

CARDINAL

# CADENCE

THE MAGAZINE OF LAMAR UNIVERSITY

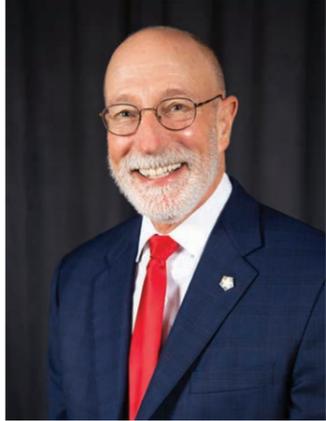
VOL. 48, NO. 1 | SUMMER 2020



*Red+White*  
**TOGETHER**



| FROM THE **PRESIDENT** |



**T**his issue of Cadence is different from others you may have read in the past as it is shaped by a collective experience no one could have foreseen for 2020. As you well know, COVID-19 has affected all of us, some more than others. This issue focuses on just a few of the many stories to unfold throughout our community during this time. Lamar University's alumni, faculty, staff and students have strived to find solutions and be proactive in the face of uncertainty.

One of the things we are thankful for is being a leader in online education. This provided us an advantage when 100% of our classes went to an online delivery system during the last semester. LU faculty, such as those featured in this issue from the College of Fine Arts and Communication, had the opportunity to showcase their unique and creative teaching methods while our digital

learning platform helped K-12 educators across the nation so they could continue teaching during the pandemic. Three alumni who are also educators, Aline Ayala, Stu Guthrie and Barbara Ybarra, describe how they translated face-to-face learning into a digital environment.

Other areas on campus are assisting our community. LU's Small Business Development Center is working with struggling local small businesses. Alumni are likewise engaged, in Southeast Texas and beyond, helping in different industries affected by the quarantine. Lauren Martin is in event management at The Laurels in Beaumont and is guiding couples whose plans were altered or postponed. Megan Mistic works at Buckner Calder Woods senior care home and plans activities to keep all of the residents busy, especially in the face of social distancing. Nutrition and Senior Services' CEO Janci Kimball maintained food needs for their clients by providing a drive-through service while Mary Beth Jones and Fred Antoine ran a sack lunch ministry out of St. Anthony Cathedral Basilica. Justin McCullough used e-commerce to create Curb-to-Car, an application that delivers food and various goods to individuals.

Our alumni also are serving others through their careers as nurses, police officers and emergency medical technicians, among other professions, and developing products to help these hometown heroes. Charles Daleo created a hand sanitizer provided at no cost to those on the front lines while Kaylynn Tkachev sewed headbands with buttons on them for medical personnel to attach to their masks for more comfort during long shifts. Judith Smith served as manager and spokesperson for the coronavirus testing center at Jack Brooks Regional Airport in her role as director of the Port Arthur City Health Department. Her work not only contributed to early testing and monitoring but also for doing critical work in contact tracing for those who were positive with the virus.

Articles in this issue also feature students making masks through 3-D printing, staff like Kelsey Baden who keeps spirits high as Lamar University's cheerleading team coordinator and alumni such as Daniella DeLaRue who volunteered in the Peace Corps before being evacuated as a result of COVID-19. I encourage you to read these interesting and timely stories as well as find out more information about how the Cardinal Emergency Fund positively affected two of the many students for whom your support was key.

Enjoy the sneak peek on the back cover of our new Welcome Center's progress, and as we go to press with this issue of Cadence, I wish each of you and your loved ones continued health and happiness.

With Cardinal Pride,

**Kenneth R. Evans**, President



**CARDINAL CADENCE**  
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VOL 48, NO. 1 | SUMMER 2020

Cardinal Cadence is published by Lamar University, a member of The Texas State University System and an affirmative action, equal opportunity educational institution.

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Cardinal Cadence (USPS 017-254) is published by Lamar University, 211 Redbird Lane, Beaumont, Texas 77710.

Lamar University is an equal opportunity/affirmative action educational institution.

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*At Lamar University, challenges identified are challenges met, as our friends, alumni, students, staff and faculty know well. Throughout hurricane response and recovery, economic downturns and coronavirus response, we have gathered as a community, identified actions to take and ultimately, successfully, overcome the obstacles. This issue of Cadence shares some of the stories of our Cardinals and how they responded with heart and hand when called.*



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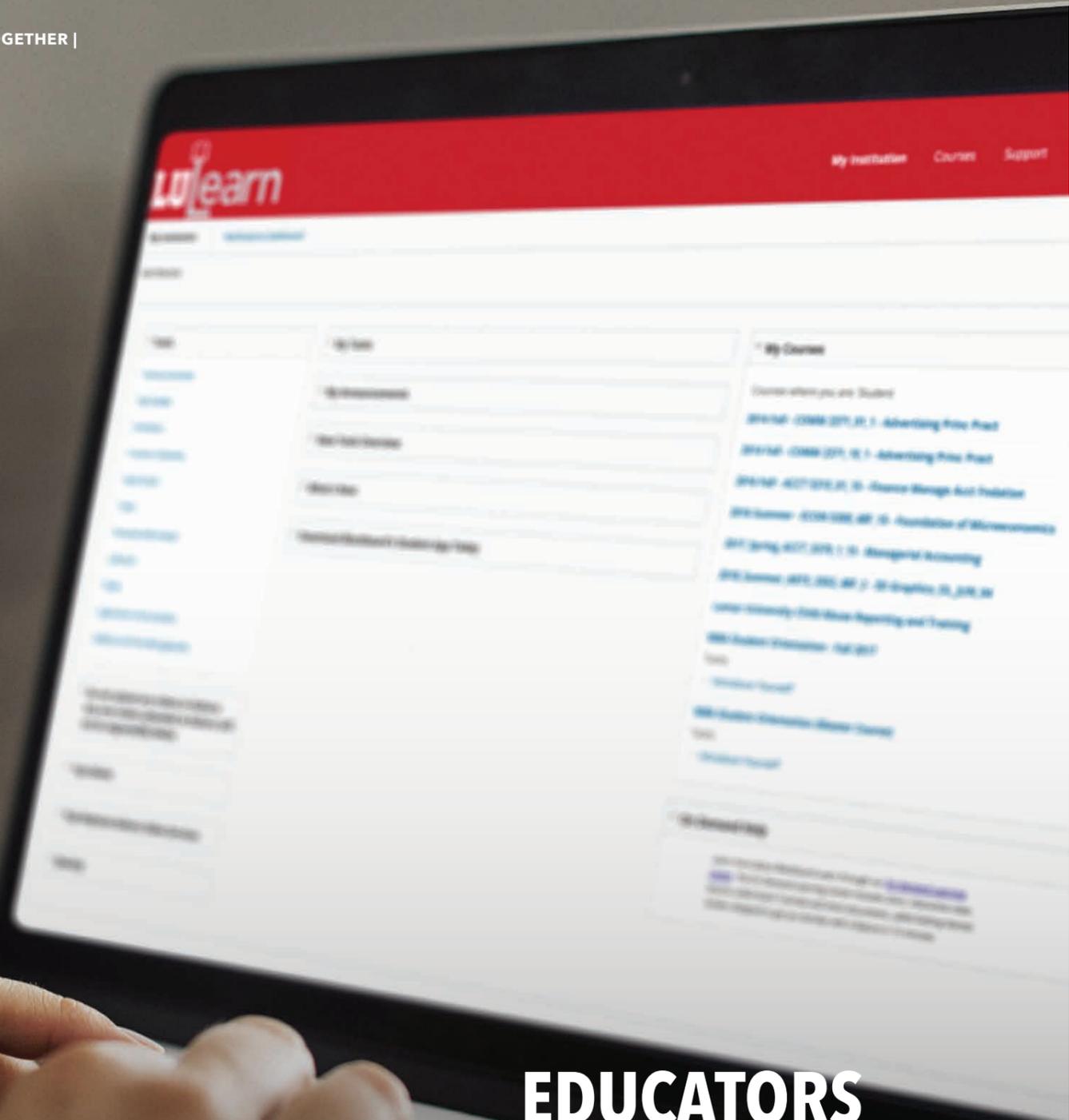
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# EDUCATORS USING PLATFORMS LU PIONEERED

by Shelly Vitanza

For resources, visit  
[lamar.edu/learnyourwaycadence](http://lamar.edu/learnyourwaycadence)

## Lamar University's more than 20 years of an overall 25-year effort to provide education delivered directly to the student has played a critical role in transforming the industry and ensuring a continuity of learning during the pandemic.

In 2005, with a few years of experience in the online space, the university was positioned to build a robust online program when Hurricane Rita disabled the physical campus.

"We were one of the early pioneers in the concept of providing a critical and value-added dimension to higher education by delivering curriculum to students at their location," said Kenneth Evans, LU president. "The reason many universities across the country and K-12 schools in Texas were able to flip a switch, transforming their campuses to virtual classrooms during the COVID-19 crisis, is because early pioneers like Lamar University, through experience and thorough investigation and implementation and continuous analysis, developed systems that have now been disseminated across the industry."

In 2007, LU launched three online master's degree programs in the College of Education and Human Development with huge success. Since that time, the University has expanded its online degrees to include programs in criminal justice, school counseling, computer science, cybersecurity, communication, nursing, business and a Bachelor of Science in technology.

In fact, since launching into the online space, 21,741 students have earned degrees online—2,593 bachelor's degrees, 18,592 master's degrees and 556 doctorates.

"We now have 18 undergraduate programs, 21 master's, one doctoral program and six certifications online," said Brenda Nichols, interim provost and vice president for academic affairs. "We have 4,000 graduate education students online across eight different areas and another 3,500 graduate and undergraduate students totally online."

LU's communication platforms for admissions as well as the ongoing student experience are streamlined. Online students have access to the same learning aids as on-campus students, including library-enhanced learning platforms, tutoring, coaching and advising.

"The same faculty members who teach on-campus classes also instruct the online students," said Nichols. "We don't use teaching assistants to teach courses, and we try to maintain small class sizes in order to meet the needs of our students."

As a result of LU's now vast experience in the online curriculum space and its students' exposure to alternative learning methodologies (Many of LU's on-campus students also take online courses. Pre-pandemic, approximately, 5,000 of the 8,000 on-campus students take at least one course online.), the university was able to move to a comprehensive online program in the face of the pandemic. Now every student is taking online courses, from music to mechanical engineering.

"The beauty of the platforms for digital learning environments is they are now being used by universities and colleges across the globe in response to the global pandemic," said Evans. "Our early efforts were to make this transformative offering available

for students in the format that works best for them, never considering that a day would come when online education was the only option, as has been the case during the pandemic."

## LU's educational faculty and alumni assume leadership roles during pandemic

When 90% of the world's schools closed in 185 countries and 1.6 billion children were sent home to finish the school year via alternate instructional methods, Lamar University's education leadership faculty and its education alumni assumed a leadership role more than 20 years in the making.

After a near seamless transition to a comprehensive online platform during the COVID-19 pandemic, LU's educational faculty began supporting educators across the country, and LU's alumni became leaders in their districts.

Krystal Hinerman, clinical assistant professor of educational research; Ken Young, associate professor of educational leadership in the Center for Doctoral Studies of Educational Leadership; and Cindy Cummings, assistant professor of educational leadership, represent more than 30 years' experience in both PK-12 and higher education online teaching, course development and program planning. They led the cause to help individual educators and entire districts transition to online platforms.

"The training we have received and the years of experience teaching online has prepared us for providing support in these unique times," said Hinerman. "We've looked at this as a state-wide effort in response to needs specifically for school districts but have addressed specific requests also, and all remotely."

Hinerman, Young and Cummings offered free webinars to demonstrate how to teach online using streaming video tools and provided tips on how to set-up and conduct instruction with students in an interactive format. Dozens of Lamar University educational leadership faculty joined the effort to support educators across the nation and developed additional webinars based on feedback from teachers and districts.

"It is in this spirit that we felt compelled to do what we could to support them in a manner that would not burden them or their institutions financially or otherwise," said Young. "We're not doing this as consultants for money or notoriety, but because we care about them and the success of the students they teach. In our opinion, it is a practical way to bridge the university and communities we serve to make a positive difference in our state and beyond."

Since the initial webinar, the team has developed additional webinars based upon the feedback they've received. They have deployed links to recorded meetings and tutorials to anyone who requests them. They are curating resources to support Texas educators and administrators and to be made available to whomever needs them.

"Of course, we're supporting Lamar University's faculty, our students and alumni as many of them make this transition to online teaching and learning, but we're also continuing to support the community members who are reaching out to us individually regarding support and resources for this process," said Young.



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LAMAR UNIVERSITY

- Market Expansion & Research Grants
- Client Operations
- Strategic Market Network
- Marketing Plan Development
- International Trade
- Start-Up Assistance
- Financial Analysis and Assistance
- Loan Package Assembly
- Feasibility Analysis
- Business & Financial Plan Development

## Small Business Development Center: Taking care of business amid coronavirus pandemic

by Shelbe Rodriguez

Just a few weeks ago, the World Health Organization declared the rapidly spreading coronavirus a pandemic, causing a paradigm shift in businesses across the globe. David Mulcahy, director of the LU Small Business Development Center, says only those business owners who have planned well in advance will come out on top.

“As a business owner, even before a disaster, you need to have at least six months of operating cash just in case something happens. Those who do not will be in trouble,” Mulcahy said. “About 60% of businesses have survived, and 40% are out there trying to figure out what’s going on and how they can get

out of this situation.” Those businesses that have financially prepared will have easy access to money, capital and other resources because, according to Mulcahy, they are healthier companies. For those businesses that are struggling significantly from the social disruption, the SBDC offers funding options and relief resources.

The SBDC provides the road map for current and future business owners with free consultations, daily webinars on U.S. Small Business Administration Recovery Assistance as well as low-cost training programs and seminars. The center also serves as a link between the SBA and the consumer with the main goal of relaying information from the legislature and

providing future business owners with current information so that they can act appropriately.

