

August 2025



# Pitt State

MAGAZINE

**GENERATIONS  
OF GORILLAS  
FOLLOW IN  
FOOTSTEPS**





## New president



Thomas Newsom, PhD, has been chosen by the Kansas Board of Regents as the next president of Pittsburg State University; he'll begin this fall.

Since 2020, he has served as president of Southeastern Oklahoma State University in Durant, Oklahoma.

Newsom also has served as vice president of Student Success and dean of students at Texas A&M-Commerce, where he oversaw the development of new student success initiatives and led the university's student affairs.

A native of Sherman, Texas, Newsom earned a doctorate in higher education administration from the University of North Texas, a master's in higher education from A&M-Commerce, and a bachelor's in business administration from Austin College.

He and his wife, Vicky, a teacher, have three children.

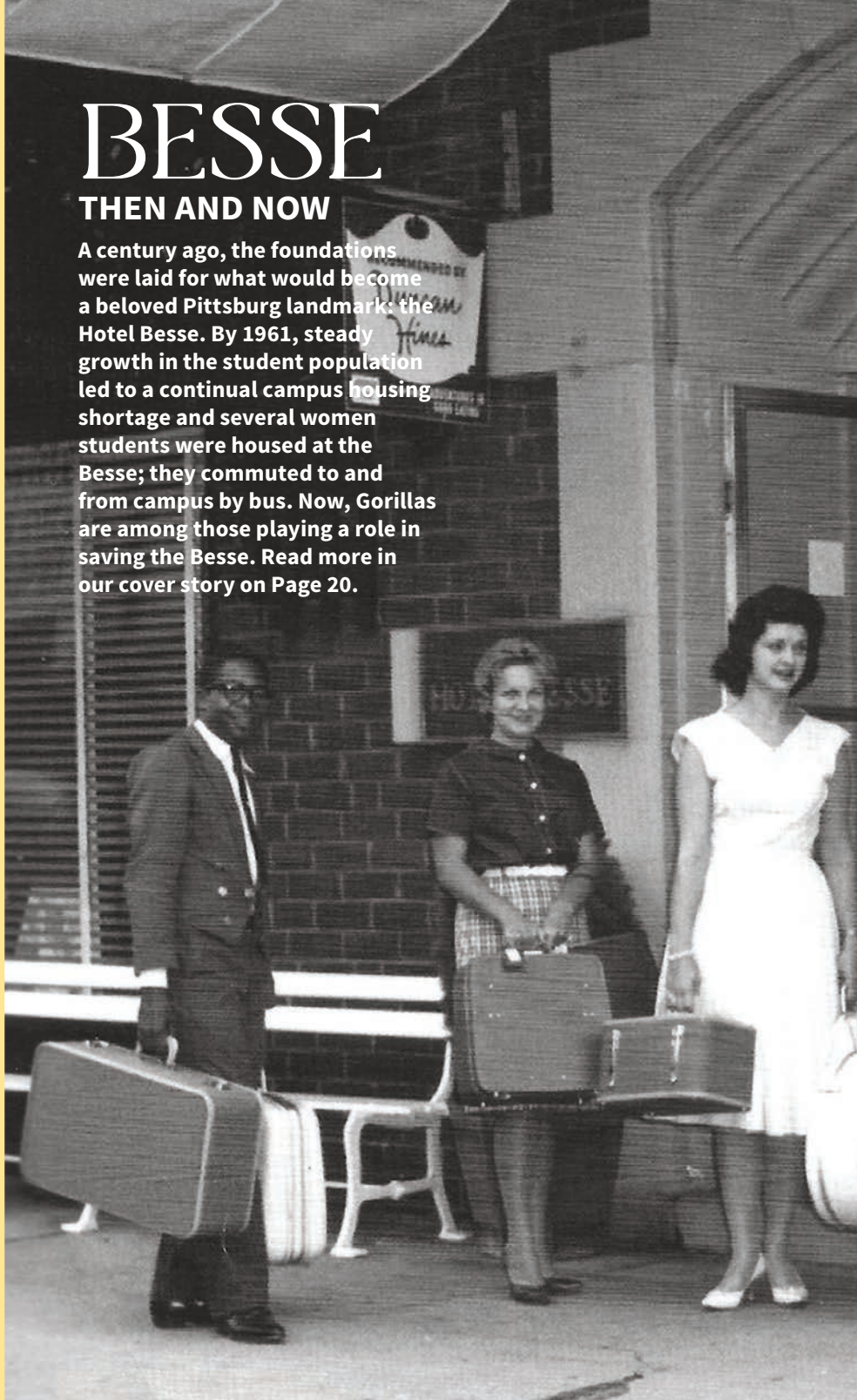
On a visit to campus this summer, the couple said they were warmly received.

"We felt very welcome here," he said. "We truly understand now what it means to say Once a Gorilla, Always a Gorilla."

In addressing the campus this summer, Newsom said the university's true measure of success will be what students do when they leave Pitt State.

## BESSE THEN AND NOW

A century ago, the foundations were laid for what would become a beloved Pittsburg landmark: the Hotel Besse. By 1961, steady growth in the student population led to a continual campus housing shortage and several women students were housed at the Besse; they commuted to and from campus by bus. Now, Gorillas are among those playing a role in saving the Besse. Read more in our cover story on Page 20.



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### For extra copies or information:

PSU Creative and Strategic Communication  
106 Russ Hall  
1701 S. Broadway  
Pittsburg, KS 66762-7575  
620-235-4124  
psumag@pittstate.edu



# PittState

MAGAZINE

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**Interim President**  
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Aaron Thompson (BS '09, MA '25)



**Editor**  
Andra Stefanoni

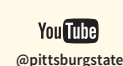
**Content**  
Andra Stefanoni  
Bethanne Elliott (BS '18)

**Design**  
Paulina Scholes

**Photography**  
Sam Clausen  
Addie Hinterweger (student)

More photos and stories at:  
[pittstate.edu/GorillaConnection](http://pittstate.edu/GorillaConnection)

Podcasts at: [buzzsprout](https://www.buzzsprout.com)   
 Spotify



# CONNECT WITH US!

## GORILLA CONNECTION

Keep up to date on milestone moments, innovative projects, and inspiring people:

[pittstate.edu/gorillaconnection](http://pittstate.edu/gorillaconnection)

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

[youtube.com/@bicknellcenter](https://youtube.com/@bicknellcenter)

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/backgrounds](http://pittstate.edu/backgrounds)

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](http://pittstate.edu/info/fightsong)

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

[pittstate.edu/magazine](http://pittstate.edu/magazine)

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

[pittstate.edu/tour](http://pittstate.edu/tour)

## Finding Gus



No matter where you go, you're never far from Gorilla Nation. Check out this awesome Gorilla statue on Rodeo Drive in Los Angeles!

**Check out other Gorillas around the world on Page 30.**

## And the winner is...

We continue to be amazed at the number of you who enter our popular "Finding Gus" contest! We wish we could give a prize to each and every one of you for having such Gorilla spirit! This time, the winner is **Sheila Taylor** (BBA, Accounting, '95), who spied it on Page 35.

## Can you find it?

Search this issue and email your guess to **alumni@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 **November 1**. We'll mail one lucky winner a hardbound copy of "Pittsburg State University: A Photographic History of The First 100 Years."





## Letters to the editor

DEAR EDITOR,

I enjoy reading the magazine every time I receive it. My favorite part in the January '25 issue was the tribute to Connie Kline on Page 39. Both of our daughters had Connie as their 3rd grade teacher. We knew her as Miss Cuthbertson. Our oldest daughter, Jessica, had her in '95-'96. It was such a wonderful experience that I requested Miss Cuthbertson as the teacher five years later when our youngest, Caitlin, was going into third grade. It is the only time I ever requested a teacher for the girls. Every year when I picked up the girls on the last day of school we would go by Miss Cuthbertson's class to get a hug and tell her all about their year. It was one of the highlights of our year. We were so sad to hear that she had died. The girls and I attended her celebration in Pittsburg. It was a great tribute to a remarkable, loving woman!

**Brenda Durbin** – Class of 2017

DEAR EDITOR,

I was delighted to see the magazine as usual in the mail today. I read it from cover to cover! A bittersweet note was of President Appleberry's passing. I arrived at PSU in Spring 1979. We had the big anniversary and of course it rained. Apple Day was even more special since we had the Appleberrys on campus. So many good memories of them. I don't remember their kids but they were totally immersed in campus life activities. She was always so graceful and like a second mother to all of us. He always had a smile on his face. It wasn't unheard of for him to pop in and attend a campus organization meeting just because. As busy as they had to be with his job and their own family, they still cared about Gorilla Nation. They were still at PSU when I left in 1981. They brought so many positive changes during their tenure! May they rest in peace.

**Betty Hyatt Pierson** – Class of 2014

DEAR EDITOR,

Always fun looking for Gus. Found him on page 35 hiding under the tree on the left. Some of my best memories are from my years at PSU: I met my wife, Janet, in Spring 1968. We just celebrated our 53rd anniversary. I received my BS in Printing Technology in 1971. As a freshman, I won the 1968 CIC conference 3000-meter Steeplechase and placed 6th in the NAIA national championship which was in Albuquerque.

**Rich Yergovich** – Class of 1971



P.S. Always thought it would be fun to recreate this photo in a "then and now" picture. I still have the original T-Shirt. Notice the construction in the background!

## "Lemons to lemonade"

Longtime Biology Professor Jim Triplett (BS '66, MS '68) was known for his dedication to student learning opportunities, and that didn't change even after his death: his 2003 Honda Insight, one of the first electric vehicles in town, was donated to the School of Automotive & Engineering Technology by his widow, Shirley, for use in labs.

Triplett dedicated many years of his life to sustainability and conservation measures and championed the installation of the first electric vehicle charging stations on campus and downtown.

At the same time, Kelly Burgess



(BST '01) donated his son's electric vehicle — a 2011 Chevy Volt that had been involved in a traffic accident.

"I see this as a 'lemons to lemonade' event," Burgess said. "We're transforming these cars into something very positive for students at Pitt State."

## Nursing scholarship created in honor of impactful leader at Pitt State



A new endowed scholarship created to honor a longtime nursing educator will have a lasting impact on students just like she did.

More than \$35,000 has been raised for the Cheryl Giefer BSN to DNP Scholarship Fund and 10 students in the Doctor of Nursing Practice program each were

awarded \$1,000 as the first recipients.

Amy Hite (BSN '96, MSN '00, EdS '19), director of the Irene Ransom Bradley School of Nursing, received an anonymous donation of \$25,000 to create such a scholarship. Giefer (BSN '78), who retired as director of the school last year to return to the classroom, was Hite's teacher and hired her as a faculty member.

"It's the nicest thing anyone has ever done for me," Giefer said. "I

can't believe they did this. It's amazing."

The scholarship fund is especially for students in the DNP program, which Giefer played a key role in launching in 2016. From 2016 to 2024, she served as director of the nursing school.

To contribute to the Cheryl Giefer Scholarship Fund, visit [pittstate.edu/foundation](http://pittstate.edu/foundation), choose "Give Now," and complete the required fields. In the "Specify fund type" field, write "Cheryl Giefer DNP Scholarship."



STUDENTS IN THE THERAPEUTIC REC PROGRAM pulled off the biggest TR-Iffric Day of Play yet, with 500 people in attendance. When it started eight years ago, there were 20. This year, graduate student Zoey Harvey took the lead organizing. Professor Laura Covert Miller said the annual event gives students valuable hands-on experience in planning and carrying out an event for a special needs population so when they graduate, they'll have the necessary skills. "It also makes a difference in the lives of those they serve from our community," she said.



## A home away from home



More than half a century had passed since Art Greene (BST '69), Larry McAulay (BA '71), Russ Smith (BBA '71), and Ronald Cattelino (BBA '70) lived in Shirk Hall. But when the four friends stepped through the door in late March, it was as if no time had passed at all.

"This was our family away from home — our home away from home," Smith said.

