

SPECIAL ISSUE

FALL 2016

# Perspectives

The University of Missouri-Kansas City alumni magazine

UMKC

## American Road Trip

ALUMNI STYLE







# 2016-17 UMKC BASKETBALL HOME GAMES

## MEN'S

SEASON  
TICKETS  
ONLY \$99

FREE Municipal  
parking pass  
(requires minimum purchase  
of two season tickets)  
  
Alumni get fees  
waived — up to  
15% savings!

NOV. 5	MISSOURI S&T <i>Exhibition</i>
NOV. 15	DRAKE
NOV. 25	ARKANSAS MONTICELLO
NOV. 28	SOUTHEAST MISSOURI
NOV. 30	SOUTH DAKOTA
DEC. 10	WILLIAM JEWELL
DEC. 15	OMAHA
DEC. 20	UT MARTIN
JAN. 2	USC UPSTATE
JAN. 5	NEW MEXICO STATE‡
JAN. 7	UT-RIO GRANDE VALLEY‡
JAN. 26	GRAND CANYON‡
JAN. 28	CSU BAKERSFIELD‡
JAN. 31	OTTAWA
FEB. 9	UTAH VALLEY‡
FEB. 11	SEATTLE U‡
FEB. 18	CHICAGO STATE‡

‡ WAC contest  
All home games are played  
at Municipal Auditorium.

## WOMEN'S

COURTSIDE  
SEATS  
ONLY \$75

Includes \$15  
concession voucher  
  
Alumni ONLY get  
all fees waived!

NOV. 5	KANSAS CHRISTIAN* <i>Exhibition</i>
NOV. 11	TULSA
NOV. 22	WESTERN ILLINOIS
NOV. 25 NOV. 26	PLAZA LIGHTS CLASSIC VS. EASTERN KENTUCKY, MORGAN STATE OR WESTERN MICHIGAN
NOV. 29	CENTRAL CHRISTIAN
DEC. 7	MISSOURI-ST. LOUIS
DEC. 10	OMAHA*
DEC. 19 DEC. 20	ROO CLASSIC VS. NORTHERN ILLINOIS, SOUTH DAKOTA OR SOUTHERN ILLINOIS
JAN. 12	SEATTLE U‡
JAN. 14	UTAH VALLEY‡
JAN. 21	NEW MEXICO STATE‡
FEB. 4	UT-RIO GRANDE VALLEY‡
FEB. 18	CHICAGO STATE‡*
FEB. 23	CSU BAKERSFIELD‡
FEB. 25	GRAND CANYON‡

‡ WAC contest  
Home games are played  
at Swinney Recreation Center.  
\* Double-header games  
at Municipal Auditorium

TICKETS

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## Perspectives

Fall 2016 | Vol. 26

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UMKC would like to thank the many alumni in this magazine who submitted photos for publication, as well as the photographers who allowed us to use their work in this special edition.



On the cover: Kasey Kangaroo cruising in a 1965 Chevrolet Chevelle Malibu convertible.

## Welcome to an American road trip, alumni style!

We began planning for this special issue many months ago. We hoped to tell the story of the impact UMKC alumni have across the country day by day. From teachers and dentists to chefs and ranchers and martial arts gurus, our graduates are everywhere doing incredible work in their communities.

So we are taking you coast to coast to share a story from each state. Although we couldn't have planned for it, as the stories and photos came together, the passion and thoughtfulness UMKC alumni have for their service blew us away each and every time. We're proud of the kind of graduates this institution produces, and this project only deepened that appreciation. We hope you'll find it inspiring too.

When you plan your next road trip, no matter what direction or town you pass through, know there's a good chance a fellow Roo is running the pharmacy, teaching music, coaching baseball, managing the local accounting firm, or yes, even pulling you over when you speed.

So thank you to the alumni who took the time from their day-to-day commitments to share their stories, their journeys, their families and lives with us. We couldn't be more honored to include them in this American road trip issue. Read more about each person on our website — [perspectives.umkc.edu](http://perspectives.umkc.edu) — where you'll find more content and photos.

Happy travels!

Lisen Tammeus Mann



83,283 ALUMNI\*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

# American Road Trip ALUMNI STYLE

Use the page numbers listed to follow Kasey Kangaroo on his trip across the U.S.!

### Midwest

- |                    |                    |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| p. 23 Michigan     | p. 28 Iowa         |
| p. 24 South Dakota | p. 29 Minnesota    |
| p. 25 Ohio         | p. 30 Nebraska     |
| p. 26 Illinois     | p. 31 Kansas       |
| p. 27 Indiana      | p. 32 Missouri     |
| p. 28 Wisconsin    | p. 33 North Dakota |

### Pacific

- p. 7 Alaska
- p. 8 Washington
- p. 9 Oregon
- p. 10 California
- p. 11 Hawaii

### Rocky Mountains

- p. 13 Wyoming
- p. 14 Montana
- p. 15 Utah
- p. 16 Nevada
- p. 16 Idaho
- p. 17 Colorado

### Southwest

- p. 19 Texas
- p. 20 New Mexico
- p. 20 Oklahoma
- p. 21 Arizona

### Northeast

- p. 45 Vermont
- p. 46 Rhode Island
- p. 47 New Jersey
- p. 47 New York
- p. 48 New Hampshire
- p. 49 Pennsylvania
- p. 50 Maryland
- p. 51 Delaware
- p. 52 Connecticut
- p. 53 Massachusetts
- p. 54 Maine

### Southeast

- p. 35 Georgia
- p. 36 South Carolina
- p. 37 Tennessee
- p. 38 Louisiana
- p. 39 North Carolina
- p. 39 Kentucky
- p. 40 Alabama
- p. 40 Virginia
- p. 41 West Virginia
- p. 42 Mississippi
- p. 43 Florida
- p. 43 Arkansas



ON THE WEB  
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\*Alumni with current mailing addresses on record





3,984 ALUMNI



“What I love most about Alaska is that every weekend feels like a vacation.”



Rudolph looks out over Blackstone Bay, near Whittier, on a camping and kayaking trip.

## ALASKA

## Bart Rudolph '06

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION  
PLANNING MANAGER,  
MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE



Photo: Lee Rodriguez

## Urban planner takes leap of faith, moves 3,500 miles to Alaska

As a child, Bart Rudolph (B.A. '06) drew imaginary cities and street patterns. Little did he know he would one day have a career in transit planning.

When he came to UMKC, Rudolph didn't have a clear idea of his career path. He sat down in a counselor's office and saw a brochure advertising urban planning, and something clicked. A talk with Professor Michael Frisch in the Architecture, Urban Planning and Design program made his decision final.

“I had no idea it was a profession until after reading through the brochure.”

After graduation, Rudolph applied for a job with the Alaska Department of Transportation. He hoped they would fly him out for an interview, so he could check “visit Alaska” off his bucket list.

“In the end, they never flew me out for an interview, but sold me on

what Alaska had to offer in terms of recreational activities and the roles and responsibilities of the job,” he says.

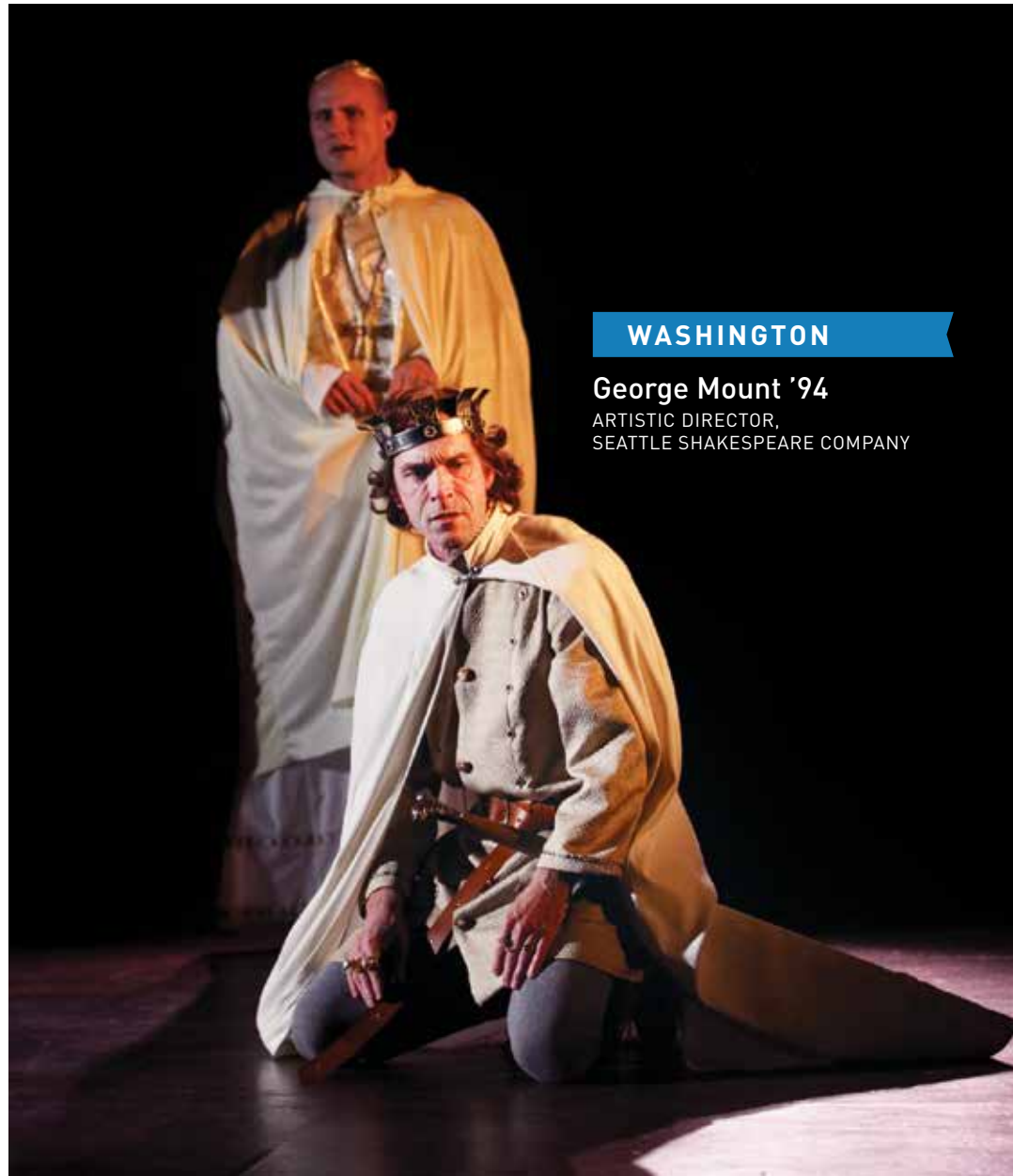
Two weeks later, Rudolph moved to Alaska, sight unseen. He's never looked back.

Today, he is the public transportation planning manager in Anchorage, Alaska. Since moving there, he has climbed glaciers, hiked mountains, kayaked around icebergs and camped under the northern lights.

At the start of 2016, Rudolph resolved to spend every weekend of the year outside.

“In Alaska, it's so easy to go outside, and people really prioritize outdoor recreation,” Rudolph says. “Plans don't change if it's raining, snowing, or even if temperatures drop to 20 degrees below zero.”





## WASHINGTON

George Mount '94

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR,  
SEATTLE SHAKESPEARE COMPANY

Photo: John Ulman

Mount (front) performs in a production of *Richard II* in 2014.

## Shaping Shakespeare for the modern world

How do you make the work of a 400-year-old playwright resonate with a modern audience? That is the question George Mount (M.F.A. '94) tries to answer every day as the artistic director of the Seattle Shakespeare Company.

"What in this play needs to be heard today?" Mount often asks. "What is the personal, political, philosophical crux that an audience today, in your town, would benefit from experiencing in this play? It's really what should be asked for

any script, new or old."

Mount's passion for theater goes all the way back to his childhood.

"It's honestly the only thing I ever really wanted to do with my life," Mount says. "From as young as elementary school, I wanted to be an actor."

Despite this passion, Mount still had obstacles to overcome when he entered the acting program at UMKC.

"I came into the acting program with a lot of emotional defenses, some

unwillingness to open myself up," Mount says. "It was a struggle, but the three years of the program allowed me to develop skills to access emotional experiences safely in an artistic setting."

Mount says his work at UMKC enabled him to take on more challenging roles.

