

# illumine

—University of Southern Indiana—



FALL 2023



features

**Heat Mapping Motivation** 18

Business Lab Reveals Secrets of Shoppers

**Hidden Gem Sheds Light** 22

Better Living through the Communal Studies Center

**Mountains to Climb** 24

Why Alice Returned to College

**Bird Box** 30

USI's Historic Bluebird Trail



departments

You Said   We Did	2	From the Desk of	15
President's Perspective	4	Scoreboard	16
Coneucopia	6	Behind the Scene	34
Student POV	14	Class Notes	39

## PORTAL PRAISES

*Excellent piece!*

**Jennifer Greene '04 M'09**  
Rice Library Archivist  
Evansville, IN

*Impressive! I appreciate the effort to keep this information updated/evergreen. Well done all!*

**Lauren Vaal Rickelman M'11**  
Evansville, IN

*Great work!*

**Kristen Kathleen Tucker M'99**  
Evansville, IN

## WESSELMAN WOODS WOW

*Thank you for sharing! We gave away a lot of copies of illumine this weekend!*

**Wesselman Woods Nature Preserve**  
Evansville, IN

## WHAT A WELCOME

*I think it's so awesome that President Rochon goes around and says hello to everyone on move-in day!*

**Joshua Vooris**  
Owensboro, Kentucky

## DUCK DISASTER DIVERTED

*There's not much we can't do! Last week, there was a little problem on campus—we had some baby ducks waddle a little too far.*



*No fear, though, we saved the entire group, and the babies went on their way and continued their campus stroll.*

**USI Public Safety**  
Evansville, IN

## GIVING BACK TO MY ALMA MATER

*A surreal day for me. Today I'm at my alma mater University of Southern Indiana looking at a large 4kV compressor motor which is having some issues. I never dreamed that my engineering degree from USI, focusing on power distribution and rotating equipment, would have given me such a great foundation to serve our community and ultimately lead me back here to help.*

*Looking forward to using PdMA Corporation MCE Max and other NDT methods to help determine the problem and a solution.*

**Matthew Conville '13 M'21**  
Henderson, Kentucky

## ALUMNI IMPACTS COMMUNITY

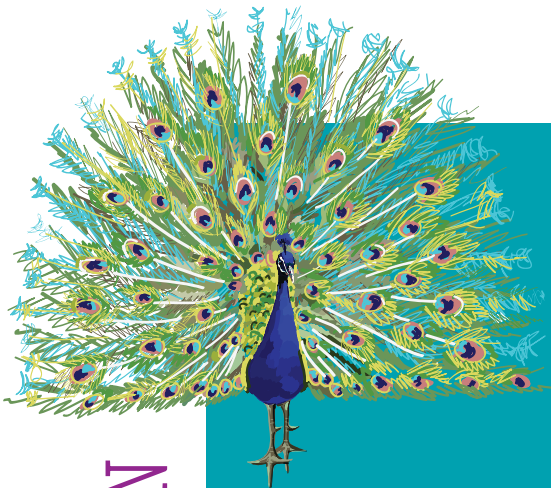
*My Pathways students are doing a community service with the JD Sheth Foundation. I will have them read this before going!*

**Dr. Brandi Hendricks**  
Director  
USI Pathways to College Program  
Evansville, IN

*Jaimie D. Sheth '01 is the best!*

**Ashley Riester '12**  
Evansville, IN

We invite readers to comment on articles and start conversations by bringing unique perspectives to relevant magazine topics. Correspondence and comments will not be limited to letters mailed to the editor, but may be from email or social media networks. Letters mailed to the editor may be published in the magazine unless the author states it is not for publication. Letters should be kept to 250 words, and may be edited for style, length, clarity, grammar and relevance to USI issues. Letters to the editor should be sent to [magazine@usi.edu](mailto:magazine@usi.edu).



THINGS THAT MAKE US PREEN

FACELIFT AND MORE

AN \$18.5 MILLION RENOVATION IS UNDERWAY IN THE 29-YEAR-OLD HEALTH PROFESSIONS CENTER. IT INCLUDES TRANSFORMING MITCHELL AUDITORIUM, A MULTI-TIERED LECTURE HALL, INTO A STATE-OF-THE-ART RADIOLOGY SUITE, EQUIPPED WITH SEVERAL NEW IMAGING MACHINES AND A LARGE CLASSROOM. A NEW 250-CAPACITY AUDITORIUM WILL BE BUILT DURING THE PROJECT'S FINAL PHASE AND WILL CARRY ON THE NAMING LEGACY OF LONGTIME UNIVERSITY FRIENDS, THE LATE WILLIAM H. AND TRUDY MITCHELL.

HISTORIC INFUSION

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN INDIANA'S HISTORIC NEW HARMONY PROGRAM RECEIVED \$2 MILLION FROM LILLY ENDOWMENT INC. THE FUNDING

IS FOR SUPPORT OF HISTORIC NEW HARMONY'S RELIGION AND CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS INITIATIVE.

BUSINESS AS USUAL

THE ROMAIN COLLEGE OF BUSINESS HOSTED A HIGH SCHOOL BUSINESS DAY CASE AND SCHOLARSHIP CHALLENGE LAST FALL. NEARLY 50 HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS COMPETED FOR CASH AND BRAGGING RIGHTS AS THE TOP BUSINESS CASE TEAM AND FOR SCHOLARSHIPS TO THE ROMAIN COLLEGE OF BUSINESS. A TEAM FROM EVANSVILLE'S NORTH HIGH SCHOOL WON THE BUSINESS CASE COMPETITION WHILE A STUDENT FROM BROWNSTOWN CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL IN SOUTHEAST INDIANA WON THE INDIVIDUAL COMPETITION.

ACROSS THE POND

THE USI CHAMBER CHOIR COMPLETED THEIR NINTH TOUR OF IRELAND AND 16TH INTERNATIONAL TOUR. THE GROUP IS THE TWO-TIME PREMIER COMPETITION CHAMPION OF THE MAYO INTERNATIONAL CHORAL FESTIVAL IN CASTLEBAR, IRELAND.

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illumine is published two times annually by the University of Southern Indiana for its alumni and friends. Reach us at: University of Southern Indiana, 8600 University Boulevard, Evansville, Indiana 47712. Send editorial information to illumine's editor C. L. Stambush at clstambush@usi.edu, USI.Editor@usi.edu or call 812-465-7020.

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# PRESIDENT'S PERSPEC



As a child, I did not appreciate reading and saw it as a chore, but my mother, a devoted reader, stressed its importance. She knew the role reading played in life and its advancements. Neither of my parents went to college, but they were wedded to me and my siblings earning degrees. They had witnessed the results of what was possible with an education, and they wanted us to have a different life. Higher education provided that. With it we would be offered different life opportunities that would result in different life realities. Not just in terms of income and career choices, but independence, autonomy, engagement and more.

College not only changed me, but it changed my future family. My wife and I were able to expose our children to places and cultures where they met people, experienced differences and saw things that shaped and enhanced their understanding of the world and themselves because of our college educations.

Unfortunately, the value of higher education is under the microscope as national discussions occur about student debt and its return on investment.

The value of higher education itself, however, gets lost in this abyss when a dollar amount is attached to it as opposed to it being a life-altering, transformational opportunity.

Overwhelmingly, the people I have met from across this globe,

who have been afforded the opportunity of some form of advanced education, have benefited from attending these institutions and said their lives were changed forever.

Higher education, however, requires a leap of faith in yourself. You will not acquire the knowledge needed for your future success in a month or two. You will need to apply yourself; you will need to be engaged; you will need to be disciplined to reap the benefits education offers. You will need to invest time and money into your future through two, four or more years of late-night studies, a few failed assignments, substantial intellectual gains and, yes, possibly debt.

As a society, we are willing to invest \$30,000 in a new car that depreciates 20% in value the first year of ownership, but we balk at investing that same \$30,000 in our futures through education. Unlike a car, however, education increases in value. The Indiana Commission for Higher Education says those with college degrees will earn an additional \$1 million during their working lives than their peers who hold only high school diplomas or GEDs.

Education, however, is not shiny or tangible like a new car. You cannot drive education around, but it will take you farther in life, providing unlimited mileage. Understanding the value of education requires a belief in the investment. Such faith in higher education, however, and trust of public institutions in general, is on the decline, according to a Gallup poll released July 11, 2023. In 2015, 57% of Americans said they had “a great deal” or “quite a lot” of confidence in higher education. In 2018, that slumped to 48%. Today, it is an anemic 36%. As someone

who has dedicated his life to higher education and the advancement of all young people, I find this disturbing and fear for the future of our society.

I echo the alarm Indiana Commissioner for Higher Education Chris Lowery sounded concerning Indiana’s college-going rate among high schoolers which plummeted to 53% between 2015 and 2020. He noted in an article published in *The Statehouse File* August 2022 that “education beyond high school is at the heart of economic and social mobility, and civil society.”

In 1965, the University of Southern Indiana was established to address this very concern and conceived in the belief that access to education was a *right* that needed to be available to everyone. It offered a pathway to an excellent education through a public institution, at a time when there was a strategic system in place that prohibited a public university from existing in the same city as a private institution.

When my mother realized my reading comprehension was not where she thought it should be, she did not give up on me, she enrolled me in a reading course. We did not have the money for this additional spending, but she persisted, understanding it was an investment in my future that would one day pay off. She was right about the transformative power of education, but what she might not have foreseen was the generational, intellectual wealth that would accrue because of it, paying dividends to her grandchildren, great grandchildren and more. It is this generational ripple effect higher education offers that elevates and benefits whole societies, and one worth making today and tomorrow.

# CELESTIAL CELEBRATION

USI is gearing up for a phenomenal experience as the moon crosses over the sun on Monday, April 8, 2024, at 2:02 p.m. To celebrate the eclipse, we're hosting a free and open to the public two-day event—Solarpalooza—with speakers, science exploration, education, entertainment and food trucks.

The event kicks off the day before on Sunday, April 7, 2024, with trailblazing electrical engineer and retired NASA astronaut Joan Higginbotham in the Screaming Eagles Arena as part of the Romain College of Business Innovative Speaker Series funded by USI Foundation. The day of the eclipse—April 8—will be a full day of experiential learning and engagement, food and music on The Quad.

"We have ordered 25,000 solar eclipse glasses," said **Dr. Kent Scheller**, Professor of Physics and event organizer. "You will be safe watching this event. That's first and foremost." High school students considering USI and their family members will have an opportunity to learn more about academic opportunities at USI and tour campus and housing as part of the event. Learn more at [USI.edu/solarpalooza](https://www.usi.edu/solarpalooza).



## Open Heart Training



Sexuality and Gender Alliance (SAGA) is building a resource list for students containing names of faculty, staff and administrators committed to maintaining a safe space for LGBTQ+ students. USI employees receive Ally Training, a program designed to teach participants effective communication skills for talking to LGBTQ+ youth as well as the "coming out" process, the challenges they face at home, in school and the community.





# WANTED: THRILL SEEKERS



## MORE THAN BOOKS

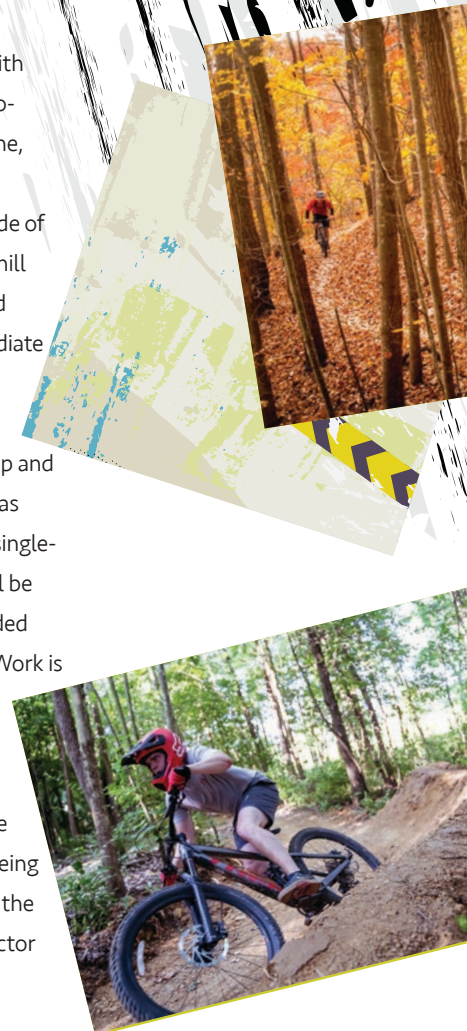


The University of Southern Indiana Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program launched a new telehealth initiative to improve older adults' access to medical care. Vanderburgh County residents can now participate in telehealth appointments with Deaconess Clinic medical providers from four Evansville Vanderburgh Public Library locations: Central, Oaklyn, North Park and Red Bank.

Grab your mountain bikes and head to USI! The University, in collaboration with Trelcru Inc. and Trail Heads, is creating a two-phase mountain biking experience. Phase one, completed during summer 2023, includes a one-acre mountain bike park on the west side of campus. The bike park features three downhill flow trail runs complete with dirt jumps and bermed corners, offering beginner, intermediate and expert level experiences.

Phase two includes a 2.75-mile Campus Loop and 0.5-mile Broadway Connector Trail, as well as trailhead kiosks and trail signage. The new single-track loop, with beginner-level features, will be constructed on more than 30 acres of wooded property adjacent to campus apartments. Work is expected to begin this fall.

"These trails will be a nice addition to our quality-of-life offerings for students and the rest of our campus community, as well as being an outdoor recreation asset we can offer to the local community," said **Jim Wolfe**, USI Director of Facility Operations and Planning.