The group, which traveled from Kansas City, wanted one last look at it before it was razed.

They recalled the life lessons they learned there, including leadership serving as Residence Hall Assistants, living away from home for the first time, and interacting with peers from different racial, political, and geographic backgrounds.

And then, they were off down the halls, climbing staircases, peeking in rooms, recalling details aloud — they remembered which rooms they lived in, amusing pranks, a student with barbershop experience who

kept them in buzz cuts for ROTC, and their dorm mothers' names.

While they lived in Shirk, the Vietnam War was waging, Presidential Candidate Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated in Los Angeles, Martin Luther King, Jr. was shot in Memphis, and Apollo 11 landed on the moon.

Shirk Hall was built in 1958 as a men's residence hall and was named after James Shirk, who came to the university in 1912 as an assistant professor of physics. In 1914, he became a full professor and department chair, and during World War II, he was the head of the civilian pilot training program based on campus. He taught until his death in 1950.

Shirk Hall was renovated in the 1980s for use by KRPS 89.9, the university's public radio station; University Police & Public Safety; and offices. The building was completely vacated by 2024.

"We'll always have fond memories of our time here," Greene said.

## Alumni activities planned for Homecoming



Homecoming 2024 King and Queen, Parker Jenkins and Emma Polly.

Homecoming 2025 is planned for the week of Oct. 6–11. The theme: Gorilla Galaxy!

Activities for alumni include a new opportunity to participate in Yell Like Hell, planned for 6:30 p.m. on Oct. 10 at Carnie Smith Stadium; and a bonfire in Gorilla Grove at 8 p.m. International alumni are invited to a reunion from Oct. 9–11. An alumni awards reception will be held at the Alumni Center at 2 p.m. Oct. 10. The Homecoming Parade is planned for 9 a.m. Oct. 11, followed by tailgating in Gorilla Village and a 2 p.m. football game. Questions? Call Danielle Driskill at 620-235-4761.

## Preserving pages of history

History has been coming alive one page at a time in a large sunlit studio in Porter Hall — once home to the university's first library, and now home to the Art Department.

There, Assistant Professor of Art Olivia Timmons has collaborated with University Archivist Sara DeCaro and students to reproduce some of the Little Blue Books once published by noted publisher E. Haldeman-Julius, of nearby Girard, Kansas.

They use a Vandercook press, which requires hand inking and hand turning. Once pages have passed across historic metal plates, each representing a page from one of the famous pocket-sized books, they must dry for 24 hours. Then, they are assembled.

Between 300 and 500 million of the Little Blue Books were produced from 1919 to 1978 as a way to educate the working class. Paperbacks and bookstores didn't yet exist. Libraries were rare.

In nearly 2,000 different titles, they were printed on cheap pulp paper and sold for 5 to 10 cents each in heavily frequented places like drug stores and train stations, and by mail order.

They covered many topics, some racy for the time: "What Married Women Should Know" and "How to Get a Divorce." Others were more to the point: "Africa — Its Place in Modern History" by W.E. Burghardt Du Bois, and "Insects and Men: Instincts and Reason," by Clarence S. Darrow.

Following World War II, J. Edgar Hoover added Haldeman-Julius to the FBI's enemies list. In 1951, he was convicted of tax evasion. A month later, he was found dead in his swimming pool.

His company continued to print the books until 1978, when the printing plant and warehouse were destroyed by fire.

Today, a copy of each is housed in Axe Library, along with historical records about Haldeman-Julius and metal plates used to print many of the books.

Collections of the series also are housed at Kent State University, Bowling Green State University, and California State University-Northridge.

It was when student intern

Angel Abshire began cleaning the plates that the reprint project was born.

They decided to make the Little Blue Books the subject of a proposal for the National Council of Public History Conference in Canada.

They took along reprints of the books to hand out to attendees, and a small printing press for a demonstration.

"This is such an interesting way to make history more understandable and more visible," DeCaro said.



## New Diesel/HEV facility

Final funding is being sought for a new \$20 million facility to provide lab space for students to train on heavy equipment, including diesel engines, hydraulic systems, powertrains, electrical and electronic systems, and hybrid and electric vehicles.



Naming opportunities are available. Final architectural plans will be finalized in 2026, with occupancy targeted for Fall 2027.

Such an expansion will allow the university to double the current enrollment of 250 students and help the region meet workforce needs of business and industry.

The facility will be built north of the Crossland Technology Center.

Professor Tim Dell said the curriculum has grown tremendously and it's nearly impossible to simultaneously disassemble engines, transmissions, and other components in the existing space.

"The new building will take all of the programs in Automotive, Collision, Hybrid Electric Vehicles, and Diesel and Heavy Equipment to a new level for future generations," he said.



# Help now available for students with anxiety about public speaking

A graduate who became a faculty member is leaning on what she learned from her former department chair to help improve students' lives.



Students who experience anxiety at even the thought of public speaking, whether it be in an informal or formal setting, now have help at the Pitt State Communication Center. It's equipped with a simulation lab and state-of-the-art technology that includes virtual reality, recorded scripts that walk students through the speech-giving process, special lighting, and in-person consultations to help them prepare.

"Speaking in front of people can be a bit gut-wrenching for me," said Professor Alicia Mason (MA '06), who oversees a team of graduate assistants responsible for about 550 students in speech classes each year. "I recognize those needs in students."

State guidelines require students to complete at least three speeches in a live setting. Up to 25 percent of students report high levels of communication apprehension, which can manifest in no-shows on speech day — an avoidance strategy.

"We only have them here for so long, so let's make a difference that will pay off long-term for them," Mason said. "It's not just about them getting a grade in a speech class. They will use these abilities the rest of their lives."

The cognitive restructuring visual guidance scripts she used were developed from the source materials of the late Pete Hamilton, longtime chair of the Communication Department.

"He's still inspiring people," Mason said.



BUILDING UPON THE SUCCESS of last year's first Pittsburg State University Hispanic Music Festival, directors Isaac Hernandez (MM '23) and Frida Herrera have announced they're planning the festival again this fall in hopes it will become an annual event for the campus and community. It will coincide with National Hispanic Heritage Month from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15. Details: [events.pittstate.edu/hispanicfestival](https://events.pittstate.edu/hispanicfestival)



STUDENT RESEARCH at Pittsburg State makes a real-world impact — from public health and housing to sustainable materials. At the same time, it empowers students to become thinkers, problem-solvers, and leaders. This year, the annual Research Colloquium drew the most participants in the past decade. Research by 160 students included the distribution of ticks and tick-borne diseases in Southeast Kansas parks, the use of bio-based composite materials to enhance mechanical strength and improve flame retardancy, the economic factors that are shaping U.S. housing affordability, and more.

## Gorillas help to save the Besse

Two Pitt State grads and a group of Gorilla football players have been part of saving a Pittsburg landmark one floor at a time.

The football players are majoring in Construction Management and over the summer were interns for Crossland Construction — the contractor for the Hotel Besse project in Downtown Pittsburg.

The building will turn 100 in 2027. In recent years, it was abandoned and fell into disrepair. Now, it's part of Gorilla Rising, which includes a new Kelce College of Business two blocks to the south that is replacing an aging building on campus.

At the Besse, the lower level

will house commercial space and the Center for Reading and the Kansas Small Business Development Center.

The mezzanine will include the “Collegiate Room” (a nod to a room of the same name decades ago), a laundry for residents, and a few student apartments. Floors 2 through 13 will be dedicated solely to student apartments.

The building — one of the tallest in Southeast Kansas — is on the National Registry of Historic Places.

The work the students did was rewarding in two ways, the Gorillas said.

“It was a way to learn and grow in our careers while also getting to help out the Pittsburg community by saving this building and returning it to use,” said Levi McGee, a sophomore offensive lineman from St. Charles, Missouri.

“We’ve gotten a lot of support from the community in football, and this was a way to give back.”

Jaydon Hill, a junior tight end from Grove, Oklahoma, said it’s a way to apply what they’ve learned in the classroom from faculty members.

“We talk a lot about managing the pieces of the process in our classes, so now it’s cool to be part of that process and get our hands dirty,” he said. “You have to think through problems on your

own sometimes, relying on what we’ve learned.”

Cortland Hervey, a senior wide receiver from Kansas City, Kansas, said it’s exciting to be part of preserving history.

“And we are implementing here on the job site what our teachers have taught us, which is a great feeling,” he said.

Other Gorillas gaining experience working floor



## Making life better

### COMMUNITY SERVICE



Health, Human Performance, and Recreation students helped coordinate the annual Outdoor Kids Day with Pittsburg Parks & Recreation, leading activities like archery, canoeing, scavenger hunts, and arts and crafts at Lakeside Park.

### VOLUNTEER SERVICE



Members of the International Student Association volunteered at Westside Elementary’s annual school carnival by directing activities, assisting with the raffle, and more.

### TEDDY BEAR CLINIC



Nursing majors held the First Grade Teddy Bear Clinic for area students, who rotated through engaging learning stations to learn about wellness, safety, and how to care for themselves and others.





by floor in the 69,249 square feet, 13-story building are Construction majors Jake Eddington (Columbus), Matthew Craig (O'Fallon, Missouri), Logan Eck (Carl Junction, Missouri), Gavin Salyers (Parsons), and incoming freshmen Levi Blair (Girard) and Aiden Lillich (Parsons).

"Being able to work on a building like this is surreal," said Blair, who grew up coming to Pittsburg and seeing the Besse towering over downtown.

### Gorilla leaders

Overseeing them all is Field Engineer Dylan Halterman (BST '24), who now works for Crossland.

"When you go downtown, this is the first thing you notice," he said. "I'm proud to be working on it."

He is bringing to the job what he learned from faculty with experience from working in industry themselves.

"And if you ever have a question, you can always call them — Jim Otter, Joe Levens — they stay connected with us even after we graduate," he said. "Pitt State's Construction program — there are no words. It's incredible."

Overseeing the entire project, including 50 to 60 people and their schedules, is Job Site Superintendent Cheyne Sager (BST '05).

He also has played a role in renovations at Carnie Smith Stadium, the Overman Student Center, the ROTC Rappelling Tower, and the PSU Veterans Memorial.

"I'm very proud of this project. There's a lot of

**Besse History**  
Construction began in 1924, funded in part by donations from more than 100 of Pittsburg's "bankers, business, and professional men and women," and from financier Alexander Besse. It opened on June 14, 1927. The grand ballroom and the public and private dining rooms of the Besse Hotel became favored hangouts for soldiers posted at Camp Crowder during World War II. Read more about Gorilla Rising at [pittstate.edu/gorillaconnection/gorilla-rising.html](http://pittstate.edu/gorillaconnection/gorilla-rising.html).



potential to make this look pretty cool when it's all said and done," Sager said.

"I think it's something I can tell my kids and grandkids about. I can bring them here and show

them this is something I did as my first job as a graduate of Pitt State," said Halterman. "Whether I'm here or not, it will always have a special place in my heart."

### SCREEN-FREE PLAY



Students in the Honors College hosted area children on campus for a morning of screen-free play as part of a semester-long project. They built "spaghetti towers," played board games, and enjoyed structured outdoor play.

### PHILANTHROPIC PROJECTS



Each semester, students in the Social Work program plan and implement philanthropic projects — not just for a grade, but to help make a positive impact in our region. This year, projects focused on foster care, food pantries, mental health, and more.

### COMMUNITY SUPPORT



Students in the Construction Systems Technology course built dog houses as a capstone project and donated them to the Southeast Kansas Animal Advocates.









# “Do the best you’re capable of every single day.”

IT’S LIKELY THAT BY THE TIME YOU READ THIS IN AUGUST, Coach Amanda Davied (BS ’03) is still pinching herself.

She still was in April, several weeks after the Gorilla women’s basketball team made history by reaching the NCAA Division II Final Four for the first time.

“I sometimes ask myself, ‘Did this really happen? Was that for real?’” she said from her office overlooking John Lance Arena in the Weede Building — the same arena where she once played point guard for Pitt State.