According to the SBA, capital access is among the top common issues that small businesses will face during this time. To combat this, on Mar. 27, President Donald Trump signed into law the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act, which contains \$376 billion in relief for American workers and small businesses. The SBA has developed the Paycheck Protection Program, Economic Injury Disaster Loan Emergency Advance and SBA Express Bridge Loans and provides SBA debt relief for small businesses in economic distress. Sam’s Club, Google, LiftFund,

AssistHer, Restaurant Strong, Hello Alice and local community grants also are being distributed immediately to small business owners affected by the economic shutdown.

“The Federal Reserve has additionally offered to back some of the loans of the much larger companies,” Mulcahy said. “I really want business owners to know, don’t get frustrated and just hang in there. Relief is on the way.”

Aside from financial distress, Mulcahy said the second biggest question on the minds of local business owners will soon be, ‘where are my customers?’ “You need to find new ways of doing things. You have to morph your company to make some things happen,” he said. “The way we did business yesterday is not the way we will do business tomorrow. It will be a different world, and the only way that we will benefit from it is if we adapt.”

With shelter-in-place orders slowly lifting and no clear view of how businesses will fare after the pandemic

ends, most business owners have developed a wait-and-see approach. Gevorg Sargsyan, professor of economics and finance, believes the coronavirus will have a dire impact on businesses,



particularly in the Southeast Texas area. “Like the rest of the nation, coronavirus has resulted in lower demand for goods and services across the economy. The Southeast Texas community relies heavily on oil and gas, construction and real estate sectors,” he said. “Coronavirus has created an unprecedented situation and activated all three threats against our

economy on a large scale in a long-term basis.” According to Sargsyan, this will be a major test of the resiliency of all small, medium and large enterprises in the area.

For small business owners most in need of immediate assistance, Mulcahy said there are more funds and resources ahead. “The SBDC plans on extending its hours to ensure that customers can come see us. We have funding from the CARES act coming in and virtual meetings available. I’m also bringing in a bilingual counselor to serve the Hispanic population here in the Southeast Texas community,” he said. “We’re here to get the consumers the information they need so they can weather the storm, whether it be this one or the next.”

*For more information on resources and funding for small businesses affected by coronavirus, visit [sbdc.uh.edu](http://sbdc.uh.edu).*

## Kristy’s Korner Framing

Despite coronavirus shutdowns, for one mom and pop shop, it’s been business as usual. For nearly two decades, Beaumont-based business Kristy’s Korner Framing has served the Southeast Texas community and beyond. Owners, Kevin and Barbara Couron ‘80 believe that it’s their “old school” business tactics that has kept their business afloat during the pandemic.

“We run our business in an honest and trustworthy manner,” Kevin said. “We offer a good product at a good price while implementing a caring customer service program.”

While they weren’t classified as essential, the pair continued to work amid shelter-in-place orders, taking custom orders via phone and email. They also relied on commercial accounts they’ve landed throughout the years, one being ExxonMobil, to maintain their workload. “When you’re a ma’ and pa’ shop, your customers become like family. We build a relationship with our customers and they learn quickly that they can count on us,” Kevin said. “It is those relationships that are priceless and can ultimately determine the success of your business.”

Aside from customer service, another tactic that has worked for this small business is budgeting and cutting unnecessary costs. The pair said that they “tightened the belt” years ago in hopes of one day retiring. “We didn’t need to use any SBA loans and that’s mainly in part to us living within our means,” Kevin said. “That’s the key—live within your means and prepare for tragedy tomorrow.”

While most business owners have relied on social media and online distribution to keep their businesses afloat during the shutdown, Barbara suggests reaching out directly to your customer base. “Check on them and let them know that you are thinking of them and ask if there’s anything that you can do for them,” she said. “Think outside the box on how you can help them. That’s the way Beaumont operates; we help each other out during times like this.”

As shelter-in-place orders begin to lift, Kristy’s Korner Framing is among those businesses that have officially reopened their doors. Kevin and Barbara said that they will continue to sanitize their work areas and wear protective masks, and, not surprisingly, they will continue to be here when the community needs them.

# E-Commerce evolution:

*Curb-to-Car application keeps buyers and goods connected in pandemic and beyond*

by Casey Ford

In a time when we are all missing human interaction, technology might seem a cold solution for connection. But our phones and computers have, of necessity, replaced hugs and handshakes, so technological innovators have sought out warm, fuzzy solutions to keep us connected to the people—and foods, goods and services—we love and that make us feel normal.

Justin McCullough '02 and his team at FSG SmartBuildings, based in Round Rock, Texas, have used their “down-time” since the pandemic began to stimulate e-commerce with their Curb-to-Car application. The app is not only keeping businesses connected to their homebound customers—and customers connected to their favorite stuff—but it also is evolving virtual commerce, as it allows for simple interactivity, convenience and safety. It may seem ironic that technology would have significant interest in the happiness and safety of human beings, but it makes much more sense when we meet entrepreneurs like McCullough and understand the heart that beats beneath the interface.

For most of his childhood and adolescence, McCullough thought everyone was like

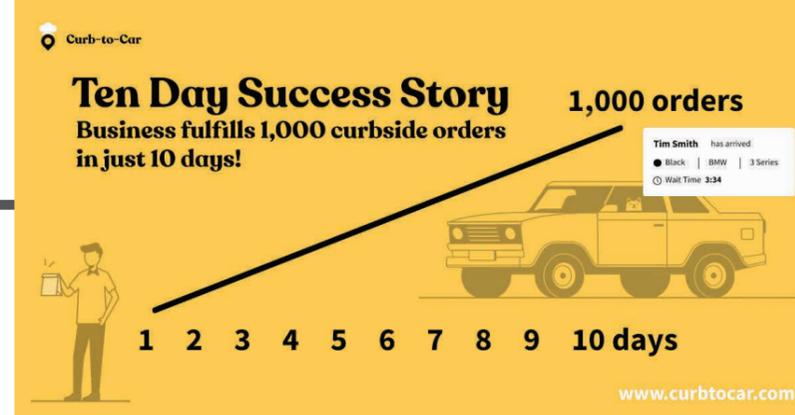
his dad—surely everyone owned a business and had two beepers and multiple offices. As he speaks about his father, McCullough tears up—in 2007, he lost the man who taught him that “you can change where you live, where you work, but you cannot change your name, and the McCullough name means something.” A successful business owner in petrochemical shipping, this father encouraged his young son to make his own path in business, so by the time McCullough graduated from Orangefield High School in 1996, he was set on a path toward technology entrepreneurship. It would lead him to Lamar State College-Orange, where he would meet Renae, his wife of now 20 years, and then to Lamar University and a B.B.A. in management information systems.

McCullough jokes that back then, before there were names for “what he is,” he thought of his studies ambiguously as “half-computer science, half-management”, but what he really learned during his MIS time at LU was that his big passion was people. To earn a living during his studies, he built a business designing and hosting turnkey web sites for some of the most

recognizable business names in Southeast Texas. Feedback from his early customers validated that McCullough’s professional purpose was focused on others. For him, entrepreneurship has always been less about financial success and more about innovating to serve and lead.

When Hurricane Harvey aftermath moved McCullough and his family away from Beaumont and out to Central Texas, he assumed his role at FSG Smart Buildings,

where he serves today as chief products officer. He had the opportunity in the beginning to build an FSG innovation team, so he “got the



Beaumont band back together,” and today in their Round Rock offices, McCullough works with several LU alumni, including his vice president of product, Adam Haynes '09, his lead architect, Chris Allen '09; lead software engineer, John Tyler '14, and software engineers Zeb Barnett '13 and Matt Williams '13.

Because of the ways the pandemic immediately changed their own day-to-day business routines, McCullough and his team realized early on that they had an opportunity to think about how they could make something immediately deliverable and useful to businesses that might be struggling to adapt and thrive. He compared it to the way that a shoe company transitions to mask-making or a distillery converts to hand sanitizer production—their development of Curb-to-Car was the culmination of past e-commerce experiences and efforts in building an IoT—Internet of Things— platform for smart buildings. They were able to leverage this system architecture into the creation of an app in a moment of

exigency to help business owners back into business with curbside pickup capabilities.

Curb-to-Car is a contactless pickup application usable by any goods-providing business. Some Austin businesses using it successfully include coffee companies, booksellers, other retailers and restaurants, including those of the world-renowned Hai Hospitality Group. When asked if he thinks the world will ever go back to the old way of buying stuff, McCullough said, philosophically, he thinks not.

“The customer is like water,” he said, “seeking the path of least resistance in its inevitable course downhill. It’s my mission to follow the customer and help cut that path for them—technology is the cutting tool, a virtual river moving through all manner of obstacles to make commerce more customer centric.” During the pandemic, people have largely had no choice but to opt for curbside pickup or delivery, but once this all resolves, McCullough

**“It’s my mission to follow the customer and help cut that path for them—technology is the cutting tool...”**

—Justin McCullough

From the 965 orders you and your team have delivered, your average delivery time is 5 Minutes and 45 Seconds.

It looks like the busiest time of day for your business is from 5pm until around 7pm.

The most common vehicles your customers drive are the Honda Civic, Ford F150, and Honda Accord.

The most common colors of your customers’ vehicles are Grey, Black, and White.

The chart below shows your orders over the past week.

## Simple curbside check-in for any business

“Curb to Car was instrumental for us to pivot our service model to full take out. It's extremely simple, easy to use, and the team has been nothing short of extraordinary during this time. I highly recommend the software.”



Stevie Stanwyck  
Director of Training at Hai Hospitality  
Uchi / Uchiko / Uchibä / Loro

thinks many people are not going to want to go back into the store as often. Curb-to-Car is just one way that technology can make it easier for businesses to give customers what they need and want—removing impediments between buyers and goods.

McCullough acknowledges that it can be difficult today to find a new niche in technology. Consumers are discerning because they have endless options. A concept can seem

world-changing, but then people must understand it and use it the way it was intended, and it has to propagate in beneficial ways long-term. The key to this kind of success, then, would seem to be an understanding of what people want and need and then caring enough about them to give them access. McCullough and entrepreneurs like him are innovating for connection in a world looking for ways to heal itself and move into the future.



**Online course delivery article published**

Last fall, a collaborative article titled "Evaluating Online Complex Technology-Enabled Course Delivery: A Contextualized View of a Decomposed IS Success Model," featuring delivery of online education, was accepted for publication in *Communications of the Association for Information Systems*, the official journal of the Association for Information Systems, which published the article in its February 2020 issue.

The authors are assistant professor of information systems and analysis **Yu Zhao**, professor and chair of the Department of Information Systems and Analysis, **Kakoli Bandyopadhyay** and professor of marketing and associate dean of Graduate Studies and Research **Soumava Bandyopadhyay**.

"The article focuses on understanding the factors that are likely to impact the success of online delivery of courses involving complex technologies," Kakoli Bandyopadhyay said. The team conducted a survey of business students from four mid-sized state universities in the U.S. Each university was a member of the SAP university alliances, and the students had taken at least one online SAP-enabled course. The findings indicate that system quality, information quality and service (instructor) quality are all significant antecedents of student satisfaction; system quality and information quality are significant antecedents of perceived learning outcomes; and only system quality is a significant antecedent of students' continued intention to use online learning.

**New Cardinal Success Coach meets challenges**

With student success and retention among its top priorities, the College of Business named **Kristin Helm** as its new Cardinal success coach. The New England native relocated to Southeast Texas in early February of last year to serve as a career consultant for the College of Fine Arts and Communication. "Thinking back to when I was a college student, I really valued the mentors that I had in my life, and I just wanted to give back like my mentors had given to me."

Helm assumed her new position just one week after Tropical Storm Imelda hit the Southeast Texas community last fall, and it was her first lesson in understanding the importance of her role. "I spent countless hours speaking with students and trying to help them to meet their basic needs and discuss how they could successfully move forward in the semester," she said. "From that experience, I really feel more connected to our students and the university."

On the heels of that challenge came university closures and shelter-in-place orders brought on by COVID-19, and again students had a semester other than the one they anticipated. But Helm says it's times like these when her role matters most as she works with at-risk College of Business students, connecting them to campus resources and communicating with faculty.

"During such an emergency, retention is key," she said. From spotty WiFi and academic distress to financial need and health concerns, Helm said, "It's hard to know that students will potentially drop out because they can't afford future semesters, or they don't have access to basic necessities."

When the university initially moved to online learning, Helm knew that she had to act fast in order to ensure that business students adapted successfully. She reached out to College of Business deans, directors and department chairs for assistance in pinpointing which students might be most in need of resources. She then collaborated with **Craig Escamilla**, executive director of retention and student success, on university calling campaigns to both online and on-campus students.

"I felt so much pride in that—there's so much value in a student hearing from a real person asking what they need and if they are okay," she said. "It was through these calls that we were able to get feedback that ultimately changed how we were serving our students." One change the calls generated was the establishment of two additional WiFi locations on campus for those students who lacked the resources for internet access.

Helm says working specifically with College of Business students pushes her professionally "because they are such driven students. They are always willing to do more to ensure their success, so it makes me do more. Through this role, my hope is that I can help these students find their way."



▶ **Fall Honors Convocation Awards Ceremony**

The College of Business, along with the Student Advisory Council to the Dean, hosted its 28th annual Fall Honors Convocation Awards Ceremony recognizing the honor and achievement of scholarship recipients which highlighted more than 40 donors for their generosity. Among them were **Dr. & Mrs. Sam Parigi, Mr. & Mrs. Herman Wilson, Barbara Mattison** and **David Aysen** on behalf of **Dr. Don Warren Jr.**

▶ **AmeriCommerce CEO visits LU**

The Michael G. Weinert Entrepreneurial Lecture Series presented **Ed Sturrock '02**, CEO and co-founder of AmeriCommerce Ecommerce Software last fall. Sturrock founded his company as an LU student, and in 2005, just three years after graduating with his B.B.A. in management information systems from Lamar University, he and his partners took their company nationwide.

▶ **Motiva shares branding success**

The Financial Management Association National Honor Society hosted Motiva Enterprises, the largest oil refinery in North America. Students of all majors had the opportunity to learn about social awareness, career opportunities in the oil and gas industry, and how the company has successfully branded itself for nearly two decades.

