kan.
M. Irene Spritzer, Frontenac, Kan.
Charles R. Thomas, Wichita, Kan.

1963

Bill M. Barnes, Lawrence, Kan.
Leroy Foreman, Owasso, Okla.
John H. Hollis, Ozawkie, Kan.
Phillip G. Walker, Wichita, Kan.

1964

Gerald M. Becker, Hernando, Fla.
Kenneth R. Choate, Claremore, Okla.

Ann L. Ferguson, Girard, Kan.
Leslie C. Hobbs, Independence, Mo.
Gary G. Kennedy, Galena, Kan.
Betty Mathis, Phoenix, Ariz.
Thomas G. Smith, Redfield, Kan.
Ava M. Welch, Joplin, Mo.

1965

Janet L. Aikins, Bel Aire, Kan.
Myrtle L. Babbitt, Webb City, Mo.
James A. Courtney, Joplin, Mo.
Raymond D. Duncan, Mount Vernon, Mo.
Larry R. Hamilton, Cape Girardeau, Mo.
Donald E. Hicks, Parsons, Kan.
John C. Jarboe, North Little Rock, Ark.
Donald R. Johnson, Racine, Wis.
Donald C. Johnston, Joplin, Mo.
Kenneth L. Kerns, Great Bend, Kan.
Max Oldham, Springfield, Mo.
Ronald L. Paden, Joplin, Mo.
John W. Powell, Joplin, Mo.
Dorothy L. Spring, Kansas City, Mo.
Ted G. Stueber, Parsons, Kan.
David L. Torbett, Independence, Kan.
Bob L. Wells, Columbus, Kan.

1966

Lawrence M. Basky, Plymouth, Wis.
Judy L. Endicott, Montgomery, Ala.
William C. Ferrell, Lawrence, Kan.
James D. Kelso, Pittsburg, Kan.
Michael H. Lewark, Pittsburg, Kan.
Lyle L. Potts, Nixa, Mo.
Tom R. Thompson, Wichita, Kan.

1967

Jesse R. Anderson, Bella Vista, Ark.
Marilyn M. Barker, Fort Scott, Kan.
Fern Bath, Webb City, Mo.
Tom G. Earp, Overland Park, Kan.
Christina L. Kastler, Joplin, Mo.
Gene A. Schmidt, Leawood, Kan.

IN MEMORY

James “Jim” McBain – Philosophy

Professor James “Jim” McBain, known for his engaging teaching style in biomedical ethics, business ethics, and ancient, modern, and contemporary philosophy since coming to Pittsburg State in 2002, lost his fight with ALS on Oct. 12. He was 50.

His colleagues and former students said he enriched every life he touched and was a master educator. In his own words, written in 2016:

“I love helping my students work through the literature I love. I love the class time, the conversations, the a-ha moments students have. I love rereading those works that got me into philosophy in the first place and discovering new texts that are shaping my future thoughts.”

He was a published author, frequent guest speaker at universities across the nation, and was active in the PSU in Paraguay program. He served as the co-chair of the medical ethics committee for Ascension Via Christi Hospital in Pittsburg, where Chaplain Pete Mayo described him as a “tremendous resource who brought deep and wide background and theory.”

He is survived by his wife, Rhona Shand McBain, former associate professor of art.



Stephen E. Smith, Baxter Springs, Kan.
Richard Van Becelaere, Pittsburg, Kan.

1968

Dennis V. Alvarez, Mulvane, Kan.
Melinda S. Dixon, Lockwood, Mo.
Lloyd E. Lowe, Maryville, Tenn.
Raj K. Malhotra, Ocala, Fla.
Gary G. Tobias, Lampasas, Texas
Nancy K. Tomlinson, Wichita, Kan.

1969

Leona G. Boland, Punta Gorda, Fla.
Connie J. Cox, Coffeyville, Kan.
William G. Dorsey, Statesville, N.C.
Charles R. Hull, Overbrook, Kan.
Alfred M. Martino, Webb City, Mo.
Gilbert W. Niemeir, Camden, Ark.
Fred A. Pitts, Joplin, Mo.
Faye Watts, Oswego, Kan.
Curtis F. Wilson, Clarksville, Tenn.

1970

Jerry Bartlett, Lebo, Kan.
John L. Blair, Erie, Kan.
Walter L. Cochran, Nevada, Mo.
Roger G. Freeman, Sedan, Kan.
Garrett R. Haddock, Columbus, Kan.
Marilyn K. Hurt, Chanute, Kan.
Mike McCreedy, Chanute, Kan.
Frances Nutt, Mayflower, Ark.

1971

Tom W. Housh, Miami, Okla.
Terry L. Johnson, Girard, Kan.

1972

David R. Boyes, Joplin, Mo.
Tom Cherry, Tuscumbia, Mo.