Her love for basketball started early in rural Farlington, Kansas.

“I dribbled around feed sacks on the farm,” she said. “I ran across the pasture, jumped a creek, and played on a concrete pad with a hoop.”

She started to get good. In middle school, her parents drove her across the region to play travel ball. She missed slumber parties, but friends and teachers were supportive.

At Girard High School, Coach Sunny Pierce became a major influence.

“There was my mom, and there was Sunny,” she said. “The way she connected to us as players — we adored her.”

At Pitt State, she played under Coach Steve High and felt “trust and commitment.”

“Winning is fun, losing sucks, but either way I want to do it with people who care about your best interests.”

She excelled on the court, scoring

nearly 1,300 points in four years and landing in ninth place for scoring in Pitt State history.

High invited her to be his graduate assistant. By 2004–05, she was an assistant coach, helping to lead the Gorillas to a regular season conference championship and five trips to the NCAA Tournament.

She became head coach in 2018, following Coach Lane Lord.

Last summer, she sensed something special in the ’24–’25 team.

“I felt very confident,” she said. “The team was picked first in the league and 17th in the nation. But we didn’t talk about it. We just knew the mission: stay humble. You have to earn it.”

Her mantra to players and herself: “Do the best you are capable of every single day. But stay humble; being too confident is a dangerous place to be.”

As a coach, her free time is limited. Even on the bus ride home from the Final Four, she was watching recruiting video and planning recruiting trips. But she loves every minute of it.

“It’s a gift, the connections this job allows me to make,” she said. “I really feel the support of this community.”

“The connection of previous coaches, previous players, and super fans to this program is incredible. People wait in line for tickets for women’s basketball. That’s not normal.”

“I could have left after graduation,” she added, “but I thought, ‘I’d spend my whole life trying to get back here.’”



# THE VOICE OF GORILLA ATHLETICS

For nearly three decades, Eddie Lomshek has been a familiar voice to fans of Pittsburg State University Athletics, calling football and basketball games with precision, passion, and hometown pride.





A 1987 GRADUATE OF ST. MARY'S-COLGAN High School, he grew up in Pittsburg during a time when "everyone played outdoors — there was no cable, no video games."

"Whatever the season was, that's what we were doing," he said.

His love of sports, born on sandlots, in driveways, and on his transistor radio, shaped his life.

His broadcasting career began in the mid-1990s when he noticed KKOW Radio frequently changing sideline reporters and mentioned it to someone who worked at the station.

That opened a door.

"I originally planned to teach and coach but switched my major to Communications with an emphasis in Broadcasting and never looked back," he said.

He spent his first 20 years with KKOW and the last eight with My Town Media, following in the footsteps of the legendary Tom Van Hoy.

"No question, getting to do it in my hometown, for my alma mater, has been really special," he said. "I know who the people are, and at the root of it all is relationships. Having a front row seat to it has been incredible."

His early years included recording game highlights on cassette tapes. Since then, he's covered 27 football and 26 basketball seasons and spring sports, including record-breaking runs in softball and baseball.

He prepares meticulously, often compiling far more information than he'll use.

"I'd rather have it and not need it than need it and not have it," he said, crediting mentor Tom Van Hoy with instilling that lesson.

Today, he relies on iPads and real-time stats from sports information departments to enhance his calls.

Among his most unforgettable moments: this year's women's basketball team's Final Four run.



*"No question, getting to do it in my hometown, for my alma mater, has been really special," he said. "I know who the people are, and at the root of it all is relationships. Having a front row seat to it has been incredible."*

"It had never been done in almost 50 years of the program," he said. "There were goosebumps in that moment — you could feel the love and chemistry in that team."

Not every memory is about victory. The 2004 men's basketball team, which set NCAA all-division scoring records but fell short of a title, still stands out.

"That's why I love sports," Lomshek said. "The discipline, the accountability, the life lessons — how to handle

setbacks and defeat. I preach that to my kids."

A former member of the Army National Guard, Lomshek and his wife have three sons — all multi-sport athletes. He acknowledges the time may come to scale back.

"You miss a lot — weddings, funerals, your kids' games. Every year, I reevaluate."

Still, the feedback from listeners and support from advertisers keep him going.

"It's nice to know people are listening. Hopefully they feel their support is worth it."

In the off-season, he enjoys fishing and coaching youth baseball.

"That's the one season I get to just be a dad," he said.







# Class project leads to successful business

WHEN TODD ALLISON DECIDED to return to school in 2020 for an advanced business degree, the Executive MBA in the Kelce College of Business was the perfect fit: he had a BFA in Photography and had owned a camera store for a decade, so already had some business acumen.

He had come to Pittsburg from Lawrence, Kansas, to work at Progressive Products, a manufacturing business in Pittsburg founded in 1979; and to run a sister business, Apex Stages, which produces high-end stages for large performances.

"I wanted to explore business further," said Allison, "and the Executive MBA at Pitt State was the answer."

His first semester, a class project would change the trajectory of his business.

"I took the Marketing Strategy class, and we did a market analysis of the stage industry," he said. "It confirmed that there was a big gap in entry-level products for smaller events and venues."

His solution: Astra Stages. By 2021, he had developed a prototype. By 2022, Astra made its debut at a national mobile stage conference and landed a half-dozen sales.

"Astra Stages started as an MBA project for me — a school project that turned out to be a multimillion-dollar company," he said.

Last year, Allison gave back: he donated his 50th Astra Stage to be used in Gorilla Village by bands performing at football tailgating and other events.

"Pitt State had a hand in creating this company, so I wanted to ensure Pitt State got one," he said. "We made it in school colors for fun, with a red tarp and yellow guards."

In turn, the stage will keep giving back: there are spaces on the tarp's skirts and sides for advertisers, which will generate an estimated \$15,000 in revenue for scholarships for graduate students in the MBA program. The Kelce logo is on the skirt, as is a QR code that leads to a video story.

"I wanted to show people that starting a business is not a crazy idea," Allison said. "The entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well in Pittsburg — probably more so than in your average town."



## SAVE THE DATE

In May 2025, the Kelce College of Business marked its 50th anniversary of awarding its first MBA degree.



On Sept. 13, alumni, faculty, staff, and friends will celebrate with an event in Gorilla Village prior to the first home football game of the season.







*“... we’re  
encouraging  
our students  
to succeed  
and staying  
connected  
to them.”*





# A lasting legacy

WHEN SAM REDA, SR. GRADUATED from Pitt State in 1933, it was an incredible achievement: the son of an Italian immigrant coal miner, he was the first in his family to attend college, often hitching rides to Pittsburg from Scammon, and went on to build a successful career in teaching, accounting, and insurance.

Reda inspired generations of his family to pursue higher education — including daughter Gloria Reda Star (BA '62) and sons Sam (BBA '64) and Jack (BBA '72).

The brothers, who live in the Kansas City area, created the Reda Education Foundation two years ago to help first-generation students who faced barriers. It's already helped students get closer to the finish line of earning a degree.

Funding comes in part from an annual benefit fundraising event, "Broadway on the Plains," with the help of Jack's daughter, Angel Reda, a Broadway actress with many connections in the industry.

Among their first Reda Scholars at Pitt State: seven students in the Irene Ransom Bradley School of Nursing.

"We wanted to honor our father with a lasting legacy that would help transform lives just like his was," Jack said. "Dad was a trailblazer who broke the ice and whose children, grandchildren, nephews, nieces, and cousins followed in his footsteps."

Jack and Sam returned to campus in April to meet with the scholars and learn about their educational experiences.

"You're ready for the next part of your career and you're a real testament," Sam told the students. "We're very proud of you."

Among them: Tharyn Lewis, who was in and out of the foster system with multiple guardianships and left at age 17, taking her 14-year-old brother with her. She has raised him ever since. Now starting her senior year, she assumed college was never something she would be able to do.

"I was thankful not only for the scholarship, but because Jack and Sam really took time to get

to know us. It has felt like I have a family member rooting for me."

Abby Robinson, whose father was incarcerated, helps provide for her mother and brother. She is starting her senior year and dreams of working in pediatrics.

Shelby Blythe, who became pregnant her freshman year, dropped out of college to become a single mother but was able to return as a Reda Scholar and graduated in May; she is now working as a cardiology nurse for a regional hospital.

"This scholarship meant the difference for me finishing school," she said.

The Foundation has added three students from the Crossland College of Technology for the fall semester and plans to add students from the Kelce College of Business in the near future.

"Our mission — we're not just about providing money, we're encouraging our students to succeed and staying connected to them," Jack said.

## Coaching honors (again!)

Kyle Rutledge was named NCAA Division II Coach of the Year for men's outdoor track & field, and assistant coach Jason Crow (BBA '16) earned NCAA DII Men's Assistant Coach of the Year accolades, after the duo led the Gorillas to the team title at the NCAA DII Outdoor Championships. The team scored 111 points and won seven events.



Rutledge

Rutledge and his staff also were named the MIAA Men's and Women's Outdoor Track and Field Coaching Staff of the Year after the Gorillas swept the MIAA Outdoor Championships.

The women's team shattered the all-time scoring total in MIAA history. The Gorillas claimed their eighth MIAA Outdoor Championship in the last 10 seasons by compiling 271.5 points and dominating the competition from start to finish in the three-day meet.

The men's outdoor track and field team continued its dominance at the 2025 MIAA Outdoor Championships. They claimed their fifth straight MIAA Outdoor Championship and the program's 10th MIAA outdoor title in the last 14 seasons by compiling 252.5 points in the three-day meet.

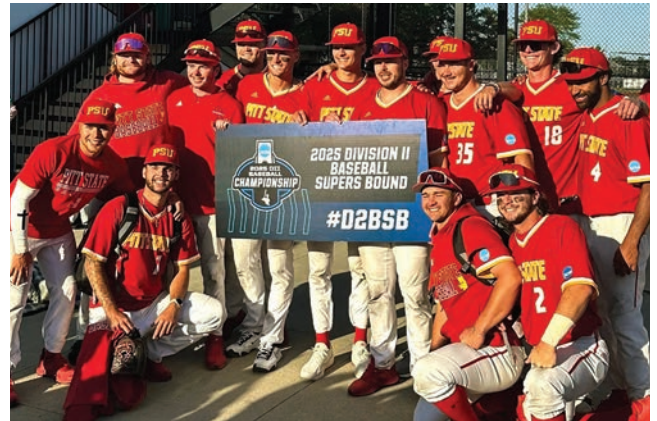
Rutledge, who this academic year will begin his fifth year as director of the program, has been named NCAA DII Men's Track & Field Coach of the Year seven times

in the last four years (indoor and outdoor). He has earned Women's Track & Field Coach of the Year accolades twice.

This marks the third time in his Pitt State career that Crow has earned National Assistant Coach of the Year honors.



Crow



GORILLA BASEBALL ADVANCED to the NCAA super regional round for the first time in program history. The team scored two runs in the bottom of the sixth inning to break an 8-8 tie and eventually claim a 10-8 victory over Minnesota State University to advance to the 2025 NCAA-II Super Regionals in Warrensburg, Missouri.

## New baseball coach

Brock Buckingham has been hired as the Gorillas head baseball coach. He becomes just the sixth head coach in the 46-year history of the program, replacing Bob Fornelli.



Buckingham

Fornelli retired from his position following the end of the Gorillas record-breaking 2025 season that culminated with a 42-12 record and a trip to the NCAA Division II Super Regionals. Fornelli finished his 29-year coaching career with a 1,120-495 (.693) record.

Buckingham comes to Pitt State from Cowley College in Arkansas City, Kan., where he was an assistant coach for 17 seasons. During his tenure, Buckingham helped the Tigers amass 720 victories, capture nine Jayhawk Conference East Division titles, and qualify for the JUCO World Series five times. Cowley placed third overall in 2017 and finished as the national runner-up in 2022.



# New outdoor track and field construction underway

An outdoor track and field facility will improve safety, match the standard of excellence achieved in recent years by athletes and coaches, and could play a role in the local economy.