"I got to play Katherine in an all-male version of *The Taming of the Shrew*," he says. "It was stunning to be on the receiving — and giving — end of that kind of treatment."

## OREGON

Todd Dohlman '06

CHEF,  
NONG'S KHAO MAN GAI

## UMKC soccer star scores as high-end chef

From practicing his foot skills to polishing his knife skills, Todd Dohlman (B.L.A. '06) has taken his college experiences into the kitchen. The former UMKC athlete is now a chef at Nong's Khao Man Gai, a Thai restaurant in Portland, Ore.

Dohlman came to UMKC to fulfill his dream of playing Division I soccer. As the team's goalkeeper, he made 291 saves during his athletic career — a UMKC record. He also helped lead the team to two NCAA tournaments. Dohlman ranks second at UMKC in career minutes played with 4,823, and achieved eight career shutouts and 18 wins.

As a student, Dohlman found inspiration in his history classes.

"I really enjoyed all the different ways the past was presented to me," he says. "I felt challenged and inspired to learn the subject they were teaching me."

After college, Dohlman decided to tackle a new challenge: cooking. He says becoming a chef sounded exciting and challenging.

"My time [at UMKC] really helped me in deciding to get a formal culinary education instead of just become a line cook and working in a kitchen," he says.

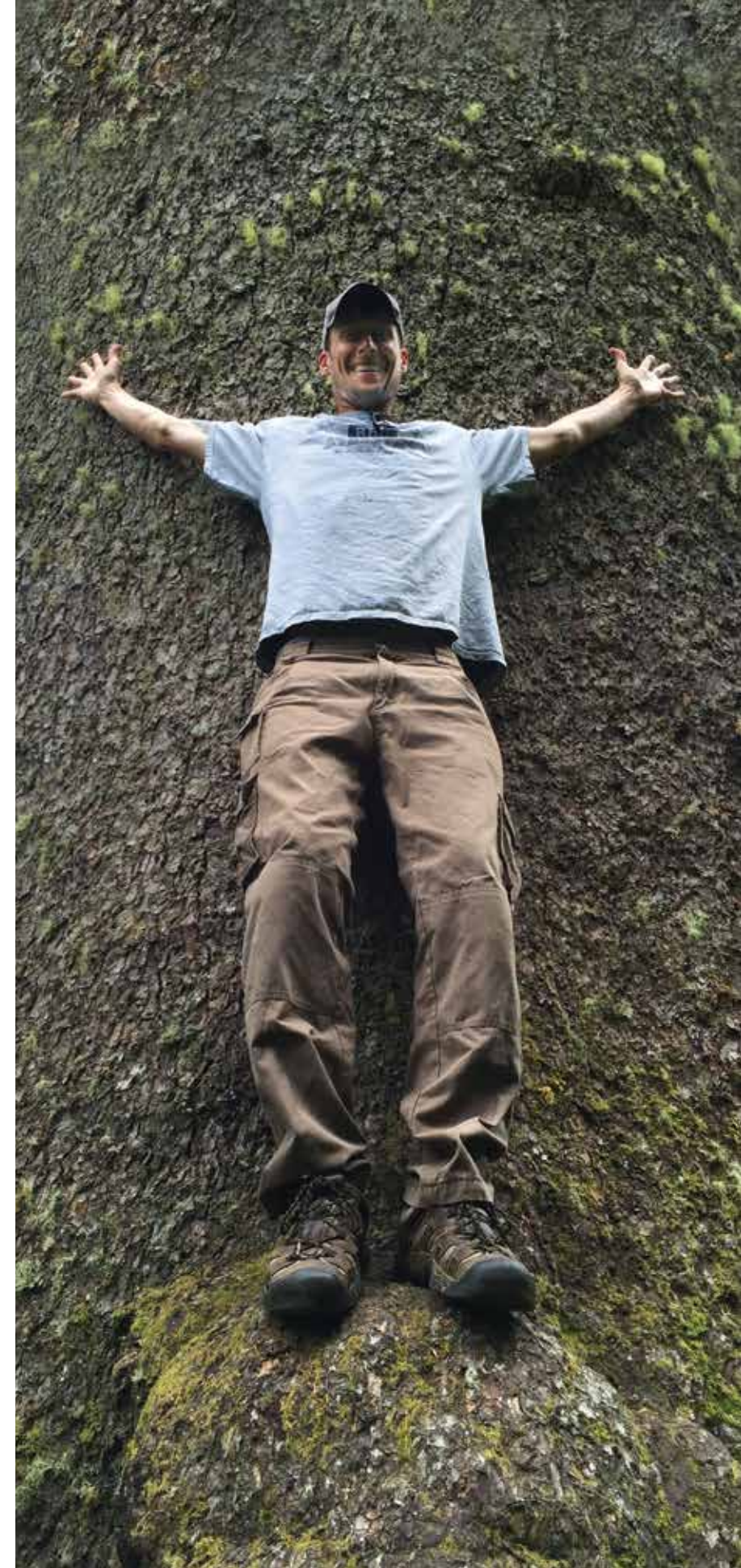
His advice for aspiring chefs? Don't be afraid to fail.

"Cooking is supposed to be fun."



## ON THE WEB

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Dohlman visits "Big Spruce," a 144 foot tall, 750-year-old tree on the Oregon coast.





Photo: Christina Simmons

## CALIFORNIA

**Dwight Scott '94**DIRECTOR,  
SAN DIEGO ZOO*San Diego zoo director's kangaroo roots*

When Dwight Scott (B.L.A. '94) got his start in the zoological business, the animals inspired him. That inspiration would take him on a path to one of the most prestigious zoos in the world.

While at UMKC, Scott started watching the Discovery Channel, specifically the animal shows. Former Assistant Sociology Professor Jeffrey Longhofer helped Scott create an independent study program with the Kansas City Zoo, where he began working with orangutans and chimpanzees.

"I fell in love with the animals," he says. "They are so unique. Each one has their own personality. They're fascinating, and I could tell, even at that point, that I was into something pretty special."

After graduation, Scott took a job as a zookeeper in the ape house at the Kansas City Zoo. A few years later he moved to Florida to work at Disney's Animal Kingdom theme park.

After management roles at zoos in Tulsa and Oklahoma City, Scott was named the director of the world-

renowned San Diego Zoo.

In addition to being one of California's most popular tourist destinations, the San Diego Zoo is fighting extinction around the world. The zoo is part of a larger organization, San Diego Global, which operates 140 animal and plant conservation projects across 80 countries and six continents.

Scott says he enjoys living the mission of protecting animals every day, both in his role at the zoo and in his position as executive chairman of the Dian Fossey International Gorilla Fund.

"It is important to us that we create empathy for wildlife, and that people understand that animals and people are better together," he says.

Over the course of his career, Scott says he is most grateful for the people he has worked with. He also acknowledges the burden of responsibility to preserve wildlife for the next generations.

"I want to make sure that when we pass the baton to the next group of zoo leaders that we are in even better shape than we are today."



"When I say 'just another day in paradise,' it's actually true."

## HAWAII

**Farakh Zaman '05**ELECTRICAL ENGINEER,  
U.S. AIR FORCE*Finding inspiration in the Air Force*

After graduating from UMKC, Maj. Farakh Zaman (B.S.E.E. '05) had a great job at an electrical contracting firm. However, he wanted a bigger challenge.

After speaking with one of his mentors, he joined the Air Force.

Following what he calls "13 weeks of hell" at Officer Training School, Zaman was commissioned as a second lieutenant. He remembers his first assignment as a spacecraft engineer as "a dream come true."

"I don't know many people who can say they got to design something from the ground up and then sign their name to it and launch it into orbit," he says. "I got to see and experience something that has a direct impact on our soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines and helps keep them safe when they are in harm's way. There were many nights we were called in to save a satellite literally falling from the sky."

Currently stationed in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, Zaman regularly takes in not only the beautiful scenery, but also the harbor's historical significance.

"I can't imagine anyone being stationed at Pearl Harbor and not being affected," Zaman says. "It is an incredible experience. Every day you see the price of what was paid by those before us. For example, there are still bullet holes in the building I work in. You can go across the base and see the sunken ships, the old hangars and planes that were shot up. It's like stepping back in time."

Zaman says his Boy Scout leaders are the ones who inspired him on his career path.

"When I was younger, many of my Boy Scout leaders were prior military," Zaman says. "I grew up loving the military and planes in particular. Those leaders' stories helped spark an interest in serving my country."

Zaman with his nephew, brother-in-law and sister-in-law on the staircase of Air Force One during President Obama's visit to Hickam Air Force Base in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

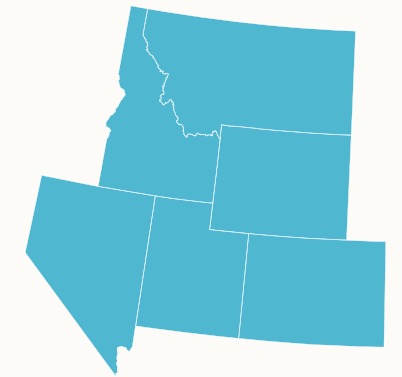


“He was thinking a couple friendly dates to pass the weeks. I had my sights on long term.”



2,255 ALUMNI

## ROCKY MOUNTAINS



### WYOMING

#### Mary Frances and Tom Burke, '79 and '78

CO-OWNERS,  
BURKE AND BURKE, MDS

#### *Learning to laugh in love and business*

Mary Frances Burke (M.D. '79) and Tom Burke (M.D. '78) run their Wyoming medical practice much like their marriage: a partnership based on open, honest communication.

“Our practice was built on the value of establishing strong, functional relationships with our patients,” Tom says.

The couple met at the UMKC School of Medicine, but according to Mary Frances, it was not “love at first sight.” They were friends for three years before Tom asked her out, less than a month before he graduated.

“He was thinking a couple friendly dates to pass the weeks,” she says. “I had my sights on long term.”

Clearly, things didn't go according to Tom's plan. When he moved to Denver, the couple stayed in touch through love letters and weekly phone calls. A year later, Mary Frances graduated and moved to Denver; by August, they were engaged.

Over the course of his career, Tom has mentored dozens of doctors and medical students. He says none of that comes close to the benefits of collaborating with his wife.

“Through her eyes, I once again looked at my patients with wonder and appreciation,” he says. “We teach and

learn from each other, and our patients benefit from both of our perspectives.”

Both agree their UMKC education shaped not just their medical practice, but their entire lives.

Mary Frances originally came to UMKC because she wanted to see patients from day one. She says that bedside experience gave her a deep respect for the vulnerability of patients.

“They are not a disease,” she says. “They are individuals, and deserve to be treated as such.”

Tom agrees, saying the bedside exams he conducted at UMKC helped him shape his practice today.

“I learned that listening to my patients was often the key to diagnosis,” he says. “I also learned not to take myself too seriously, and that I could share my humor with the rest of the team, including the patients.”

Today, they run Burke and Burke, MDs in Casper, Wyo. At the heart of the Burkes' practice is a commitment to serving their community.

“Enabling people to grow through adversity and maximize their potential to leave this world a better place — there is no greater vocation on this earth,” Mary Frances says.





Photo: Montana Department of Justice

## MONTANA

## Cherie Lofton '99

STATE TROOPER,  
MONTANA HIGHWAY PATROL

*Saving lives just another day at the office*

Montana State Trooper Cherie Lofton (B.A. '99) once rescued a truck driver trapped in a semi that had rolled onto train tracks. She wasn't able to get the driver out, so she called the railroad. The engineer stopped the train just 27 feet from the truck.

Still, she doesn't consider that moment the highlight of her career.

"I cannot think of just one accomplishment that I could say is my greatest," Lofton said. "I try to be a well-rounded officer."

Lofton, who lives in Helena, says she isn't sure exactly where her interest in law enforcement came from, but her family definitely had a hand in it.

"My father was a deputy in Arizona and later a police officer in Montana," Lofton said. "I think his stories over the years sparked my interest."

Lofton says her UMKC education exposed her to new ideas that have been crucial in her law enforcement career.

"Attending UMKC gave me the opportunity to meet people from a wide variety of cultures and backgrounds," she says. "This has been very beneficial to me in my job as I deal with a large variety of people on a regular basis."

Lofton was recently appointed to a committee that creates programs for stress management and mental health care for officers, something she is deeply passionate about.

"Law enforcement officers are susceptible to cumulative stress and post traumatic stress disorder as a result of the ups and downs of the job," she says. "Self-care is important."