## Stalking Audubon



For the last 10 years, Dr. Leigh Anne Howard, Communication and Media Department Chair and Professor of Communication Studies, and Dr. David Black, Assistant Professor Emeritus of Radio and Television, have traced the footsteps of 19th century naturalist John James Audubon, interviewing a variety of Audubon biographers and experts about the naturalist's contributions to the study of birds through his art. Their dedication to his life and work has resulted in a one-hour documentary titled *Art for Science's Sake: Stalking John James Audubon*.

"We learned about Audubon in grade school and high school, but

until we started the project, we did not know how complex and fascinating he really was," Howard says. "The more we learned and talked to people who shared their own fascination and insights about who he was and what he accomplished, the project took its shape, and we are glad to pass on what we learned."

Audubon is best known for his mammoth book, *The Birds of America*, a four-volume work of 435 color plates presenting one of the greatest documentations of birds ever produced. His work initiated a new standard of realism in ornithological depictions. Unlike the naturalists of his time, Audubon painted and published life-size drawings of birds, depicting them in their natural habitats while they engaged in natural behaviors:

eating, hunting, feeding their young, flying and socializing. He set out to draw in detail as many North American birds as possible and to record information about their behaviors and physiology in his journals, later published as the *Ornithological Biographies*.

"It's been close to 200 years since Audubon was actively creating *The Birds of America*, and his work still resonates," adds Black. "He lived and worked in this area and continues, to this day, to be seen as both a remarkable and controversial figure in American history."

Howard teaches courses in intercultural communication, performance and cultural studies and credits her and Black's Kentucky roots for their interest in the project.

### FIRST TO PULL AN AUDUBON PLATE IN 175 YEARS

In July 2002, Michael Aakhus, Professor Emeritus of Art, was the first person to pull an impression from Audubon's Tell-Tail Godwit copper plate, one of 78 remaining plates out of 435, since Robert Havell Jr., artist and printmaker, made many of the engravings for Audubon's *The Birds of America* book.

Prints pulled from the original engravings without the direct involvement of Havell or Audubon are called restrikes. Only five other institutions are known to have produced restrikes from an original Audubon copper plate.

## ATTENTION THESIS AUTHORS



Scholarly Open Access Repository  
at University of Southern Indiana

The Rice Library Scholarly Communication Unit wants researchers worldwide to have access to USI alumni's academic theses through SOAR (Scholarly Open Access Repository).

By giving permission to the Library, at no cost to you, Rice Library will scan your thesis (which is currently only available in print in the University Archives) and upload it to SOAR. The benefit of SOAR is that your thesis will have a permanent link that you can share with friends and family, and serve as a showcase of USI scholarship.

For more about SOAR, visit [USI.edu/scholarly-works](http://USI.edu/scholarly-works). To include your work in SOAR, contact **Peter Whiting M'10**, Scholarly Communication Librarian, at [pwhiting@usi.edu](mailto:pwhiting@usi.edu) or 812-465-1280.

# THE CURTAIN IS RISING

USI Theatre, a program of the Hagemann Performing Arts Department, has lined up an array of entertaining plays for its 2023-2024 season that will delight audiences and provide students with a wide range of theatrical performances, from musical to drama, contemporary to classic. Performing Arts students design and engineer the sound and lighting, create the costumes, design/build/stage the sets and act. Once a year, students perform alongside professional actors in a Repertory Project play, where they gain valuable experience and begin to build their professional network.

Get your tickets by calling 812-465-7110 or scanning this QR code.



**DRACULA**  
by Kate Hamill  
Directed by Eric Altheide  
Performance Center, October 12-15, 2023

**EXIT, PURSUED BY A BEAR**  
by Lauren Gunderson  
Directed by Joshua Robinson  
Performance Center, November 16-19, 2023

**RUTH, A ONE-ACT OPERA**  
Composed by Phil Hagemann  
Directed by Joshua Robinson  
Performance Center, January 26-27, 2024

**RIDE THE CYCLONE**  
A musical by Jacob Richmond and Brooke Maxwell  
Directed by Joshua Robinson  
Performance Center, February 15-18, 2024

**VANITIES**  
by Jack Heifner  
Directed by Madalyn Cottrell  
Mallette Studio Theatre, March 29-31, 2024

**THE WOLVES**  
by Sarah DeLappe  
Directed by Eric Altheide  
Performance Center, April 18-21, 2024



## Art Gala Returns

After the COVID-19 induced hiatus, the College of Liberal Arts is planning to bring back "A Toast to the Arts" in February 2024. The event will include, among other things, a silent auction where

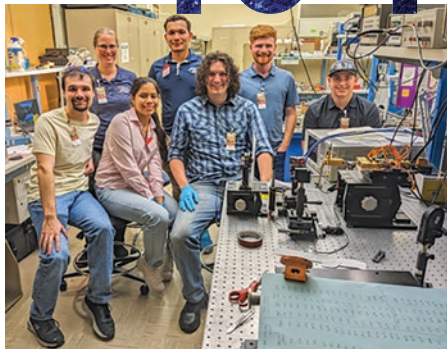
paintings, sculptures, ceramics and more can be bid on—with all proceeds benefitting the Society for Arts & Humanities, which supports the academic and artistic enrichment of the USI College of Liberal Arts. For more information call 812-464-1855.



## NATIONALLY SCORED

USI's online sport management graduate degree program was ranked 10th nationally by Intelligent, an independent organization that ranks colleges and programs across the country using aggregated publicly available data without advertising or affiliate relationships with schools. The program also received the award for Best Intercollegiate Athletic Focus.

# PUTTING NASA TO THE TEST



Six USI students ventured west this past summer to partner with the NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) at the California Institute of Technology to test a project the group has been working on since October 2022.

Mechanical engineering major Kassidon Hatfield; electrical engineering majors Briston Bundy, Melanie Cedeno and Miguel Pinto; civil engineering major Derrick Thompson and physics major James Hunnicutt traveled with **Dr. Jenna Kloosterman**, Assistant Professor of Engineering and Physics, to take measurements of a new Terahertz frequency amplifier designed by JPL.

The goal for the students was to test the amplifier using optics they designed on USI's campus. "The scientific goal of the entire project is to develop better instruments to measure and study the star formation process, which is traced by atoms and molecules that radiate in the Terahertz region of the electromagnetic spectrum," said Kloosterman. "THz frequency light oscillates once every one trillionth of a second, [about 25,000 times higher in frequency than an AM radio]. This frequency is below visible and infrared light on the electromagnetic spectrum, but higher than microwave." Another exciting prospect about the project, she added, is that it could be used on future balloon and space missions conducted by NASA.



## *Dream Launchers*

A bus driver turned entrepreneur had an idea for a device that helps patient care technicians turn patients on the bed more safely and comfortably but didn't know how to make it a reality, until she connected with **Steven Stump '99 M'09**, Director of the Center for Applied Research (CAR). He assisted her in applying for a grant which helps fund startups and entrepreneurs in the state of Indiana and connected her with USI engineering students and a USI alum to help build the devices' first prototypes.

Four prototypes were fabricated for Miller, and she received a patent for it in January 2023. She credits working with CAR and student project technicians for turning her vision into a reality.

CAR helps connect businesses with University resources, including access to 600 faculty members, four USI colleges and 70 academic programs. The Center also helps individuals, organizations and communities become more successful through product development, market research, organizational strategies, environmental studies and more. If you have a business idea, scan this QR code.



## Art Anywhere Anytime

The mission of USI's Art Collection has always been to provide educational and aesthetic experiences for the University community and all who visit campus, says **Susan Colaricci Sauls M'16**, Director of University Art Collections. Now, a project to digitize its collection will be extended to a virtual, global audience, thanks to a \$25,000

gift from USI Foundation Board member **Neal Franklin** and a \$5,000 gift from **John Lawrence '73** to underwrite the project. While this process opens access to the collection to more viewers, it also aids in preservation efforts and allows art researchers access. The artwork will be accessible online through the University Archives and Special Collections.



# WE NEED YOUR FEEDBACK!

We are refreshing *illum*e and would like your input on what you enjoy most or least, what you want more of and a few other questions in a brief survey.

**Survey closes  
October 31, 2023.**

Go to [USI.edu/magsurvey2023](https://USI.edu/magsurvey2023) for a chance to win one of three USI hoodies from the Campus Store or scan this code.



Alumni, please update your contact information and mailing preference by visiting [USI.edu/AlumniUpdate](https://USI.edu/AlumniUpdate).



Photo by Zoe Tucker



## THE BIG PICTURE

USI's Solar Splash Team scored Most Improved Team and cinched third place in the world championship of collegiate solar boating, hosted in Springfield, Ohio. The team earned points in seven categories including technical reports, visual displays, workmanship, slalom, sprint and endurance.

*This year's team was mechanical engineering majors Jacob Mills '25 (pictured), Kyle Echert '26, Mariah Fulton '25; electrical engineering majors Zoe Tucker '26, Landon Gates '24; civil engineer major Alexandria Brown '26.*

# STUDENT P.O.V.

Taylor Barrett '24  
Pre-med biochemistry

## Choices

Growing up I did not believe college was for people like me. People who grew up without a father and got in trouble with the law. People who moved every few years into another abusive stepdad's home. People whose mother cried to them not knowing where their next meal was going to come from. People whose mother's lives were scarred with misfortune and poor choices. Who would expect anything from a child of that environment?

I can hardly recall a time in which I lived in a stable environment. My mother has been married seven times, many of the marriages involving physical abuse, emotional abuse, drug addiction and poverty.

Shortly after we entered the most impoverished portion of my childhood, when I was 13, I began hanging with the wrong crowd and getting into trouble. I drank alcohol, smoked marijuana and got in trouble with the law. My grades suffered.

We moved when I was 15, and I changed schools. Uprooted from my old friends and the trouble we got in together, I realized I was being offered an opportunity to start over. It was tough to break old habits, but by surrounding myself with people who thought and behaved differently, I realized I had a

choice to make a future better than my past.

I began thinking about my future. I wanted to be a physician so I could help young people who came from childhoods like mine. But I had a terrible history, no money and no means to begin my path, so I decided to join the Army for the educational benefits and to gain the self-discipline I desperately needed.

I left for basic training to be a medical laboratory technician; my stepping stone to becoming a doctor one day. Within three weeks, however, I suffered four hip stress fractures. It was a year later, living with those fractures, that I was ultimately honorably discharged. I never wanted to leave the Army; it showed me how mentally tough I was and that I could do anything I set my mind to. I worried that without the Army, my chances of becoming a physician were out of reach. Thankfully, I retained my military educational benefits and began thinking college was possible.

I chose USI for its familiarity, beautiful campus and the great things I'd heard about it from others. I had no idea how grateful I would become. My biggest challenge was closing the gap between my capability and my performance. I did not know

how to prepare for exams or manage my time. Slowly, I increased my workload and responsibility to challenge myself without shocking myself. There is no doubt I am a completely different person having attended USI.

I now know how important and influential a child's early years of development are to their future. My older brothers experienced much more abuse than I did. One has been in and out of prison and the other experiences mental health issues. Although I love my mother, her choices eventually led to her incarceration.

Her choices, however, are not my choices, and I consider myself lucky. Without perseverance, the Army and USI, I would not stand a chance at getting accepted into a medical school somewhere. That is a gift I could not have received elsewhere.

USI has bridged the gap between where I was and where I want to be. It has helped me prove to myself that I am able to do what I set out to do— despite the circumstances. I am so glad I am included in this community. Every day I wake up knowing I am lucky to be where I am, and fortunate to earn an education so I can one day give back.



# DESK OF...

## FROM THE



As the child of a mother who was but a child herself, having given birth at age 15, my maternal grandparents contributed significantly to who I am today. James and Sallie were vital caregivers and role models as mom was playing catch up in night school to graduate from high school on time with her class. Each inspired and taught me in very different ways and were an invaluable aspect of family dynamics that transmitted essential life lessons and family history through storytelling and recounting personal experiences.

My grandfather was always well-groomed and sharply dressed. I watched him interact with people from all walks of life, gaining their friendship and respect. I also thought he was rich, as he always had a wad of dollar bills the size of a baseball in his pocket. Whether paying vendors for services or products related to his two businesses or giving money to us grandkids, each time he pulled it out, I could not help but stare. Seeing all that he accomplished, I was impressed. Knowing later in life that he did it with a third-grade education, I was astonished. Never have I known or witnessed a man do so much with so little. There are two phrases I often heard him say: “You don’t have to have all the things to do everything, and you can do something with nothing,” and “Always do right by people because you don’t always know which people are right.”

My grandmother was wheelchair-bound later in life due to her battle with multiple sclerosis. She was far more intentional in her approach and a staunch advocate for education. She often said, “Baby, this

## TROY MILLER

Vice President for Strategic Enrollment Management

wheelchair got me, but it doesn’t own me.” Her care, concern, vigilance and determination for me to succeed academically seemed to be her life’s work. My school day did not end once school was out for the day. Each afternoon, sitting at the kitchen table under the watchful eye of my grandmother, I completed homework assignments as quickly as I could with the goal of being able to go outside and play with my friends. However, the jubilation of completing all the homework assigned by my teachers and the anticipation of going outside was short-lived. My grandmother would then pull out her own lessons for the day, and I would have to spend another hour or two doing reading comprehension, multiplication and long division. I held her in great reverence and admired her dearly, and thought these lessons were normal for a second grader.

Although no longer with me, my grandparents continue to serve as my moral compass, having shared their wisdom and instilled values and ethics that shaped my character. They were repositories of knowledge, both formal and informal. Their guidance helped develop my sense of right and wrong, and taught me about respect, hard work and determination; things that I still seek today to provide and share with my four daughters.

The importance of role models like my grandparents cannot be overstated. Acknowledging and appreciating this profound impact strengthens our emotional well-being and moral development. All of these are critical to fostering intergenerational bonds that are imperative to the holistic development of future generations. I only hope my grandchildren feel I have impacted their lives half as much as I know James and Sallie impacted mine. I am thankful and grateful for having them as part of my village.