Site work began over the summer in the field along Ford Street between the Bicknell Family Center for the Arts and the Crossland Technology Center. This fall, the track will be poured. Done by Mammoth Sports Construction, it is anticipated to be



completed by March 2026.

For decades, teams have used the track and field inside Carnie Smith Stadium. The track is six lanes (national competitions use nine) and is confined by the historic rock wall built in 1939; it cannot be expanded. The track surface is worn and has been patched numerous times, while

the field sport locations present hazards.

"This was probably the last outdoor season we could even practice at the stadium and not worry about significant safety concerns like injuries to athletes," said Vice President of Athletics Jim Johnson. "We'd done all the patch jobs we could do and were at a crossroads."

The project is donor-funded and will be comprised of phases. The first includes the track and field base, seating for 1,700 spectators, a storage building, a warm-up runway, and fencing.

Pitt State is scheduled to host the MIAA Outdoor Track and Field meet and must confirm by November; Johnson anticipates having the first phase complete in time for the May event.

"There was a lot of history and countless great memories made on the current Prentice Gudgen track at Carnie Smith stadium, and that history and those memories will live forever," said retired longtime Coach Russ Jewett. "I'm thrilled that new history and lifelong memories are going to be made at this new, modern facility that will best serve the Gorilla track and field program, the university, and the community for many years to come."

Those who wish to support this project can do so by emailing Johnson at [jjohnson@pittstate.edu](mailto:jjohnson@pittstate.edu) or contacting the Development Office at [dev@pittstate.edu](mailto:dev@pittstate.edu) or 620-235-4768.

## 2025 Athletics Hall of Fame

A diverse group of seven individuals and one historic team will be formally inducted to the Pittsburg State University Intercollegiate Athletics Hall of Fame on Oct. 31 and honored at halftime of the Gorillas' football game against Missouri Southern on Nov. 1.

The Class of 2025 is headlined by a cast of decorated athletes and coaches:

**Gretchen (Clark) Love (2010-11)**, a four-time NCAA Division II All-America high jumper in track & field;

**Zac Dickey (2009-11)**; an All-America quarterback in football;

**Dennis Franchione (1985-89)**, the legendary football coach who guided the Gorillas to five straight trips to the national playoffs including a pair of national semifinal finishes;

**Lizzy Jeronimus (2012-15)**, a four-time All-America in women's basketball;

**Leah (Shireman) Smith (2003-05)**, a three-time All-America javelin thrower in track & field; and

**Shane Tafoya (1990-91)**, a two-time All-America linebacker in football.

**Phil Schepens (1992-95)**, a two-time NCAA Division II All-America offensive lineman in football, and the 1994 Softball Team, which won a program record 48 games and reached the NCAA Central Region Finals, will be inducted in the Hall of Fame's "Legacy" category.

# Following in their footsteps

For several recent graduates, their journey to Commencement was part of a legacy that spans three generations and is rooted in pride, perseverance, and a deep connection to Pitt State.

The Ratzlaff Family





## The Ratzlaff Family

The year President John F. Kennedy was assassinated, and the Civil Rights era began, Robert “Bob” Ratzlaff walked across the Commencement stage to receive his MS in History from Pittsburg State University.

In May, two of his grandchildren walked across the stage to accept theirs, marking the 14th and 15th degrees to be awarded to members of the Ratzlaff family in 62 years.

Bob Ratzlaff went on to walk in Commencement exercises



Robert Ratzlaff

dozens of times in the decades that followed his own graduation: In 1966, he was hired as a faculty member in the History Department, and after earning his PhD in History from KU, he served as chair of the department from 1978 to 1987.

He then was appointed vice president of Academic Affairs and served in that position until his retirement in 2006, marking 40



years of service to the university.

“One of his favorite things to do was walk in Commencement to lead students and faculty in,” said his son, Chris Ratzlaff.

Bob died in 2019, but the Dr. Robert K. Ratzlaff Outstanding Faculty Award, given each spring since 1986 to faculty chosen by students, stands as a testament to his impact.

“Our entire family takes great pride in having followed in his footsteps,” Chris said.

Chris grew up on nearby Homer Street and attended George Nettels Elementary directly across from campus.

“The university always felt like home,” he said. “The campus was our playground. We attended university events, and it was instilled in me at a young age to take pride in the crimson and gold.”

Chris, currently a school administrator at the Southeast Kansas Interlocal 637, earned a BS in Psychology in 1997, an MS in Clinical Psychology in 2003, an EdS in School Psychology in 2007, and an Educational Leadership Certificate in 2014.

His wife, Cathy, an elementary

teacher, earned a BS in Elementary Education in 1998 and an MS in Technology in 2006.

They still live within blocks of campus and take pride in the university.

His sister, Julie Sinclair, also a school psychologist, earned an EdS in School Psychology in 2006, and brother, Brian Ratzlaff, who works in finance, earned a BBA in Business Administration in 1990 and an MBA in 1995.

His mom, Jeffriann Ratzlaff, earned a BBA in Business Administration in 1965 and an MBA in 1967.

His daughter, Cameron Ratzlaff, earned a BS in Exercise Science in 2021 (and then a doctorate from Rockhurst in 2024) and is an occupational therapist. Megan Coverdell, an extended family member considered a grandchild, earned a BBA in Business Administration in 2018.

And lastly, granddaughter Caleigh Ratzlaff earned her BS in Psychology on May 16 and grandson Cooper Ratzlaff earned a BS in Construction Management on May 17 — almost exactly 62 years after their grandpa first walked across the stage.



"It feels incredibly special and meaningful to be a third-generation Gorilla graduate, while carrying on a proud family legacy," said Cooper, who started work at Crossland Construction Company this summer.

Caleigh said she, too, was proud to be part of a family legacy and was honored to be a Pitt State graduate.

"Poppy Bob instilled the value of

education in all of us and we were part of Pittsburg State University growing up, therefore it was already home for me," she said.

"Being a third-generation student that will graduate from Pitt State feels like an honor because not many people can say that their whole family has graduated from the same college."

Cooper, who has great memories of being on campus starting in

childhood with "Poppy" at football games, plans to remain connected to the university through alumni events, by supporting athletics, and helping future students like his family helped him.

So does Caleigh — and in a few years, she'll add the 16th degree to the family log.

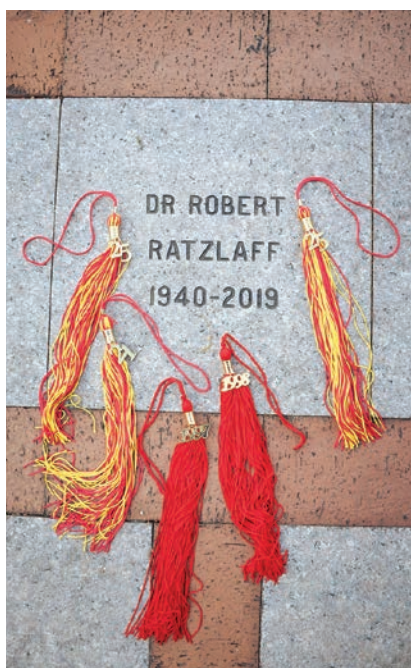
"Pitt State will always be part of my life. After graduation, I will start my Master's degree in the Psychology department," Caleigh said. "Once I start in my professional field I will continue to support PSU. In the future, I would like my own children to attend PSU and continue this legacy!"

Cameron, their sister, said she feels "honored to be a part of a family legacy with us all attending

*"I think about how proud he would be — not only of myself, my wife, our kids, but now his grandkids. I can just envision him with a big smile on his face and probably tears in his eyes."*







such a great university as PSU.”

“I know that my Poppy would be proud of all of us for continuing our education, and for each one of us choosing to attend the same university that he did, worked at, and loved,” she said.

Their dad agrees.

“I think about how proud he would be — not only of myself, my wife, our kids, but now his grandkids. I can just envision him with a big smile on his face and probably tears in his eyes,” Chris said.

## Your turn!

Do you come from a family of Gorillas that dates back a few generations? Let us know your “legacy” story! Email [alumni@pittstate.edu](mailto:alumni@pittstate.edu)

## The McDaniel Family

Riley McDaniel graduated in May with a BS in Plastics Engineering Technology, following in the footsteps of his dad, Zach McDaniel (BST Wood Technology '01) and Dr. Jim McDaniel (BS Biology-Pre-Med) in '77. Three great-uncles also graduated in '55, '58, and '73.

“It feels great to be another Gorilla in the family. Pitt State has set up my family members to do great things in life and I feel it’s going to do the same for me,” said Riley, who was hired by Paragon Films in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma.



From left: Riley McDaniel, Zach McDaniel, and Dr. Jim McDaniel.

## The Diskin Family

Lexie Diskin graduated in May with a BS in Nursing, following in the footsteps of her mom, Wendy (BST Commercial Graphics '96), her dad, Todd (BS Plastics Engineering Technology '93, MS Technology '95), and her grandpa Joe Diskin (BSET Machine Design and Drafting '70, MS Industrial Technology '71). Her uncle, Jeff Diskin, earned an MBA in '93.

“Growing up, I was definitely a Pitt State fan. We came to games and my dad played baseball. The nursing program is what drew me in in the end. It means a lot to be the latest in the family to graduate from here,” said Lexie, who was hired as a pediatric trauma, burn, and surgical nurse at Children’s Mercy in Kansas City.



Lexie Diskin (left)



Campus and community members gathered with Eva and Cecil Wilkinson at the front door of the newly completed alumni center for a formal dedication on May 22, 1976, following Commencement.



## University celebrates 50th anniversary of Wilkinson Alumni Center

When alumni, friends, employees, and members of the Wilkinson family gathered to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Cecil and Eva C.

Wilkinson Alumni Center in April, they honored a half-century of legacy, generosity, and Gorilla pride.

The milestone event focused on its enduring

role as the heart of the university's alumni spirit.

"Fifty years ago, it was envisioned as a place to celebrate our past and invest in our future," said Kathleen

Flannery, vice president for University Advancement and president of the PSU Foundation. "It's all about gratitude, legacy, tradition, and building on those who came before us."

Portraits of the Wilkinson couple grace the building's lobby, serving as a reminder of the family's commitment. An endowment created in their name has supported several modern updates over the years, including the installation of an elevator.

The celebration recognized the original visionaries and leaders who brought the center to life, including familiar community names such as Jack Overman, Joe Hart, A.J. Wachter, Jim and Cathy AuBuchon, George Nettels, Augie Rua, Gene Bicknell, John Clark, Helen Kriegsman, and John Kreissler.

Today, it's home to Alumni & Constituent Relations, Advancement Services, the Foundation Board of



From left: Jon Bartlow, Mindy Cloninger, Ken Bateman, Danielle Driskill, and Johnna Norton.

Trustees, and the Alumni Association Board of Directors. The lower level serves as a venue for a wide variety of campus and community events.

Gary Tredway, chair of the PSU Foundation and a college classmate of the Wilkinsons' nephew, Wendell, expressed gratitude to the family.

Ken Bateman, the university's first alumni director and a driving force behind the center's creation, shared reflections. "Students have always been part of the facility — whether working here or attending events — and it helps them realize that even after they leave, there's a place they can come back to that is entirely theirs," he said.

In attendance were all five directors of the Alumni Association: Ken Bateman, Mindy Cloninger, Johnna Norton, Jon Bartlow, and current director Danielle Driskill. Driskill described the center as a place where friendships are rekindled, milestones are celebrated, and Gorilla pride shines brightly.

"Working with our alumni and friends has taught me the true meaning of 'Once a Gorilla, Always a Gorilla,'" she said. "I'm grateful for this beautiful building, their support, and now their family's support."

Wendell, the Wilkinsons' nephew, delivered an emotional address about the lasting impact his aunt and uncle had on his life, and how they inspired him to carry on their legacy.

"They recognized the life-changing potential higher education had for others," he said. "Let it remind us that the value of giving is not measured by personal gain but by the profound impact it can have on our society and our community."