**"UMKC gave me the opportunity to meet people from a wide variety of cultures and backgrounds."**



Sorensen feeds horses on his ranch in Cedar City, Utah.

*Where teaching meets farming*

In Utah, ranching is a way of life. Just ask Monty Sorensen (M.A. '89).

In high school, Sorensen spent summers working on his uncle's ranch. In college, he worked for a cattle rancher to keep in shape for football season. When Sorensen married his wife, he married into a ranching family.

"I loved the outdoors, loved the animals, loved being on the mountain, riding horses," he says. "I didn't mind doing a lot of manual labor ... I kind of fell in love with it."

Today, Sorensen owns land on a mountain range where he farms and raises sheep. But he also has a day job: high school teacher.

Sorensen joined the faculty at Canyon High School when it opened in 1997 and still teaches biology there today.

"[Teaching] gave me an opportunity

to hopefully change kids' lives and give them an opportunity they might not have been able to get — somebody to encourage them," he says.

In the classroom, Sorensen combines his passions for teaching, science and ranching. He teaches an agricultural biology class in which he uses the farm and ranch to help his students understand the concepts.

In 2003, he received the District Teacher of the Year Award, and in 2013, Canyon High School named him Teacher of the Year.

"I try to have fun every day I teach. If you were to come into my classroom, the way the kids and I interact is not the normal teacher-student relationship," he says. "I think that's been a key thing. The kids know that we're part of them and they're part of us."



## UTAH

## Monty Sorensen '89

FARMER, SHEEP RANCHER AND  
BIOLOGY TEACHER





### NEVADA

**Robert Rinne '89**

DIRECTOR OF TECHNICAL PROCUREMENT  
AND CONTRACTS, ALLEGANT AIR

### *Pilot turns lifelong passion into career*

From engineering to pilot training, Robert Rinne's (M.B.A. '89) life revolves around aviation.

Rinne spends his weekdays as a director with Allegiant Air, a Las Vegas airline that operates across the U.S.

On the weekends, he's flying small planes and gliders. He also gives sightseeing flights and jointly owns a business that buys, restores and leases gliders.

**"I was born with a love of aviation. My father and three of my uncles all had pilot's certificates ... I was always infatuated with the sensation of flight."**

**ON THE WEB**  
For full versions of these stories,  
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### IDAHO

**Esther Machen '10**

DENTIST,  
MACHEN FAMILY DENTISTRY

### *Dentist opens family practice*

Esther Machen (D.D.S. '10) entered the field of dentistry as a hygienist, but wanted to do more.

"When I was a hygienist, my younger brother had several abscessed teeth and I was frustrated all I could do was ask the dentist to help him," she says. "I felt that I could not do enough that would really make a difference for people that could not afford dental care."

Around the same time, Machen's husband decided to go to medical school. Machen says medical and dental programs are limited in Idaho, so they packed up and moved to Kansas City.

"I truly enjoyed my instructors

and have their words running through my head as I am doing a procedure," she says. "The value of truly caring for all resonated with me."

Today, the Machens share a building in Idaho Falls where they each see patients. One half is dedicated to Machen Family Medicine. The other half is Machen Family Dentistry.

Although Idaho will always be home, Machen says she and her husband appreciate Kansas City because it was a great place to raise a family.

"We loved that it offered all the benefits of a big city, but still had a small-town feel."



### COLORADO

**Liane Pieffer Rockley '94**

VICE PRESIDENT,  
ROCKLEY MUSIC CENTER AND  
ROCKLEY FAMILY FOUNDATION

### *Musician works to provide music to children in need*

Liane Pieffer Rockley (B.M. '94) and her husband have a very musical marriage. She studied flute performance at UMKC; he studied clarinet and saxophone performance at the University of Northern Colorado.

Now they spend their days making sure other students have the same opportunities they did.

Rockley and her husband run the Rockley Family Foundation and the Rockley Music Center in Lakewood, Colo. Together they provide instruments and funding for students in need.

At first, the program served only Colorado, but it quickly grew.

"We were getting calls from across the

country from people who said 'my friend at CU-Boulder said you had this program, and they'd be in Delaware,'" Rockley says. "We realized there was a need for instruments and scholarship monies across the country."

The Foundation has donated nearly \$17 million to fund music education across the country. Rockley recalls one mother who had taken the bus with her two children — one of whom was autistic — to buy a piano.

"One of these staff members was showing them a piano and the little boy's eyes were just lighting up," she says. "He was so engaged, and the mom just had tears in her eyes seeing her son so

enthralled with music."

The woman had trouble getting financing, so the Foundation stepped in to cover the remaining cost.

"She just started sobbing. ... There are hundreds of stories like that one."

Rockley says her experience with the Rockley Music Foundation has inspired her to push for music in all schools. She believes music can help curb violence, bullying and other problems children face in school.

"Seeing these stories about how positive music is in everybody's lives makes me really do more — be that advocate — and try to get that music access to everyone."





“I believed fairly early that I had some things to say.”

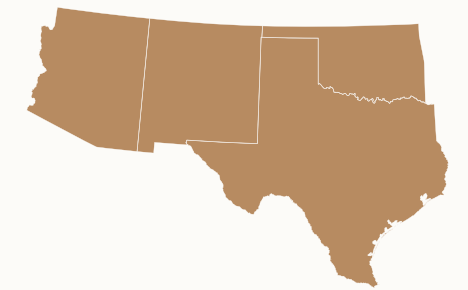
Story performs alongside colleagues in the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra.

Photo: Richard Rodriguez



4,810 ALUMNI

SOUTHWEST



## TEXAS

### Rosalyn Story '72

VIOLINIST,  
FORT WORTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



## *Author, musician builds unique career*

When Rosalyn Story (B.A. '72) came to UMKC, she had no idea whether she could make her dream to become a professional classical musician a reality.

“The odds were stacked against me,” she says. “At the time, I knew of no African-American violinists who could be role models for me.”

With the help of Professor Emeritus Tiberius Klausner and other faculty members, Story learned more than just how to master her instrument: She learned how to make a career out of music. She was also able to take courses in black literature and black history, which influenced her later work as a writer. Today, she balances two careers — writing and playing violin in the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra.

Story has published several novels,

all of which have a musical thread or theme. For her, music and writing are intertwined.

“I use language the same way I do music — it’s all communication,” she says. “There are places that can be reached in the human psyche only through music, where even language fails. And words, because of the sound of vowels, the percussion of consonants, can land on the ear like music.”

Story traces her love of music to growing up in a black church, playing in the high school orchestra and attending shows at Starlight Theatre every summer.

Story says that in her musicianship and her writing, she tries to pass on the lesson she learned from her high school orchestra director: You can do whatever you set your mind to, no matter the odds.





Photo: Jane Phillips

## NEW MEXICO

**Sherry Hooper '86**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
THE FOOD DEPOT*Feeding thousands every day*

As a child growing up in Kansas City, Sherry Hooper (B.A. '86) watched her mother struggle to feed her family. Today, Hooper helps other families going through the same challenges.

Hooper is executive director of The Food Depot, a food bank in Santa Fe, N.M., that distributes about 445,000 pounds of food per month. The organization also helps fund homeless shelters, youth programs and senior centers.

*"I'm in a beautiful area, working with a generous community, doing work that brings me joy. What could be better?"*

**ON THE WEB**For full versions of these stories, visit [perspectives.umkc.edu](http://perspectives.umkc.edu).

Photo: Cherokee Nation Clinic

## OKLAHOMA

**Laura Hallacy '04**NURSE PRACTITIONER,  
CHEROKEE NATION CLINIC*Serving the Cherokee Nation*

Laura Hallacy (M.S.N. '04) has been taking care of people since she was a child, starting with her brother.

"He was always injuring himself," she says. "I was digging gravel out of his knees, cleaning scrapes and changing dressings. It just seemed like what I was meant to do."

When it came time to choose a career, nursing was a natural fit for Hallacy. After six years working as a registered nurse, two of Hallacy's mentors suggested she become a nurse practitioner.

That's where UMKC came in.

From her home in northern Oklahoma, Hallacy took advantage of the UMKC School of Nursing's distance learning program. Classes were broadcast live to Joplin, Mo. Hallacy and other students participated via videoconference.

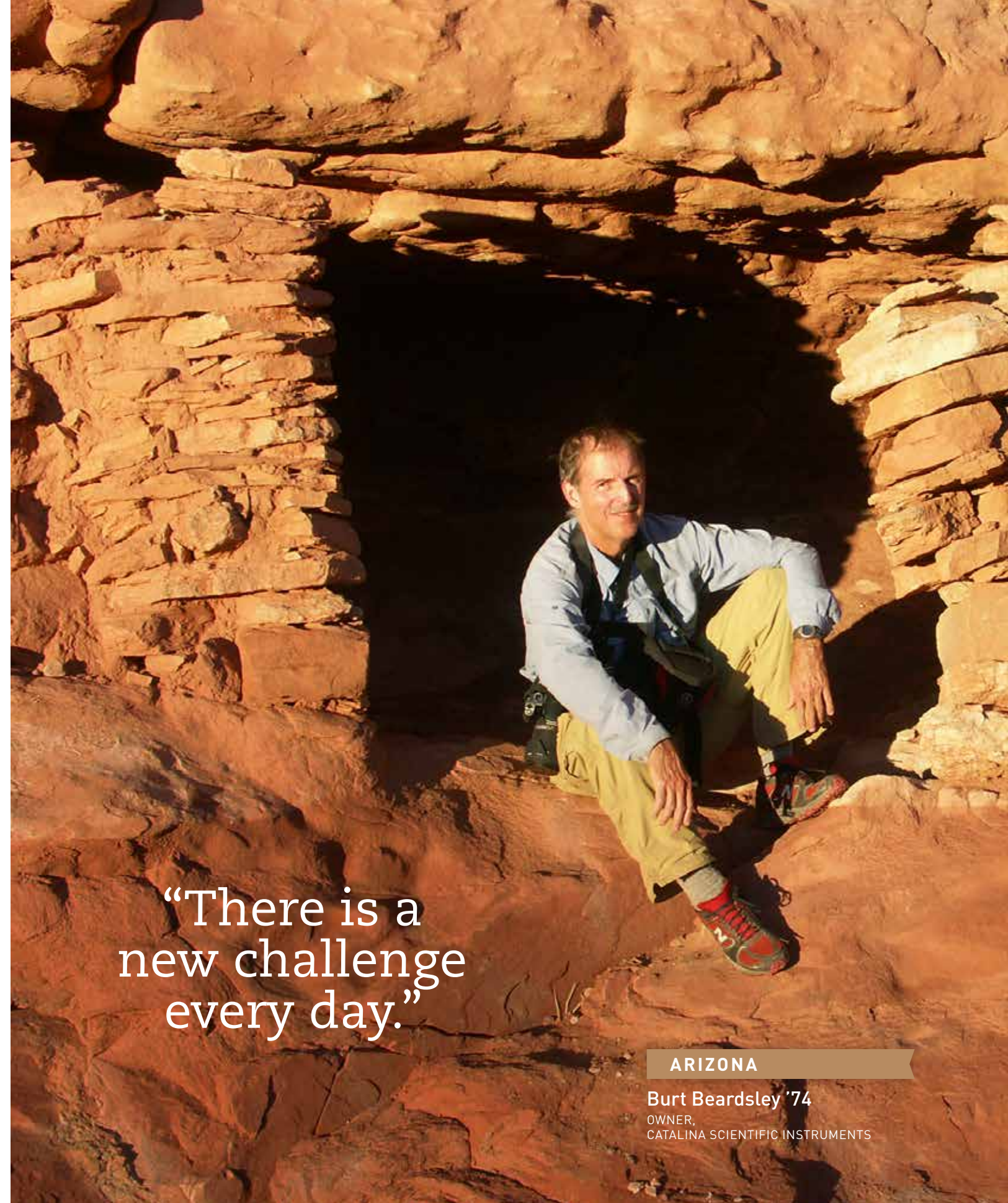
For Hallacy — who was working and raising two small children at the time — it was the next best thing to being on UMKC's campus.

"My UMKC experience increased my confidence in what I could do and accomplish," she says. "That is, ultimately, where my life changed to a new career."

After graduating with her M.S.N., Hallacy got a job with the Cherokee Nation in Jay, Okla. More than a decade and several jobs later, she still works with the Cherokee people, as a nurse practitioner in Vinita, Okla.

Hallacy isn't Cherokee herself, but says she relates to that community and its culture because she is a calm and quiet person.

"I have to be patient and give them time to open up with me."