*Troy Miller*



## ATHLETE Q&A CARSON KLEINHELTER '25



### WHAT IS YOUR MAJOR AND GRAD YEAR?

Radio and TV, 2025



### WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PRE-GAME HYPE SONG?

I enjoy the beat of rap music as well as the lyrics because they motivate me to get excited to perform well. I'm also inspired because the music we listen to as a team before meets, such as "Crossfaded" by Don Tolliver, serves to inspire and unify us.



### WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU TO BE A USI STUDENT-ATHLETE?

The first aspect of being part of something bigger than myself is being part of a team. In my life I will be part of many teams: family, work, friendships, etc. Collaboration and trust between teammates help everyone grow, mature and excel.



### WHAT'S THE BIGGEST LESSON YOU'VE LEARNED SO FAR IN YOUR USI ATHLETIC CAREER?

Winning the Indiana Cross Country State Championships in my senior year of high school helped me understand the opportunity before me as a runner and as a student-athlete. I've learned every experience in life presents a challenge that I now welcome because I've discovered that hard work, persistence and determination propel me to achieve my best in every endeavor of life.



### WHAT IS THE BIGGEST MISCONCEPTION YOU GET ABOUT BEING A STUDENT-ATHLETE?

That student-athletes have no time for a social life. Although student-athletes do not have the typical social experience of most college students, we become a family of sorts with our teammates. We develop relationships that will last a lifetime.



### HOW DO YOU BALANCE ACADEMICS AND ATHLETICS?

Balancing academics, athletics and work is a challenge I'm grateful to have because it prepares me for a life that will require such skills in different arenas. By learning to manage my time well, I've been able to better complete all the tasks before me. For example, I have become dedicated to running early in the morning because it enables me to accomplish one of my goals and gives me motivation for others. I think I will always have to be motivated and creative in balancing aspects of my life, and I see this stage of life as an important training for the future.



### AS A MEMBER OF USI PRODUCTION STAFF FOR ESPN+, WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?

My role is multi-faceted, but I enjoy operating the camera at the USI sport games the most. I've also enjoyed learning to work the trcaster and hope to learn more about any camera they assign me to operate. Working for ESPN has inspired me to learn as much as I can in hopes of integrating these skills into my future career.



### WHAT IS THE TRAINING PROCESS LIKE FOR CROSS COUNTRY?

Each member of the cross country and track team has certain mileage goals they must meet each week and are monitored by our coaches. We do various workouts that are assigned to members of the team according to the team's needs. Our workouts vary depending on whether we are in school or on break. They target the skills the coach thinks we need to improve, which changes throughout the season. This is all in an effort to address our weaknesses and improve our strengths as a team.





**WHAT'S YOUR INNER THOUGHT PROCESS WHEN RUNNING?**

I really try to zone out and "zen" during runs. It's a beautiful feeling when you're locked in and focused during a run.

**HOW HAS USI GOING DI IMPACTED YOU AS A STUDENT ATHLETE?**

USI's entrance into NCAA Division I is an occasion for pride since it is the highest level of competition. Personally, I am as motivated for Division I as I was previously for Division II, and I am glad that USI is able to

compete at the highest level. Unfortunately for me and my teammates, we will not be able to compete in NCAA championship events due to the 4-year waiting period. Despite this restriction, I am grateful for being able to compete at the Division I level.

# HEAT MAPPING MOTIVATION

## How the Biometrix Discovery Lab Reveals Secrets of Shoppers

By Hendrix Magley



Dogs are a customer's best friend. That's the discovery Ali Oliver '14, Marketing Director at Midwestern Pet Foods, Inc.—an Evansville-based corporation that has eight different brands under its umbrella—and her marketing team made this past spring.

It's no secret that people love dogs—from cute photos to countless viral videos, puppies have been known to provide happiness and comfort at times when it's most needed. They can even make someone more inclined to buy a certain product.

Oliver's team learned this when deciding on a new packaging design for the rebrand of their Earthborn Holistic line's top-selling dog food. Using new technology provided by USI, they discovered bankable insights: people flocked to the bag with an image of a friendly pup and ignored nature scenes or landscapes. The pup provoked a positive emotional response detected by the eye-tracking glasses' heat sensor mapping and made the customer more likely to purchase the product. "They could not take their eyes off of this dog," Oliver said. "We knew then that we might need to rethink this situation because this is what people look at—the dog. It helped make the decision for us."

USI's Biometrix Discovery Lab in the Romain College of Business, (funded by USI Foundation in 2017, and one of the only such labs housed in a business college) emphasizes research into human attention, arousal, cognition and emotion that is collected through eye tracking glasses, screen-based eye-tracking software, facial expression analysis and electrodermal activity sensors.

"We apply biometric technology, some AI-driven, some not, to allow students, faculty and organizations in our community to discover insights into human behavior they otherwise may never uncover [through traditional methods, such as surveys]," said Dr. Chad Milewicz, Associate Professor of Marketing, Chair of the Economics and Marketing Department and Director of the Biometrix Discovery Lab.

The technology used in the lab can detect the appeal of visuals using screen-based eye-tracking software and hardware to track the movement of the viewer's eyes on a screen. This provides deeper insights into how placement of images and content in videos, websites, games, 3D environments and more hold the attention of people. In the field, similar data is gathered through eye-tracking glasses that record what people look at and for how long in stores and businesses.





Faces are telling as well, and the lab's facial expression analysis captures emotional expressions and automated facial coding from any video to test the impact of content intended to elicit emotional arousal and facial response. But sometimes it takes more than just facial recognition to see how someone reacts to something—the lab can also measure emotional response through electrodermal activity. If something is scary, threatening, joyful or otherwise emotionally relevant, then there is an increase in eccrine sweat gland activity that can be detected.

"To really understand human behavior, you have to go much deeper than what surveys or questionnaires can reveal and analyze people's emotional, physiological and cognitive responses. Tapping into the nonconscious allows us to see the driving forces and factors behind the behavior and decision making," said Peter Hartzbech, Chief Executive Officer of iMotions, the company that developed the technology used in USI's lab.

Implementing biometric research into the academic sphere opened the door to many

opportunities for both faculty and students. "Many industries, including advertising, healthcare and automotive, are applying emotional AI—a capability which we have in our lab," Milewicz said. "Affectiva, the company which supplies our emotion AI software, reports that 70% of the world's largest advertisers and 28% of Fortune Global 500 companies use emotional AI. We are constantly looking for ways to apply this and our other biometric technologies for academic research and to provide consulting to regional businesses."

It is not only industries who can benefit from USI's Biometric Discovery Lab. USI's marketing students have already placed USI on the map with their wins when Jaeden O'Dell-Schultz '23 and Courtney Bourne '23 placed second at the American Marketing Association International Collegiate Conference in the international Undergraduate Research Competition held in New Orleans last spring. They defeated students from universities such as Arizona State, University of Florida, University of Kentucky and Penn State with their research presentation focused on the application of

neuroscientific techniques, such as eye-tracking, to learn about students' emotional responses and visual attention when viewing different social media accounts.

"Applying my marketing knowledge to a unique project provided insight into the daily responsibilities of professional marketers," said O'Dell-Schultz. "Overall, this experience was amazing and helped me gain a better understanding of my future profession."

Students, in turn, are bringing benefits to the state through a collaboration with the Indiana Commission for Higher Education. Dr. Sabinah Wanjugu, Assistant Professor of Marketing, and her junior marketing students audited the Commission's website, Learn More Indiana, to improve its optimization and marketability for their audience of high school students, counselors and parents.

"[The resources in this lab] have bridged the gap between academia and industry, offering valuable experiential learning opportunities and elevating the quality of research conducted by students and faculty," said Wanjugu. "As a marketing faculty

member, I believe that research conducted through the lab will lead to the discovery of valuable insights and impactful research findings, ultimately enhancing the institution's reputation and contributing to the advancement of marketing knowledge."

In addition to Midwestern Pet Foods, the Biometric Discovery Lab has also worked with Berry Global's Blue Clover Studios for design purposes and is currently talking with The Children's Museum of Indianapolis about a partnership on a wayfinding study—an opportunity Milewicz noted would be "exciting to work with the largest children's museum in the country."

Not only do these partnerships open the door for faculty to do new research studies but they also open up the possibility of presenting research at various conferences related to biometrics. It also has allowed the lab to expand its footprint outside of the Evansville area into more of a regional and, ideally in the near future, a nationally known facility. "These partnerships benefit both the College and those who work with the lab in several ways," said Dr. Nicolas Jankuhn,

# "YOU HAVE ZERO TIME TO GRAB SOMEONE'S ATTENTION."

**It would take less than a second to look at the dog (on the package) and bounce from here to there—a second! It's ridiculous. You hear about that, but this was proof we just hadn't experienced. You have zero time to capture attention."**

Ali Oliver, USI alumna and Marketing Director at Midwestern Pet Foods, Inc.

Assistant Professor of Marketing. "These collaborations create a mutually beneficial relationship that supports the growth and development of both the College and its students, while also contributing to the local community."

Currently, the Biometrix Discovery Lab is mostly used by the Romain College of Business faculty. But soon, that will be changing. Thanks to a presentation by Jankuhn and Wanjugu at USI's Teaching and Learning Symposium, instructors across campus have become interested to see how they can use the eye-tracking glasses and software in their various disciplines.

Sophia Okotah, Assistant Professor of Art and Design in the College of Liberal Arts, is in the beginning stages of using eye-tracking software in her classes. With the help of this technology, students will learn how to improve the user experience of whatever they create and how they can best attract their target audience.

"There is nothing more satisfying and rewarding than when designers decipher the emotions

their work exudes in users and learn about the parts of a visual piece that matter the most to them," Okotah said. "With this tool, designers, marketers and clients are more inclined to successfully reach project goals, and I am glad that story begins here at USI."

In addition to cross-campus collaboration, the lab is continuing to look for more partnerships with companies near and far. There also will be opportunities to add more technology and hardware, as there continues to be advances in both artificial intelligence and beyond.

Whether it's discovering the best way to market dog food or mapping out the best route for a museum, biometric research provides a deeper look into decision-making that we haven't had access to before.

New lessons will be learned, fresh insights gained. As long as biometric research is consistently pursued, there will always be discoveries to be made.

"The technology is incredible," Milewicz said. "But it is human creativity and the desire of

students, educators, researchers and community partners to explore and to discover that will allow the lab to grow and have a positive impact at USI and beyond."

In addition to the Biometrix Discovery Lab, the Romain College of Business is also home to the Experimental Economics Lab, Cybersecurity Operations Center and Textual Analytics and Publications Laboratory (TAPLab). Dr. Sudesh Mujumdar, Dean of the Romain College of Business, believes these facilities help prepare students for real-world experiences in their respective fields.

"I'll be hard pressed to come up with a business school that has all four labs of this sort residing in the business school. That's sort of unique," Mujumdar said. "Our students have access to these labs and are co-creating experiences with faculty members and businesses in the community. That's what makes us special."





## HOW DECADES OF RESEARCH HELPS COMMUNITIES LIVE BETTER

As media outlets spew news of rising crime, cost of housing and more, do you ever find yourself nostalgically longing to live in a community of bygone days, where neighbors know each other, shout a cheery hello, lend a hand and the doors aren't locked day or night? Do you wonder if a community like that could even exist today, given the state of crisis ours are in?

"We have fewer and fewer people who can afford their housing," says Dr. Silvia Rode, Director of USI's Center for Communal Studies. "We have plenty of data showing people are lonelier than they ever have been, that more and more elderly people are in need of care and, as individuals, we are leaving too large of a footprint that is destroying our environment. We can overcome these challenges, however, by looking at examples of communities that provide alternatives."

By researching past communities through the University's Center for Communal Studies, academics and laypersons alike are discovering alternative ways to build future communities.

The Center houses written documentation collected from more than 500 communities; contains 15,000 images and 243 oral histories; and has the historic and experimental town of New Harmony, Indiana, in its back yard—a living laboratory for communal living. Established in 1976 under the leadership of Dr. Donald Pitzer, Professor Emeritus of History, the Center is the foremost research repository in the United States for historical communal groups, intentional communities and utopias.

"The Center offers students, scholars and active communitarians lessons in utopianism and intentional communities around the world," says Rode, who wants to see greater collaboration between academics and community-minded individuals.

"We sponsor conferences, lectures and workshops and the communal studies minor designed for scholars and the community at-large to address some of the contemporary challenges facing humanity and seek out habitation models for the future."

Since the 1950s, housing has been designed with single families in mind, a model that today is marred by shortages, cost increases and sustainability issues.

"Single-family homes may very well become a model of the past," says Rode. "Intentional communities—where groups of people choose their structural identities—be it financial, environmental, multicultural, religious or spiritual in nature—may be the way of the future."


Such communities already exist in pockets around the world. The birthplace of Harmonist George Rapp (who founded New Harmony, Indiana, as a communal experiment in 1814) Iptingen, Germany, with its greater population of 6,787 has transitioned to renewable energy with locals setting the price for energy. The ecovillage of Findhorn, Scotland, serves as a transformational learning community. In Berkeley, California, an intergenerational cohousing project negotiated limited equity arrangements with the city. In Padanaram, Indiana, conceived in the 60s as a religious community, the members share land and responsibilities equally. And on USI's campus is a model 640-square-foot Minka House, a living-learning lab designed to promote living well and aging in place (read about it on page 34).





# SHEDS LIGHT

By C. L. Stambush

While the Harmonists and Owenites gave rise to the Center, today's studies and collections promote community development, sustainability, eco-friendly living and conflict resolution. "Why not reimagine living practices that combine communal traits from long ago with new technologies?" says Rode. "Data from alternative living communities in rural or urban landscapes can offer viable solutions to more affordable housing, a healthier environment, care-partnering and a positive inter-dependency. Communities are organic and therefore changing. But, as long as people are willing to learn from the past and from each other, we can transform society. USI's Center for Communal Studies can lead the way into how we live in the future." 