## FOUNDATION SPOTLIGHT

# Wilkinson Family



The Wilkinson family includes (l to r): Briten and Kyle, Lynda and Wendell, and Bekah and Cody.

The dream of having an alumni center on campus was made possible by the generosity of Cecil and Eva C. Wilkinson. Today, their family continues their desire for philanthropy.

They were deeply rooted in Southeast Kansas. Eva was born in Weir, and Cecil was born in nearby Coal Valley. He went on to graduate from what was then called College High School on the campus of Pittsburg State, beginning the family's long association with the university.

Cecil worked in the coal industry for many years, eventually buying his own mining interests.

Understanding the importance of giving back, the Wilkinsons worked with Jack Overman, an Alumni Association board member and director of the Student Center, to support students through scholarships.

The legacy of these scholarships continues 55 years later, having made a difference to generations of Gorillas.

The Wilkinsons also worked with Overman and Ken Bateman, the first director of Alumni Relations, to make the idea for an alumni center a reality.

The couple wanted to support a space that was not state funded, was spacious enough for mailing and sorting alumni letters for the then 25,000 alumni, and would provide a space for alumni to gather socially — a place alumni could call "home."

The center was completed in November 1975 and dedicated in May 1976. The couple also created an endowment to support the needs of the facility in perpetuity.

The Wilkinsons both died in 1979, but their impact continues to make a difference in how the university serves their alumni and generations of future Gorillas.





## Troop 1908

Pittsburg State Intercollegiate Athletics has formally recognized its first honorees of the Troop 1908 Award. The award name is a nod to the university's first year of intercollegiate sports competition.

The award recognizes and honors individuals or groups who have supported Pitt State Athletics programs through substantial service and/or contributions or have distinguished themselves through outstanding achievements in athletics.

### HARVEY AND SHARON DEAN

Harvey (MS '70) and Sharon Dean generously funded the indoor track in the state-of-the-art Robert W. Plaster Center, the renovated Sharon K. Dean Recital Hall, programs within the Crossland Technology Center, student scholarships, and the Teacher of the Game.

### BOB LEPPKE

Bob Leppke (BS '69) was instrumental in creating the university's 11,000-square-foot strength and conditioning facility outfitted with professional ProMaxima weight and conditioning equipment, upgraded the iconic Jungletron in Carnie Smith Stadium, and is a fixture on the football sideline at all home games.

### MILES AND PAULA SCHNAER

Miles (BS '70) and Paula Schnaer (BSEd '72) funded a modern HVAC system and video board in John Lance Arena, were key contributors to the original Jungletron, and regularly donate their time, wine from Schnaer Family Wines, and funds for scholarships and special events. Their company, Crown Automotive, has supplied courtesy vehicles to Athletics staff for nearly 15 years. Miles currently serves as chair of The PSU Foundation.



From top: The Dean Family, Bob Leppke, and the Schnaer Family.



# Campus awards

## TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION

Pitt State has become a recognized leader in technology education, and this year captured some of the highest honors possible at the International Technology and Engineering Educator's Association conference in St. Louis.

Associate Professor Byron McKay (BSEd '13, MS '16) and Assistant Instructional Professor Trevor Maiseroulle (BSEd '16, MS '18) from the university's School of Technology and Workforce Learning, were awarded the Distinguished Technology & Engineering Professional Award, given only to the top 5 percent of the profession.

Andrew Klenke (BSEd '93, MEd '98, EdS '06), director of the School of Technology and Workforce Learning also earned two prestigious awards: the ITEEA Teacher Educator of the Year Award and the ITEEA Special Recognition Award, and Pitt State students brought home four national awards.



From left: Assistant Instructional Professor Trevor Maiseroulle, School of Technology and Workforce Learning Director Andrew Klenke, and Associate Professor Byron McKay.

## MEDIA PRODUCTION

Eight Media Production majors won eight awards in this year's Kansas Association of Broadcaster's competition,



and Communication major Addie Hinterweger (BS '25) claimed a top prize in the Kansas Press Association Awards of Excellence competition for her online photo series that takes viewers below ground to tunnels that provide heating and cooling services to the campus.

## CONSTRUCTION

A team from the School of Construction racked up individual, team, and faculty awards that came with hefty financial awards at a national competition hosted by the Mechanical Contractors Association of America. Professor Shannon Nicklaus (BSVTE '95, MS '01, MET '08) received the MCAA Educator of the Year Award.



## GRAPHIC COMMUNICATIONS



Students majoring in Graphic Communications earned 32 medals at the American Advertising Awards, or ADDY Awards — the industry's largest and most respected competition.

A professional silver ADDY was awarded to Professor Rion Huffman.





## Award-winning teachers

Public school teachers who got their start at Pitt State have been recognized as being among the best in their field.

**Robin Anderson** (BS, '16), a 7-12 Mathematics teacher at Andover Middle School in Andover, Kansas, was given the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching by President Biden in January. It's the highest recognition a K-12 STEM teacher can receive; up to 110 teachers are recognized each year. Anderson received a certificate signed by the president, a trip to Washington, D.C. to attend recognition events, and a \$10,000 award from the National Science Foundation.

**Hannah Reynolds** (BSEd '23), a chemistry teacher at Eisenhower High School in Goddard, Kansas, received the Kansas Horizon Award from the Kansas State Department of Education in recognition of her outstanding teaching skills as a young educator. She was honored at the Kansas Exemplary Educators Network State Education Conference on Feb. 21, in Topeka.

**Breana Clark** (BS '10, MS '22), a theater teacher at Pittsburg High School, was named Kansas Director of the Year by the Kansas Thespian Association and her school musical, "Les Misérables," was chosen for the main stage performance at the Kansas State Thespian Festival 2025. It received two Jester Awards.

**Grace Brunner** (MA '24), an 8th grade ELA teacher at Hocker Grove Middle School in Shawnee, Kansas, and **Brendan Schmidt** (BS '22, MS '24), a 5th grade teacher at R.V. Haderlein Elementary in Girard, Kansas, were chosen for Outstanding Educator Awards by the College of Education. They were praised by nominators for their dedication to their students and their ability to inspire, motivate, and collaborate.

## Dr. Ralf J. Thomas Distinguished Service Award

The Alumni Association established the Distinguished Service Award in 1991 and in 2000 re-named it in memory of a retired faculty member who volunteered for the Alumni Association for 22 years. Award recipients have generously given their time and talent for the betterment of the university.



**Dan Alcala**

BST '73

Dan Alcala has served the university in a variety of capacities. He never misses an opportunity to attend an alumni event in the Wichita area and encourages fellow alumni to attend.

From 2008–2014, he served on the Alumni Association Board of Directors, including a term as president during which he traveled to numerous Gorilla Gatherings and engaged alumni.

Since 2024, Alcala has served on the university's Hispanics Advisory Council and provides valuable insight.

He has served as County Champion for the Wichita area, helping the Office of Alumni & Constituent Relations with programming and events.

He continually supports the Silverback Fund, the School of Construction, and Pitt State Cheer.

In 2022, he became a member of the Heritage Society at Pitt State.

A former member of the Pitt State Cheer team, he's a frequent attendee at Carnie Smith Stadium and at Gorilla athletic events held in the Wichita area.

During the pandemic when in-person alumni events were limited, Alcala helped orchestrate two drive-through Southeast Kansas fried chicken dinner alumni events in Wichita, distributing 275 dinners wearing his gorilla costume dressed in his 50-year-old Pitt State Cheer team uniform.

When President Dan Shipp biked Kansas in Summer 2023, Alcala biked between Wichita and Hutchinson with him wearing that same costume and uniform.

Professionally, Alcala worked in the construction field. He is a retired project manager from The Law Company, Inc. in Wichita.

# Meritorious Achievement Award

Two alumni were honored with this year's Meritorious Achievement Award, the highest award based on career achievement presented by the Alumni Association. The event was held in April at the Wilkinson Alumni Center.



*Hazel Coltharp (BA '82, MS '84) accepted the award on behalf of her late husband.*

## Glenn Coltharp

Education '81, '83, '85

Glenn Coltharp, PhD, a posthumous recipient, completed 40 years in the education profession.

He died in 2024.



The Missouri State House of Representatives and the Missouri Senate honored his contributions to education with resolutions in 2022, and he was awarded an honorary doctorate by Missouri State University in recognition of his service to the public sector.

Coltharp taught in, developed, and led programs from preschool through graduate school at the Pre-K-12, community college, and university levels.

He was vice president of academic affairs and president of Crowder College in Neosho, Missouri; and dean of the School of Education, head of the Department of Teacher Education, and professor of Teacher Education at Missouri Southern State University in Joplin.

He also served as a superintendent, assistant superintendent, middle school principal, elementary school principal, and principal of the Missouri State School for Severely Handicapped, and taught kindergarten, second grade, and fourth grade.

In May 2024, he was given the Distinguished Alumni Award by the USD 250 Pittsburg Community Schools Foundation.

He earned his doctorate from Kansas State University.



## Frank Villamaria

Biology '77

Dr. Frank Villamaria has led a distinguished career not only as a physician, but as a leader in the U.S. Navy and as a member of the faculty of Baylor College of Medicine, where he is a clinical professor.

He is vice chair of anesthesiology services for Baylor Scott & White South Region in Temple, Texas, and for many years taught anesthesiology at Texas A&M University Health Science Center College of Medicine.

He began serving in the U.S. Navy Medical Corps in 1982, first as a flight surgeon. During Operation Desert Storm, he was promoted to Lt. Commander.

From 1991-2018, he served as Commander of the U.S. Naval Reserve Medical Corps. At retirement, he achieved the rank of captain.

He served in numerous leadership roles at the Scott & White Memorial Hospital and the Scott, Sherwood, & Brindley Foundation in Temple, including as a senior staff anesthesiologist, head of the cardiovascular anesthesia section, and an associate medical director.

Villamaria graduated from the KU School of Medicine in 1980 and earned a master's degree in public health from Texas A&M in 2003.



## 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 [alumni@pittstate.edu](mailto:alumni@pittstate.edu).



Dan Alcala (BST '73) and his wife Marilyn showed their Gorilla pride on a Shriner's cruise that included St. Maarten, St. Thomas, and St. Kitts.



Kelly Beckfield (BS '01) and Andrew (MS '24) traveled to Iceland for two weeks to celebrate their marriage and completion of their masters' degrees.



Carol Lichtenstein Freeman (BA '81), Wayne Freeman (BST '82) and Gus traveled south in January 2025 to the Iceberg Graveyard in Pleneau Bay Antarctica!



Krina Cloninger Snider (BST '85) was beaming with PSU pride on 'The 80s Cruise' to the Bahamas, Puerto Rico, and Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic....from her 1985 Back to the Future and Gus attire, to decorating her cabin door with throwback photos from her days at Pitt State.





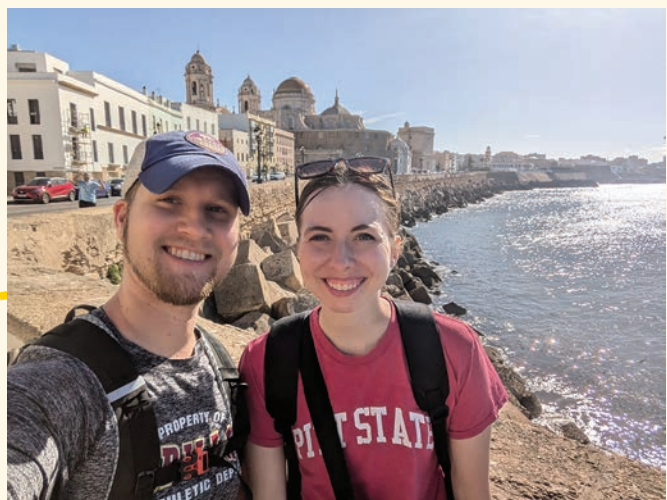
Generations of Gorillas in the Dean Kennedy family celebrated on a Christmas cruise in Cozumel, Mexico. The trip included Dean & Cheryl Kennedy ('70), Kari Kennedy Gordon ('01), and the newest Fall Gorilla and Volleyball player, Kaitlyn Gordon. When the Kennedy family holds family reunions, they have about 40 Pitt State alumni in the group.



