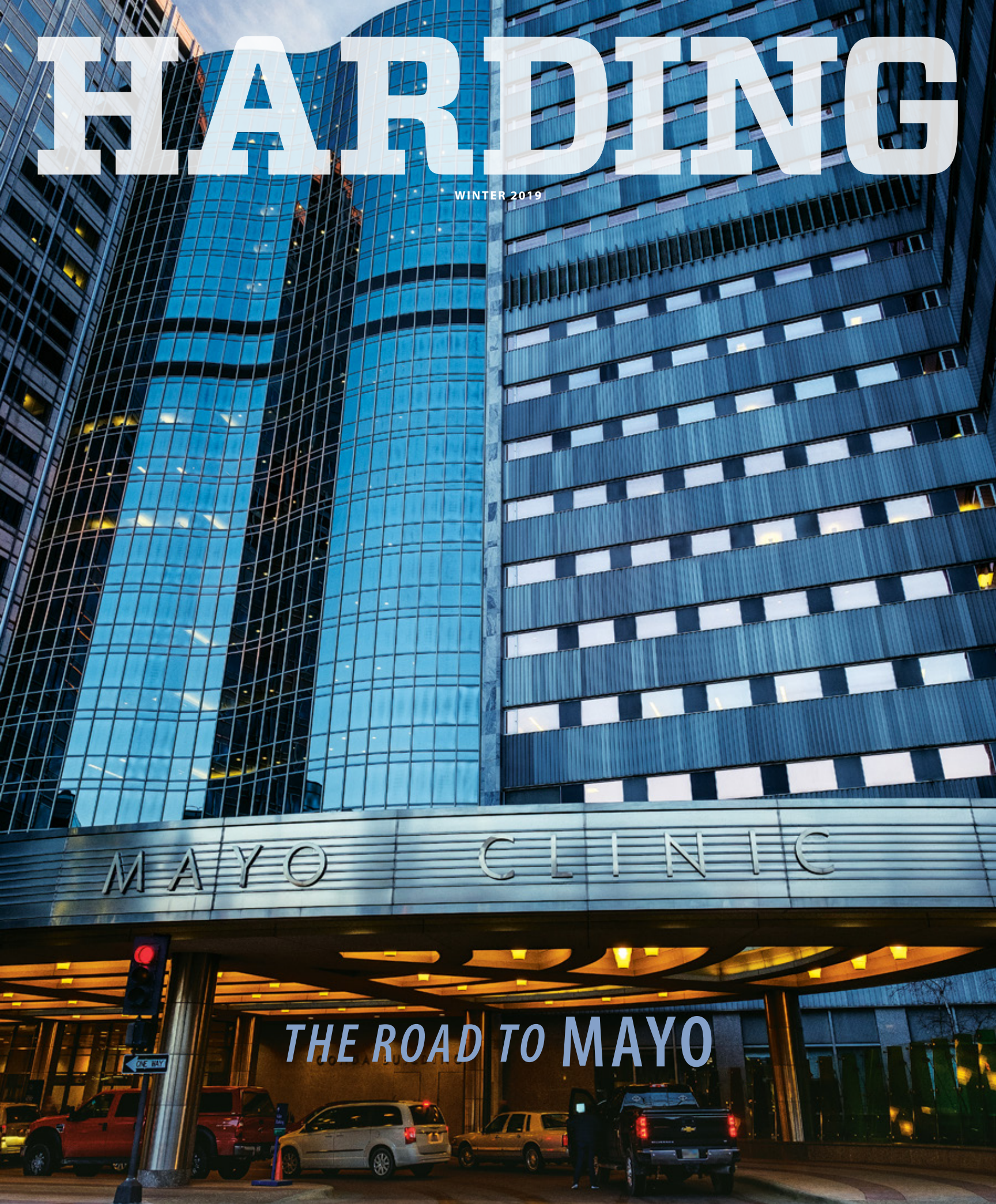


# HARDING

WINTER 2019

MAYO CLINIC

*THE ROAD TO MAYO*





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PHOTO BY JEFF MONTGOMERY



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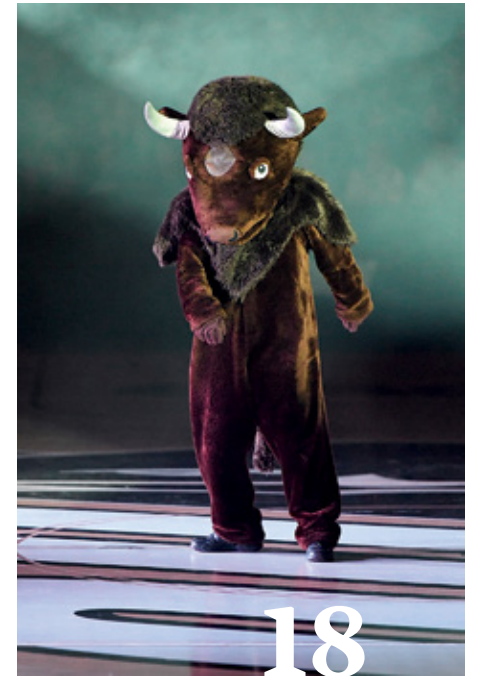
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PHOTO BY KURT STEPINITZ

# Real-life nursing

By BRUCE D. McLARTY, *president*

**O**N OCT. 12, 2018, my Instagram post featured a Harding reunion in Minnesota. Eight of the nine alumni who are now Mayo Clinic nurses were at the home of Dr. Greg ('85) and Heidi Bettich ('85) Kays in Red Wing, Minnesota, picking apples and making hot apple cider.

Our magazine reached out to these nurses, and beginning on page 24, you may read in their own words stories of their service at Mayo as well as how they were prepared by their training in the Carr College of Nursing.

Since the program's beginning in 1975, the College of Nursing's mission of "Developing Nurses as Christian Servants," is a heritage that creates the opportunity for close student-faculty relationships and mentoring along with a variety of clinical experiences. My wife, Ann, is a proud 1980 graduate of this program.

We were thrilled but not surprised by the College of Nursing's ranking by registerednursing.org as the No. 1 program in the state. On its site it states "Harding University is home to the renowned Carr College of Nursing, a prestigious program for those committed to receive their BSN or MSN. With flexible options and clinical training that can integrate mission work, Harding graduates are highly sought after."

Also in this edition (page 14), read the stories of three families and their beautiful homes in Legacy Park, an on-campus de-



velopment that is quickly growing and enhancing the Harding campus community.

We also obtained permission from *Champion* magazine to reprint their summer 2018 cover story (page 18) which featured our Bison mascot, Buff. Their cover lines say Buff is "a lesson in following dreams, earning respect and capturing the heart of a campus." This story will warm your heart.

Fall has been rewarding on campus in so many ways and, as you read this, our spring semester has begun. We ask God's blessings on it as well as you, our readers, in 2019. 🙏



## HARDING

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# #comehomeHU18

SELECTIONS FROM HOMECOMING WEEKEND OCT. 19-21, 2018 📷



TOP ROW: @sarahhulajohnson, @alliswag\_7, @annalisadaughety MIDDLE ROW: @princesadeosoofficial, @bruceclarty, @mrskatewalter BOTTOM ROW: @wendyrampy, @angieraney, @compositioncop

PHOTO BY JEFF MONTGOMERY

Ganus Activities Complex is filled with approximately 600 students, faculty, staff and volunteers on Oct. 24, 2018, taking action to fight hunger in White County and surrounding areas. They teamed up with Arkansas Blue Cross Blue Shield and The Pack Shack to pack 254,000 meals in under two hours. For more on this event, turn to page 7.

PHOTO BY JEFF MONTGOMERY





The legacy of Andy T. Ritchie Jr. continues with the naming of an endowed chair.



Dr. Shawn Daggett shows pictures of the Andy T. Ritchie Jr. family as part of the official signing ceremony Oct. 19, 2018, for the endowed chair named in Ritchie's honor.

## Endowed Bible Chair honors Ritchie

IN OCTOBER, THE UNIVERSITY established the Andy T. Ritchie Jr. Endowed Chair for Discipleship and Church Planting in the College of Bible and Ministry through the support of Bill and Doris Fulks and an anonymous donor.

"Andy T. Ritchie was a logical choice for the name of the endowment," said Dr. Shawn Daggett, director of the Center for World Missions. "He was filled with spiritual fervor, and in his teaching, he narrated the story of Jesus in such a way that his students experienced Christ firsthand. He always spoke of God as someone not only to be revered but a person with whom we can have an intimate relationship."

Ritchie joined the faculty as Bible professor and chorus director in 1946 and retired in 1974. An archived letter from former student Sally Rogers Clark ('58) notes Ritchie was "the most humble, godly, consistent Christian I have ever known."

Many of those who were mentored by Ritchie became foreign missionaries, church planters and founders of new Christian colleges. During his tenure at Harding, he visited more than 60 missionary families (many of whom were his former students) in 20 different countries.

"[Ritchie] used his summers to serve Christian camps and conduct evangelistic campaigns," said Daggett. "Wherever he traveled, he took Harding students with him. Under his contagious influence, Harding graduates went out to plant and strengthen churches all over the globe. In conducting research on the history

of missions here at Harding, we discovered that Ritchie, more than any other one person, was responsible for inspiring and training students to become missionaries and evangelists in underserved parts of the world and this country."

The endowed chair will serve to generate interest in missions, recruit church planters, and mentor students in Christ-like living.

"Experts tell us that new church plants are better positioned to welcome nonchurchgoers than older established congregations," said Dr. Monte Cox, dean of the College of Bible and Ministry. "Our students come to Harding from all over the country and fan out around the globe after they graduate. For decades, we have encouraged graduates to form teams and relocate together to less-churched regions of the U.S. We believe the Chair can provide much-needed preparation that will lead to a higher degree of persistence for these mission-minded alumni."

The distinguished chair appointment in Ritchie's honor will be awarded to candidates demonstrating excellence in teaching and the potential to make a difference through use of the accompanying funds. The first appointment will be named in fall 2019. The endowed funds to be used by the chair will potentially cover research and publications; travel expenses for field trips, equipment and materials; expenses of special seminars and conferences; and visiting lecturers in Bible and ministry fields.

For more information on establishing an endowment, visit [harding.edu/advancement](http://harding.edu/advancement).

## Walker board chair

DR. ROBERT C. WALKER ('77) WAS elected chairman of the board of trustees in October 2018.

Walker succeeds retired Russellville, Arkansas, banker Roy Reaves, who has served as chair since 2014 and remains on the board.

"I consider this opportunity to serve as chairman of the board of trustees at Harding as one of the greatest privileges ever afforded me," said Walker. "I have loved Harding ever since I was a student. The education I received, the relationships I made, and the Christianity that was modeled before me has found a place deep within me."

Walker is a physician with Surgical Associates of North Alabama. He received his bachelor's degree from Harding and doctor of medicine from University of Alabama School of Medicine. He is certified by the American Board of Surgery and a fellow of the American College of Surgeons. He serves on the board of directors for Alabama Policy Institute.



He has received the Outstanding Alumnus Award from the College of Sciences at Harding and the John A. Caddell Award from Decatur General Hospital Foundation. Walker is an elder at Beltline Church of Christ in Decatur, Alabama. He and his wife, Beth, have three children: Charlie ('08), Mary Kyle ('10) and Claire ('12).

"I am compelled to give back to this great university," said Walker. "We must never forget those on whom we currently stand. All great institutions must be sustained, and my message as chairman of the board is 'give back.' In so doing we can maintain Harding as a premier Christian university."

Newly-elected officers will serve two-year terms in their respective positions and are on the board's executive committee along with immediate past chair Reaves. Harding's board is comprised of 25 men and women representing nine states.

PHOTOS BY JEFF MONTGOMERY

## Providing meals for neighbors

THE UNIVERSITY TEAMED UP WITH ARKANSAS Blue Cross and Blue Shield and The Pack Shack to package 254,000 meals in under two hours for donation to the food insecure in White County and surrounding areas. The meal-packing event took place Wednesday, Oct. 24 and involved approximately 600 volunteers, including campus organizations and athletic teams.

The event was sponsored by Arkansas Blue Cross and Blue Shield who launched a "Fearless Food Fight" campaign earlier this year to mark its 70th anniversary. The company has committed to packing 700,000 meals to fight food insecurity in Arkansas.

"Arkansas Blue Cross will continue to take a multifaceted approach to improving the health of our state," said Curtis Barnett, Arkansas Blue Cross president and chief executive officer. "Our company already supports and will continue to support programs addressing the social determinants of health. However, we want to make a concerted effort to work with other organizations in the state that are committed to helping people have access to nutritious food. Great work already is being done throughout Arkansas, and we want to continue to do our part in helping to ensure our most vulnerable citizens have access to healthy food."

Arkansas ranks second in the nation for food insecurity, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. According to a recent report, nearly 20 percent of Arkansans do not know from where they will obtain their next meal. The state ranks No. 1 nationally for very high food insecurity, with 8.1 percent of Arkansas adults and children experiencing deep hunger. They may cut back or skip meals frequently. Arkansas also ranks No. 5 for senior hunger, with an estimated 240,000 Arkansans age 60 and older struggling with having enough food. Nutrition is one of several social determinants of good health.

"I think this event is a huge answer to prayer," said senior Lexi Hoagland, student organizer for the event. "God worked in cool ways through Harding to help impact our community. I hope the meals that were made can let our neighbors have peace of mind knowing where their next meals will come from. I'm very thankful for The Pack Shack, Arkansas Blue Cross and Harding for letting this event come alive."

The meals were distributed to food pantries, churches and nonprofits throughout the area — providing a quarter of a million meals to the local community.

Learn more about the Fearless Food Fight at [arkansasbluecross.com/FearlessFoodFight](http://arkansasbluecross.com/FearlessFoodFight).

## Master's in Information Systems begun

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL of Business launched an online Master of Science in Information Systems in January.

The MSIS is a 30-credit hour program with concentrations in data analytics and information assurance and security. Every course includes an emphasis in ethics, systems thinking, analytical and critical thinking skills, collaborative skills, written communication, creativity and technical solutions.

The MSIS program targets professional candidates who want to increase their knowledge in this area of study either to perform better in their current role or to transition careers.

The IS discipline bridges the gap between business and highly technical professionals. The MSIS is carefully designed with the business professional in mind, engaging just enough technology for a deeper understanding of data related decisions.

The MSIS is offered alongside Harding's MBA, which was recognized as one of the best in the country in 2018 by BestColleges.com, a leading provider of higher education research and college planning resources. The ranking highlights accredited, not-for-profit institutions who have developed exceptional academic online programs for students looking to advance their knowledge, skills and careers in business administration.

To learn more, visit [harding.edu/business](http://harding.edu/business) or call 501-279-4240.

## QUOTABLE

“Words matter to others. Words matter to self. Words matter to God.”



UNDERSTAND  
WORDS  
MATTER TO SELF



Diane Burton, speaker, coach and author of *The Master's Masterpiece*, was one of eight speakers at the second annual TEDxHardingU, Nov. 13, 2018. Held in the Administration Auditorium, TEDxHardingU is a program designed to spark deep discussion and connection in a small, intimate setting.

PHOTO BY STERLING MCMICHAEL



# SPOTLIGHT



As the director of maintenance for Physical Resources, **DANA MCMILLION** is managing expectations across campus.

### WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO HARDING?

In 2004 my children had been tugging at my wife and me to move closer to them as they were all in Arkansas. They all found their spouses at Harding and had started their families, giving us grandchildren to love on. At the time, I had been employed by Johnson Controls for 17 years and was in Milwaukee. I was able to transfer to Little Rock, Arkansas, as service manager. Even while we were looking for a place to call home, Johnson Controls had begun reorganization within the company and 62 days after moving I found myself out of a job. Within a couple of days, I met Danny DeRamus, the physical plant director, in a men's class at church, and he had a position open that I could possibly fill. After much prayer I was offered a position and began my career at Harding.

### DESCRIBE YOUR ROLE AS DIRECTOR OF MAINTENANCE.

Our group here is organized into two parts — a construction team and a service team. I am responsible for the service team, which takes care of the day-to-day service responsibilities. We also are responsible for major event planning and setups for events such as Homecoming, graduation, Parents Weekend, concerts, guest speakers, and of course those wonderful Christmas lights. We also are responsible for the after-hour emergency service responses for those issues that arise after normal working hours.

### WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF THE JOB?

No two days are exactly the same, so it's not a monotonous job. One day we are helping tear down the football stadium towers, and another day we are at the pool assisting with a roof replacement. You never know what your day is going to look like.

### NAME SOME CHALLENGES AND REWARDS OF COMPLETING HARDING'S CHRISTMAS LIGHT DISPLAY.

It has been an ever-expanding display. At the end of the initial lighting each year, the president and others walk the display, and we evaluate how the lights look. We talk about new ideas that might add to what we already have in place. Every year we add more lights to increase the range and depth to make it a deeper and more positive experience. We now have a couple of contractors that help us with setting up the display. We used to do everything ourselves, but it got to be too much time away from daily service commitments. The city and the campus are working together to make Searcy a destination where people will come to visit the various light displays, not just Harding's.

### DO YOU HAVE ANY HOBBIES?

I love spending time with my family and supporting my grandchildren in the various sports and events they are involved with. I also love restoring old cars. Through the years I have had several classic Volkswagen buses and Beetles. I also enjoy working on my hobby farm. I have several animals to take care of and am always looking to expand our country lifestyle.

### WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE FOR THE HARDING COMMUNITY TO KNOW ABOUT THE PHYSICAL RESOURCE TEAM?

We have a great team of very talented individuals that give their heart and soul to this University. We occasionally have some major issues after hours, but these folks show up after a full day of work and take care of the issue at hand. The grounds crew is working whether it's 10 degrees or 100 degrees outside running around in their golf carts doing what they do. We have people who are working from home troubleshooting systems remotely to get a system back up quickly and are running system checks on their iPads making sure everything is running OK. We've got a couple of employees that have been here for more than 50 years and are still setting an example for others to follow. 📍

PHOTO BY JEFF MONTGOMERY



# SEEN on SOCIAL MEDIA



**Madyson Rowland** @madyk\_r  
Yess Harding!!!! Is such an amazing place!!!! You will absolutely love it! I am a sophomore! The atmosphere is so uplifting, encouraging and so amazing!  
OCTOBER 11



**Brian Bush** @brianbushok  
What a blessing to spend [time] with my @HardingU family in Weatherford yesterday and visit with @BruceMcLarty! May God continue to bless HU. You are always in my prayers.  
OCTOBER 14



**Jennifer Rice** @jenniferr1992  
We are so thankful for all that the Harding faculty and staff do for our kids. Doing safety checks on students' cars is just one more thing that makes it great to be at Harding.  
NOVEMBER 14



**Julia Reinbolt** @JuliaReinboldt  
Didn't realize how sad I would be to miss my first @HardingU lighting cer-



emony until after I saw it on everyone's social media :((  
NOVEMBER 26

**Rachel** @rachel\_tinsley\_10after  
@\_jacktinsley\_ how awesome is that!!! Your school rocks!! I've never seen a campus lit up like this! Take pics! Make memories and enjoy! So proud of you and thankful for where you are! #hardinguniversity #lightsgalore @hardinguniversity  
NOVEMBER 26



## EVENTS

FEB. 22-23

### W.I.N.G.S

"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." This two-day women's conference will explore what John 13:35 means and how to put it into practice with real-life context and application as a woman in God's service.  
harding.edu/wings

MARCH 28

### ASI speaker TONY DUNGY

Closing out the 2018-19 series is Tony Dungy, former head coach of the 2007 Super Bowl Champion Indianapolis Colts and football analyst for NBC Sports. Known for his leadership style and pri-

orities of faith and family, he will speak about motivating for success.  
harding.edu/asi

APRIL 18-20

### Spring Sing

"The Greatest Show" promises to live up to its name as more than 1,000 students from more than 20 social clubs and organizations hit the stage in the University's annual Spring Sing production, competing for cash awards to be donated to the charity of their choice.  
harding.edu/springsing

APRIL 26

### Arts & Life Series ANDREW HARNBERGER

Last but certainly not least in the 2018-

19 performance series is marimbist Andrew Harnsberger and the Harding University Percussion Ensemble. According to National Public Radio, Harnsberger is sure to be "a joy to watch in performance and a feast for the ears."  
harding.edu/artsandlife

MAY 11

### Commencement

The end of the academic year brings with it a time for celebration as more than 800 students cross the stage in three ceremonies, representing Harding's nine colleges and more than 100 majors.  
harding.edu/graduation

For a complete list of events, visit  
harding.edu/calendar.

# BY THE NUMBERS

## RELAY FOR LIFE

# \$27,000

Amount raised to support cancer research with American Cancer Society

# 38

Number of planning committee members who worked to organize and execute the event

# 120

Number of luminaria bags sold to remember loved ones lost and to honor those in treatment

# 30

Number of campus clubs and organizations that sponsored a booth to raise money

# 12

Hours in the all-night event 5 p.m.-5 a.m.

# 10

Number of years Harding has hosted a Relay for Life event

# 15

Million cancer survivors in the U.S. — a number that is expected to grow thanks to research funded by events like Relay for Life



NEWSMAKERS

CENTER FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

Lolita Meredith was named director of the McNair Scholars Program in October 2018, replacing Dr. Ann Brown who accepted a position as associate professor in the department of English.

COLLEGE OF ALLIED HEALTH

Brian Odom defended his dissertation in October 2018 at the University of Central Arkansas and earned a Ph.D. in physical therapy. The title of his dissertation is "Examining Best Practice in Wound Healing in Pediatric Critical Care."

Inna Swann successfully defended her dissertation in November 2018 at the University of Central Arkansas to earn a Ph.D. in physical therapy. The title of her dissertation is in three parts: "Part I: Test-Retest Reliability and Validity of the Modified Clinical Test of Sensory Interaction on Balance (mCTSIB) in Children, Aged 9 to 13 years, Measured by the NeuroCom VSR™ System and the NeuroCom SMART Balance Master®; Part II: Defining the Normative Values for the mCTSIB in Children, Aged 9 to 13 years, Using the NeuroCom VSR System; and Part III: A Comparison of Postural Control in Children, Aged 9 to 13 years, in Zambia and the United States, Using the mCTSIB by the NeuroCom VSR System."

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES

Senior English major Miranda McClung's short story "Pattern of Migration" and poems "Billy" and "Roadside" have been chosen for publication in the literary journal Cave Region Review 2018 edition released in November. The review is a regional publication that publishes both student and professional writers from the Ozark Mountain region.

COLLEGE OF SCIENCES

Family and Consumer Sciences major Ashley Hudson won second place at the 24th annual Southeastern Association of Educational Opportunity Program Personnel McNair/ Student Support Services Scholars Research Conference in Atlanta in July 2018 with her research and presentation on "Should I Stay or Should I Go? Women Who Stay in Abusive Relationships." In September 2018, she presented at University of Arkansas Little Rock's Attracting Intelligent Minds Conference and at the AIM conference at the University of Arkansas.

Dr. Cindy White, associate professor of chemistry, has been appointed chair of the chemistry and biochemistry department effective at the end of the spring 2019 semester. She assumes the role held by Dr. Dennis Matlock who will return to full-time teaching.

FINANCE OFFICE

Dr. Mel Sansom, vice president of finance and CFO, was recognized as the 2018 Arkansas Business Chief Financial Officer of the Year for Education. He was honored at a special luncheon held at Embassy Suites in Little Rock Wednesday, Nov. 7, 2018.

HONORS COLLEGE

Dr. Mike James has been selected to serve as president of the Great Plains Honors Council, a six-state regional grouping of colleges and universities, all of which are under the National Collegiate Honors Council. The selection was made at the annual GPHC conference held in March 2018 at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater. James was elected president-elect for 2018-19, then president for 2019-20.

OFFICE OF UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS

Scott Hannigan became the senior director of undergraduate admissions in November 2018. He previously served as recruiter for Tennessee and director of recruiting programs.

UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING

Sheryl Ragland joined the office as the graduate programs marketing associate in November 2018.

Lifting up students in the valley

TWO UNIVERSITY STUDENTS created a new support group called HU Valley for students who have a family member with a serious illness. Juniors Hayley Ford and Ally Bateman connected after they each had a parent who was diagnosed with cancer.

"My dad got diagnosed with stage four colon cancer at the beginning of the summer, and I didn't really tell a lot of Harding people just because it was weird to talk about," Bateman said. "Hayley posted on Facebook that her mom got diagnosed with cancer at the end of the summer. I just texted her and said, 'Hey, I kind of know what you're going through, so if you want to get coffee or something, we can totally sit down and [talk].'"

After sharing about their experiences and relating to each other's struggles, they realized there might be an opportunity for other students to be supported and encouraged by people who really understood.

"My thought was that Ally and I were already friends, and if someone that I already knew [was experiencing] something similar to me, there was no way that nobody else on campus was not going through something similar," Ford said. "A lot of people just might not know of anyone else to talk to about it."

Much of the dialogue of the group revolves around supporting a family member at a distance — many students aren't close to home, which can bring on feelings of anxiety and isolation from information.

"We talk about different ways we think are effective that our family communicates with us," Bateman said. "One girl said her family has a calendar [that shows] when all of her dad's appointments are so she's not left in the dark."

The group meets every other Thursday, and each meeting is structured in a way that gives everyone the opportunity to share about

recent experiences or feelings in a comfortable environment.

"It's just really cool to watch the Holy Spirit move in the room, and people just speak and tell their story and are not afraid," Bateman said. "Every time someone speaks, all of us are like, 'Yes, I know exactly what you're talking about.'"

"There are some people in the meetings who don't really have anyone else to share this with," Ford said. "They have to keep quiet about it for one reason or another. So this is really their only time to come out and talk about it. I know someone who came for their first time, and they were so open. She said, 'I trust you all, so I'm just going to share my whole story.' That was really powerful for both Ally and me to know that there is a community where we can all trust each other and share with each other without fear of other people finding out or fear of other people judging."



Hayley Ford and Ally Bateman discuss the value of HU Valley with President Bruce McLarty during a fall chapel program.

PHOTO BY JEFF MONTGOMERY



MY VIEW DONNY LEE

BULLYING: More than a social problem

According to the 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 19 percent of high school students in the U.S. were bullied at school, and nearly 15 percent of high school students were bullied electronically. On Oct. 30, as a part of the L.C. Sears Collegiate Seminar Series, the Honors College and Cannon-Clary College of Education jointly hosted a lecture event on school and workplace bullying, welcoming Paul Coughlin, author of Free Us from Bullying: Real Solutions Beyond Being Nice, as the speaker. What does bullying look like today, and what should our response be as students, teachers and community members? We asked Dr. Donny Lee, dean of the College of Education, to further discuss bullying in school.

BULLYING CONJURES UP EMOTIONS and memories for many of us. To some, this word arouses memories of an experience that still evokes a visceral response; to others, it reminds us of the daily reality of people we know and love. Whatever the case, we need to understand the complexity of this phenomenon and work to create safer environments for our children and ourselves.

Researchers, practitioners and the public often define bullying differently. Daniel Olweus, a Norwegian researcher, includes in his definition descriptors such as unwanted behavior, perceived or real power imbalance, and repeated behaviors. He adds that bullying can be verbal, physical or relational.

Targets of bullies are often perceived by bullies as being insecure, passive and unlikely to retaliate. In other words, bullies look for people they perceive to be easy targets. Current best practices suggest empowering students to create personal boundaries and assertiveness. In addition, encouraging them to seek adult support (as opposed to rescue) when they are bullied equips a student with some sense of connection and power.

As students witness bullying, they often experience conflicting emotions: fear, powerlessness, guilt for not acting or the temptation to participate. Indeed, bullying rarely occurs with just two participants. More often, bullying happens in a social context cast with participants who have various roles. For example, while a person may be the primary bully, he or she often has what Olweus calls followers

or henchmen. They may not initiate or lead in the bullying, but without them, it would likely not begin or persist. Others play roles ranging from supporters to passive bullies, to passive supporters, to disengaged onlookers, and, finally, to possible and real defenders. In the complex social environment of schools, we often overlook the larger drama unfolding as bullying persists.

Media and social networks almost daily remind us of the tragic consequences of bullying with some targets even taking their own lives. The research suggests the relationship between bullying, depression and suicide is complicated. Research is unclear whether bullying causes depression or whether depressed kids become targets for bullies. Further, some experts suggest that kids who die by suicide often have a complex set of social and emotional challenges that are occurring simultaneously without evidence of any one of them necessarily or directly causing such an extreme response. Whatever the case, bullying creates an environment in which young people struggle to maintain positive mental health and healthy relationships.

Effects of bullying manifest beyond the actual occurrences. More common, short-term effects of bullying are fear, isolation,

anger, depression, self-harm, lower grades in school, and suicidal ideation and attempts. Even when bullying stops, many targets continue to suffer from long-term effects such as depression, interpersonal issues, and negative perceptions of self, trust and anger.

The best response we, as educators, parents and citizens, can make to the problem of bullying is to acknowledge the scope of the issue and then confront it directly in our schools and communities. The best strategy is prevention, and some systemic approaches have proven effective in schools. These include all adults in the school actively participating and making it a permanent part of the school environment, not a temporary fix. Although many students don't report being bullied, when they do, we need to listen, believe and support them.

Bullying is not a school problem, a kid problem or an imaginary problem. It is real. It is harmful. It is fixable. We need resolve and determination to meet it head on.

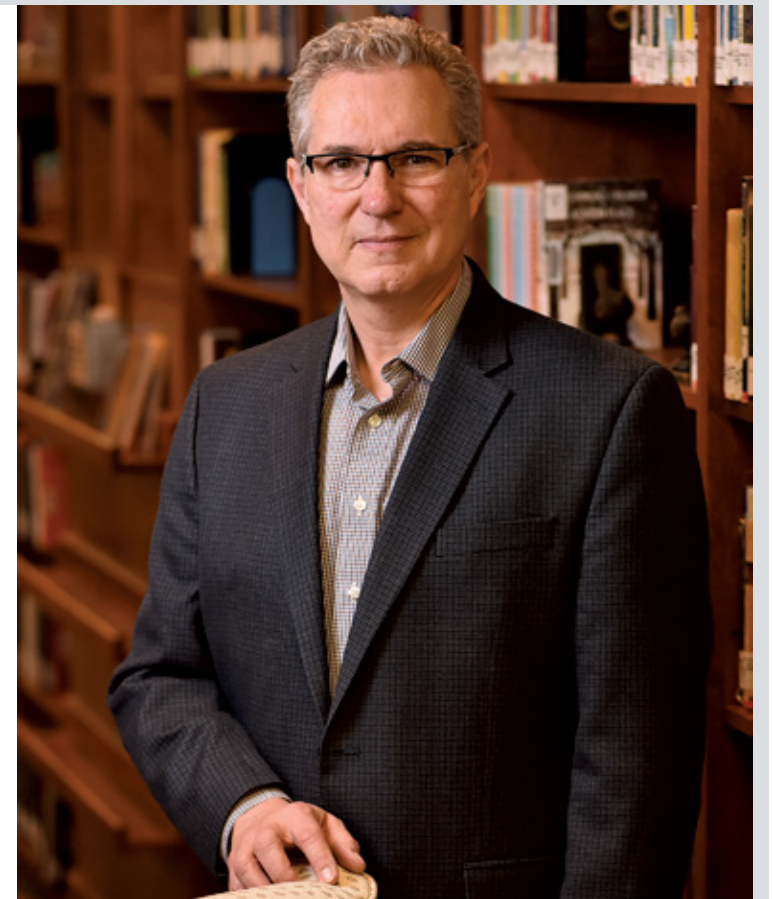


PHOTO BY JEFF MONTGOMERY



## Too hot to handle

By SCOTT GOODE, assistant athletic director for sports information

**I**T WAS UNSEASONABLY WARM on Monday, Dec. 13, 1965, in Searcy. The high was in the low 60s and the sky clear. Nationally, people were paying attention to goings on in Vietnam and to the Gemini 6 and 7 space missions that would rendezvous more than 100 miles above the earth two days later. In Searcy, the news that week centered on finding a contractor to build the new vocational college on the east side of town. The campus was abuzz as dismissal for Christmas break would come later in the week. The Bison newspaper anticipated such a frenzied exodus that it reminded students in an editorial to follow the speed limit as they burned up and down Highway 67 on the way to their hometowns. That night students needing a study break and local residents looking for entertainment filed into the Rhodes Field House to watch Harding's basketball team play its final home contest before the break against rival Arkansas Tech. They saw an individual performance by a Harding guard that has never been matched.