*Persevere*

# MOUNTAINS TO CLIMB: The Path Alice Walks

By C. L. Stambush

*Intentional*

*Alice Burris always intended to earn a college degree;*

*it just took her 39 years to achieve what she started in 1984.*

*But then, nothing in Alice's life went according to plan;*

*at least, not her plan.*

*Authentic*

*Blessed*



# Persevere

At 57 years old, Alice has faced some mountainous hurdles in life, beginning with an unexpected pregnancy during her first semester at USI when she was 18, then a diagnosis of multiple sclerosis (MS) when she was 36 and disabled by it at 41, followed by the sentencing of her oldest son to 38 years in prison. It was the last one that propelled her to return to USI in pursuit of a bachelor's degree in criminal justice with the goal of going on to law school so she can right some wrongs she sees in the penal system.

"I am a firm believer in God having a plan for me," she says. "It's not just about fixing the police or fixing the prosecution, it's the system. It was never designed for people of color. We were not even considered people when the Constitution was written. There are too many wrongfully convicted people. That is what God has placed on me to work on."

Alice knows her son is not an angel. Before being sentenced to 38 years, he had his share of run-ins with the law that landed him in and out of jail and earned him a three-year sentence in prison. Her position has always been, *you do the crime, you do the time*. But in the case of her son's current incarceration, Alice does not believe he is guilty of the charges he was convicted of—possession of and dealing in methamphetamines.

## The Word

There is a mirror in Alice's home office filled with affirmations. It is the source of her annual word-for-the-year selection; one word to guide her and be her touchstone through any challenges the year brings. As she

gazed at the potential pronouncements early in January 2020, one kept rising up before her: Persevere.

Alice had been entertaining the idea of returning to USI for a college degree, and the word was a message to her. She filled out the application, telling no one her plans. A few weeks later, while attending a church conference in Florida, she learned she had been accepted as a returning student. "I was shocked, but I don't know if it was because I got in or if I was OMG, what did I do?" she says.



Alice and her oldest son

Doubt plagued her. "I asked myself, 'Do I really want to devote four years to getting a degree?'" Her mind raced through all the reasons not to go back to school. She had MS and experienced relapses that upended life. Her grandson lived with her part of the week. She had not been a student in decades. "I knew, spiritually, that was the enemy giving me all the reasons why not to [go back for my degree]," she says. "I remember praying about it and God telling me he had work for me to do and I needed to get this done."

Then COVID-19 shut the world down and she wondered again if it was a sign. "I thought to myself, 'Lord, am I not supposed to go [to college]?" she says. "But do you know what [answer] I got? Persevere."

To keep her on her educational and life course, Alice had "Persevere" imprinted on a bracelet she wore daily. That May, on Mother's Day, she wrote to her three children telling them since they were all grown and had families of their own, it was time for mom to do what mom needs to do, and she was going back to school. Their support was unwavering, as well as that of her mother, whom Alice had always leaned on. "She was my biggest cheerleader," Alice says.

## The Journey

Alice arrived on campus in August 2020, in the shadow of COVID-19 but with the zeal of every first-year student. "I was right there. I wanted to be all in. I'm a freshman and I'm going to act like a freshman," she says. "When I came back, my goal was to be a part of everything I could."

She quickly learned of USI's Emerging Leaders (EL) program which offers first-year students the opportunity to develop leadership skills, engage with and contribute to the USI community while creating new friendships. She applied and was accepted. Alice's contribution to the group came from years of job-related leadership experience, having spent 15 years in retail management positions for various clothing and merchandising store chains. Her last job, before MS prevented her from working, was as a branch manager for a bank.

Despite years of experience, Alice credits her 18-year-old peers in the program with teaching her. "I learned so much from the young people. Yes, I have children," she says, "but it is different talking to people outside of your family. Hearing their perspectives helped me become a better listener and leader."

The spring, semester-long program puts students into small clusters. The groups meet weekly to participate in workshops, listen to speakers and learn about leadership opportunities. At the end, each group selects a member to talk about their experience and Alice was elected to speak for her group. "I spoke on how much I learned from

them and that we can always learn and hone our skills no matter our age, and to not be afraid to do so," she says.

Returning to USI as a 53-year-old, first-year student, Alice discovered the paper trail of her past haunted her future. "I only had that one

semester [at USI] in 1984," she says. "I thought they would have thrown those [grades] away, but they didn't. I brought those credits with me...and that GPA."

Learning to be a student again was demanding enough, but learning to be one in the new world of COVID-19 placed more hurdles in her path. The faculty taught some classes via Zoom and textbooks were not always part of the course, as financially conscientious faculty sought cost-cutting measures for students where possible.

"I'm old school. I prefer the classroom," says Alice. "I write. I couldn't believe it when I saw students typing on tablets. I need to write. I need to see the teacher. I need a textbook." When her biology class did not come with a textbook, she wrangled one, nonetheless. "I said [to my instructor], I need a book, so he gave me his book."

Alice chooses to sit up front and actively participate in class discussions. She brings to the conversations not only her professional and personal insights, but also her community activism experiences as a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer for 11 years and a member of Congregations Acting for Justice and Empowerment (CAJE). "I share what I have done with the other students, but only if it is appropriate to the context of the classroom discussions," she says.



# Authentic

## The Supporters

Alice's first year at USI was a flurry of settling into a new life while balancing the old one, studying, participating in EL and more, but her sophomore year took a dive. "I couldn't keep up. I felt like I was always behind and playing catchup," she says. "Then someone told me about TRIO. I wasn't sure what it was but said, well okay, it's a program. I'm there." She applied and was accepted.

Through USI's TRIO Student Support Services (SSS) Alice found the help she needed to address her test anxiety which in turn helped reduce stress that exacerbates the disease attacking her central nervous system. "Because of the MS, cognitively things are slowed down, and it takes me longer to process. There are some days I'm just not there. I have tremors. I can't write because it will look like scratches," she says. "Coming back to USI, that was one of my major concerns, because I know stress can bring on [debilitating symptoms.]"

SSS connected her with USI's Disability Resources (DR) office where Alice says Michele Barnett, Senior Administrative Assistant for the office, with assistance from her professors, arranged for her to take tests in a quiet, stress-free environment. "Testing accommodations are the most common accommodation we provide," says Barnett.

"An example of testing accommodation is extra time during exams with minimizing distractions. This can be a small room or a single room to themselves. Accessibility is different for every person; accommodations are given based on documentation we receive from a licensed care provider."

In addition to testing arrangements, the DR office offers students in need recorders for notetaking, readers (someone to read an exam to students), large print and Braille textbooks, priority registration and more. "The DR saved me, literally. I almost quit my sophomore year," Alice says. "Getting this accommodation in place and all the things that make it easier for me to be able to fully participate, kept me going."

The night before her final exams this past spring, she was home studying for a test in Criminological Theory when the next thing she knew, it was morning. "I wasn't feeling myself but knew I had a final and went [to campus]," Alice says. "I got to the DR office to take the test and Michele asked, 'Are you alright?' I remember her mouth moving but I don't know what she said." An ambulance was called, and Alice was taken to the hospital where doctors determined her MS medication levels were off. "I was having absentia seizures, where you just stare."

During Alice's USI journey, many across campus have stepped up to support, encourage and care for her. Jada Hogg, Outreach Coordinator and Student Mentor in the Multicultural Center (MCC), runs a

program called Women Unlocked, designed to connect and empower African American women to create opportunities and build relationships that will have a positive impact on their success. Alice credits Hogg for teaching her about the value of self-care. "She taught me that if I am not okay, if I am not full, then I have nothing to give anyone else, not even myself."

Alice was diagnosed with MS 21 years ago, when she woke one day with blurry vision in her left eye and a headache. Her ophthalmologist determined she had optic neuritis and referred her to a neurologist. Since

then, she has lost her vision in that eye two more times, experiences leg tremors that make walking impossible, fatigue, numbness and tingling, pain, muscle spasms, stiffness and weakness, depression and anxiety, problems thinking, learning and planning. "MS is a devastating disease. A relapse can come on so quickly," she says.

When a relapse happens, as it did last March, Hogg went out of her way to be there for Alice. "She showed up at my door with everything off the Captain D's menu," Alice says. "We ate and prayed together. If God wanted me to go back to school, he was going to make sure that I could do what I needed to do and had the people in my life to help me do it."



While navigating life with MS possesses problems, Alice prefers to focus on the positives and opportunities she's experienced as a student at USI; including the academic relationships she developed with faculty; particularly Dr. Caroline Jalain, former USI Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice. The two developed a close relationship. "She was the first one who encouraged me. She said, 'Oh, you can do this,'" Alice says.

To broaden students' understanding of the criminal justice field, Jalain purposefully exposed students to professionals in law enforcement careers, so students get an idea of the jobs in the field. "It's not just what they are learning in the classroom, but for them to see real practitioners who do this work every day and for them to see the potential jobs they may not be familiar with in the major," she says. "Practitioners like to come and share their knowledge and their stories, but they also like to come so students can ask questions and start imagining themselves getting a job in the field. In fact, many of my students have had the opportunity to job-shadow or intern with guest speakers."

In Fall 2021, Jalain invited Alice to present with her at the Southern Criminal Justice Association Annual Conference in Daytona Beach, Florida. An experience Alice describes as "awesome." But the work she was hired to assist Jalain with in her research into the effect COVID-19 had on Veterans Treatment Court proved more than Alice could handle. "That has probably been one of the hardest things for me while at USI, having to say no to some things I want to do and would be helpful in the law field, such as internships. But I know for me to get into law school, my grades need to be high and my LSAT score too," she says.

## *The Calling*

As Alice heads toward graduation in December 2023, she sees the light at the end of this first tunnel. "I love the Criminal Justice program. When I came back, I knew that was what I wanted to study because of my son,"

Alice says. "Quite naturally, my son is at the top of my list, but there are so many others I've found out about through my work with CAJE." Alice's son has served more than four years of his 38-year sentence, but her work is just beginning. "There are no words to describe how I feel—powerless, frustrated and mad," she says. "I tell my son, you are in prison, but I am too."

With her mission in mind, Alice is not taking any chances when it comes to graduating within her four-year timeframe. In fact, she is set to graduate a semester early and has maintained a 3.0 GPA or higher each semester since returning to USI. To stay on course, Alice consulted with her academic advisor as well as other USI administrators to be sure

she was getting the courses and requirements she needed. "I'm here to tell you that for this [degree] everything is on the table," she says. "It is that important to me."


Because of the unpredictable nature of MS, Alice is keenly cognizant of the fact that if she does not complete the work today, it might not get done. "I don't know what tomorrow will be. That is why I strive to finish my degree, because I want to graduate, even though I don't want to do it in the cold."

This past January, Alice selected a new motivational word: Authentic.



Alice and her two youngest children

The word fits with her feelings about the friendships she's developed with students, faculty, staff and administrators. "They have been the highlight of my experience at USI because I've learned from everybody," she says.

But USI has provided Alice with more than meaningful relationships and intellectual rigor. "In college, you learn who you are. USI has been good to me and I'm very indebted," she says. "It is my privilege to be able to learn and it will be my responsibility to help right wrongs any way I can." 

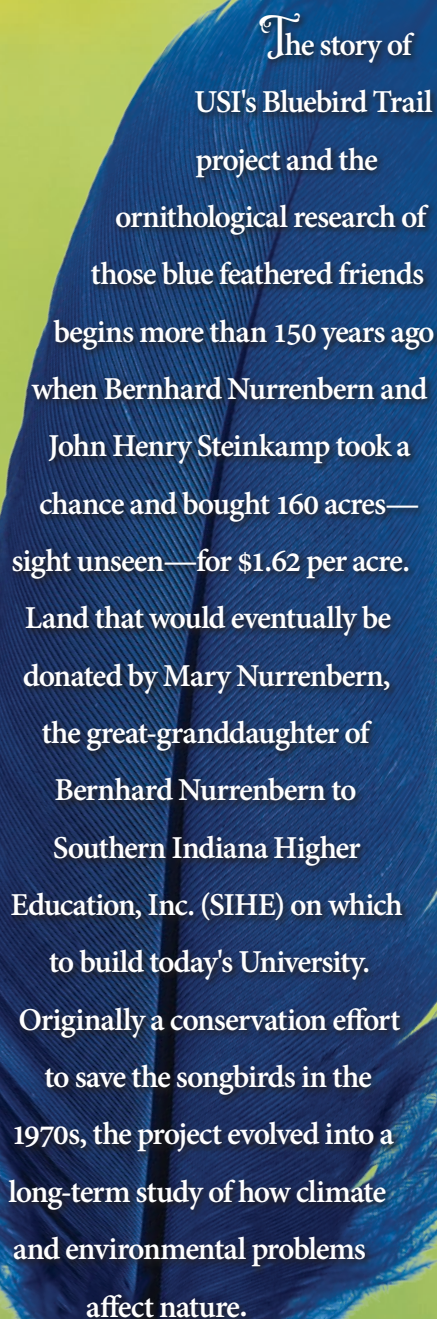


# BIRD BOX

THE USI STORY OF THE FALL AND RISE OF EASTERN BLUEBIRDS  
By Barbara Goodwin







The story of USI's Bluebird Trail project and the ornithological research of those blue feathered friends begins more than 150 years ago when Bernhard Nurrenbern and John Henry Steinkamp took a chance and bought 160 acres—sight unseen—for \$1.62 per acre. Land that would eventually be donated by Mary Nurrenbern, the great-granddaughter of Bernhard Nurrenbern to Southern Indiana Higher Education, Inc. (SIHE) on which to build today's University. Originally a conservation effort to save the songbirds in the 1970s, the project evolved into a long-term study of how climate and environmental problems affect nature.