Gorilla alumni worked in Slidell, Louisiana, selling fireworks for New Year's; the name of their store is Big Gorilla Fireworks in homage to their alma mater! Pictured: John Collar (BSBA '71), Dona Collar ('69-'71), (James) Tim Collar ('79), John Nicholson ('88), Eric Nicholson ('23), and Kelly Nicholson ('19).



Pawan Kahol, former dean of Graduate and Continuing Studies, as well as the dean of Research (2012-2020) took a cruise to six Central American countries in January 2025. He proudly wore a Gorilla polo and hat throughout the entire trip. This picture was taken in Honduras.



Caleb Durbin (BS '21) and Kristen Durbin (BS '18) represented the Gorillas while visiting Cadiz, Spain with friends.





Chuck Bisson (BST '72) showed his Gorilla pride in the mountains of Norway on a recent trip there with his wife.



Amy Betzen (BBA '99) traveled to the Mother Cabrini Shrine in Golden, Colorado. She remembered to pack her Pitt State t-shirt. Here, she's stopped for a rest in front of the risen Jesus Stations-of-the-Cross.



Mark Mocnik (BA '80) took Pitt State along on the trip of a lifetime through Australia and New Zealand, making eight stops in 19 days. Among the stops: Sydney Harbor, with Sydney Opera House in the background, taken from under the Sydney Harbor Bridge.



Alumni & Constituent Relations took a road trip to Texas to visit Gorilla Alumni in February. Six stops in five days across the Lone Star State — what an adventure! Pictured: Eric Jones (BBA '12, MBA '17), Gus the Gorilla, and Lindsay (Ong) Jones (BS '15).

**1962**

**Larry Garman** (BSEd, MS '65) was inducted into the Missouri Sports Hall of Fame. Garman served as the head football coach at Pittsburg High School for 34 years. He was 255-84-5, won three Class 5 State Championships, had 31 winning seasons, and a state record for 21 playoff appearances. He continued sharing his love for football as assistant coach at Pitt State for 24 years. He served the Gorillas in many roles, including working with tight ends and recruiting. He retired in 2023.

**1980**

**Nancy Meads** (BA, MS '82) was awarded the 2025 Lore and Mel Mallin Award for Employee Excellence by Kansas City Hospice & Palliative Care. This award recognizes one team member annually who exemplifies the guiding principles of compassion, enrichment, choices, expertise, respect, balance, stewardship, and excellence. Meads is an administrative assistant at Kansas City Hospice House.

**Joe Sternberger** (MET) retired as a senior technical fellow from Spirit AeroSystems, Inc. in June 2024 after 44 years at the company, which was previously part of the Boeing Company.

**1982**

**Ron Freeman** (BSEd, MSED '92) published a book in December 2024 called "Rethinking Race: Our History's Achievements and Our Promising Future."

**1987**

**Monica Murnan** (BSEd, MS '94) was appointed to the Kansas Board of Healing Arts

## Judge Fleming joins Kansas Court of Appeals

Chief District Judge Lori Bolton Fleming (BME '96) of Pittsburg was named by Kansas Gov. Laura Kelly to the Kansas Court of Appeals. The 11th Judicial District includes five courthouses in Southeast Kansas.

Fleming was the first woman to serve as judge in the 11th District. In private practice from 2003 to 2012, she served as an assistant county attorney from 2001 to 2003. She also worked as a private practice attorney for Wilbert & Towner and for the Spigarelli Law Firm, and as the legal clinic director for Pitt State from 2009 to 2012.

She is active in local volunteer efforts, including partnering with the university to create a pre-law internship program to help address the rural attorney shortage. She has served on the Rural Justice Initiative, the Pretrial Justice Task Force, the Kansas Digital Evidence Advisory Group, the COVID Jury Trial Advisory Group, and the Cybersecurity Committee.

Before joining the legal profession, she worked as an elementary school music and English teacher. She earned her law degree from Washburn University.



by Kansas Governor Laura Kelly. The board focuses on ensuring healthcare professionals meet certain qualifications in order to protect the public from incompetent practice by individuals who have been credentialed to practice in Kansas.

**1993**

**Rance Walls** (BS) was elected by the ADP Board of Directors to lead The Association of Directory Publishers as its president and CEO. ADP is a 127-year-old international organization for marketing professionals based in Traverse City, Michigan. Walls also continues to serve Liberty Press LLC in Springville, Utah, as vice president of sales and marketing, a position he has enjoyed for more than 23 years.

**1994**

**Jason Kermashek** (BST) manager of Gorilla Graphics, formerly known as University Printing & Design, accepted an award on behalf of his team at the Association of College & University Printers Annual Awards. This award recognizes and celebrates the superior craftsmanship and management initiatives that are deemed best of the best as voted by their peers.

**1997**

**Matt Seimears**, PhD, (BS), president of Lower Columbia College, sent two of his academic deans, Michaela Jackson and Tamra Gilchrist, to meet with Pitsco Education's Chief Executive Officer Matt Frankenbery (BSEd '94) to tour the Texas A&M Robotics Lab. This newly formed exploratory opportunity will bring the Pitsco Education Robotics Platform to the Longview, Washington, LCC campus

and be part of the new robotics program at LCC.

**1999**

**Brandon Kosine**, PhD, (MS) was named president of Casper College in Casper, Wyoming. He had served as interim president since May 2024, and in a variety of roles at the college for the last 13 years.

**2003**

**Daniel Craig** (BS) a former member of Gorilla track and field and cross country teams, was recognized for completion of the four-year, \$500,000 Pathways to a Healthy Kansas programs from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas. Craig works as cancer outreach coordinator for the Tammy Walker Cancer Center.

**2004**

**Angie Saporito** (BA) administrator at Mercy Hospital in Columbus,



was chosen for Leadership Kansas. She is one of only 40 people selected from a field of more than 500 nominated to take part in the program. Established in 1979 by the Kansas Chamber Education Foundation, it is now supported and administered by the Kansas Chamber.

**Eva Sager** (BA, MS '10) campus activities director, was named the recipient of the national Frank Harris Outstanding Student Government Advisor Award at the National Association for Campus Activities national conference. Sager has advised the Pitt State Student Government Association for 10 years.

**Rocky Restivo** (BBA, MS '11) associate professor in Graphic Communications, was among a select group of photographers from across

the U.S. to have a photo accepted by PhotoSpiva, a juried exhibition that is the longest-running national competition of its kind. Of 833 submissions, only 105 photos were accepted. Restivo's, called "Kosher," was taken during the university's Travel Photography class in 2024.

**2007**  
**Megan Durr Titus** (BSN) was honored with the Missouri Governor's Award for Excellence in Teaching. She is the program coordinator in the Lincoln University of Missouri School of Nursing and attributes her dedication to excellence in nursing education to the strong foundation she received from the Irene Ransom Bradley School of Nursing.

**2008**  
**Laura Batson** (MS, EdS '12) was named superintendent of Atchison USD 409 in Atchison. Previously, Batson served as director of Teaching and Learning at USD 453 in Leavenworth.

**2010**  
**DePrice Taylor** (BS, MS '12) received the 2024 MVP of the Year Award from the Heartland Black Chamber of Commerce and was honored at the annual awards banquet. Taylor is the executive director of community relations for the Kansas City Current.

**2011**  
**Zach Fletcher** (BS) is now serving as director of regulatory affairs for the state of Kansas after serving as Governor Laura Kelly's deputy communications director. Prior to joining

the governor's office, Fletcher was the director of communications for the Kansas Department of Revenue, and before that, director of communications for Pittsburg Community School District.

**2012**  
**Brandon Mills** (BA) completed the Certified Public Manager program through the University of Kansas Public Management Center and was awarded the Capstone Paper Excellence Award. Mills serves as the assistant city administrator and city clerk for the City of De Soto.

**2013**  
**Nate Dreiling** (BGS) was named inside linebackers coach at the University of Oklahoma. A four-time All-American linebacker for Gorilla Football, he previously coached at Humboldt High School, the University of Kansas, Pittsburg State, Oregon, Southeast Missouri, New Mexico State, and most recently at Utah State as interim head coach.

**2013**  
**Sydney Anselmi** (BS, MA '15) along with Eva Sager (BA '04, MS '10) earned certification in Student Affairs granted by the Higher Education Consortium for Student Affairs Certification. Both are leaders in Campus Activities at Pitt State. Few other higher education professionals in Kansas have been certified.

**2014**  
**Kaitlyn Herder** (BA, BBA, MBA '15) was promoted to marketing manager at Gap Inc., where she supports Gap and Athleta brands.

## Baseball legends

The effort to honor two baseball legends is the focus of a new documentary by Aaron Thompson (BS '09, MS '25).

Thompson, who has been the university's videographer since 2019, completed "Preserving the Big Train: A Family's Gift to Humboldt, Kansas," as part of his Master's degree.

It explores efforts to establish a museum in Humboldt, Kansas, that honors Walter "Big Train" Johnson and George Sweatt (1922), the first Black student athlete at Pitt State to letter in four sports.

It took him three years to plan, film, research, and edit. It included extensive interviews, historical documents, and footage from a trip to a commemorative event at a Minnesota Twins game.



Aaron Thompson with Hank Thomas, grandson of baseball legend Walter Johnson.

"It stands as one of the most rewarding projects I've ever worked on in my nearly 20 years in this field," Thompson said. "I'm grateful I had the chance to bring this story to life as part of my master's program at Pitt State."

**View the documentary:** [youtube.com/watch?v=KA0sft6nHas](https://youtube.com/watch?v=KA0sft6nHas)

**Jason Spradling** (BSEd) was named head football coach and weights teacher at Prairie View High School in Prairie View. He has served as assistant football coach and offensive coordinator in recent years.

**Abbie Thomas** (BS) was named Controller at Stormont Vail Health.

## 2016

**Catie Cummins** (BSEd) was named athletic director at Carl Junction High School. She most recently served as junior high activities director and physical education teacher for Neosho School District.

**Renato Pinto** (BAS) was named to the 2025 International Sign Association's Elite Class, which includes young professionals in the sign, graphics, and visual communications industries who are recognized as ISA Elite and represent the next generations of industry leaders. Pinto works as a signs account manager for CDL Companies.

## 2018

**Brittan Wilde** (BS, MA '20) was promoted to Director of Market Strategy at Crossland Construction Company, Inc. She most recently served the company as Marketing Proposal & Division Coordinator.

## 2020

**Orion Battaglia** (BS) was awarded the 2025 STFM Foundation Student Scholarship from the Society of Teachers of Family Medicine. Only 20 medical students across the country receive this scholarship, which acknowledges the students' strong potential

for a career in academic medicine. Battaglia is in his fourth year at medical school at the Wichita campus for KU School of Medicine.

## 2020

Art teacher **Sierra King** (BST) got to visit famous sites in Paris, Rome, and Florence this summer on a Fund for Teachers Fellowship to study Renaissance art. Her plan was to return with hands-on techniques, fresh ideas, and big plans for a community art show, "Night of the Renaissance," inspired by her journey. King teaches

at Pryor Middle School in Pryor, Oklahoma.

## 2022

**Riley Watkins** (BGS) was named the offensive assistant coach for Appalachian State University's Football Team in December 2024. He's worked at a variety of SEC schools and most recently was at the University of South Carolina.

## 2023

**Max Caldwell** (BAS) was honored with the Technician of the Year Award from the National

Institute of Automotive Service Excellence, which recognizes individuals for exceptional technical skills, dedication to excellence, and a commitment to advancing the automotive repair and service industry.

**Kaylee West** (BSEd) received the Horizon Award in the Fort Leavenworth School District. She teaches kindergarten at Bradley Elementary School.