*"There is a new challenge every day."*

## ARIZONA

**Burt Beardsley '74**OWNER,  
CATALINA SCIENTIFIC INSTRUMENTS

Beardsley at the Anasazi Granary, a vista on the border of Arizona and Utah.



“Receiving my training at UMKC made just the right impact at just the right time.”

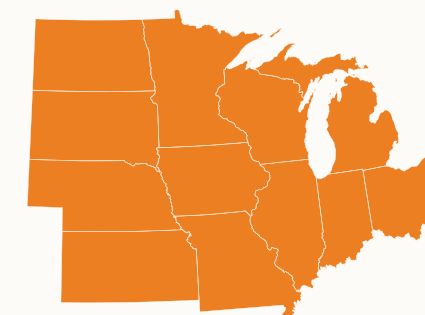


Younger takes a selfie at his medical research lab in Ann Arbor, Mich.



64,594 ALUMNI

MIDWEST



## MICHIGAN

### John Younger '91

CO-FOUNDER AND CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER,  
AKADEUM LIFE SCIENCES

### *Where tiny bubbles are a big deal*

You won't see John Younger's (M.D. '91) face on movie posters, but the technology he's developed sounds like something from a science-fiction film.

Each day, Younger uses tiny bubbles to solve giant problems, and — much like a superhero — solving those problems has a big impact on humanity.

At Akadeum Life Sciences, a company Younger co-founded in 2014, tiny bubbles are a huge deal.

"We make microscopic bubbles that capture and float single cells out of blood and tissue samples. You can think of the bubbles as life preservers for stem cells, cancer cells and other cells that researchers or clinicians need to keep track of," he says.

This process is called buoyancy-activated cell sorting, or BACS™. The goal is to change the way scientists and physicians think about cell sorting for research, diagnosis and treatment.

A Warrensburg, Mo., native, Younger comes from a family of Roos. Both his parents attended UMKC.

At UMKC, Younger discovered a love of chemistry while studying with

Professor Emeritus Charlie Wurrey and retired Professor Bob Yang.

"Some of the deepest roots of what I'm doing at Akadeum were laid down by those two sharing their enthusiasm," he says.

Younger says he believes the foundation UMKC provided affected his future in ways both expected and unexpected.

"Receiving my training at UMKC made just the right impact at just the right time," he says.

Younger says the hardest part of starting a business is trusting your instincts. He thinks many people could benefit from leaving a steady job for a startup, but they're afraid of uncertainty.

Younger has learned to ignore that fear.

"I've learned that we all live with a lot of uncertainty, and that the unknown is never far away for any of us," he says. "I think if you can embrace the idea that many aspects of your life and career are much less certain than you assume they are, then taking a leap into blue becomes something you can not only imagine, but plan for."





Grotenhuis and her family attend a wedding in Yankton, S.D.

## SOUTH DAKOTA

## Tracey Grotenhuis '02

RECREATION SUPERINTENDENT,  
CITY OF YANKTON PARKS AND RECREATION*Where coaching meets community*

For Tracey Grotenhuis (M.A. '02), *Parks and Recreation* is more than just a TV show. It's her life.

Grotenhuis serves as the recreation superintendent for the Parks and Recreation department in Yankton, S.D.

"It is so important for our department to offer numerous programs throughout the year for both adults and children," she says. "Our mission statement is to enhance the quality of life for the citizens of Yankton through high-quality parks, facilities, programs and community special events. I feel our department does that on a daily basis!"

In some ways, Grotenhuis has been working in recreation all her life. At the University of Kansas as an undergraduate, she ran track, and at UMKC she was an intern at Swinney Recreation Center.

After she finished her graduate degree, Grotenhuis took an opportunity to return to a sport she loves — volleyball. She coached the volleyball team at Mount Marty College in Yankton, S.D., for nine years.

"I hope that I inspired them to work hard and give their best effort in all facets of their lives," Grotenhuis says. "You only have a short time to be a college student and my goal was that each one of our student athletes on the volleyball team made the most of that experience."

Though she loved coaching, Grotenhuis moved to a role at the Parks and Recreation department in order to spend more time with her husband and two children. Today, she coordinates programming that benefits thousands of adults and children — everything from sports leagues to music classes.

**"Our mission statement is to enhance the quality of life for the citizens ... I feel our department does that on a daily basis!"**

## OHIO

## Joe Tafelski '72

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
ADVOCATES FOR BASIC LEGAL EQUALITY INC.

Tafelski outside his law offices in downtown Toledo, Ohio.

*Lawyer defends those most in need*

Joe Tafelski (L.L.M. '72) doesn't wear a cape, but he's still a hero to a lot of people. He's spent his career helping low-income individuals and families seek justice.

"I think a lot of times people view justice as the end result," he says. "But I think the greatest part of justice is the process we use to try to get to that."

Tafelski is the executive director of Advocates for Basic Legal Equality Inc. (ABLE), the largest civil aid program in Ohio. ABLE, Tafelski says, helps people who have nowhere else to go.

Some of Tafelski's first experiences with nonprofit law firms were in Kansas City. Internships he completed at UMKC helped him understand the impact lawyers can have on the community.

"The internships helped expand my horizons and taught

me that the practice of law is something where you can do something that can be mentally challenging, but also, if you are in the right area, you can really help a lot of people," he says.

That desire to help others eventually led Tafelski to ABLE.

Tafelski says one particularly memorable case dealt with migrant farm workers who were being paid less than minimum wage. ABLE helped them get the money they deserved. As they signed the settlement papers, one of the workers approached him and said, "to me, ABLE is justice. Without ABLE, I wouldn't have any justice."

This, Tafelski says, is why ABLE's work is so important.

"Lawyers can have a huge impact on someone's life if they go about it the right way."





Thompson poses with one of her patients at the Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago.

“At the collegiate level, you are much more than just an athlete’s coach. You are the person a student athlete will spend the majority of their time with.”



Beltran works with a student athlete on the sidelines of a meet.



ILLINOIS

**Dana Thompson '91**

PROFESSOR OF OTOLARYNGOLOGY –  
HEAD AND NECK SURGERY,  
NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY  
FEINBERG SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

DIVISION HEAD OF OTOLARYNGOLOGY –  
HEAD AND NECK SURGERY,  
ANN & ROBERT H. LURIE CHILDREN'S  
HOSPITAL OF CHICAGO

*Figure skating shaped surgeon's skills*

Once a competitive teen figure skater, Dana Thompson (M.D. '91) now uses many of those skills in a different arena: the operating room.

“A career as a surgeon always appealed to me, as it borrowed from skills I developed as a figure skater: discipline, focus, drive and tenacity,” she says.

Thompson grew up in a family where medicine was more than just a job.

“I was fortunate to be surrounded by successful physicians who simply loved what they did and served as early role models,” she says. “My father was in obstetrics and gynecology in Kansas City. My grandfather was a general practitioner in a small town in Mississippi.”

Thompson also received encouragement from three black physicians in her Kansas City, Kan., neighborhood.

“Through this network, I was able to

observe my father deliver a baby and perform a hysterectomy and see the wonders of eye surgery,” Thompson says. “Most importantly, I had a group of role models who collectively demonstrated that neither race nor gender would be an obstacle to pursuing my goal of becoming a physician.”

Today, Thompson is division head of otolaryngology at the Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago. In this role, she performs high-risk surgeries on children, removing obstructions from the larynx and windpipe.

“I found that I enjoyed the complexity of the anatomy of the head and neck region, combined with a career in helping people with the key essential functions of human life: the ability to hear, breathe, talk, communicate, eat and swallow.”

*Track coach takes Roo legacy to Notre Dame*

As an assistant coach for the Notre Dame track and field team, Adam Beltran (B.L.A. '99) knows he has a big responsibility.

“At the collegiate level, you are much more than just a coach. You are the person a student athlete will spend the majority of their time with,” Beltran says. “You have the opportunity to be a positive influence and help them with issues that you have already dealt with as a former student athlete.”

Beltran's mentorship of student athletes appears to get results. During his tenure, at least nine athletes have broken track and field records.

Despite that success, Beltran says being a coach presents new challenges every day.

“In a program with a smaller budget, getting new equipment was a challenge because resources were limited and had to be stretched between multiple areas,” Beltran says. “Another challenge I have

found coaching at the collegiate level is that job security can be directly linked to the head coach. I can speak from experience that going through a head coaching change can be nerve-wracking.”

A lifelong athlete himself, Beltran says UMKC helped him fine-tune how he could turn his love of sports into a career.

“I always gravitated towards sports as a kid,” Beltran says. “Initially, I thought I wanted to teach high school and coach, but then UMKC gave me the opportunity to serve as an assistant coach for the track team.”

Beltran's advice to student athletes: Choose a school for yourself, not for the athletics.

“Pick a school you can see yourself at, even if they do not have your sport,” he says. “This is the place you will be the happiest. Coaches leave, but the school will always be the school.”

INDIANA

**Adam Beltran '99**

ASSISTANT COACH,  
UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME  
TRACK & FIELD PROGRAM





Photo: Derek S. Rickett

## WISCONSIN

## Jim Hill '78

ASSOCIATE VICE CHANCELLOR OF  
STUDENT AFFAIRS,  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MILWAUKEE

## Connecting students with community

Jim Hill (M.A. '78) is the associate vice chancellor of student affairs at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

He is responsible for giving students the tools they need to navigate college and beyond. He also connects them with volunteer opportunities that benefit the Milwaukee community as a whole.

**“The UMKC counseling training prepared me to develop my sense of caring and my skills for working with individuals in difficult situations — who are just needing to find themselves.”**

**ON THE WEB**  
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Berger visits the Roman Forum while touring Italy with his wife.

## IOWA

## Mike Berger '74

TRAVEL AGENT

HORN PLAYER,  
SIOUX CITY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

## Horn player creates career in travel industry

From the Eiffel Tower to King Tut's tomb, Mike Berger (D.M.A. '74) can help you plan the vacation of your dreams.

But that's just his day job.

Berger is also an accomplished horn player and a member of the Sioux City Symphony Orchestra.

He ended up at UMKC after a fellow musician recommended he study under Frank Franano, who was instrumental in founding the Kansas City Symphony. Berger says Franano improved his skills, but more importantly, taught him how to be a professional musician.

“He taught me to respect your colleagues and respect the audience,” he says. “That helped me tremendously. It made a total

difference when I got into the travel industry.”

After finishing graduate school, Berger became a travel agent in Sioux City, Iowa.

“If you're going to sell something, you probably ought to be selling something you like,” he says. “Travel, it's easy. I have a passion for it. I believe in it.”

Berger says he believes travel is “psychologically important,” whether visiting the Lake of the Ozarks or taking a tour across Europe. He estimates he has visited more than 30 countries in his lifetime.

Berger says he would like to retire in Kansas City someday, but for now, he has a pretty sweet deal.

## MINNESOTA

## Sheridan Zuther '97

SINGER AND PERFORMER

## From the family farm to jam-packed audiences

Sheridan Zuther (B.M. '97) has been performing since her childhood, but to very different audiences. As a little girl, Zuther would climb on top of large hay bales and sing to herds of cattle.

“Fun fact: cows really love music! They were always very attentive,” she says.

With no other children her age around, Zuther spent a lot of time with the animals that occupied her family farm on the central plains of North Dakota.

“They were my playmates and my first audiences who got to hear my made-up songs and see the shows I put on just for them,” she says.

Zuther also loved to sing in their concrete grain silo, a trick she discovered at just three years old.

“The acoustics bouncing off the concrete walls and tin roof were amazing, and I started doing what came natural to me,” she says.

At the age of nine, Zuther attended a summer singing workshop where she met her future teacher, Joseph Hegstad. Every week for the next 10 years, Zuther's parents drove her 120 miles for voice lessons. Hegstad (D.M.A. '71) led her to UMKC to study at the Conservatory of Music and Dance.

Through connections she made at UMKC, Zuther joined the nationally acclaimed quintet Five By Design, touring full-time around the U.S. and Canada.

“It was an amazing experience and I learned so much ... so much that when I stopped touring I was able to self-sustain as a working musician, private music teacher and musical theater producer,” she says.

After seven years of touring, Zuther returned to Minneapolis where she now lives and works as a singer and performer.

“My purpose in life is to help people forget about their troubles for a little while and feel the wonders of life through music.”