## BEFORE THE RESEARCH

Nurrenbern and Steinkamp were part of more than a million immigrants who fled Germany to the United States in the 1830s to escape economic hardship. When the families arrived in Evansville by paddle boat from Cincinnati, Ohio, they discovered a town boasting 36 houses, a cemetery, two churches and a small main street with thriving businesses, including a newspaper and mail services. Penniless (having been robbed of their savings on the paddle boat), they learned the land they had purchased to farm was a densely populated hardwood forest of Cypress and White Oak trees.

The families felled the trees and sold the wood to pay for supplies needed to make their dream of owning and farming their land come true. Subsisting on the wild boar and bear that roamed the thick forests, they prospered, leaving a farmstead legacy more than tenfold their original purchase.

## BIRTH OF THE BIRDBOXES

By the spring of 1966, as the first University buildings went up on Nurrenbern land, the bears and boars that once roamed the woods were long gone; white-tailed deer, wild turkeys, rabbits and an amazing diversity of birds now filled the woods. When Dr. Alton Lindsey, a pioneering ecologist and one of the scientists on the 1928-30 Byrd Antarctica Expedition, visited the campus he walked the acreage and concluded the University had the greatest botanical

diversity of any campus he had visited, except, perhaps, the Redlands Campus in California. A former professor of then Dean David L. Rice, who later became USI's first president, Lindsey warned Rice he would "retroactively flunk" him if he didn't manage the property carefully.

That same spring, Rice presented an "inspirational slide show" about the University to the Westwood Garden Club that included future needs and hopes for a nature center. This piqued Club members' interest, and Doris Eicher, who grew up encouraged to love the outdoors, envisioned a trail system that would connect with Burdette Park. The Club approached Rice about creating trails for the students and community in the wooded areas surrounding campus. Given the green light, the women of the Club enlisted Boy Scout Troop 371 to carve out 5.5 miles of wooded trails that wove around the campus' bluffs and creek beds.

Many members of the Westwood Garden Club participated in the Audubon Society's annual Great American Bird Count, counting birds they spotted from their yards. Helen and Richard Buck and the Eicher family counted birds on the University's campus as well. Both families delighted in having bluebird houses on their property to hear their expressive range of sounds, from plaintive to scolding to warbling.

In 1972, however, the woods no longer rang with the birds' unique songs, and bird counters noted in their reports that

Kate Reasor and Doris Eicher



the local eastern bluebird count had sharply declined. The reason: unusually harsh winters and loss of habitat attributed to rapid urban development on Evansville's west side. If the birds were to survive and thrive in the region, they would need their own "urban development."

Banking on their friendship with Rice, himself a bird enthusiast, Helen Buck and Doris Eicher sent a letter proposing building bluebird houses on the trail the Boy Scouts created, noting the "bluebirds prefer to nest in holes in wooden fence posts or in cavities in older trees. Authorities agree that boxes built to specification and mounted about fence-post height on the edge of timber or underbrush will attract and encourage the bluebirds to nest. We would be grateful for your permission to proceed with the Bluebird Trail."

Rice loved the idea and instructed the Club to meet with Paul Grimes, the University's Superintendent of Buildings and Ground, to determine their location on the trail, with the understanding that if the campus grew, the trail would have to be relocated.

Members of the Westwood Garden Club and Audubon Society of Evansville met to put together 22 bluebird houses with donated wood. Virgil Eicher and Richard Buck put the houses up on the trail and everyone waited to see what would happen. The Club knew bluebirds can lay eggs up to three times a year, if the conditions are right.

The first year, the boxes contained 11 baby bluebirds. Buoyed by their success, the Garden Club members spent the rest of the year learning as much as they could about the identification, migration habits, feeding and

horticultural needs of birds. Their trail logs described a doe stepping out of the thicket between boxes six and seven, a Camomile in bloom, a groundhog den and a variety of snakes and turtles laying eggs by Reflection Lake. But they also noted a deadly competitor: the house sparrow. They were taking over the bluebirds' nesting boxes.

The invasive nonnative sparrows were introduced in the United States in the mid-1850s as a means of controlling the caterpillar population that were destroying Basswood trees. By the 1970s their population had exploded, and the aggressive little birds were taking over the nesting sites of native birds such as purple martin, tree swallows, chickadee and eastern bluebirds. They harassed, attacked and killed those native birds and destroyed the eggs in the nests they invaded.

To stop the carnage, the Garden Club members altered their bluebird box design and began removing the sparrows' nests found in bluebird boxes. They also plugged the holes as soon as the bluebirds finished nesting to prevent other birds from using them.

The Buck and Eicher families began speaking to local groups, churches and schools about the observations on USI's trails and their conservation efforts on behalf of the eastern bluebird. Donations poured in. The Eichers put many miles on their car, as their love for the bluebirds took them to Illinois and Kentucky. It was a family affair until 1977 when Virgil Eicher died following open-heart surgery. Soon after that, there was an unexplained absence of bluebirds noted in the field logs. The records show no bluebirds visited the Bluebird Trail boxes from 1978-1981.

Richard Buck and Virgil Eicher



## EVOLUTION OF RESEARCH

By the 1990s, the original members of the Garden Club were no longer monitoring the Bluebird Trail's boxes, but Dr. Chuck Price, Professor Emeritus of Teacher Education, had taken an interest. Like the Bucks and Eichers, Price found great satisfaction taking photos of nature and came across the bluebird boxes that had fallen into disrepair and set out to revive the project. He took his science education students out on the trail to give them an example of bringing the outdoors to the classroom, inserted a small camera into one of the birdboxes and wrote a grant to support the monitoring of the birdboxes by USI students.


Along with Don Fleming, Property Supervisor and Services Coordinator, Price established 50 new birdboxes in the grasslands surrounding campus, igniting a new wave of bluebird study involving USI students from across disciplines.

After Price retired, Dr. Jim Bandoli, Professor Emeritus of Biology, took over. As campus grew so did the threat to the bluebird population and other natural wildlife. As a researcher in wildlife biology, Bandoli knew the conservation of campus wildlife was important to future research by biology students and faculty. He recruited students from his wildlife biology class to monitor and record bluebird activity. Most of the students weren't going to be wildlife conservationists or park rangers, but they all loved being outdoors.

The birdbox research took a turn when Dr. Alex Champagne, Associate Professor of Biology, took over when Bandoli retired in 2017. Champagne's team of students collected information to evaluate habitat preference

of nesting birds, observe yearly fluctuations in species composition and study the impact of climate change on the timing of breeding. If the summers are too hot and dry, do the birds go elsewhere? Do they lay fewer eggs because there is not enough food supply for the bluebirds?

The research has revealed the eastern bluebirds now lay their eggs approximately 12 days earlier than their predecessors in the 1970s, indicating the bluebirds are adjusting and responding to increasingly warmer temperatures. Other things have changed too. Unlike their predecessors, who recorded the data in physical field logs, today's birdbox monitors enter their data into Google Sheets via smart phones.

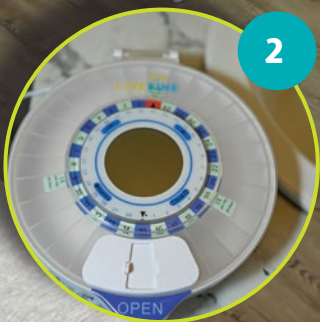
Legacy, however, endures—whether it's the Nurrenbern and Steinkamp families who still farm on this side of town or the progress afforded campus thanks to the donations made by Mary Nurrenbern, and others, 60 years ago. Even the work of the Westwood Garden Club lives on, as another generation of USI faculty and students take to the trails, checking bluebird boxes to help research and understand how commercial expansion and residential growth not only impact bluebirds but us as well. 



*Thanks to USI Archives, Bobbie Steinkamp Richardson, Charles Steinkamp, Willard Library, Dr. Chuck Price, Dr. Jim Bandoli, Dr. Alex Champagne, Jessica Yorgenson, Kaitlyn Knox, Sue Vernier, Roberta Heiman's A Story of Leadership: Southern Indiana Higher Education, Inc., USI Foundation, Richard and Helen Buck, Virgil and Doris Eicher, the Westwood Garden Club and the National Audubon Society for contributions to this story.*



3



2



# BEHIND THE SCENE

In the heart of USI's vibrant campus stands the Minka Learning Lab for Living Well, a federal and Bronstein Foundation funded initiative of USI's Bronstein Center for Healthy Aging and Wellness, a USI Foundation initiative. Minka is Japanese for "house of the people" and it's a model for what homes can be for those seeking to age in place. Equipped with smart technology controlled by artificial intelligence (AI), it's designed to support multiple ages and abilities.

USI's Minka is a test ground for home technology that makes life easier, safer and enables social connectivity for older adults to live independently. The 640-square-foot home has three different tiers of AI. The first tier includes technology that handles everyday tasks. The second tier is a more advanced language processing system. The third tier is technology that improves emotional well-being and independence for people living with dementia.

1. **Activity and Leisure:** Many of the AI devices are designed to eliminate daily life chores in order to make life easier and more enjoyable. They include contactless flush toilet and sinks, a central charging station, a timer-activated coffee maker, all-in-one washer/dryer unit and more.
2. **Safety:** Ensuring health and safety in the Minka begins with an ADA-graded entry up the walk and into the home. Inside, the bed sensors turn lights on and off as a person gets in/out of bed in the middle of the night, a timer-controlled medicine dispenser unlocks the correct medication compartments at the time prescribed, the lift chair gives a boost and the shower has a zero-entry threshold.
3. **Social Connectedness:** Human engagement is key to emotional well-being. SHURI, a telepresence robot connected to a tablet and guided by someone remote, allows in-home visits with family, friends and even physicians. Fur-friends are family too, and an automatic pet feeder helps ensure they don't go hungry.
4. **Physical and Mental:** The Minka includes JOI, a system specifically designed to help people with dementia, that creates personalized "joy pops" through photos and videos. The air purifier filters out 99.97% of airborne particles and an aromatherapy device provides scents selected to stimulate mood. Outside, there are raised flowerbeds and more for engaged activity.
5. **Student Involvement:** In addition to the involvement of health profession disciplines in the Minka, senior engineering students designed and constructed an accessible patio and porch addition, a walkway to a rain garden and a rain garden water catchment system. A senior project in computer information systems conducted research and wrote white papers defining the need for all devices to be operational under one management system.



Check out this interactive video of the Minka with this QR code.



# ONE MOMENT, PLEASE



## LEARNING BY DOING

As I began my undergraduate studies, I quickly learned the value of higher education through my newfound independence. I was able to enroll in courses that further explored my interest of natural history discovered through backpacking and camping with the Boy Scouts. My university's geology program delivered new experiences to me, including field trips, firsthand activities and a global perspective. In the summer of 1994, I was a student in an immersive capstone for seven weeks in southwest Montana offered by another institution.

Through learning by doing and intensive training, I gained the ability to construct geologic maps through field observations, identify the distribution of natural resources, mitigate environmental threats and work as part of a team to solve problems. My success would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of faculty, staff, friends and family, and inspired my quest to deliver meaningful educational experiences to students at the University of Southern Indiana.

**Dr. William Elliott**  
Interim Dean and Professor of Geology  
Pott College of Science, Engineering, and  
Education



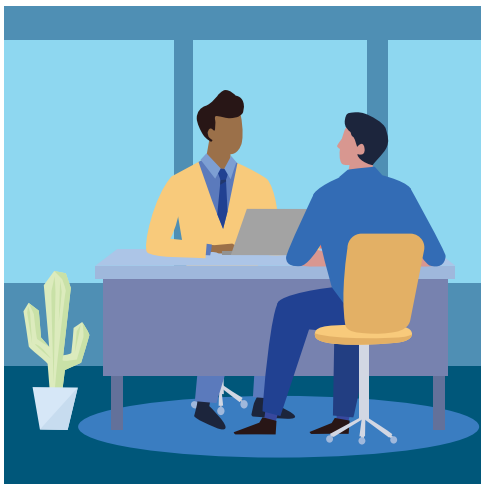
## AROUND THE WORLD

My grandfather on my father's side passed away when my father was 12. My father's family were farmers in India who had lost their farmland during the British colonial rule. My grandmother didn't have access to formal education and so it largely fell upon my father to try and find ways to support his mom and siblings. He was a sharp student in school, often called upon by his classmates to help with homework and he very generously obliged. His classmates' parents took notice of this giving side of my father, and in turn, helped him and the family.

Education (literally) opened doors to the kind of life that my father, his siblings and my grandmother were able to lead. In turn, it made my life possible. Education is thus very personal to me, and my mission, as an educator and administrator, has always been increasing access to the kinds of competencies that can be life-changing—the kinds of competencies that the Romain College of Business is continuously striving and innovating to build.

**Dr. Sudesh Mujumdar**  
Dean and Professor of Economics  
Romain College of Business

## THE DEANS OF USI'S FOUR COLLEGES SHARE PERSONAL INSIGHTS FROM THEIR LIVES THAT SUM UP THE VALUE OF EDUCATION.

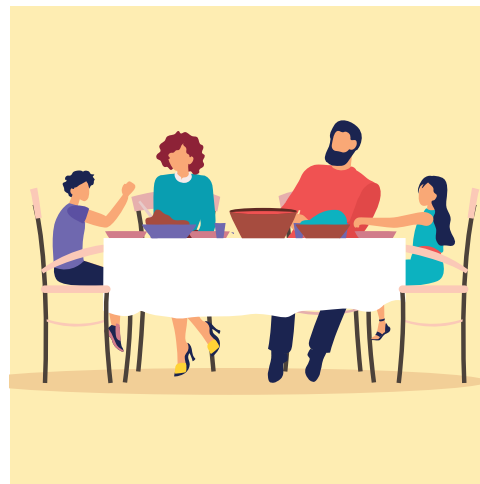


### WORKFORCE WONDER

After college, I got a job at IBM minding a network of computers. One day, my boss asked me to lunch. I met him in his office, and as he was grabbing his blazer, we made small talk. I mentioned something about being an English major. He looked at me, nonplussed. "You weren't an English major!" "I was," I said. "Didn't you read my transcript?" (He hadn't.) Back when I filled out the employment application, I wrote "E-N-G" on the line that asked for my college major. It was a short line, and while I meant "English", I think IBM read it as "engineering." After I got the job, I felt like an impostor at times, working alongside others who I assumed had studied computer science and engineering. But I was as good at my job as any of them. I excelled in training because I was an imaginative reader who asked good questions. I could size up and communicate problems quickly. As I stood there, my boss pulled my file and read through it. "Well, I'll be!" he said. "So, what now? Am I fired?" "Ha! No," he said. "Heck, I was a music major."

