

# CARDINAL CADENCE

THE MAGAZINE OF LAMAR UNIVERSITY

VOL. 52, NO. 4 | FALL 2024



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## | FROM THE **PRESIDENT** |



From left, President Jaime Taylor, Cynthia Norwood '72, Larry Norwood '73

I've been zipping around campus on my electric scooter lately, but the other day, I decided to walk to a meeting instead. Let me tell you, it made me realize just how large our campus is! It took me forever

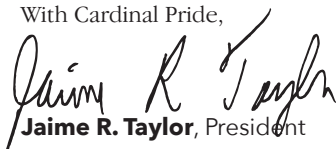
to get there, and now I have a whole new appreciation for everyone who gets around on foot, especially in the Texas heat. But it also got me thinking about all the different ways we move across campus. We each have our own style and travel at our own pace, whether we're walking to class, biking across campus, longboarding, or even "scootering" like me.

But here's the interesting part: no matter how you choose to move from Point A to Point B, we're all connected by the same basic forces. Gravity keeps us on the ground (most of the time), and momentum keeps us moving forward. Every step, every push of a pedal, every turn of a wheel – it's all physics in action. And that's how I see Lamar University. From one point of view, we're each doing it our own way, with our own destination in mind. But from a different vantage point, we can see that our Cardinal community is connected by something larger and deeper than ourselves. And that connection is exactly what you'll find in the pages of this issue of *Cadence*.

I hope you'll read the story about Larry and Cynthia Norwood, an alumni couple who started their journey together at Lamar University (he followed her here after a blind date!). Their generosity stems from their mutual connection to the University, and it continues to impact our students today through the engineering scholarships they've established. Another alumni family's deep Lamar roots illustrate how shared experiences here can create lasting bonds across generations and inspire an extended family to take on shared philanthropic values. You'll also read about a recent nursing graduate whose unusual journey from the Navy to a major in chemical engineering to a career in healthcare shows how Lamar University can provide the grounding and support to help students make the most of the unique paths they take.

These stories remind us that the Lamar community extends far beyond our campus. We set our own paths in motion, but even as they inevitably diverge, they are guided by the values and experiences gained here. So take a look inside *Cardinal Cadence*. You might just find yourself inspired to reconnect with your own Lamar story and maybe even find new ways to contribute to our vibrant community.

With Cardinal Pride,

  
Jaime R. Taylor, President



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VOL. 52, NO. 4 | FALL 2024

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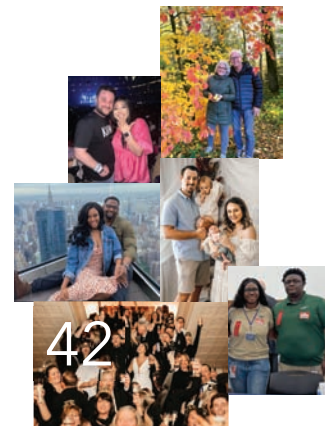
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LARRY AND CYNTHIA NORWOOD:

# Sharing stories of support, strength and success

by Brooke Barnett

**L**arry Norwood '73 says that all engineers are problem solvers. It was that very kind of strategic problem solving, centered around two important aspects of his personal life, that originally brought him to the Lamar University campus in 1968.

“When I was in high school I knew I wanted to go into engineering,” he recollects. “I also realized that, with three brothers, my parents were going to have two or three sons in college for multiple years. I wanted to find a university with a strong engineering program at a reasonable cost, with a cooperative education program where I could earn money for college expenses. Lamar certainly met those criteria.”

The engineering program wasn't the only thing that attracted Larry to Lamar. There was also an important issue of geographic proximity to a certain lady who had recently become a fixture in his life.

The previous year, as a senior at Liberty High School, Larry had been sent on a blind date with a junior from the rival high school in Dayton. Arranged by mutual friends, the blind date introduced him to Cynthia Smesny, and the two quickly became inseparable.

“It was the only blind date either of us ever had. Cynthia and I started dating right away,” Larry remembers. “So, for a brand-new college freshman, Lamar met another important criteria, which was proximity to Cynthia. It made Lamar a perfect fit for me.”

Cynthia '72 echoes the same sentiment, saying that Lamar was her ideal choice for college.

“I could create an interesting tale explaining why I chose Lamar,” she laughs. “But, alas, it boils down to the wonderful guy I was dating. Growing up in a small town and being the first in my family to attend college also influenced my choice of a nearby school. It was comforting to live on campus, but to know that family was only an hour away. It also helped that several of my high school classmates were going to Lamar.”

While attending LU, the couple married in 1971. They spent the first year of their marriage living in an efficiency apartment across from McDonald Gym.

“The apartment's location was great for attending classes or going to activities on campus, but the spartan apartment certainly made you appreciate the finer things, as well as provided an

incentive to graduate,” Larry jokes. “We had fun, and it provided a great location to listen to the concerts held in McDonald Gym. We have now been married for 53 years, so some blind dates do work out.”

The couple look back fondly at their early years together on campus.

“Kampus Korner was an interesting gathering spot with friends. We also enjoyed the shade and escaping from heat under the trees at the Quad, although they were much smaller in the 70s,” Cynthia recalls. “Dr. Winfred Emmons in the English Department and Dr. Ralph Wooster in the History Department are the two instructors I learned the most from, not only because of their professionalism but also the apparent love of their chosen fields.”

Larry shares similar positive memories and experiences.

“I remember having lunch with Cynthia at Kampus Korner and playing cards with other engineering students between classes,” he recalls. “Some of the best memories I have were the excellent professors I had. Dr. Jack Hopper came to Lamar as a young associate professor in 1969, and later served as the chair of the Chemical Engineering Department and dean of the College of Engineering for many years. During my years at Lamar, I spent a lot of quality time with Dr. Hopper. No matter how busy he was, he always had time to help students, provide advice or guidance, and was interested in how students were doing and what they were working on. I really felt my Lamar professors wanted me to be successful. That's what made Lamar special to me.”

Having been influenced by several of her high school teachers, Cynthia aspired to teach English or history. As an undergraduate, she had a strong interest in art, but didn't initially consider it a viable career path. Cynthia graduated from Lamar in three years, earning two degrees with honors in history and English, as well as teaching certificates in both subject areas.

While working on his degree, Larry accepted a co-op position at the Lubrizol Corp. and split his semesters between working and attending classes. The co-op experience taught Larry valuable work skills and allowed him to earn money to pay for college and earn his degree without student loan debt. After graduating with a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering in 1973, Larry went to work for Lubrizol full time.

Cynthia taught for eight years, then a promotion for Larry had



the couple relocate to Cleveland, Ohio. After their move, she decided to step out of the classroom and began to pursue her love of art. After seeing a local artisan making a rug at a nearby festival, Cynthia decided to try her hand at rug hooking. She has since written two books about rug hooking, taught classes and workshops across the country and is widely regarded as an expert on the topic.

Larry enjoyed a successful engineering career with Lubrizol that spanned 39 years, ultimately serving as corporate vice president of operations before his retirement in 2012.

“A successful engineering career begins with a strong engineering education,” Larry says. “Lamar gave me a great background. I believe the practical approach perspective I learned at Lamar always helped me stay grounded. The interpersonal skills and work ethic I learned at Lamar helped me throughout my career.”

The Norwoods have continued their involvement with Lamar, through both philanthropic giving and Larry’s service on the College of Engineering Advisory Council and Lamar University Foundation Board. In honor of the education that they received at Lamar, the couple established the Larry and Cynthia Norwood Chemical Engineering Scholarship in 2012 and the Larry and

Cynthia Norwood Scholarship for Student Recruitment in the College of Engineering in 2023. Larry was honored as an LU Distinguished Alumnus in 2021 for the expertise he has shared through service on the council and foundation boards.

“Larry has always supported my endeavors, especially when I started my own rug hooking business. When he talked about his desire to create scholarships at Lamar, I was quick to support his dream,” Cynthia explains. “It has been most rewarding to meet many of the students who received our scholarship. It is so encouraging to see the next generation excited about their future.”

Having watched Lamar change and grow over the past five decades, the Norwoods hope to leave a legacy helping students realize their dreams and inspiring others to pay it forward.

“When Lamar celebrated its 100-year anniversary in 2023, it occurred to me that I have been involved with Lamar for 54 years as a student, alumni or volunteer,” Larry concludes. “We hope that as Lamar continues growing, we maintain that close connection to students and are focused on their success, that we educate students to think for themselves, prepare them for successful, challenging careers and help them become good citizens. And after all, Lamar engineers are excellent problem solvers, and the world needs more of those.”



DR. SIERRAH M. GRIGSBY:

# Unforgettable experiences, exceptional accomplishments

by Brooke Barnett

**W**hen asked about the Texas Academy, formerly the Texas Academy of Leadership in the Humanities (TALH), at Lamar University, Dr. Sierrah M. Grigsby has no problem describing a bevy of unforgettable experiences.

The Texas Academy is a prestigious program available for high school juniors that provides a jumpstart to earning

an undergraduate degree at LU. In addition to rigorous academics, Texas Academy students benefit from research, service opportunities and participating in many university activities. Texas Academy students are awarded a tuition and fees scholarship, which is used to complete high school requirements and simultaneously earn college credit.

Reflecting on her time in what was then known as TALH, Grigsby describes volunteering at the STARS tutoring center, teaching and offering study halls for

university athletes. She also vividly recalls the excitement of running outside with her classmates to play in the snow when an unexpectedly heavy snowstorm hit during her first winter on campus.

“The experience of tutoring not only allowed me to make friends with other college students outside of my program, but also solidified my passion for helping others succeed,” she explains. “The snow day was a rare and unforgettable experience, especially for someone who had lived in Beaumont for 16 years.”



Throughout middle school and high school, Grigsby was deeply involved with summer programs at LU, which first introduced her to the Texas Academy. She attended Central Medical Magnet High School in Beaumont before being accepted into the Texas Academy. As a Beaumont native, she recognized the value of the program and was excited to continue her family tradition of attending at Lamar. Grigsby's mother, Bettye Grigsby '88, received a B.S. in biology from LU before earning her doctorate and serving as an assistant professor at University of Houston–Clear Lake, and her father, Archie '97, earned a B.S. in family and consumer science–food and nutrition. Her aunt, DeEadra Albert-Green '94, has a B.S. in psychology from LU, earned a doctorate and is a dean at Concordia University–North Lamar University Center in Austin.

“My family has a long-standing connection to Lamar University, dating back to my great-aunt Freddie Mae (Lemons) Bell [Mitchell], who was one of the first black women to graduate from the institution in 1958,” she adds. “Both of my grandparents attended Lamar for certification courses, and several other family members, including my parents and aunt, have also graduated from the University. These familial ties played a significant role in my decision to attend

Lamar. While my family was initially hesitant about me living on campus and attending college at the young age of 16, their connections to the institution helped.” Mitchell was one of the first six African-American students to graduate from LU, then named Lamar State College of Technology, and she taught for many years in the Beaumont school district. The other five graduates in that cohort were Lonnie Flanagan '61, Winona (St. Julian) Frank '58, Alvin Randolph '59, Jimmie Rice '58, and Vara Vincent.

Grigsby remarks that spending time in the University library held a special place in her heart during her time on the Lamar campus.

“My father often shared stories of his own college days spent studying in the library stacks,” she recollects. “It was a heartwarming experience to follow in his footsteps and spend countless hours in the same spaces where he had once learned.”

During her time at the Texas Academy, Grigsby participated in a summer research program at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, which provided her with her first experience in science research and shaped her trajectory towards pursuing a Ph.D.

Grigsby completed her high school diploma from the Texas Academy in 2010 and earned a bachelor's degree in microbiology from the University of Rochester in New York in 2013. Her time at the Texas Academy allowed her to gain experience with collaborative learning and provided her with valuable insights into navigating the higher education system.

“In addition to that early research experience, my work as a candy striper at Baptist Hospital throughout my time at Central Medical Magnet High School and TALH further solidified my interest in medicine,” she explains. “These experiences, combined with the sense of belonging, discipline, community engagement and teamwork fostered at TALH at Lamar have been instrumental in my current Navy career.”

Her early research experience at the

Texas Academy also resulted in her first scholarly publication. She credits this accomplishment with helping her to become a highly competitive applicant for graduate programs, leading to her acceptance at the University of Michigan. She earned a Ph.D. in molecular and cellular pathology there in 2019 and became a medical officer in the U.S. Navy in 2020. She relocated to Brooklyn, New York, in 2023 to attend medical school at State University of New York–Downstate Health Sciences. She was inducted into the Alpha Omega Alpha Medical Honor Society that same year.

“I've always had a desire to explore new places and experience different cultures. Achieving my higher education goals has been incredibly fulfilling,” she explains. “While I am still working towards building my ideal career, I am grateful for every step of the journey.”

Grigsby is currently a second-year resident in the internal medicine program at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Washington, D.C. She plans to pursue a fellowship in hematology and oncology and looks forward to exploring new opportunities through the Navy. To date, she has 18 published research articles to her credit.

“I find great satisfaction in caring for fellow service members, their families and retirees. The flexibility and diverse experiences that come with a career in military medicine are among the primary reasons why I chose to commission,” she adds.

Looking back, Grigsby credits her family's support for allowing her to meet and exceed her goals along the way.

“I am incredibly proud of my journey thus far. Despite facing numerous challenges and being told that I wouldn't achieve certain things, I have been able to surpass expectations,” she concludes. “Overcoming obstacles and persevering through adversity has allowed me to become an example of what can be achieved with prayer, hard work and determination.”

VALERO ENERGY CORP.:

# Pioneering the *future* of chemical engineering at LU

by Jason Morton

Lamar University is poised for a significant leap forward in engineering education thanks to a groundbreaking philanthropic gift from Valero Energy Corp. The global energy leader has pledged an initial \$500,000 commitment towards the development of the Valero Reaction Engineering Lab within the Department of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering. This substantial gift will underpin a comprehensive three-phase project aimed at refining the transition of engineering students from academic environments to energy industry-leading expertise.

The partnership between Valero and Lamar University marks a new chapter in academic and industry collaboration, setting a precedent for future synergies that elevate educational and professional standards. The investment from Valero will be used to acquire state-of-the-art equipment and to facilitate advanced engineering student, faculty and staff training, thereby enhancing the quality of education and research within this new assemblage operations lab.

## The vision behind the gift

The Valero Reaction Engineering Lab is designed to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. The three-phase plan is specifically organized to align with the evolving needs of the chemical and biomolecular engineering program. This

initiative is more than a simple upgrade; it represents a paradigm shift in how engineering students will interact with cutting-edge technologies in energy and chemical engineering.

**PHASE ONE** will focus on the acquisition of essential equipment tailored to meet the programmatic needs of future undergraduate and graduate students, faculty and staff. This state-of-the-art machinery will be integrated into the existing Unit Operations Laboratory, which underwent a significant renovation in 2017. Retrofitting this existing facility to house the new lab signifies a commitment to maintaining a cutting-edge learning environment. The new equipment focuses on a customizable 3-reactor set up that can be used to produce green diesel, sustainable aviation fuel or hydrogen from steam methane reforming. These production models will illustrate recycle, maximized conversions, minimized unwanted products, and safe operations for heterogeneous reactor systems.

**PHASE TWO** will center around process control and simulation that will include a full-size control room operator display to train students in recognizing abnormal conditions, alarm management skills, response time reduction, and assessing operator stress/fatigue. This simulation ensures that Lamar faculty are well-versed in the latest technologies and methodologies crucial for maintaining a high standard of instruction. By

equipping faculty with the knowledge and tools they need, Valero's investment will directly enhance the student experience.

**PHASE THREE** will see the application of carbon capture absorption and regeneration. This new carbon capture system will develop students' understanding for the need to capture carbon dioxide thus preventing the CO<sub>2</sub> from entering the atmosphere. These technologies will be explored in research and development projects, foster an environment where students can engage in practical hands-on experiential learning and contribute to pioneering advancements in the fields of chemistry and engineering.

## A synergistic impact: Education and industry

For Lamar University, the Valero Reaction Engineering Lab in Chemical Engineering will enhance the campus experience for students, providing them with unparalleled opportunities to engage in practical, real-world applications of their studies. This lab will serve as a catalyst for research and innovation, preparing students to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving industry in a complex economy.

Valero's involvement underscores its commitment to advancing STEM education and research in southeast Texas. The company's cutting-edge research in liquefied natural gas and sustainable aviation fuel aligns seamlessly with the goals of the Valero Reaction





Valero Corp. representatives Jerome Delafosse '09, director of human resources, Carol Hebert '89, public affairs manager, and Chris Turbeville, director of technical services, discuss plans for the new lab with Tracy Benson, chair, Dan F. Smith Department of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering.

Engineering Lab. By preparing students with the skills and knowledge to advance these technologies, the partnership ensures that future graduates are well-positioned to contribute to and expand upon Valero's groundbreaking work.

The collaboration between Lamar University and Valero Energy Corp exemplifies a successful model of industry-academic partnerships. It not only aligns with Lamar's mission to educate the leaders of tomorrow but also sets a compelling precedent for how industry and academia can work together to achieve shared goals. This partnership highlights the potential for similar collaborations across the educational and industrial spectrum, creating a template for future endeavors that bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world application.

### **Strengthening bonds and expanding horizons creates a legacy of impact**

Lamar University is both proud and deeply honored to strengthen its

longstanding relationship with Valero Energy Corp. through this extraordinary and transformational gift. The University's College of Engineering will benefit immensely from the enhancement of its facilities and the opportunities for its students to engage in leading research. The Valero Reaction Engineering Lab will elevate Lamar's capacity to provide top-tier education and contribute to its mission of fostering innovation and leadership thereby shaping and strengthening the future of a growing economy in science and technology in the Golden Triangle and beyond.

The impact of Valero's generosity will be profound and far-reaching. The lab will serve as a lasting legacy, not only for the University but also for the many students whose lives will be enriched by this opportunity. This investment will ensure that Lamar University continues to provide a world-class education, preparing students to excel in their careers and make significant contributions to the fields of chemistry and engineering.

The Valero Reaction Engineering Lab will stand as a testament to the transformative power of philanthropic commitment and industry-education collaboration. It is a reflection of Valero Energy Corp.'s dedication to supporting educational excellence and innovation in the Gulf Coast. As this lab becomes a cornerstone of the chemical and biomolecular engineering program, it will undoubtedly inspire generations of engineers and researchers who will shape not only southeast Texas' economic future but also the world. Our alumni have led and lead companies with worldwide reach.

Valero's generous gift to Lamar University is not merely a donation; it is a strategic investment in the future of engineering education and industry advancement. The partnership between Lamar University and Valero Energy Corp. will continue to yield benefits for years to come, reinforcing the University's commitment to developing the leaders of tomorrow and advancing the frontiers of science and technology.

# Lives and legacy shared

by Marilyn Tennissen

**“Y**ou’ve come a long way, baby,” was a popular slogan of the changing role of women in 1968, and Georgia (Grater) Lau ’68 could have been the poster child for the movement. She graduated from Lamar State College that year with dual science degrees in biology and chemistry: an achievement for anyone, especially for a young woman at that time.