Photo: Joan Buccina





NEBRASKA

**Matthias Okoye '80**  
DIRECTOR,  
NEBRASKA INSTITUTE OF FORENSIC SCIENCES INC.

*Physician investigates high-profile crimes*

As the director of the Nebraska Institute of Forensic Sciences Inc., Matthias Okoye (M.S. '80) draws on his experience as a physician, lawyer and forensic expert.

Okoye obtained dual medical degrees from the University of Lagos College of Medicine in Lagos, Nigeria, and the British Conjoint Board of the U.K. in 1974. He then served as senior house officer in surgery and pathology for the Nigerian Ministry of Health.

He immigrated to the United States in 1976 and began a residency at the University of Kansas Medical Center. He earned a master's degree in pharmaceutical science, with an emphasis in toxicology, from UMKC. He also obtained a juris doctorate degree from the Detroit College of Law.

How does he combine all of his scholarship and expertise? Forensic science. Okoye, who lives in Lincoln, Neb., has discussed forensic cases on national news programs like CNN, ABC News and CBS. He has also been invited by other nations to conduct investigations of controversial and high-profile deaths.

Okoye received the Emerald Award for Minorities in Science in 2005, one of many recognitions for his contributions to medicine and forensic science.

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Photo: Brandon Parigo

KANSAS

**Glen Mathis '72**  
OWNER,  
MATHIS DRUG STORE INC.

*Pharmacy is in the family*

Glen Mathis (B.S. '72) is a caretaker — of his farm, of his family, and of the customers at his drug store.

Mathis and his wife, Karen, own Mathis Drug Store, an independent pharmacy in Girard, Kan. They bought the store from Mathis' father, who also got his pharmacy degree from UMKC.

"Pharmacy is in the family," he says. "It's one of those things that gets in your blood."

Mathis has built his business around, as he calls it, "a commitment to never say no."

"I feel like a doctor. When people go to the doctor and they need medicine, I get it for them," he says. "I've come in at 2:30 in the morning and on Saturdays and Sundays and Christmas and Thanksgiving."

It's a promise he and his wife made to the community when they bought the store more than 20 years ago.

"I'm used to being called away from dinner," he says. "That's part of the business — that's what we decided."

Mathis and his wife have also committed themselves to providing individualized care to each of their customers. Mathis says he knows 90 percent of his customers by name.

"It's very rewarding to have people call you and basically put their life's trust in your hands," Mathis says. "Karen and I both feel that way."

Mathis and his wife aren't the only caretakers in their family. Two of their daughters are nurses, and one of their sons-in-law is an oral surgeon.

When they're not working at the drug store, they're tending to their farm or spending time with their three children and seven grandchildren.

As for regrets, Mathis says he only has one.

"The only regret we have now is we look back on things and wish my wife went to UMKC with me, because it's been really rewarding."

Mathis in his drug store in Girard, Kan.





Photo: Petty Officer 3rd Class William McCann



Photo: Navy Band Great Lakes

MISSOURI

Katie Kalinowski '09

PETTY OFFICER SECOND CLASS,  
U.S. NAVY

Kalinowski plays with children in Savusavu, Fiji, while on a mission to provide medical care.

Musician finds home in global service

When she graduated from UMKC, Katie Kalinowski (B.M. '09) knew she wanted to make a living playing clarinet. What she didn't realize was that she could do it in the U.S. Navy.

Kalinowski is now a petty officer second class, a position she says has changed her immensely.

"I've grown as a person and as a woman," Kalinowski says. "I think I'm more confident and stronger than before I joined. I've been mentored by some amazing women since joining, and I hope I can pay that forward to others."

Kalinowski has had some unique opportunities since joining the Navy. As part of the Pacific Partnership humanitarian mission, she traveled to Fiji, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines and Vietnam, training local medical personnel to respond to disasters.

"We performed at hospitals, clinics, schools, public concerts and onboard

the ship. It's hard to pick a favorite experience, but I always loved performing for schools. Seeing the kids smile and enjoy the music was wonderful."

Though being away from family and friends is tough, Kalinowski says she enjoys her time on Navy ships.

"It was certainly different from anything I'd ever experienced! I loved being out at sea and watching the clouds, the water and the sunsets."

Since joining the Navy in 2010, Kalinowski has played in three different bands: the U.S. Fleet Forces Band in Norfolk, Va., the Pacific Fleet Band in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, and Navy Band Great Lakes in Great Lakes, Ill. She says her home, however, will always be Missouri.

"I grew up in St. Charles, so I'll always love that area," she says. "Eating a fresh Jonathan apple grown in Missouri is something I haven't been able to do in Virginia or Hawaii!"



Merriman (top row, second from left), shown with a group of fellow instructors, runs a martial arts academy in Killdeer, N.D.

Attorney named to World Martial Arts Hall of Fame

Pat Merriman (J.D. '86) could apprehend a criminal with his bare hands, but he prefers to use the law. The North Dakota state's attorney is also a ninth-degree black belt.

His father first encouraged him to learn martial arts in order to protect himself against bullies. Merriman was born with a mild form of Asperger's syndrome and says he had trouble fitting in as a child.

"My dad convinced me that unless I wanted to get beat up every day ... I should learn how to fight."

Decades later, Merriman is still practicing martial arts. In fact, he founded his own system of Aiki Ju Jutsu, later teaching it to police officers and members of the military.

In the late 1990s, Merriman got a call from a man named Leonard Holifield. He

had read Merriman's book *Martial Arts and the Law* and wanted to nominate Merriman to the World Martial Arts Hall of Fame.

"I actually said, 'Yeah, right,' and I hung up on the guy," Merriman recalls.

The man called Merriman back, clarifying that he was the cousin of five-time heavyweight champion Evander Holyfield.

Through that connection, Merriman was eventually inducted into the U.S. and World Martial Arts Halls of Fames.

"I was just in the right place at the right time," he says.

Merriman currently ranks as a ninth-degree black belt. In order for Merriman to get the top rank, he must die.

"I'm not really looking forward to that promotion," Merriman jokes.

NORTH DAKOTA

Pat Merriman '86

DUNN COUNTY STATE ATTORNEY



“I get to use my teaching skills preparing sermons, giving lectures and convincing people by the word of God.”



Moore inside his church, Allen Temple AME in Woodstock, Ga., which is more than 150 years old.



4,566 ALUMNI

SOUTHEAST



## GEORGIA

**Carl Moore '68**

SENIOR PASTOR,  
ALLEN TEMPLE AME CHURCH

### *Pastor recalls civil rights march alongside Martin Luther King Jr.*

As a 17-year-old college student in Montgomery, Ala., Carl Moore (B.M.E. '68) found himself just three blocks away from Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, a birthplace of the civil rights movement.

Weeks later he was on the steps of the state capitol, praying alongside Martin Luther King Jr.

One day, Moore and his friends participated in a demonstration. Leaders of the march handed out signs and placards. Moore's sign read, "It's 1960, not 1860."

"We hadn't gone very far, within a block or so, before the police drove up and stopped us and said we were unlawfully marching and we were put in paddy wagons."

They waited in jail until the Montgomery Improvement Association bailed them out. A judge found them guilty and fined them \$165 each.

Moore says protesting never scared him until the day he marched with King.

"All of these white people were looking at us and chewing tobacco and calling us every name that they could," he says. "It

was like venom in the eyes. This was the only time that I felt vulnerable."

Because of his arrest during the demonstration, Moore was not allowed to return to his university that fall. His mother, fearing for his safety, put him on a train to Kansas City to live with relatives.

That fall, Moore enrolled at the University of Kansas City, now UMKC.

After graduating with his degree in musical education, Moore taught for several years in Kansas City, until a violent incident ended his teaching career.

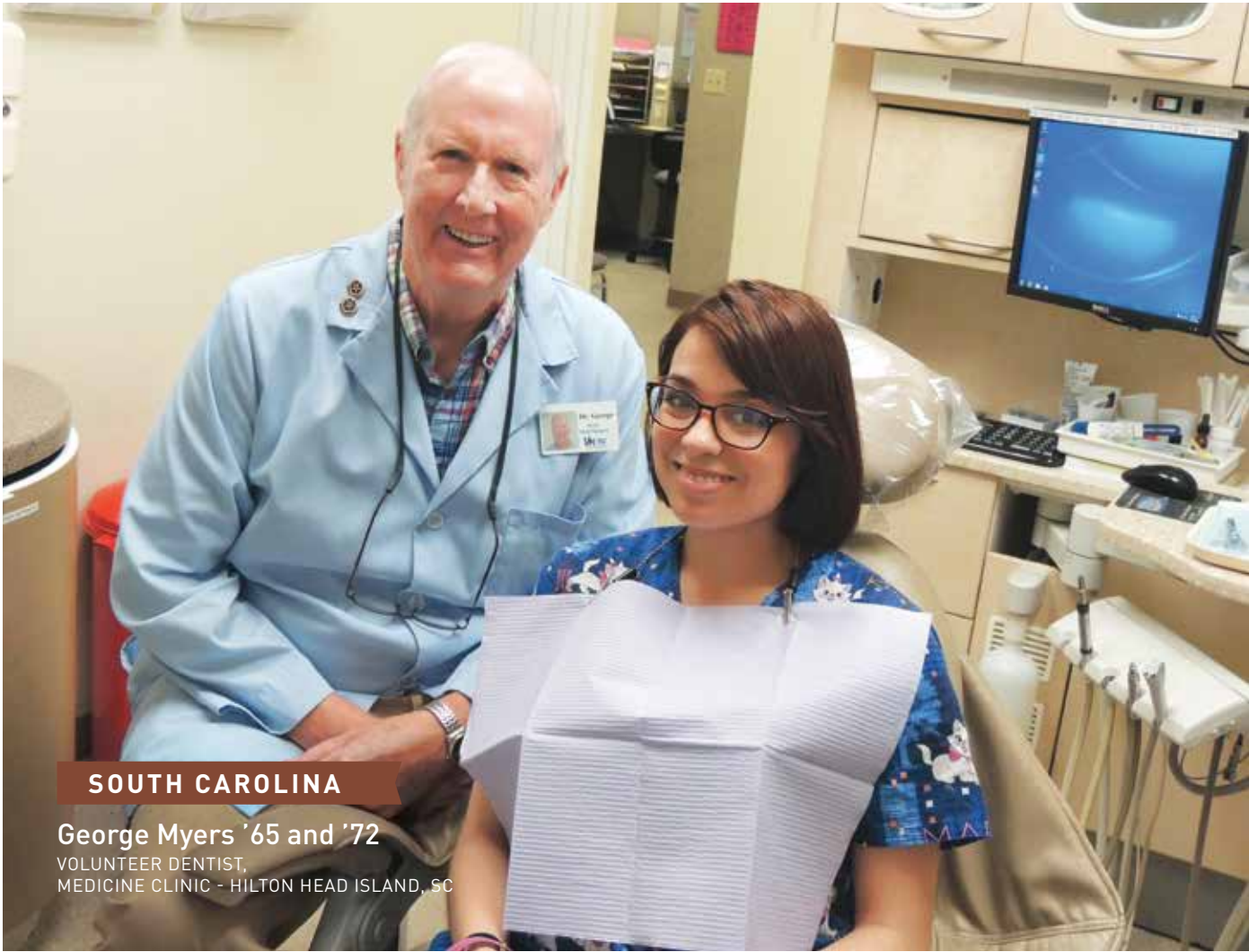
"A little boy pulled a gun on me and threatened my life," Moore says. "I didn't even finish out the school year."

Moore got a job training sales people at IBM, beginning a 25-year career with the company.

In 1984, Moore says he heard a message from God, telling him to preach the gospel.

"I said yes to him, and since that day, the work has been awesome," Moore says. "I am in the work that I really firmly know the Lord has called me to do in life."





SOUTH CAROLINA

George Myers '65 and '72  
VOLUNTEER DENTIST,  
MEDICINE CLINIC - HILTON HEAD ISLAND, SC

*Retirement doesn't stop dentist from giving back*

George Myers (D.D.S. '65, M.S. '72) remembers the exact day he decided to become a dentist: Oct. 4, 1957.

"I was a junior in high school and had no idea what I would become. The TV news that morning announced that the Soviet Union had successfully launched the first orbiting space satellite, Sputnik, beating the U.S. to the punch," Myers says. "We were now in the space race, and we were behind."

The federal government immediately began encouraging schools to produce engineers and scientists. That same week, Myers went to see his family dentist, who was a UMKC graduate.

"The more he talked, the better it sounded," Myers said. "I decided then and there that was where my future lay."