The point's implicit, but it's consistent with my message that a liberal arts degree is a great workforce degree.

**Dr. Del Doughty**  
Dean and Professor of English  
College of Liberal Arts



### DINNER TALK

Being prepared for life, especially adulthood, was a discussion my parents had with me many times growing up. We discussed the costs and the possible real-world challenges I might face. They shared their experiences with me. My value for education, including higher education, is rooted in those discussions. My family members mostly worked in healthcare and frequently discussed the "blood and guts" of complex healthcare issues, often literally, at the dinner table. When it came time for me to make choices about what I wanted to do with my life, I knew I had to do something that was not only meaningful to me but also helped and empowered others.

My many years of education have instilled in me the knowledge, skills and competencies to work on complex healthcare challenges, complicated diseases and to share evidence for effective treatments. I am thankful to the educators and mentors who helped me through many years of my education. I learned that not only can education be life-changing, but the outcomes of that education can also be lifesaving.

**Dr. Julie McCullough**  
Dean and Associate Professor of Nutrition  
College of Nursing and Health Professions

# WORLD | View



Representing 16 nations from around the globe, 60 USI international alumni came together in Osnabrück, Germany, for a first-ever reunion. The international alumni reunion emphasized three important milestones for USI: 1) USI has graduated 52,000+ students since its founding in 1965, 2) the Center for International Programs celebrates its 25th anniversary in 2023 and 3) USI's longest standing international partnership was

established more than 30 years ago with the University of Osnabrück and the University of Applied Sciences Osnabrück.

"Some of the alumni traveled from as far away as Mexico, Panama and California to attend the event. Some people had not seen each other in over 20 years. The sense of connectedness was palpable, as we shared special memories and caught up with each other's lives," said Heidi Gregori-Gahan, USI International

Advancement Specialist and adviser to the International Alumni Network (IAN).

The city of Osnabrück, called the Peace City because of its historic significance, is not only Evansville's sister city but home to the University of Osnabrück and the University of Applied Sciences Osnabrück. USI and these institutions have shared a 30-year exchange partnership, in which more than 425 students, faculty and staff have crossed over the Atlantic

Ocean to engage in an exchange of ideas and knowledge.

During the visit, USI's President Ronald Rochon and Dr. Susanne Menzel-Riedl, President of the University of Osnabrück, and Dr. Andrea Braun von Reinersdorff, Vice President for International Affairs from the University of Applied Sciences Osnabrück, renewed their commitment to the partnership.

***"When we engage with alumni and help them connect with each other and their University community, it reminds us that creating these meaningful relationships provides a greater understanding of the world, making it smaller and more accessible."***

Janet Johnson M'05, Director of Alumni Engagement and Volunteer USI



# Class Notes

## STAY IN TOUCH

EMAIL us  
at [alumni@usi.edu](mailto:alumni@usi.edu).

UPDATE your information  
and send photos  
via the form  
at  
[USI.edu/AlumniUpdate](http://USI.edu/AlumniUpdate).

*Class notes may be edited  
for length or clarity.*

*We regret that  
we may not  
be able to use all  
submitted photos, and  
reserve the right to select  
which ones are included.*



## 1970s

**Don Daniel '73**, communications, has retired from his position as a Police Officer at Reno Police Department in Reno, Nevada.

**Dan Green '78**, psychology, is Senior Director Member Services Advisor of Federal Home Loan Bank of Indianapolis in Indianapolis, Indiana.

## 1980s

**Michael Moore '80**, electrical engineering technology, has retired as Director of Business Development at Nidec in Saint Louis, Missouri. His group developed all the motors that power the Amazon Robotic Warehouse Robots. He now resides in Saint Johns, Florida.

**Joey Barnett '81**, biology, received USI's 2023 Suzanne A. Nicholson Leadership Award due to his exemplary service to the University and his genuine interest in the success of USI students. Barnett has mentored several USI students and played a role in their acceptance to medical school and PhD programs. He established the Medical Professions Scholarship Endowment to provide generous scholarship support for graduates of the Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation Medical Professions Academy who attend USI.

**Janet Campbell '82**, sociology, is a Mental Health Counselor at Deaconess

Cross Pointe Outpatient Services in Evansville. She has been there for over 30 years, and recently achieved her master's in clinical psychology.

**Alen Paul Friz '82**, biology, and his family are living life on a farm. (Left to right: Alan Friz, wife Aimee, children Andreas, Alega, Augustine, Victoria, Ambrose, Elena, Sonja, Adolf, Aidan.) [1]

**Charmaine McDowell '85**, English, political science, was awarded the 2023 M. Edward Jones Engagement Award by the University of Southern Indiana's Outreach and Engagement.

**D. Keith Jewell '86 M'91**, accounting, business administration, is Interim President and CEO of Riverview Hospital in Noblesville, Indiana.

**Patrick Sullivan '86**, communications, business administration, is Learning and Development Specialist at Masco Support Services in Mooresville, North Carolina.

**Peggy Jo Stone '87**, political science, now an 88-year-old former teacher, always longed for an education with the dream of becoming a lawyer one day but lacked the support of her husband. After her children were grown, she came to USI. "I met other women who had a story so much like mine and we decided to organize a club. Now there are more women going to college than men; the world is ever changing."

**Steven "Steve" Dealph '88**, marketing, completes one of his bucket list goals by attending all four of the Tennis

Grand Slams in the Australian Open in Melbourne, Australia. [2]

**Bruce Dockery '88**, elementary education, was inducted into the Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame in May 2023.

**Anthony Goodwin '89**, radiologic technology, graduated from Harvard Medical School with a postgraduate certification in May 2023.

## 1990s

**Jeffrey Somers '90**, economics, political science, is Vice President of Business Development at Greenfield Banking Company in Greenfield, Indiana.

**Kelley Coures '92**, political science, has published *Out in Evansville: An LGBTQ+ History of River City*, a book about LGBTQ+ history here in Evansville. A portion of the sales will go toward River City Pride, Evansville's LGBTQ+ organization, whose board he served on.

**Stacie (Yeager) Barker '92**, elementary education, **Candace (Conley) Beidl '92**, communications, **Kristen (Morse) Northern, Elizabeth (Kuebler) Elpers '92**, elementary education, and **Cindy (Houston) Stierwalt '04**, dental hygiene, members of Delta Zeta sorority, visited USI's campus last spring for a visit down memory lane. [3]

**Tess (Libbert) Fleming '93**, business administration, joined health



information technology corporation, IQVIA, in March 2022 as Principal, Digital Enablement.

**Jenifer Gossman '94 M'11**, business administration, elementary education, is Cloud Migration Specialist at CDW in Evansville.

**Sharie (Sweet) Peterson '94**, Spanish studies, is a High School Teacher at Heritage Christian School in Indianapolis, Indiana.

**Eric Crayner '95, political science**, is the Lead Firearms Instructor for the training section of the Lexington Police Department in Lexington, Kentucky. In the photo (center, blue shirt), he is discussing aspects of training in low light conditions with members of a recruit class. [4]

**Elizabeth Beck '95**, biophysics, geology, is a Senior Consultant at Antea Group USA in St. Paul, Minnesota.

**Brent "Andy" Julian '96**, political science, social science (teaching), is Superintendent at Fairfield Community High School in Fairfield, Illinois.

**Mike Whicker '98**, English (teaching), wrote and published another novel. "It is selling well. I have written 28 books, 25 are in a series of thrillers, and three books are not in that series. Two of my novels, *Invitation to Valhalla* and *Children of the Night* are under movie options by a group from Hollywood. Many of my books can be found in libraries around the country and various bookstores." [5]

## 2000s

**Norma (Lawrence) Unser '00**, public relations and advertising, and her husband, Al Unser Jr., two-time Indianapolis 500 winner, rode in the Indianapolis 500 Parade Lap May 2023. [6]

**Jason Reckelhoff '00 M'03**, computer information systems, business administration, is Lead Program Manager at Bud's Harley-Davidson Sales Incorporated in Evansville.

**Travis Gillison '01**, radio and television, is Helpdesk Manager of Exact IT Consulting in Indianapolis, Indiana.

**Adool Ferguson '02**, computer information systems, is Head of Global Cybersecurity at Greif in Delaware, Ohio.

**Rachael (Harris) Hoskins '02**, business administration, is Senior Global Human Resources Analyst at Walt Disney Company in Orlando, Florida.

**Charles Miller '02**, political science, is a Judge for Marion County Superior Court in Indianapolis, Indiana.

**Joy (McBride) Cook '03 M'09 D'22**, health services, radiologic and imaging sciences, secondary education, educational leadership, has joined the American Red Cross' Board of Directors for the Southwest Indiana Red Cross Chapter. She is an Associate Professor and Chair of the Radiologic and Imaging Sciences Program at USI.

**Ryan Owens '03**, general physical education, is Assistant Basketball Coach at the University of Notre Dame in Notre Dame, Indiana.

**Jennifer (Clements) Williams '03**, accounting, is a Partner for FORVIS in Louisville, Kentucky. She is the Louisville-Southern Indiana Market Leader for the firm's Nonprofit, Education & Public Sector Practices.

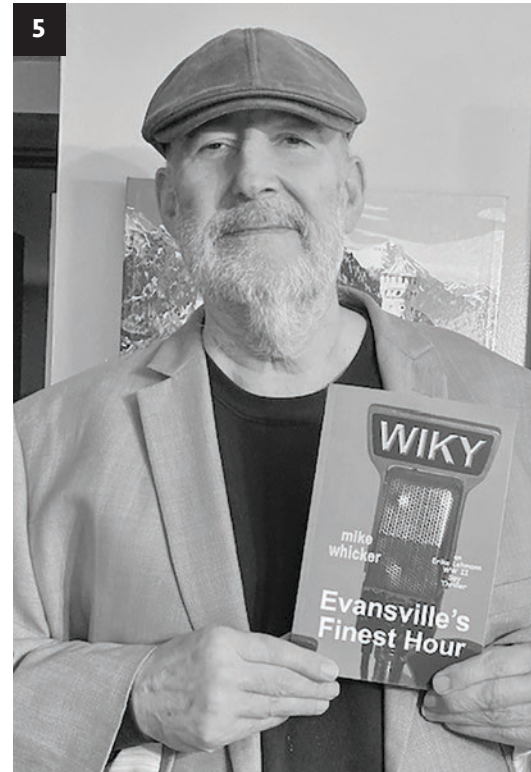
**James Gladish II '03**, health services, individualized studies, is an Emergency Physician with Paradigm at Daviess Community Hospital in Washington, Indiana.

**Eric Goggins '04**, elementary education, has been promoted to Superintendent of North Gibson School Corporation in Princeton, Indiana.

**Bradley Youngman '04**, public relations and advertising, is Sheriff of Daviess County Sheriff's Office in Owensboro, Kentucky.

**Sara (Dunnewold) Nethery '05**, elementary education, is Principal at Bates Elementary for Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville, Kentucky.

**Eric Sharp '05**, public relations and advertising, is Executive Director for Lakeview Estates of Phoenix Senior



Living in Birmingham, Alabama. He has accepted the PSL Impact Award on behalf of Lakeview Estates in Roswell, Georgia. The Impact Award recognizes the most improved community and is awarded annually to the community that embodies the determination of the Phoenix. Never losing focus on what their community can be even when, maybe, others can't see it.

**Kevin Dartt '06 M'22**, management, engineering management, is Project Manager at Nix Custom Fabrication Facility in Poseyville, Indiana.

**Corey Goers '06**, marketing, is a Financial Advisor for Prudential Financial Incorporated in Avon, Indiana.

**H. Lee (Fritz) Kline '06**, history, social science (teaching) is an Academic Facilitator at Kokomo Center Schools in Kokomo, Indiana.

**Michael LaGrange '06**, engineering, is Operations Director at Embry Enterprises Incorporated in Evansville.

**Jeffrey Mitchell '06**, biology, has started his own Podiatric Medicine business as

a Physician at Ankle & Foot Centers of America in Franklin, Tennessee. He now has a business partner along with multiple offices growing and expanding in the Nashville area.

**Chad Dockery '07**, history, is the Director of Athletics at Reitz Memorial High School in Evansville.

**Morgan (Laswell) Rignall '07 M'23**, sociology, accounting, is thrilled to announce her most recent degree from USI. She is a member of Beta Gamma Sigma Honor Society and a Controllor/Court Deputy at Chapter 13 Bankruptcy Trustee for attorney Robert Musgrave. [7]

**Stephen Sims '07**, radio and television, is Director of Marketing and Communications at Prince of Peace Catholic Church in Madison, Indiana.

**Emily Taylor '07**, journalism, is a Senior Academic Advisor at University of Evansville in Evansville.

**Taya Carothers '08**, international studies, Spanish studies, is Manager of Qatar Support Office at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois.

**Melissa Schmitt '08 M'13**, special education, elementary education, is Owner of Schmitt Genetics in Boonville, Indiana.

**Michele (Sepulveda) Bowman '09**, elementary education, and **Jacob Bowman '10**, industrial supervision, visited Puerto Rico from north to south and east to west. They explored El Yunque National Park Rainforest, ziplined The Monster and The Beast, and saw where Michele's father was born and raised. [8]

**Lora (Traylor) Edwards '09**, health services, is a Realtor and Broker for Century 21 Scheetz in Fishers, Indiana.

**Bretta Gannon '09**, mathematics, is a Mathematics Teacher at Davidson Academy in Nashville, Tennessee.

**Joshua Lichtenfeld '09**, journalism, is a Sales Consultant at Schepel Cadillac in Merrillville, Indiana.

**Jacklyn Oakley '09**, biology, is the Medical Director of Weight Loss Solutions at Deaconess Gateway Hospital in Newburgh, Indiana.