Vicki J. Gentry, Pittsburg, Kan.
Terry A. Gillham, Chanute, Kan.
Charlie C. Gregory, Aransas Pass, Texas
Jim A. Johnson, Pleasanton, Kan.
Beverly D. McDaniel, Wichita, Kan.
Allen R. Shirley, Joplin, Mo.

1973

John H. Dalgarn, Miami, Okla.
Joseph A. Meuser, Lamar, Mo.
Jacqueline A. Murray, Pittsburg, Kan.
Don R. Noland, Pittsburg, Kan.
Kathy M. Schurman, Joplin, Mo.
Tony L. Stansberry, Shawnee, Kan.

1974

Clarence M. Anderson, Frontenac, Kan.
Stephen R. Bartelli, Brighton, Ill.
Claire Childress, Westminster, Colo.
Cheryl J. Kinnear, Carthage, Mo.
George H. Primm, Athens, Ga.
Gregory J. Smith, Derby, Kan.
Virginia M. Stark, Joplin, Mo.
Paula M. Woods, Crestline, Kan.

1975

Earl C. Craig, Kansas City, Mo.
Scott Hogue, Pittsburg, Kan.
Jere G. Marcum, Joplin, Mo.
Dan H. Peterson, Pittsburg, Kan.
Willie R. Price, Jr., Muskogee, Okla.
Michael P. Seeley, Hurst, Texas

1976

Stanley L. Burns III, Billings, Mont.
Frank Jackson, Andover, Kan.
Linda L. Rather, Chanute, Kan.
William L. Van Cleave, Galena, Kan.

IN MEMORY

Victor "Vic" Sullivan – Technology

Victor "Vic" Sullivan, who as the dean of the College of Technology played a key role in the funding, development, and construction of the Kansas Technology Center at PSU, died on Aug. 1 after a 10-year battle with Alzheimer's.

Today, the courtyard in the heart of the KTC bears his name as a lasting testament to his passion and dedication.

Sullivan began teaching "industrial arts" at Pittsburg State in 1962. In 1985, he was promoted to interim dean and then dean of what was then called the School of Technology & Applied Science during a time of tremendous growth.

He retired in 1998, but continued to stay connected to Pittsburg State until his death.

Sullivan is survived by his wife, Mary-Kate, their son Mark (BS '80) of Houston, their daughter Olive (BA '82) of Pittsburg, as well as several grandchildren and great-grandchildren.



IN MEMORY

J. Bryan Sperry – Mathematics

Longtime associate professor of mathematics J. Bryan Sperry died May 12 at age 95. He also served as sponsor of PSU Fellowship of Christian Athletes during his 32-year tenure. He retired in 1995, but stayed connected to the university as a volunteer until just a few years ago.



Soon after his freshman year in college, World War II broke out; he was drafted and sent to Europe, where he would fight in the Battle of the Bulge. He would return to earn degrees in education at the University of Kansas, where he played in the 1948 Orange Bowl and set a school record for two touchdown receptions.

He captured the nation's heart in 2015 when at age 89 he ran for 37 yards during an alumni football game and scored a touchdown, making him an internet sensation.

Many of his memories were included in his book, "Life of a Country Boy," published in 2012.

The family suggests memorials to PSU Fellowship of Christian Athletes; they may be mailed to Brenner Mortuary, 114 E. Fourth St., Pittsburg, KS 66762.

1977

Rebecca S. Hunn, Erie, Kan.
Daniel L. Johnson, Iola, Kan.
Diane S. Mollnow, Fredonia, Kan.
Thomas M. Saxton, Jr., Iola, Kan.
Beverly R. Sayles, Moran, Kan.

1978

Mary J. Ruark, Joplin, Mo.
Jerry E. Sutton, Mount Hope, Kan.
Earl B. Vore, Parsons, Kan.

1979

Sharon M. Brown, Parsons, Kan.
Carol J. Carnes, Bethesda, Md.
James R. Howell, Pleasanton, Kan.
Bill King, Jr., Independence, Kan.
Ronald D. Moorehouse, Joplin, Mo.
Joyce Saar, Greenville, S.C.
Gary L. Yurk, Columbus, Kan.

1980

David E. Noyes, Pittsburg, Kan.
Tony Swanwick, Carl Junction, Mo.

1981

John J. Bunn, Deerfield, Mo.
Richard N. Deardorff, Joplin, Mo.
Alma L. Fisher, Girard, Kan.
Beverly M. Fite, Pittsburg, Kan.
Mark K. McWherter, Olathe, Kan.
Bonnie B. O'Neal, Lamar, Mo.
Tom Porter, Cherokee, Kan.

1982

Helen M. Durham, Miami, Okla.
Randy R. Reid, Saint Charles, Mo.
Rebecca A. White, Louisville, Ky.