*Providing for our community*



**Charles Daleo -68 comes from a family where they have pharmacy and LU in common.**

His father, Anthony '31 graduated from South Park Junior College, while Charles and his brother Frank -59 took pre-pharmacy classes in the 1960s at Lamar University before graduating with pharmacy degrees from the University of Texas at Austin. Their sister Antoinette (Daleo) Mabe earned her degree in education from LU in 1958, and Charles Daleo's son Grady graduated from LU in 2014.

The brothers opened Daleo Compounding Pharmacy and Wellness Center in 1980, still located on Calder 40 years later. A Beaumont native, Daleo believes LU serves Southeast Texas well. "Lamar University is a tremendous asset to our community," he says. "It has been a part of

my father's and three siblings' education and allowed all of us to achieve our university degrees."

One way of giving back to the community he grew up in was through the creation of hand sanitizer for first responders. "In the past, it has not been legal for pharmacists in Texas to compound a medication without a prescription from a practitioner," Daleo explains. "But the pandemic has allowed it." Because of this current great need for hand sanitizer, the Food and Drug Administration and the World Health Organization have authorized pharmacists to compound alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Daleo Pharmacy has already provided numerous bottles of their hand sanitizer to first responders and remain open with regular store hours so people have access to this hard-to-find necessity right now.



*Helping through headbands*

**Kaylynn Tkachev '15 loves sewing, a passion her mother instilled in her, and constantly works on projects in her craft room.**

When a neighbor, who works at a nearby hospital, mentioned how the constant use of masks was rubbing the back of her ears, Tkachev jumped at the opportunity to help. She created a comfortable fabric headband with buttons on either side so the mask can be secured on the buttons and not the ears. "So far, I have sewn thirty headbands," she says. "There are very few materials needed—just a couple of strips of fabric, thread and two buttons."

Originally from Southeast Texas, Tkachev graduated in 2015 with her Bachelor of Fine Arts in Music Education and enjoyed her time at Lamar University.

"My professors made me feel known and supported and were always willing to share their expertise and meaningful advice, even after graduation," she says. "I made lifelong friends and important career connections through internships, student organizations and other various opportunities."

She and her husband, Artur '17, moved to Denver in February for his job and are doing well during the pandemic, believing there are many things to be thankful for right now. "It's times like these that show you how much good there is in humanity," she says. "I am so filled with pride and love for my friends who are working on the front lines, and I can't wait to give them the biggest hug once this is all over." For now as Tkachev looks toward the future, she will continue making and donating these innovative headbands to those in need.

by Kate Downing



# Connections:

## Innovative teaching during a pandemic

by J.T. Robertson & Shelly Vitanza

### Collaborate, innovate, create.

That's the motto for the College of Fine Arts and Communication at Lamar University. Never has the faculty had to live this more than in the pandemic time of COVID-19. As classes began their work through online meeting, the question abounded, how do you live and teach the fine arts through a Zoom call? In this article, we discuss some innovative ways students lived and practiced the arts, as well as how a Beaumont Independent School District principal had to implement new learning strategies overnight.

For Travis Prokop, assistant professor of dance in the Department of Theatre and Dance, he knew he needed to adjust accordingly and fast. He began filming dance combinations that he could send to his students and researched different forums to connect through like Zoom and Microsoft Teams.

"My biggest worry was how to do an online dance class. We play off of each other's energy in person, and I didn't know how that would work through a computer screen. I knew this would be the largest pitfall to overcome," said Prokop. "The next obstacle to overcome was what our dancers focus on with the space they were working with."

Prokop decided to be realistic and choose one goal—to keep connections established. He wanted to also focus on his students' mental health and knew dance was what they needed as a distraction and a way to cope.

"What I've enjoyed the most through this situation is seeing people dance and do choreography more on social media. More people are enjoying the arts, and everyone is realizing they can become an artist," mused Prokop.

For Xenia Fedorchenko, associate professor in the Department of Art and Design, panic planning and experimentation is what got her and her art students through this difficult time.

"Normally we teach our art students in an amazing facility with access to labs, studios, ink, paint, rollers and many other media that are very

accessible to our artists. Suddenly, we were in a situation where we had to be very creative and experimental," said Fedorchenko. "We went back to the Renaissance age and used the same materials artists used hundreds of years ago."

Fedorchenko had to utilize her entire house to set up different classrooms. For her printmaking class, she set up her kitchen island to have room to experiment printing with ladles, spoons, a stone egg and other materials she had. The class used rolled up fabric as a dabber and leather as a stamper. Other kitchen essentials used were spices such as turmeric, cinnamon and vegetable oil to make ink. For her Alternate Fibers class, Fedorchenko set up in a different room to make paper and had to experiment with different chemical reactions to see what they could create. The class made paper from using grass and okra slime instead of the typical lye that would have been used at school.

"I believe this group of students will be more resilient and stronger critical thinkers and creative problem solvers because of how they have had to adapt to COVID-19," said Fedorchenko.

For Belinda George, '03, '08, '15, principal of Homer Drive Elementary in BISD, going virtual for her wasn't scary. The hardest part was knowing her students couldn't interact with her or their teachers.

"I created a Q and A from the state mandate of the school closure for the teachers and created Zoom meeting trainings for my faculty and staff. I had to learn how to present information virtually, but by the third week we had our rhythm down," said George.

To connect with her students, George started virtually reading books to her students and their families on the Homer Drive Facebook page. Because this was such a success and seemed to connect her families, George started reaching out to the authors of the children's books she was reading and invited them to participate in Zoom meetings with the students.

"Not only did our students love getting the chance to meet the authors of their

favorite childhood books, the authors enjoyed it as well," said George. "We were able to ask them questions and find out what inspired their stories."

George would like to keep some of the new learning instruments in place when life returns to normal. She would like to see some of the Zoom meetings for students who are absent and to also have PowerPoint presentations available with clickable links to lessons.

"It has been so precious to see my students learning technology and interacting through different ways," said George. Who knew doing jumping jacks through Zoom P.E. could be so fun?"

One of the highlights for George during this phase was planning a parade for her students to see their teachers and for the faculty and staff to celebrate the students. As they were riding through the neighborhoods of their students, she heard one student exclaim, "I knew my principal would be here. I knew she would show up!"

Colleagues in the Mary Morgan Moore Department of Music hit all the high notes of collaboration, striking an innovative chord and creating a harmony of instruction, practice and ultimately learning.

Immediately, many of the faculty began recording short videos and posting them in order to conduct asynchronous teaching on various platforms, including Zoom. Brian Shook, the chair of the department, focused on updating his YouTube channel, a resource for LU faculty as well as faculty across the country.

"By and large, we had no dramatic problems. Professors came up with alternative assignments that still focused on objectives of the courses and the

**"I believe this group of students will be more resilient and stronger critical thinkers and creative problem solvers because of how they have had to adapt to COVID-19."**

—Xenia Fedorchenko



overall spirit from the faculty remained positive,” said Shook. “It’s stressful, but everyone understands the situation and everyone had a can-do attitude.”

Shook, and many of the LU faculty, turned to a Facebook group created to discuss teaching higher education music. The 10,000-member group shared tips, tricks and techniques for teaching music using alternative modalities.

Jack Benson, an instructor teaching music appreciation and theory, started his own discussion board to get his students’ feedback about the best approach to teaching online. “I didn’t want them to feel pressured or frustrated and wanted to get a feel for their perspective,” said Benson. “They were very kind with suggestions, and I made adjustments to the syllabus.”

Benson had been teaching music theory online for years but not his other classes that require students to listen to and discuss music. He opted to use Zoom to create a live classroom setting at the time students were used to attending class. Benson expected attendance to decline, but he was surprised.

“Most days we were right at 100%,” said Benson. “I was in awe they were so faithful, but this generation of students is very tech driven.”

Brielle Frost, assistant professor of flute who also conducts the flute ensemble, also found the transition to online easier than she expected because the students were so adaptable. She used a variety of platforms, and students embraced them.

Like Benson, Frost used Zoom for larger studio class meetings. She

incorporated Flipgrid for students to make recordings and Skype, FaceTime or Zoom to meet up and listen to the recordings.

“The quality of the performance was not as good as in person, but Skype worked well for hearing the tone,” said Brielle. “Flipgrid is a great visual component, although heavy ended on the teacher’s side. It was easy for students to log in, and we could perform and talk about what they were working on in that musical passage. It also had an open grid for a studio class so everyone could comment on each other’s performances.”

Although Flipgrid had some limitations, Frost found the visual aspects of the application, as well as the ability for students to record themselves and hear their recordings played back, were extremely beneficial.

“They created a vibe story about who they are with fun pictures. Many downloaded the application, even though it’s web based, and it was another way for them to learn and a great process for students who recorded themselves numerous times, listened with a critical ear and then recorded. I think some of them spent hours that first few weeks,” said Frost.

Tim Dueppen, assistant professor of music, also found his students practiced more than usual, possibly because of the isolation and extra time they had. “I didn’t think it would go as well as it did,” said Dueppen. “The students worked really hard and focused on specific parts of their performances that were lacking.”

Dueppen, who teaches applied music, low brass, jazz band and chamber music, instructs many students individually, which was a real challenge during the pandemic. He used Skype, Zoom and Collaborate to see students every week at their regularly scheduled class time. For the ensemble classes, the group used Skype, but the emphasis of the course shifted from playing together to each playing his or her part well.

“Obviously you can’t replace in-person contact, but the online medium gave us an opportunity to focus on different types of things. Students worked on their own parts and what they really needed to get better on and took turns evaluating each other’s playing,” said Dueppen.

Dueppen, the area coordinator for the brass festival as well as the organizer of the Collage Concert, used the extra time to plan these events. He also reached out more to students. “I’m surviving by doing the stuff I can do to get caught up for when the university opens back up,” said Dueppen. “We are all kind of making this work in some way. With a great attitude, confidence and resilience, we can step up to the challenge that the world is facing.”

Brian Shook has a YouTube channel—“Brian Shook”— and additional resources are available at

[briellefrost.com](http://briellefrost.com)

[trombonetim.com](http://trombonetim.com)

[jackbensonmusic.com](http://jackbensonmusic.com)



**Keith Carter Fifty Years**  
“Keith Carter Fifty Years” opened at the Dishman Art Museum this past fall to celebrate the life and

works of **Keith Carter**, Walles Chair and professor of art in the Department of Art and Design.

“For decades my photographs have explored our relationship to time, place, memory and vernacular culture. I tend to think of them as a visual diary. I often draw from the world around me, literature, the animal world and folklore to examine externally objective, yet internally boundless, themes where our chaotic world is at once both mysterious and ordinary,” said Carter.

Carter’s explorations include the use of the traditional chemical darkroom and arcane historical processes, as well as contemporary practices. In doing so, he hopes to examine both the history of photography and our own shared natural histories.

#### All State Choir Camp

The Mary Morgan Moore Department of Music hosted a record-breaking All State Choir Camp last summer with more than 200 students in attendance. **Coty Morris** served as the director. “We finished our 2019 camp with more than 200 talented and highly motivated high school singers and a great team of enriching, top-notch and highly skilled clinicians and staff,” said **James Han**, associate professor of music and director of choral activities at LU. “New to our team last year was **Coty Raven Morris**, who is currently pursuing her Master of Music in Choral Conducting at Michigan State University. Ms. Morris joined our choir camp as our camp manager. With her charisma, she was exciting, engaging, most thoughtful and ensured our campers enjoyed a most productive camp full of fun activities.”



#### Holtzhausen’s Strategic Communication to be translated and offered in paperback

**Derina Holtzhausen**, dean of the College of Fine Arts and Communication, has been recognized for her international book, *The Routledge Handbook of Strategic Communication*, with a translation into Chinese and the textbook being offered in paperback.

“I co-edited this book with my colleague from Germany, **Ansgar Zerfass**,” said Holtzhausen. “My research involved interviews with 65 scholars from all continents. This book offers a truly international perspective on strategic communication.”

*Strategic Communication*, first published in 2015, was released as a hardback, but as a result of demand, the book will be released in a paperback edition. The publication, with a reputation for national and international research on postmodern principles in communication, is cited weekly on an international basis.

“This book has a world-wide reach and delves into areas such as conceptual foundations of strategic communication, institutional and organizational dimensions, implementing strategic communication and domains of practice. I was just interviewed this week by scholars in Germany and Kenya on the research,” said Holtzhausen.

*Strategic Communication* joins Holtzhausen’s other published book, *Public Relations As Activism*, both of which have provided a valuable resource for scholars and students in public relations and have been used in advanced courses on public relations theory, PR management, organizational communication and other related areas.

#### Tackling tinnitus

**Vinaya Manchaiah**, Jo Mayo Endowed Professor in the Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences, began a tinnitus research project this past November. He is looking for research volunteers who have tinnitus (ringing or buzzing in the ear) to volunteer for an eight-week internet-based program, Tackling Tinnitus. Tinnitus, which affects more than 30 million people in the U.S., can be very bothersome and disrupt many aspects of daily life.

“Although there is no cure for tinnitus, research has identified strategies that can help people better manage their tinnitus,” said Manchaiah. “This program shares these strategies.”

This free program runs during an eight-week period with more than 20 modules providing strategies for individuals with the condition. The information can be read online, downloaded or printed. It is structured in a way to make it easy to read and includes videos and worksheets to track progress. The intervention is available in both English and Spanish. Participants must be at least 18 years in age with troublesome tinnitus and have access to the internet. Spanish speaking individuals with tinnitus are highly encouraged to participate.

For more information about this program, to register as a participant or to learn more about the researchers involved, please visit [tacklingtinnitus.org](http://tacklingtinnitus.org).



► **Communication and Media recognized by Intelligent.com**  
The Department of Communication and Media has been awarded top ranking status by [Intelligent.com](http://Intelligent.com), recognizing it as one of the best communications degree programs in the nation. This student-focused comprehensive research guide is based on an assessment of 1,604 accredited colleges and universities. Each program was evaluated based on curriculum quality, graduation rate, reputation and post-graduate employment.