## 2010s

**Stephen Baylor '10**, engineering, is Senior Design Engineer at GE Appliances in Evansville.

**Kimberly (Gottwald) Cornman '10**, public relations and advertising, early childhood education, is Clinical Director at Possibilities Northeast, LLC in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

**Emily (Crippen) Hall '11**, business administration, is Associate Director of Professional Development & Student Employment at Wabash College in Crawfordsville, Indiana.

**Elizabeth (Mathis) Langton '11**, biology, is a Clinical Pharmacist at Elkhart General Hospital in Elkhart, Indiana.

**Jonah Otto '12**, history, political science, is an Assistant Professor at Universitat Augsburg in Augsburg, Bavaria, Germany.

**Rebecca West '12 M'20**, finance, accounting, is proud to say her oldest child, Anden West, age 18 recently graduated from North Knox High School



and is an incoming freshman at USI for the fall semester.

**Adam Brothers '14**, management, marketing, is Director of Development at ICU Mobile in Akron, Ohio.

**Brandon Shaw '14**, sport management, is Director of Sales of ZeroCarb LYFE in Evansville.

**Micah Konkler '15**, sport management, is a Realtor for ERA First Advantage Realty Incorporated in Newburgh, Indiana.

**Jacquelyn (Taylor) McCann '15 M'18**, biology, engineering management, is Senior Process Facilitator at AstraZeneca in Mount Vernon, Indiana.

**Keith Miller '15 M'20**, health services, business administration, is Chief Executive Officer at Lawrence County Memorial Hospital in Lawrenceville, Illinois.

**Teresa Bowling '16**, sociology, criminal justice studies, graduated from the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department Leadership Academy and has been assigned as a Counselor for the 84th Indiana State Police Recruit Academy.

**Denton Ice '16**, communication studies, earned his real estate license and began a new career at FC Tucker Emge as a real estate professional. He and his wife also welcomed their third child (their first daughter) in August 2022. "I am thankful for the place God has me and my family and look forward to seeing what the future holds!" [9]

**Ashton (Mossberger) Logan '16**, social work, and her husband celebrated their one-year wedding anniversary by visiting Athens, Greece. [10]

**Elizabeth Damm Schmitt '16 M'21**, accounting and professional services, human resources, is a Business Teacher at Bosse High School for Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation in Evansville.

**Jessica Swank '16**, criminal justice, sociology, has been promoted to Lieutenant and Assistant Jail Commander at Boone County Sheriff's Office in Lebanon, Indiana.

**Timothy Burklow '17**, management, is Value Stream Leader at Anchor Industries Incorporated in Evansville.

**Florence (Takaendesa) Gomani '17**, economics, mathematics, is a Data Analyst at IH Securities in Harare, Zimbabwe.

**Timothy Luczak '17**, public relations and advertising, is Dean of Enrollment Management at Indiana University McKinney School of Law in Indianapolis, Indiana.

**Morgan Marczak '17 M'18**, social work, is a therapist at The Willows Good Samaritan Hospital in Vincennes, Indiana.

**Shameka Bell '18**, health services, is a Telemedicine Virtual Health Administrator for Optum Healthcare Solutions in Indianapolis, Indiana. She also facilitates a community health social impact student organization at IU/PUI.

**Morganne Carpenter '18**, criminal justice, is Detective at Boone County Sheriff's Office in Lebanon, Indiana.

**Aaron Furman '18**, sport management, is Minor League Clubhouse Manager for the Chicago Cubs in Chicago, Illinois.

**Alexandra (Flora) Mahoney '18**, exercise science, is Assistant Athletic Trainer at Franklin College of Indiana in Franklin, Indiana.

**Kyla Pryor '18**, health services, is Administrative Assistant in Cardiology at Riley Hospital for Children through Indiana University Health in Indianapolis, Indiana. She also is engaged to Cameron Maynor. [11]

**Anthony Sanders Jr. M'18**, business administration, is Principal Specialist of Quality Assurance at Cardinal Health in Indianapolis, Indiana.

**Jacob Archibald M'19**, secondary education, business administration, is a Health Equity Consultant at United Healthcare in Louisville, Kentucky.

**Holli (Melton) Blanford '19**, political science, is Public Information Officer for City of Henderson in Henderson, Kentucky.

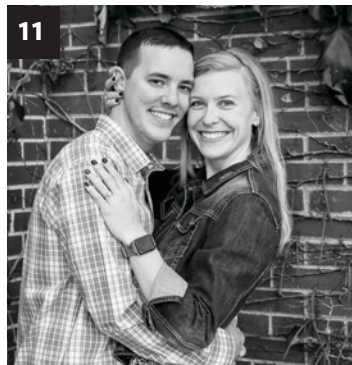
**Abby Scully '19**, health services, is a Front Desk Associate at Forté Sports Medicine and Orthopedics. She resides in Fishers, Indiana.



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**Sabrina Sturgeon '19**, communication studies, is Project Coordinator for Inclusive Excellence at Council of Independent Colleges in Washington, D.C.

**Logan Tedrow '19**, history, political science, is an Associate Attorney at Ziemer, Stayman, Weitzel & Shoulders, LLC in Evansville.

**Jessica (Coleman) Tedrow '19**, biochemistry, German studies, is a Resident Physician at Indiana University Vincennes Psychiatry Residency in Vincennes, Indiana. She graduated from Indiana University School of Medicine and was a recipient of the Patricia A. Keener Award in May 2023.

**Kristina Washington M'19**, business administration, is Associate Director of Finance and Administration at University of Chicago in Chicago, Illinois.

## 2020s

**Eric Ayers M'20**, healthcare administration, is the Founder and

CEO of emc2, LLC, a personal coaching, consulting and content creation business in Englewood, Tennessee.

**Holly Bittner '20**, public relations and advertising, was named Hometown Hero in March 2023 by raising money for Granted Evansville to fund wishes for terminally ill children in the Tri-state area. Her team "The Star-Spangled Dancers" raised thousands of dollars for the mission.

**Pamela Davis '20 M'21**, psychology, sport management, is a Golf Professional at Bloomington Country Club in Bloomington, Indiana.

**Drelin Julkes '20**, individualized studies, is Director of Inclusion at Camp Fire Wilani in Springfield, Oregon.

**Gunnar Lynch '20**, biology, graduated in May 2023 from the University of Evansville Physician Assistant Program with a master of physician assistant science degree, passed the Physician Assistant National Certification Exam and is now Physician Assistant-Certified.

**John Martin '20**, English (Teaching), is a 7th/8th Grade English and Language Arts

Teacher at Lincoln Elementary School for the Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation in Evansville.

**Reba Riggs '20**, English, is Associate Financial Representative at Northwestern Mutual Financial Network in Evansville.

**Ilyas Batyrshayev M'21**, engineering management, is the founder of a company called Superchem, which manufactures liquid and powder detergents in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

**Irelane Enoch '21**, biology, is a Clinical Specialist at Stryker Medical in Evansville.

**Joseph Diego Ferrer M'21**, data analytics, was awarded the Knight Scholarship from Columbia Southern University. "The merit-based scholarship entitles me to earn my master of public health tuition free! I begin my new graduate degree program in Fall 2023."

**Sydney (Mitchell) Harris '21**, social work, recently published a children's book titled *Some Bodies Need a Little Help*, a story that cultivates her passion for inclusion and acceptance. **[12]**

**Alexis Osgerby '22**, psychology, recently completed a master's in forensic psychology from Arizona State University. She lives in Evansville and is a Mobile Crisis Team Responder at Southwestern Behavioral Healthcare. **[13]**

**Bryana Schreiber M'22**, business administration, is Program Director of the Indiana Humanities Council in Indianapolis, Indiana. She served as an adjunct professor of business at Franklin College in the spring, helping develop future leaders. Along with this she has started a new business, Uplifting Fitness, which donates profits to charities in and around Johnson County.

**Abby Sink '22**, public relations and advertising, is Compliance Specialist at Meetings & Events International in Evansville.

**Justis Clifford M'23**, business administration, is Chief Strategy Officer for Lorain-Medina Rural Electric and North Central Electric Cooperatives in Burbank, Ohio.



## Marriages

**Lauren (Leshner) Patz '04 M'05**, social work, and **Kyle Patz '05**, accounting and professional services, were married July 2022. The couple lives in Indianapolis, Indiana. **[14]**

**Jennifer (Stilwell) Taylor '06 M'18**, public relations and advertising, art, engineering management, and **Noah Taylor** were married February 2023. **[15]**

**Colton Vincent '13**, psychology, and **Paige (Zint) Vincent '16**, health services, radiologic and imaging sciences, were married October 2022. They went to Europe for their honeymoon. "One of the things we did was see a Manchester City game (our favorite team) against Arsenal this year! They won 3-1 then they won the treble, which hasn't been won since 1999!" **[16]**

**Jessica (Bartley) Kipp '15**, biology, and **Alexander Kipp** were married September 2022. The couple resides in Evansville.

**Paul Blanford '17**, business administration, and **Holli (Melton)**

**Blanford '19**, political science, were married September 2022. The couple resides in Henderson, Kentucky.

**Janiese (Dash) Brooks '19**, nursing, and **Garrison Brooks** were married October 2022. The couple resides in Evansville.

**Reid Edwards '20**, economics, finance, **Emily (Miller) Edwards '22**, food and nutrition, were married May 2022. The couple was engaged in September 2020 on the third-floor balcony of the Romain College of Business. The couple resides in Olney, Illinois.

**Rowena (Labo) Mendoza '21**, elementary education, and **Mark Mendoza** were married July 2022. She is a Middle School Science Teacher at Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation, and the couple resides in Evansville.

**Sarah (Brayshaw) Rose '21**, nursing, and **Connor Rose '21**, geology, were married November 2022. The couple resides in Evansville.

**Nathan Hobgood '21**, mechanical engineering, **Sydney (Ingler) Hobgood '22**,

biology, were married May 2023. She is attending Indiana University School of Medicine, and he is a mechanical engineer at RTM Engineering Consultants in Evansville. **[17]**

## Births

**Eric Harris '07**, English (teaching), and **Myra (Wheatley) Harris '11 M'12**, social work, welcomed their third child, **Leighton** in July 2022. **[18]**

**Megan (Miller) Davison '08 M'21**, psychology, healthcare administration, and **Jordan Davison** welcomed **Hazel** in February 2023. **[19]**

**Floyd Bishop '10**, management, and **Amanda Bishop '11 M'14**, management, business administration, welcomed their third child, **Sawyer** in October 2022.

**Jillian (Piatt) Ward '13**, food and nutrition, and **Samuel Ward**, welcomed **Millicent** in March 2023, little sister to **London**. **[20]**

**Leela Roach '14**, psychology, and **Matthew Roach** welcomed **Ember** in February 2023.

**Amanda (Callahan) Caesar '16**, communication studies, and **Jeff Caesar** welcomed **Truett** in July 2022.

**Nicole (Thorbecke) Lary '18**, English (teaching), and **Kolby Lary '18 M'20**, sport management, welcomed **Gracelynn** in April 2023. **[21]**

## In Memoriam

**Helen "Marie" Slaton '72**, social science (teaching), of Santa Monica, California, died December 7, 2022. She was Director of Religious Education for Our Lady of Malibu Catholic Church and loved to travel, visiting all 50 states and some countries overseas. Marie enjoyed photography and loved her dog Tedi Tid Bit.

**Pamela (Knapp) Spear '73**, dental assisting certificate, of Fort Branch, Indiana, died



April 16, 2023. One of her favorite things to do in life was to cook and bake for others. Cooking and baking brought her so much joy. She also enjoyed spending time with her ten grandkids and attending their school and sports events. She was an avid reader and loved God's word.

**Mary Lynn (Williams) Bell '75**, elementary education, of Evansville, died March 7, 2023. She was a kind and gentle woman who always supported others. Whether she was saying the rosary for you or slipping you a \$20 bill (but don't tell Rodney), she was always your biggest cheerleader wanting you to take every opportunity in life to venture out and have fun.

**Brenda Helming '75**, elementary education, of Evansville, died February 10, 2023. She taught at Lockyear Business College, Ivy Tech and the Evansville Blind Association. Over the years, she helped many people receive their GEDs. She retired from Tri-State Orthopedics after 17 years.

**Delores (Pritchett) Strupp '75 M'05**, mathematics, industrial management, of Evansville, died February 5, 2023. She worked for Bristol Myers, Benardin,

Vectren and most recently, Mitchell, before retiring. She was an active and devoted member of the church, a supporter of Vanderburgh County 4-H, a member of the Vanderburgh County Extension Homemakers and Farm Bureau Board of Directors.

**Cathy (Williams) Besing '76**, business education, of Evansville, died July 21, 2023. She was a compassionate woman, loved to travel and explore unusual places, and was a doting mother, grandmother, sister and aunt. Cathy was an accomplished pianist, animal lover and held a black belt in karate.

**Lora (Mattocks) Altstadt '77**, elementary education, of Evansville, died July 27, 2023. She loved to provide a welcoming experience to the people who participated at the many events held at the Altstadt home and pole barn in Perry County. Included in this were events held for the Serra Club of Dubois County, the alumni of St. Meinrad Seminary and the Seminarians in the school at St. Meinrad, Indiana.

**William "Bill" Holsey Sr. '78**, elementary education, of Evansville, died February 22, 2023. He had a passion for education and

was a teacher for the Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation for 41 years before retiring. Bill was a member of the Evansville Masonic Lodge and Commander of the Sons at the American Legion 265. He volunteered at the Hadi Shrine Hospital Staff, was the V.A. Clinic Driver Coordinator and a former President of the Lorraine Park Neighborhood Association.