1983

Daniel E. Armstrong, Carthage, Mo.
Howard L. Butler, Nevada, Mo.
Charles Clough, Coffeyville, Kan.

Deborah J. Deer, Lamar, Mo.
Steven A. Esch, Afton, Okla.
Vickie L. Haynes, Nixa, Mo.
Sharon F. Smith, Diamond, Mo.
Peter N. Truta, Overland Park, Kan.
John T. White, Columbus, Kan.

1984

Roy D. Edmonds, Louisburg, Kan.
Deanna J. Harper, Iola, Kan.
John D. Holmes, Pittsburg, Kan.
Rita O. Thomas, Joplin, Mo.

1985

Kimberly S. Fisher, Osawatomie, Kan.
Robert V. Horn, Chanute, Kan.
Paula S. Larery, Pittsburg, Kan.
Linda J. Rickel, Topeka, Kan.
Mark Spillman, Moran, Kan.
Rod A. Sprague, Marysville, Ohio
David R. Welling, Pittsburg, Kan.

1987

Patrick F. Sheern, Garnett, Kan.
Kirk D. Steinle, Ken Caryl, Colo.
Carol A. Vaverka, Parsons, Kan.

1989

Elaine Emmett, Fort Scott, Kan.
James M. Gerstenkorn, Woodway, Texas

1990

David B. Bahr, Johnston, Iowa
Jeanne Carter, Neodesha, Kan.
Roberta L. Closs, Parsons, Kan.

1991

Kenneth R. Beckwith, Parsons, Kan.
Jan Dare Tate, Fort Scott, Kan.

1992

Stacey L. Hauck, Frontenac, Kan.

1994

Jason D. Chaney, Prosper, Texas
Terry L. Hayden, Parsons, Kan.

1995

Kim A. Harp, Coffeyville, Kan.
Laney Littlefield, Miami, Okla.

1996

James D. Fischer, Independence, Kan.
Greg T. Kiel, Castle Rock, Colo.
Carlos Nevins, Overland Park, Kan.

1999

Jennifer L. Laswell, Pittsburg, Kan.

2000

Jamie J. Gates, Erie, Kan.

2001

Julia E. Mills, Olathe, Kan.
John L. Schmid, Coffeyville, Kan.

2002

Donna M. Byrum, Nevada, Mo.
Debra J. Doss, Joplin, Mo.
Duke L. Spurgeon, Grove, Okla.

2004

Josh K. Dirks, Olathe, Kan.

2008

Toby L. Adams, Fort Scott, Kan.
Nathan D. Maxwell, Yukon, Okla.

2009

Dustin D. Craft, North Miami, Okla.
Thomas R. Hanrahan, Brownwood, Texas
Jordan P. McElwee, Frontenac, Kan.

2010

Benjamin A. Szostak, Lincoln, Ala.

2011

Keith W. Valverde, Lansing, Kan.

2012

Leanne D. Pollreis, Walnut, Kan.

2016

Tyler E. Carroll, Springfield, Mo.
Darla M. Ross, Riverton, Kan.
Beatrice N. Scott, Joplin, Mo.

**PITTSBURG STATE
FACULTY & STAFF:**

Jack L. Kennedy, Pittsburg, Kan.
Vic Sullivan, Pittsburg, Kan.
Roger E. Adams, Joplin, Mo.
Clint E. Carter, Wichita, Kan.
Kathleen C. Spillman, Miami, Okla.

IN MEMORY

Earl Ward – Information Technology

Earl Ward, who worked for 40 years as computing operations manager at Pittsburg State in an era that saw significant change in infrastructure and systems, died Oct. 29 in Pittsburg. He was 88.



A U.S. Navy veteran who served during the Korean War, he began work at PSU — then called Kansas State Teachers College — in 1960. In 1969, he earned a degree and would serve the university until he retired in 1999.

Former colleagues say he brought about order in the operations of the computing center as the university moved from an IBM mainframe to prime computers.

“He worked with folks from all areas of the university and seemed to have a gift or making plans that pleased most, if not all, end users,” recalled Jim Butler (BSEET ‘85, BSCS ‘86), whom Ward hired as a student employee to install hardwired computer terminals across campus.