But when Georgia went to apply for a laboratory research position at a local refinery she learned times weren’t changing all that fast. A receptionist told Georgia that women could only apply for secretarial jobs. Young Georgia was devastated but put it behind her.

Even when an apologetic plant manager encouraged her to come back and apply, she said no and chose instead to follow in her father’s footsteps and become an educator.

For the next 27 years, high school students in Channelview benefitted from her talents in chemistry and biology. “I like to think about how many kids are doctors today because she followed her heart,” said Clayton Lau ’69, her husband of 53 years.

After her death in 2022, Clayton decided to establish a scholarship at Lamar University in her honor, the Georgia Chree Lau Memorial Presidential Scholarship for biology and chemistry students.

While in college, the two met in 1967 at a party hosted by Sigma Nu, the fraternity Clayton joined and for which he served as president while he pursued a degree in marketing. Georgia was at the party with her Delta

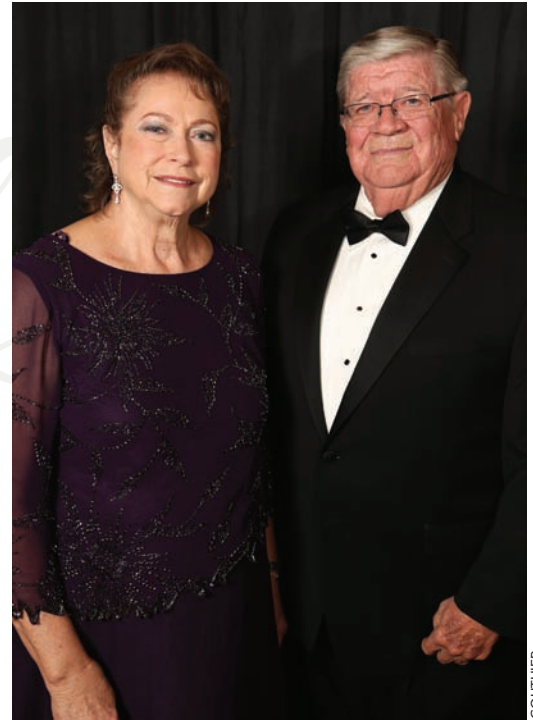
Zeta sorority sisters.

“We loved Lamar,” Clayton said. “Going through rush and Greek events, it was so much fun! We embraced college life.”

Clayton claims “She was brilliant; I was dumb,” but he was smart enough to marry Georgia in 1968 and smart enough to have a successful career in marketing industrial equipment. He has headed Houston Dynamic Services Inc. since 2001. The rotating equipment company located on the Houston Ship Channel focuses on the U.S., South American and European markets and provides services to the petrochemical, refining, power generation, mining, and oil and gas industries.

After college, the couple stayed involved in their alma mater, establishing the Clayton and Georgia Lau Presidential Scholarship in Business and the Clayton and Georgia Lau Faculty Development Fund in Business. Clayton is a trustee of the Lamar University Foundation, member of the College of Business Board of Advisors, past president of the Alumni Advisory Board and one of the first College of Business Executive in Residence speakers. He was inducted into the College of Business Hall of Fame in 2018 and is a member of the President’s Circle.

Georgia shaped young minds while teaching chemistry and biology at



GOUTHIER

Channel View High School for almost 30 years and went beyond the classroom to serve as the Science Department head, National Decathlon coach and National Honor Society sponsor. Georgia was friendly and outgoing and maintained a lifelong group of friends, playing bridge, going out to lunch and traveling.

“But her real love was gardening,” Clayton said, and she received many awards for her volunteer efforts with the Harris County Master Gardener Program.

“I like photography, so we would travel to see the beautiful gardens she wanted to see and I would take pictures. I think Keukenhof Tulip Gardens in Amsterdam was her favorite,” Clayton said.

Clayton is happy to see the memorial scholarship in her honor become a reality.

“Lamar is where she got her foundation and where we got our start together,” Clayton said. “I think she would approve.”





RED DAY 2024:

# About *donors* more than dollars

by Jeff Spoeri

**G**rowing every year in popularity and participation since its inception in 2021, Red Day has become an integral part of the culture of Lamar University. This annual day of giving, scheduled to coincide as nearly as possible with the anniversary of LU's founding on Sept. 17, 1923—and to avoid conflict with the many organizations that schedule their own giving days on or around "Giving Tuesday," the Tuesday after Thanksgiving—brings Cardinal alumni and friends together across the country to celebrate the great accomplishments of LU over the past year and to provide critically needed financial support for the University's future. Because Red Day is about donors more than dollars, it is a unique and accessible opportunity for all to get involved with philanthropy at any level to support any area of the University, and this year, Cardinal Nation came out in force.

Red Day 2024 established a new record for individual giving, with 553 donors over the course of the 24-hour period, Sept. 17-18, along with VIP and early giving prior and "Red Day Overtime" through the following weekend; this achievement also eclipsed this year's Red Day donor goal by more than 10%. Collectively, these generous supporters gave over \$162,000 across Lamar University, which goes directly to helping students through scholarship support, academic and athletic program enhancements, research and service opportunities, emergency funding through the Cardinal Emergency Fund, and more. In addition, all five academic colleges set their own

records for donor participation, led in raw numbers by the College of Engineering, with 147 unique donors, and in percentage increase by the College of Education and Human Development, whose 56 donors exactly doubled its donor count over last year. Not to be outdone, the College of Business raised more than \$42,000, which set the pace for the amount donated to any college or unit.

Several challenges and competitions helped boost donor participation in Red Day 2024 as well. The College of Engineering's remarkable donor count was encouraged in no small part by a challenge from Ed Gunderson '78, who pledged to give \$100 for every donor up to \$10,000. A similar challenge by Roland Rodriguez '74 helped the College of Business secure its own record Red Day response. Also in the College of Business, LU retiree Camille Mouton, former vice president for university advancement, fulfilled a \$5,000 pledge when that college exceeded 60 donors, and Neches Federal Credit Union provided a \$500 gift to match \$100 in gifts to Alumni Affairs, a challenge that was already met through early giving when Red Day began. Finally, the Lamar University Foundation once again this year gave donation "bonuses" to the three academic colleges that exceeded their past average Red Day donor count by the greatest percentage: the "Red Day Top 3" who earned these awards were the College of Education and Human Development, the College of Engineering and the College of Fine Arts and Communication, respectively.

Plans soon will be underway for the fifth annual Red Day in September 2025.



ROLLINS

1



BAKER

2



ROLLINS

3

1. LU Ambassador Drake Rothenberger, left, with Jeff Spoeri, associate vice president of university advancement
2. From left, Reese Rodgers, chemical engineering major and secretary of Robotic Cardinals, left; Bobby Barton, computer engineering major and Robotic Cardinals vice president; and Paul Pate '97, Port Arthur Robotics coach.
3. Charlee (Chelette) Fitzgerald '18, community impact officer, and Jason Duplant '03, chief product officer, both of Neches Federal Credit Union, with Isaac Torres, forensic chemistry major.



# The voice of Lamar University is born

by Sarah Parker

*“I cut this ribbon with best wishes for much happiness and success to everybody connected with this Voice of Lamar University.”*

**O**n April 30, 1974, Lamar President John Gray spoke these words to a gathering of campus and community leaders eagerly awaiting the inaugural broadcast of the University’s first radio station, KVLU—The Voice of Lamar University. It was with the clamor of the crowd’s boisterous applause that KVLU first hit the airwaves and began its now 50-year journey as a staple of both the Lamar and Southeast Texas communities.

The dream of a public radio station on Lamar’s campus had been born just a few short years prior, and it would take a labor of love of numerous committed staff and supporters, including a member of Congress, to turn the dream into reality.

“It was people who really used their position and used their love for

Lamar and decided it was a good deal and would be an asset to the community to have a non-commercial station,” said Jerry Hudson, a former Lamar faculty member who worked on the early process of establishing KVLU.

According to Hudson, one of the station’s early advocates, Brock Brentlinger, dean of the College of Fine Arts at the time, played a key role in beginning the process of bringing a radio station to Lamar and determining its format.

“[Dr. Brentlinger] was the motivation behind all of this,” Hudson said. “He said, ‘We don’t just want an FM station; we want an NPR [National Public Radio] station,’ because he really loved the programming on NPR. And he said, ‘Of course we will use it as an educational tool for people wanting to go into broadcasting.’”

Finding an available frequency turned



out to be a tricky process as the audio signal of Beaumont's KFDM Channel 6 television station was close to the noncommercial radio frequency and using the selected channel 91.3 might cause interference. Additionally, space issues on the Lamar campus prevented the construction of an antenna tower on campus, forcing the University to find an off-campus location to construct the tower.

"We had to find a location that was near their [KFDM's] tower to avoid interference with their signal," Hudson said. "Yet, they did not want to share their tower with our antenna because of 'windloading' on their tower."

George Beverley, a longtime fixture at KVLU who served in multiple roles including classical music host, station manager and business manager, was there in those early days and remembers some of the initial hurdles, such as recruiting a small team of volunteers to watch on their home TVs for signal interference with Channel 6.

"It was the beginning of a public radio station in Beaumont," Beverley said. "Back then, it was not digital. We had to have a very large broadcast transmitter. We had to find a little place on Channel 12's broadcast building at the bottom of the tower."

Ultimately, the broadcast signal location was determined, and the FCC approved Lamar's application for licensing in record time, thanks in part to the help of

Congressman Jack Brooks '41 and other supporters.

"Not only did we have congressional groups working on it, [but] we [also] had other friends with the FCC, and so they kind of rushed it through," Hudson said.

In 1973, the University obtained the construction permit to build the station, originally housed in the same building as the LU Police Department and Post Office. A government grant was secured to pay for the antenna and studio equipment, and funding to operate the station and secure programming from NPR was received from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. The original staff included three full-time employees and several part-timers. To adhere to CPB requirements of five full-time employees, the station added two additional staff members a year later.

"Within a year period of time, we got the station on the air, which is unheard of," Hudson said. "Every step along the way, things just fell into place."

After two years of hard work and dedication to making the dream of KVLU a success, The Voice of Lamar University signed onto the air for the first time on the afternoon of April 30, 1974. Beverley made his on-air debut that day and was present for the opening ceremony and inaugural broadcast. Fifty years later, he laughingly remembers Gray's closing remarks.

"I'm looking forward to enjoying your

programs, and now I'm going to go talk to Mary, my wife, and see if she won't buy me a new radio," Gray said, according to Beverley.

Fast-forward five decades, and KVLU continues to expand its eclectic mix of programming, which now includes a 24/7 schedule of commercial-free news, music, a recently introduced Lamar Sports segment and local features that underscore KVLU's mission to educate, enlighten and entertain listeners.

Current station manager Jason Miller '01 says he's focused on growth, keeping up with technology to be better able to reach audiences in innovative ways and increasing KVLU's instructional base to offer more hands-on training for students.

"We've always been a blending of news and talk and music and then sort of a potpourri of other things like specialty programs," Miller said. "I want to expand upon student instruction, Lamar content, Lamar sports. I would like us to continue to be a source for the arts and culture and the nonprofit community here in Southeast Texas. I would like us to have more podcasts. It's important to realize trends in technology to be able to get content to people in more ways."

With a passionate team looking to the future, KVLU is on track for another 50 successful years on the airwaves, serving the community as The Voice of Lamar University.

# Dream Makers

We express our deep gratitude to the alumni and friends of Lamar University who have recently established endowments or made plans to endow gifts through estate plans. These gifts encourage students to pursue a college education and support faculty in creating innovative learning environments. An endowment creates a legacy that becomes a permanent part of Lamar's history. To learn more about how you can endow a gift to Lamar, we invite you to visit our website at [lamar.edu/development](http://lamar.edu/development) or to start planning a gift through your estate, visit [legacy.lamar.edu](http://legacy.lamar.edu). In this issue of Cardinal Cadence, we are honored to recognize these Dream Makers.

*by* Karen Nichols

Allan C. Bounds graduated from Lamar University in 1980, earning a Bachelor of Business Administration in Marketing. He also earned his MBA from Lamar in 1986. Allan served as the first president of Alpha Kappa Psi, a professional business fraternity, and was also a member of Sigma Nu Fraternity during his tenure at Lamar. The former Lisa LaQue and Allan met at LU after Allen spent three years in the Navy. Allan's career spanned 37 years in the energy business, in the area of natural gas and international LNG. He said his time at Lamar helped put him on the road to his career in energy and prepared him to work in a fast-paced industry environment by establishing in him a good fundamental knowledge of business functions. As college students, Lisa and Allan worked multiple jobs while attending Lamar full-time. They shared how happy and proud they are to provide this assistance, in the form of the **Lisa and Allan Bounds Scholarship in Marketing**, to benefit a Lamar student staying the course to complete their degree.

Anita L. Riddle earned her advanced degrees at Lamar University while working at ExxonMobil Refinery in Beaumont, Texas. Anita received a Master of Engineering Management in 1993 and a Doctor of Engineering in Chemical Engineering in 1996. Anita retired from ExxonMobil after a 28-year career. She worked as a chemical engineer, in lubricants refinery management and as a procurement executive. While working and after retirement, she served on several advisory councils and boards at LU, including the Lamar University Foundation Board of Trustees, College of Engineering Advisory Council, Chemical Engineering Advisory Council and the Center for Midstream Management and Science. Anita was also a member of the Society of Women Engineers and the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers. As a member of the Society of Women Engineers, Anita helped many engineering students, coordinating

community service, professional and social activities. The successful integration and networking of members of the Society of Women Engineers motivated Anita to create the **Dr. Anita L. Riddle Endowment for the Society of Women Engineers** supporting the Lamar chapter's activities with the goal of helping engineering students take advantage of as many opportunities as possible and build strong professional networks.

After earning his bachelor's and master's degrees in chemical engineering and gaining six years of industrial experience at ExxonMobil, Jack Hopper transitioned his career to education, joining the faculty of Lamar University in 1969. In 1974 he was named chair of the Chemical Engineering Department, and in 1999 became the seventh dean of the College of Engineering. He held the dean position until his retirement in 2013. After retirement, Jack was given the title dean emeritus. Throughout his time at Lamar, Jack inspired many and is remembered by numerous students and colleagues who considered him a friend. After Jack's death in 2022, John Via, a member of the College of Engineering Advisory Council, successfully led an effort to endow the **Dr. Jack R. Hopper Memorial Scholarship in Engineering** through gifts from friends, family and colleagues. Jack Gill '58, HD '01, a member of the College of Engineering Advisory Council, shared, "Jack [Hopper] became Lamar's greatest engineering faculty member [and] a legendary dean. Most research grants, top faculty achievements and most big-time alumni achievers can be attributed to his dedication."

Roy Huckaby was an active member of the Marines from 1952 to 1954 and a member of the reserves from 1954 to 1960. After his active duty, he attended Lamar University, where he was a student leader and active in many organizations. He graduated in 1957 with a BBA in accounting and became a certified public

accountant in 1973. Student leadership and service were very important to Roy, and they had a profound positive impact on his life. Roy was involved in various Beaumont businesses for many years. He was a founder of G&S Cable Co. Inc., Southern Automotive Inc. and Lone Star Air Compressor Co. Inc. In addition to the companies he founded and at which he worked, he served as controller for Baptist Hospital of Southeast Texas during the computerization of the hospital. He later worked at Lindy Dennis Air Conditioning Inc., serving in the positions of controller, vice-president and president. Roy later became director of the LU Small Business Assistance Center, which was part of the John Gray Institute, where he served until he retired in 1996. He was an active member of the Beaumont and Lamar University communities and was a giant of a man when it came to service to his family and others. He touched so many lives during his 90 years, inspiring his son-in-law and daughter, Christopher '90 and Amy Graham, along with his grandson, Nathaniel Graham, to endow the **Roy G. Huckaby Memorial Scholarship in Accountancy and Entrepreneurship**.

Jamie '84 and Scott McCauley '81 established the **William F. "Bill" Kunetka Memorial Scholarship in Nursing** to benefit aspiring nursing students at Lamar University in recognition of the outstanding care and compassion Bill received in his final days. Bill graduated from Lamar University in 1964 with a civil engineering degree and later earned his professional engineering license. He worked for 31 years at the Mobil Oil refinery as an engineer. After retiring early, the enjoyment of working on engineering projects drew him back to the refinery through various contract companies. During his retirement, Bill enjoyed many days at his lake cabin at Sam Rayburn with his wife, Barbara. He loved fishing, hunting, gardening, woodworking and working on his family genealogy. Bill, happily known as "Pa" for 34 years, was

an avid sports fan. Early on, he enjoyed coaching his children's recreational sports teams and attended many of his grandchildren's sports and activities as they grew up. Bill was a charter member of Saint Jude Thaddeus Catholic Church in Beaumont, where he served on the parish council. He was a member of the Knights of Columbus 951 and attended an ACTS retreat, which inspired him to serve at many subsequent ACTS retreats.

A 1957 graduate of Lamar State College of Technology, Donald E. Owen earned a Bachelor of Science in geology and graduated *magna cum laude*. He later received his master's and doctoral degrees at the University of Kansas. In 1985 Owen joined the faculty of Lamar University in the Department of Earth and Space Sciences. He retired after 30 years of service and was named professor emeritus. Shortly before his retirement, Owen created a planned gift. In 2023 Owen's estate left a gift to the Lamar University Foundation establishing the **Dr. Donald E. Owen Scholarship in Geology**.

Elmer T. and Maida Lee Robertson were what their son, Jack Robertson '66, affectionately referred to as members of the greatest generation! Both were from Texas; he was the son of ranchers and she was raised by her postmaster grandfather and her grandmother in a small Texas town. Elmer joined the Army Air Corps right after Pearl Harbor. Having never left Texas, he found himself on a ship headed to Pearl Harbor and later to the Pacific front. His squadron was later trapped on a small island cut off by Japanese forces. They survived for months living off the land and avoiding the enemy. For his efforts, Elmer was awarded the Silver Star and other decorations. Upon his return, he entered the oil business as a roughneck and never looked back, becoming a successful entrepreneur in an industry he loved. Maida was a waitress

at a diner when she met Elmer a year before Pearl Harbor. After the war, she supported Elmer, went to college and found her passions for writing, art and the environment. She was well ahead of her time in "protecting the planet," as she referred to it. Jack Robertson endowed the **Elmer T. and Maida Lee Robertson Endowed Regents Scholarship in Environmental Engineering**, saying it is the perfect match for Elmer and Maida. Elmer, having over the years hired engineers from LSU and Texas A&M, discovered Lamar University and said their graduates could "hit the ground running." Maida, for her part, would be ecstatic to know there was a master's degree offered in environmental engineering. This scholarship will continue to inspire and support future generations to improve quality of life. They would be proud to know that they are contributing to such a worthy endeavor.