Ronnie Brown grew up in Pocahontas, Arkansas. His older brother, Jim Brown, who came to Harding in the late 1950s, pitched for the Bison baseball team and covered sports for the school newspaper. When it came time for Ronnie to attend college, Jim convinced him to enroll at Harding as well. Ronnie certainly had the athletic pedigree. He placed second in the hurdles at the Arkansas Class A state track and field meet, and Harding coach Carl Allison offered him a scholarship to play football. "I figured I could do more as a basketball player," Ronnie said, "so I switched." As a freshman, Ronnie played baseball and basketball while majoring in physical education.

When Brown arrived on campus, the basketball program was beginning its eighth season after the University restarted intercollegiate basketball in 1957-58 after a hiatus of almost 20 years.

On the hardwood, the 6-foot-1-inch Brown averaged 7.0 points and 3.1 rebounds as a freshman for a Harding team that finished with an 11-17 record. "I was a wing man and played a

little bit of point guard," Brown says. Then with a chuckle, "I shot a lot."

As a sophomore, his season started quickly. He scored 24 points in the season opener against Southwest Baptist. He had a 21-point game against Henderson State in which he connected on 8 of 10 shots. Three games later, he was 12 of 18 from the field and 9 of 10 from the free-throw line and scored a season-high 33 points in a 91-83 win over Arkansas A&M (now Arkansas-Monticello).

Two games after that came Arkansas Tech. Sam Hindsman began coaching basketball at Arkansas Tech in 1947 and would retire from coaching following the 1965-66 season. In his

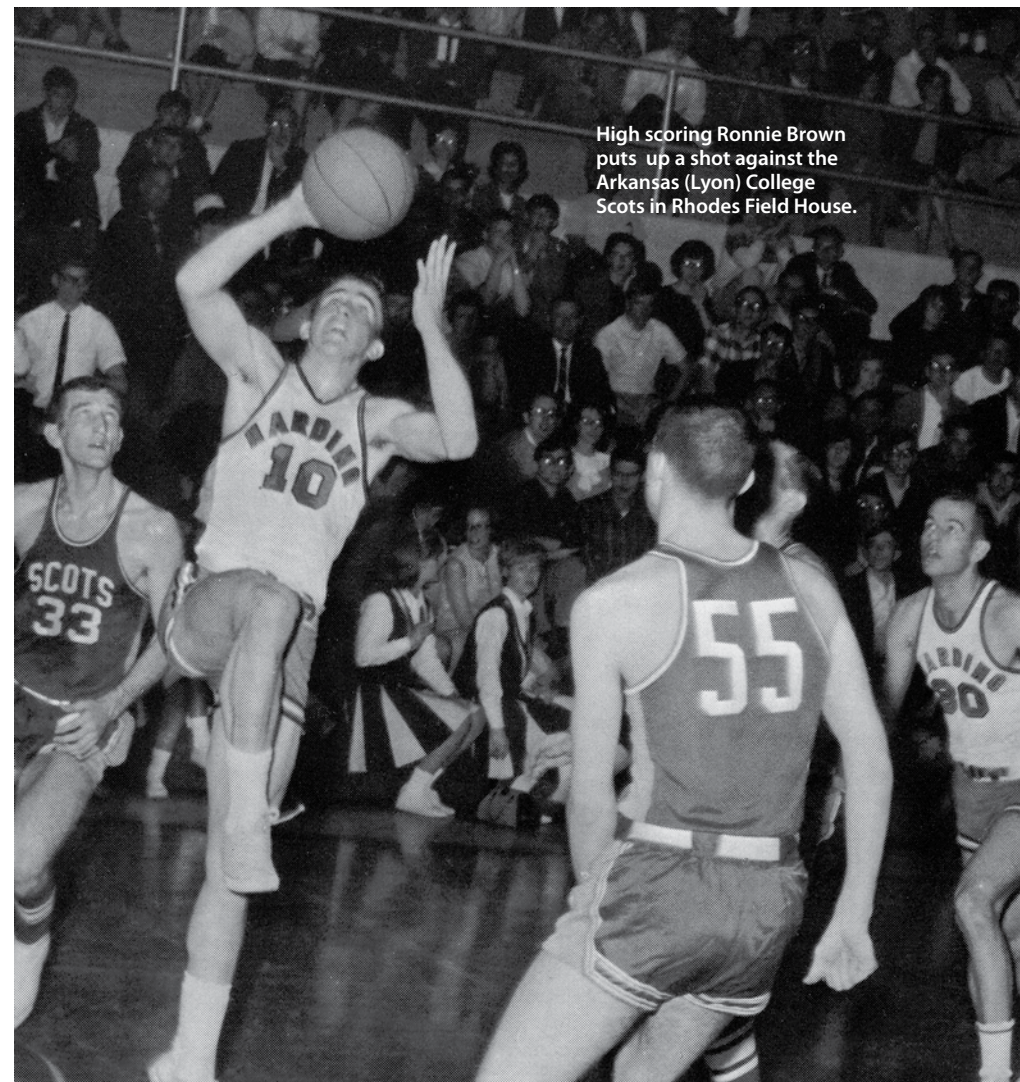
final year, Hindsman used a two-platoon system, substituting five players on and taking five off for each substitution.

It did not matter who was in the game for Tech that night. Nobody could stop Ronnie Brown.

"I was an outside shooter and a penetrator," Brown says. "It seems like in that game, both parts were going pretty good."

Brown scored 14 points in the first quarter, hitting six shots and two free throws. He matched that total in the second quarter, giving him 28 points at halftime and giving Harding a 58-44 lead.

"You don't check the scorebook at halftime if you are playing," Brown says. "So I had no idea



High scoring Ronnie Brown puts up a shot against the Arkansas (Lyon) College Scots in Rhodes Field House.

1966 PETIT JEAN PHOTO

PHOTO BY JEFF MONTGOMERY

how well things were going. It was a close game, so my concentration was on winning the game."

Brown scored five points in the third quarter, and Harding led 77-67 with one quarter left. Tech closed the gap early in the fourth and took the lead 83-82 with just over six minutes left.

There were two ties and two more lead changes in the next five minutes, but with 1:05 left in the game, Brown made a free throw to put the Bisons ahead for good at 94-93. Harding won 97-93. Brown made one more free throw in the last minute, his 14th point of the quarter and school-record 47th point of the game.

It is still Harding's school record.

"I've been kind of surprised that I still hold the record," Brown says. "You would think that with all the good players Harding's had over the years that someone would have broken it by now. What is that ... 53 years?"

A few players have come close. Hall of Famer Rolando Garcia had 43 points against Central Methodist in 1990. Harding's only player drafted by an NBA team, Stan Eckwood, had 42 points twice. Tiago Lewis scored 42 against Philander Smith in 1992, and the most recent 40-point effort came from Jacob Gibson in 2016.

Brown actually set three school records that night: the record for points in a game (47), shots made (18) and shots attempted (31). College basketball did not have the 3-point shot for more than 20 years after Brown set the record. He estimates that maybe half of his buckets that night would have counted as 3-pointers now. He set his record with nothing but ones and twos.

"I got tired shooting," Brown told The Bison later in the season, "but Tech kept giving me good shots."

The 1965-66 team finished 11-18. Brown was the leading scorer, averaging 19.3 points, still good for 20th on Harding's single-season scoring average list.

Brown played his final two seasons of collegiate basketball at Arkansas State, where he started and averaged 10.2 points.

After his collegiate career ended, Brown coached high school basketball in Arkansas for

### BY THE NUMBERS



Rimington Trophy winner senior Bryce Bray also received the Roaf Award, given to the best collegiate offensive lineman in the state of Arkansas.

**50** Number of consecutive games started by football center Bryce Bray, a school record. Bray received the Rimington Trophy in December as the best center in Division II football.

**26:21.0** Freshman Dylan Douglas' time at the 8K GAC Cross-Country Championship in Edmond, Oklahoma. Douglas led the Bisons and placed 11th overall.

**6 and 7** Number of goals (6) and assists (7) by freshman Jack Savage who led the Great American Conference, becoming the first Harding men's soccer player to lead a conference in both categories in the same season.

25 years with stops at Pocahontas, Morrillton and Dardanelle.

"My fondest memories of playing basketball at Harding involved my teammates," Brown says. "I had some awfully good teammates who were great friends."

Many years later, Brown humbly says that

**5** Number of Harding's cross-country runners in the NCAA era to qualify for the national meet as an individual, including sophomore Alicja Minczuk who placed third at the GAC meet and 10th at the NCAA Central Region meet.

**62** Career goals for Harding senior Bethany Sutherland, a school record. Harding Hall of Famer Kendyl Washburn is second with 48.

**16** Number of regular season conference championships won by the volleyball team, which includes the 2018 title. The Lady Bisons also won the GAC Tournament championship and defeated No. 3-ranked Nebraska-Kearney in the NCAA Tournament, the first NCAA Tournament victory in program history.

his record-setting game was the result of "poor defense and the fact that the ball was going in the hole."

You could say that on that December night at the Rhodes, Brown's shooting touch was unseasonably warm. No Harding player has ever been hotter. 🏀



# BUILDING A Legacy



By JANTZEN HALEY  
Photography by JEFF MONTGOMERY

In 2007, the idea for Legacy Park was conceived. The vision included a new concept for student housing as well as individually-owned private homes. In 2016, these homes started becoming a reality as Legacy Park Phase IV, the first residential phase, launched, and the 20 home sites were quickly procured. Phase V is now underway with 20 additional home sites mapped out on the west side of campus.

From the steps of their home in Legacy Park, Bill and Pat Merritt chat with Amelia Grizzell, Jake Leslie and Harrison Draper as they walk by.

Dr. David B. Burks, chancellor and spearhead of the Legacy Park vision, says the plans have unfolded exactly as anticipated, with larger homes, smaller homes and student apartments coming together as part of an urban, residential community.

“It’s great for university students to be able to interact with residents wherever they are and vice versa,” Burks says. “It simply upgrades the west end of campus. This is a revitalization of that area with beautiful homes. The architecture of Legacy Park will show value for years and years and years to come.”

We couldn’t agree more, so we took a stroll through the neighborhood and learned from several homeowners what it is like to be a resident in the Legacy Park community.

## UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Hospitality emanates from the Waltons the moment they greet us as we make our way up the sidewalk. You’d never know their home was about two months shy of being livable. Terri ushers us inside where a couple of workers are busy installing cabinets in the kitchen. Natural light shines in from the many windows in the spacious living room, where we congregate around a table saw and stand in a midst of sawdust. It’s here we learn that Terri drew the plans for the house herself.

“I drew the initial plans and was told I needed to cut it down to 30 feet wide,” Terri says. “And then I was told I needed to bring it in another foot, so side to side, the house is 29 feet wide.”

She goes on to add that the stairs were the most difficult part to get just right. Her husband, Mitch, jokes that the drawing process came with many eraser shavings, but it’s clear as we make our way through each room that every detail was crafted with much thought and precision.

The Waltons moved to Searcy after receiving the news that their first grandchild was on the way. Four years later, they were looking for something permanent.

“If we were going to stay here, we wanted to put down roots,” Mitch said. “We started looking for lots, and we saw several but couldn’t make a decision. We’d come up here in the evenings to walk on campus, and we started to see these houses going up. We’d walk into these houses as they were being framed and thought, ‘How about this right here?’ You can enjoy all the things that are going on around campus — there’s just something nice about living in a college town.”

Terri described their Craftsman-style home as we made our way from the living room into the kitchen and throughout the rest of the rooms. Characterized by expansive porch space and a practical floor plan, the layout has a logical flow and welcoming feel. While the width of the house is a mere 29 feet, the depth provides ample space for every feature the Waltons desire and more.

The first floor is home to the living room, kitchen, laundry room, master bedroom and bath, office, full second bathroom, front porch, back porch, screened side porch and spacious garage with extra storage. A library space greets you upstairs and branches off to two bedrooms, a full bathroom, an upstairs living space, more storage and another porch overlooking green space toward campus.

In line with the exterior architecture style, the interior boasts natural light, lots of built-ins and wainscoting. As with any home-building process, there were bumps along the road, plan approvals to achieve, and last-minute changes to be made, but Mitch and Terri both found the process thoroughly enjoyable.

Practicality and elegance grace every inch of the home, even before floors are finished and walls are painted. Though Mitch and Terri agree that the hardest part is yet to come — picking out final paint colors, light fixtures, mirrors and more — they cannot wait to greet and host guests in their new home. In fact, we are not the first to tour the unfinished home, as many of their friends have already stopped by for a tour during its construction.



Construction continues on the living room of the Waltons’ new home on Park Avenue.



Mitch and Terri Walton are eagerly awaiting the completion of their new home in Legacy Park.



Wainscoting adds to the cozy feel of the upstairs family room in the Waltons’ home.



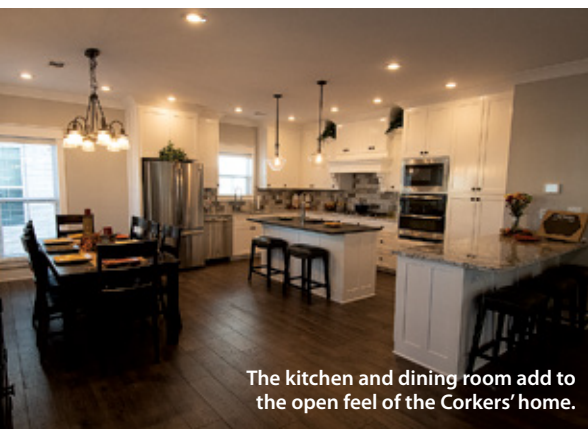
“I have **loved** living in this **community**. It’s been a really **positive** experience.”



The Corkers’ second floor porch overlooks Center Street.



Karen Corker is surrounded by her sons Hayden and Hunter and her husband, Bobby.



The kitchen and dining room add to the open feel of the Corkers’ home.

Already, they are meeting neighbors and finding a place in their Legacy Park community, having attended a neighborhood block party, meeting many fellow homeowners, and enjoying the perks of sporting events, campus use, chapel and campus activities.

### DISCOVERING CITY LIFE

After living near the end of a country road for years, the Corkers purchased a lot and moved into town. When we visited, they had lived there five weeks, and all four seemed to be adjusting to “city life” quite well.

Accustomed to the country commute, Bobby and Karen quite like the new accessibility of living on campus — Karen, especially, as she is several months into a new job as director of accounting for the University. With two new drivers on their hands, as well, the Corkers are much more comfortable with letting twins Hayden and Hunter take to the roads at night now that they are in such close proximity to everything.

Their previous home sold in just three weeks, and they had to be out a short three weeks after that. During the building process — for more than a year — the Corkers lived with Karen’s father, so when move-in day arrived, they were more than ready to have their own space again.

Each member of the Corker clan has spoken for their favorite space. Karen’s claim is the open kitchen, which leads right into the living room and is the perfect place to host guests. As a matter of fact, though they had only called this place home for five weeks when we stopped by, the Corkers had hosted some type of get-together four of the five weekends. Their sons’ top pick was their second-floor porch, right off each of their rooms upstairs. The view looks out over the neighboring homes and toward the campus entrance. Karen is quick to speak on Bobby’s behalf that their bathroom holds his favor.

Hayden and Hunter had a large say in the design process for their rooms, picking out everything from paint colors and furniture to light fixtures and doorknobs. There may or may not have been some “Fixer Upper” influence to their decisions.

A bonus for the timing of their move-in, Karen was asked if a group of interior design students could use different rooms in the home for a project. Free design advice sounded like a good deal, so the decorating was yet to be complete pending the design presentations set to occur a couple of weeks after our visit.

The open floor plan was immediately inviting, but several other features stood out as we made our way through the house. Branching off from the living room is a small office space with a stunning shiplap-covered ceiling, built-in desk and Coca-Cola décor (appropriate as Bobby and Karen have spent much of their careers working for the employer in Little Rock). Care and detail was catered to throughout the house, down to the decorative knobs chosen for each room, including fun mechanical gear-like features in one of the boys’ rooms upstairs.