► **Theatre and Dance presents Permanent Collection**  
“Permanent Collection,” by **Thomas Gibbons** was the second production in the Department of Theatre & Dance’s 2019-2020 season. **Caitlin Grammer**, a senior theatre major from Bridge City, directed the production, which featured seniors **Austin Jones**, **Houston**, and **Temesha Ramsey**, **Beaumont**; juniors **Josh Pendino**, **Lumberton**, and **Brianna Butler**, **Baytown**; and sophomores **Dustin Smith**, **West Hardin**, and **Taylor Bell**, **Colmesneil**.

► **Deaf Studies and Deaf Ed students visit Paris**  
Sixteen students from the Department of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education visited Paris this past summer on their study abroad trip. The students met and interacted with Deaf people from around the world at two conferences, the World Association of Sign Language Interpreters and the World Federation of the Deaf Conference.



**Cardinals Esports hits the ground running**

Cardinals Esports was founded in October of 2019 by Interim Associate Dean **Tim Roden** and computer science senior **Zachary Mosteller**. In the five months since Cardinals Esports started, the organization has added 42 full-fledged members and has over 150 students in their discord channel. Cardinals Esports—a form of sport competition using video games—currently supports multiple teams.

Of the teams, *Overwatch*, *Rocket League*, *Fortnite* and *League of Legends* competed in full-fledged collegiate seasons throughout the fall 2019 semester. All competitive teams have made great strides during the past semesters and promise to be top contenders in collegiate esports. Team *Overwatch* recently hit a milestone by defeating the Columbia Chicago College Renegades. This win is proof of all the hard work and practice the members of the *Overwatch* team have put in.

**Jason Chambliss**, leader of the *Overwatch* team, said they felt “vindicated” by this victory and that it was proof of what is to come. Another team to watch is the *League of Legends* headed by **Tommy Nguyen**. Nguyen is a proven competitor in the Esports scene. He has won tournaments and prize money playing *League of Legends* in high school and is looking to continue winning. In their first season, they defeated Baylor University, who is a strong competitor on the Esports scene.

**Couch named “highly effective” math educator**

**PJ Couch**, associate professor of mathematics, has been named one of the top mathematics educators in the country. Most of us know Couch as “the guy who rides the unicycle around campus.” He was one of three mathematics educators in the nation to receive the Henry L. Alder Award that is given annually to faculty members whose teaching has been effective and successful in undergraduate mathematics.

“Education has created many opportunities for me, and Lamar University’s role in my success has been paramount,” said Couch. “It feels great to be able to parlay LU’s investment in me to the benefit of others, and I hope that this recognition can help me create more opportunities for more people.”

As a faculty member, Couch has founded the MaPP Challenge for high school students, has displayed a passion for undergraduate research, is a part of the Key Communicators initiative with Beaumont Independent School District and an active member of the Lamar University Greater South Park Neighborhood Partnership.



**Stinson receives prestigious community service award**

**Cynthia Stinson**, chair of the JoAnn Gay Dishman School of Nursing, has been honored as the 2019 Julie and Ben Rogers Community Service Award recipient. Although Stinson has served at Lamar University for 25 years, she’s been a Cardinal much longer. She received her bachelor’s degree from LU in 1980 and then continued her education at other Texas institutions.

The Julie and Ben Rogers Community Service Award was established in 1979 to acknowledge the members of Lamar University’s faculty and staff who make a lasting impact on the Southeast Texas community through an outstanding record of service and volunteer work. Individuals from LU, Lamar Institute of Technology, Lamar State College - Port Arthur and Orange are chosen.

Stinson combines her vocation with her life experience through service leading. She serves on the Board for the Pink Power Support Group, organized “Cancer Crusaders,” and formed the collaboration between the Gift of Life and Dishman School of Nursing to teach high school students about the dangers of tobacco and risks of cancer. Not only has she served on many committees and in organizations at Lamar University, but she continues to present on numerous topics to community members outside of the classroom on topics such as health and disease, treatment and caregiving.

Students within the School of Nursing average around 6,000 hours of community service to local agencies each year, largely attributable to their service-oriented leader, Stinson.

▶ **Recent grad accepted into Ph.D. program**  
**Judah Roden '18**, a recent master’s degree in computer science graduate and son of associate professor **Tim Roden**, was accepted into a doctoral program in the Department of Computer Science and Engineering at University of North Texas to study game design and artificial intelligence.

▶ **Biology student selected to present**  
**Tyler Nelson**, a biology major, presented at the Gulf Coast Undergrad Research Symposium at Rice University. The topic of his presentation was “Effect of Varying Cell Culture Conditions in SKNO-1 Acute Myeloid Leukemia Cells.” Nelson was chosen through a selective process.

▶ **Med school acceptance goes viral**  
**Omar Hamza '20** received his medical school acceptance and shared his mother’s reaction through social media. Hamza received more than half a million views within 24 hours as well as congratulatory messages from around the world. He will attend Texas A&M College of Medicine.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

*Alumna Daniella DeLaRue '03 evacuates from Tonga*

by Daniel Houston



**E**arlier this year on March 15, more than 7,300 Peace Corps volunteers in 60 countries were forced to retreat in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, leaving behind students, friends, families and the country in which they’d dedicated so much time.

Daniella DeLaRue '03, a Peace Corps volunteer stationed in Tonga and former director of the Lamar University McNair Scholars Program, was discussing plans for college with one of her students when the email arrived that would ultimately send her and her fellow volunteers back home.

“I remember trying to figure out just how quickly it was spreading,” said DeLaRue, recalling the days and weeks leading up to the exodus. “Because of the communal nature of Tonga’s culture, I knew how quickly a virus like that would spread.”

With 53 volunteers living among four island groups, DeLaRue pondered the implications of not only all these members evacuating their posts, but also those of Peace Corps posts around the world.

“This is completely unprecedented—like so many things with the pandemic—that every volunteer was evacuated back to the U.S.,” said DeLaRue. “In the midst of packing and giving out all the hugs I could to everyone before I left, it was difficult to process.” Two days later, DeLaRue and her fellow volunteers would be on a flight back to the U.S. “It was simply heart-wrenching for everyone.”

With the current education project underway, DeLaRue was an English literacy facilitator on the main island of Tongatapu, and the program manager for their learning center and library. She also managed the American Center, which the U.S. Embassy in Fiji sponsors, and provided resources such as free internet access and guidance for students wanting to study in the U.S., as well as events for the public like the Saturday morning reading club that DeLaRue and her staff also conducted.

“Everything has been disrupted,” she said. “I had a feeling we would be evacuated for safety reasons, but I had hoped it wouldn’t be this soon. We could not predict how quickly this would consume resources and shake infrastructures in travel and healthcare.” DeLaRue remains in touch with the school in Tonga and supervises the staff from a distance. She has plans to reinstate as soon as volunteers are cleared to return to finish her service.

“I, like so many others, really feel I have unfinished business there,” said DeLaRue.

DeLaRue describes the connections she had with the Tongan people as crucial to her understanding and appreciation of their culture. “The best part of my service in Tonga had to have been the relationships I built, whether it was with my host family, teachers at my school, the students I taught, vendors in the market, other volunteers in my cohort, or other friends I made,” said DeLaRue. “I miss the feeling of home I felt, even thousands of miles away from Southeast Texas.”



# CITY OF PORT ARTHUR HEALTH DEPARTMENT

## Judith Smith: Brave longtime leader

by Shelly Vitanza



During the COVID-19 pandemic, Judith Smith '79, an inaugural graduate of LU's nursing school, became the manager and spokesperson of the coronavirus testing center at Jack Brooks Regional Airport. Overnight, Smith, the director of the Port Arthur City Health Department, was thrown into the media spotlight and expected to be the expert on testing for the novel communicable disease.

No doubt Smith was the most qualified candidate for the testing center's lead role. During her 36 years in public health, she has tested, treated and educated the public about contagious diseases. After working in the hospital setting for several years, Smith began her public health career in 1983 as the sexually transmitted disease and immunization nurse for the Port Arthur Public Health Department. While continuing that role, Smith also became the tuberculosis nurse and was on the frontlines of a measles outbreak in the community in 1985. During a syphilis epidemic, Smith and her team conducted 'night blitzes' into bars to provide community outreach. With the same tenacity and compassionate care, Smith served the community through HIV and H1N1.

"Overall, public health is so interesting because things change," said Smith. "After Hurricane Rita, we attended several workshops on pandemic flu and were reminded, it's not if but when. We always knew with every year it could be the big one. Something could occur that could throw you off guard."

COVID-19 was the 'big one' Smith and her team anticipated but hoped would never happen. However, they had a pandemic plan in place. They also had experience with drive-in testing. In 2005, under Smith's direction as the newly appointed director of the Port Arthur Health Department, a drive-through flu clinic was established.

"We were familiar with drive through, so the county used our idea. We could show them how it should be done where people call if they are symptomatic and make an appointment. It all fit into the CDC guidelines."

Jefferson County provided the funding for Smith and the department's 11 nurses to run the makeshift center. For four weeks, the health department was shut down so that Smith and her team could conduct all of the testing.

Smith, a cancer survivor, didn't hesitate for a minute to take the assignment. However, because many of her nurses have small children or elderly parents at home, she gave them the option of not working at the center to guard their personal health.

"The nurses are the real heroes. Every one of them accepted and said they wanted to go out and help. They did an amazing job. It ran very smoothly. Patients were satisfied. There were no complaints, and no one had to wait."

Not only did Smith and her staff conduct testing, but the staff also gathered all of the information from each patient.

When test results were returned, the department communicated outcomes to patients and counties.

"Our epidemiologist made sure that each county was contacted and contact tracing initiated. The big focus became contact tracing, and we had a team set up for that when results were positive. We made sure that contacts were notified and told to quarantine according to the CDC guidelines. We called a lot of people."

As challenging as closing the department was and moving to a makeshift center, wearing layers of personal protective equipment and delivering bad news to people was, the media spotlight was the most overwhelming aspect of Smith's leadership role.

"I watched how hard the staff worked and then to hear and read the critique from media was the most challenging. It [COVID-19] was new, and we just didn't know everything, but media continually called and wanted to spin something that we didn't do or overlooked. To read something unfair or taken out of context, especially during this time when we should be giving each other an encouraging word, was the most challenging part."

Smith has seen a lot of changes during her stint in public health. It wasn't that long ago that gloves became a part of standard operating procedures to draw blood or give shots. She also has witnessed the death of patients from HIV to now live

in a time of effective medications as well as vaccines for varying strains of flu. She predicts a new era post pandemic.

"I have not been afraid but I think the scary part for me is just thinking about how can we live with a new normal until a vaccine or a treatment or antiviral is available without people just relaxing and just thinking it's no longer here," she said.

While Smith is trying to determine how "we come to grips with living a new normal," she continues to lead her expanding team (funding has been granted for more people to help with COVID-19 contact tracing) at the Port Arthur Health Department to meet future new public health challenges.

"We don't visit in the office as much as we used to because of the virus, so I just try to encourage people by sending out texts and emails telling them, 'you've done a good job' or 'this is going to be a good day.' I have fun and laugh a lot; I respect each employee and encourage everyone to have the same respect to one another."

**"The nurses are the real heroes. Every one of them accepted and said they wanted to go out and help. They did an amazing job."**

—Judith Smith

# A cheerful presence IN THE CARDINAL COMMUNITY

by Hannah Snodgrass



Lamar University Cheerleading Team Coordinator Kelsey Baden exemplifies never-ending spirit and passion. While most people on campus recognize her work through Cardinal Athletics, it's Baden's off the field (and court) leadership and positivity that make a difference during this global pandemic.

Baden arrived at LU in June 2018 from Southern Illinois University, with previous stops at UT-Tyler and St. Louis University in Missouri. She grew up cheering competitively, beginning at age nine, and continued at her alma mater—Webster University, where she studied communications. She also cheered professionally in the NFL for the St. Louis Rams, so she knows what it takes to compete at the highest level.

Baden never envisioned coaching for a living, but now cannot imagine taking a different path. She and her cheerleaders share a tight-knit, family bond; their love for each other is equal to their love for LU. "We all talk frequently, either through our GroupMe app or through conferences on Zoom or FaceTime."

With COVID-19 halting sports and gatherings, Baden and her team are working creatively to maintain their bond, activity levels and enthusiasm. "We're pretty good with our social media, and one of the Cheer FX groups here in Southeast Texas challenged us to this burpee backflip tournament, so we've been posting about that and staying connected," Baden said. Team members encourage one another. "If somebody does a new skill, everybody responds. It's fantastic."

The pandemic has had the biggest effect on cheer team tryouts, which they conducted through video. Prospective cheerleaders received tryout material on April 20 and were given until May 1 to submit their video. Twenty-two

cheerleaders were selected for the 2020-2021 season, including 10 returning members.

"The virtual tryout worked really well. We were able to look at videos, schedule interviews on Zoom and choose our team in about four days. We are anxious to finally get together as a team and begin practicing for the new year," Baden said.

When asked her favorite thing about coaching, she describes watching her athletes grow and "seeing not just the cheerleaders, but the type of people they become." Baden talks of the growth in one of her cheerleaders as he went from timid and never having cheered before to being named a captain his senior season in 2019.

In describing her "LU moment," Baden doesn't hesitate to talk about the exciting experience of coaching her team as the Cards went to the playoffs her first football season in 2018. She recounts being on the sidelines with her cheerleaders for the LU vs. Texas A&M football game in 2019. "It was pretty wild! It was kind of like they did not even know what to do with themselves. It was a once in a lifetime experience for all of us."

Baden and the LU Cheerleading Team can naturally make not-so-great situations fun and maintain the same energy regardless. They are well versed in "pumping up energy" in the crowd, engaging with current and prospective students, alumni and Cardinal fans to make people smile. An exciting new tradition Baden is proud of is having alumni cheerleaders ring the bell at football games.

While she and the team have done their best to remain spirited during the COVID-19 pandemic, Baden looks forward to getting back to what they love—cheering on the Cards and bringing positivity and pride to the LU community when it is needed most!