**Kathleen (Alvey) Hennig '79**, health services, of Evansville, died June 5, 2023. She was an avid University of Kentucky fan and had an unrivaled knowledge of college athletics, as well as an encyclopedia of sports. Kathy loved her nephews and was considered a second mother to them. She also had an enduring love for her dogs.

**Karen Darnall Fleck '81**, English, of Evansville, died May 15, 2023. She was an amazing mom and dedicated wife who loved teaching nature-based learning with a fiery passion. Karen was a Master Gardener who loved finding native plants to incorporate into her yard. She would be mad to know anyone was crying over her death and want them to go buy a plant instead.

**Brad Gentry '82**, marketing, of Evansville, died March 19, 2023. He worked as a Courier

## USI FAMILY Retiring

### POTT COLLEGE OF SCIENCE, ENGINEERING, AND EDUCATION

Clarissa Willis, Professor Emerita of  
Education

10 years

### COLLEGE OF NURSING AND HEALTH PROFESSIONS

Mellisa Hall, Professor Emerita of Nursing

18.5 years

Karen Parker, Assistant Professor Emerita  
of Nursing

24.5 years

Constance Swenty D'11, Assistant Dean  
Emerita and Professor Emerita of Nursing

17 years

Constance Walker, Director Emerita of  
Advising, Nursing and Health Professions

13 years

### ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

Michael Auberry, Lead Custodial Worker

20 years

Yvonne Beavin, Senior Administrative  
Associate

14 years

David Estel, Lead Desktop Support  
Technician

25 years

Mohammed Khayum, Provost Emeritus and  
Professor Emeritus of Economics

32 years

Angela Martin, Help Desk Assistant

32 years

Kay Myrick, Administrative Assistant of  
Lifelong Learning

23 years

Suzanne Schroeder, Senior Administrative  
Associate

27 years



17

for Blue Ribbon Couriers. Brad was a loving husband, father and grandfather. He was the epitome of an outdoorsman, enjoying hunting, fishing, bird watching and gardening.

**Roger Wollenmann '83**, accounting, of Evansville, died June 14, 2023. He worked as a Sales Associate for many years, and enjoyed walking, reading, puzzles, gardening and watching movies. Roger especially loved spending time with his family and friends.

**John Devine Jr. '85**, biology, of Chicago, Illinois, died December 14, 2022. He had a lucrative career in toxicology and was a dedicated and hardworking individual. What truly defined John, however, was his unwavering commitment to family and friends. He had a wide range of interests and hobbies, including gardening, traveling and baseball (his favorite teams were the St. Louis Cardinals and New England Patriots). In his free time, John enjoyed playing pool with friends and trying new restaurants around the city.

**Barbara Lanman-Givens '85**, elementary education, of Fishers, Indiana, died April 14, 2023. She taught elementary school for six years and was principal of Hedges Central Elementary School in Mt. Vernon, Indiana, from 1991 until her retirement in 2009.



18

Barbara enjoyed travel, painting, book club, playing cards with her friends and sharing her love of art with her granddaughters.

**Russell "Rusty" Hill '85**, political science, of Evansville, died May 8, 2023. He held the rank of Specialist in the U.S. Army where he was stationed in Ft. Hood, Texas, served in Seoul, South Korea, and was a member of Disabled American Veterans. Rusty worked in human resources, social services and the insurance industry. He was also a member of the World Future Society. Rusty was a historian and enjoyed collecting watches and fountain pens.

**Cynthia Abney '89**, communications, of Chandler, Indiana, died February 9, 2023. She was a selfless individual who gave her heart and soul to her family and loved ones every day. Cindy was a beautiful luminous soul, artist, adventurer, lover of plants, animals and all living things.

**Christine "Chris" (Robertson) Hoehn '89**, elementary education, of Mount Vernon, Indiana, died February 13, 2023. She was a lifelong early childhood educator, had been a foster parent and worked at Harmonie State Park. She loved spending time with family and friends, researching genealogy, camping, traveling, fishing, being in nature, working at the State Park and her monthly BUNCO nights.

**Timothy "Tim" Vancleave '89**, computer information systems, of Evansville, died July 7, 2023. He was the Senior IT Specialist for Vanderburgh County's Judicial System. Tim's strong work ethic was undeniable as he continued to work every day without a complaint, in spite of side effects from radiation and chemotherapy treatments. He coached kids' soccer, liked sci-fi movies, golfing with his dad, working crossword puzzles with his mom and playing video games with his daughter.

**Linda (Hays) Kinkel '90**, elementary education, of Evansville, died June 7, 2023. She believed in education and enrolled at USI after her children were grown. Linda taught 1st and 5th grades at Tekoppel, Fairlawn and Harper Elementary schools for several years before retiring. She enjoyed tennis, running and cooking for her family, making her legendary chocolate chip cookies, apple crumb pie, banana pineapple bread, cranberry coffee cake and Christmas sausage strata.

**Larry Paul '90**, psychology, of Evansville, died April 11, 2023. He retired as a Program Director from Vanderburgh County Superior Court, was an avid reader, enjoyed woodworking, fly fishing in the mountains, cycling, target shooting, hiking the trails of USI, volunteering for the Vanderburgh Humane Society and was a fixer-of-all-things.



19

**Gayle (Powers) Schweizer '92**, early childhood education, of Evansville, died January 26, 2023. She worked as a teacher in the Head Start Program and was a member of Holy Redeemer Catholic Church. Gayle loved spending time with her grandchildren, working in the yard and trips to Lake Barkley with her family.

**Kirk Knight '93**, business administration, of Evansville, died July 8, 2023. He had a passion for cooking and created the most delectable meals, was a member of the Flying Pigs Barbeque team and enjoyed competing alongside his friends. Kirk will be missed greatly by all who knew and loved him.

**Karen Sue (Memmer) Will '93**, nursing, of Evansville, died March 31, 2023. She worked as a Registered Nurse at Welborn Baptist Hospital prior to joining Toyota in 1998. She retired from Toyota in 2016 as a Team Leader on the assembly line. Karen enjoyed dancing at concerts when the song was good and making a positive impact on the lives of others.

**Shirley (Bateman) Bryan '95**, business, of Evansville, died January 25, 2023. She co-owned and operated Kraft Haus in North Park with her sisters, was a founding member of The Turning Pointe with her husband and a member of the Daughters



20



of the American Revolution. She had a gift for welcoming everyone into her life and was happiest when her home was filled with family, friends, laughter and joy.

**Thomas "Tom" Stofleth '96**, business, of Evansville, died March 25, 2023. Affectionately known as "Tomcat" to his close friends, Tom took great joy in running, joining a band of fellow runners and participating in half and full marathons across the country until 2020. He also enjoyed dancing at the Eagles Country Club and dressing up for Halloween to fool friends and family alike.

**Carl Hauschild '99**, social science (teaching), of Evansville, died July 6, 2023. He was a teacher for the Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation at Evans Middle School and North High School.

**Debra "Debby" (Brendel) Wells '00**, business administration, of Evansville, died May 27, 2023. She worked for Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation for 38 years, performing many positions during her tenure, and retired as Administrator, Manager of Budget and Finance and Treasurer. Debby was a proud, devoted, and loving wife, stepmother, grandmother, aunt, sister and daughter.

21



**Amy (Mounts) Casavant '03**, art, of Evansville, died April 29, 2023. She worked at Old National for almost 30 years, starting off as a teller and completing her career there as President of the Old National Bank Foundation. She was a Phenomenal Woman of USI and Community Award recipient, as well as a Live United Volunteer Award recipient. Amy served on the boards of Lampion Center, 4-C of Southern Indiana, Community One and as a mentor for the YWCA for over 20 years. She enjoyed planning and taking vacations with her family.

**Kristopher "Kris" Stunkel '04**, public relations and advertising, of Winter Park, Florida, died May 29, 2023. He worked as an Assistant Manager at Sam's Club for 23 years. An avid sports fan—his teams were Indiana University Basketball, Chicago Cubs Baseball and Colts Football. Kris looked forward to spending time at the beach, specifically St. George Island, and treasured making new memories with his family and friends.

**Patricia "Trish" (Becker) Word '06**, art, of Wadesville, Indiana, died May 17, 2023. She was a talented artist who also loved to garden, plant flowers and spend her time outdoors. Trish's love of Native American history led her to pursue her degree at USI, where she enjoyed going on "digs" and

spending time looking for artifacts. She also enjoyed listening to music, cooking for others, being a Girl Scout leader and working at the Antique Showroom in New Harmony.

**Gina Ice Woody D'12**, advanced practice, of Bradenton, Florida, died July 3, 2022. She taught at East Carolina School of Nursing for 22 years continuing through May 2022. Gina also was the Director for East Carolina Consortium for Nursing Leadership from 2015-2018, and she co-authored various medical articles in the *Journals of Nursing Education*. While not teaching as a clinical professor, Gina enjoyed planting flowers and working in the yard, baking, exercising, golfing, boating and spending time at Topsail Beach with family and friends.

**Elizabeth "Liz" Cook '16**, public relations and advertising, of Evansville, died January 26, 2023. She enjoyed being outdoors in the warm sun, by the pool at home, and traveling to Florida (her favorite beach, Perdido Key) with her daughter and family. Liz was a member of Crossroads Christian Church, played soccer in high school and was an avid Chicago Cubs fan.

## USI FAMILY

### Retiring (continued)

**Carol Schmitt '98**, Senior Systems Administrator Emerita

34 years

**Dee Ann Schneider**, Bursar Assistant

12 years

**Lee Ann Shafer**, Instructor, Emerita in Professional Studies and Advisor Emerita, Bachelor of Professional Studies

20 years

### In Memoriam

**Jean (Krueger) Broyles**, Administrative Clerk of Admissions, (20 years) retired, died April 9, 2023.

**Shirley (Bateman) Bryan '95**, Administrative Associate (33 years) retired, died June 2, 2023.

**Charles "Charlie" King**, Senior Maintenance Mechanic, (5 years) retired, died June 3, 2023.

**Oscar Ozete**, Professor Emeritus of Spanish, (23 years) retired, died February 20, 2023

**Keith Wright**, Custodial Worker, (13 years) retired, died February 1, 2023

## Honorary Degrees

USI's Board of Trustees conferred an honorary Doctor of Science degree on **Dr. Marlene Shaw**, Professor Emerita of Biology and an honorary Doctor of Fine Art degree on **Richard Hunt**, for their contributions to the University and the Evansville community.



He is dad to a son named Foster (born in January) and a 95-pound Pirenees mix named Duncan.

**A**aron C. Trump secured his first job when he was 11 years old; three degrees and a string of legal positions later the Mt. Vernon, Indiana, native, (although born in Houston, Texas) became USI's Chief Government and Legal Affairs Officer in 2018. "I must have had 10 friends send the job posting to me," he said. The dual position—in-house legal counsel (USI's first) and state house lobbyist—enables him to advocate for higher education in a political arena where the stakes are high while also practicing law.

Aaron's respect for education grew from seeing his mother (a former USI employee) earn an associate degree in business from USI and a spot on the Dean's list when she was 40. Aaron followed suit by earning a bachelor's degree in psychology and

business, a master's in higher education and student affairs and a juris doctorate.

While his Hoosier work ethic

kicked into gear with his first job at age 11 (on a golf course because he wanted his own money



to buy shoes for basketball season) it is still going strong today as he works to enrich USI in the minds of Indiana legislators.

**What do you enjoy most about each of these diverse roles?**

On the government affairs side, it is getting the opportunity to travel the state and share our USI stories.

There is so much great work being done by staff and

faculty on this campus to serve

not only our students but the broader

Evansville

community and the southwest region.

On the legal side, it's having a seat at the table with the administration and Board of Trustees to ensure that the decisions they make to continue advancing USI will not face compliance roadblocks down the line.

**What aspect of each role is the most challenging?**

For both, it is finding balance. The different roles each require full attention and can pull me in a variety of directions. Post pandemic meeting technology has improved the ability to stay connected but also resulted in expectations that you can be in two places at once. But many USI people perform in multiple roles, so I'm certainly not complaining.

**What is your strategy for getting legislators to embrace and support USI?**

When President Rochon and I enter these meetings, the repeated mantra is "USI

is ready to serve." We are always conveying the capacity of this institution and its people to drive Evansville and Indiana forward. It is also important to listen to what matters most to each individual we work with in the government and identify ways to either develop responsive programs or perhaps highlight work we are already doing that was going unrecognized.

**What have been the biggest legislative wins for USI and how will they benefit**

**students?** Most recently we were able to secure the most significant capital investment USI has ever received from the state

at \$83 million. This will fund a major renovation project affecting multiple campus structures and academic spaces used by our students. We were also able to obtain funding for a new summer program that will specifically support our most vulnerable students to help them be persistent from the start of their college enrollment all the way through graduation.

**What one word describes you?** I could spend hours with a thesaurus and still not pin this down.

**What book should everyone read, and why?** "Exposure" by Robert Bilott. It's a memoir that follows the litigation surrounding PFOA and PFAS, referred to as "forever chemicals." Bilott put his entire legal career at risk by pursuing this case for almost 20 years without collecting fees because he believed in the cause.



He and his wife have a running disagreement: Donut Bank vs. Dunkin Donuts.

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*Spirit and Heart of USI*



**Future Screaming Eagle runner, 3-year-old Brynlee, ran a half mile in USI's Night Flight children's race, a fundraiser that benefits USI Athletics' Track & Field and Cross Country programs. Running alongside her are mom Jordan (Mornout) Callison '14, English teaching, and dad Michael Callison '14, marketing; both ran track and field at USI under Coach Michael Hillyard '94.**

*Visit [USI.edu/spiritheart](http://USI.edu/spiritheart) for submission guidelines.*