The Corkers have a separate garage with a two-bedroom apartment above. It is currently rented to two students, but the boys plan to attend Harding in two years and have grand plans to find the perfect renters. Karen’s not sure about the idea, but she and Bobby built it with flexibility in mind.

“We can always Airbnb it,” Karen says. “There are enough people who come to stay ... or I can put my scrapbook stuff up here, and if there’s nobody out here, the boys and their friends can come out, turn the couch and put a TV on the wall.”

Just five weeks in, they’ve adjusted to the lights and sirens in the city, and it’s clear that the Corkers are happy with the move and excited to grow roots in their Legacy Park home.

### CREATING COMMUNITY

When Dr. Burks first spoke to the faculty about the initial vision for Legacy Park Residential, Britt and Ashley Lynn knew they wanted to be in on the ground floor of

the operation. In fact, when the lots went up for sale, the Lynns knew precisely where they wanted to build, and Britt was at Dr. Burks’ office by 8:05 that morning to stake his claim.

Shortly thereafter, the Lynns began the design process. They fell in love with a set of plans designed originally for a community in the Pacific Northwest overlooking a lake. One could argue that the green space and campus view outside the beautiful windows in the Lynns’ home make an even more picturesque backdrop.

Speaking of backdrop, the very first item they found for the entire house was a blue and gray backsplash for the kitchen that wound up setting the tone for both the interior and exterior of the house with the exception of the impossible-to-miss Tennessee Volunteers orange door — a tribute to Britt’s favorite team — on the back of the house leading to the garage apartment they rent to students.

Full of rich colors and magnificent light fixtures, the living, dining and kitchen areas greet guests with a distinct and exciting atmosphere. The open floor plan is perfect for hosting, and it’s clear the Lynns view their home as an opportunity to connect and build relationships.

“One of the things that they pitched to the faculty was living in a community where you’re living alongside students, where you can bring your mission into your house,” Britt says. “We have students over to hang out or have lunch. It’s been a really positive change because it has integrated us into the community of students a whole lot more, which we wanted.”

They moved in February 2018 and love the convenience and opportunity that living on campus provides their family — from walking to work in the mornings to meeting friends at Midnight Oil and Starbucks, to walking several blocks to the square and local restaurants in downtown Searcy.

While the Lynns enjoy the conveniences of campus and the community of their fellow neighbors, the advantages reach beyond those of the individual families building and living in Legacy Park Residential. Britt speaks to the benefits for the Harding and Searcy communities as well.

“I have to start with what I consider to be the heart of Harding, which is the students,” Britt says. “As beneficial as it is for a faculty member to come over here and be surrounded by a community of other people that are invested in the students, I think it’s beneficial for the students to see that there are people who model integrating faith and living.”

He says there also is potential for improving the relationship between Harding and Searcy as we grow beyond campus and integrate into the heart of the community as residents.

“You’re not separated by giant yards,” he says. “You see when another person is on the porch, and when you’re on the porch you talk to each other. It’s a really quick and easy way to build community — if you see someone outside, you’re outside, and you just have a conversation. I have loved living in this community. It has been a really positive experience.”

### THE REAL STORY

Communities may be defined by a geographic area, a common interest, a set of values and beliefs, or simply by the name they bear. At Harding, community means all these things and more, and the vision of Legacy Park Residential is to invite others to build a home in the heart of the Harding community. Dr. Burks says it best: “[Legacy Park Residential] is more than just the houses that are built there. It is the community that we’re attempting to build. The homes are beautiful, but it’s the community that we are trying to establish. That is really the story.”



The living room of the Lynns’ home opens into the dining room and kitchen.



Britt and Ashley Lynn and their children, Rebecca, Braden and Hayley, enjoy life in Legacy Park.



Blue is the integral color used both inside and outside the Lynns’ home.

# Home, where the 'Buff' roams

*Student finds confidence, respect and  
the love of an entire campus as  
the University's spirited bison mascot*

By RACHEL STARK

Photography by JEFF MONTGOMERY

Originally published in NCAA's Champion magazine in summer 2018

**B**UFF THE BISON NEEDS HIS PROTEIN. It's another sweltering day in Searcy, Arkansas, and although summer break for Harding students has commenced, duty calls for the University mascot. In a few hours, he will suit up in a furry costume that will make this 90-degree day feel like a 130-degree sauna. During an average football game in early fall, Buff the Bison may lose 5 to 7 pounds roaming the sidelines. So on this afternoon in late May, as he engages with athletes competing in the Special Olympics Arkansas Summer Games, the bison cannot afford to let his nutrition slide.

But Buff is distracted. The lunchtime conversation revolves around his favorite subject — sports — and the beef dip sandwich he ordered remains mostly untouched. Fortunately, his mascot handler, who doubles as his mother, stays on mission.

"OK, Buff, eat some protein," Robbie Dunning instructs.

Her son keeps talking, now about the Harding softball standout who recently transferred to a Division I school. While chagrined at the team's loss and the inevitable impact on its season, Buff understands the student-athlete's desire to play on a bigger stage. Buff had once made a similar decision himself.

"All right, Buff, you need some protein there," Robbie chimes in again. Apparently, you can lead a bison to meat, but you can't make him eat.

Buff's path to Harding has been long, arduous and unexpected. A 30-year-old student with autism, attention deficit disorder and a learning disability, Buff would not be where he is today — en route to a college degree and galvanizing an entire community along the way — if he had not both received tremendous opportunities and seized upon them.

"I'm eating!" he replies to his mom emphatically before quickly adding: "But I'm also nervous." His audience today presents a dynamic different from the familiar boisterous fans he wins over at college basketball, football and volleyball games. He doesn't know what to expect.

"Just be 'Gentle Buff,'" he is told. Dial down his usual animated antics, adjust his persona to fit the crowd. Buff nods. At that, he's had plenty of practice.



During the Bisons first home Division II playoff game Nov. 19, 2016, Buff is on his turf as he supports the Bisons in their defeat of the University of Central Missouri Mules 48-31.

At the Jan. 13, 2018, home men's basketball game against Ouachita Baptist University, Buff joins the cheerleaders in a formation.



THE HARDING campus teams with bisons.

Yes, that's bisons with an "s" — a grammatically incorrect plural form of the word thanks to Harding students who adopted the nickname in the mid-1920s and, later, students who insisted it never change. Today, the horned animal flanks banners adorning light poles around campus. They're charging on a colorful mural in the student center. A majestic, life-sized statue outside Benson Auditorium claims to be the "largest hand-carved oak bison in the world."

Four decades after the birth of the nickname, an unruly bison calf was brought to Searcy, declared the school's mascot and given a name: Benny. But Benny never tamed his aggressive ways, spurring school administrators to vow the animal would either "behave or be barbecued." In 1972, mascot legend has it, Benny was killed and served to students in the school cafeteria.

The first Harding mascot costume emerged soon after that. There was Bobby the Bison. Then Barry. Eventually, in 2003, a student body vote changed the name to Buff. But the Buff that Harding knows today didn't emerge until seven years later, when a quiet, sports fanatic from outside Baltimore went searching for a college that needed a mascot.

Since then, the one, true Buff has gone by a second name: Austin Dunning.

Austin has stamped his way into Harding tradition with a skill set refined over more than a decade of training, an unharnessed passion for every Bison sports team, and an unwavering commitment to his role in Harding athletics. In costume, he exudes an infectious school spirit, whether he's leading the football team through a pregame parade, high-fiving basketball players during warmup, or emboldening fans to cheer louder for the home team. He's the last person incoming students meet at summer orientation, welcoming them to Harding with a coveted photo op. Little kids ask about Buff. Opposing teams notice when he's missing. Referees remember him.

Those close to Austin describe it as a transformation. When he slides into the thick bison costume, he becomes Buff. But at the same time, he also becomes more of himself — the Austin who doesn't have to worry about saying the wrong thing. The one who is free, even expected, to act goofy without fear and flirt with social norms in the name of entertainment. Mascotting unshackles him from the struggles he experiences daily with his disabilities. And it combats the de-

pression that lingers quietly but consistently deep inside him. "When I become a mascot, that's my happy place," Austin says.

The thing that makes him happy makes a lot of other people happy, too. As Harding has gone out of its way to accommodate Austin's needs — tutors, extra time on tests, a mascot invitation that doesn't expire — he has given much in return.

Inside the office of Harding President Bruce McLarty, more bison memorabilia abounds. Among the collection are two framed photographs, shot in Yellowstone, capturing the beginning and end of the bison life cycle. One image shows a newborn calf leaning on its mother as it stretches its weak legs for the first time. The other shows an elderly bull bowing for water, alone, battle scars from a long life notched on his horns.

McLarty, like everyone at Harding, knows Buff. In describing the relationship Austin has with the school, the president points to the photo of the supported calf. "I don't think it's disconnected to that picture right there," he says. "You see a community rallying around someone and helping him as he helps us. It's community in its purest form."

A connection can be made with the second photo, too, yet it goes unspoken: Austin

"When I become a mascot, that's my happy place."

won't be Buff forever. He's still a few years off from graduating, but already the question of what's next lingers. Eventually, his time as a bison — the bison — will come to an end. Eventually, he'll need to move on to new pastures, wherever they may be.



HE PADS THROUGH the Harding practice gym lugging a large, lumpy black bag over one shoulder like Santa Claus.

He enters the weight room, which serves as his own personal locker room during basketball games, and sets down the sack, which falls open to reveal a clump of brown fur.

He begins by pulling on a headband to catch the sweat that will soon soak his brown hair. He fastens an ankle brace for a tendon he tore while stomping (a "hoof injury," he calls it). He slips into a tan vest lined with ice packs, which usually soften by halftime of football games.

Then, he steps into the Buff suit, pulling it up his legs, past his torso and over his shoulders, before pressing the Velcro slabs together over his chest.

After the suit come the brown gloves, then Austin's all-black, size-6 1/2 Nikes. Next, another layer of fur cloaking his shoulders and upper chest. "I call this my Viking fur," Austin says, giving it a pat.

Robbie stands by, ready to assist. The mother, who moved to Searcy when her son enrolled in Harding, has been the biggest player in making Austin's mascot dreams possible. It started when he came home from kindergarten and spoke excitedly about the Little Caesars character that appeared at his class pizza party. After that, Austin remained transfixed by costumed characters of all kinds. "It was never, 'I'm going to be a fireman. I'm going to be a doctor. I'm going to be a policeman,'" Robbie says. "It was always, 'I'm going to be a mascot.'"

The bison suit she helps Austin into today was custom-made by a professional costume designer in Atlanta. It's a resounding upgrade from the old Buff costume, which Robbie quickly nixed when she and her son arrived on campus. "It had a snout that looked like it was part cow, part bear,"

Robbie says. No, they decided, if Austin was to be Buff, he had to look the part. So the Dunnings financed the costume on their own, crafted perfectly to fit Austin's slender, 5-foot-3 frame.

Finally, it's time for the pivotal step. Austin grabs the giant bison head with two hands and pulls it over his own. His gloved hands fumble for hidden clasps to a bicycle helmet that forms the protective base of the head. Then, you hear it: "Click."

Buff is complete.



BEFORE BUFF, he was Freddie. Before Freddie, he was Buzz. He also has been Keyote the Coyote, an unnamed puffin and even the Easter Bunny.

But before any of that, he was a bullied kid longing for respect.

Austin had been fighting battles since birth. Born 11 weeks premature, he weighed 2 pounds when he entered the world and spent 44 days in the neonatal intensive care unit. When he missed developmental milestones his older brother had reached at the same age, Robbie and her husband, Rick, went searching for answers. Some diagnoses came quicker than others. But all confirmed that Austin would have to work harder than most to communicate, to learn, to be independent.

These challenges feed into his depression, which Austin says he's had for 18 years. That was when the trouble at school began, when he began experiencing difficulty with classwork and became a target for bullies.

On his first day at Western Guilford High School in Greensboro, North Carolina, Austin was thrown into a metal trash can in front of his peers who were filing out of a school-wide convocation. He remembers being pulled out by a senior on the basketball team named Walter, going home that night to pray about it, and telling his parents only that he had a bad day. But inside, a quiet determination brewed: He would not be remembered as the kid who was thrown into a trash can.

A few weeks later, Austin learned his high school was hosting mascot tryouts. This was his shot. The afternoon of tryouts, he gathered his "Scream" mask and other mis-

cellaneous props, stuffed them into an old gym bag, and snagged a ride to school from his mom. He had a routine in mind that he never had to call on; instead, all he was asked to do was don the black and gold costume of Buzz — which "kind of looked like Georgia Tech's mascot, but chubbier," Austin says — and interact with students. Easy.

Inside the costume, no one knew who Austin was. Everyone loved Buzz. Even more, Austin never had to worry that his words could be misunderstood. The No. 1 rule of mascots: Do not speak.

Austin landed the gig along with two other students. Most often, the responsibilities of a mascot are shared among multiple people to allow for substitutions and much-needed rest during long games. But when Austin's counterparts quit shortly into the season, he endured alone.

Being Buzz brought Austin happiness, so the Dunnings set out to help him become the best Buzz he could be. He needed to learn proper mascot techniques, strategies for engaging a crowd, physical conditioning.

Robbie heard about a cheerleading camp that incorporated mascot training. She raised the idea with the school's mascot coach, who not only encouraged Austin to go but also urged Robbie to attend and receive coach training. Robbie resisted, but the coach explained he was leaving for another job, and no one else wanted to fill the role.

Robbie's son needed to be the mascot. The mascot needed a coach. So the mother and Buzz flew off to camp.

Austin flourished as Buzz — a hornet, not a bee, he is quick to point out. He made the character his own through a new flag run tradition, signature dance moves and creative gags (such as Buzz dressing up as a hunter when the Hornets faced the Tigers). He earned a varsity letter all four years of high school, earned three national rankings by the Universal Cheerleaders Association, and performed at three Capital One Bowl games between 2004 and 2006.

After he graduated in 2006, the Dunnings moved from North Carolina to a suburb of Baltimore, and Austin enrolled in a nearby community college. The school had a handful

“It was **always**, I’m going to be **a mascot.**”

of sports and a mascot. It had no football, cheerleaders or band, but it would have to do.

For four years, Austin was Freddie the Cougar for the community college. But he missed the excitement of competitive sports teams and an avid fan base. He missed his favorite sport, football, and he missed the camaraderie he shared with band members and cheerleaders. No students lived on the commuter campus, so the crowd at games was slim and skewed older. The Cougar couldn’t connect.

Austin wanted something more. A Christian school, he told his parents. And, of course, one that needed a mascot.

The Dunnings’ national search led them to Searcy, Arkansas, where Division II Harding was struggling to find a reliable person to fulfill the role of Buff. Robbie scouted the school out first, flying down for a visit. Upon her return, Austin knew exactly what to ask.

“Do they have football?” Yes. “Do they have cheerleaders?” Yes. “Do they have a band?” Yes. “What are their school colors?” Black and gold — just like the Hornets. He envisioned a stadium like his high school, but bigger, cloaked in those familiar colors. Harding would feel like coming home.

“I’m going.”



WHEN BUFF ARRIVES, heads turn. Little kids tap their parents and point. The brave ones approach.

It’s not every day you see an anthropomorphic bison roll up in a golf cart. Even for adults, the sight induces a chuckle.

“Buff, right,” Robbie instructs. Buff turns, looks down to see a young boy waving at him and returns the gesture. Buff sees through a single grapefruit-sized opening covered in netting between the mascot’s eyes and horns. He has no peripheral vision, seeing only what is directly in front of him. So Robbie guides him, telling him when to look left or right, up or down, when a child is waiting at his feet or when a step is nearing.

“Can this little guy get a picture?” Someone asks, nudging a nervous kid forward. He looks at Buff suspiciously but inches closer, turning slowly toward the camera. Buff

strikes his signature pose, raising one hand to form horns with his fingers.

“1, 2, 3, got it! Thank you!”

Every summer Harding hosts the Special Olympics event, but this is the first time Buff has attended.

“He’s got to be burning up,” one lady says as she walks by. She’s right. The summer heat is suffocating under Buff’s dense fur. The ice packs don’t stand a chance.