Alumna Linda Guillory previously endowed two scholarships. Her third endowed scholarship is the **Gail G. and Danny D. Wright Scholarship in Business**, honoring her sister Gail Wright and in memory of her brother-in-law Danny. Danny grew up in Nederland, Texas, and attended Nederland schools. He graduated from Nederland High School in 1969 and attended Lamar School of Technology for two semesters until he was drafted into service during the Vietnam Conflict. Inducted into the Army on Feb. 2, 1971, he served one year and four months overseas in Germany as a clerk typist. He was honorably discharged from active duty on Oct. 30, 1972, with the Army rank of Specialist E-4. Had he not been drafted, Danny would have continued his education at Lamar to earn a degree. He began his working career at the Texaco Refinery in 1973 and worked there for 11 years. He then went on to work at various refinery jobs in the area until his retirement in 2008. Gail grew up in Groves, Texas, and attended Groves schools. She graduated from Port

Neches-Groves High School in 1971. She then attended Lamar University from 1971 to 1973 and received a Certificate of Completion in secretarial science. She went on to begin her work career in business as a file clerk before working in the accounting department at a local savings and loan from 1973 to 1976. During that time, Danny and Gail were married on April 20, 1974. Their daughter Alicia Gail Wright Jinkerson also attended Lamar University, graduating in 2002 with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology. She worked at Lamar from 2001 to 2006.

Billy and Charlotte Boyd of Lumberton, Texas, endowed the **Courtney Martin Memorial Scholarship in Engineering** in memory of Courtney Puckette Martin to honor her remarkable legacy and to inspire future generations. Courtney was a pioneering woman whose contributions to science and humanity have left an indelible mark on the world. As a key figure in the Apollo reentry project, Courtney played a crucial role in one of humanity's greatest achievements: landing a man on the moon and bringing him safely back to Earth. In addition, her work on the pacemaker program has saved countless lives, exemplifying her commitment to advancing medical science for the betterment of society. Beyond her professional achievements, Courtney was dedicated to uplifting others through education and personal connection. She volunteered her time to teach adults how to read, opening new worlds and opportunities for those she helped. Her warmth and generosity made everyone feel special and welcome, and her spirit of kindness and inclusivity touched all that knew her. It is the Boyds' hope that the recipients of this scholarship will carry forward her dedication to making the world a better place, just as she did.

William "Bill" '76 and Merrilee "Lee" Withers '79 are native Texans. Bill was born and lived in Beaumont, Texas,



through high school (French High School, class of 1972) while Merrilee, born in Corpus Christi, Texas, later lived in South Carolina and Georgia before landing in Beaumont and graduating from French High School in 1974. After briefly dating in high school, Bill and Lee reunited as students at Lamar University, fell in love and married in 1980. Bill entered LU as an undecided major but settled on economics through the encouragement of faculty at that time, most specifically Sam F. Parigi, and graduated with a BBA in 1976. Lee enrolled in 1976 after a brief time working for Region 5 Education Service Center. She completed her BS in elementary education in 1979. As a student at LU, she was president of the Student Council for Exceptional Children for two years and she was twice awarded the Will L. Smith Award for Outstanding Special Education Student. After graduation, she began a long tenure as a public school teacher with multiple assignments in Beaumont, then later in Clear Creek, finally finishing in Alvin, Texas. She returned to her alma mater and earned a master's degree in elementary education in 1991. Bill and Lee were children of loving and caring parents, none of whom were fully college educated. With their parents' support, Lamar gave them the opportunity to earn professional credentials, better their lives and lay a foundation to raise a family. Bill subsequently enjoyed a 43-year career in the marine transportation business, while Lee was a teacher for 24 years. Without LU, all of this would have been unlikely. Remembering where they came from and to give back to the LU community, they endowed the **William Marlin and Merrilee Withers Presidential Scholarship in Education** and the **William Marlin and Merrilee Withers Presidential Scholarship in Business**.

Charles and Gloria Locke have been faithful supporters of Lamar University for over 30 years and were inaugural members of the Lamar University

President's Circle at the Spindletop Level in honor of the financial gifts they bestowed upon Lamar throughout the years. They supported campus initiatives through Le Grand Bal, Friends of the Arts, and Friends of the History Department to name but a few. But their impact on the Lamar University students whom Charles and Gloria humbly loved is best exemplified by their establishment of eight family scholarships during Charles' lifetime. The scholarships provide funding in the areas of theatre, dance, communication, engineering, business and the STEM fields. Charles died in 2024 and the Lockes' son, David Locke '76 directed the family's gift this year to endow the **Charles B. Locke Presidential Scholarship in Chemical Engineering** in Charles' honor and memory, a fitting legacy for a gentleman who truly loved Lamar. Charles attended Lamar College, earning an Associate of Arts degree in general studies in June 1944. He then attended Texas A&M University, graduating in 1948 with a Bachelor of Science degree in chemical engineering. He worked for Magnolia Petroleum Co. from 1948 to 1952 and then joined Forest Lawn Memorial Park in Beaumont, Texas, in 1952, serving as president and general manager and opening Forest Lawn Funeral Home in January 1973. He also served as president and general manager of Memory Gardens of Jefferson County, Texas. Charles was a committed leader in his community and served on many charitable and civic boards. He was a past president of the Rotary Club of Beaumont, a director of the First City National Bank, and a member and past chairman of the board of Trinity United Methodist Church.

As a proud alumna who earned a Bachelor of Science in chemical engineering from Lamar in 1979, Barbara Moor reflects fondly on the guidance of the remarkable professors who shaped her academic journey, as well as the co-op opportunities that provided invaluable job experience and funding for much of her tuition.

The **Moor Scholarship for Academic Excellence in Chemical Engineering**, endowed by Ted E. Moor III and Barbara Moor, is a scholarship established in recognition of the exceptional educational opportunities provided by Lamar University and the potential for its graduates to be a powerful force for good in the world. During Barbara's last two years at Lamar, she was fortunate to receive scholarship support from past endowments. This scholarship honors that legacy by extending similar support to the next generation of scholars. It is also a tribute to the late Ted Moor Jr. who served as chairman of the board of regents of the Lamar University System from 1989 to 1993, furthering the University's mission of academic excellence and innovation. The Moor Scholarship for Academic Excellence in Chemical Engineering is dedicated to fostering the development of bright and ambitious students, providing them with the financial support they need to achieve their educational goals and to contribute meaningfully to their chosen fields.

Pamela and Mark Stasney created the **Pamela and Mark Stasney Fund for the Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering**. The Stasneys believe education and economics have an impact on our communities, our state and our country. Having lived, raised a family and worked in Europe, Asia and America, they have seen firsthand the power and profound impact of practical and talented engineers on their projects, the success of their companies and their communities. To that end, they are pleased to support Lamar University engineering. It is their sincere hope that the faculty and staff of the Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering will have expanded resources to mold and excite the next generation of outstanding Lamar University engineering graduates.



**MCMANUS:**

**The collection  
of a lifetime and a  
spirit of *giving***

*by Allison Lennartz*

**J**ohn McManus '63 began pursuing his degree at Lamar in the fall of 1959. Initially a math major, McManus changed his major to electrical engineering upon completing his freshman year. During his senior year of college, he assumed several leadership positions among his peers, serving as both chairman of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers and vice president of the Blue Key Honor Society. Additionally, he started a bicycle racing team with some of his fellow students. McManus graduated from Lamar State College of Technology with a Bachelor of Science in electrical engineering in the spring of 1963. Upon finishing his studies, he would make another change regarding his career choice. Instead of becoming an electrical engineer, he went on to become a computer programmer, working for entities like Phillips Petroleum, General Electric and Massachusetts Institute of Technology. All in all, he would spend more than 35 years helping develop and maintain computer systems before retiring from Mobil Oil in 2000.

McManus's time on the bicycling team at Lamar fostered a deep love for the sport and would eventually lead him to bike hundreds of thousands of miles throughout his lifetime; he even biked across the entire U.S. in 2009.

As it turned out, biking slowly led him to another life-long passion: photography. His appreciation for the art form developed over time. He participated in several bike tours in the 1970s and enjoyed taking pictures to document his trips but desired to improve his skills and understanding of the pursuit. To his dismay, the only classes available to him at the time were focused on black and white photography; however, after taking an introductory class, his appreciation of and love for black and

white photographs grew exponentially, and it wasn't long before he was brokering deals and accumulating his own collection of photographs from his fellow students. He experienced some success with his own works. He won a photo contest with a local news outlet in Dallas, and one of his pictures was featured in a national calendar in 1975, but he ultimately decided that he preferred to collect photographs rather than take them.

While working for Mobil Oil in Dallas, McManus met Brenda J. Cole, who graduated from the University of Texas at Arlington with a B.A. in accounting and economics and earned her MBA from the University of North Texas. She displayed leadership qualities through working as an advisor to the Alpha Chi Omega sorority and by volunteering with both the Dallas Symphony Junior League and the Dallas Junior League. After working in the same department together, McManus and Cole discovered they shared similar interests such as traveling and an appreciation for the art of photography.

They took a French class together one year and have been together ever since. Like McManus, Cole has an eye for beautiful photographs. Through the years, the couple has come to possess works from notable photographers such as Ansel Adams, Walker Evans and George Tice. They now proudly display some of these works in their home in Fredericksburg.

In July of this year, McManus and Cole graciously agreed to entrust their entire collection of 83 framed photographs to LU. Some of the works will be displayed in the Dishman Art Museum and in Lamar University's Public Art Collection while others will be placed in various offices or areas of campus as determined by the Dishman Art Museum curator and the LU Public Art Committee chairs. The addition of these photographs



RAWLS

from the McManus and Cole estate gift will “significantly enhance the overall inventory” of the Dishman Art Museum and will afford students excellent opportunities to study the works and techniques of some of the most well-known and loved monochrome photographers of the 20th century. Display of some of the pictures may also help to further the careers and awareness of artists who are not as well-known at this time by increasing visibility and research surrounding their work. Along with the generous gift of their esteemed collection, McManus and Cole are the first to establish a scholarship for students who enroll in LU’s new computer engineering program. As of the fall of 2024, their benevolence will assist students who are pursuing degrees in computer engineering.

When asked why he chose to make such a charitable gift to the Dishman Art Museum, McManus said that he and Brenda have considered what would happen to the photographs when they are both gone. Lamar University was an institution that came to mind as he considered who he could entrust to preserve and manage the images, some of which are “very valuable” and nationally recognized for their quality and historic character. McManus has already made significant contributions that will improve the lives of current and future students at Lamar, but he also offers some helpful advice to those who aspire to achieve success and establish a lasting legacy with their lives: “If students choose the correct career and work hard, it can be profitable as well as enjoyable,” which will ultimately help them to lead “a good life.” He also recommends saving for retirement starting at a young age. He was fortunate to retire over 24 years ago and still finds himself enjoying “the good life” as he continues to pursue his passions and plans trips to travel the world. Just within the next year, he and Brenda anticipate visiting Ireland and enjoying a cruise from Venice to Istanbul. And you can bet that they will take some beautiful pictures along the way.



RAWLS



## Celebrating a multi-generational *legacy*

by April Thompson

**A** 1946 edition of *The Redbird* (now *University Press*) reported that Lamar College celebrated G.A. Wimberly Day with a special assembly in the Union building. G.A. Wimberly, an extraordinary figure in Lamar's history, had dedicated his life to the growth and prosperity of LU, spending 47 years with the University as an auditor, business manager, comptroller, acting president and assistant to the president. His daughter, Frances Wimberly-Alberto '56, would follow in his footsteps, weaving her own chapter into the legacy of Lamar.

Born into the Lamar family, Alberto's journey with the University began the day she entered the world. G.A. had become an integral part of Lamar in 1926, starting as the economics teacher and baseball and basketball coach of South Park High School, and later serving in various capacities for Lamar Junior College, Lamar State College of Technology and, finally, Lamar University. "The naming of the Wimberly Building was suggested by Dr. John Gray who was well aware of my father's contributions to Lamar," Frances Alberto said. "My dad had offices in that building for as long as I can remember, and his office was moved when the round building [Plummer] was built. We were all so excited, and we made pictures of each family member with my dad in front of the building showing the Wimberly name."

Alberto herself attended Lamar State College of Technology from 1952 until her graduation in 1956. She earned

her master's degree in education while teaching and became a living testament to the values for which Lamar stood. "I majored in home economics at Lamar," she recalled, "and I was president of the Texas State Home Economic Clubs." Her connection to Lamar was not merely academic; it was ingrained in the fabric of her life. She fondly remembered two-time Lamar President John Gray '25 and his wife, Mary '25.

"Dr. and Mrs. Gray were great friends with my family," Alberto said. "After John died, I would go by to see and visit with Mary often. When Rex Cottle was president, he and his wife, Carol, had students come and visit their home often."

Alberto was also active throughout campus as a student. She was nominated as a candidate for homecoming queen three times, and as a freshman, "the Wesley Foundation was my home away from home. It was a big help in making me feel at home at Lamar," she said.

Her brother, G.A. Wimberly Jr. '61, earned a B.B.A. in accounting and served as the student loan officer until his passing in 1979, leaving behind his own imprint on the University's history. The Wimberly legacy continued through generations, as Frances's daughter, Rebecca Rogers '91; stepson, Mickey Alberto '90; niece, Kelly Wimberly '85; and nephew, G.A. Wimberly III '83, all graduated from Lamar University.

Frances and her husband, Charlie Alberto, were not just spectators but active contributors to Lamar's growth. Charlie's involvement in the Cardinal Club, including a term as its president, demonstrated the family's commitment.

In honor of G.A. Wimberly Sr., they established an endowed scholarship through the Cardinal Club, ensuring that his influence would continue to shape the lives of future Lamar students.

The ties that bind the Wimberly-Alberto family to Lamar were further strengthened by scholarships—the G.A. Wimberly Jr. Memorial Scholarship and the Charles V. and Frances W. Alberto Scholarship—the purchase of Cardinal Bricks (now laid in the Quad) and continued attendance at homecomings, basketball and football games. The family's impact was not only financial but deeply personal, touching the lives of students, faculty and the Lamar community at large. "After most ball games, we would gather at someone's home and visit. After homecoming, Charlie and I would open our home, especially to those who were from out of town," Frances said.

As the years passed, Frances remained in touch with her college friends, especially those from her Southern Belle Sorority (Alpha Chi Omega), creating a network of connections that transcended time. "I've enjoyed keeping up with my college friends. I've attended most homecomings and attended many monthly meetings with my sorority," Alberto said. "I also keep in touch through emails, phone calls and Facebook."

Frances Wimberly-Alberto, now 89 years old, reflected on a life intertwined with Lamar University with gratitude.

"Lamar has been an important part of our lives, and we feel blessed for being connected," Alberto said.

Alumni and friends gathered on Friday, April 5, 2024, for a special awards ceremony honoring the 2024 Distinguished Alumni Award Recipients: Charles E. Breithaupt '75, '79, Stephen C. Head '73, '75, Carmen (Angelle) Jordan '90, and Edwin Vallery '79.

**1** Charles Breithaupt '75, '79 and Dean of the College of Education and Human Development Alberto Ruiz

**2** Vel (Dailey) Martin '63, '77 and Hester (Briscoe) Bell '61

**3** Linda Domino and Joe Domino '75

**4** Amy Graham and Caralee (McDonald) Thompson '95

**5** Ariana (Jones) Bates '17, '21 and Christopher Bates '08

**6** Shelly (Gautreaux) DeRouen '92, Carmen (Angelle) Jordan '90, and Carole Jones

**7** Lihua Liu, and Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences Sunny Lei

**8** Meg (Baertl) Brown '15 and Jarrod Brown

**9** Lila (Creamer) Stevens '01, Duane Joubert, Charles Breithaupt '75, '79, and Emily (Everett) Allen '98, '04

**10** Loyce Pumphrey, Don Pumphrey '88, and Major Gifts Officer Uliana Trylowsky

**11** Lamar University Ambassadors with President Jaime Taylor – Sergio Mendez, Jonah Smith, Mary Wernig, Sara Barboza, Amarie Guillory '24, President Jaime Taylor, Miguel Arevalo, Harvest Prater, Drake Rothenberger, Julia Barrett, and Admissions Counselor Madeline Tzul '24

**12** COO Lamar University Foundation, Inc. Karen Nichols '83, Gisela Houseman, Peggy Zabala, and Vice President for University Advancement/CEO of the Lamar University Foundation, Inc. Juan Zabala '07

**13** LU Ambassador Daniella Lopez-Rosa, Soleil Tran, Darlene Hirasaki, and George Hirasaki '63

**14** Edwin Vallery '79, Darius Vallery, and Joseph Vallery

**15** Gwendolyn Lavalais, Mark Kubala, Kris Reynolds '16, '17, and Regina Rogers '14

**16** Coordinator of Marketing for the Center for Career and Professional Development Amy (Pumphrey) Dillow '10, '16 and Phillip Dillow '08, '11

**17** Associate Director of Community Relations and Public Affairs John Rollins '12 and Lamar University First Lady Stacy Taylor

**18** Senior Video/Photography Coordinator for Distance Education Jack Fitch '08 and Vice President for Student Affairs and Strategic Initiatives Freddie Titus '83, '86



Andy Coughlin, president, Press Club of Southeast Texas, was joined Sept. 23, by fellow board members to deliver this year's donation of \$12,000, an addition to the over \$230,000 already given to the Lamar University Foundation for the benefit of the Press Club of Southeast Texas Memorial Scholarship. Pictured from left, Stephan Malick '95, Debbie Bridgeman, Andy Coughlan '01, Julia Rodriguez, Jennifer Johnson '06, Sarah Parker '07, Jeannette Fresne, Kristi Dodd, John Rollins '12; and Karen Nichols '83, LU Foundation



BROWN



The Lamar University Foundation hosted a centennial book discussion with the authors of *A Century of Leaders*, Judy (Walker) Linsley '67, '77, and Ellen (Walker) Rienstra '62, '80, Sept. 19, 2024.

**A** Ellen (Walker) Rienstra '62, '80, left, and Judy (Walker) Linsley '67, '77

**B** Terry Savoy-Hadley '95, left, and Yolanda (Johnson) Avery '86, '91

**C** From left, Donna (Syphrett) Prince '63, Raynell (Alford) Singletary '58, Gretchen (Burner) Watson '61, Jackie (Dezelle) Bean '58, '60, Hester (Briscoe) Bell '61; seated: Ellen (Walker) Rienstra '62, '80, left, and Judy (Walker) Linsley '67, '77

**D** From left, Tom Farrell; Peggy Zabala; Ellen (Walker) Rienstra '62, '80; Judy (Walker) Linsley '67, '77; Rusty Chimeno '87, '11; LU Foundation COO Karen Nichols '83; and Juan Zabala '07, CEO, LU Foundation, and vice president for university advancement

GOUTHIER

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*A conversation with Ashley Spicer-Runnels '07*

# What's next in higher education?

*by Cassandra Jenkins*

**A**shley Spicer-Runnels graduated from Lamar University in 2007 with a Bachelor's of Science in Family and Consumer Sciences. After graduation, she remained a Cardinal for six more years working as the director of student development and leadership while she pursued both her master's in business administration and doctoral degree. She obtained an MBA from the University of Houston-

Victoria in 2010 and a Doctorate of Education in Educational Leadership from LU in 2013.