A few years later, Myers was studying dentistry at UMKC. He says a lot of things have changed since he was taking classes. One of the most noticeable? The cost.

"This will amaze you. Regular tuition was \$300 per semester, and [my mother's] faculty discount was 90 percent, so my cost was \$30 per semester," Myers says. "I was fortunate to graduate with no student loans or debt. Obviously, times have changed."

When Myers retired from dentistry, he wasn't ready to give up the profession entirely. So he started working with the Volunteers in Medicine Clinic, providing free dental care to patients on Hilton Head Island, S.C. The majority of his patients work in the tourism industry.

Myers says volunteering is a way to show gratitude for the many blessings he's received over his lifetime.

"Winston Churchill was quoted as saying, 'We make a living from what we get, but we make a life from what we give.' I intend to cheerfully give back to my community for as long as my mind and body will allow."

"[UMKC] afforded me the opportunity to mature, become more self-reliant and attain professional skills that no other program or faculty could."

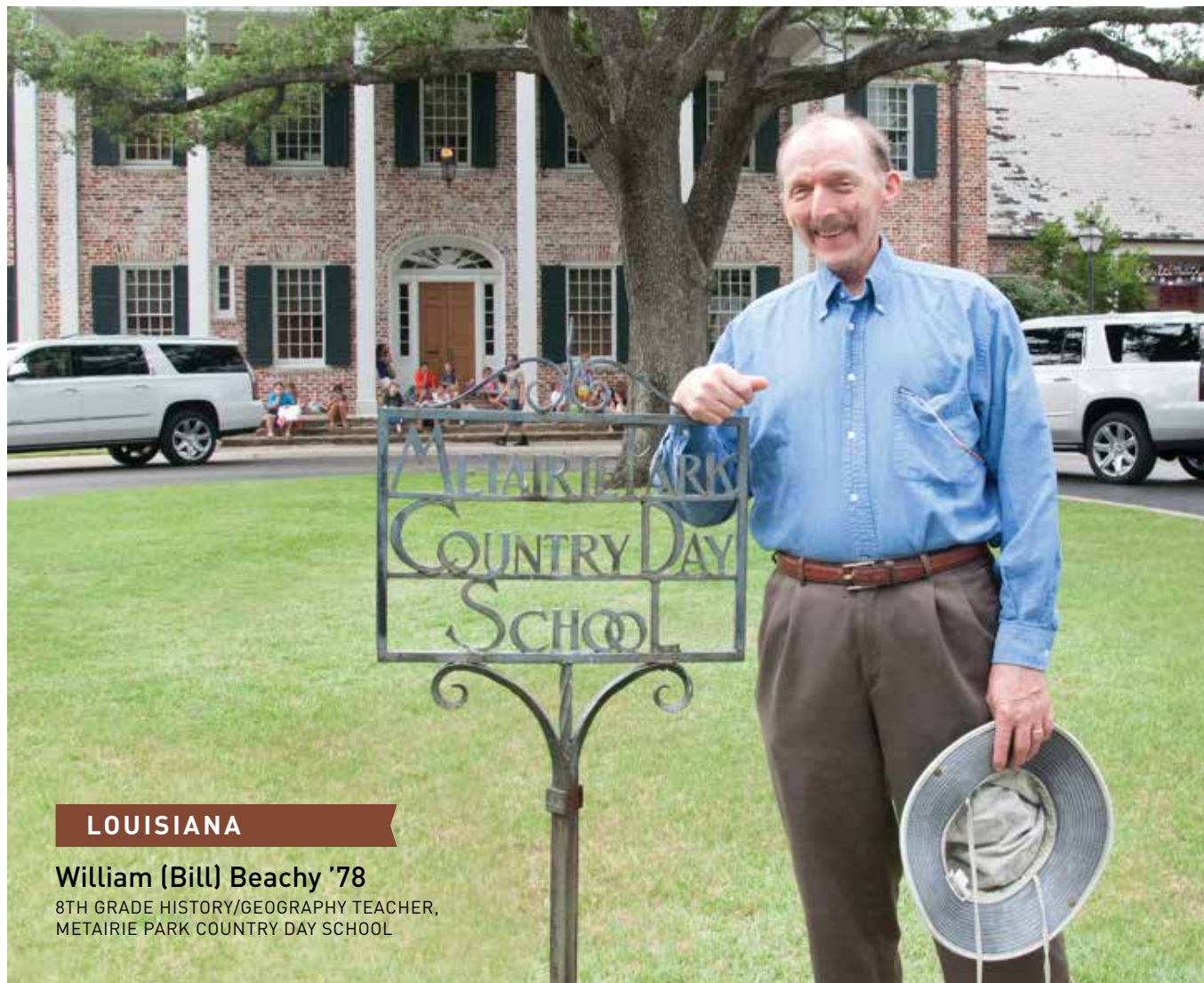


TENNESSEE

Jayne Cagle '81 and '87  
YOGA INSTRUCTOR,  
PURNA YOGA AT ONE JOYFUL YOGA  
  
DIRECTOR,  
A JOYFUL HEART CENTER

After a successful career as a dental hygienist in Chattanooga, Tenn., Cagle turned her attention to yoga and health.





## LOUISIANA

**William (Bill) Beachy '78**

8TH GRADE HISTORY/GEOGRAPHY TEACHER,  
METAIRIE PARK COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL

Photo: Julie Bordes

*Teaching students to unplug and reconnect*

Bill Beachy (M.A. '78) often uses photos in his classes, something he learned from a professor at UMKC. Back then, they used slides. Today, he uses an iPad.

Beachy is a history and geography teacher at a college prep school in Metairie, La. Although technology has changed significantly since he started teaching, Beachy says the most important lessons never change: time management, persistence and the satisfaction of a job well done.

"It may be more difficult now to get students to look at the world outside and to make their own independent observations now that digital technology has become so fascinating, and now we assume all answers are just the swipe of a finger away," he says. "At the same time, our students find they appreciate our wilderness trip — without cell phones!"

In his teaching, Beachy has a lofty goal — helping students

appreciate the world around them, as well as the people in it.

"The most important lessons my students can learn are not the details of history and geography, but the importance of the broad sweep of the human story, our interactions with one another and the planet which sustains us."

A keen sense of curiosity is nothing new for Beachy. At seven years old, he would pore over the atlas on his family's yearly trips from Kansas City to Ontario. Once they arrived, he would explore distant parts of the lakes by canoe and sailboat.

Now, Beachy says, he tries to teach his students about the "surprises" that lie in the world around them.

"When I look at them I want them to see the ridiculous and the ironic, as well as the sublime and inspiring. I want them to learn about people all over the world so they can appreciate how truly complex and fascinating we humans are."

## NORTH CAROLINA

**Heather Brosz White '95**

DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT AND FOUNDATION RELATIONS,  
NORTH CAROLINA ALLIANCE OF BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS

*Passion for volunteering leads to career helping kids*

Heather Brosz White's (M.P.A. '95) commitment to service didn't begin when she started working with the Boys & Girls Club. She's been volunteering since she was a child.

"Helping a company make money doesn't interest me," she says. "The nonprofit sector offers something that I am motivated by: helping others have a better life and making a difference."

While at UMKC, White volunteered with the Housing Authority of Kansas City, where she helped develop a mentoring program for girls. She says her time in Kansas City helped shape not just her career, but her life.

"I met some of my absolute favorite people on earth, including my husband, while living in Kansas City and attending UMKC," she says. "The city is beautiful, friendly, active, vibrant and exactly what I

needed in that time of my life."

In 1997, White got a call from the Raleigh Boys & Girls Club. A few weeks later, she was a camp director. She had worked with kids before, but nothing like this.

"I was leading 15 staff and 120 children on 110 acres," she says. "We fished, hiked, played games, did art projects and archery, canoed and went swimming. Every two weeks we spent the night in tents."

Nearly 20 years later, White is still helping children. Today, she is the director of government and foundation relations at the North Carolina Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs in Raleigh.

She also has some advice for anyone looking to give back to the community.

"Think about what is important to you. ... If you have an interest or skill, there is a way to help."



## KENTUCKY

**Kenji Takada '87**

PRESIDENT AND CEO,  
TBK AMERICA

*Finding a new home at UMKC*

Kenji Takada (B.B.A. '87) is originally from Japan, but he considers himself an all-American businessman.

When he arrived in California in 1981, he befriended a Kansas City couple on vacation. A year later, he made a big decision — to make Kansas City his home, and UMKC his alma mater.

Takada recently became president of TBK America, the American arm of a Japanese manufacturing firm. Previously, he worked for the Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development in Frankfort, Ken.

**"I always tell my kids how lucky they are to be born as Americans and to be able to live here. I am Japanese by birth, but an American by choice."**



Photo: Shaun King Photography



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## ALABAMA

## Kevin Biagi '80

CHIEF SCIENTIST,  
NOU SYSTEMS INC.

## Using science for national security

Kevin Biagi (B.S. '80) has spent his 31-year career helping the U.S. government fight enemies abroad.

He has spent weeks in various deserts testing bomb-detection equipment with the goal of helping American forces protect themselves against improvised explosive devices, or IEDs.

Today, Biagi works in Huntsville, Ala., helping the Army utilize small satellites on missions.

**"I was in meetings with people who had been in Afghanistan ... and had friends who died. That's more than academics."**



Photo: Alley Cat Allies

## VIRGINIA

## Becky Robinson '85

PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER,  
ALLEY CAT ALLIES

## Graduate's cat rescue program protects animals around the world

Becky Robinson (M.P.A. '85) is a true friend to felines. In 1990, she founded Alley Cat Allies, an organization that advocates for the humane treatment of cats. It's the only one of its kind, nationwide.

Protecting cats is a calling that goes back to Robinson's childhood, when her family launched the humane society in her hometown of McPherson, Kan.

"My childhood was spent with animals of all kinds," she says. "I was raised to be deeply concerned with the well-being of companion animals and wildlife."

What she didn't realize, however, was how many millions of cats needed help across the country. When Robinson happened upon a colony of alley cats in Washington,

D.C., she learned many of them were killed when taken to shelters.

"Once I saw the cats ... I could not look away."

Robinson learned about a program in the United Kingdom in which the government humanely captures cats, spays or neuters them, gives them vaccinations and returns them to their outdoor homes.

The U.S. didn't have a similar program, so Robinson started one.

Alley Cat Allies now has more than 600,000 supporters worldwide. The organization is based in Bethesda, Md., but Robinson wants people to know they can help cats in their own neighborhoods, too.

"Animals do not have a voice, so they need us to speak up for them."

**"I hope to inspire the next generation to get in the game."**



Photo: Kristen Garten Photography

## WEST VIRGINIA

## Katie DiDomenico '10

FOUNDER/CHAIR,  
YOUTH SPORTS CONNECTION

## Empowering every child to be an athlete

Katie DiDomenico (M.S.W. '10) has been playing sports nearly her entire life. As an adult, she helps kids across the country follow her lead.

DiDomenico founded Youth Sports Connection, a nonprofit that helps families pay for equipment and other fees required to play sports.

"Asking a family to pay \$40 for their child to play basketball, for example, is often times cost prohibitive," she says.

"In searching for programs available to help with the cost for participation, I found there wasn't much available for these families."

The majority of DiDomenico's career has been spent helping others. Her idea to start Youth Sports Connection came while working at a children's hospital in Aurora, Colo. She has also worked as a foster care case manager in Florida and a clinical social worker for people undergoing dialysis.

"The M.S.W. program at UMKC introduced me to people, programs and organizations that I would not have otherwise experienced," she says. "The program is unique in that it is more urban than others in the area and caters to non-traditional students."

DiDomenico says playing sports has made her into the person she is today. Now she's trying to give that gift to the children who need it most.

DiDomenico with her 18-month old son, Lorenzo.





MISSISSIPPI

**Vickie Johnson '87**  
MATERIAL QUALITY MANAGER,  
RAYTHEON SPACE AND AIRBORNE SYSTEMS

*Engineering a career in a changing industry*

When she decided to become an engineer, Vickie Johnson (B.S.E.E. '87) wasn't deterred by the fact that few people in industry looked like her.

"I have been a woman in the engineering field for nearly 30 years," she says. "I navigate this by remaining focused on two things: doing the best job that I am capable of, and continuing to learn. These two things will always garner the respect of those who are forward thinking enough to realize superficial qualities such as race or gender don't matter when it comes to the work at hand."

Johnson is a material quality manager with Raytheon Space and Airborne Systems, charged with improving the company's quality and efficiency.