Still, he works the crowd, posing for every photo, high-fiving the old and the young, pumping his fists, clapping his hands, pointing, dancing, nodding. Buff’s facial expression never changes, but he’s a master at making others smile.

“I feel more comfortable dancing in costume in front of 30,000 people than I would be at a wedding where I’m in a tuxedo with 200 people,” he says later. His inspiration for many of his animated moves? None other than the late professional wrestler, the Ultimate Warrior.

Before long, Buff heads inside the athletics facility, where Special Olympics weightlifting competitors enjoy a break. The empty bench press stationed in the center of the room beckons the bison, and, flanked by event workers, Buff performs one press to cheers from his audience.

Then he’s back on his feet, shaking athletes’ hands, patting their backs and, always, posing for the camera.

Eventually, Buff slips into the hallway and escapes the crowd, where he can safely break character. Austin pulls off Buff’s head, revealing a mop of wet hair, a rosy face and his bespectacled eyes, one of which is squinty. Something is in his eye, he explains, and it hurts. He pulls his lids open wide while Robbie searches for the culprit. He grunts in pain. Something is in his eye, he explains, and it hurts. He pulls his lids open wide while Robbie searches for the culprit. He grunts in pain.

Then he affirms what everyone already knew. “I can fight through it,” Austin says in earnest. He pulls the head back on, snaps the helmet and saunters down the hallway.

In that moment, a woman talking on her phone swings open a door just as Buff is about to pass it. He doesn’t see it coming and slams his horned head against it. The woman peeks around the door sheepishly and starts apologizing as Buff turns away and brings his

hands to his face, pretending to cry. Onlookers laugh.

Sometimes you plan and practice winning performances. Other times, you crash head-first into them.

“I just ran into a bison,” the woman says into the phone as she walks away. “Long story.”



AT HARDING, IT SEEMS everyone has a Buff story.

Scott Goode, Harding’s longtime sports information director, tells of his earliest Buff memory. “It was your second Midnight Madness when —”

“I crowd surfed?” Austin interjects. He knows where this is going.

“Yes, and I was scared to death. I was scared they were going to break you in half or let you fall on the bleachers. You went from the floor up to the second level.”

Jeff Morgan, both the athletics director and men’s basketball coach for Harding, remembers freshman Buff entering his office eight years ago with a notable statistic. “I was watching game film for the next game, and he came in and said, ‘Hey, coach, I just want to let you know last night we upped our field goal percentage from like 48.5 to 49.2,’” Morgan recalls. “He had that on a sticky note and gave it to me. I kind of knew right then, this was going to be awesome.”

Andi Haney, a former women’s basketball player who now works in Harding’s advancement office, appreciates all the times Buff arrived as early as the players did before games, then calmed their nerves with encouragement and a high-five at half-court before tipoff. “We’re very thankful for him,” she says.

Buff fans talk about the pretend fights with other teams’ mascots, the stunts with cheerleaders, and the one-arm push-ups he performs when Harding scores. Buff himself likes to share the story of the only time he has broken character in a game: Last season during a Division II semifinals football game, he grew so frustrated by the lack of crowd energy that he verbally begged fans to cheer and slammed his hand against the bleacher so hard he bruised it. He remains baffled by the reticence he sensed that day. “I honestly



don’t understand it,” Buff says. “We got that far, you expect to cheer at every moment.”

Buff stories bring laughter. But the Austin stories tend to evoke a different kind of emotion. Those who know him outside of the costume know he is working tirelessly toward his college degree, despite his learning disability, with a doggedness that has kept him chipping away at the academic requirements for a general studies major since 2010. Technically, Austin is a senior, but now that he has reached the upper-level courses at

Harding, he takes just one three-credit class a semester. He meets with a private tutor at least three hours a week. He is likely two to three years away from graduating.

Austin knows he doesn’t need a college degree for the career path he hopes to pursue. He has all the training required to be a professional mascot. “I just want to do it to be proud of myself, to say I completed college,” he explains. “My brother did it at Appalachian State. My mom completed college at Middle Tennessee State. My dad got

a degree at Nashville State College and then Auburn.” He thinks about his two nephews and the example he hopes to set for them. “Yes, uncle’s job is a little out of the ordinary, but look, he still went to school and still did what he loves on the side.”

“I get choked up thinking about him trying to get through Harding,” Goode says. “I got through Harding, and it was hard. But with the challenges he faces every day ...” The SID’s voice trails off. “It’s a struggle. But it’s that struggle that, when he’s totally done with it, that’s going to make it worth every minute.”

The struggle can be hard to spot beneath an amusing, dancing mass of brown fur.

“It could be, why do I study eight hours a week for a test, and I go in there prepared, and I still make a 70? And I studied my heart out, and I memorized everything?” Austin says. He is a member of a social club on campus, but his pledge class and closest friends have all since graduated. He longs for love — and not the kind pouring out of Buff fans.

His journey through college may be harder and longer than most, but without it, Austin wouldn’t be Buff. And as Buff, he’s won something invaluable, something he’s been vying for since high school. Respect.

“That’s what I wanted,” Austin says.



AFTER A LONG DAY IN THE SUN, Buff the Bison retreats to his home, a one-bedroom apartment across from campus. He lives there alone, but over the years Buff has led a herd of Dunnings to Searcy. His parents and his brother’s family live just minutes away.

He climbs the steps to the second floor, his legs heavy, and stops at the unit with Harding sports posters taped to the windows. Apartment No. 12.

“Like the imaginary 12th man,” he says.

These days, Austin thinks often about his final game at Harding, though he’s not sure when it will be. Will he speak? Reveal his identity to unknowing fans?

Maybe, he says, he’ll train his successor. After all, you can’t just pick anyone out of a crowd, throw them in a bison suit, and expect them to flourish.

True transformation takes time. 🐾

# Ministering at MAYO

Ten alumni graduate from Arkansas' best nursing program to nation's best hospital

Carr College of Nursing is ranked the No. 1 nursing program in Arkansas for 2018 according to registerednursing.org. Since 1975, the program has trained and graduated quality nurses with an emphasis on Christian servant-hood. With a rigorous curriculum and an excellent pass rate, including 100 percent the past two years, on the national licensing exam, Harding nurses are well equipped for success in their nursing careers. Ten graduates took their training and moved to Rochester, Minnesota, to start postgraduate life at the hospital. *U.S. News and World Report* ranks best in the nation.

Mayo Clinic is a nonprofit medical center based in Rochester. Its mission, according to its website, is to inspire hope and contribute to health and well-being by providing the best care to every patient through integrated clinical practice, education and research. Its motto is, "The needs of the patient come first." These qualities, among others, are what attracted these alumni to join the ranks of the more than 30,000 allied health staff at Mayo Clinic's Minnesota medical center.

By JANTZEN HALEY  
Photography by KURT STEPINITZ

A

**SHLEY FINCHER** graduated in May 2016 with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing and a minor in psychology and started at Mayo Clinic in August 2016. She was board treasurer of the Arkansas Nursing Student Association during

her time at Harding, which is what led to her learning about and pursuing a career at Mayo Clinic.

Having spent most of my childhood in Alaska and the Pacific Northwest, I had always thought that I would begin my nursing career there. However, an encounter with Mayo Clinic representatives changed the course of my life, which I believe was a blessing from God. I love my job and the people with whom I work. Looking back, I can see how putting my trust in God gave me the confidence to apply. I truly believe this is the place I was meant to begin my nursing career.

I am a registered nurse in the cardiovascular surgical progressive care unit. One thing that is unique about the unit is that I have to have the knowledge not only to provide care to adults but also to children as young as 1 year of age. I also serve as a preceptor for new nurses and as a member of the unit's education committee where I work with a group of fellow nurses, nurse managers and a nurse education specialist to organize the training and education of new nurses and continuing education of current nurses.

I have found that if I just slow down and take five minutes out of a busy day to talk with each of my patients about what matters to them, it can make all the difference in their day. I could go on and on about all of the memories that make me love what I do. It is very true that my job comes with many challenges, but I have been very blessed to work in a unit that has amazing teamwork where we can find joy and laughter together even on difficult days. There is nothing better than being able to work at an amazing hospital, with amazing people, doing a job that I love.

Two of the most important things emphasized in the Harding nursing program are, one, how to critically think through problems and situations to provide the best care for our patients, and two, how to see the patient as a whole person and not just their disease or illness. The hands-on instruction we received proved to be an invaluable foundation that helped me during my initial training at Mayo Clinic. I will be forever grateful for how well Harding's nursing program prepared me both academically and spiritually to successfully launch my career.



S

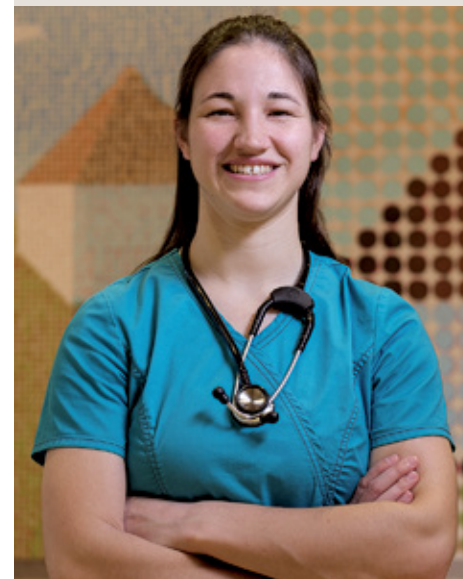
**IERRA HOLLINGSWORTH** graduated in May 2016 with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing and a minor in health care missions. She started at Mayo Clinic in July 2016 and spent two years as an internal medicine nurse before transferring to the obstetric specialty.

Mayo Clinic was just a very well-known hospital that had a website we could use as a reference as a nursing student. I never really thought of it as a potential work place until a hospital forgot to interview me. I thought and prayed about what I should do. Then, I remembered that a fellow classmate (Fincher) had spoken of getting a job at Mayo Clinic in Rochester. I decided to apply and see if that was where God wanted me to go — turns out, it was.

My current job is a labor and delivery nurse. My main responsibility is to advocate for the mother and baby's safety and well-being as one entity as well as two separate human beings. The most rewarding aspect is when I know I did everything I could to provide the best possible care to the moms and babies. I also find that helping my fellow co-workers learn new things or lighten their load is very rewarding.

The most challenging aspect is probably knowing where the fine line is of sharing my faith in a professional setting. At Mayo Clinic, we see patients from many cultures — Muslim, Hindu, Buddhism, Greek Orthodox, Atheist, Catholic, Methodist, Sikhism, Jainism and more. Because of the hospital's status, we get patients that fly here from all over the world to receive care. We have chaplains at the hospital for many of the different religions, but I do still hope for the opportunity to share my faith if they are interested and open to learning.

As I work with different staff and train new nurses, I see more and more how amazing my education was at Harding. The professors and clinical instructors required a lot, but they were always available if we needed something regarding school or otherwise. I believe that student-instructor relationship makes a huge difference.



Co-workers on a regular basis will ask how I know such minute details about a disease, pathophysiology or medication side effects, and I know that it is only because my instructors expected a lot out of me and provided me with the support to succeed. Carr College of Nursing curriculum and staff do an amazing job instilling critical think-

ing, work ethic, respect, values, dignity, autonomy, integrity, service, faith in practice, continued professional development and, most importantly, following God.



**B**

**RITTNEY FIRQUAIN** graduated in December 2016 with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing and began working at Mayo Clinic in February 2017. She currently works on the medical cardiac intensive care unit.

I originally applied for a position thinking that starting my career at Mayo Clinic would provide me with incredible learning opportunities. The unique patient stories, demographics and diagnoses, the collaborative working relationship among members of the health care team, and Mayo's focus on the importance of nursing assessment and education was very attractive to me.



ICU nurses are in a unique position that allows them to be in close proximity to their patient and their patient's family for extended amounts of time, which creates the opportunity for education and deeper understanding of the unique needs of a patient.

Making patients and their families feel well-supported, educated and empowered regardless of their clinical outcome is very rewarding. Walking through hard conversations about death, end of life, and goals of care are made easier and more rewarding when there is a high level of trust and confidence between the patient and their nurse.

Though it can also be the most rewarding part of the job, perceiving the individualized needs of the patient and their family members is often very difficult due to differences in preference, culture and worldview — adjusting to each patient's different goals and expectations is often challenging.

I am able to serve God and others in my workplace by being present and trying to stimulate conversation about ethics and culture and by creating a positive work environment. Speaking openly about my own faith and asking patients or co-workers about their beliefs usually opens up conversation, but I am always praying that my interactions and words at work are honoring to the Lord. Harding prepared me for this job by educating about the complexities of emotional and spiritual care that come with being a nurse.

**S**

**CARLET SCHREINER** graduated in December 2016 with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing and began working for Mayo Clinic in February 2017. She is currently a cardiac surgery progressive care nurse.

After graduation, I wanted to challenge myself and move to a city where I had never been. I started applying to various hospitals across the United States and decided to take a chance and submit an application to Mayo Clinic. I was impressed by their mission and values. Mayo's main focus is "the needs of the patient come first," and I liked that everything I read about them seemed to emanate that value.

The most rewarding part of my job is seeing the drastic and quick transition my patients go through during their recovery. Most patients will come to our unit with multiple chest tubes, temporary pacemakers, catheters, central lines and more. Over the course of three to five days, they get everything removed, rehabilitate through frequent daily walks and physical therapy, and end up leaving the hospital to go home with their families. It is fun to be able to empower patients in their recovery process and educate them so they can return home feeling well and confident.

Harding's nursing program is unique in the fact that it allows students to spend a pretty significant amount of clinical time in ICU settings. Because of that, I felt so much more comfortable starting my job on a critical care floor. Harding also prepares you well for the emotional and spiritual aspects of nursing. It is not uncommon to have patients in tough situations. Being able to meet a patient's spiritual needs is often



just as important, if not more so, as being able to meet their physical needs.

I get to serve God by serving my patients. Patients are not only enduring physical pain during their recovery but emotional fatigue. As a nurse, I get to spend my time with patients, encouraging them and supporting them through a very trying time. When patients feel anxious or dis-

couraged, I have the opportunity to validate their feelings but also cheer them up. I also get the opportunity to pray with worried family members and share uplifting scriptures.

**E**

**THAN BROWN** graduated in May 2018 and started working for Mayo Clinic in August 2018. He is an RN on the cardiac surgical and heart transplant intensive care unit.

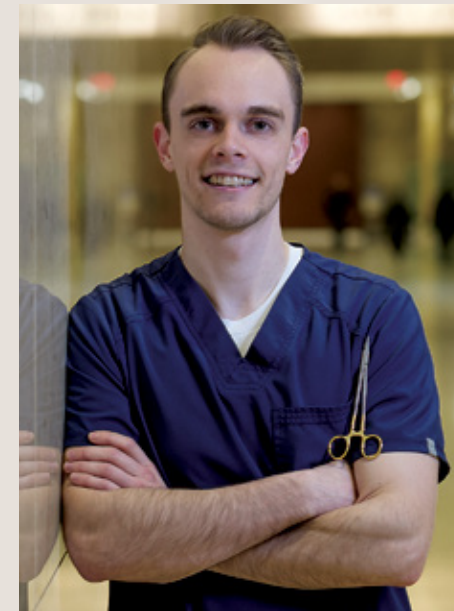
I applied after hearing about the incredible work environment at Mayo Clinic from several fellow Harding graduates that had moved up there. There are so many opportunities for growth, and I knew this would be a great place to start my career.

My team cares for patients immediately after they have had open heart surgery. We help get them on the road to recovery after a life-changing operation. I find the interaction with family members of the patient to be the most rewarding part about the job. It gives me a chance to see into the life of the person I am caring for. I think Harding prepared me to be able to spread hope during times of uncertainty, and that is a beautiful skill to have in the ICU.

Each day presents a new challenge, but I find the learning curve in the ICU to be the most challenging. There is so much to learn every day, and it is all very complex, but I am so excited to be able to learn these skills and be trained in the different specialties that Mayo has to offer.