Ward married Betty Lou Lauber in 1954; she preceded him in death in April 2020. He is survived by one son, Phillip Dean Ward and his wife, Cara, of Frontenac, Kansas; one daughter, Sharon Lynn Hilton and her husband, Aaron, of Aurora, Missouri; as well as two siblings and numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

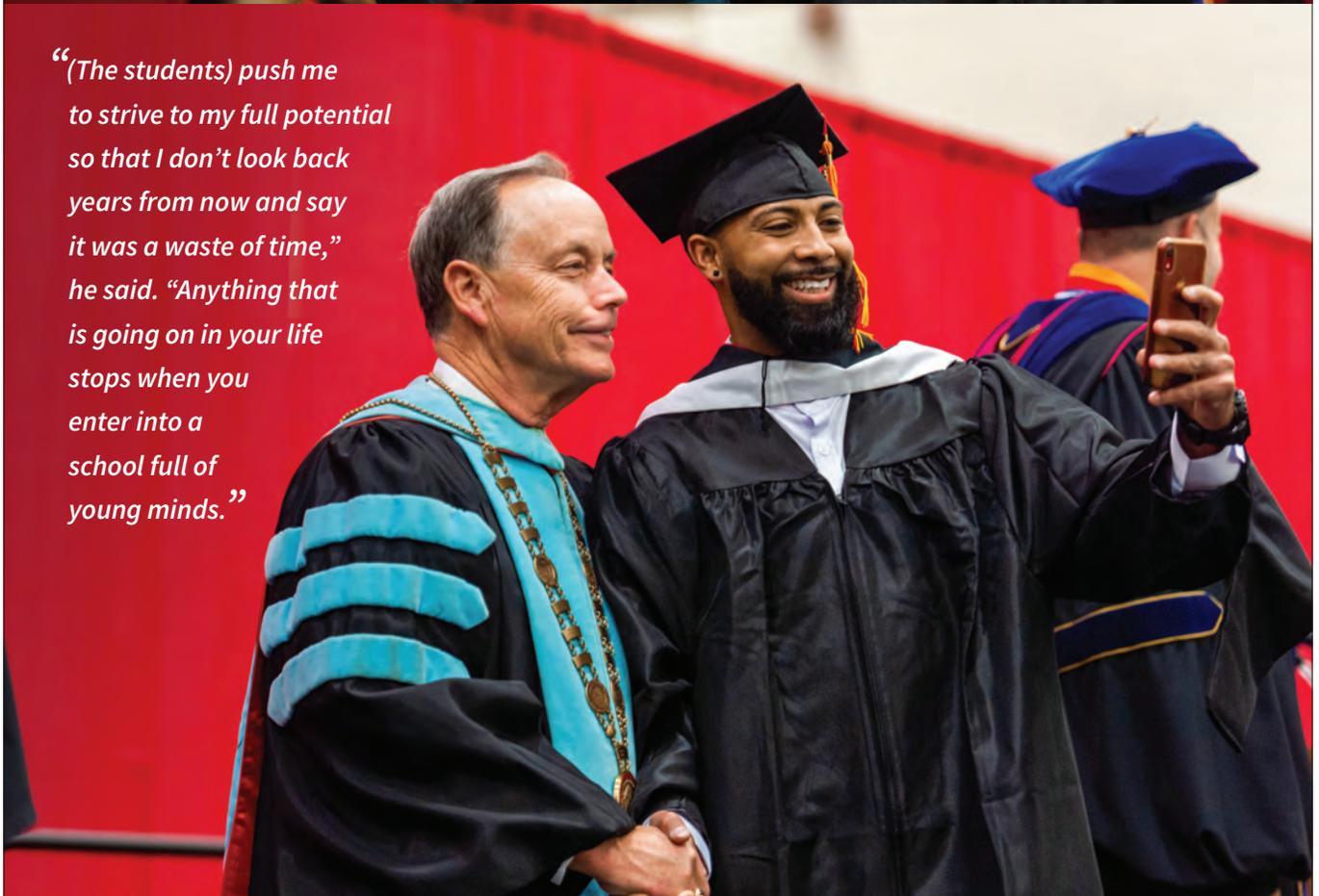


Top: Luke Lee posed for a selfie with President Steve Scott during the 2017 Fall Commencement ceremony after being awarded his bachelor's degree in elementary education.

Bottom: Lee repeated the milestone moment at the 2021 Fall Commencement ceremony after being awarded his master's degree in education. For five years, Lee has worked for the Turner School District in Kansas City, Kansas, first as a second-grade teacher and this year as the district parent-community liaison, and says he feels privileged to have the opportunity to impact real lives on a daily basis.



“(The students) push me to strive to my full potential so that I don’t look back years from now and say it was a waste of time,” he said. “Anything that is going on in your life stops when you enter into a school full of young minds.”





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GATHER AND CELEBRATE

Alumni & Constituent Relations is once again holding in-person Gorilla Gatherings across the Midwest and Taste of Pittsburg events featuring Chicken Annie's Original in cities in Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma.

The team is also excitedly planning Half-Century Reunions; Family Day activities; Homecoming; and Distinguished Service, Meritorious Achievement, and Outstanding Alumni awards ceremonies for 2022!

For a complete list of upcoming events, visit pittstate.edu/alumni

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It's filled with features from campus, recognitions of alumni accomplishments, and announcements about what's coming up.

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