She acknowledges that the engineering industry wasn't always welcoming to people of different races or genders, but says the field is changing.

"To open-minded individuals, there's no time for petty things that will only get in the way of doing the job and achieving outstanding results," Johnson says. "I have to say that today there are a lot more people who truly value diversity than back in the eighties when I entered

the engineering field."

Johnson first heard about engineering from a math professor her freshman year. At UMKC, she says, her love for the field really took off.

"I began to really understand the concepts being taught," she says. "I loved the engineering classes at UMKC. The professors were great and very helpful whenever I had questions."

She has one major piece of advice for aspiring female engineers.

"Push on and stay determined, even in the face of adversity, because it will be worth it."



FLORIDA

**Rick Scott '75**  
GOVERNOR OF FLORIDA

*Missouri native now a national leader*

No Roo road trip would be complete without UMKC's only sitting governor, graduate Rick Scott (B.A. '75). Scott has been in the news recently dealing with the aftermath of Hurricane Matthew, the strongest Atlantic storm in nearly a decade.

Scott grew up in North Kansas City, Mo. His mother was a clerk at J.C. Penney, while his father drove trucks and city buses.

Scott met his wife while attending North Kansas City High School. After graduation, he attended a year of community college, then joined the U.S. Navy.

After two years in the Navy, Scott came to UMKC on the G.I. Bill. During that time, he worked at a grocery store and bought two donut shops, his first foray into the business world.

Following his graduation from

UMKC with a management degree, Scott earned his law degree at Southern Methodist University and went to work for Johnson & Swanson, a Dallas law firm specializing in health care, oil and gas.

In 1987, Scott and his wife invested their life savings to start Columbia Hospital Corporation. Ten years later, Columbia operated more than a thousand facilities across the country.

In 2010, Scott became the 45th governor of Florida, defeating his opponent in one of Florida's closest gubernatorial races ever. He was elected to a second term in 2014.

Scott lives with his wife and two daughters in Tallahassee, Fla. When they're able, the family still attends Naples Community Church, which they helped found in 2006.



ARKANSAS

**Lisa McCullough '88**  
CHIEF FINANCIAL AND OPERATING OFFICER,  
ENDEAVOR FOUNDATION

*Breaking down poverty barriers*

Every day, Lisa McCullough (M.S. '88) challenges people's pre-conceived notions about poverty.

McCullough is the chief financial and operating officer for Endeavor Foundation in Springdale, Ark. Over the past 18 years, Endeavor has provided more than \$113 million to organizations improving people's quality of life in northwest Arkansas.

**"We all need poverty education — those living in it as well as those of us who aren't."**

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“Weekend volunteer commitments were incentives to get out rather than complain about the weather!”

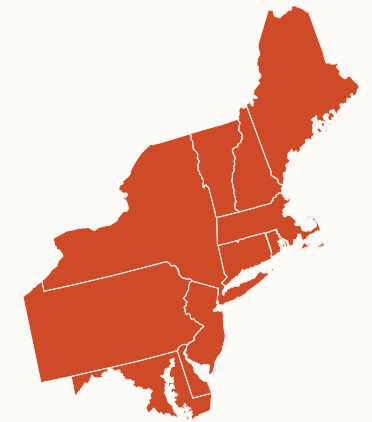


The Regans on a trip to Acadia National Park in Maine. The couple rode bikes through the park during Gail's fall break from Castleton.



3,074 ALUMNI

NORTHEAST



## VERMONT

**Bob and Gail Regan '97 and '04**  
VOLUNTEER ADAPTIVE SKI INSTRUCTORS

### *Where volunteering trumps date night*

Bob and Gail Regan have used their UMKC educations in lots of different fields but with one common goal: serving others.

Bob (B.L.A. '97) works with Project Independence, a program that supports people with developmental disabilities. Gail (Ph.D. '04) is an associate professor at Castleton University, as well as a mentor for girls.

In addition, they both volunteer as adaptive ski instructors, helping people with disabilities to enjoy outdoor activities. The couple says volunteering is a great way to connect amidst their busy schedules.

“The first winter we participated in training was very cold, and we found that having weekend volunteer commitments were incentives to get out rather than complain about the weather!” Gail says. “Doing something fun and useful has been a good way to spend time together.”

Bob, however, is perhaps best known for an entirely different type of service.

In 1980, while living in Kansas City, he opened the popular Brookside restaurant Charlie Hooper's. His general manager of 20 years, Kelly Buckert, is also a UMKC graduate.

Some of Bob's favorite memories of Kansas City revolve around Charlie Hooper's — tailgating at Chiefs games, supporting the Kansas City Comets and preparing for the annual St. Patrick's Day parade. The restaurant also supported the UMKC women's basketball program.

When Gail finished her degree at UMKC, the couple relocated to New Haven, Vt., where Gail teaches health and wellness courses at Castleton. She also volunteers with Girls on the Run, a program to help girls make smart, healthy choices. Gail says it's the perfect way to foster her interest in physical activity but also provide a service-learning opportunity for her students.

“For me personally, it is a nice complement to the traditional college-age group to interact with the generally sweet, energetic, eager-to-chat young girls.”





## RHODE ISLAND

Elizabeth Williams '05

CURATOR OF DECORATIVE ARTS AND DESIGN,  
RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN MUSEUM*Art curator sees herself as storyteller*

Interns everywhere could learn a lot from Elizabeth Williams (M.A. '05). When Williams started working at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art while pursuing her master's degree at UMKC, she was an intern. By the time she left, she was an assistant curator.

Today, Williams is the curator of Decorative Arts and Design at the Rhode Island School of Design Museum in Providence. The collection includes books, furniture, games, jewelry, musical instruments and even toys.

Williams says she has been drawn

to art since she was a child, but as a practical person, appreciates art that also serves a useful purpose.

"They are those objects that have brought aesthetic presence and functional design to the tasks, routines, celebrations and rituals of everyday life for centuries; they tell the story of how we live."

Williams specializes in the decorative arts, specifically 18th and 19th century silver. Precious metals are interesting, she says, because societies use them to create some of their most important and sacred objects.

"Silver can be made into simple vessels or implements, or the most grand of presentations," she says. "It survives and endures through the passage of time, but can be — and was — readily melted down for a new creation or used for its intrinsic monetary value in time of need."

As caretaker of more than 27,000 pieces of art, Williams says one of her most important roles is that of storyteller.

"The goal is to share an interesting story with your visitors that engages a wide range of audiences from a number of perspectives."

## NEW JERSEY

Patty Fagin '95

HEAD OF SCHOOL,  
STUART COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL OF THE SACRED HEART*Embracing diversity in education*

Patty Fagin's (Ed.S. '95) time at UMKC was defined by diversity. As a white woman from the suburbs, Fagin says it was her first time studying with students of color.

"I was taking courses around diversity and had conversations with people that I'd never had before," Fagin says. "That really helped me open my eyes as to how students are treated differently. Not just because of their ability or disability, which is my area, but also because of race or ethnicity."

At UMKC, Fagin learned how students' problems could be aggravated by a school or an institution, rather than by the students themselves.

"Is it the kid, really, or the institution that creates the problem?" Fagin asks. "That was a real eye-opener for me — to think that if schools were structured differently, maybe these students wouldn't struggle the way they struggle."

Fagin chose to study special

education because she wanted every student to enjoy school as much as she did as a child. Today, she carries out that goal as the head of school at Stuart Country Day School of the Sacred Heart, an all-girls' school in Princeton, N.J.

In her 40-year career, Fagin says she has learned the importance of teaching young people to be good citizens and good adults, not just good students.

"You need to support the whole child," Fagin says. "It's not just the academics. It's that faith and character piece. ... We are here to make a difference in the world."

As for her life in New Jersey, Fagin says she appreciates both the beautiful environment and the people in it.

"Princeton is an incredible town. It's bucolic almost — surrounded by farms," Fagin says. "Great culture and academics, and an entire community that's focused on discussions ... They want to talk about everything."



## NEW YORK

Richard Humphrey '90

CO-FOUNDER, IMAGINEAIR

FOUNDER, KAVOO

*Entrepreneur travels the globe for a living*

Richard Humphrey (MBA '90) was born in Kansas City, but his passion for travel and entrepreneurship have taken him all over the world.

Since completing his MBA, Humphrey has helped create two travel companies — Kavoo in 2008 and ImagineAir in 2004. Kavoo provides private travel in the U.S. and Canada, while ImagineAir uses smaller aircrafts to save people time on their trips.

Through these two companies, Humphrey helps travelers reach the people and places they care about most.

Humphrey is also an avid traveler himself. When not exploring New York City, he's traveling to Greece, France, the Bahamas and Mexico, just to name a few.

He is also the chairman of the New York Entrepreneurs Organization, a group that helps entrepreneurs to network and build their skills.



Photo: Brandon Detherage



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Photo: Britta photography

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Allison Winchester '11

NEONATAL NURSE PRACTITIONER,  
DARTMOUTH HITCHCOCK MEDICAL CENTER

*Passion for children, families drives  
nurse practitioner*

Allison Winchester (M.S.N. '11) knew at a young age she wanted to enter the medical field. Unfortunately, it was a sad experience that helped her realize she wanted to work with children.

"I babysat a little boy with special needs who later passed away. I knew I wanted to do pediatrics from that point on."

Winchester's sister was a neonatal nurse and suggested she give it a try. She has now been in the field for 16 years.

Winchester says she wouldn't have been able to become a nurse practitioner had it not been for the UMKC School of Nursing and Health Studies' distance education program. She was able to

continue working as a nurse in New Hampshire while she earned her master's as a neonatal nurse practitioner.

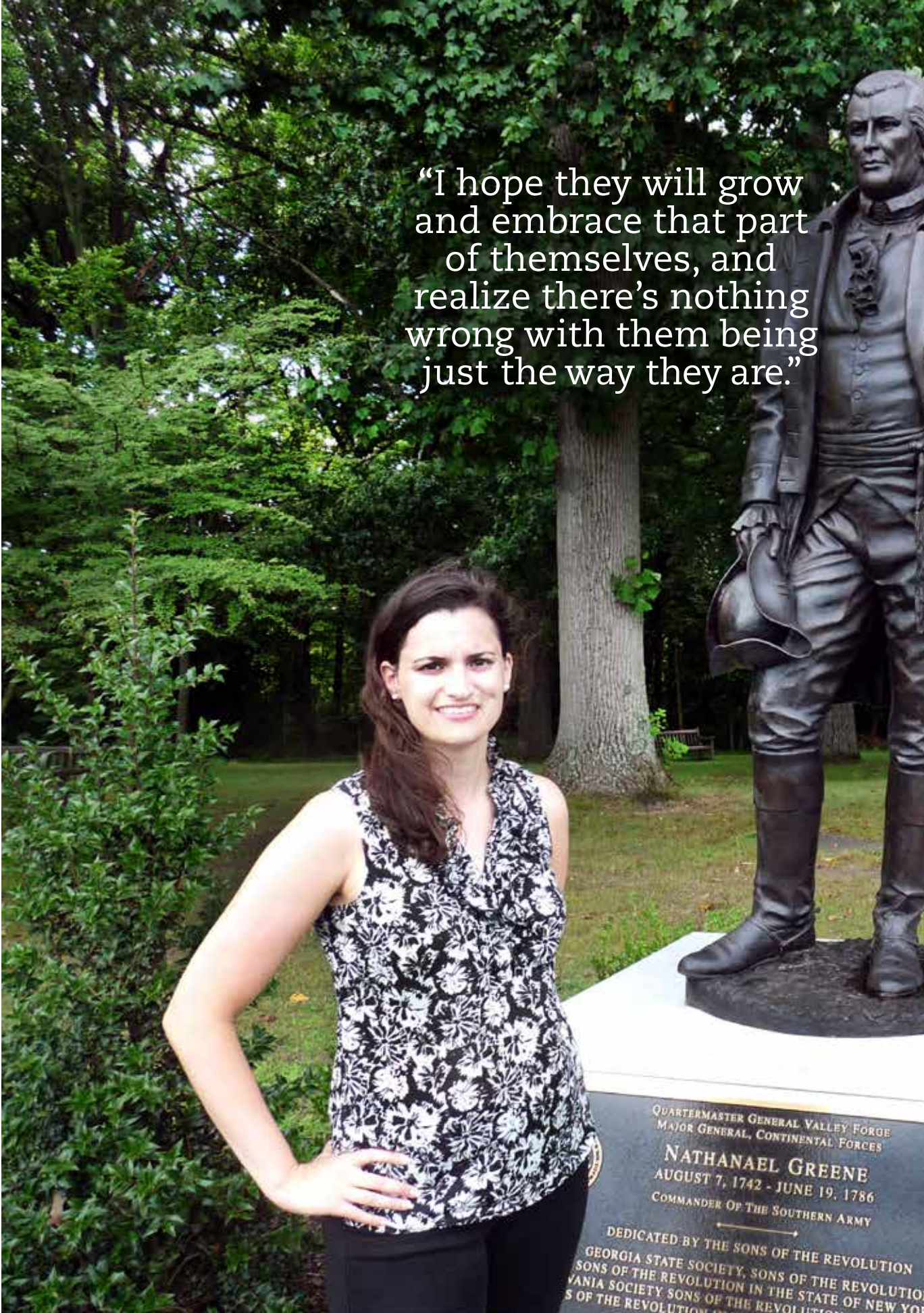
"I loved the program. Now I have a wonderful job," Winchester says. "I am the director of our neonatal transport team and also spend time teaching the pediatric residents."