During Runnels' career, she has been front and center in educational administration, from assistant vice president and then assistant vice provost for academic affairs at Texas A&M University–San Antonio to her current role as assistant vice chancellor for academic and health affairs for the Texas State University System (TSUS). This followed her stint as vice chair of Texas A&M University System's Council



on Academic Technology and Innovative Education.

As assistant vice chancellor, Runnels is responsible for leading and guiding the seven institutions that make up TSUS, including Lamar University, Sam Houston State University, Sul Ross State University, Texas State University, Lamar Institute of Technology, Lamar State College–Orange and Lamar State College–Port Arthur. Her duties include helping to create academic strategy, assist with research and development, advance online learning and technology, and foster strategic partnerships.

Fellow LU alumna Cassandra Jenkins '19 sat down with Runnels to talk about the challenges, outlook and future of higher education.

***What changes, if any, do you believe are necessary to modernize higher education to prepare for the future?***

Higher education needs to continue its work to close the gaps between various sectors, and I think we are working towards that. We are working more closely with K-12, different industries and state agencies. At a higher level, you see a lot more engagement on a national level with different sectors.

The other side of this process is that, traditionally, higher education has been thought of solely as an education provider for the public and I think we've evolved into a new space that supports our communities and the public in ways that go beyond the classroom.

***How do you foresee technology reshaping higher education in the next 5 to 10 years?***

Technology is a tool, but it's never been intended to strip away the expertise of the people on the ground. The way I think of it is that it will help make us more efficient in terms of our decision making as well as our ability to compile and analyze information.

I'm also really excited to see how it transforms the way we teach our students, whether that's faculty trying to really leverage their expertise and broaden the scope of what they are teaching and do it in a faster way or the administrator who has a ton of things to do but needs to do it more efficiently.

***What are some ways that you think higher education institutions can better align their programs with the needs of the modern workforce?***

It's a multi-layer approach. Generally speaking, most of our students are going to end up working in jobs and positions that don't exist now, so I think it's important to teach them foundational aspects of their particular discipline, as well as transferable skills.

Working closely with industry and with the workforce is going to be incredibly important to making sure students are graduating prepared to fully immerse themselves as effective and contributing members of that organization.

I think it's also equally important for us to remain committed to teaching people how to be lifelong learners. As we think about these people ascending to various leadership roles, the ability to learn and be willing to learn is going to be very important.

***How important will partnerships between higher education institutions and industries be in the future to ensure graduates are ready for the evolving job markets?***

At its simplest, most basic level, we think about the connection between our faculty and our industry partners at the curricular level, including the courses they're offering and their connect ability to help students be ready to roll into a job. On an elevated level, it's about creating a shared language to support both our communities.

It's going to take shape in different ways, because it's not just about placing students into various employment—it's about helping them thrive in that space. We support them holistically, so they can advance as leaders in those organizations, be innovative and evolve. So, the relationship between higher education and industry is invaluable.

***What are some of the most pressing challenges you see in higher education and how do you think they can be addressed?***

The narrative around higher education is a challenge for us. We aren't at risk of becoming obsolete, but I think we're still trying to figure out how to broadly share the modern version of our impact. Our institutions know our value, but we're contributing so much more than we realize. Trying to articulate our value not only to students, but also to the communities we serve, is both a challenge and an opportunity.

The other challenge is in our curriculum. The way that students obtain degrees is changing, and we are no longer just the traditional 8-to-5 operation. We don't spend enough time communicating how we diversified our model and that we are creating a space for everybody, regardless of their prior learning, their skills or their place in higher education.

***Do you believe the outlook for higher education is bright?***

I think the future is bright for higher education. I think that it's an exciting time in higher education. It's evolving. We are open to new ideas, and higher education professionals are responsive to those ideas.

There are so many great people that are going into higher education that come from a lot of different backgrounds, and so I think that mix of new perspectives and vision is helping us to elevate the work that we do, and that all cycles back down to our students and communities. I'm really excited about the future of higher education, the work we are doing and the conversations we are having.



# A journey from service to *care*

by Josh Romero

**A**lumnus Joshua Tindel's journey from Southeast Texas to the Navy and back to academia is marked by resilience, dedication and a commitment to service.

After graduating in May 2024 with a degree in nursing, Tindel has integrated his military experience with his passion for healthcare. His hope is to inspire others facing similar challenges to pursue their dreams, serve their communities and never hesitate to ask for help.

Through his volunteer work at the Crisis Center of Southeast Texas and his dedication to helping others, he exemplifies compassion and leadership—qualities that define both his military and nursing careers. "I chose Lamar University because of how rooted it is in this community. I was born in Nederland and raised in Port Neches. My entire early life was spent in Southeast Texas, and so Lamar was the obvious next step after high school," Tindel said.

Driven by the pursuit of independence and adventure, his initial path at Lamar took a significant turn when he decided to enlist in the Navy as a hospital corpsman after his freshman year. "I wanted an opportunity to be independent, to move away and have new experiences. I spent my boot camp marching through snowstorms in Great Lakes, Illinois," he recalled.

His training as a corpsman was backed by specialized training in preventive medicine at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, which prepared him for his career

as a nurse. "I served as the base health inspector and conducted regular inspections of restaurants, daycares, gymnasiums, pools and living quarters," Tindel said.

While his career in the military began to progress, his job role expanded significantly. "As I moved up in the ranks, I received training and was appointed the Safety, Customer Service and Biohazardous Waste Representative for the clinic. The most rewarding and impactful of these, however, was becoming a trained and certified Department of Defense Sexual Assault Victim Advocate."

Once Tindel completed his enlistment, he found his way back to LU. "It was a cathartic experience to come back over 10 years later. Some things had changed, but a lot of things were exactly as I remembered them. Even my original Cardinal ID still worked, and I would get some puzzled looks by the recreation center staff as I checked in. Once a Cardinal, always a Cardinal," he said.

As a hospital corpsman, he received thorough training in numerous medical fields, which paved the way for his future career in nursing. "We were trained in nearly all aspects of medicine," Tindel said. "This included courses in emergency medicine, pharmacology, laboratory and even nursing classes." Returning to Lamar in 2020, he initially pursued chemical engineering as a major but soon realized his true passion was in nursing. "Although I genuinely enjoyed learning calculus, thermodynamics and process analysis, I realized that my heart and soul just wasn't in it," he said. "And so, I changed



majors to nursing, and it felt a bit like a homecoming for me.”

Tindel chose psychology as a minor. Thanks to the continuous career development encouraged in the military, the transition from military to civilian life was seamless. “The goal was always to keep pushing. Career development is a large part of the military lifestyle; you are trained and encouraged to push yourself and never get complacent. I continuously took classes while I was on active duty and left with an associate’s degree,” Tindel said.

Financial support through the G.I. Bill and the Hazlewood Act made pursuing higher education an obvious choice. “The Navy very much set me up for success. I was a much better student this second time around,” he said.

Service-based learning, an integral part of the JoAnne Gay Dishman School of Nursing curriculum, played an important role in Tindel’s education. This approach combines both classroom learning and community service. “We take the various nursing theories and principles that we

learn in the classroom, apply it out in the community, and then reflect on our experiences to gain a deeper understanding,” he said.

His volunteer work at the Crisis Center of Southeast Texas, particularly with the suicide and sexual assault crisis hotline, is personal to him. “Suicide and sexual assault are something that I unfortunately have become very familiar with. My closest friend committed suicide during our sophomore year of high school, and I’ve seen firsthand the devastating and cascading effects it can have on friends and family,” Tindel shared.

At the Crisis Center, he continued his advocacy work, providing crucial support through the hotline. “My time as a Department of Defense victim advocate helped me as a source of confidentiality and discretion,” Tindel said. “I manned a hotline phone, accompanied victims to hospitals, and I’ve even given testimony in court. I had both friends and strangers confide in me because of the position I held. It was a burden, but that burden is nothing compared to the physical and mental trauma that the victims go through.”

In his volunteer work, he embraced the compassionate principles of nursing, caring for people’s mental and emotional needs as much as their physical health. His volunteer efforts were



recognized with several awards, including Highest Achiever and Community-Based Service-Learning Elite Scholar by the JoAnne Gay Dishman School of Nursing.

“Admittedly, it feels odd,” Tindel said. “I wasn’t keeping track of my hours. Instead, I was just helping out by filling in at all of the empty shifts. It wasn’t until the end of the semester that I compiled everything and saw that I had nearly 190 hours, far exceeding the minimum requirement of 70 hours. That was never my goal. I was just doing what I could to help out.”

Receiving recognition for his volunteer efforts and academic achievements was a humbling experience. “What I am really going to remember for years to come are all the phone calls that ended with a genuine thank-you.”

His story serves as an inspiration and he encourages others to volunteer, assuring them that they can make a difference in someone’s life with the right training and support. “My main hope is to get more people involved with these causes and to spread awareness. The Crisis Center is always in need of volunteers,” Tindel said. “Some people may be hesitant; I had classmates who saw it as too much responsibility, too stressful, or too morbid. However, the Crisis Center does an excellent job at preparing you for the role. You could be the difference in someone else’s life.”

Tindel also aims to clear any misconceptions about military service, emphasizing the diverse professional roles available beyond combat positions. “Not everyone is an infantry rifleman deployed to a battlefield. There are positions for lawyers, engineers, journalists, photographers, musicians and more. I enjoyed it so much that I am eager to go back,” he said.

He also emphasizes the importance of mental health and sexual assault awareness, urging those struggling to seek help and support from organizations like the Crisis Center of Southeast Texas. “If you are struggling with mental health or sexual assault, you do not have to keep it to yourself,” he said. “The Crisis Center offers counseling services and support groups, and you do not have to go through it alone.”

With graduation behind him, Tindel returned to the Navy as a commissioned officer. “I fell in love with the structure and accountability, and I’m excited to do it as a registered nurse now.”

**Academy STEM camp inspires**

The Texas Academy at Lamar University, in collaboration with several sponsors, hosted the Innovation CoLABoration camp this past summer. The initiative is designed to ignite a passion for STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) careers among Texas youth. The camp, part of the Governor’s Summer Merit Program administered by the Texas Workforce Commission, introduced students to a variety of high-demand, high-skill industries.

Sponsored by Southeast Texas Workforce Solutions, Texas Workforce Commission, LU’s College of Arts and Sciences and College of Engineering, and the Reaud Honors College, the camp enabled students aged 13 and older to explore six key industry clusters: advanced technologies and manufacturing, aerospace and defense, biotechnology and life sciences, information and computer technology, petroleum refining and chemical products, and energy.

“The Innovation CoLABoration experience was an outstanding opportunity for young minds in our community to come together and learn STEM academic and career pathways embedded within authentic learning environments here on campus,” Tilisa Thibodeaux, dean of the Reaud Honors College, said.

Throughout the week, students engaged in diverse lab rotations that immersed them in various STEM disciplines. They delved into science by learning how to check drinking water quality, exploring DNA, creating ice cream through chemistry, and synthesizing dyes. Career opportunities presentations by the Texas Workforce Commission, the Center for Midstream Management and Science, and Centers for Advances in Port Management, complemented these activities, adding a practical aspect to their learning experience.

Robotics was another highlight, with students building BaseBots, upgrading to ClawBots, competing in robot competitions, and repairing robots. A session at the Midstream Center provided a real-world application of their skills. Engineering projects included working with circuits, experimenting with non-Newtonian fluids, applying engineering principles in the kitchen, and understanding refinery control centers and port management, offering students a glimpse into various engineering fields. Math activities engaged students in innovative ways, involving games like Nim and impartial games, exploring deep mathematical concepts, and creating hyperbolic space using crochet. Discussions on careers in STEM and business, particularly in aerospace, helped students understand practical applications.

A mix of historical context and team-building fun was provided by a field trip to Spindletop and the Beaumont Escape Room, culminating in a mega relay, an awards ceremony and presentations by the Reaud Honors College and Texas Academy.

For more information or to participate in the 2025 camp, complete the interest form at [lamar.edu/gsmc](http://lamar.edu/gsmc).

**LU honors legacy of Coach Sonny Jolly**

In a fitting tribute to a man who, beginning in 1971, dedicated half a century to Lamar University athletics, the LU track will now bear the name of Coach Sonny Jolly ‘64. A former student-athlete, letterman, head coach and director of athletics, Jolly is celebrated as a legendary figure in college sports. His 20-year reign saw him transform the Lamar Cardinals into a Southland Conference powerhouse, bringing national recognition to the University for its athletic achievements.

“Sonny Jolly stands as a legendary figure in the realm of college sports,” President Jaime Taylor said. “His contributions not only elevated the Cardinals to new heights but also brought national recognition to Lamar University for its reputation as a force in college athletics.”

Coach Jolly resurrected the Lamar University track and field program, creating a dynasty in the Southland Conference and guiding it to national prominence. From 1978 to 1986, the Cardinals achieved an unprecedented feat by winning nine consecutive Southland Conference outdoor track and field championships. In total, his teams amassed 22 conference titles across cross country and indoor and outdoor track and field events.

Jolly’s exemplary coaching earned him the title of conference Coach of the Year nine times. He coached 40 All-Americans, one NCAA national champion, and guided mile-relay teams to second-place finishes in the NCAA. Several of his athletes competed in the 1984 United States Olympic Trials and the 1984 Summer Olympics. In 1988, Jolly led the victorious U.S. National Team in a dual meet against Great Britain and served on the U.S. coaching staff at the 1991 Pan American Games. The newly named track stands as a testament to his enduring influence on the program.

**Dishman school ranks among top nursing schools in Texas, nationwide**

The Lamar University JoAnne Gay Dishman School of Nursing Bachelor of Science (BSN) in Nursing Program has been recognized as one of the top nursing schools in Texas, according to RNCareers.org. The University ranks #16 out of 121 nursing schools in the state and #173 out of over 1,700 nursing programs nationwide. This recognition cements Lamar University’s reputation as a nationally distinguished Nursing School of Distinction.

The University boasts an NCLEX-RN first-time pass rate of 98% for 2023 and subsequently a three-year average passing rate of 94%, significantly higher than both state and national averages. In Texas, the average NCLEX-RN passing rate is 88.45% for BSN programs. Nationally, the average is 86.21% for BSN programs.

**Lamar University welcomes new business dean**

LU has named Joby John as dean of its College of Business. With a career spanning multiple continents and industries, John brings an impressive breadth of knowledge and leadership experience. His expertise in business models, process design, operations and marketing will play a crucial role in shaping the future of business education at Lamar.



“I was immediately struck by the warm, supportive atmosphere at Lamar University,” John said. “The positive energy here is palpable, and it makes all the difference. I’m also very excited about the growth of our online programs and the prospects of new and cutting-edge programs at all levels well-suited for the regional market needs.”

John’s global experience—working in countries ranging from Argentina, Egypt, Estonia, Finland and Spain—gives him a unique perspective. His clients include major names like Arabella Insurance, L.L. Bean, Volvo North America, and Mico-BOSCH in India, a testament to his ability to bridge academic theory with real-world business application. This blend of professional consulting and academic contribution has made him a highly respected figure in the field of business education.

# Wathen, DeShong & Juncker

by Susan Johnston Taylor

**B**eaumont-based accounting firm Wathen, DeShong & Juncker, L.L.P. has been informally recruiting LU graduates for decades. Recognizing the value of these employees to the firm, they became more intentional about creating a formal recruiting process about 15 years ago.

“We look for someone who wants to go work at a place that has opportunity for growth,” said managing partner Chip Majors ’93. “We want them to *want* to stick around in the area and also eventually either take on a leadership role at the firm or a technical role.” As of publication, Wathen, DeShong & Juncker employs 29 LU graduates, plus two LU interns.

Haley Zick ’16 began as an intern and has been working at the firm full-time (now as tax manager) for nearly a decade. She said the partners created a positive and supportive environment for interns by working around her college schedule and answering questions about her coursework. “They did the same

through grad school and through my CPA exam,” she added. “I think one of the big things about this firm is they value the employees the most.”

Greg Morris ’22, ’23, said he felt the firm’s collegial and supportive culture from the beginning of the recruitment process. “I met with Chip and Jennifer [Dobbs Shaw ’96, the firm’s CFO] and we had an amazing discussion, not just about accounting, but also *Star Wars*,” he said. “And then later that evening, I found out I was offered a job, and I was ecstatic! I called all my friends and started recruiting myself.” Several of Morris’ friends now work at Wathen, DeShong & Juncker, too.

Majors started his accounting career at another small firm but left due to its negative work environment. When the partners at Wathen, DeShong & Juncker offered him a job in 1996, the pay was a little less, but they told him “you can do what you want to do here. You can be partner if you want, or we can find some other ways to fulfill your career.” As managing partner, Majors is living proof

of that statement.

Partner Jane Burns ’83, a recipient of the Lamar Accounting Excellence Award as the top accounting student in her class, participated in LU recruiting and received offers from national and regional firms. She ultimately chose Wathen, DeShong & Juncker and has been working there since a few weeks after graduation. “No matter how much work you have going on or whether it’s tax season or not, we can treat each other with respect and enjoy every minute of it,” she said. “I really believe in this firm, and both of us [Burns and Majors] are graduates, so that’s a testament to Lamar.”

Working for a large accounting firm in Houston doesn’t appeal to everyone, so Wathen, DeShong & Juncker’s LU recruiting relationship allows the firm to attract graduates who may want to stay more local, providing an alternative to bigger, less personal firms. “It’s important to know that there are some good opportunities here in town,” Majors said.



WDJ Cardinals from left, back row: Pat O’Neill ’82, Jeff Fregia ’01, Mason Domingue ’24, Troy Laughlin ’21, ’22, Greg Morris, ’22, ’23, Nathan Janecek ’23, ’24, Troy Domingue ’93, Allen LaNear ’18, ’23, Stanley “Chip” Majors ’93; middle row: Angela Ryder ’03, Amanda Buffington ’15, ’17, Christina Brant ’16, Chloe Frost ’19, ’20, Vy Nguyen ’11, Erlinda Shannon ’03, Carey Bunn ’01, Whitney Blair ’19, ’20; front row: Michael Kiefer ’91, Jennifer Shaw ’96, Patty Pulido ’11, ’13, Jane Burns ’83, Haley Zick ’16, Wanda Sims ’92

MILLER



# A father's legacy

by Sarah Parker

**A**n appreciation for learning and education runs as deep as Cardinal pride in the Hamza family. Family patriarch, Lamar University Distinguished Professor and Fellow of clinical mental health counseling Khalid Hamza possesses a robust educational background with numerous graduate and post degrees in complex fields such as computer science, cognitive science, instructional technology, clinical psychology, medical psychology and neuroscience. He says it was a passion for knowledge that drove his desire to continue furthering his education.

"I took a long road, a hard road, but I love learning," Hamza said.

When he accepted a faculty position in Lamar's College of Education and Human Development in 2003, Hamza never would have guessed he had found not only a university home where his career could flourish but also one where his family could flourish and embark on rewarding educational journeys of their own.

For the past two decades, Hamza has served as a professor at Lamar, instructing students in the college's professional pedagogy, leadership and counseling departments. He also works as a researcher and medical-consulting forensic neuropsychologist. He has published and lectured regionally, nationally and internationally.