Harding definitely helped me learn the nursing skills necessary to be at a world-renowned facility like Mayo Clinic. I also feel that Harding gave me the gift to be able to speak to other people from around the world that are seeking answers at Mayo Clinic. Through trips like Harding University in Florence and many mission opportunities, Harding gave me the ability to see God's kingdom in a more spectacular way. This viewpoint has helped me numerous times to spread hope and healing to the patients I have interacted with from all different backgrounds, and I am especially thankful for that skill.

Nursing is a profession of service, and I find that I get to serve God each day I walk into the hospital. It is an honor to step into the lives of complete strangers who are in need and to be able to, hopefully, fulfill that need. I know that God brought us all here, and we will continue to work for his kingdom in Rochester, Minnesota.



**K**

**ERRY DAY** graduated in May 2018 with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing and a minor in health missions. She began working as a registered nurse at Mayo Clinic in August 2018.

I originally wanted to work in Texas closer to home; however, that was not in the books for me. I was stressed about not having a job when my other peers did.



Four of my peers had accepted jobs with Mayo Clinic, so I decided to give it a shot. Little did I know this was exactly what the Lord had planned for me. I am thankful every day for him leading me to Mayo!

As a registered nurse, we do it all. The most rewarding part of the job is when you have

a tough patient that tells you what a difference you've made at the end of the day. It makes all of the struggles so worth it. On the flip side, the most challenging part is when patients change in status for the worse.

I've realized it's all in the small things. Recently, I was giving a patient a shower, and I was washing their feet. This made me think about Jesus washing the disciples' feet. In everything I do, I try to be compassionate, and I've seen that people respond more to this approach.

I also feel like Harding has prepared me in terms of critical thinking. I ask a lot of questions, and I've learned that it's the best thing I can do — the more I think and question, the safer I know I'll be, and the better off the patient will be.



C

**URTIS DUPUIS** graduated in May 2018 with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing and began working at Mayo Clinic in August 2018. He is currently an RN on the surgical thoracic progressive care unit.

A fellow classmate inspired me to apply for a position, and the idea of working with my friends at the best hospital in the nation drew me in. I chose surgical thoracic because I plan to transfer to pediatrics in the future, and issues with the lungs are very common in that community.

My responsibilities include caring for the holistic needs of my patients and their families. As a nurse, I provide direct patient care, and I am the intermediary between my patient and other providers in and out of the hospital. I am serving God by fulfilling my calling to become a nurse. During each shift, I serve my patients by helping them perform activities of daily living, managing symptoms, providing comfort and being their advocate.

One of the most rewarding aspects of my job is to empower my patients to actively participate in interventions that accelerate their healing. Nothing makes me happier than to walk in and see my patients using their incentive spirometer [a medical device used to help patients improve their lung function] or requesting to take a walk in the hall. The most challenging part is to watch patients go through their hospitalization alone. Mayo Clinic can be an overwhelming place to take on by yourself, and I try to go out of my way to make patients that come here alone feel comfortable and included.

I use critical thinking skills in my job every day that I gained from challenging case studies, paperwork and competencies at Harding. Harding's program taught critical care concepts that are not included at some other universities, and I feel that I had a leg up starting my job because of how well Harding prepared me.



S

**TEPHANIE JORDAN** graduated in May 2018 with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing and began working at Mayo Clinic in August 2018. She is currently an orthopedic trauma nurse.

I planned to work in the Dallas area where I am from, but I wasn't hearing much back from where I wanted to work. I decided



to apply to Mayo Clinic because they had an opening in the field I was interested in, and I heard back immediately. It was definitely a good thing because I had never considered applying to a hospital as renowned as Mayo before.

On the orthopedic trauma floor, I work in an inpatient setting, which means patients are there anywhere from one

day to multiple weeks. I am responsible for direct patient care, which covers a wide variety of things, from physiological needs to emotional, behavioral and spiritual needs.

The most challenging part of the job is not the work itself but the relocation. Moving far away from family and friends has been difficult, and I can't drive five hours home for a weekend anymore like I could at Harding. And then there's the winter — it's cold and snowy here, and my little Kia can't take the slippery roads well. That aside, I enjoy working directly with patients doing everything I can to make their stay comfortable, and I find it most rewarding when patients thank me for caring for them.

Harding's nursing program is challenging, but it definitely did the trick. Not only did I feel well-prepared to face the physiological aspects, but I felt prepared to speak to patients past their diagnosis and focus on them and their immediate needs.

Everything I do, from the big things to the little, is serving God. By serving others, I'm able to serve him. I feel that every day he is giving me the chance to make a positive impact in the lives of my patients.

M

**ICAYLA MOBLEY** graduated in May 2018 with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing and began working for Mayo Clinic in August 2018. She currently works on the thoracic and general surgery progressive care unit.

I was looking for a challenging work environment where I would have great opportunities to learn. When I applied for the position, I knew that a job that emphasized working with the lungs would make a great foundation for my career, since mostly everyone has a pair of lungs.

As a registered nurse, I take care of patients with treatments, medications and a lot of education. I love being able to be with my patients and help them find comfort on some of the hardest days of their lives.

I think the most challenging is taking on patients with multiple medical comorbidities [multiple chronic diseases or conditions]. This makes the case very complicated, and I have to really look at the details of their case to best understand how to take care of them — it's a fun challenge that Harding prepared me to take on.

The teachers at Harding are incredibly knowledgeable. The amount we had to learn felt so overwhelming at the time, but so much of it is applicable to my job and helps me take the best care of my patients.

Helping to take care of someone and build someone up from rock bottom is, I think, one of the most Christ-like things you can do with your life. Devoting yourself to others is exactly what God calls us to do.



## A former PERSPECTIVE

S

**ARAH DILL BLANSHAN** graduated from Harding in May 2006 with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing. She worked at Mayo Clinic from 2006 to 2012. She is a family nurse practitioner by training but is currently a stay-at-home mom. She and her husband, Bob, live in Plainview, Minnesota, with their three children.

I happened to see a flyer for the Summer III program through Mayo Clinic, which is an internship experience between your junior and senior year of college. They pair you up with a registered nurse for 12 weeks, and you work side-by-side with that experienced nurse. I made a lot of friends through that and came to feel like the Midwest could be home. At the end of that program, they offered me a job.

The most rewarding thing to me is the opportunity to help people. Sometimes it is in big ways, like literally saving their life in a crisis or coming to terms with a life-changing situation. Many other times it is in small ways, like helping them maintain dignity in an embarrassing situation or helping them understand their own diagnosis better. These little things can be huge to a patient.

Academically, Harding was tough and thorough. The program prepared you well for practice, but the real benefit of going through Harding was having the perspective of nursing being a ministry. The professors really made us think about how our care is an outflow of our faith and how we truly can touch lives through our work.

I think just about anybody can serve God and others in their work, but nursing is special because often times it is so raw and real. You are face to face with humanity every day, and you get to be right there with them, helping them along as they face the good and bad that life throws at them — it really is a privilege. 🙏

BLANSHAN PHOTO SUBMITTED





# Connections



Send us your news! Let us know about your wedding, birth, job change, promotion, award, retirement, etc. Email your items to [alumninews@harding.edu](mailto:alumninews@harding.edu) or write Harding University, Office of Alumni Relations, Box 10768, Searcy, AR 72149-5615.

## 1970

**Di An Bomar Williams** taught elementary school for 18 years. She received her master's in library media from Jacksonville State University in 1998 and served as a library media specialist until retiring from Alabama schools in 2010. She currently contracts with SubTeach USA and was honored with the SOAR Award for going above and beyond in the field of education. Her husband, **Roy** ('71), was honored at Crowley's Ridge College's Veteran Preachers Appreciation Dinner before retiring from full-time preaching. The couple were missionaries in Tooele, Utah, for two years. They also served congregations in Arkansas, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi and Tennessee. (721 Central St., Kensett, AR 72082)

## 1976

**Bonnie Ulrey Barnes** received the Hubert Smothers Award presented to teachers within the Tennessee Association of Independent Schools for deep commitment to the teaching profession and demonstrating excellence. She joined Memphis University School in 1999. She began her career in 1978 teaching French and English in Beebe, Arkansas. She received her first library director position at Ohio Valley College in 1981. She earned her master's in English from the University of Arkansas and a master's in library science from Vanderbilt University. She spearheaded a five-year renovation of Hyde Library at MUS. She has served as treasurer for Memphis Association of Independent Schools Library Information Consortium since 2006 and is a member of various local, state and national library associations. (8259 Byre Hollow Cove, Cordova, TN 38018)

## 1977

**James B. McSwain** recently had a book published titled *Petroleum and Public Safety: Risk Management in the Gulf South, 1901-1915*. He is a professor emeritus of history at Tuskegee University. (2045 Lee Road 137, Lot 70, Auburn, AL 36832)

**Michael Pullara** recently published a book called *The Spy Who Was Left Behind*. The book covers his investigation into the 1993 death of fellow alumnus **Freddie Woodruff** ('69), who was serving with the CIA in the country of Georgia at the time of his death. Pullara has been practicing law for 38 years. (1111 Hermann Drive, #21A, Houston, TX 77004)

## 1978

**Charlotte Wolfe** has been promoted to circulation director of Journal Inc. where she has 33 years experience. She serves on the board of directors for

Mississippi State University-Itawamba Extension Service and as president of the board of directors for the Itawamba Animal Shelter. She is a member of Bean's Ferry Church of Christ. (33 Johnson Heights Drive, Fulton, MS 38843)

## 1979

**Jim Speer** has been named to the Rector (Arkansas) High School Sports Hall of Fame as a member of the class of 2018. He started playing basketball in the pee wee league and finished his career playing for Harding. He also has served as a longtime member of the Rector School Board. (3557 Highway 49, Rector, AR 72461)

## 1986

**Barry Wheeler** was inducted into the Rochester College Sports Hall of Fame. He earned his master's degree from the United States Sports Academy. He coached volleyball at Rochester College for 12 years where his teams made eight national tournament appearances in the NSCAA, including two national titles. He also coached women's basketball for 12 years while making two national tournament appearances. He is currently in his third season as head Lady Pioneer volleyball coach and is an associate professor and department chair of health, physical education and wellness at Crowley's Ridge College. He is married to **Carol Lynette Gardner**. (100 College Drive, Paragould, AR 72450)

## 1987

**Joyce Breshears Simmons** obtained her doctorate of nursing practice in 2017. She is the Baptist Health College of Nursing AASN Registered Nurse Program Director. She and her husband, **Eric** ('86), have two daughters. (320 Jaybird Lane, Searcy, AR 72143)

## 1993

**Lara Qualls Noah** has been appointed executive director of Alpha Chi National College Honor Society in Little Rock, Arkansas. She volunteers with the Arkansas chapter of the ACLU and the Progressive Arkansas Women PAC.

## 1995

**Dale Sheehy** has completed 10 years as youth and family minister for the Lake Shore Drive Church of Christ in Waco, Texas. He is married to **Kim Fancy** ('94). (204 Gail Drive, Waco, TX 76708)

## 1996

**Oscar Andrade** is chairman of the board of directors and managing director of Ford Motor Credit Co. in Mexico. He has been with the company since graduation. He received a Diversity and Inclusion Award from Ford in 2010 and earned his MBA from Harding in 2005. He and his wife, Andrea Montano, have three children. (Av. Vista Real 35-501, Huixquilucan, México 52774)

**Hal Porter** has joined TwelveStone Health Partners as director of information technology and infrastructure. Previously, he was the founder and principal of Brentwood, Tennessee, based Compliance and Security Professionals. He served in the U.S. Navy for eight years. (386 Grove Hurst Lane, Brentwood, TN 37027)

## 2000

**Michael Wright** has been elected to the Shelby County Board of Commissioners. He is senior coordinator of internal communications with Youth Villages and is married to **Alison Hiatt** ('99). (5730 Bartlett Woods Drive, Bartlett, TN 38134)

## 2001

**Justin** and Sarah **Lacey** announce the birth of a daughter, Piper Leigh, June 2, 2018. Justin is the director of communication at Westbury Christian School and a member of the board of directors of the Houston Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America. Sarah is a middle school counselor for Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District. They also have a daughter, Harper. (1431 Shillington, Katy, TX 77450)

## 2002

**Julie Newsom Mooney** is a senior compensation adviser for USAA. She holds an MBA from University of Texas at Dallas. She and her husband, Howard, have two children, Colin and Caitlin. (7948 Bishop Drive, Frisco, TX 75036)

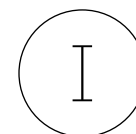
**Chad Wagner** is president of the African Christian Schools Foundation, which supports and oversees schools of preaching in Africa.

## 2003

**Shelby Dodson** has joined the Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee Gallatin office as a staff attorney. She came from the Tennessee Justice Center, where she served for two years as an Equal Justice Works Justice AmeriCorps Legal Fellow. She graduated cum laude from Belmont University College of Law in 2016. (5820 Maxon Ave., Nashville, TN 37209)

## Tenor one

PROFILE | DAVID WALTON



**I**N A SUBLET APARTMENT IN NEW YORK CITY, David Walton ('09) patiently waits for his next opera audition. Classical singers from all over the world gather in the City from October through December to audition for companies casting for the following seasons. While there, Walton is singing for Kentucky Opera, Pensacola Opera, Anchorage Opera, several German opera companies and many more where he is being considered for their upcoming seasons.

The Nashville, Tennessee, native wasn't always planning for a future on stage. "I love music, but I didn't really think about taking it seriously," Walton said. "I needed a fine-arts credit my senior year in high school, so I auditioned for chorus because I didn't want to take art. Also, I knew chorus wouldn't have homework and projects. My choral director put me in the tenor one section, and I started to enjoy it. He started giving me solos, and little by



little it grew into this really meaningful experience." With plans to attend Harding after graduation, Walton decided to pursue a music scholarship.

"The music department at Harding took a huge risk on me," he said. "I had no idea how to read music or really know what I was doing at all, but I had a high tenor voice, so I guess they saw potential and gave me a scholarship."

It was during his time at the University that Walton learned the art and mechanics of music. Upon graduation, he went to Ole Miss where he received a master's in vocal performance.

"I could never have felt more prepared going into graduate school," Walton said. "People like Scott and Cindy Carrell, Dr. Ganus, Arthur Shearin, Kelly Neill and Laura Eads instilled in me a foundational, fundamental understanding of music."

He also was prepared spiritually for the challenges ahead. "The arts world is very free," Walton said. "It's very open. So, you have to go into it with an open mind and yet also know your own strengths and weaknesses. Having people and examples like my professors at Harding in the voice studio and in the choir room really instilled in me a spiritual strength ready to take on whatever was going to be thrown at me."

In 2011 Walton and his wife, Rebecca Hatfield ('09), moved to St. Paul, Minnesota, where he was hired to sing full time with Cantus, a men's vocal ensemble. He performed with them for three years before joining the Resident Artist Program with the Minnesota Opera and now works as a freelance opera singer.

"When I left Cantus and really decided to get into opera, I wanted to pursue the music of Mozart, Rossini and Donizetti," Walton said. "I also wanted to work one on one with composers who write for my voice and explore new ideas and make world premieres. I'm getting to do my fifth world premiere with Minnesota Opera this spring."

In 2018 alone, Walton performed as Belmonte — one of his dream roles — in Mozart's "Abduction from the Seraglio," Tonio in Donizetti's "The Daughter of the Regiment," and at the Glimmerglass Festival last summer, he was Count Almaviva in Rossini's "The Barber of Seville."

He also sings with symphonies and does concert work. "Getting to do Handel's "Messiah" with the Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra and Bach with the Atlanta Symphony has been a really amazing experience," Walton said.

While he hopes to one day perform at Carnegie Hall or the Metropolitan Opera, and possibly do an opera somewhere in Europe — a couple of months in Germany, Austria or France — Walton is happy with what he's getting to do right now, which is "making music and telling stories on stage with friends and colleagues." 🎭

— Jonathan B. Murphy

PHOTO SUBMITTED

## 2004

**Timothy Wylie** is co-principal investigator for the department of computer science study on the algorithmic self-assembly of deoxyribonucleic acid at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. The project was recently awarded nearly \$500,000 from the National Science Foundation. He is married to **Rachel McCauley**.