## Soccer advances to national spotlight

For the second time in program history—and the second time in just four years under head coach Steve Holeman—LU soccer won the Southland Conference regular season and tournament titles to advance to the NCAA Championships. Big Red posted a 16-7 (.696) overall record—the second-best win total in program history—and dominated the conference with a 10-1 (.909) league mark.

The Cardinals opened the season with one of the toughest non-conference schedules in program history and the nation. LU's non-conference docket consisted of two teams ranked in the final top 25 poll, and included the likes of Oklahoma State, UL Lafayette, Southern Mississippi, Alabama, Arkansas and Tulsa.

After a 1-5 (.167) start to the season, and numerous injuries to the starting lineup, Holeman rallied the troops as Big Red won 15 of its next 16 contests on their way to the league title. During their run, the

Cardinals held 10 opponents to one goal or fewer.

The Cardinals' season came to an end during the first round of the NCAA Championships against No. 14 UCLA. LU came up just short to the nationally ranked Bruins but the Southland honored their efforts on the field, bestowing four superlative honors and assigning seven spots on the all-conference teams. Junior Lucy Ashworth was named SLC Player and Forward of the Year, while classmate Esther Okoronkwo was named league Newcomer of the Year and Holeman was named SLC Coach of the Year.

Following LU's postseason run, the Red and White received more accolades on the field as Ashworth, Okoronkwo and Plata were all named to the United Soccer Coaches All-Region teams. Ashworth and Okoronkwo received first-team recognition while Plata was named to the third team.



▶ On Dec. 12, 2019, Blane Morgan took over as Lamar University's new head football coach. The former San Diego State quarterbacks coach becomes the third head coach since the program's rebirth and its 10th since transitioning to four-year status.

▶ Junior defensive back Michael Lawson was named first-team All-Southland Conference as a defensive back and punt returner during the 2019 season. The two-way threat ranked among the nation's Top 10 in interceptions per game.

▶ Junior point guard Ellis Jefferson became the first player in LU men's basketball to record 11 steals in a game. In the final game before the Christmas holiday, Ellis recorded his only double-double of the season with 12 points and a school-record 11 steals.



## Men's cross country wins 17th Southland title

The men's cross country team recorded the most dominant performance in Southland Conference history on its way to a league record 17th league title—the program's 12th in the past 14 years. Big Red scored 34 points to win the championship meet by 86 points—the largest margin of victory in championship history.

Senior Jordan Rowe clocked a time of 24:01.7 to win the race by seven seconds and averaged a 4:50.1 mile. Rowe was not a one-man show, but the tip of a spear that was painted LU Red and White. He led an attack that saw LU place three runners in the overall Top five and five in the Top 14 for the victory.

The Cardinals were recognized by the Southland for their efforts on the course. Six runners garnered all-conference recognition, including three first-team selections. Rowe was named Men's Cross Country Athlete of the Year, while Liam Burthem received league Newcomer of the Year honors. LU distance coach Tony Houchin also received his fourth SLC Cross Country Coach of the Year honor.

Big Red's point total was its best performance since scoring 27 to win the 2015 title. The 86-point margin of victory smashed the previous record, which was also held by LU and set during the 2008 season.

## LAMAR UNIVERSITY ANNOUNCES CENTER FOR MIDSTREAM MANAGEMENT AND SCIENCE

In an effort to support Southeast Texas' greatest petrochemical expansion in decades, Lamar University announced the establishment of the Center for Midstream Management and Science. Approved and funded by the 86th Texas legislature, the Center for Midstream Management and Science will focus on midstream research and teaching across campus.

LU founded the center to meet the need for midstream technology and additional needs of the upstream and downstream industries. It is dedicated to discovering solutions to distribution and storage modalities, environmental impacts, and to optimizing commodity movements and market access.

The new center will serve as a bridge between LU and local industry, connecting breakthroughs in access to oil and gas to the downstream advances in refining and liquefaction technologies.

"The center was established to grow a multi-industry/university collaboration that advances in midstream capacity, resiliency, environmental compliance and safety," said Brian Craig, dean of the College of Engineering. "The center will develop advanced education, training and solutions for the midstream industry, such as technology gaps related to capacities, distribution, storage, optimization, reliability, inspection, data analytics and decision making, predictive maintenance, resilience, cyber physical security, IIoT, safety, environmental compliance, economics, new and emerging markets, and future business opportunities. These solutions and knowledge can then be broadly distributed to the industry, workforce, policymakers, students and scholars."

The Center for Midstream Management and Science will support students, faculty members, labs and post-doctoral fellowships across Lamar University with an emphasis on applied research that is vital to the midstream industry. Additionally, the center facilitates training for the midstream community by hosting events and seminars. The center also supports the development of academic courses and certificate programs at LU to train the next generation of midstream professionals.

"We are uniquely positioned to team with industry leaders and midstream providers for solutions not only to distribution and storage modalities but also to optimize flow rates and gain access to the best-suited markets," said President Kenneth Evans. "With a highly-regarded engineering program, dedicated research faculty in the environmental field, a business college actively involved in this industry and a center committed to port science and management, LU has the talent pool to drive the science and management of these vital midstream processes."

The kickoff symposium Nov. 21 hosted midstream industry operators and suppliers, state legislators, regulators and LU faculty and students. Todd Staples, president of the Texas Oil and Gas Association, was the keynote speaker.



**College of Engineering Reaccredited**  
Bachelor's degree programs in chemical, civil, electrical, industrial and mechanical engineering have been reaccredited by the Engineering Accreditation Commission of ABET, the global accreditor of college and university programs in applied and natural science, computing, engineering and engineering technology.

ABET accreditation assures that programs meet standards to produce graduates ready to enter critical technical fields. "Maintaining our ABET accreditation demonstrates LU's commitment to provide quality engineering programs that provide a solid educational foundation, giving our students the capability to lead the way in innovation, emerging technologies and anticipating the safety and welfare needs of the public," said Brian Craig, dean of the College of Engineering.

Sought worldwide, ABET's voluntary peer-review process is highly respected because it adds critical value to academic programs in the technical disciplines, where quality, precision and safety are of the utmost importance. "These standards are essential to produce graduates ready to begin their engineering futures," said Craig. "Additionally, graduation from ABET-accredited programs may also establish a student's eligibility for many federal student loans, grants and scholarships, is often a mandatory requirement for employment, and supports entry to many technical professions through licensure, registration and certification."

ABET is a nonprofit, non-governmental organization that currently accredits 4,005 programs at more than 793 colleges and universities in 32 countries.

### Flow cytometer funded, a game changer for LU and the community

James Henry, associate professor of chemical engineering, was awarded a National Science Foundation grant for the acquisition of a flow cytometer/sorter for LU. This device will be the first of its kind to be located between Houston and Lafayette and will be available for multidisciplinary research on campus.

A flow cytometer allows researchers to examine and sort individual cells at a rate of 100,000 per minute, giving far more precision in the study of groups of cells. "Without this equipment, we can't do much quantitative analysis of single cells," explained Henry. "The flow cytometer will allow us to collect data about individual cells based on what questions we are asking." Henry is primarily focused on Alzheimer's research, and the device will aid research associated with Alzheimer's disease therapeutic screening and identification and drug screening, as well as the identification of unique cancer types and markers and determination of environmental toxins.

Henry also has spoken with local oncologists about the possibility of allowing them the use of the flow cytometer for local testing of biopsies. "At this time, these samples are sent out of town, which can add days or weeks to a cancer diagnosis," he said.

### "The Nest" installed across BISD

Soon eight elementary schools will be equipped with innovative learning labs. A high-tech STEM-centric space, called "The Nest," opened in May 2019 at Pietzsch-MacArthur Elementary and has served as the model space for more labs, two of which opened last October.

"The Nest," evolved from a relationship between Lamar University and the neighborhood surrounding the campus, which includes Pietzsch-MacArthur. Several years ago, LU's former First Lady Nancy Evans began promoting "Reading Wednesdays" at PMac. Each Wednesday, Evans would visit with students and encourage them to read. Soon afterwards, Evans helped organize LU education majors to regularly tutor the students. That's when it became obvious that a special room or space was needed to accommodate reading and individualized learning. Spurred by Evans, Audrey Collins, principal at PMac was asked to "dream big" about a space that would meet the needs of her students.

"My battle cry has always been, your toughest kids deserve the best of everything so I asked for the best," said Collins. Norman Bellard, LU's assistant to the president for community relations and founding member of the South Park Neighborhood Partnership, and Teresa Simpson, chair for the LU/BISD Business Partnership, took Collins' vision, enlisted community partners and sourced funding (\$20,000+ for each room) to ensure elementary students across the district have benefit of "The Nest" in their schools. More innovative learning labs will open in 2021. Bellard said the plan is to open two a year.



### Proksch named 2019 Distinguished Faculty Lecturer

LU named Bryan Proksch, associate professor of music, the 2019 Distinguished Faculty Lecturer. Total Petrochemicals and Refining USA Inc. sponsored the 2019 edition of the Distinguished Faculty Lecture series.

Proksch's lecture, "Music and Oil in Beaumont: John Philip Sousa and the Magnolia Petroleum Band," included the music of Sousa performed by students from the Mary Morgan Moore Department of Music Nov. 12 in the Setzer Student Center Live Oak Ballroom.

The award, initiated in 1987, is one of the highest honors accorded a Lamar University faculty member. The entire university and the general community nominate prospective lecturers, and a committee of faculty members and representatives from the student body, staff, administration, alumni, faculty retirees and the community selects the honoree based on the professor's proposed topic and on his/her professional background and recognized teaching/presentation skills.

Proksch, who received his Ph.D. in musicology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, was selected for his comprehensive research and historic documentation of John Philip Sousa, specifically Sousa's connection to Beaumont. His presentation covered "all four of Sousa's visits to Beaumont, including a 1906 visit during which the Lucas Oil Company took him on an excursion to open 'a few gushers' for him out in the oil fields," said Proksch, who joined Lamar University in 2013. Proksch is the author of *A Sousa Reader: Essays, Interviews, and Clippings*, a unique collection of articles that reveal fascinating information about Sousa.



### Westgate receives the distinguished TSUS Regents Professor Award

James Westgate, professor emeritus of earth and space sciences, has been awarded the Texas State University System Regents' Professor Award, which honors college professors for their outstanding professional excellence and significant educational contributions on the international, national and communal levels.

Since joining LU in 1989, Westgate has been principal investigator or co-PI for more than \$1.7 million in science, education and research grants and garnered more than \$1.2 million in grants aimed at providing scholarships and opportunities for teacher graduate students.



### Lin named associate provost for Research and Sponsored Programs

Prof. Jerry Lin has been selected as associate provost for research and sponsored programs. Lin's long and productive research-oriented career at LU, his understanding of the world of funded and competitive research and his long-standing relationships with area industry recommended him for the position.

Since joining LU in 1999, Lin has been principal investigator or co-PI for approximately \$7 million of external grants funded by federal and state agencies and by industries. Lin is also active in the international research community. He is author or co-author of more than 120 peer-reviewed articles published in top journals of his area of expertise, which have been cited more than 3,300 times.

### LU one of 10 universities in the nation on the rise

College Gazette has named Lamar University one of the "Top 10 Public Universities on the Rise."

Lamar University ranks eighth in College Gazette's 2019 listing of "amazing universities on the rise." The independent organization that provides an online starting place for students and families to discover "right-fit" schools, cited several metrics for the ranking, including programs, student and alumni accomplishments, faculty accolades and research programs and expenditures.

The ranking also included consideration of the campus, noting LU's state-of-the-art facilities, recent renovations and updates to its residence halls. LU's rankings by other sources also played a role in the university's inclusion on the distinguished list. LU was recently noted as a Top 20 "rising star" institution in the country by Firetail, a UK-based consulting firm; LU has scored in the Top 75 in three of its specialty graduate programs, including education, nursing and criminal justice; Intelligent.com, an online news source and research website, ranked 11 of Lamar University's programs in the Top 35 nationwide.

## LU HELPS BRING NSF RESEARCH VESSEL TO THE GULF OF MEXICO

Lamar University is helping bring one of three state-of-the-art National Science Foundation-funded oceanographic research vessels to the Gulf of Mexico— the first new regional class research ship in the U.S. Academic Research Fleet to the Gulf in nearly four decades.

As one of 15 associate members of the Gulf-Caribbean Oceanographic Consortium, led by the University of Southern Mississippi and the Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium, Lamar University played a role in developing the future scientific agenda for Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean oceanographic research. The consortium's efforts ultimately secured the approximately \$100 million funding for the vessel to be built and stationed in Louisiana and Mississippi. Matthew Hoch, associate professor of biology, serves as LU's representative on the consortium.

The new ship, which is expected to be delivered in 2023, will perform regional, national and international research important to the U.S. and the world. With science labs, deck space for scientific deployments and state-of-the-art technologies, the 199-foot ship will enable valuable research on environmental change, the global hydrologic cycle, biodiversity in the ocean and marine mineral resources.

"The lack of knowledge of most of the world's oceans is tremendous, and the Gulf and Caribbean are no exception. Despite decades of oceanographic research in the Gulf of Mexico, much of the work has been done close to shore in smaller research vessels," said Hoch. "The new RCRV will have a range of 5,400 nautical miles (6,200 miles) so we can study large-scale questions not touched on previously."

The ship will be operational for multidisciplinary collaborations among institutions. The vessel has 12 science berths, where students and faculty can participate in projects while at sea. In addition to bringing the vessel to the Port of Beaumont for public and outreach events, Hoch says he's looking forward to the new discoveries now possible with such a research ship.

"One potential project would address impacts of increasing excessive sediment and nutrients from the Amazon River, due to Amazon deforestation, on ocean biology. Surface currents carry these pollutants past the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef, into the Gulf of Mexico and via the Loop Current may pass the reefs of the Florida Keys. For example, Amazon River nutrients have been implicated in the excessive sargassum weed on beaches of Belize, Mexico and Texas," said Hoch. "Equally exciting is the potential for discovery of new benthic (bottom) life in the multiple basins and deep-sea trenches, and let's not forget the opportunity to study geological processes and past conditions on Earth in this tectonically active region of the world's oceans."