Among many accolades and achievements, Hamza received the Distinguished Faculty Lecture Award in 2018, followed by recognition as the Distinguished Scholar and Research Fellow Professor (2018-2021). As a distinguished faculty lecturer, he spoke of his world-renowned work with the Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS) Mental Health Committee, which he chaired for almost eight years. SAMS is a global medical relief organization working at the front lines of crisis relief in Syria, Europe, the U.S. and Turkey. In 2016, Hamza received international recognition when he coined the term Human Devastation Syndrome while working with victims of war internationally. With Lamar's steadfast support, he said he was able to pursue his passion of giving back through volunteer work.



A thirst for knowledge and love of learning doesn't stop with Hamza. His wife, Niveen Yaseen Hamza '05, '11, took the opportunity to further her education at Lamar after getting to know the University through her husband's work. In 2005, Niveen earned her master's degree in chemistry and went on to complete her doctorate in educational leadership in 2011.

"[My husband] is an advocate for Lamar, and he believes it provides quality education," said Niveen, who currently works as a professor of chemistry at South College in Asheville, N.C. "The education Lamar offered us opened doors for us."

Growing up in a household with multi-degreed parents who placed a high value on education, the three Hamza children—Ayah '16, Omar '20 and Ali '22—were bound to pursue degrees in fields that would take them to the graduate level and beyond. All top-performing high school students, Ayah, Omar and Ali had their pick of universities to earn their bachelor's, but thanks to their father's encouragement, each decided to spend their collegiate careers at Lamar.

"Children in our area, usually in any area, want to go to schools that are away from home," Hamza said. "[My children] were convinced because of what I believe

about Lamar and the good education here that Lamar would be a great foundation for them."

Inspired by her father's enthusiasm for the quality programming at Lamar, Ayah took advantage of the University's "great pre-med track" and earned her bachelor's in dietetics and nutrition with a minor in chemistry, gaining "all the ingredients [she] needed to be a good medical school applicant." Ayah completed her medical degree at the University of North Texas and currently works as a pediatrician in the Fort Worth area.

"I always held Lamar in high regard as my father would bring me to the University since I was nine years old," Ayah said. "His love for his job and teaching future generations naturally trickled down to myself and my brothers, so we ultimately saw Lamar for the opportunity it truly was."

Another future doctor, Omar knew from both his sister's experience and his own research that Lamar had everything he needed to prepare him for medical school.

"We grew up with Lamar, and it was an easy decision for us to apply there later," Omar said. "I think Lamar has incredible opportunities for research, grants and mentorships. Lamar gave me the tools to pursue great research opportunities that

allowed me to explore things outside of the U.S., [to] research with brilliant minds and additionally hone my networking skills with things like the Ambassador program and the honors program."

After earning his bachelor's in chemistry with minors in French and biology, Omar pursued his M.D. at Texas A&M and is currently in residency at Harvard Medical School/Cambridge Health Alliance.

"I believe anything is possible with the right mindset at Lamar," Omar said. "I know so many people that achieved incredible success after graduating from LU. I just want students to remember to take advantage of the opportunities available there, put yourselves out there, network as much as you can and enjoy your experience at LU!"

Ali, the second youngest of the Hamza children, followed in his siblings' footsteps of starting out his postsecondary education journey at Lamar but opted to go the pre-law route rather than pre-med. He finished his bachelor's in political science with a minor in legal studies and is currently working on his law degree at the University of Texas School of Law. He positioned Lamar's reputation next to Ivy League schools by winning moot court national debates under the supervision of Terri Davis, associate professor of political science.

"My dad was a really big influence in terms of who I want to become," Ali said. "As a kid, I used to go to his classes sometimes and see how he taught. From that, I gained the sort of skill, or the sense of passion, where I love to learn, and I love to teach, and I don't hide my identity. I think those three things—how to be a student, how to be a scholar and how to be yourself—are probably the three things that he taught me."

Ayah, Omar and Ali began giving back to LU as students by serving as LU Ambassadors. Each on their own path to success, the Hamzas will agree it was a father's love of Lamar that led the way.

"I'm so proud of my father and how much he put into where he is today," Ayah said. "Lamar should start paying him for marketing because he did a great job turning the whole family into Cardinals."



We hope you enjoy reading about former classmates. If you have news to share—a position announcement, milestone, achievement, wedding, baby—or know the whereabouts of a lost alumnus, we want to hear from you.

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**40s**

**John "Pete" Damrel** '42, A.A. general studies, served in the U.S. Army Air Corps as a navigator. Following his army service, he moved to Houston to attend Rice University where he completed his bachelor's degree and worked his entire career at Texas Instruments. He and his late wife, Jessie, raised five sons and a daughter, and in 2021, he moved to North Carolina to be closer to his children and grandchildren. He celebrates his 100th birthday on Dec. 4, 2024.

**60s**

The Top Attorneys of North America recognized **Jim Bearden Sr.** '62, B.S. government, in their 2024-2025 edition. He is an attorney with The Bearden Law Firm and lives in Orange.

**70s**

**Phyllis (King) Lee** '72, B.S. health and physical education, retired as a teacher and coach at South Park Middle School in Beaumont school district. She and her husband, Robert, live in China, Texas.

**Diana (Salas) Reho** '72, B.S. speech, retired as a speech therapist at Wheatley School of Early Childhood in Port Arthur school district. She and her husband, **Joseph** '76, B.B.A. accounting, live in Port Arthur.

**The Honorable David Bernsen** '73, B.B.A. marketing, was named one of America's Top 50 Lawyers for Texas for personal injury for 2024. He is an attorney with The Bernsen Law Firm and lives with his wife, Dinah, in Beaumont.

**Nancy (Gonzales) Taylor** '73, B.B.A. secretarial science, retired from Huntsman and Texaco. She and her husband, Danny, live in Port Neches.

The Beaumont Foundation named **Glen Morgan** '75, B.B.A. general business—law, a Southeast Texas Legend and established a \$100,000 endowed scholarship in his honor at LU. He is a partner with Reaud, Morgan & Quinn Inc. He and his wife, Teri, live in Beaumont.

**Wanda (Brignac) Nicklebur** '75, B.S. elementary education, '90, M.Ed. elementary education, is a retired educator and independent consultant with Rodan Fields. She and her husband, **James** '71, who is an instrument technician at the Port Arthur Refinery of Valero Energy Corp., live in Nederland.

**George Bowden** '77, B.S. communication, earned a master's degree in journalism in 2015 and is senior marketing strategist with Freese and Nichols Inc. He and his wife, Kimberly, live in Granbury.

Pres. Joe Biden appointed **Igalious "Ike" Mills** '77, B.F.A. art, to the White House Environmental Justice Advisory Committee. He is the state legislative liaison for Texas Small Farmers and Ranchers/CBO, and he and his wife, Azzie, live in Port Arthur.

St. Anne Catholic School named **Cathy (Bebeau) Zummo** '78, B.S. nursing, a 2024 Distinguished Alumna. She is a nurse at Christus St. Elizabeth Hospital and lives with her husband, Frank, in Beaumont.

Congratulations to **Kenneth Leavins** '78, B.S. electrical engineering, '85, M.B.A. business administration, on his retirement from Port Neches-Groves school district alternative education center after 17 years of service. He and his wife, Tina, live in Nederland.

The Lamar University Department of Theatre and Dance honored **Lou (Talkington) Arrington** '79, B.A. dance, for her 50 years of service with the Lamar Dance program. She is a dance instructor and lives with her husband, Mark '78, B.S. speech, in Beaumont.

**80s**

**Renita (Yowman) Jones** '81, A.A.S. child care technology, retired as instructional aide at Abraham Lincoln Fine Arts Academy in Port Arthur school district. She and her husband, Darrell, live in Port Arthur.

**Bernie Auld** '82, B.S. civil engineering, is senior program manager for river operations dam safety with the Tennessee Valley Authority. He and his wife, Christy, live in Nashville.

**Carol Matthews** '82, B.B.A. office administration, retired as a coordinator for the City of Beaumont and is now a professional volunteer. She lives in Beaumont.

**Steve McReynolds** '82 owns Groves Equipment Rental Co. He and his wife, Colleen, live in Port Neches.

Nederland school district named diagnostician **Mary Jo Fehrenbacher** '83, B.S. elementary education, 2024 Langham Elementary School Teacher of the Year. She lives in Beaumont.

Congratulations to **Carolyn (Antwine) Kenebrew** '83, certificate vocational nursing, '87, A.A.S. nursing, retired from Christus St. Elizabeth Hospital after a 40 years of service in nursing. She lives in Beaumont.

Congratulations to **Vicki (Ashton) Norville** '84, B.B.A. finance, on her retirement from Lamar State College Orange in May 2024 after 23 years of service. She and her husband, **Joseph** '63, live in Bridge City.

**Kevin Prescott** '84, B.B.A. marketing, is senior technical business manager and chief of staff at AT&T. He and his wife, Theresa, live in Frisco.

**Jeffrey Lewis** '86, A.A.S. diesel mechanics, is assistant campus director at Bob Hope High School. He and his wife, **Belinda (Broussard)** '97, B.B.A. marketing, who teaches fourth grade at St. Anthony Cathedral Basilica School, live in Beaumont.

**Kevin Landry** '87, A.A.S. industrial electricity, owns On the Run Beaumont and On The Run Clear Lake, which was a finalist for the Better Business Bureau 2024 Torch Award for Ethics in the micro division. He earned his doctor of chiropractic in 1992, and he and his wife, **Jana (Miller)** '73, certif. vocational nursing, '78, B.S. nursing, who earned her law degree in 1999 and has her own firm Jana K. Landry, Attorney at Law, live in League City.

**Kelly (Montagne) Meadows** '87, B.S. nursing, is director of health services for Little Cypress- Mauriceville school district. She and her husband, Benjamin, live in Orange.

Congratulations to **Andy Preslar** '87, M.A. English, on his retirement from Lamar State College Orange in May 2024 after 40 years of service. He and his wife, **Mary (Robin)** '99, B.A. English, live in Orange.

**Donna Gober** '88, B.S. elementary education, '08, Ed.D. educational leadership, is a clinical instructor for the Lamar University College of Education and Human Development. She lives in Beaumont.

**Lisa (Bowen) Meshell** '88, B.B.A. general business—advertising, '97, B.B.A. general business—office administration, is AP team lead with Spindletop Center. She lives in Beaumont.

**Bettina (Williams) Evans** '89, B.S. secondary education, teaches culinary arts at Taylor Career Center in Beaumont school district. She and her husband, Oscar, live in Beaumont.

**90s**

**David Rutledge** '90, B.S. mechanical engineering, is mayor of Bridge City, where he and his wife, Rebecca, live.

**Jolei (Bayard) Shipley** '90, B.S. elementary education, who earned her law degree in 2003, is an attorney with Smith Shipley Law. She and her husband, Terry, live in Nederland.

**Dean Wood** '90, B.S. kinesiology, '85, A.A.S. machine tools, retired from Langham Elementary School in Nederland school district as a physical education teacher after 34 years of service. He and his wife, Katherine, live in Nederland.

Congratulations to **Leslie (Garison) Anderson** '91, B.S. elementary education, '14, M.Ed. administration, on her retirement from Bridge City school district as assistant principal of Bridge City Elementary School. She and her husband, Jeff, live in Orange.



**Alumni Baseball Pre-Game Party**

Alumni and friends gathered before the LU v. Northwestern State Baseball game May 4 to cheer on the Cardinals at Vincent-Beck Stadium.



John Stiles, Roy West '83, Zach Stiles '15, Trisha West, Pres. Jaime Taylor, Whitney (West) Stiles '10, Future Cardinal Murphy Stiles, Future Cardinal Saddler Stiles, and Future Cardinal Buffalo Styles



Tammy (Audilet) Goines '82 and Future Cardinal Tyler Baldwin



Men's baseball Head Coach Will Davis and City of Beaumont Mayor Roy West '83



Jerry Creamer, Leslie Creamer, Jim Gilligan '69, '70; Lila (Creamer) Stevens '01



J.T. Beckman '82, '87, Bryce Sheffield, LU Ambassador; Jeff Spoeri, associate vice president for university advancement



Sherri Biddle and Wes Biddle '08



Jennifer (Hansen) Lyons '93, '11; Robert Lyons '93; Keith Henke '91; Kristine (Bounds) Smith '88; Jim Love '71



Gwen (Cantue) Sharp '99, '20, Carlton Sharp



Chris Ingram '93 and Future Cardinal Parker Ingram



Quinn Reynolds, John Reynolds '07, Future Cardinal Jalen Reynolds and Future Cardinal Jayde Reynolds



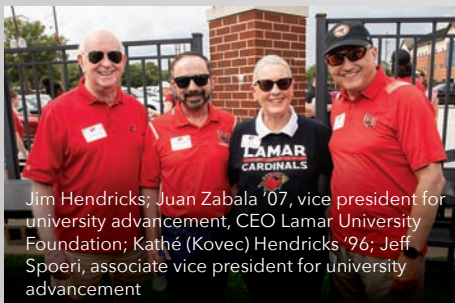
J.T. Autrey '14 and Future Cardinal Ledger Autrey



Jim Love '71, First Lady Stacy Taylor, John Rollins '12, associate director, community relations and public affairs



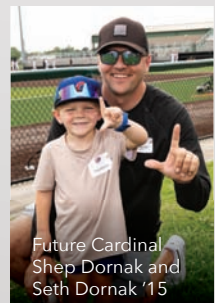
Noah Olliver, Claudia Olliver, Terry Olliver, Terry Savoy-Hadley '95 and Kerry Hadley



Jim Hendricks; Juan Zabala '07, vice president for university advancement, CEO Lamar University Foundation; Kathé (Kovec) Hendricks '96; Jeff Spoeri, associate vice president for university advancement



Huy Do '02, Future Cardinal Lucas Do, Future Cardinal Logan Do and Tea (Nguyen) Do '08



Future Cardinal Shep Dornak and Seth Dornak '15



Matt Gore '09; Jim Love '71; Jim Gilligan '69, '70; Cory Holley '10, '12; Brandon Chambers '10; J.T. Autrey '14

# CLASS NOTES

**Jim Seratt Sr.** '91, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, '95, M.A. history, retired as an instructor for the Lamar History Department. He is the founder and pastor of Grace Community Church and lives with his wife, Brenda, in Vidor.

Congratulations to **Jon Burris** '92, B.S. kinesiology, '02, M.Ed. administration, on his retirement as assistant superintendent of Hamshire-Fannett school district in June 2024 after 31 years of service in education. He lives in Beaumont.

Songwriter and musician **Mike McQuerry** '92, A.A.S. instrumentation technology, is a 2024 Oaks Event Center Wall of Fame recipient. He lives in Buna and is analyzer team leader for BASF TOTAL Petrochemicals.

**Diane Black** '93, B.S.W. social work, '00, M.Ed. counseling and development, owns Black Flower Press, a publishing company, and released her first book, *"Dead Dog Road: A True Story into the Dark World of an Abused Child,"* about a child abuse case that she encountered as the director of a children's home in Silsbee. She is the founder and director of The Roosevelt House Children's Home and lives in Allen.

**Bill Decker** '93, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, won second place in Barebow Recurve for ages 70-74 at the Texas Senior Games in San Antonio, qualifying to compete in the 2025 National Senior Games in Des Moines, Iowa. He is an adjunct instructor at Lamar State College-Port Arthur and lives with his wife, **Nannette (Thomas)** '91, B.S. elementary education, in Port Neches.

**Gambol (Dodge) Golden** '93, A.A.S. computer drafting technology, owns Golden Drafting Services. She lives in Baytown.

**Melissa Hudler-Gouthier** '93, B.A. English, '99, M.A. English, who earned her Ph.D. in faculty of arts, law and social sciences in 2014, retired as a lecturer for the English and Modern Languages Department at Lamar University. She and her husband,

**Brandon** '96, B.S. communication, who owns Brandon Gouthier Photography, live in Beaumont.

**Paula (Weatherford) Boyd** '94, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, retired from teaching at Tyrrell Elementary School in Port Arthur school district. She and her husband, Clifton, live in Port Arthur.

**Marilyn (Shelton) Brown** '94, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, retired from teaching at Memorial High School in Port Arthur school district. She and her husband, David, live in Orange.

**Dana (Day) Arceneaux** '96, B.B.A. management information systems, is core operations administrator for Cyfair Federal Credit Union. She and her husband, Justin, live in Hamshire.

USAA selected **Jennifer Chambers** '96, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '06, M.Ed. counseling and development, for the Our Community Salutes, USA, General Colin L. Powell Memorial Service Award. She is CCMR coordinator at West Brook High School in Beaumont school district, and she and her husband, Robert, live in Lumberton.



Austin Munoz, left, Nuhash Hossain '21 and Andrew Sealy '19



From left, Gabe Estrada '23, Josh Harris '19, Olajuwon Taylor '23, Fernando Ramos '21, Zach Zarate '21

**TMEA Music Alumni Reception**  
Music alumni and friends gathered at the TMEA Conference in San Antonio for an after-hours networking social Feb. 9, 2024, hosted by the College of Fine Arts and Communication, Mary Morgan Moore Department of Music, and the Office of Alumni Affairs.

PHOTOS BY CLIFTON



Rick Condit, retired professor of music, left, and Lee Miller '71



Gary Janecek '95 and LU Ambassador Kristin Hebert '24



Isabelle Hawkins and Jimmy Frasier '04, '08



From left, Rico Padron '20, Eric Shannon, associate professor of music, director of athletic bands; Jennifer Shannon, instructor of music; Adrian Woodard '18; Nick Quintana '19



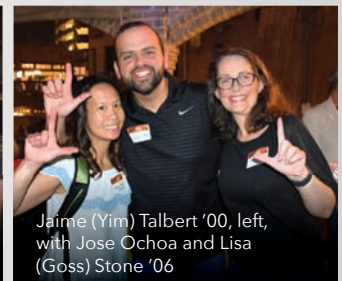
Kobe Emmons '20 and Troy Kaufman '20



Nick Rissman, professor of Music; Debra Greschner, instructor of music; and Jimmy Frasier '04, '08



From left, Nuhash Hossain '21, Andrew Sealy '19, Thomas Brown '22, Joseph Landrum and Chris Graves '21



Jaime (Yim) Talbert '00, left, with Jose Ochoa and Lisa (Goss) Stone '06



Golden Wright '21, dean, College of Fine Arts and Communication; Evie Clifton, coordinator of alumni affairs; Jeanette Fresne, associate dean, College of Fine Arts and Communication; and Jeff Spoeri, associate vice president for university advancement



Laura Brown '20, Marcus James '20, Tommy Holland



Michael Johnson '90, left, Sam Moore '87 and Adam Debes '15

**Jeremy Hawa** '96, B.F.A. graphic design, owns Light Strike Productions, which was a finalist for the Better Business Bureau 2024 Torch Award for Ethics in the micro division. He is an instructor of communication in the Communication and Media Department at Lamar University. He and his wife, Shanna, live in Beaumont.

**Samela Macon** '97, B.S. sociology, is vice president of operations for children and family services with Buckner International. She and her husband, Joe, live in Silsbee.