**Submit Class Notes information online to: [alumni@pittstate.edu](mailto:alumni@pittstate.edu).**

## A bond of brothers

It's the end of an era: The final Brou brother has graduated. Rigo Michael Brou, Rigo Eljoenai Brou, and Rigo Jonathan Brou, of Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast), now are all proud alumni.

"Graduating from Pittsburg State University alongside my two brothers has been a profound experience for our family," Jonathan said. "Being Gorillas together has strengthened our bond and filled us with immense pride."

Michael started at Pitt State in the Intensive English Program in 2013 and went on to earn a BBA in '17, an MS in '20, and an MBA in '21. Eljoenai also started in the Intensive English Program in '17 and earned a BBA in '21 and MBA in '23. Jonathan started in '20 and completed his BST in December '24.

"What a privilege it was to welcome each brother and watch them get involved in their academic pursuits while also sharing their culture," said Brenda Hawkins, international student advisor.

All three brothers were very active and influential on campus and in the community.

"From their participation in international food and culture events to being orientation leaders, each of them used their unique gifts and strengths to make a lasting mark on this campus," Brenda said.

"Our shared journey at Pitt State has laid a solid foundation for our futures," Jonathan said.

From left: Bosia N'dri (family friend and alumnus), Danielle Amoikon (cousin and current student), Rigo Eljoenai Brou (alumnus), Kouassi Brou (father), Rigo Jonathan Brou (graduate), Emmanuella Brou (Michael's wife), Rigo Michael Brou (alumnus).





**1937**

**Lois E. Sours**, Pittsburg, Kan.

**1939**

**Betty L. Miller**, Laramie, Wyo.

**1942**

**Mildred S. Finch**, Peachtree City, Ga.  
**Treasure L. Zimmerman**, Coronado, Calif.

**1944**

**Ivy S. Brand**, Shawnee, Kan.

**1947**

**Estelle E. Crouch**, Forest Park, Ill.  
**Helen V. Lassman**, Longmont, Colo.

**1949**

**Wayne H. Creasy**, Tulsa, Okla.  
**Loris J. Jones**, Los Angeles, Calif.  
**Betty E. Kappelman**, Lawrence, Kan.  
**Bill Moore**, Fort Worth, Texas  
**Tom E. O'Connell**, Tulsa, Okla.

**1951**

**Donald Clark**, Stockton, Mo.

**1952**

**Donna E. Ashlock**, Olathe, Kan.  
**Jo Ann Bland**, Santa Ana, Calif.  
**Molly J. Masquelier**, Overland Park, Kan.  
**Charles W. Shilkett**, Sun City Center, Fla.

**1953**

**Fern E. Brown**, Albuquerque, N.M.  
**Edith J. McGee**, Sunnyvale, Calif.  
**Dorothy D. Williams**, Lawrence, Kan.

**1954**

**Bert Chaney**, Hutchinson, Kan.  
**John R. Grasso**, Tonganoxie, Kan.  
**Harriett A. Grove**, Brownstown, Mich.  
**Aaron D. Haley**, Yuba City, Calif.  
**Hazel I. McCord**, Bartlesville, Okla.  
**Mary M. Myers**, Winfield, Kan.

**1955**

**Lewis C. Wamsley**, Tulsa, Okla.  
**Meldon G. Wilhite**, Saint Joseph, Mich.

**1956**

**George W. Roberts**, Miami, Okla.  
**Merwin E. Thompson**, Tahlequah, Okla.  
**Wesley H. Williams**, Lawrence, Kan.

**1957**

**Charles R. Copenhaver**, Hillsboro, Ore.  
**John W. Justice**, The Villages, Fla.  
**Don W. Kauble**, Lincoln, Mo.  
**Donald R. Kaufman**, Parker, Ariz.  
**Martha J. Lardner**, Cypress, Calif.

**1958**

**Philip E. Harris**, Frontenac, Kan.  
**Ruth Hunt**, Katonah, N.Y.  
**James C. Killion**, Olathe, Kan.  
**Wayne Langston**, Valley Mills, Texas  
**Leslie W. Miller**, Broken Arrow, Okla.  
**Robert L. Wingblade**, Ashburn, Va.

**1959**

**Donald E. Curran**, Savannah, Mo.  
**Jack W. Day**, Las Vegas, Nev.  
**Bob W. Hamilton**, Bartlesville, Okla.  
**Clarence M. Newton**, Yates Center, Kan.  
**Betty F. Nusbaum**, Lebanon, Mo.  
**Jerie G. Ramsey**, Cedar Falls, Iowa  
**Bob N. Ramsey**, Cedar Falls, Iowa  
**Franklin E. Turner**, Overland Park, Kan.  
**Jerry L. Weeden**, Oakland, Calif.

**1960**

**William J. Barlow**, Panama City, Fla.  
**Jerry M. Bork**, Bartlesville, Okla.  
**Gerald E. Christmore**, Las Cruces, N.M.  
**Lynda L. DeNeve**, Olathe, Kan.  
**Walter N. Dooley**, Boonville, Mo.  
**Beverly K. Herron**, Carmel, Ind.  
**Rosemary Mathis**, Prince Edward Island  
**Carolyn Nelson**, Kansas City, Kan.  
**Lee R. Parsons**, Bartlesville, Okla.  
**Dwight E. Sandahl**, Leavenworth, Kan.  
**Barbara A. Sherrill**, Iola, Kan.  
**Myrna A. Swanson**, Liberty, Mo.

**1961**

**Janet S. Carson**, Omaha, Neb.  
**Gerald L. Honn**, Overland Park, Kan.  
**Victor J. Macari**, Canton, Kan.  
**Roger D. Patrick**, Rocklin, Calif.  
**Minnie L. Rainey**, Kansas City, Kan.

**1962**

**David L. Caruthers**, Harrisonville, Mo.  
**Johnny G. Eli**, Parsons, Kan.  
**Robert I. Miller**, Raymore, Mo.  
**Ralph E. Mock**, Council Grove, Kan.  
**Philip G. Morgan**, Elizabethtown, Penn.  
**Charles B. Schafer**, Wellsville, Kan.  
**Terry D. Toomey**, Topeka, Kan.  
**Don L. Wright**, Monticello, Ga.

**1963**

**Sarah J. Brock**, Deerfield, Mo.  
**Jack J. Brock**, Deerfield, Mo.  
**Ursalee Crepinsek**, Lockwood, Mo.  
**Arvilla Gregor**, Prescott, Ariz.  
**George L. Hart**, Columbia, Mo.

**1964**

**Francis E. Clark**, College Station, Texas  
**Sharon K. Ferguson**, Lees Summit, Mo.  
**Donald Laketa**, Concord, Mich.  
**John T. Shirley**, Tahlequah, Okla.  
**Linda R. Witzansky**, Tulsa, Okla.

**1965**

**Janice R. Ambrose**, Kingston, N.Y.  
**Jack W. Brownlee**, Leesburg, Ga.  
**Iraj Dardashti**, Beverly Hills, Calif.  
**John G. Merrill**, Newnan, Ga.  
**Jim D. Rairdon**, Wichita, Kan.  
**Ted E. Snider**, Cache, Okla.  
**Georgia M. Stroud**, Fairview, Mo.

**1966**

**Dennis R. Baker**, Topeka, Kan.  
**Keith A. Bendure**, Brookline, Mo.  
**Chuck F. Bogatie**, Cumming, Ga.  
**Doug V. Grotheer**, Weir, Kan.  
**Vernon C. Hudson**, Joplin, Mo.  
**Tom N. McQuin**, Bakersfield, Calif.  
**Bud A. Miller**, Athens, Texas  
**Leland W. Moore**, Silver Lake, Kan.  
**William E. Probst**, Kingman, Kan.  
**Jerry E. Smith**, Naples, Fla.  
**Michael F. Spicer**, Webb City, Mo.  
**Jim R. Triplett**, Pittsburg, Kan.  
**Mary M. Turpen**, Webb City, Mo.  
**Wayne Yamada**, Castro Valley, Calif.

**1967**

**Jack Bates**, Belton, Mo.  
**Helen I. Black**, Joplin, Mo.  
**David J. Foster**, Rossville, Kan.  
**Merrill E. Huff**, Enid, Okla.  
**Aneterea T. Puletasi**, Spokane Valley, Wash.  
**Abie W. Ratzlaff**, Manhattan, Kan.  
**David L. Richwine**, Saint Joseph, Mich.

**1968**

**Kenneth R. Cattaneo**, Pittsburg, Kan.  
**Daryl D. Dedic**, Berthoud, Colo.  
**Vern Gilmartin**, Paragould, Ark.  
**Marolyn L. Hardy**, Independence, Kan.  
**Gary C. Horn**, Phoenix, Ariz.  
**Sharon L. Minor**, Yates Center, Kan.

**Melvin D. Nichols**, Bartlesville, Okla.  
**Kevin F. Roberts**, Great Bend, Kan.  
**James R. Trevino**, Parker, Ariz.  
**Ann E. Worthey**, Laramie, Wyo.

#### 1969

**Jim R. Augustus**, Cushman, Ark.  
**Betty J. Davis**, Fort Worth, Texas  
**Morris E. Robinson**, Redfield, Kan.  
**Helen A. Smith**, Newton, Kan.  
**Loyal A. Vincent**, Omaha, Neb.  
**Gale Watson**, Dallas, Texas

#### 1970

**Leonard B. Allgood**, Papillion, Neb.  
**Mary F. Burghart**, San Tan Valley, Ariz.  
**Don R. Ferguson**, Lees Summit, Mo.  
**Howard C. Kiburz**, Mechanicsburg, Penn.  
**Bill A. Rickords**, Moore, Okla.  
**Larry D. Swaim**, Fort Scott, Kan.

#### 1971

**Heddie L. Becks**, Tishomingo, Okla.  
**Rodney D. Frazer**, Jonestown, Penn.  
**Ray Lawrence**, Lees Summit, Mo.  
**Glenn A. Leintz**, Basehor, Kan.  
**Mary D. Lentsch**, Knoxville, Tenn.  
**Grace I. Parker**, Pittsburg, Kan.  
**Janet S. Parsley**, Sierra Madre, Calif.  
**Chuck Towle**, Overland Park, Kan.  
**Jerry D. Webber**, Saint Joseph, Mo.  
**Dannie G. Wood**, Independence, Mo.

#### 1972

**Betty J. Barnes**, Kansas City, Mo.  
**Ro Ann A. German**, Wichita, Kan.  
**Roger L. Johnson**, Topeka, Kan.  
**Thomas D. Kolar**, Billings, Mo.  
**Aaron M. Wilson**, Joplin, Mo.

#### 1973

**Jim P. Dorsey**, Wellsville, Kan.  
**Bob L. Ferro**, Joplin, Mo.  
**Luella M. Lowe**, Nokomis, Fla.  
**Tony Roberts**, Lizton, Ind.

#### 1974

**Khabol L. Coker**, Parsons, Kan.  
**Elizabeth J. Conley**, Marion, Ill.  
**Mark A. Johnson**, Independence, Kan.  
**Donald E. Matlock**, Fort Smith, Ark.  
**David F. Nelson**, Riverton, Kan.

#### 1975

**Doug Brannan**, Mt. Vernon, Mo.  
**Mike G. Emerson**, Frontenac, Kan.  
**Shirley K. Lloyd**, West Mineral, Kan.  
**Sheryl A. McCoy**, Erie, Kan.  
**Clifford L. Merritt**, Independence, Kan.  
**Walter E. Raining**, Kansas City, Mo.  
**Kevin L. Wade**, Anderson, S.C.

#### 1976

**Kimberly S. Anderson**, Redlands, Calif.  
**Stephen J. Heinz**, Leocompton, Kan.  
**Audrey L. Penner**, Scottsdale, Ariz.  
**Charles E. Pierson**, Houston, Texas

#### 1977

**Karyn L. Carpenter**, Bainbridge Island, Wash.  
**Brad T. LeMaster**, Wellington, Kan.  
**Jan M. McCaffree**, Nevada, Mo.  
**Seyyed Mehdipour**, San Jose, Calif.  
**Terry L. Payne**, Parsons, Kan.  
**Jerry D. Ricke**, Medicine Lodge, Kan.