# ALUMNI KEEP KIDS LEARNING DURING THE PANDEMIC

by Shelly Vitanza

Lamar University has 90,000 alumni and 12,000 of those are in education. These educators assumed leadership roles during the pandemic to ensure children across the nation were able to continue their educational pursuits despite the challenges.

LU initiated online courses in 1995 in the College of Education and Human Development. Therefore, most of LU's educational alumni are familiar with online learning platforms. These alumni either were enrolled in online courses at LU or they were taught online tools in their educational curriculum.

"Our educational alumni across the nation are well-trained in online education, and many of them are now invaluable leaders at this time in our nation's history," said Robert Spina, dean of the College of Education and Human Development. "These alumni have not only moved their teaching, mentoring and student connections to digital formats, but their experience and knowledge base has been a critical part of the success of moving K-12 education online."

Here are three LU alumni who have ensured the transition from face-to-face education to online platforms and who have provided the greatest pedagogical value along with the teacher-student connection so important in K-12 environments.



**Barbara Ybarra '16**  
Associate Superintendent  
of Teaching and Learning

Bryan Independent School  
District, Bryan

Bryan ISD, a district that generally serves a lower socioeconomic status demographic where 76% of the population receives free and reduced cost lunch, had no learning management system in place when the pandemic hit.

The first week of the pandemic, the district purchased Schoology, a program that automatically integrated with the district's student information system. They trained more than 1,200 teachers in a 48-hour period and were completely launched and teaching students online within two weeks.

"We had been researching systems for several years and planned to bring the top companies back this spring for implementation in 18 months," said Barbara Ybarra, associate superintendent of teaching and learning. "We got the system purchased within the first week and had it enrolling students by the second. Five weeks in, we have 93.5% of 16,000 students online."

The district created a lead trainer program to train teachers district wide, all virtually, through Google Hangouts. Through slide deck and on-demand video series, the teachers were fully immersed.

Teachers did incredibly great," said Ybarra, who earned her doctorate in educational leadership from LU in 2016. "We said to the teachers, 'This is what you're faced with now, we've got to keep going.' They actively rose to the occasion."

The district did provide content for courses in a starter kit and provided a

consistent structure for all classes, which Ybarra had learned from her work at LU was essential in helping parents and students navigate in the new online platform.

"First and foremost, I was a student in an online program, and I know what worked for me and really appreciated how courses were structured and the consistency from one course to the next," said Ybarra. "One of the courses I took at LU was about developing online. I'm thankful I learned how to develop a quality online course that is easily accessible."

Bryan ISD, like many schools, has a significant digital divide between students who have access at home and those who don't. The district has distributed more than 5,000 Chromebooks to meet the students' needs.

The district also made sure that every student, including those with special needs, were accommodated through the virtual learning platform. Special education courses are occurring on video conferencing and through teletherapy. Some online courses are modified for students with vision impairments and dyslexia but submitted with everyone else's assignments, and those students are included in discussion boards.

"For example, if a student is supposed to receive preferential seating in a classroom, we are reaching out to the parents and determining where the best place for that student to work in the home is," said Ybarra. "Our special education and accommodations are continuing through the virtual platform."

Bryan ISD's pandemic experience is documented on Facebook at @bryanisd and Twitter @bryanisd.

"There are great stories and little wonderful moments, but what's been the most wonderful, incredible thing to watch is what can happen when an entire team is completely behind getting kids what they need," said Ybarra.



**Alline Ayala '18**  
Digital Graphics 1 and Gateway to  
Technology/Engineering 1

Hudson Bend Middle School  
Lake Travis Independent School  
District, Austin

Alline Ayala's school went on spring break March 11 and then extended the break another two weeks, giving teachers time to plan lessons and prepare for an online learning experience. The district coordinated all curriculum through Schoology. All assignments were consistent for every subject in every grade, assigned the same day with the same due date. Teachers were then asked to offer "office hours" for students to attend via Google Meet.

"A few schools and educators began reaching out to me mid to late February asking for help on designing their emergency plans for teaching and learning," said Ayala. "Knowing that I had the preparation and knowledge to be able to support them was very helpful in my own journey to make sense of this situation. Contributing to their efforts and giving back to a profession that has given me so much has been an integral part of my own self-care process."

Teachers in Ayala's school and the entire district have worked together using their strengths. Those with more experience with online learning have taken the lead on the structures for lesson creation and instruction, and others with video production skills have created videos for the rest of the teams to use.

Ayala, who received her doctorate in educational leadership from Lamar University in 2018, said the doctoral research she conducted, titled "Perceived

motivations of educators applying and volunteering in Edtech ambassador programs within McClelland's Achievement Motivation Theory," applies to the current pandemic situation.

"The doctorate program, prepared me to be open to the unexpected and trust the process, and that has really been helpful in navigating the uncertainty of the times," said Ayala.

"During the program I participated in research around online learning, teacher personal learning networks, micro-credentialing with badges and achievement motivation. My understanding of these topics has deeply shaped the way I am approaching the process of teaching and learning with my students during this crisis."

She has valued her experience as an online learner because she can appreciate what her students are now going through. "Much of what is published is modeled from my experience as an online learner. Our multi-week project started with an 'introduction' similar to a course syllabus, in which we share what the topics and tasks are for each week. I also have modeled much of my feedback strategies to those I had received from my professors (clear, specific, actionable). I feel much more confident about myself when in front of the camera and can manage the calls well with muting others and presenting screens."

Ayala created the presentation, "Supporting Continuity of Teaching and Learning During an Emergency: Conversation Guide and Quick Start Recommendations" for other teachers and districts.

**"...WHAT'S BEEN THE MOST WONDERFUL, INCREDIBLE THING TO WATCH IS WHAT CAN HAPPEN WHEN AN ENTIRE TEAM IS COMPLETELY BEHIND GETTING KIDS WHAT THEY NEED."**

**-BARBARA YBARRA '16**



**Stu Guthrie**  
current doctoral candidate  
Principal

Bush Middle School, North East Independent School District, San Antonio

Bush Middle School Principal Stu Guthrie drew heavily on his experience in the LU doctoral program when implementing an online program for his school. The announcement about the pandemic came on Thursday of the school's spring break, which gave Guthrie and his teachers a few days to prepare the "Bush Family" for an alternative learning system.

Before school was to start again on Monday, Guthrie sent an email to the semi-affluent school community, comprising 1,000 students, explaining the situation and what was going to happen. He also sent a Google form for kids to respond.

"Because I'm currently working on my doctorate, I knew we had to implement communication, which is big anytime, but, when you're in a situation where everyone is going to be working from home, that's even more important," said Guthrie, who is in his first year of LU's educational leadership program. "I told our faculty our communication has to be straightforward; we have to respond to emails faster; they have to be short and sweet with each other, and we also have to do the same with our kids who would need real simple directions, checklists and a way to know they were accomplished things."

Guthrie received 650 responses within a couple of days of sending his

email survey, which was an indicator of how many students could be accessed electronically and how many students would need low-tech or paper options.

While Bush Middle School implemented Google Classroom for 95% of the online teaching, Guthrie continued his communication campaign to find out how he and the school could help students become online learners.

"Each week, I personally called about 30 kids and parents—10 per grade level—that had not been fully connected," Guthrie said. "I asked how we could help them, devices, less work, etc., to get them through. It's important that students see and hear from you and you continue to build personal connections."

Guthrie learned what he expected; not every student had his or her home desk set up with computers, lights and materials. Additionally, some students were helping their younger siblings. Others had spotty internet connections.

In the coming weeks, Guthrie remained focused on building strong personal connections and staying in touch with his faculty, students and parents. He consistently inquired how he could be part of the solution where problems arose, assuring parents their children would not fall behind, and just listened to parents who needed to talk. The school issued Chromebooks and laptops where there was need and slowly implemented the online program for all students.

"As a result of being an online student at LU, I kept communication clear and concise, made all assignments phone friendly in the beginning and didn't get fancy until we had everyone going in the right direction," said Guthrie. "I've received good feedback from our community with how we rolled out our distance learning."

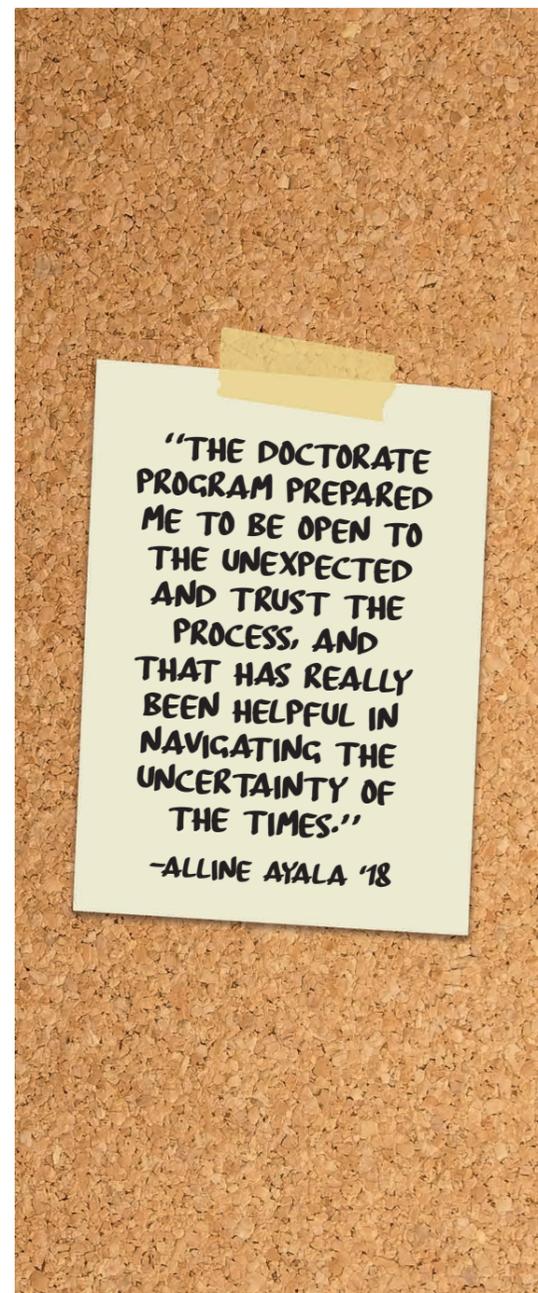
In week five of the pandemic, Bush Middle School had 100% of its 1,000 students connected and working online, and Guthrie said teachers were able to stretch kids in their assignments and give a little bit more.

"Initially, we stuck with one app or interface," said Guthrie. "We still hit

the highlights of the material we're presenting and leave out the fluff, but I've told the teachers now is the time you can start to test the boundaries and ramp up the rigor a little bit."

Guthrie continues to communicate and interact with students. He recently hosted a Zoom lunch, where he went into the school cafeteria with food from a local restaurant owned by a Bush family and kids popped in on Zoom. They talked about their food, their dogs, their families and the crisis.

The Bush pandemic experience is documented on Twitter: @mrguthrietweets.



**Dean Spina named distinguished alumnus**  
The distinguished alumni award is the highest award presented to University of Pittsburgh alumni. **Dean Bob Spina** was honored by the university's School of Education as the Department of Health and Physical Activity's Distinguished Alumnus. Spina has 30 years of combined teaching, research, service and administration experience in higher education after graduation from the University of Pittsburgh's doctoral program in health, physical and recreation education. Currently, he serves as dean of the College of Education and Human Development at Lamar University and is a fellow in both the National Academy of Kinesiology and the American College of Sports Medicine.

**New department name points to the future**  
Family and Consumer Sciences has a new name: The Department of Nutrition, Hospitality and Human Services. The name change intent is to reflect current directions in each of the department's respective fields and better align with its program areas and the mission to address fundamental human needs. The department's professional disciplines are bound by the common theme of rendering service to individuals, families and communities. Other exciting news in the department includes the development of several minors: students across the campus can now minor in culinary arts, event planning, hospitality administration, fashion retailing, family studies and nutrition.



**Education advocate and mathematician Freeman Hrabowski presents Academic Lecture**

The Lamar University Academic Lecture Series, hosted by the College of Education and Human Development, invited one of TIME Magazine's '100 Most Influential People in the World' **Freeman Hrabowski** to campus last fall. Hrabowski is renowned for 'getting kids to love to learn', especially lower income students and those underrepresented in STEM disciplines. His research and publications focus on science and math education, with a special emphasis on minority participation and performance. His leadership, expertise and vision are integral to programs worldwide and used by universities, school systems and community groups around the country. His lecture, "Pursuing the Dream: A 50-Year Perspective on Broadening Participation in Education," was based on his experience as a valued consultant on science and education to national agencies, universities and school systems. Hrabowski has a compelling story which he tells in his most recent book, "Holding Fast to Dreams: Empowering Youth from the Civil Rights Crusade to STEM Achievement." He describes the events and experiences that played a central role in his development as an educator and leader including being jailed at the age of 12 for participating in Martin Luther King Jr.'s children's crusade.

▶ **Assessment research office formed**  
The college has heavily invested in the faculty and is working to bolster their endeavors concerning assessment, assessment research and accreditation. **Kyle Boudreaux**, with a background in data collection and reporting, online learning and learning technologies, and professional development, will direct the new Office of Assessment Research, facilitating faculty access to data as they collaborate on scholarship, reporting and course analysis to increase student engagement and measure students' learning.

▶ **Alumna Danielle Jackson named Texas Assistant Principal of the Year**  
**Danielle Jackson** of Marshall High School in Fort Bend ISD has been selected to represent the Texas Association of Secondary School Principals as the 2019-2020 Texas Assistant Principal of the Year. Jackson graduated cum laude with a BA in Political Science in 1997 and an MA in English in 2003. Jackson will represent the state as she enters the National Association of Secondary School Principals National Assistant Principal of the Year recognition program.

▶ **Superintendent Jay Killgo gives commencement address**  
**Jay Killgo**, Vidor school district superintendent, delivered an inspiring speech during the December 2019 commencement ceremony. Graduates and guests alike were encouraged by his humble words focused on future opportunities and understanding that learning does not have an end but remains a process.