**Laurie (Anders) Mathews** '97, B.B.A. marketing, is managing director and wealth management advisor with Merrill Lynch & Co. She and her husband, John, live in Lumberton.

**Jennifer (Prejean) Sigler** '97, B.S. nursing, earned her certification in Women's Health Care and Psychiatric Mental Health. She is a nurse practitioner and co-owns Beaumont WELLness for Women. She and her husband, Giles '98, B.G.S. general studies, live in Beaumont.

Ernst & Young named **Jared Boudreaux** '98, B.B.A. marketing, a finalist for the 2024 Entrepreneur of the Year Award. Jared is president, CEO and managing partner at Vector Controls



and Automaton Group. He and his wife, **Malinda (Faulk)** '95, B.S. psychology, '98, M.S. psychology-community, who is a licensed professional counselor with her own firm, Malinda C. Boudreaux LPC, live in Orange.

Congratulations to **Dawn (Villot) Garrett** '98, B.S. elementary education, on her retirement from Little Cypress-Mauriceville school district. She and her husband, John, live in Bridge City.

Barbara B. Yarbrough Elementary School named **Kristen (Necastro) Godwin** '98, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '18, M.Ed. administration, the 2024 Unsung Hero of the Year. She is an assistant principal and lives in Midland.

**Debra (LeBlanc) Nolte** '98, B.A. English, is principal of Hamshire-Fannett High School. She and her husband, **Joseph** '95, B.S. political science, '03, M.Ed. administration, live in Humble.

**Garrett Craver** '99, B.S. psychology, '04, M.Ed. counseling and development, '12, M.B.A. business administration, is

an LPC supervisor and administrator of behavioral health at Baptist Hospitals of Southeast Texas.

**Cheryl Martin-Andrepoint** '99, M.S. theatre, '03, M.Ed. special education, '12, M.Ed. administration, retired as diagnostician in the department of special education for Port Arthur school district. She lives in Beaumont.

## 00s

**Jennifer (Comeaux) Barnett** '00, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, retired from Port Neches-Groves school district in 2024. She and her husband, Jonathan, live in Port Neches.

**Crystal (Odom) Burton** '00, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, teaches at Hillcrest Elementary School in Nederland school district. She and her husband, John, live in Port Arthur.

**Jill (Tomplait) Nolan** '00, B.S. sociology, owns Jill Nolan, Realtor-JNK Home & Land, which was a finalist for the Better Business Bureau 2024 Torch Award for Ethics in the micro division. She and her husband, David, lives in Kirbyville.

President and owner of SR2 Solutions and co-founder of Aegis Shield **Charles Teel** '00, Texas Academy of Leadership in the Humanities, '05, B.G.S. general studies, '11, M.B.A. business administration, delivered the May 2024 commencement address for the Texas Academy. He lives in Beaumont.

**Shally (Sonnier) Watts** '00, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '07, M.Ed. special education, is director of special programs for Bridge City school district. She and her husband, **Neil** '03, B.B.A. management information systems, live in Bridge City.

Texas Music Educators Association recognized superintendent of Beaumont school district **Shannon (Pier) Allen** '01, M.Ed. administration, '13, Ed.D. educational leadership, as a Distinguished Administrator. She and her husband, **Red** '90, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, live in Beaumont.

The Symphony of Southeast Texas promoted **James Strawther** '01, B.G.S. general studies, to executive director. He and his wife, **Lara (Morales)** '03, B.M. music, who is the choir director at Nederland High School, live in Lumberton.

**Orlando Arriaga** '02, B.S. theatre, performed the role of Pierre in the play The Father at the 4th Wall Theatre in Houston. He and his wife, **Laurie (Sadler)** '01, B.S. theatre, live in Katy.

**Leigh (Judkins) Martin** '02, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '09, M.Ed. administration, teaches math and science at Little Cypress Junior High in Little Cypress-Mauriceville school district. She and her husband, Jeremy, live in Orange.

## Five alumni join board

Five LU alumni were elected to the board of directors of the Beaumont Heritage Society for the 2024-2025 term: JoAnna (Morgan) Truncali '11, B.S. communication, president; Matthew Fischer '11, B.B.A. general business, B.B.A. entrepreneurship, B.B.A. management, '14, M.B.A. business administration, secretary; Katherine Hambright '84, B.B.A. finance, board member; Sandra Castille '77, B.S. speech, board member; and Dan French '73, B.A. economics, honorary board member.

Vidor school district named **Amy (Block) Odom** '02, B.S. kinesiology, '22, M.Ed. educational technology leadership, 2024 Vidor Junior School Teacher of the Year. She lives in Vidor.

Nederland school district named **Maricela "Marcie" Torres** '02, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, 2024 Hillcrest Elementary School Teacher of the Year. She lives in Beaumont.

**Jacob Bennefield** '03, B.B.A. management information systems, is network section director at the Texas Department of Transportation. He and his wife, **Carrie (Dowling)** '11, B.A. American Sign Language, live in Leander.

**Lauren (Dollar) Buckley** '03, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '08, M.Ed. counseling and development, is a school counselor with Vidor High School. She and her husband, Marcus, live in Vidor.

**Nicole (Madden) Lewis** '03, B.S. chemical engineering, is vice president of operations-Americas at Orion Engineered Carbons. She and her husband, **Jacob** '03, B.S. psychology, '10, M.Ed. administration, who is science department chair for Cleveland High School, live in Kingwood.

**Tracie (Hebert) Lutz** '03, B.S. nursing, '19, M.S.N. nursing administration, is the emergency department director at Baptist Hospitals of Southeast Texas. She and her husband, Byron, live in Lumberton.

**Karl Nowotny** '03, B.S. physics, is director of the Mission Training Complex for the Department of Defense. He and his wife, Christy, live in San Antonio.

**Lisa (Guidry) Tarver** '03, B.B.A. accounting, '04, M.B.A. business administration, '23, M.S. management information systems, is a business systems analyst for Motiva. She and her husband, Brandon, live in Groves.

**Chris Theriot** '03, B.S. kinesiology, is head boys track coach and football defensive coordinator at Bridge City High School. He and his wife, **Lindsay (Robichau)** '04, B.S. nursing, who is a registered nurse at Christus St. Elizabeth Hospital, live in Orange.

**Wendy (Crowder) Fournet** '04, B.A. history, earned her Ed.D. in learning and organizational change in August 2024. She is executive vice president/ chief administration officer of Erlanger Health in Chattanooga, Tenn., a teaching hospital affiliated with the University of Tennessee Health Science Center. She and her husband, **John** '90, A.A.S. computer drafting technology, live in

Chattanooga, Tenn.

**Holly Hebert** '04, B.B.A. marketing, is the community engagement liaison at Gulf Credit Union. She lives in Groves.

**David Ochoa Jr.** '04, B.A. political science, '15, M.Ed. counseling and development, is the freshman counselor at Nederland High School. He lives in Vidor.

**Rachael (VonDer Au) Turner** '04, B.S. family and consumer science-interior design, is lead designer in the Architectural Interiors Division at Workplace Solutions. She and her husband, Jason, live in Rosenberg.

**Stacy (McCorkle) Webb** '04, B.S. theatre, teaches theatre at Vidor High School and won the 12News Golden Apple Award. She and her husband, Donald, live in Orange.

**Tony Aguilar Jr.** '05, B.B.A. human resource management, is project manager at Top Maintenance Services. He lives in Groves.

**Elise Becker** '05, B.B.A. marketing, '12, M.B.A. business administration, is inside sales manager at Arlanxeo. She lives in Bridge City.

**Marla (Dale) Gilmore** '05, B.S. communication, '16, M.Ed. educational technology leadership, is assistant superintendent of Hamshire-Fannett school district. She and her husband, **David** '03, B.S. kinesiology, who is sales manager of gas lift and product line manager for PCS Ferguson of ChampionX, live in Hamshire.

Vidor school district named **Staci (Orta) Glach** '05, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '18, M.Ed. administration, 2024 Vidor Middle School Teacher of the Year. She and her husband, Michael, live in Beaumont.

**Carrie (Franklin) Guarnere** '05, B.G.S. general studies, teaches physics at Port Neches-Groves High School. She and her husband, Mark, live in Nederland.

Orangefield school district named health science technology teacher **Jessica (Johnson) Van Huis** '05, B.S. nursing, 2024 Orangefield High School Teacher of the Year. She and her husband, **Jonathan** '13, B.S. biology, live in Orange.

**Kayla (Marcus) White** '05, B.B.A. general business, is executive director of the Southeast Texas Nonprofit Development Center. She and her husband, Bruce, live in Beaumont.

**Trish (Wiggins) Blanchard** '06, B.S. political science, is the business

| CLASS NOTES |



Greg Busceme '79



Station manager of KVLU  
Jason Miller '01



Kevin Clay '15

**After School Special: Alumni Art Exhibition Opening Reception**

The Dishman Art Museum in collaboration with the Office of Alumni Affairs hosted After School Special: The Lamar University Sixth Juried Alumni Art Exhibition juried by Michael Kennaugh '86. The opening reception was held at the Dishman June 14, 2024. Featured artists included Greg Busceme '79, Kevin Clay '15, Ken Mazzu '92, Jason Miller '01 and André Ramos-Woodard '17.

PHOTOS BY GOUTHIER



Stephanie Chadwick, chair, Department of Art and Design; Jerry Thacker; and Magda Villarreal



Jim Hendricks, Kathé (Kovec) Hendricks '76, major gifts officer and LU Public Art Committee co-chair Kim Steinhagen and Roy Steinhagen



Director of the Dishman Art Museum Dennis Kiel, Katharine Carmichael and Keith Carter '70



James Patton '83, LU Ambassador Jocelyn Maldonado and LU Ambassador Estrella Balderas



Patricia (Bolle) Culbertson '91 and retired professor of music Robert Culbertson



Tamia Cooper and Charlie Cooper '83



Hetty (Green) Brown '79; Shannon (Copeland) Figueroa '02, '03, '07, director of alumni affairs and advancement services



Ila Spence '24, Keith Carter '70, Cathy (Marshall) Spence '97 and Emily Lewis '21



Roy Steinhagen, Kim Steinhagen and Rob Clark



Ramona Young and Andy Coughlan '01, '05



Coordinator of alumni affairs Evie Clifton, Cherrie (McVey) Hefty '70, Alan Hefty '69 and Shannon (Copeland) Figueroa '02, '03, '07



Instructor of communication Stephan Malick '95, '18; Greg Busceme '79; and director of the University Press Andy Coughlan '01, '05



Kyra Hall '23, Brandi Hamilton '21 and Kim Steinhagen

operations manager for St. Peter Catholic Church and School. She and her husband, Devon, live in Greenville, N.C.

Congratulations to **Jeania (Swiney) Craus** '06, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, on her retirement from Little Cypress Junior High School as a seventh grade math teacher. She and her husband, John, live in Port Arthur.

**Lori (Kimball) East** '06, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, teaches kindergarten in Nederland school district. She and her husband, Mike, live in Nederland.

**Lainey (Hargroder) Hanna** '06, B.B.A. marketing, '18, M.Ed. administration, is assistant principal of Helena Park Elementary School in Nederland school district. She and her husband, Chris, live in Beaumont.

Nederland school district named reading and math interventionist **Denise (McKeever) Hudson** '06, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, 2024-2025 Helena Park Elementary School Teacher of the Year and district Elementary Teacher of the Year. She and her husband, **Randy** '04, B.B.A. economics, '05, M.B.A. business administration, who is a marine terminal scheduler with Entergy Texas, live in Nederland.

Vidor school district named **Lorelei (Stinnett) Jackson** '06, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '09, M.Ed. administration, 2024 Vidor Elementary School Teacher of the Year. She and her husband, **Austin** '07, B.B.A. accounting, who is controller for Broussard's Mortuary, live in Vidor.

Port Arthur school district named **Jameson Knowles** '06, B.S. exercise science and fitness management, 2024 Teacher of the Year. She is a coach at Monsignor Kelly High School and lives in Port Arthur.

**Christopher Lanier** '06, B.B.A. accounting, is a certified public accountant at FMW P.C. Certified Public Accountants. He lives in Port Arthur.

Bridge City school district named **Michelle (Phillips) Lapeyrolerie** '06, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, 2024 Bridge City Intermediate School Teacher of the Year and Elementary Teacher of the Year. She and her husband, Paul, live in Bridge City.

Congratulations to **Sondra (Coward) Peiffer** '06, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, on her retirement in May from Sour Lake Elementary School in Hardin-Jefferson school district after eight years of service. She and her husband, Neal, live in Lumberton.

**Stephen Reid** '06, B.S. nursing, is a family nurse practitioner at Baptist Hospitals of Southeast Texas. He and his wife, **Geri (Philyaw)** '90, psychology, '04, A.A.S. nursing, who is a peritoneal nurse for Kidney Center of Beaumont, live in Nederland.

Congratulations to **Will Stark** '06, B.B.A. management, and his wife, Barbara, on the birth of their daughter, Samantha. He is global enterprise account manager for Cyrus One, and they live in Dallas.

**Sara (Castro) Tahaney** '06, A.A.S. nursing, is a registered nurse and teaches health science at Bridge City High School. She and her husband, Casey, live in Groves.

**Scott Whitman** '06, B.B.A. human resource management, is a vascular consultant with Boston Scientific. He lives in Houston.

**Joel Love III** '07, B.M. music, is assistant professor of composition at Missouri State University. He and his wife, Amelia, live in Springfield, Mo.

**Oscar Villanueva** '07, B.A. English, is senior bible instructor at Second Baptist School. He lives in Houston.

**Jerry Wallace Jr.** '07, B.F.A. graphic design, '10, M.Ed. educational technology leadership, '14, Ed.D. educational leadership, is dean of student services at Lone Star College-Montgomery. He and his wife, **Belashia (Johnson)** '08, B.S. communication, who is principal injury attorney and a certified mediator with The Wallace Law Firm, live in Humble.

**Josh Yawn** '07, B.S. communication, owns Joshua Productions, which won two national Telly Awards. He and his wife, **Lindsay (Fisher)** '10, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, live in Beaumont.

Broussard's Mortuary promoted **Melanie Lanuza** '08, B.S. graphic design, B.S. communication, to lead designer. She also owns Mel L Creative and lives with her partner, **Nicholas Vikos** '07, B.F.A. graphic design, who is a certified framing expert for The Michaels Companies Inc., in Beaumont.

Gov. Greg Abbott appointed **Joe Markham** '08, B.S. health education, to the Radiation Advisory Board for a term to expire April 16, 2025. He is a lieutenant with the Arlington Fire Department, and he and his wife, Danielle, live in Keller.

Little Cypress Mauriceville school district named **Jamie (Lemaire) Williams** '08, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '11, M.Ed. administration, 2024 Elementary Teacher of the Year. She lives in Bridge City.

**Lindsey (Moore) Fortenberry** '09, B.S. communication, earned her M.B.A. in accounting in May 2024. She is senior accountant for Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, and she and her husband, Jason, live in Calera, Okla.

Congratulations to **Beth Gallaspy** '09, M.A. English, on earning her law degree. She is an equal justice works fellow with Lone Star Legal Aid, and she and her husband, Pete, live in Beaumont.

Nederland school district named librarian **Connie (Martinez) Grogan** '09, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '17, M.Ed. school counseling, 2024-2025 Highland Park Elementary School Teacher of the Year. She and her husband, **William** '16, B.S. kinesiology, who teaches special education at Hamshire-Fannett High School, live in Groves.

Junior League of Beaumont named **Diana (Davis) Miles** '09, B.S. nursing, Sustainer of the Year. She is director of quality for Baptist Hospitals of Southeast Texas. She and her husband, Rodney, live in Beaumont.

**Stephen Parker** '09, B.B.A. marketing, is territory sales manager at Husqvarna. He lives in Lumberton.

ExxonMobil promoted **Julia Rodriguez** '09, B.S. mathematics, B.S. mechanical engineering, to polypropylene global optimization manager. She lives in Houston.

**Sarah (Fleming) St. John** '09, B.S. psychology, '21, M.Ed. administration, '23, Ed.D. educational leadership, is principal of Little Cypress Elementary for the 2024-2025 school year. She and her husband, **Brandon** '11, B.S. electrical engineering, B.S. physics, who works for Motiva Enterprises, live in Orange.

**Lana (Gauthier) Richards** '09, B.B.A. marketing, is a State Farm agent. She and her husband, Jonithan '96, B.B.A. marketing, who owns Park Avenue Cleaners, live in Beaumont. Jonithan was a Cardinal golf letter winner, and they have a second-generation Cardinal running track for LU.

**Kasey (Lawler) Strange** '09, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, teaches English as a second language at Stewart Elementary School in Clear Creek school district. She and her husband, Beau, live in League City.

**Erica (Sanchez) Weatherford** '09, B.B.A. management, teaches in Nederland school district. She and her husband, Wesley, live in Nederland.

**Benjamin Webb** '09, B.S. electrical engineering, who earned his Ph.D. in optics and photonics in 2016, is a laser scientist in the Laboratory for Laser Energetics at the University of Rochester. He and his wife, Lyric, live in West Henrietta, N.Y.

**Heather (Richard) Wiggins** '09, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, '10, A.A.S. nursing, '11, B.S. nursing, teaches health science technology at Silsbee High School and won the 12News Golden Apple Award. She and her husband, James, live in Silsbee.

## 10s

**Brian Blackburn** '10, M.Ed. administration, is head boys basketball coach at Aledo High School. He lives in Fort Worth.

Congratulations to **Amy (Pumphrey)** '10, B.B.A. marketing, '16, M.B.A. business administration, and **Phillip Dillow** '08, B.B.A. marketing, B.B.A. finance, '11, M.B.A. business administration, on the birth of their son, Phelix. She is a career consultant and marketing coordinator for Lamar University's Center for Career and Professional Development, and he is sales manager of Patriot Security Systems. They live in Nederland.

**Christi Grudier** '10, B.S. communication, earned her master's degree in marketing and communication May 8, 2024. She is an instructor of communication for the College of Fine Arts and Communication at Lamar University and owns Southeast Texas College Counseling. She lives in Beaumont.

Vidor school district named **Janelle (Zamora) Haley** '10, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, 2024 Oak Forest Elementary School Teacher of the Year. She and her husband, Dennis, live in Vidor.

**Lyndi (Wells) Keller** '10, B.S. kinesiology, earned a master's degree in theological studies in 2020 and teaches in Seminole school district. She and her husband, Matt, live in Hobbs, N.M.

Port Arthur school district named **Kayla Livingston** '10, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, 2024 Teacher of the Year. She teaches at the Port Arthur Alternative Campus and lives in Port Arthur.

**Paul Offill** '10, M.Ed. administration, is assistant superintendent for administrative services for Midway school district. He lives in Woodway.

**Stacy Rosa** '10, M.Ed. teacher leadership, is principal of Billie Stevenson Elementary School in Rockwall school district. She lives in Rowlett.

**Charles Sadler** '10, M.Ed. administration, is assistant principal of Mesquite High School. He lives in Dallas.

**Dylan Moses-Bennett** '11, B.S. communication, earned a master's degree in professional communication May 11, 2024. She teaches debate in Clear Creek school district and owns Always Big Balloons. She lives in Houston.