## 2005

**Brian** and Molly **Ford** announce the birth of a son, Hunter Allen, July 31, 2018. Brian is the CFO for Sees Group. (1025 St. Andrews Place, Nashville, TN 37204)

Ben and **Ashley Harlow Hewatt** announce the birth of a daughter, Violet Elisabeth, March 23, 2018. Ben works for a local car dealership and Ashley is a homemaker. Their other children are Harlow, Dylan and Ezra, who died in 2012. (2450 Garfield Ave., Abilene, TX 79601)

**Emma Parks Vieth** earned a master's of health science specializing in public and community health education in 2016 from Touro University in California. (1616 Kassidy Place, Rohnert Park, CA 94928)

## 2006

**Chad** and **Justine Buchanan Barron** announce the birth of a son, Rhiley Jonathan, Jan. 1, 2018. Chad is a family therapist for Family Preservation Services of Polk County. They have two other children, Mallory and Colby. (423 Comet Drive, Hendersonville, NC 28791)

**Meredith Jones** married **Ricky Young** ('09) July 14, 2018. Meredith earned her doctorate in education leadership from Harding and is the director of Harding University Northwest Arkansas. Ricky is a manager of state income tax strategy and compliance at Walmart Inc. (3712 S.W. Homestead Ave., Bentonville, AR 72712)

## 2007

Chad and **Betsy Glover Dawson** announce the birth of a daughter, Karis Drew, June 18, 2018. Chad is a chiropractor at Natural State Health Center, and Betsy is a homemaker. They also have two sons, Kyler and Caden. (2 Partridge Drive, Little Rock, AR 72212)

## 2008

**Adam Bledsoe** is a feature reporter for THV11 in Little Rock, Arkansas. He is a veteran of the U.S. Air Force. For nearly a decade, he was in law



enforcement serving as a police officer and most recently was the public information officer for the Faulkner County (Arkansas) sheriff's office. He and his wife, Amanda, have two children. (564 Highway 285 N., Damascus, AR 72039)

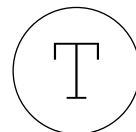
**Michael H. White** received a 2018 NHF-Shire Clinical Fellowship Award from The National

Hemophilia Foundation. As an NHF-Shire Clinical fellow, he receives specialized clinical training in the comprehensive bleeding disorders clinic and women and girl's bleeding clinic at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta. He is a pediatric hematology and oncology fellow at Emory University/CHOA and completed his medical degree at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School.

He is currently enrolled in the Master of Science in Clinical Research program at Emory University and has been awarded funding through the NIH TLI trainee grant for his focus on multidisciplinary clinic and translational science. He also is the chair elect for the HTRS Fellows Network and serves as a board member for the International Health Care Foundation.

PROFILE | VIVI VITALONE

## Stories of relief



**THE REASON WHY VIVI VITALONE** ('14) is a communicator is simple — she loves people, she loves to tell their stories, and she's seen that doing so makes a huge difference.

"I think that most of the issues we have in the world are because of fear and miscommunication," she said. "And I hope that by working in journalism, I can prevent a little bit of that. By telling each other's stories, we can understand each other better."

Vitalone grew up in Rome, Italy, familiar with Harding. After her father was asked by the University to be a visiting scholar and teach missions in the College of Bible and Ministry, she moved with her family to Searcy in 2011. Vitalone knew she wanted to be a journalist and began her degree in journalism that fall.



After her time at Harding, she participated in a Global Outreach internship with a church in New Zealand and then secured a communications internship with World Food Programme, the food delivery agency of the United Nations headquartered in Rome. Her responsibilities during the eight months she spent working for WFP included telling stories and sharing information from correspondents handling the aftermath of an Ebola outbreak.

"WFP was helping people affected by Ebola, and they were getting all the footage and photos back to us," Vitalone said. "Then we would put it on the website, write press releases and organize [press] conferences. Places that were considered the worst places in the world — that's where my colleagues were going, which really inspired me to help and inspired me to be strong and do the job."

Through her connections with former journalists at WFP, Vitalone became a freelance field producer for Raw-News in Rome, an agency that, according to Vitalone, provided TV networks around the world with freelance producers and cameramen. During the two years she was working and traveling Italy, Greece and France from her home base in Rome, she spent much of her time covering the refugee crisis with her colleagues on the Balkan and Greek routes. After coming home and realizing that the issue, which was not isolated to the countries in which she had been working, was going to affect her whole

generation, she decided to pursue her master's degree in migration from SOAS University of London.

"I'm actually getting my master's in migration because of the amount of stories I covered about the refugees — and not just about the refugee crisis itself, but how migrants and refugees affect the countries they get in and how the geopolitics of that country changes because of the refugees," she said. "Having the understanding I have now about what happens in the Middle East, with refugees, and political situations in Europe and America, I can do my job better. I get to cover these stories with more knowledge."

After meeting many Kurds, an ethnic minority, in Greece, she decided to focus her thesis on how the Kurdish diaspora in Europe is influencing Turkey, Syria and Iraq as they strive to get more social, civic and human rights for the Kurds. Her thesis is dedicated to her friend Botham Jean, a fellow University alumnus who was murdered in September 2018.

"I also want to take this occasion to remember my friend Botham Shem Jean, who was murdered during the last few days of thesis editing," she wrote in the acknowledgements. "He wasn't a Kurd in Turkey, but he was a black man in the United States, which, these days, looks dangerously like the same thing. Thank you for shining a light on all of us. I will never forget you."

After working as a freelance desk editor for NBC in July, Vitalone was offered a full-time staff contract in November 2018 as a desk editor in London. Her role at the news desk is to serve as a contact between the show and the correspondents creating news packages and live coverage throughout the world.

"We have correspondents and producers all over the world," she said. "So whatever happens in any part of the world, we have to understand what's happening — understand if it's a story that's actually going to develop into something where we need to send people over or just to get editorial content."

Even as a Christian employee in London whose first language is not English, Vitalone feels she was well-prepared for the challenges she has encountered through her experience at Harding. In addition to being a journalism major with an English minor, she was also a photographer for The Bison newspaper.

"Harding helped me keep my faith, and I would be nowhere without my faith, especially here in London," Vitalone said. "It's not just what Harding taught me as a journalist but also what it taught me about having high standards for myself and for my job and having the morals to be a good person and a good colleague."

— Hannah Owens

PHOTO SUBMITTED

## 2009

**Philip and Catherine Canterbury Groves** announce the birth of a son, Anderson West, Sept. 26, 2018. Philip is the vice president of finance at The Escape Game. (1100 Belvidere Drive, Nashville, TN 37204)

## 2011

**Christopher Dixon** is designer of special projects at Pensole Footwear Design Academy. He won the 2017 World Sneaker Design Championship and is building his own brand, "Constant Development."

## 2013

John and **Elizabeth Jones Golden** announce the birth of a son, Boone Kenneth, Aug. 27, 2018. They also have a daughter, Hazel. (516 County Road 713, Jonesboro, AR 72401)

## 2014

**Christopher Webber** has published *The Battle For Redemption: A Walk Through The Bible*. The book takes the reader on a journey from Genesis through Revelation. He is the youth and worship minister at Nichols Street Church of Christ in Bay City, Texas, and earned a master's in Christian education from Dallas Theological Seminary in 2016. (11 Columbella St., Bay City, TX 77414)

## 2015

**Seth Tackett** is the event manager for the Memphis Grizzlies. He received his master's from Temple University in May 2018.

## 2018

**Zachary Cowdery** is the full-time worship minister at Riverside Church of Christ in Coppell, Texas. (1717 E. Belt Line Road, #1324, Coppell, TX 75019)

**Jami Ann Balkman** has been recognized by the city of Alma, Arkansas, as a Volunteer of the Year. She was recognized for her work with the Crawford County Library Board, the Friends at the Alma Library, and the Airedale Book Express Summer Bookmobile and free meal program. She also has been awarded the 2018 Bessie B. Moore Trustee Award by the Arkansas Library Association for outstanding service as a library trustee in Arkansas. (3302 Collum Lane W., Alma, AR 72921)

## Passages

**Ruby Davis Anderson Williams** ('38), 102, of Searcy died Oct. 25, 2018. In the summer of 1934, she worked with others preparing for the opening of Harding College following the move from

Morrilton, Arkansas. During World War II, she worked various jobs including at the ammunition plant complex in Jacksonville, Arkansas, and following the war, with Arkansas Power and Light Co. She earned her master's in education in 1959 and spent the next 30 years teaching junior high history, civics and economics. She was a charter member of College Church of Christ. She was preceded in death by her husband, **James** ('43). She is survived by two daughters, **Dorothy Maple** ('61) and **Margaret Southerland** ('71); one sister, Pauline Owens; nine grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren; and two great-great-grandchildren.

**Paul Edward Miller** ('39), 102, of Mountain View, Arkansas, died Aug. 22, 2018. He was a minister in churches of Christ and also served as a Bible teacher and elder in various congregations. He was a teacher and principal at White County Central Schools and a retired civil service employee for USDA Soil Conservation Service. He was a noted historian, having served on the board and as past president of White County Historical Society and as a member of Stone County Historical Society. He authored a history of Bethel Grove Church of Christ. He was preceded in death by his wife of 52 years, **Alyene Yocum** ('44); one son, **L. David** ('74); and a stepson, Allen Ferren. He is survived by his wife of 23 years, Jewell Ferren; three sons, **Paul** ('64), Dennis and Royce; two stepchildren, Daniel Ferren and Gail Butler; 10 grandchildren; and six stepgrandchildren.

**Blanche Irene Rickman Horsman** ('45), 97, of Florence, Alabama, died Sept. 7, 2018. A teacher and homemaker, she taught at Bay and Dalton, Arkansas, and at Mars Hill Bible School in Florence. Her primary calling was as a homemaker. She and her husband were actively involved at Mars Hill Bible School where she was a member and past president of the Associated Women's Organization. She and her husband were both named MHBS Volunteers of the Year in 1989 and Friends of Mars Hill in 2003. During retirement, the couple traveled to all 50 states as well as out of the country. She was preceded in death by her husband of 58 years, **Homer** ('50). She is survived by her children, **Marilyn Sullivan** ('76), **Paula Mason** ('79), **Millie Dauck** ('82) and **Don** ('84); six grandchildren; and one brother, **James** ('52).

**Ruth Summitt Geer** ('47), 94, of Ash Grove, Missouri, died Nov. 20, 2018. She taught elementary school at Crowley's Ridge Academy in Paragould, Arkansas, and later served as administrative secretary at Crowley's Ridge College. She and her husband served as missionaries in Tanzania and Kenya for 18 years. She was preceded in death by her husband of 54 years, **Carter** ('50). She is survived by four children: Sandra Halface, **Janet Allison** ('70), **Tom** ('80) and Ruth Ann Deck; 12 grandchildren; and 24 great-grandchildren.



**Willard McNeil Cox** ('51), 88, of Searcy died Dec. 23, 2017. He was a preacher for churches of Christ in Alabama, Florida, Texas, Oklahoma, Missouri and North Carolina for 60 years, retiring in 2011. He also taught at Athens Bible School, Mars Hill Bible School, Mount Dora Christian School and Lubbock Christian School. He was the author of *Seven Sayings for the Suffering Savior* and taught at two schools of preaching, Elk City School of Preaching and Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies. He is survived by his wife of 66 years, **Yvonne Simon** ('54); five children, Ronald, Donald, **Gerald** ('77), Curtis and **Sharon Smith** ('80); 10 grandchildren; and seven great-grandchildren.

**Anita McSpadden McKenney** ('52), 86, of Searcy died June 24, 2018. She worked for Southwestern Bell before marrying. She and her husband began McKenney Supply in Searcy. She loved music. She is survived by her husband of 64 years, Frank; two children, **Travis** ('86) and Sharon Hawk; and three grandchildren.

**Robert Thomas Horsman** ('53), 88, of Frontenac, Kansas, died Aug. 21, 2018. He worked as a chemist for Phillips Petroleum in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, owned his own sawmill, was a truck driver, and owned a moving and storage business in West Memphis, Arkansas. He was an elder and Bible class teacher and was a member of the church of Christ in Columbus, Kansas. He is survived by his wife, Lucile; six children, **Susan Nossaman** ('78), **Kay Shelton** ('81), Mike, Terry, Lynda Fairleigh and Bonnie Bennett; two siblings, Marie Matthews and **Donald Horsman** ('59), 13 grandchildren; and 14 great-grandchildren.

**William Kay Moser** ('53), 88, of Searcy died Aug. 4, 2018. He preached continually for the church of Christ from 1953-2013, in Arkansas, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana and Missouri. He published three novels, *Thorn in the Flesh*, *A Beautiful Fascination* and *A Glorious Summer* as well as his autobiography, *Be a Man, Son*, and many articles. He is survived by his wife of 64 years, **Yvette Johnston** ('53); three children, **Rebecca Bradford** ('76), **LaNelle Stamps** ('80), and **Timothy** ('88); four grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren.

**John Robert McRay** ('56), 86, of Nashville, Tennessee, died Aug. 24, 2018. He retired as professor emeritus of New Testament and archaeology at Wheaton College. He was a preacher, author and teacher who also served on the faculties of Middle Tennessee State University, Lipscomb University and Harding. He is survived by his wife of 61 years, Annette Jackson; three sons, Rob, David and Barrett; one brother, **Tom** ('62); eight grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

**Marilyn Louise Noble Riemer** ('56), 86, of Gresham, Oregon, died Aug. 28, 2018. She was a home-



## Connections

maker, preacher's wife, ladies and children's Bible class teacher, and helper to struggling Christians and the elderly. She and her husband worked with several congregations, mostly in the Northwest. She worshiped with Metro Church of Christ. She was preceded in death by a son, Stephen. She is survived by her husband of 62 years, **Fred** ('57); three children, David, Clinton and Linda DeWhitt; and five grandchildren.

**Martha Louise Tucker Norton** ('58), 82, of Lenoir City, Tennessee, died April 2, 2018. She taught elementary school and also was a AAA travel agent. She loved to hike and became a member of the 900-Mile Club after hiking every trail in Great Smoky Mountain National Park. She completed the trails a second time in 2011. She was a member of West End Church of Christ. She was preceded in death by her husband, Ken. She is survived by a daughter, Leslie; five grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

**A.J. Arnold** ('61), 77, of Katy, Texas, died June 22, 2018. He received his master's from Harding School of Theology. A minister, he devoted his life to living out the love he learned from the Lord. He is survived by his wife of 56 years, **Catherine**

**Estell** ('63); three children, Mary Kay, **Will** ('93) and Randall; and four grandchildren.

**Peggy Louise Wisenbaker Sizemore** ('62), 77, of Hoover, Alabama, died Aug. 13, 2018. After staying home to raise her children, she worked in a high school office, with a real estate attorney, and in a dental office. She was a member of Homewood Church of Christ and the Birmingham Symphony Chorus. She is survived by her husband of 56 years, **Leon** ('60); two daughters, **Stacy Weeks** ('86) and **Sally Sizemore** ('91); two sisters, Anita Scott and Glynese Rios; and three grandchildren.

**Margaret Ann Rogers Bonnell** ('62), 76, of Battlefield, Missouri, died Sept. 17, 2018, from cancer. She began her teaching career at Harding Academy in Searcy and continued at Aurora (Nebraska) High School. In 1966, she began teaching at Doniphan (Missouri) High School where she taught speech and English until her retirement in 1995. While at DHS, she developed a student-led live radio show, Spotlight on DHS, on Saturday mornings. She also was an off-campus adjunct public speaking teacher for Three Rivers Community College in Poplar Bluff, Missouri, from

1981-95. She resumed TRCC duties at West Plains, Missouri, in 2001. She loved stamping and making handmade cards with ladies from her church, Union Hill Church of Christ. She is survived by her husband, **Charles** ('63); two daughters, Kim Herman and Kendra Propst; a sister, **Mary Goddard** ('68); and two grandsons.

**Marjorie Holmes Martin** ('62), 98, of Searcy died Oct. 23, 2018. She attended college two years and then worked as an office manager at General Motors in Pontiac, Michigan. When she returned to Arkansas, she began teaching in Griffithville. After marriage and the birth of her daughter, she was a homemaker until she returned to teaching in 1958. For almost 30 years, she taught in the Searcy Public School District at both McRae Elementary and Sidney Deener Elementary. She was inducted into the Searcy Public School Hall of Honor for outstanding service in teaching in 2008. She instilled her love of music in the hundreds of second graders she taught. She was a member of Downtown Church of Christ, Searcy Beethoven Club, and a charter member of Greenkeepers Garden Club. She was preceded in death by her husband of 59 years, James. She is survived by her daughter, **Janyth Baker** ('71); three grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren.