# Dreams postponed

by Madison Franco

Lauren Martin '03, B.S. interior design, is a designer at The Laurels, a family owned and operated wedding venue in Beaumont. She has made a career of helping couples plan the dream wedding many have imagined for years. But what

happens when that perfect day falls in the middle of a pandemic? "A lot of our couples have had to change plans," Martin said. "We had to cancel all of March, April and May, and for the ones coming up, we're having to reduce numbers. But we are able to reschedule them all."

From changing dates to cutting guest lists, the coronavirus pandemic has certainly had an effect on weddings. Under the first social distancing guidelines, gatherings of more than 10 people were banned. This meant that some couples who chose to get married had to reduce a large guest list of loved ones down to about eight people.

"One couple had a really small ceremony with just

immediate family, and then we rescheduled the reception for next year, so it'll be like their one-year anniversary," Martin said. We're trying to be flexible, work with them, meet their needs and still make it special for them."

In any situation, Martin reminds clients that the most important part of a wedding is the couple's love, and that reassurance is especially needed today.

"I just tell them at the end of the day, the only thing that matters is that you're married to your best friend. You're going to look back at this in 30 years and laugh about it," Martin said. "You're going to go through a lot of things in your marriage. Just know that if you can get through this, you can get through a lot in your marriage."



# Ensuring seniors are healthy, happy

by Madison Franco

Megan Mistic '13, or "Miss Sunshine" as her residents sometimes call her, began volunteering at her grandmother's senior living home when she was only 10 years old. Since then, senior care has become her lifelong passion.

"I fell in love instantly, and everything I've done since then has been goal-driven to running a senior living home," Mistic said.

After she earned her bachelor's degree in general studies at LU, Mistic followed her dream to work in senior living.

As the healthcare activity director of Buckner Calder Woods senior care home, keeping residents happy

and loved is part of her job. Normally, that might include organizing activities such as group events and family visits, but with the risk of COVID-19, Mistic has had to get creative.

From Mother's Day Zoom calls to "noodle ball" (hallway hockey with pool noodles), Mistic makes sure that residents and staff are always having fun while social distancing. She has helped organize a drive-by parade, asked local dancers to perform outside residents' windows, and goes above and beyond to keep residents happy and safe at the same time.

"We're constantly cleaning, constantly social distancing, constantly wearing face



masks. We're just trying to keep our residents safe and show them love as much as possible."

Her efforts to entertain and protect residents at Buckner Calder Woods are too many to list, but even outside of work, Mistic keeps the wellbeing of her residents in mind.

"When I go out in public, I wear a face mask. I constantly wash my hands. I have hand sanitizer in

my pocket," Mistic said. "Outside of the building, I take every precaution. I'm just trying to do what's best for my residents and family members and just try to keep as much calm and peace and happiness as possible."

In a troubled time of changing circumstances, Mistic responded to stress with compassion and creativity to meet the needs of the residents she calls "family."



Four days into Janci Kimball's tenure as CEO of Nutrition and Senior Services in Beaumont, Tropical Storm Imelda dropped 40 inches of rain on Southeast Texas. Not long after, in November 2019, a dramatic explosion at a butadiene plant run by TPC Group in Port Neches sent literal shockwaves through the region.



Through it all, Kimball, a 1991 graduate of the College of Fine Arts and Communication, coordinated the delivery of life-sustaining meals and critical services, such as transportation, to area seniors.

Already tested by water and fire, Kimball and the 350 employees and volunteers of Nutrition and Senior Services adapted quickly in the face of a global pandemic. The recipients of their services are among the most

# Adapting quickly to meet demand

by Grayson Meek '10, '17

vulnerable to COVID-19, and many of their volunteers are seniors, as well. "We recognized immediately the need for alterations," Kimball says. To deal with the uptick in demand driven by stay-at-home orders and the inherently fragile population, they adjusted their service plan by limiting operations to full-time staff and closing a dining facility and replacing it with a drive-through format. They also utilized contactless delivery to maintain a sense of personal connection with their clients.

Seniors, already isolated in the best of times, are especially likely to go for extended periods without contact during this pandemic. "Many times, we may be the only humans they see or speak to each day. This has been especially critical during this crisis."

To donate or volunteer with Nutrition and Senior Services, visit them on the web at seniormeals.org, find them on Facebook or contact them by phone at (409) 892-4455.

Lunch Ministry continues to fill the need where it can every Sunday. Currently, Jones and other long-time members of the group, including Fred Antoine '78, are operating under a COVID-19-specific protocol that involves a smaller team in the kitchen, increased sanitization and an altered delivery method. As businesses reopen and the desire to recapture old routines grows stronger, Jones admitted that the return to normal operations might not be immediate. Acknowledging the uncertainty but never forgetting the original mission, she remarked, "We will try to encourage social distancing and we will follow the guidelines that are put into place. Right now, we are all just feeling our way, and trying to continue our mission of feeding the hungry."

To learn more about volunteer opportunities once normal operations resume or to donate, visit the Sack Lunch Ministry (stanthonycathedral.org/events) and Some Other Place (someotherplacebeaumont.com) on the web.



# Supporting struggling community members

by Grayson Meek '10, '17

The St. Anthony Cathedral Basilica Sack Lunch Ministry, begun in 1997, always had a clear mission. Mary Beth Jones '10 became a parishioner around that time and recalled that the group emerged to fill a specific need in the community. When Some Other Place, an initiative of emergency programs, services

and food pantries run by a collective of religious entities, needed to close its doors on Sundays, the Sack Lunch Ministry stepped in to provide meals. "The need did not disappear on that day, and our parish decided to step in to help," said Jones. The need is a little greater now, and the future cannot be foreseen, but the Sack

# SAFE... — & — STYLISH

by Shelly Vitanza



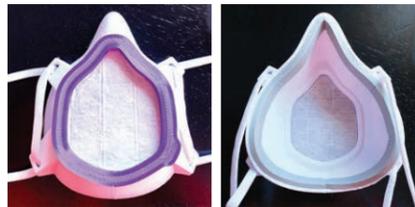
In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Morgan Mitcham wanted her friends and family to have comfortable fitting masks with high-quality filters, so the Lamar University senior mechanical engineering major created her own.

With two 3-D printers, printer filament and a few items from the hardware store, Mitcham, who plans to graduate in December, crafted a mask that is comfortable, meets CDC filtration standards and comes in a variety of colors.

"I basically found a design online that I made my own," said Mitcham. "I added a little more comfort to the existing design to accommodate different nose sizes and added insulation foam right around the edge, so it seals better than an N95 mask."

Most unique about Mitcham's masks is the filter. She uses the highest quality residential air conditioning filters. The filter material is capable of preventing COVID-19 from passing through it and has a 97% particle removal efficiency rate.

"They're expensive, \$40, but I can cut it up into small bits, double it and make 100 filters for the masks from one 20-by-30 air filter," said Mitcham. "The filters are pleated so there is no fiber glass, and they're probably more efficient than N95."



Another 'Mitcham distinction' is the comfort of her masks. She super-glues insulation foam that is used to secure window unit air conditioners in windows. The memory foam-like product easily adheres to the edges of the mask that come in contact with the face providing cushion. She also prints ear straps using a flexible rubber material that is adjustable for different head sizes and also removes the strain from the ears.

"I have made about 30 masks for family, friends and medical professionals I know personally," said Mitcham. "They are working really well, and it's something I can do to help in this situation."

In between her LU course work—two classes and a senior design project—Mitcham makes her masks. Each mask takes

about eight hours to produce and assemble and costs a little less than \$3. Mitcham hasn't charged for her masks, but she's put about 100 hours into the project.

"It's been really fun making them and now I'm making them in different colors which is more fun than solid white," said Mitcham. "I've got colorful filament for ear sabers like turquoise and yellow."

To support her new project, Mitcham has joined a Facebook group—COVID HomeBrew Mask Relief. The group communicates about the availability of filament, which is in high demand, and where masks are needed all over the country.

"It's exciting just knowing I have two printers going all the time, and I'm helping people to stay healthy," said Mitcham.



**College of Engineering Center for Midstream Management and Science hosts first annual symposium**  
In partnership with the Texas Oil and Gas Association, Lamar University brought together members of the midstream sector to hear from industry leaders **Todd Staples**, president of Texas Oil and Gas Association; **Thomas Long**, group chief financial officer for Energy Transfer; and **Jim Nyquist**, group president of Emerson Automation Solutions.

More than 100 guests attended the symposium, where they heard panelists discuss the future of the midstream industry as well as the outlook for the energy sector in general in Southeast Texas. Many LU students were in attendance and had the opportunity to network with industry leaders and participate in the question-and-answer session.

Lamar University launched the Center for Midstream Management and Science in September 2019. The center serves as a bridge between LU and local industry, connecting breakthroughs in access to oil and gas to the downstream advances in refining and liquefaction technologies. As part of its mission, the CMMS will continue to host events bringing industry leaders onto the LU campus for collaboration and learning opportunities.



**Xuejun Fan receives distinguished TSUS Regent's Professor Award**

**Xuejun Fan**, professor of mechanical engineering, was awarded the Texas State University System Regents' Professor Award for 2019. This prestigious award honors university professors for exemplary performance and contributions to the educational community.

Fan, an internationally renowned scholar and expert in modeling and characterization in electronic packaging design and reliability relating to microchip packaging, joined the faculty in 2007.

Since that time, Fan has won multiple awards for research and teaching, including the University Scholar Award and the Distinguished Faculty Research Fellow award. In 2018, he was named University Professor and Mary Ann and Lawrence E. Faust Endowed Professor. He has authored and edited four books, published more than 100 peer-reviewed journal papers, filed five patents around the world and won numerous research grants.



**LU establishes MOU with Emerson for cutting-edge training technology**

LU reached a Memorandum of Understanding with Emerson, a global technology and engineering leader, to ensure the College of Engineering prepares its students with the latest digital transformation technologies and advanced process automation, instrumentation and control equipment now and in the future.

As part of LU's innovative, leading-edge instruction, curriculum and research, the university will provide engineering students, faculty and working professionals access to labs that include Emerson automation systems and technologies. Additionally, LU will develop applicable curriculum to fully integrate the equipment.

In addition to contributing \$200,000 to Lamar University's Foundation in 2018, Emerson will contribute to the provision of two Performance Learning Platforms—fully instrumented and operable process skids that provide hands-on training—and TerminalManager™ software to teach students how the industry manages the entire terminal business process. In addition, Scallon Controls, Emerson's Impact Partner, will also contribute to the provision of four DeltaV™ distributed control system process trainer panels—allowing students to learn control system fundamentals in a safe and controlled environment—as well as lifecycle services and support for all of LU's engineering labs that host Emerson equipment. Emerson will also provide training materials relating to their products and provide guest speakers on campus.



► **Professor receives funding**  
**Qin Qian**, associate professor of civil and environmental engineering, received funding for two research grants to address regional flooding.

► **Henry awarded grant**  
**James Henry**, associate professor of chemical engineering, was awarded National Science Foundation grant funding for the acquisition of a flow cytometer/sorter for Lamar University.

# Community support



Lamar University Alumni Board members **Sharita Gardner '12**, **Brenna (Gordon) Rodriguez '04** and **Tea (Nguyen) Do '08**, organized projects with their work and Junior League of Beaumont to assist the community.

Tea (Nguyen) Do '08, who owns a Famers Insurance Agency, personally sewed hundreds of cloth face masks for Baptist Hospital. She also sent care packages of cleaning supplies and toilet paper to her customers and provided treats for her clients to pick up outside her business for Easter.

With the money left over in the budget from canceled events at the Junior League of Beaumont, Sharita Gardner '12, who is a business development representative for MobilOil Credit Union and is the COVID-19 Response Ad-Hoc Committee for the Junior League, organized a team of members to use the funds to show appreciation through meals to frontline healthcare workers. She purchased thank you boxes of girl scout cookies to send to the hospitals, helped with a Hometown Heroes lunch at Christus, delivered meals to healthcare workers at the Southeast Texas Regional Medical Center, and ordered yard card signs for Nurses Week May 6-12 for Christus and Baptist Hospitals to boost morale. She also delivered meals with her credit union team to medical professionals at the local hospitals.

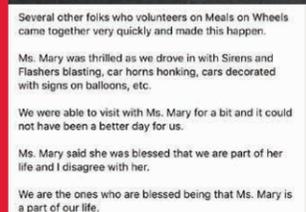
Brenna (Gordon) Rodriguez '04, regional director of Harbor Healthcare System, helped spearhead a Hometown Heroes Lunch for Christus, organized by Harbor Foundation, in addition to her daily work of keeping hospice residents healthy and comforted.



**Chad Anderson '96**, vice president of manufacturing, Indorama Ventures Oxides

## Combating hunger

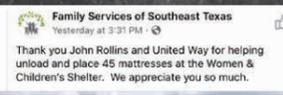
**Chris Robertson '16**, disaster response coordinator for Catholic Charities of Southeast Texas, has been working tirelessly through the pandemic to ensure low-income families don't go hungry. Chris recently became the director of Beaumont's first client choice food pantry and works more than 60 hours a week ensuring people who are out of work or have lost financial resources as a result of COVID-19 are not just being fed but are being fed well. Offering healthy choice food items such as meat, fruits, vegetables and dairy, he is helping to not only provide temporary food assistance but education on healthy dietary changes.



**Thanh Tsan '19**, associate mechanical engineering; **Leslie (Prejean) Solis '01**, chemist; **Patty Okervall '97**, Valero Energy Corp.

## RHC student produces PPE

Reaud Honors College mechanical engineering student **Ian Kennard** has been helping make personal protective equipment gear for our healthcare heroes since March 24. The demand for headband frames for face shields led to direct requests from hospitals. LU's Makerspace helped provide materials and space before closure forced Kennard to move a printer to his parents' Pearland home to continue to meet the need. He had to design several solutions to problems before he could make the process as efficient as possible. Kennard helped make ear savers on a large-format 3D printer he acquired, which also allows him to produce face shield materials in much larger batches.