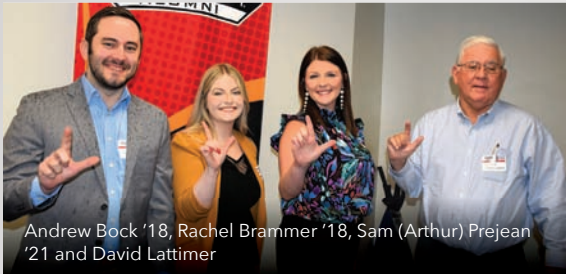
C.O. Wilson Middle School named **Allison (Pokraka) Britten** '11, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, 2023-2024 Teacher of the Year. She teaches eighth grade math, and she and her husband, **Jordan** '12, B.S. biology, '14, M.S. biology, who teaches at West Orange-Stark High School, live in Nederland.

**Kayla Peltier** '11, B.G.S. general studies, who earned her doctorate in pharmacy in 2018, is a pharmacist for the Federal Bureau of Prisons. She lives in Port Arthur.

**T.J. Reed** '11, M.Ed. administration, is executive director of personnel services for Mesquite school district. He lives in Dallas.



Amy (Babineaux) Tarver '99, Josh Smith '06, Elton Hollis and Misty Fountain



Andrew Bock '18, Rachel Brammer '18, Sam (Arthur) Prejean '21 and David Lattimer



Nate Jennings and Chris Lanier '06



Elizabeth Newman and Celine Do '18, '22



Yeneli Castro, Daniel Cruz '18, Ashley Arvie and Marlene Castro



Hetty (Green) Brown '79 and Sharita Gardner '12



Hannah LeTulle '18, Jayna (Lacy) Bonnette '19 and Julia (Rutledge) Rodriguez '21



Kiana (Smith) Lewis '12 and Hannah LeTulle '18

**Elevate Your Professional Image**

Lamar University partnered with the Greater Beaumont Chamber of Commerce and Beaumont Chamber Foundation to offer advice to Elevate Your Professional Image July 25, 2024. Keynote speaker and emcee Craig Escamilla '06, '09, joined guest speakers Sharita Gardner '12, Jamie (Johnson) Hogge '90, '95, and Hannah LeTulle '18.

PHOTOS BY PRATER



Amanda Ellis '24; Jeff Spoeri, associate vice president for university advancement; and Craig Escamilla '06, '09



LU Ambassador Harvest Prater, LU Ambassador Jocelyn Maldonado, major gifts officer for corporate relations Jason Morton and LU Ambassador Jacob Smith



Crystal Jordan, Megan (Ogden) Hanks '15 and Charlee (Chelette) Fitzgerald '18, '19



From left, Melissa (Hill) Lundberg '11, '20; Carise Mills; Rachel Brammer '18; Rachael Raymer; Erik Angelle '01, '07; David Lattimer; Andrew Bock '18



Kristin Stelly, Kelly Davis, Tish (Crider) Cornell '18 and Kylar Kahla

Orangefield school district named Orangefield Junior High School teacher **Danielle (Graffagnino) Sheppard '11**, B.S. communication, '20, M.Ed. education technology leadership, 2023-2024 Teacher and Paraprofessional of the Year. She and her husband, **Corey '10**, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, '14, M.Ed. administration, who is principal of Orangefield Middle School, live in Silsbee.

Junior League of Beaumont named **Lauren (Stewart) Thieme '11**, B.B.A. marketing, the 2024 Active of the Year. She is a realtor with Re/Max Beaumont, and she and her husband, David, live in Beaumont.

**Ashley (Hicks) Thurgood '11**, B.A. history, teaches at Stephen F. Austin Elementary School in Goose Creek school district. She and her husband, **Travis '10**, B.S. electrical engineering, live in Baytown.

**Jeffrey Banner '12**, M.Ed. administration, is executive director of secondary school leadership for McKinney school district. He and his wife, Elizabeth, live in McKinney.

**Camille (Eaton) Briggs '12**, M.A. English, is Region 4/5 media specialist for the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. She and her husband, Lionel, live in Beaumont.

**Bryan Calvert '12**, M.Ed. administration, is principal of Colleyville Middle School. He and his wife, Becca, live in Grapevine.

**Cassandra (Colbert) Ceasar '12**, B.A. English, '20, M.Ed. teacher leadership, teaches at Hardin-Jefferson Junior High School and received the 12News Golden Apple Award. She and her husband, Robert, live in Beaumont.

**Brett Doty '12**, B.B.A. accounting, earned his master's degree in accounting in May 2024. He is senior operations accountant for Sabine Pass LNG of Cheniere Energy Shared Services Inc. and lives in Port Arthur.

**Jill (Moore) Gaston '12**, M.Ed. administration, is chief financial officer of Lufkin school district. She and her husband, Keith, live in Wells.

**Hillary (Gray) Howerton '12**, B.M. music, teaches at Barbers Hill Intermediate North School. She and her husband, Cole, live in Baytown.

**Melissa (Kerby) Kelly '12**, M.Ed. administration, is director of human resources for Celina school district. She and her husband, Jason, live in Van Alstyne.

Congratulations to **Ashley (Austin) '12**, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, and **Alan Kondo '11**, B.S. chemical engineering, on the birth of their daughter, Madelyn. Ashley teaches at Barbers Hill Elementary South, and Alan is process development technical professional at ExxonMobil Corp. They live in Dayton.

**Michael Rose '12**, B.M. music, is head band director at Orangefield High

School. He and his wife, Teri, live in Nederland.

**Elliott Abbey** '13, B.B.A. general business, earned a master of jurisprudence degree in 2023 and is deputy tribal administrator for community development for Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas. He and his wife, Emma, live in Livingston.

**Billye (Lewis) Ardoin** '13, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '17, M.Ed. special education, owns LOVE Natural Remedies and teaches at Dishman Elementary School. She and her husband, Landon, live in Beaumont.

**Kailee (Viator) Batson** '13, B.F.A. studio art, owns Iron Gate Studios as a tattoo artist. She and her husband, Trevor, live in Kountze.

**Kristen "Dani" (Rolen) Buchanan** '13, B.A. chemistry, teaches forensic science at Kemper High School in Fort Bend school district. She was named 2023-2024 Teacher of the Year and takes students on educational journeys to England, Scotland, Ireland, Japan, Greece and Italy. She and her husband, **Phillip** '14, B.S. mathematics, who is a testing coordinator for Fort Bend school district, live in Sugar Land.

**Jordyn Davis** '13, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, teaches third grade at Little Cypress Elementary School. She lives in Orange.

**Garret Duhon** '13, B.S. civil engineering, is department manager at WGA Consulting Engineers. He and his wife, **Candice (Montgomery)** '13, B.S. industrial engineering, '14, M.B.A. business administration, who is commercial manager at Freeport LNG, live in Houston.

**Kyle Hatcher** '13, M.Ed. administration, is principal of Bridgeport High School. He and his wife, Karsten, live in Decatur.

Region V Education Service Center named Vidor Junior High School Principal **Aaron Herrington** '13, M.Ed. administration, 2024 Principal of the Year. He and his wife, **Carly (Bales)** '10, A.A.S. nursing, live in Vidor.

**Morgan (Bennett) King** '13, B.S. health education, earned a master's degree in curriculum and instruction in 2017 and a master's degree in K-12 leadership in 2022. She is assistant dean of education and sciences and director of Heman Sweatt Honors College at Wiley University. She and her husband, Runell, live in Longview.

**Cody Koontz** '13, M.Ed. administration, is principal of Marcus High School. He lives in Flower Mound.

Congratulations to **Jennifer (Horton) Nowak** '13, B.A. American Sign Language, '21 M.Ed. administration, and her husband, Cody, on the birth of their daughter, Hayden. She is a career and college specialist at Foster High School in Lamar school district, and they live in Katy.

**Kayleigh Romero** '13, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '17, M.Ed. educational technology leadership, earned her doctorate in instructional systems design and technology in 2023 and teaches in Magnolia school district, where she was named a 2023-2024 Star Educator. She lives in Magnolia.

**Amber (Loya) Rosilez** '13, B.S. nursing, is a registered nurse with Houston Methodist Hospital. She and her husband, **Peter** '12, B.S. chemical engineering, who is a process control engineer with Enterprise Products, live in Rosenberg.

Bridge City school district named **Lauren (LeBlanc) Bellard** '14, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, 2024, Bridge City Middle School Teacher of the Year. She and her husband, **Christopher** '10, B.B.A. finance, who is a real estate loan officer with Sabine Federal Credit Union, live in Orange.

**Danielle (Sonier) Breland** '14, B.S. family and consumer science-nutrition, dietetics and hospitality, is school psychologist at Etoile Academy Charter School. She and her husband, Cameron, live in Katy.

The Education Magazine named **Mordecai Brownlee** '14, Ed.D. educational leadership, one of its 2024 Top 10 Inspiring Educational Leaders. He is president of Community College of Aurora, and he and wife, Daphne, live in Aurora, Co.

Congratulations to **Jenna (McCain)** '14, B.B.A. accounting, '15, M.S. accounting, and **Cole Durkin** '15, B.B.A. finance, on the birth of their daughter, Lizzie. They live in Orange.

**Lachelle (Lavalais) Edwards** '14, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, is public affairs and communications manager for the Port of Port Arthur. She and her husband, Jacoby, live in Port Arthur.

Congratulations to **Shelby (Price) Giganti** '14, B.B.A. management information systems, and her husband, Michael, on the birth of their son, Bennett. She works for GEICO, and they live in Frederick, Md.

Congratulations to **Julianne (Viator)** '14, B.G.S. general studies, and **Kyle Gillam** '13, B.B.A. human resource management, '14, M.B.A. business administration, on the birth of their son, Louis, and on opening their new business, Mauriceville Feed, in June 2024. Julianne is a realtor with RE/Max, and they live in Mauriceville.

**Sarah Irwin** '14, B.S. political science, '16, M.P.A. public administration, who earned her law degree in 2019, was named a Rising Star in Business/Coporate Law in the Texas Top Women 2024 Magazine. Sarah is an associate attorney with Clausewitz Reyes Attorneys at Law and is a board member of Emerge and Rise. She and her wife, **Alora Berry** '13, B.S. communication disorders, who is a co-founder and dog

trainer at Lead the Way K9 Training, live in Spring Branch.

Junior League of Beaumont recognized **Michelle (Coon) Matheson** '14, B.B.A. human resource management, '16, M.B.A. business administration, with its 2024 Innovators Award. She is a sales professional and website liaison with Alter's Gem Jewelry Co. Inc., and she and her husband, Blake, live in Beaumont.

Congratulations to **Andrea (Rodriguez)** '14, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, and Andy Nguyen '13, B.S. construction management, on the birth of their second son, Noah. She teaches kindergarten at Sabine Pass Elementary School, and he is a construction engineer with Richard Construction Inc. They live in Nederland.

**Brooke (Crowell) Tanton** '14, B.S. speech and hearing sciences, '16, M.S. speech-language pathology, began her new business, Tanton Therapy Solutions. She and her husband, **Stephen** '19, B.S. chemistry, B.S. mechanical engineering, live in Lumberton.

Nederland school district named eighth-grade science teacher **Hue "Kim" Tran** '14, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, 2024-2025 Central Middle School Teacher of the Year. She lives in Port Arthur.

**Sherri (Holt) Anderson** '15, B.S. family and consumer sciences-family studies, is a child welfare supervisor and lives in Eminence, Mo.

Congratulations to **Kaila (Spoonemore) Jackson** '15, B.M. music, '17, M.M. music, and her husband, Anthony, on the birth of their daughter, Amelia Taylor. Kaila is behavior technician at Action Behavior Centers, and they live in Magnolia.

Port Arthur school district named **Maria Price** '15, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, 2024 Teacher of the Year. She teaches first grade English as a second language at Adams Elementary School and lives in Port Arthur.

**Candy Rodriguez** '15, B.S. political science, is director of communications for Visit Lake Charles. She lives in Lake Charles.

**Breanna Ross** '15, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, teaches sixth-grade English in Hamshire-Fannett school district and lives in Beaumont.

Congratulations to **Kristin (Weber) Tudor** '15, M.Ed. administration, '21, Ed.D. educational leadership, and her husband, Jake, on the birth of their daughter, Sutherly. Kristin is assistant principal of Dripping Springs Elementary School, and they live in Austin.

Port Arthur school district named **Cassandra Eldridge** '16, B.G.S. general studies, 2024 Elementary School Teacher of the Year. She teaches fourth-grade English, language arts and reading at Tyrrell Elementary School in Port Arthur school district. She lives in Beaumont.



### Discover the Canadian Rockies

Alumni and Friends traveled by rail through the Canadian Rockies July 3-9, taking the Rocky Mountaineer's all-dome fleet through otherwise inaccessible terrain to unlock the beauty of British Columbia, Alberta and the Canadian Rockies, led by travel partner Orbridge.

From left, front row, Jo Lynne (Feritta) Morgan '75, Cathy (Barnes) Price, Lori (Bone) Myers '82, Jan (Caldwell) Hallmark '76, '83, Fran (Farinella) Strait '73; back row, Montie Morgan '73, Richard Price, Bob Myers '82, Dan Hallmark '65, Henry Strait '74



HOOKS

**LU Softball Alumni Reunion**

Former softball players attended the April 13 LU vs. Texas A&M-Corpus Christi game for a chance to reunite and cheer on the Lady Cardinals.

Attending players back row from left: Brittany (Rodriguez) LeBeouf '17, Kaylee Ancelot '23, Tina (Schulz) Johnson '14, Ashley (McDowell) Nelson '16, Lauren Dannelley '16, Laura Napoli '18, Sarah (Ragsdale) Nash '16, Taylor Duck '15, Baylie (Comeaux) Schindler '16; front row from left: Elise LeBeouf '21, Amie (Cisneros) Goolsby '18, Aaliya Ruiz '23, Jenna Holland '16, Marissa LeJune '15, '17, Corina Thornton '18

Congratulations to **Jordan (Lynch) Fountain** '16, B.S. nursing, for earning her master's degree as a family nurse practitioner. She is an nurse with Texas Children's Hospital, and she and her husband, **Phillip** '14, B.B.A. marketing, live in Lumberton.

**Summer (Lopez) Gibson** '16, M.Ed. educational administration, is director of special education of Central Bowie County Special Education Shared Services for Redwater and Maud school districts. She and her husband, Justin, live in Texarkana.

**Eric Hernandez** '16, B.S. psychology, who earned his graduate certificate in applied statistics in 2023, is assistant professor for the department of Educational Psychology and Neuroscience at the University of Alabama. He lives in Birmingham, Ala.

**Vanessa Hernandez-Iglesias** '16, B.A. modern languages, teaches at Caldwell Elementary. She and her husband, Alberto, live in Beaumont.

Congratulations to **William Hill** '16, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, on his marriage to Lily Crain in May 2024. He is a sales representative with Universal Coin & Bullion Ltd., and they live in Beaumont.

**Matthew Hurst** '16, M.Ed. administration, is head football coach at Live Oak Classical School. He and his wife, Jessica, live in Lorena.

Vidor High School named **Maegan White** '16, B.A. English, '18, M.A. English, '21, M.B.A. business administration, 2024 Teacher of the Year. She lives in Vidor.

Port Arthur school district named **Ariana (Jones) Bates** '17, B.S. communication-broadcasting, 2024 Teacher of the Year for Travis Elementary. She is an instructional coach at Port Acres Elementary School,

and she and her husband, Chris '08, B.G.S. general studies, who is constable for Jefferson County Precinct 2, live in Port Arthur.

**Kristen (Bradford) Bolser** '05, A.A.S. nursing, '15, B.S. nursing, '17, M.S.N. nursing education, is a VN program instructor with Vista College. She and her husband, Johnathon, live in Beaumont.

Congratulations to **Kaitlin (Diaz) Hall** '17, B.S. family and consumer sciences-fashion retailing/merchandising and her husband, Troy, on the birth of their son, Jett. They live in Humble.

Port Arthur school district named **Denise (Alexander) Anderson** '08, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, 2024 Secondary Teacher of the Year. She teaches at Memorial High School and she and her husband, Demar, live in Port Arthur.

**Andre Harness** '17, B.M. music performance, leads the Andre Harness Quartet and hosts Friday Night Jazz on 91.3 KVLU public radio. He and his wife, **Taryn** '16, B.B.A. general business, B.B.A. entrepreneurship, B.B.A. management, who is office administrator for Social Solutions, live in Beaumont.

Botkeeper promoted **Andrea (Rugg) Lee** '17, B.B.A. finance, B.B.A. economics, '18, M.B.A. business administration, to customer success specialist. She and her husband, **Christopher** '15, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, who teaches and coaches at Sartartia Middle School, live in Richmond, Texas.

**Kaysi (Cox) Manuel** '17, B.S. communication, who earned her master's degree in library science in 2022, is librarian at Stafford Middle School. She and her husband, Brandon, live in McKinney.

Beaumont school district named **Emily (Jacobs) Aguilar** '18, B.A. modern languages, 2024-2025 Secondary Teacher of the Year. She teaches Spanish at Early College High School in the Beaumont school district. She and her husband, **Ramiro** '18, B.S. mechanical engineering, live in Beaumont.

**Taylor Allen** '18, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, teaches second grade reading and social studies and is the cheer coach at Roy Guess Elementary and received the 12News Golden Apple Award. She lives in Beaumont.

**Seth Barrett** '18, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, teaches history. He and his wife, Jessica, live in Holly Lake Ranch.

Texas Rural Education Association named superintendent of Como-Pickton school district **Greg Bower** '18, Ed.D. educational leadership, 2024 Superintendent of the Year. He lives in Big Sandy.

**Brooke Chilla** '18, B.S. political science, earned her law degree in 2021 and is a lawyer and public defender for the Burleigh County North Dakota Public Defender's Office. She lives in Kulm, N.D.

**Daniel Cruz** '18, B.G.S. general studies, owns Cruz Events, which was a finalist for the Better Business Bureau 2024 Torch Award for Ethics in the micro division. He and his life partner, Adam, live in Nederland.

Samsung Austin Semiconductor promoted **Katie Deaton** '18, B.S. chemical engineering, to senior engineer. She lives in Austin.

**Demi (Laney) Engman** '18, M.P.A. public administration, is director of planning and community development for the city of Beaumont. She and her husband, **Chase** '15, B.S. political science, who is the assistant city attorney for the city of Beaumont, live in Beaumont.

Congratulations to **Charlee (Chelette)** '18, B.B.A. marketing, '19, M.B.A. business administration, on her marriage to Jake Fitzgerald in June 2024. She is community impact officer for Neches Federal Credit Union. They live in Port Neches.

**Garrett Gaspard** '18, B.S. communication-corporate, owns Avenue Axe in Port Neches and received the Lamar State College-Port Arthur Small Business Development Center Award. Also, the Port Neches Chamber of Commerce named Avenue Axe "Small Business of the Year. Congratulations to Garrett and his wife, Taylor, on the birth of their son Emmett. They live in Port Neches.