**RuthAnn Simmons Hammons** ('63), 77, of Bakersfield, California, died Sept. 8, 2018. She worked many years in the mental health field as a psychiatric technician. She earned a degree in criminal justice from Cal State University in 1984 and became a parole agent for the State of California. She is survived by her husband, Delfino Pena; three sons, Landon, Brock and Jon; three stepchildren, Chris, Paul and Teresa; and numerous grandchildren.

**Mary Hicks Birmingham** ('65), 75, of Little Rock, Arkansas, died Aug. 14, 2018. She earned a Master of Science degree in counselor education from the University of Central Arkansas in 1973. She was a teacher and high school counselor for several years at White County Central Schools in Judsonia, Arkansas, retiring in 2003. She was preceded in death by her husband of 41 years, Don. She is survived by two sons, **Brian** ('95) and **Barry** ('96); five grandchildren; and one sister, **Margaret Helms** ('63).

**John Collins** ('68), 72, of Henderson, Tennessee, died July 12, 2017. He received a Master of Arts from Harding School of Theology. He also received a master's in teaching and a doctorate in history from Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro. He taught history at Chester County High School for five years before serving as supervisor of attendance for Chester County Schools for five years. In 1984, he began working at Freed-Hardeman University where he served as professor of history and chairman of the department of history, philosophy and political science. He retired in 2011. He was a member of Henderson Church of

Christ and also preached in many congregations throughout Middle and West Tennessee. He is survived by his wife, Mary Orick; three sons, Mark, **Justin** ('07) and Jared; two siblings, Branford Collins and Joyce Lamb; and four grandchildren.

**Ruby Landrum Walter** (MAT '68), 76, of Howell, Michigan, died Aug. 4, 2016. She is survived by two sons, Roderic and Erik; and nine siblings.

**Graham William Amy** ('69), 74, of Searcy died Nov. 17, 2018. He also graduated from Harding School of Theology. He preached in Ontario, Canada, and later worked in construction and home improvements. He is survived by his wife of 50 years, **Fannie Timmerman** ('68); four children, **Darrell** ('92), **Teresa Castleman** ('96), Jonathan and **Richard** ('04); one brother, Wayland; and 10 grandchildren.

**Michael Suiter** ('78), 71, of Altus, Oklahoma, died Aug. 15, 2018. He served as an aviation metalsmith and jet mechanic in the U.S. Navy from 1965-69. He received the Good Conduct Medal and the National Defense Service Medal and was honorably discharged as a second-class petty officer. He worked for Beech Aircraft Manufacturing and as a salesman before coming to Harding. He then preached and ministered for churches of Christ until his recent retirement. He served as a prison and hospice chaplain, elder for the Tipton (Oklahoma) Church of Christ, board of directors at the Tipton Children's Hospital and Frederick Memorial Hospital, and HUD Commission for the Housing Authority in Tipton. He is survived by his wife Margie; two children, Ron and **Karla Sparks** ('94); one sister, Tina Turner; and seven grandchildren.

**Keith Sliter** ('83), 63, of North Little Rock, Arkansas, died Sept. 14, 2018. He received an R.N. degree from University of Rochester. He was a member of the Open Door Community Church. He is survived by his sister, Trina Sliter.

**Norma Wanice Beckett** ('90), 88, of Searcy died Oct. 28, 2018. She was preceded in death by her husband, **Virgil** ('58).

**Teresa "Teri" Williams** ('95), 44, of Lynwood, California, died Aug. 17, 2018. She earned a Ph.D. in chemistry from Arizona State University and completed postdoctoral studies at Emory University in Atlanta. She taught at Stone Mountain High School in Georgia, Middle College High School in Los Angeles, Charles Drew Medical Magnet as well as Long Beach Community College and Pierce College. She had a distinctive soprano voice. She was a member of several singing groups, including the Higher Degree Gospel Group at Harding, Hillcrest Singers in Atlanta, Metropolitan Praise Team in Carson, California, and the Southside Choir in Los Angeles. She was a Sunday school teacher at the various congregations she attended and sang and ministered to the

sick and shut-ins. She is survived by two sisters, **Patricia** ('99) and Clarisa.

**Shelly Duzan Roggendorff** ('97), 44, of Abilene, Texas, died Sept. 21, 2018, after a four-year battle with ovarian cancer. She worked for 21 years as a labor and delivery nurse in Kentucky, Illinois and Texas. She found a calling as a nurse for families who suffered the death of a baby. After her cancer diagnosis, she transitioned to a nursing educator position at Abilene Regional Medical Center, a role she continued throughout her treatment. She also assisted with labs for the School of Nursing at Abilene Christian University, building relationships with student nurses. She is survived by her husband, Paul; three children, Ethan, Chris and Allison; her parents, Robert and Dorinda Duzan; and a brother, Kevin Duzan.

**James L. Atteberry**, 94, of Fort Worth, Texas, died Aug. 24, 2018. He went to Abilene Christian College



where he eventually earned his bachelor's degree, though completion was interrupted by World War II. He went into the Army Air Corps in the spring of 1943 as an aviation cadet where he served until 1945. He received his master's degree and his doctorate from the University of Texas at Austin. He taught English at the School of Mines from 1948-53. He then served as a professor and chairman of the English department at Harding during 1953-68. In 1968 Pepperdine University became his professional home for the rest of his career. It was during the years in California that he began flying again. He retired to Fort Worth, Texas, in 1988. He was preceded in death by his wife, Ruth Drum, and a grandchild. He is survived by two children, **Janice Sticka** ('67) and **James L. III** ('72); four grandchildren; and a great-grandson.

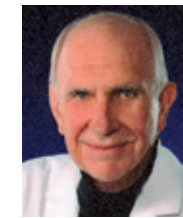
**Edna Roberts**, 85, of McCrory, Arkansas, died Aug. 6, 2018. She graduated from St. Vincent Infirmary School of Nursing in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1956. She spent 58 years nursing in hospitals, nursing homes, home health care and at camp. She was a long-time nurse in the Student Health Office at Harding. She was preceded in death by her husband, James. She is survived by four children: **Richard** ('78), Bobby, Michael and **Sandy Wiles** ('81); one sister, Annie Ridgeway; 11 grandchildren; and nine great-grandchildren.

**William Doyle White**, 80, of Searcy died Oct. 6, 2018. He earned a bachelor's degree in music at the University of Arkansas in 1959. From the second semester of his freshman year until his graduation, he was selected for a lead in all musical theatre productions and operas produced by the department. He lettered in track and field and later ran numerous marathons, including Boston.

## Connections

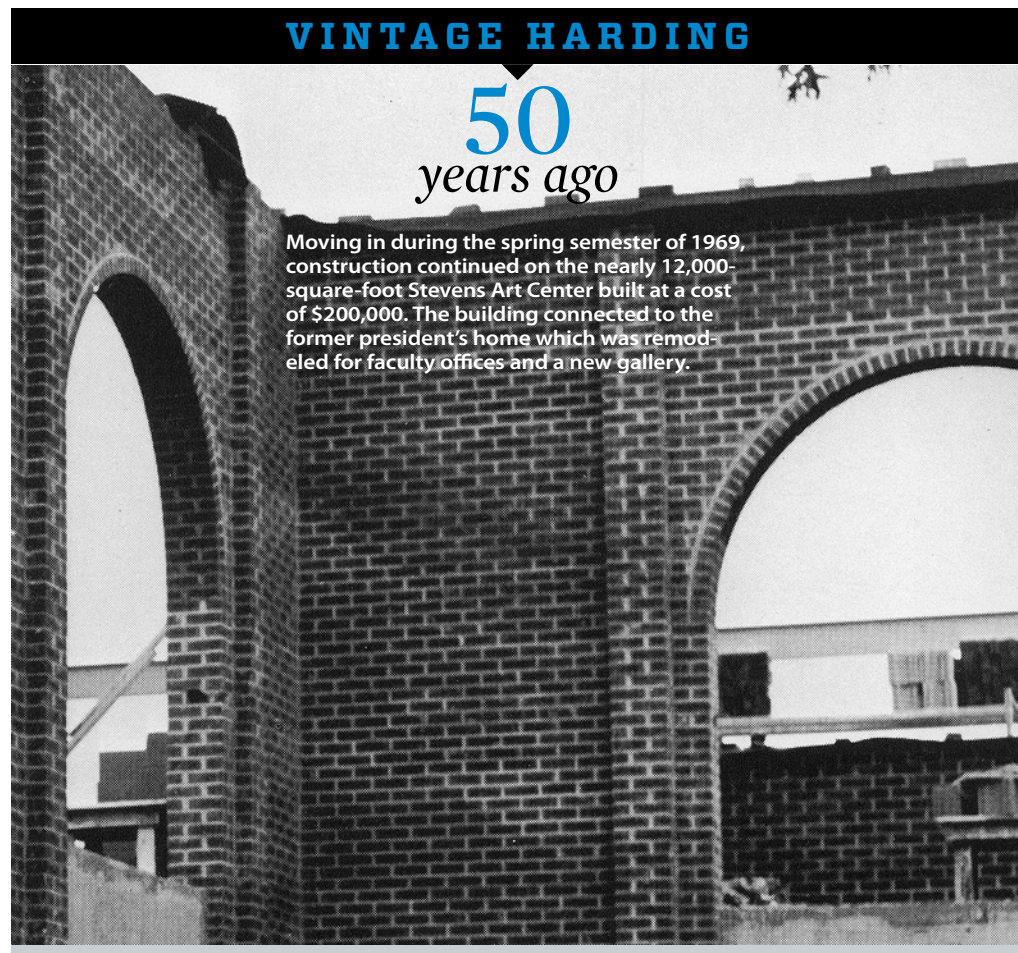


He attended medical school at the University of Chicago from 1959-63. During medical school, he continued to pursue his interest in music at the Music Conservatory, singing a lead in "Rigoletto" and performing with the Lyric Opera Orchestra and chorus at the Apollo Opera Co. He was chosen the Outstanding Male Vocalist under



30 in Chicago and sang an aria with the Chicago Symphony. He once served as a judge for Metropolitan Opera competitions. Even as a practicing physician, he performed numerous solos with the Arkansas Symphony, the Arkansas Choral Society, Opera Memphis, the Harding University orchestra and chorus, and in many regional symphonies and oratorios. After graduating medical school, he completed a one-year internship at University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences in Little Rock, and then served the United States Public Health Service as a commissioned medical officer with the Indian Health Services hospitals in Pawnee and Claremore, Oklahoma, until June 1967. He then returned to UAMS to complete residency in internal medicine and fellowship in gastroenterology. He moved to Searcy in 1970 to begin his practice, which spanned 48 years, including service as team physician for the U.S. Olympics women's volleyball team and men's boxing team in 1979; medical director for Track and Field National Finals for several years; 20 years in internal medicine and gastroenterology at Searcy Medical Center; 17 years as team physician for Harding University and Harding Academy football teams; professor of medicine and associate dean of the College of Health-Related Professions at UAMS; associate chief of staff at the Veterans Hospital in Little Rock; and medical director for Harding's Physician Assistant Program. He was a member of College Church of Christ, where he served as an elder and song leader for many years and ministered to those who came to Monday night Caring & Sharing and the medical clinic at His House. He was preceded in death by his wife of 53 years, Neva Crum; and an infant son, Stephen. He is survived by his children: **Mark** ('83), **Laura** ('86), **Jonathan** ('88) and **David** ('92); nine grandchildren; and five great-grandchildren.

**Autumn Rivera**, 21, of Denver, Colorado, died Nov. 28, 2018. She attended Harding the spring and fall 2017 semesters pursuing a career in health and fitness and was a member of Ju Go Ju social club. She is survived by her mother, Linda Gatlin; her father, Otto Rivera; a sister, Amber Rivera; a half sister, Nicole Rivera; and her grandparents, Edgard and Bobbie Gatlin and Gladys Wimmer.





# Withstanding hurricanes

By DANIEL CHERRY

**H**URRICANE MICHAEL HIT OCT. 10, 2018. For two intense hours I fortified our house against wind that howled like a freight-train whistle. Fifty-year-old oak trees that provided our home with shade and shelter threatened to attack us and render us vulnerable. Roof shingles, once a shield from rain, moved like shrapnel, attacking vehicles, windows and garage doors and stabbing into stuccoed walls.

Braced against the front door of our house, I felt the pulsing wind currents screaming threats at my family. Sheltered in a house that may not be able to protect us were 17 people with 11 being children, including two foster babies. The women and younger children huddled in our master bathroom and closet praying and singing. The three men were posted at the three main doors of the house, pushing against the wind. And our teenage boys walked through the house giving constant updates: “A window board got sucked off,” “A shingle broke a window,” and “Water is pouring in through a ceiling fan.” As the wind intensified all I could see beyond the porch was a white sheet of horizontal rain streaked with debris. We watched all eight of our oak trees collapse along with the fence, swing set and Harding swing — all piled up in a tangle of limbs and milled lumber. Now we couldn’t see any of that through the tearing wind.

Twenty minutes in, with water shooting under the doors, I realized this would keep intensifying for at least an hour. We knew we couldn’t hold the doors as the pressure continued to build. So, within about five minutes, we moved the refrigerator against the back door, kitchen table against the front door, and the piano and a line of other furniture across the living room to brace doors against each other. As water trickled down the walls, the roof flapped and the house pulsed, we sat on the couch. There was nothing left we could do.

Here are some lessons I’ve learned.

**First, I am not in control.** I am a praying person. I have always freely given my cares to the Lord and watched eagerly as they have been answered in God’s way and time. However, I have never before prayed like I did in that hour. My hands were shaking, my home was rattling, and my wife and children awaited the result of my decision to stay. And now, it was all out of my hands. I was not — I am not in control. And I hope that I will never fall for that delusion again. (Psalm 33:16-18)

**Second, we are not victims.** I’m not avoiding the valley we must walk through but acknowledging that all around us is temporary. It will burn up, break down and blow away. Christians already know this. Victims are people who have depended upon, invested in or hoped for things that were damaged or destroyed. But our foundations have not even quivered. Psalm 46:5 expresses about our eternal home that, “God is within her, she will not fall.” Our lives and our community have changed, but God’s mission and his promises haven’t. Instead, the brambles of comfort and security that shrouded our deepest hopes have been stripped and shredded. Hurricanes reveal the truth of our convictions.



### Third, tragedy presents opportunity.

Through the generous donations of Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort, other churches and individuals, our congregation has been able to supply the needs of more than 2,000 families in our community. While all dealing with personal damage and loss, many of our church members, including 29 of our young people ranging from ages 6-18, have stepped into the middle of all of this pain and offered comfort and hope. With each load of food, tools, personal care items and clothing, families have been prayed over and blessed. We have watched a deeper faith blossom in our church, experienced a richer compassion for our neighbors, and developed a stronger determination to share the gospel.

A week after the storm our 14-year-old son, Corban, observed, “It seems like it’s easier to talk to people. We all have a lot more in common.” It was true. When the streets were littered with trees and we had to climb rather than walk through neighborhoods, everyone began to speak to everyone. We all have

a shared struggle that God is using to call people. Many who had not considered faith have become spiritually open.

We have all learned that we are not in control, but Christians are not victims. Instead, we have been graced with an unprecedented opportunity to connect people to the one who provides eternal hope — a treasure that truly withstands hurricanes. 🙏

*Daniel Cherry ('00) earned an M.Div. from the School of Theology in 2007. He has preached for the Jenks Avenue Church of Christ in Panama City, Florida, since 2006. To make hurricane recovery donations, visit [jenkschurchofchrist.com](http://jenkschurchofchrist.com) and follow the hurricane relief link.*

ILLUSTRATION BY JENNIFER ALLEN



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## Final Frame

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In a show of unity, Howard Wright, master of ceremonies, and Elijah Anthony, distinguished alumnus, who are both members of the 50th anniversary class, join hands with Larry Bills (center) of the 60th anniversary class as he leads the Alma Mater at the Black and Gold Banquet Oct. 19, 2018.