As a nurse practitioner in Lebanon, N.H., Winchester often deals with parents facing uncertainty and sometimes grief. She says she tries to bring comfort to the families at the hospital.

"How you interact and communicate with families can make a difficult day a little easier."

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"I hope they will grow  
and embrace that part  
of themselves, and  
realize there's nothing  
wrong with them being  
just the way they are."



Holdren at Valley Forge National Historic Park.

PENNSYLVANIA

Jessica Holdren '07

DISABILITY SPECIALIST,  
ARCADIA UNIVERSITY

*Making college  
possible for students  
of all abilities*

Jessica Holdren (B.A. '07) didn't set out to be a disability specialist. When she got her psychology degree from UMKC, she planned to focus on eating disorder research and prevention.

While pursuing her master's degree at West Chester University of Pennsylvania, Holdren discovered a new passion: helping students with disabilities.

"It's a big transition from high school to college, especially for a student with a disability," Holdren says. "I hope they will grow and embrace that part of themselves, and realize there's nothing wrong with them being just the way they are."

Today, Holdren is a disability specialist at Arcadia University in Glenside, Penn. She says her role is to ensure all students get the same access to a college education.

"I want to make sure that when people are excluded by the nature of a program or how a place was developed, that we find ways to improve them," Holdren says.

Holdren has a special interest in helping people with "invisible disabilities," or conditions that are not immediately obvious, such as autism, anxiety or depression.

Despite the increasing enrollment and success of students with disabilities in higher education, Holdren says there are always new challenges. One of her jobs is helping instructors use technology to benefit all students, no matter their ability.

"How you make a document or make a video can make it inaccessible to someone," Holdren says. "It's completely unintentional."

Living just outside of Philadelphia, Holdren says she loves being surrounded by history.

"I love the historical landmarks — the rich history there," she says. "The first home my husband and I rented was built in the 1800s. I love how things are pretty well preserved."





Osborn shows off his UMKC alumni cap while vacationing in Hawaii.



MARYLAND

Patrick Osborn '93, '94

ARCHIVIST,  
U.S. NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS  
ADMINISTRATION

MEMBER,  
SOCIETY FOR MILITARY HISTORY

“In Maryland, you  
are surrounded  
by history ... It's  
actually in some  
ways reminiscent  
of parts of  
Missouri.”

Archivist honors father, grandfather with  
career in military history

Patrick Osborn (B.A. '93, M.A. '94) was  
born to be a historian.

His father fought in World War II,  
spending time in occupied Germany after  
the Nazis were defeated. His grandfather  
was a doughboy in World War I. So it's  
only natural that Osborn specializes in  
what he calls “the greatest conflicts in  
human history.”

As an archivist at the U.S. National  
Archives and Records Administration in  
Washington, D.C., Osborn is responsible  
for preserving some of the country's most  
important records.

“About 10 years ago, the National  
Archives had about one million cubic feet  
of records that had not been processed

yet,” Osborn says. “The past 10 years have  
been about trying to get that material  
transcribed so the public can access it.”

That passion for research inspired  
Osborn to write several books on military  
history. His latest, *The Hindenburg Line*,  
focuses on Germany's strongest line of  
defense in World War I.

Osborn, a Kansas City native, now  
lives in Maryland, which he says mirrors  
Missouri in some key ways.

“In Maryland, you are surrounded by  
history,” he says. “An hour or so away you  
can visit a number of civil war battlefields  
... It's actually in some ways reminiscent  
of parts of Missouri. In that way it kind of  
feels like home.”

Childhood hobby becomes career

Peng Wei's (Ph.D. '02) love of chemistry  
began when he was growing up in China.

“I was always fascinated by the news  
on the latest new materials, technology  
or medicines from western countries,”  
he says. “I especially love the fact that  
chemistry is not only a study on paper,  
but also hands on.”

After completing his undergraduate  
degree in China, Peng was determined to  
study in the U.S. When he came to UMKC,  
it was his first time ever leaving China.

“It was an eye-opening experience for  
a young, ambitious college graduate,”  
he says. “I took every opportunity to  
learn as much as I could. UMKC not only  
broadened my horizon academically, but  
also made me a stronger person with

passion and curiosity to advance.”

Ten years after graduating from UMKC,  
Peng co-founded Affinity Research  
Chemicals, a pharmaceutical research  
and development firm in Wilmington, Del.

Peng and his colleagues help  
pharmaceutical companies with drug  
discovery — the process of developing  
new drugs for patients.

Peng may be the president and co-  
founder of his company, but he is quick  
to give credit to his team.

“What's unique about our company  
is our highly-skilled research team in  
Delaware,” he says. “Our company's  
mission is to establish long-term  
relationships with our clients by  
exceeding their expectations.”

DELAWARE

Peng Wei '02

PRESIDENT/OWNER,  
AFFINITY RESEARCH CHEMICALS

“UMKC ... made me  
a stronger person  
with passion  
and curiosity  
to advance.”

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CONNECTICUT

S. Blair Kauffman '75, '76

LAW LIBRARIAN AND PROFESSOR,  
YALE LAW SCHOOL

Librarian wraps up 22-year career at Yale Law

One of the things S. Blair Kauffman (J.D. '75, MBA '76) loved most about UMKC was the campus, especially the parks and neighborhoods that surround it. He spent most of his career on another beautiful campus: Yale.

Kauffman spent decades as a law librarian and professor at Yale Law School, but he isn't the first Roo to fill that role. Harry Bitner, 1939 graduate, served as law librarian at Yale as well.

Over his 22 years at Yale, Kauffman says he had the opportunity to work with some of the most brilliant students and faculty members in the world.

"Yale is like an intellectual's candy shop with endless choices, where every day offers opportunities to learn something new."

Kauffman helped bring a number of unique collections and books to Yale. These include a Roman law collection and what's reputed to be the most extensive collection of rare English law books ever assembled.

Kauffman retired earlier this year. Now he and his wife, Barbara, will enjoy a quieter life at their lake house.

"We are retreating to our house on a lake in the little seaside village of Bremen, Maine, where I can swim every day during the summer, eat fresh seafood and breathe that incredibly delicious, clean Maine air."



McKenna with her vast collection of cookbooks and supplies.

MASSACHUSETTS

Patti McKenna '07

COO/EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
CHOPCHOPKIDS INC.

Getting kids into the kitchen

How do you teach kids to eat well? You let them get their hands dirty, says Patti McKenna (MBA '07).

McKenna is the executive director and COO of ChopChopKids Inc., a nonprofit organization in Belmont, Mass., that inspires kids and their families to cook together.

"Our goal is to get kids back into the kitchen," McKenna says.

When she first moved to Kansas City, McKenna volunteered for the Trolley Run. After serving as chair of the event, she decided that the nonprofit sector was where she wanted to be.

But running a nonprofit requires a lot more than drive — it takes financial prowess.

"I really am a firm believer that nonprofits need to run like a business," McKenna says. "You need the business acumen in order to make them work the way they should."

That's where UMKC came in.

While serving as the membership director at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, McKenna decided to pursue her MBA at the Henry W. Bloch School of Management, with a scholarship from Henry Bloch himself.

After graduating, McKenna spent several years at the American Heart Association. In 2014, she made the move to ChopChopKids.

Working with food was a natural fit. McKenna grew up watching her mother cook for their family of seven, and her father was a butcher. Today, she loves cooking for her family and entertaining guests at their home.

At ChopChopKids, McKenna works to give other kids those experiences she enjoyed as a child. Many of their recipes use ingredients covered under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, so families of all income levels can participate.

"I believe that cooking with your kids is really important," McKenna said. "I think it's the way to get kids to learn manners and cooking and be together as a family."





Hubert while hiking at Acadia National Park in Bar Harbor, Maine.

MAINE

**Dwane Hubert '94**

SENIOR EMERGENCY MANAGER,  
MAINE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT  
AGENCY

*Veteran steps in when disaster strikes*

A 22-year military career took retired Lieutenant Colonel Dwane Hubert (M.P.A. '94) coast-to-coast, but he never lost his connection to his childhood home in Maine.

"The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence until you've actually been there," he says. "I kept turning back and saying, some day I'm going to go home."

After more than two decades of pining for jagged coastlines, whoopee pies and Moxie soft drinks, Hubert and his wife moved back to their home state.

Today, Hubert is the director of Mitigation, Preparedness and Recovery at the Maine Emergency Management Agency. He and his colleagues are in charge of protecting the people of Maine

during emergencies and disasters.

During a disaster, such as the 2007 flooding of the St. John River, Hubert and his team assist local and county officials in protecting and supporting residents.

"We provide any resources we can get our hands on," Hubert says.

He also understands the importance of preparing people before a disaster.

"It's all about informing people on protecting themselves before something happens," he says.

Hubert also helps draft requests for disaster declarations. He says his UMKC education helps him write letters worthy of the president's desk.

"I became a better writer and correspondent [at UMKC]. That was always a shortcoming of mine."

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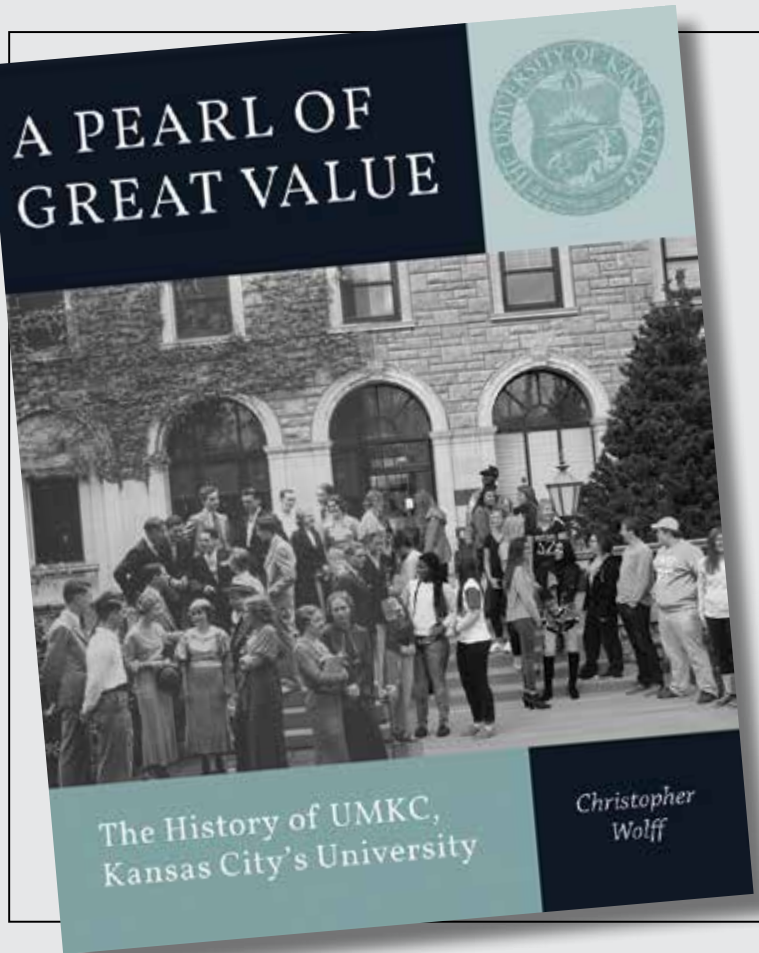
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# American Road Trip

ALUMNI STYLE