Congratulations to **Paige (Booker) Lafour** '18, B.S. family and consumer science-nutrition, dietetics and hospitality, and her husband, Ross, on the birth of their daughter, Ruby. They live in Dallas.

**Meagan (Tantillo) Ouzts** '18, B.M. music education, is head band director at Orangefield Junior High School. She and

her husband, **Dalton** '19, B.S. industrial engineering, '22, M.B.A. business administration, who is project manager for The Reynolds Company, live in Port Neches. Congratulations to them on the birth of their daughter, Annie.

Congratulations to **Brice (Evans) Rutledge** '18, B.S. mechanical engineering, and her husband, Ryan, on the birth of their son, Rush. Brice is project controls engineer at ExxonMobil Corp., and they live in Beaumont.

Congratulations to **Angelica (Figueroa)** '18, B.S. family and consumer sciences-nutrition, dietetic, hospitality, '19, M.S. nutrition, and **Michael Smith Jr.** '17, B.S. nursing, on their marriage in May 2024. She is a registered dietician with Medical Center of Southeast Texas, where he is a registered nurse. They live in Port Neches.

**Tayla Thibodeaux** '18, B.S. biology, earned her master's degree in physician assistant studies Dec. 2023. She lives in Houston.

Congratulations to **Haili (Stratton) Villa** '18, B.B.A. marketing, and her husband, Arturo, on the birth of their daughter, Evelyn. Haili owns TWFG Villa Insurance, and they live in Nederland.

**Joseph Waldron** '18, Ed.D. educational leadership, is deputy superintendent of Abilene school district. He and his wife, Marijon, live in Abilene.

Port Arthur school district named **Grasia Zepeda** '18, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, 2024 Teacher of the Year. She teaches first grade at Washington Elementary School and lives in Port Arthur.

Congratulations to **Tristen Anding** '19, B.A. political science, for earning his law degree May 4, 2024. He is an associate attorney with Germer, Beaman and Brown and lives in Port Arthur.

**Jolie Basye** '19, B.S. communication-speech education, is head volleyball coach for Hamshire-Fannett High School. She lives in Hamshire.

**Curtis Bilyeu** '19, M.Ed. clinical mental health counseling, is a clinical manager for a mental health facility. He lives in Crandall.

**James Bowen** '19, B.B.A. accounting, is a certified public accountant with Cavett, Turner & Wyble. He and his wife, **Sheree (Fails)** '20, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, who teaches kindergarten at Regina Howell Elementary School, live in Nederland.

**Tyler Burkham** '19, B.M. music education, is band director of Iowa Colony High School and tour manager of Blue Stars Drums and Bugle Corps. He and his wife, McKenzie, live in Rosharon.

Seamless.AI promoted **Shelby (Bickham) Curl** '19, B.S. criminal justice, to culture and talent manager. She and her husband, Jordan '20, B.S. biology, live in Conroe.



Congratulations to **Cade Johnson** '19, B.S. biology, B.S. exercise science and fitness management, '20, M.B.A. business administration, on earning his medical degree May 10, 2024. He and his wife, Mary, live in Houston.

Congratulations to **Kaitlyn Smith** '19, B.S. political science, for earning her law degree May 11, 2024. She is an associate attorney for MehaffyWeber and lives in Beaumont.

**Brenton Stidevent** '19, M.Ed. administration, is assistant principal at Needville Junior High School. He and his wife, Alyssa, live in Boling.

**Daniel Valdez Jr.** '19, B.A. English, '21, M.A. English, is an instructor of English at Lamar Institute of Technology. He lives in Beaumont.

## 20s

Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe promoted **Clarence Anderson** '20, B.S. communication, who earned his master's degree in organizational leadership in 2024, to systems administrator. Anderson also co-owns Moments, Memories N Such, a party supply and rental shop. He lives in Houston.

Congratulations to **Candace (Hebert)** '20, B.S. exercise science and fitness management, who earned her doctorate in occupational therapy in 2023, and **Brandon Baumgardner** '21, B.S. exercise science and fitness management, on the birth of their son, Luke, April 2024. Candace is an occupational therapist at Texas Children's Hospital and Brandon is a patrol division officer for the Houston Police Department. They live in Conroe.

**Natalie Connally** '20, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, published a her children's book, *An Old Fox is Not Easily Snared*, through Lamplight Publishing. She and her husband, **Travis** '12, B.S. mechanical engineering, who is an application engineer for Flowserve Flow Solutions Group, live in Silsbee.

**Tammy DeLeon** '20, M.Ed. administration, is principal of Park Glen Elementary School in Keller school district. She and her husband, Joseph, live in Fort Worth.

**Lauren (Dean) Guillory** '20, B.S. sociology, teaches for Silsbee school district. She and her husband, Colton, live in Lumberton.

**Mary Kim** '20, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, '21, M.B.A. business administration, is program coordinator at MD Anderson Cancer Center. She lives in Beaumont.

**Michael Lawson** '20, B.G.S. general studies, is a defensive back with the Southwest Kansas Storm in the Arena Football League. He lives in Castro Valley, Calif.

**Hannah (Hudgins) Lyons** '20, B.S. communication–film studies, is outreach and digital media events specialist with the University of Texas at Dallas. She and her husband, **Cedric** '18, B.S. communication–film studies, who is a TV commercial and motion graphics video editor with RadioVision LP, live in Dallas.

**Kelsie McClenon** '20, B.S. communication–broadcasting, is a producer for KFDM 6/Fox4 News. She lives in Groves.

**Reginal McGowan II** '20, M.Ed. administration, is principal of Chapel Hill High School. He lives in Tyler.

**Lee Vi Moses** '20, Ed.D. educational leadership, is director of student services for Belton school district. He lives in Little River Academy.

**Marlie Peavey** '20, is a surgical service line coordinator–neurology at Medical City Arlington. She lives in Arlington.

**Jackie (Sanderson) Richards** '20, B.G.S. general studies, teaches seventh-grade reading at Groves Middle School. She and her husband, Daniel '12, B.B.A. management, who is a process operator for ARLANXEO, live in Groves.

**Shea Sapp** '20, B.S.W. social work, is an administrator with The Wood Group. She lives in Silsbee.

**Eduardo Trevino** '20, B.S. mechanical engineering, is senior mechanical engineer at Powell Industry. He and his wife, **Juliana (Ocampo Andrade)** '19, B.B.A. general business, B.B.A. management, live in Houston.

Congratulations to **Abbey Chirafis** '21, B.S. political science, for earning her law degree May 11, 2024. She is an associate attorney at MehaffyWeber and lives in Port Neches.

**Andrea Figueroa** '21, B.S.W. social work, is a bilingual informational community specialist with BakerRipley. She lives in Austin.

**Stephanie (Kirby) Harris** '21, M.B.A. business administration, is director of communications and marketing at Baptist Hospitals of Southeast Texas. She and her husband, **Joshua** '06, B.S. kinesiology, who teaches at Fletcher Elementary School, live in Beaumont.

**Darren Erwin** '21, B.S. university studies multidisciplinary, is president and CEO of the Southeast Texas Better Business Bureau. He and his life partner, Don-Paul, live in Silsbee.

The governor of California has appointed **Ethel Hernandez** '21, M.S. criminal justice, to serve as judge in the Ventura County Superior Court. She lives in Camarillo, Calif.

**Kacy (Wilson) Hodges** '21, M.Ed. counseling and development, is a licensed professional counselor with Hays Behavioral Health Group. She and her husband, Brian, live in The Woodlands.

Bridge City school district named **Heather Ivey** '21, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, 2024 Bridge Elementary School Teacher of the Year. She lives in Bridge City.

Congratulations to **Nicole Lavergne** '21, B.S. speech and hearing sciences, '23, M.S. speech language–pathology, on earning her certificate of clinical competency and publishing her first research article, "In the Driver's Seat: Narrative-Based Counseling in Aphasia." She lives in Beaumont.

**Ashley (Williams) Lorio** '20, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, teaches special education at St Charles Parish Public Schools. She and her husband, Armando, live in Hahville, La.

Congratulations to **Katey McCall** '21, B.S. political science, for earning her law degree May 11, 2024. She is an attorney with the Orange County District Attorney's Office and an adjunct instructor of political science at Lamar University. She lives in Orange.

**Cassidy Ricker** '21, B.S.W. social work, earned her master's degree in social work and is a licensed master social worker. She lives in Beaumont.

**Erin Rodriguez** '21, M.S. criminal justice, is a digital forensic analyst with Waste Management. She lives in Houston.

TotalEnergies promoted **Cristian Romero** '21, B.B.A. finance, B.B.A. economics, to products shipping and trading operations. He lives in Geneva, Switzerland.

**Macie (Saleme)** '21, B.S. nursing, married **Jake Piekenbrock** '21, B.S. nursing, April 6, 2024. Both Macie and Jake are registered nurses at Christus St. Elizabeth Hospital. They live in Port Arthur.

**Amber Smith** '21, B.G.S. general studies, teaches first- and second-grade math at First Academy in Silsbee and won the 12News Golden Apple Award. She lives in Silsbee.

**Luke Wallis** '21, B.B.A. finance, B.B.A. management, '22, M.B.A. business administration, M.S. management information systems, is financial analyst at Toshiba International Corp. He lives in Cypress.

**Cailin (Harper) Walters** '21, B.G.S. general studies, owns The Venue at Belle Oaks, which was a finalist for the Better Business Bureau 2024 Torch Award for Ethics in the micro division. Congratulations to her on the birth of her daughter, Collins. They live in Port Bolivar.

**Heather (Fortenberry) Beaty** '22, M.Ed. special education, is special education coordinator for Mesquite school district. She and her husband, Brandon, live in Garland.

**Katelyn Long** '22, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, teaches second grade at Highlands Elementary School. She and her fiancé, **Brandon Garrison** '24,

B.S. chemical engineering, who is an assistant chemical engineer for Burns and McDonnell, live in Houston.

**Monique Medina** '22, B.S. university studies multidisciplinary, earned a master's degree in healthcare administration in August. She lives in Houston.

**Jamie Mondragon** '22, M.B.A. business administration, is associate athletic director of marketing, fan engagement and creative content at Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi. She lives in Corpus Christi.

**Craig Turner** '22, B.S. criminal justice, '23, M.S. criminal justice, is chief deputy for Jefferson County Precinct 2. He and his wife, **Nadria (Abdullah)** '11, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, who teaches at Abraham Lincoln Fine Arts Academy in Port Arthur school district, live in Port Arthur.



**Amber Wilson** '22, B.S. university studies multidisciplinary, teaches kindergarten at Kountze Elementary School. She lives in Kountze.

**Christopher Johnson** '23, M.Ed. education, teaches forensics at Arp High School and serves on Arp City Council. He lives in Arp.

**Nelda (Gordon) Sangwin** '23, B.S. political science, teaches technical writing at Bob Hope High School. She and her husband, Jared, live in Nederland.

Bob Hope High School named **Cavan Scalf** '23, B.A. history, 2024 Rookie Teacher of the Year. He teaches world history and coaches baseball. He lives in Orange.

**Margo Eugenio** '24, B.A. English, teaches English at Bridge City High School. She lives in Mansfield.

Kaitlyn Lawrence '24, B.S. family studies, teaches art at Bridge City Middle School. She lives in Orange.

**Julie (Pack) McMahon** '24, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, teaches fourth grade English, language arts and reading at China Elementary School. She lives in Lumberton with her husband, Ty.

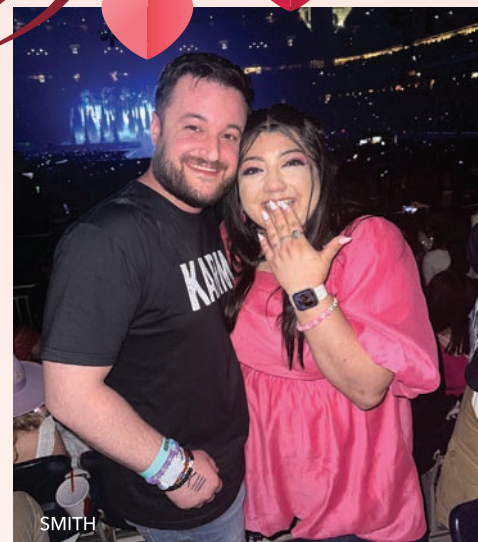
**Joshua Romero** '24, B.B.A. marketing, is enrollment marketing coordinator for the College of Arts and Sciences. He lives in Port Neches.

**Melissa Tan** '24, B.S. civil engineering, is an engineer at INEOS in the safety, health and environmental department. She lives in Seabrook.

CARDINAL  
*love stories*  
 #matchmadeatlu

**Hannah (DeRouen) '16 and Spencer Shipman '17**

We met at Lamar University while we were both studying in the Psychology Department. Spencer was a graduate student, and I was an undergraduate. I spotted Spencer outside my classroom one day and for the next few months, everyone joked about how I had “the hots” for the grad student. After finally getting fed up with all the teasing, I added Spencer on Facebook and the flirting began! Spencer offered to buy me a drink, and I said, “I’m too busy. Maybe we could hang out over Spring Break if you’re lucky.” To which he replied, “I’ll start looking for a four-leaf clover.” After a few weeks without talking, the very first day of Spring Break, I was surprised to find a message from Spencer that said, “I found my four-leaf clover.” You could say the rest is history, but then you might forget about the two graduations, two years of long-distance communication, two years of waiting for Spencer to ask me to be his girlfriend (except that he didn’t actually ask), five different jobs, moving in together, buying a dog, COVID-19, buying a house, buying another dog, the monthly date nights, and a million other adventures both big and small! However, it all led to Dec. 17th, 2021, when Spencer (finally) asked me to marry him—yes, he actually asked this time. Over the past six years, we have enjoyed every second of making memories together, and we cannot wait to celebrate our love with all of you as we ring in the new year together!



**Alycia (Ulrich) '14 and Wade Konvicka '14**

I cheered at LU from 2010 to 2014, served as captain from 2013 to 2014 and met my husband who played baseball from 2011 to 2014, Phillip “Wade” Konvicka Jr. We were married Oct. 24, 2020, had our daughter, Wilhelmina, the next August and had our son, Kohen, in April 2023. We became close friends in 2012 and did not start dating until I moved to Houston and were reconnected in 2017. We credit LU for connecting us. I had many LU alumni cheerleaders stand by my side, Destini (Ray) Rios '14, Andrea (Rugg) Lee '17, '18, Tayler (Kurek) Jones '14, and our cheer coach Kristyn (Henderson) Borgobello '07. Wade had two baseball alumni, Kyle Tucker -14 and Hunter Perry '15 serve as groomsmen. We wanted to share our story. Thanks so much and LET’S GO LU!





**Erin (Wilrich) '16 and Travis Wicker '14, '17**

We met while studying for anatomy and physiology class and became engaged March 20, 2022. We were married Nov. 29, 2023. I graduated with a B.S. in nursing, and Travis graduated with a B.S. in exercise science and fitness management and a Master of Public Health. We both work at the Texas Medical Center in Houston.

**Darian (Askew) '18 and Malik Muhammad -17**

We met in the fall of 2015 in Morris Hall while I was passing our friends dorm. We then had one of our first dates at the D-Hall and shortly made our engagement official on Oct. 23, 2015. We were married Oct. 23, 2023, and now have one son. Both of us work for CenterPoint Energy and recently represented CenterPoint at an LU career fair with our fellow classmate, Melanie Hubbard '19.

**Angelica (Figueroa) '18, '19, and Michael Smith '16**

We didn't exactly meet at Lamar but it was both our educations at Lamar that brought us together! He graduated from Lamar's nursing school and I graduated with a degree in nutrition and dietetics. He went on to become a registered nurse for the medical center, and I became a registered dietitian who was also hired on at the medical center. We worked on the same floor and that's how we met! We honestly owe it to Lamar for putting us on the right career paths that eventually led to us meeting. We actually got engaged at the Taylor Swift Concert April 21, 2023, and were married in 2024!



**Linda (Paules) '76 and John Caillavet III '75**

John and I met in 1973 when we both left our Spanish class. He talked to me about the previous semester of Spanish. We parted ways but ended up in the same statistics class the next period, and we became lab partners. I had a serious boyfriend at the time for the previous two and a half years, but John still walked with me after classes. I soon realized that he was very sweet and kind, and I wanted to get to know him better! When I did, I ended my previous relationship so I could exclusively date John. He accepted a job as the overnight guard at Gentry Hall, where I lived in my sorority wing (Delta Zeta). Nine months later, he asked me to marry him. I said, "Can I think about it?" Then he pulled out a ring and said, "I was kinda hoping we would get engaged tonight!" I accepted the ring, and we got married July 20, 1975. We have been married 49 years, have four children and seven grandchildren. We have lived in Beaumont the entire time. John worked as a chemist and then a laboratory supply sales rep. I worked as a registered medical technologist, flute teacher, youth choir director, hand bell choir director and middle school band director. I still teach flute—just started my 46th school year! Thank you Lamar University for bringing us together!



Submit your Cardinal Love Story at [alumni@lamar.edu](mailto:alumni@lamar.edu)



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**T**he first college graduation I ever attended was my mother's. I felt a tremendous sense of pride and admiration for her hard work and dedication, although as a teenager I did not have a full understanding of her sacrifices. I am sure it was extremely difficult for her, as a single, working parent. She worked nights so she would be able to attend class during the day. Looking back, I am unsure when she really slept or had any time for herself, but she managed to support us and take care of our home and little family. She graduated from the then-named Department of Nursing in 1986 with an associate degree in nursing and took her national licensure exam shortly after graduation, becoming a registered nurse. She was the first person in her family to attend college. Mom had previously served 16 years as a licensed vocational nurse, spending most of her time in the critical care areas of the intensive care unit and the emergency room. She was very honored to call herself a graduate of Lamar University.

That sense of Lamar pride continued as I



followed in her footsteps and was accepted into the same nursing program, graduating in 1997 with a Bachelor of Science in nursing. Of course, she attended my graduation. Shortly before graduation, student nurses have a ceremony where they receive a nursing pin welcoming them to the profession, and she was able to present me with mine while I wore the one she had received in 1986. It was a very special moment for both of us. Shortly after, I had the privilege of working with her in the same facility and for the first time, I got to see what others did. Simply put, she was extraordinary . . . not only was she extremely knowledgeable in her

field, but she was a true advocate for those for whom she cared and beside whom she worked, exemplifying LU's Dishman School of Nursing's motto, "A spirit of caring—A vision of excellence."

I now have worked at Lamar as faculty in the JoAnne Gay Dishman School of Nursing for the past 13 years. I feel like I have come full circle for both of us. I have a great sense of pride when people ask where I work, remembering the long history not only of my family but also of the nursing program. This year, the Dishman School of Nursing celebrates 50 years of service in the community. We held a celebration in November to honor those who have graduated. Unfortunately, I had to celebrate without her in attendance. She lost a short and fierce battle with cancer in 2022. Up until the end, she kept her nursing license active, having served for 52 years.

LU's Dishman School of Nursing has been the foundation of nursing for both of us in the profession we have loved and served. I am proud to call myself alumna and even prouder to be on the faculty for such a prestigious institution.