#### 1978

**Rick G. Blue**, Wichita, Kan.  
**Joan J. Gartner**, Altamont, Kan.  
**Elizabeth A. Gunther-Charles**, Grove, Okla.

#### 1979

**Laura R. Hartronft**, Pineville, Mo.  
**Paul J. Landy**, Tampa, Fla.  
**Rebecca A. Moerer**, Springfield, Mo.

#### 1980

**Judith A. Miller**, Springfield, Mo.

#### 1981

**Jessie L. Brown**, Wichita, Kan.  
**Larry D. Reed**, Neosho, Mo.  
**Sharilyn G. Richards**, Wellington, Kan.

#### 1983

**Gus E. Autem**, Parsons, Kan.  
**Robert M. Breneman**, Fort Riley, Kan.  
**Martin E. Dainty**, Weir, Kan.  
**Leslie J. Randall Gust**, La Veta, Colo.

#### 1984

**Arlene L. Garrison**, Bronson, Kan.  
**Fleeta A. Mason**, Fordland, Mo.  
**Elton E. Spena**, Berryton, Kan.

#### 1985

**Sherry A. Cole**, Webb City, Mo.

#### 1987

**Kevin D. Jensen**, Morganton, N.C.

#### 1989

**Jan A. Allton**, Miami, Okla.  
**Dee A. Link**, Corrales, N.M.  
**Jon A. Sowder**, Jeffersonville, Ind.

#### 1991

**Craig C. Knobbe**, Jetmore, Kan.  
**Lois A. McIlvain**, Rantoul, Kan.

#### 1992

**Monty R. Amick**, Lawrence, Kan.  
**Anita M. Gatewood**, Parsons, Kan.  
**Shannon L. Watson**, Pittsburg, Kan.

#### 1993

**Allisyn M. Brewster**, Carl Junction, Mo.  
**Jean C. Cathcart**, Dewey, Okla.  
**Donna S. Kinsch-Abaloz**, Chandler, Ariz.

#### 1994

**Bobbie Rau**, Mustang, Okla.  
**Robert M. Taylor**, Williamston, N.C.

#### 1996

**Shirley L. Francis**, Nevada, Mo.

#### 1997

**Carrie A. Bacon**, Independence, Kan.  
**Jim C. Buttram**, Tomball, Texas  
**Brent E. Smith**, Okemah, Okla.

#### 1998

**Ryan T. Galt**, Chanute, Kan.  
**Eric J. Gassen**, Leavenworth, Kan.  
**Carl E. Stout**, Mooresville, N.C.

#### 2002

**Richard L. Edwards**, Sedgwick, Kan.  
**Dave T. Harmon**, Afton, Okla.

#### 2004

**Tanya M. Brown**, Pittsburg, Kan.

#### 2005

**David E. Potter**, Marrero, La.

#### 2006

**Amy E. McDaniel**, Overland Park, Kan.

#### 2013

**Natasha Sherwood**, Baxter Springs, Kan.



## Robert Roberts PRINTING TECHNOLOGY

Robert “Bob” Jackson Roberts, a longtime professor, died on March 8 at his home in Pittsburg. He was 92.

He served in the National Guard and earned a Korean War Service Medal.

With a degree in printing and journalism, he worked at the University of Arkansas and Arkansas State University before coming to Pitt State, where he earned a master’s degree.

He navigated enormous transitions in printing technology, including from hot lead type to desktop publishing; was a founding member of PSU/KNEA; and helped secure faculty bargaining rights.

He retired as a professor emeritus in 1997.

He served on the Redbud Trail Girl Scout Council, was active in Habitat for Humanity, AARP, and Southeast Kansas Retired School Personnel, and attended sporting and music events on campus.

Memorials may be made to the Bob Roberts Scholarship for Printing Management at Pittsburg State University or Harry Hynes Memorial Hospice.



## Linda Scott PHILANTHROPY

Linda Scott, a longtime philanthropist and university supporter, died May 17 in Florida. She was 75.

Linda and her husband, Lee, are the namesakes of the performance hall at the Bicknell Family Center for the Arts, where hundreds of music and theater students rehearse and perform, speakers inspire, and thousands of community members and visitors are entertained.

She met Lee on campus during their time as students; he went on to become CEO of Walmart.

Linda had a financial mind and was an avid investor; she played a significant role in philanthropic initiatives alongside her husband.

She started the university’s H. Lee Scott Speaker Series: An Examination of American Life through a \$2 million gift. It has brought to campus such luminaries as Condoleezza Rice, Mitt Romney, Bill Clinton, Peyton Manning, Rainn Wilson,



and Thomas Friedman.

Linda gave to a variety of projects at Pitt State, including Block22, unrestricted gifts to support the university’s priorities, and the Crossland University House. She was a longtime supporter of the PSU Foundation, serving as a trustee for many years and contributing to many scholarships.

She is survived by Lee; their two sons, Eric and Wyatt and their spouses; and five grandchildren. She also is survived by her brother-in-law, Steve Scott, who served as president of Pittsburg State University, and his family.

## Stephen Teller ENGLISH

An English professor who taught for more than four decades at Pittsburg State died on June 16 at age 85.

When Teller joined the faculty in 1967, the English Department was in Russ Hall. After the department’s move to Grubbs Hall in 1968, he occupied the same office until his retirement in 2010.

He was especially known for his knowledge of Shakespeare and for his 59 year-involvement with the International Wizard of Oz Club.

He was instrumental in the university’s film programming for students in the 1970s, and was active in Pitt State Theatre and Pittsburg Community Theatre.

His wife, Nikki Patrick, was a longtime arts reporter for The Morning Sun; she preceded him in death in 2014. They are survived by their son, James, of Kansas City.

Their collection of more than 1,600 science fiction novels from the 1940s-1990s are part of Special Collections in Axe Library.

A memorial service was held in Pittsburg on June 21.



## Jim Triplett BIOLOGY

Jim Triplett, a longtime professor and chair of the Biology Department, as well as conservation champion, died Dec. 20, 2024, in Pittsburg, after a battle with cancer. He was 81.

After earning degrees at Pitt State,



Triplett served in the Navy during the Vietnam War, then earned his PhD at the University of Kansas.

He was hired as an assistant professor in 1981 and appointed Biology chair in 1985, serving in that role until stepping down in 2008 to focus on teaching and conservation projects.

In 2014, he retired and began curating the PSU Museum of Ichthyology and Herpetology.

He helped to launch Students for Sustainability; created the state’s first Bachelor of Integrated Studies in Sustainability, Society, and Resource Management; and provided leadership that led to the tobacco-free campus policy.

He served in regional and state leadership roles in conservation, sustainability, and watershed protection, and helped form the Southeast Kansas Recycling Center in Pittsburg.

He is survived by his wife, Shirley Drew, a recently retired professor of Communication; a daughter, Kellie; a son, Nathaniel; and three grandchildren.

Memorial donations may be made to the PSU Biology Department.

## Richard Weathers AUTOMOTIVE

Richard D. Weathers, a retired professor of nearly 50 years, died Feb. 19, 2025, in Pittsburg. He was 93.

He earned degrees at Pitt State, followed by a doctorate from the University of Arkansas.

After teaching high school and serving in the U.S. Army, he joined the faculty of the Automotive Technology Department in 1964.

He served on several community boards and was active in model airplane and antique car clubs. He became a pilot in his 60s. He regularly attended events at the university.

Survivors include two daughters, Judy Tremain and Joyce Weathers and their families.

He was preceded by his wife, Carolyn Brooker, who also taught at Pitt State, and an infant daughter.

He was buried in McCune. Memorial donations can be made to the PSU Foundation.



# Planned Giving

The PSU Foundation would like to recognize the following individual for making a planned gift through her estate plan.

## **Sara Henry**

Sara Henry, a longtime friend of the university, died on Jan. 6, 2025, but through planned giving will continue to support the university for years to come.



Henry graduated in 1968 with a Bachelor's in Education. She was very active in the community and on campus.

As an invaluable asset to the Music Department Advisory Board for many years, she was awarded the Alumni Association's Dr. Ralf J. Thomas Distinguished Service Award in 2021 for her dedication and volunteer efforts that helped make the Solo & Chamber Music Series successful.

Also in 2021, she was recognized as a University Ambassador for her lifetime philanthropy to the PSU Foundation.

Henry established a planned gift in 2018. It will support the Music Department and KRPS 89.9 FM, which operates from the university campus.

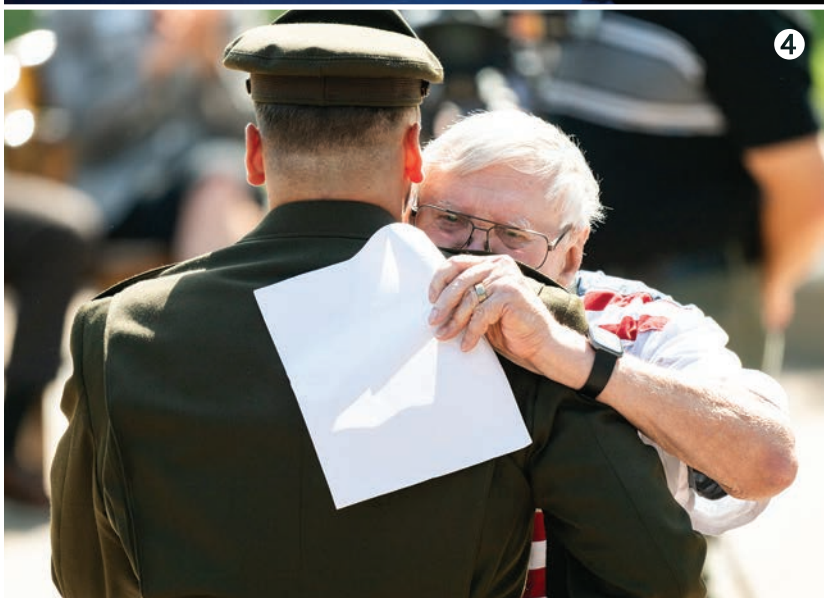
For more information on the Heritage Society and leaving a legacy, visit [pittstate.giftlegacy.com](https://pittstate.giftlegacy.com).



University photographer Sam Clausen (BS '14) sees the campus through a lens: he takes thousands of photos each year of moments ordinary and monumental — moments that define PSU.



1. Russ Hall is picture-perfect after an early morning snowfall in January.
2. The women's soccer team celebrates its first-ever regular-season win against Missouri S&T in Rolla, Missouri, in September.
3. Students welcome new and returning members during Sorority Bid Day on the Oval in August.
4. ROTC cadets and their friends and family experienced a moving Commissioning Ceremony at the PSU Veterans Memorial in May.
5. Logan Marquardt gets the iconic white coat from his mother, Karen Marquardt, during the Irene Ransom Bradley School of Nursing White Coat Ceremony in September.
6. The Centennial Bell, a gift from the senior classes of 1993 through 1996, rang often this summer as incoming freshmen and transfer students came to campus to enroll.
7. Multi-event athlete Hunter Jones celebrates a first-place finish in the decathlon at the NCAA Division II Outdoor Championships in Pueblo, Colorado, in May.
8. Evening lights glow over a full Carnie Smith Stadium during the home opener against Ferris State University in August.











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## SAVE THE DATE

### International Homecoming Reunion: October 9-11, 2025

International Alumni, join us for a three-day reunion to reconnect, reminisce, and make new memories with fellow alumni. The reunion includes all the traditional Homecoming events, as well as some exclusive events for attendees.

Learn more at [pittstate.edu/international-alumni](http://pittstate.edu/international-alumni).



## GATHER AND STAY CONNECTED

Stay connected with Pittsburg State by attending a Gorilla Gathering in your area hosted by Alumni & Constituent Relations.

For a list of upcoming events and e-newsletter information, visit [pittstate.edu/alumni](http://pittstate.edu/alumni).



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