**John Rollins '12**, public relations and community impact director, United Way of Beaumont and North Jefferson County

## Nurses in NY

JoAnne Gay Dishman School of Nursing alumni traveled to New York in April and May for 21 days, plus a 14-day quarantine upon return, to provide care to COVID-19 patients.

- Victoria (Cornell) Carmona '18**
- Sierra Roberts '17**
- Chelsey Mouton '14**
- Shaela (Thayer) Zerko '16**
- Joshua Rodgers '12, '15**
- Madelyne (Childress) Morrison '17**

# Red+White TOGETHER



**Brandi (Dotson) Leger '07**, RN supplemental, working ICU and Covid units; **Leigh (Jenkins) Martin '02**, math and science teacher, Little Cypress Junior High

## Pizza delivery

**Dennis Moncla '94**, owner of Colorado Canyon Miniature Golf, delivered stacks of pizzas to Baptist Hospitals of Southeast Texas during the past several months.



**Kayleigh Romero '13**, math teacher, Thomas Jefferson Middle School

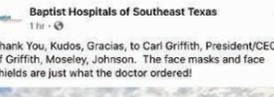
**Aja Baise '16**, who teaches third grade at Glenn York Elementary School in Alvin, and **Cindy (Madden) Nepinsky '83**, who teaches at Homer Drive Elementary School in Beaumont, saw a creative way to engage their students by making Flat Ms. Baise and Flat Mrs. Nepinsky so their students could take their own Bitmoji of their teachers on adventures with them until they can be with their teachers in person again. "I can't wait to see all of their pictures as they complete each task. Say a prayer that they don't drop me in the toilet or let the dogs eat me," Baise joked. Let's hope her students don't read this and get any ideas.



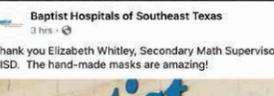
**Lauren (Plaia) Goodhue '13**, family nurse practitioner, Diagnostic Group

## Creativity and connection

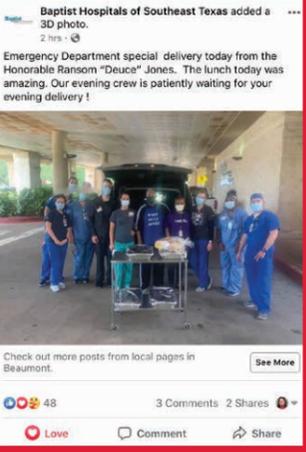
The global pandemic did not interrupt Buna Elementary School teacher **Virgie (Norris) Clark's** creativity and connections with her students for a second. Clark '14 reads to them several nights each week in her bedtime zoom time. She even created a "fort night" zoom where they built forts to show their classmates. She thrives in any environment, and her social media posts are evidence she is changing the lives of her students one day at a time. She makes a difference by having learning be fun for her students and by bringing topics in that are relevant. She is the type of teacher her students will remember for years to come.



**Carl Griffith '83**, president and CEO, Griffith, Moseley, Johnson & Associates Inc.



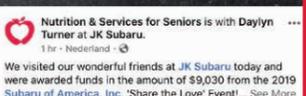
**Elizabeth Whitley '82, '86**, secondary math supervisor, Beaumont school district



**Judge Ransom "Duce" Jones '88**, Justice of the Peace, Precinct 6

## Above and beyond

**Whitney Williamson '05**, a special education specialist at Las Lomas Elementary in North East school district, has been broadcasting live social skills lessons for her special education students throughout the pandemic and worked to help relieve stressed parents by delivering gift bags as "pick me ups."



**Daylyn Turner '07**, vice president and general manager, JK Chevrolet Subaru

**Shelby (West) Ibarra '13** Shelby Ibarra, a teacher at Fehl-Price Elementary, organized a drive of food, gift cards and other items recently that she distributed to residents in Livingston and Onalaska who were affected by the tornado. She's from the Livingston area.



## Wishes fulfilled

For this year's Teacher Appreciation Week in May, Wendy (McBryde) Lapeyrolerie '99, a teacher at Hardin-Jefferson High School, created an "Adopt a Teacher Appreciation Week" Facebook page as a place for Southeast Texas teachers to be acknowledged and thanked for their hard work.

"Usually every year, the English departments I've worked for will always have their students write all the teachers a letter of appreciation," she said. "Those letters are priceless to us. Then it occurred to me right after the governor made the final announcement that we were not going to get those letters. I decided that we had a tough year already, so I needed to do something to try and make everyone's day a little bit better."

Lapeyrolerie posted the page publicly on April 29, expecting about 200 participants. The community group was at more than 4,000 by Monday morning.

"With COVID-19, people are having to teach from home and it has opened up their eyes to what we really do on a daily basis," she said. "Teachers really have a tough job, and it's amazing to see people reaching out to say thank you."

Some teachers request only prayers, others smiles and wish lists.

Port Acres Elementary kindergarten teacher Marissa Phillips' '09 wish list was fulfilled last week. She received numerous goodies for her classroom, including pencils, mounting tap, carpet markers and more. "More than anything, I'm so happy to see how many people love and appreciate teachers, myself included," she said. "This has been a trying time for everyone, and I think the realization that this is much more than a job for teachers has become apparent. We long to be back in our classroom with our children. I would give anything for just one more day with my babies."

Groves Middle School sixth-grade teacher Ashley Nicole Vickery '18 received books, school supplies, bookmarks and games. "Some of these items were bought by friends and family, but what was even more touching were the items purchased by complete strangers," Vickery said.



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.

**SEND US YOUR NEWS:**

Cardinal Cadence  
P.O. Box 10011  
Beaumont, TX 77710

e-mail alumni@lamar.edu  
or call (409) 880-8921

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**50s**

**Mike Clark** '58, B.S. geology, was recognized as “Mongol Nation’s Most Distinguished Geologist” and received a medal for geological work he did for the Mongolian government. This is an especially high honor for a foreigner to receive. Mike is retired and lives in Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia.

**Hershel Parker** '59, B.A. English, also holds a Ph.D., is a published author and Pulitzer Prize winning finalist for his biography of Herman Melville. He edited the Library of America volume, Herman Melville: Complete Poems in honor of Melville’s bicentennial in 2019. Parker is considered by some to be the most important Melville scholar of all time. He lives in Morro Bay, Calif.

**60s**

**Gerald Duff** '61, B.A. English, also has an M.A. and Ph.D. in English and was inducted into the Texas Literary Hall of Fame in March 2019 by the Friends of the Fort Worth Public Library. Gerald has taught at many interesting places during his career, including University of Exeter, Vanderbilt University, Johns Hopkins University, Oxford University, Rhodes College and Goucher College. He lives in Lebanon, Ill. with his wife, Patricia.

**Edgar Metcalf** '61, B.S. electrical engineering, is retired after having served as an environment and safety manager at Occidental Oil and Gas in Bakersfield, Calif., where he lives with his wife, Earlyne.

**David Shepherd** '63, B.S. biology, holds master’s and doctorate degrees in radiation physiology, and taught biology, archaeology and paleontology for 28 years at Southeastern Louisiana University. He served as faculty advisor and coach for the SLU Rugby Club. He and his wife, Cathy, now live in Kerrville.

**V.J. Harper II** '64, B.B.A. general business, and his wife, Cheryl, served on mission trips through their church, The Temple in Port Arthur, in June and November 2018 in the area of San Blas, Nayarit, on the Pacific side of Mexico, bringing medical and other equipment including hospital beds, a piano, walkers, crutches, wheelchairs, canes, bedside toilets, oxygen

bottles, leg and foot boots, sutures and breathing machines. These items were all donated to the local hospital and clinic. V.J. and Cheryl live in Port Neches.

**Cathy (French) Schmersahl** '67, B.A. history, holds a master’s degree in interdisciplinary studies and is retired from teaching for Rains school district in Emory. She and her husband, Dennis, live in Fort Worth.

**Bill Stoehs** '67, B.B.A. management, holds an M.B.A. business administration, and is retired after serving as director and president at Sprint Corp., AT&T Broadband, and CommSearch Associates. He served as a captain in the U.S. Navy Reserve. He and his wife, Catherine, live in Hudson, Fla.

**Jack Wilson** '68, B.S. government, is retired and lives in Lago Vista.

**Barbara Croxton** '69, B.S. elementary education, was featured for her volunteerism at the Longview World of Wonders Hands on Discovery children’s museum, where she has met other LU alumni. Barbara is a retired sixth grade science teacher in Springhill school district. Her husband, **Dick** '71, B.S. mechanical engineering, is a retired physics teacher, having taught at Sabine Pass High School. They live in Longview.

**70s**

**Susan (Allbritton) DeWolfe** '71, B.S. speech, is a senior English teacher at South Houston High School of Pasadena school district. She retired from Child Protective Services after serving as a substitute care supervisor. Susan started the Texas Coalition for the Prevention of Child Abuse and the Habitat for Humanity-based project in Victoria. She and her late husband have five children and seven grandchildren whom she enjoys spending time with. When she is not working, she does freelance writing and is active at her church. Susan lives in Pearland.

**Elaine (Litchfield) Wilmore** '72, B.S. elementary education, '74, M.Ed. supervision, earned a Ph.D. in educational administration from Texas A&M University, and she is a professor at the University of Texas of the Permian Basin. In addition to teaching, she has been a counselor and a principal. In Feb. 2019, her fifteenth book was published by Corwin Press where she is on the Corwin Best Seller List and the Corwin Million Dollar

Seller List. Elaine lives in Cleburne, Texas, as well as Ruidoso, N.M., with her husband, **Greg** '72, B.B.A. accounting, who also holds an M.P.A.

**Randy Gould** '73, B.B.A. accounting, is a retired senior finance manager of University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston. He has two adult children, Lauren and Jonathan, and he lives in League City.

**Dr. Purvis Harper** '74, B.S. biology, '74, B.S. chemistry, retired after serving as a pediatrician at Texas Children’s Hospital. He and his wife, Lynn, live in Kingwood.

**David Smith** '75, B.S. chemistry, is retired from working as a safety specialist at BASF chemical company. He and his wife, Regina, live in Warren.

**Michael Anders** '76, B.S. music-vocals, '79, M.M. music literature and vocal performance, holds a Ph.D. in music history and retired as professor of music and chair of the Visual & Performing Arts Department at the University of Findlay in Ohio after a 35-year tenure. He is emeritus professor of music and producer of the Donnell Broadway Concert Series at the University of Findlay. In May 2018, he was inducted into the 5th/3rd Bank Findlay/Hancock County Performing Arts Wall of Fame at the Marathon Center for the Performing Arts. He and his wife, Denise, live in Findlay.

**George Bowden** '77, B.S. communication, holds an M.A. in journalism and co-authored, “One Company’s Quest for Quality: From Baldrige to Lean Six Sigma,” a case study for a public relations textbook, Cases in Public Relations. Additionally, he co-authored, “Asset Management: Front Page or Front and Center” for the Nov. 2018 issue of Texas WET Magazine, a publication of the Water Environment Association of Texas. George lives in Granbury with his wife, Kimberly.

**Dallari Landry** '77, B.S. biology, also holds a J.D. and is the presiding judge of San Marcos Municipal Court, a position she was sworn into Nov. 1, 2018. Upon graduating from LU, she worked at the Gulf Refinery in their lab for a year before training as a forensic scientist with the Jefferson County Regional Crime Lab. After five years of processing crime scenes, analyzing evidence submitted by law enforcement, testifying as an expert witness and working with local government,

she decided to pursue a career in law. After attending law school, she specialized in criminal law, family law and mediation for 20 years. Judge Landry also taught in the Criminal Justice Departments at both Texas State University and University of Texas-San Antonio. She and her husband, John, live in San Marcos.

**Bill Macatee** '78, B.S. speech, was the speaker for an LU Digital Alumni and Friends Gathering via Facebook Live on March 31, 2020. Bill was named a Distinguished Alumnus in 2011 and gave the Commencement Address to the LU Class of 2014. For the past 30 years, Bill has been a prominent network television broadcaster who has anchored coverage of prestigious events such as The Olympics, The Masters, The U.S. Open Tennis Championships, as well as network play-by-play of the National Football League. In October 2018, he was inducted into the Texas Golf Hall of Fame, receiving a Lifetime Achievement Award. In addition to his career in media, he has worked in the investment world in mid-market private equity since 2013. He served as a trustee for the Lamar University Foundation from 2016-2019. Bill lives in Dallas with his wife, Sonya, and has a daughter, Cait.

**Bart Simmons** '78, B.B.A. finance, '79, M.B.A. business administration, and his sons, Trent and Andrew, own 2S Ranch and The Provision House in North Texas. The Provision House is a store specializing in grass-fed, grass-finished local beef. The Simmons family also own a ranch in Pecos, near Big Bend. Bart and his wife, **Martye (Sculley)** '78, B.B.A. accounting, have been married since 1978 and have three children and several grandchildren.

**Rita Davis** '79, B.S. nursing, is the director of nursing at Oak Grove Nursing Home. In 2019, she was honored as the Arthur E. Stillwell Award recipient at the 119th Greater Port Arthur Chamber of Commerce annual banquet. The award is presented to individuals who display the forethought and vision of Port Arthur’s founder and who work toward making the city a better place for residents and businesses. She and her husband, Barry, live in Groves.

**Byron Hildebrand** '79, B.S. health and physical education, who holds an M.S. in mid-management school administration, is a retired high school math teacher and was the state president of the Association of Texas Professional Educators from 2018-2019. He lives in San Antonio with his wife, Kim.

**Dr. John Scott** '79, B.S. biology, holds a D.O. of osteopathic medicine and an M.H.A. in health administration and is the chief marketing officer and chairman of the board of All Care Physicians Group. He is also an anesthesiologist. He and his wife, Loucille, live in Keller.

**80s**

**Phyllis LaLonde-Solcher** '80, B.B.A. marketing, is a realtor in San Antonio with JB Goodwin Realtors. She lives in Mico on Medina Lake with her husband, Scott.

**Sina Nejad** '80, B.S. civil engineering, '81, M.E. civil engineering, was reappointed to the Texas Board of Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors, an appointment announced by Gov. Greg Abbott Jan. 10, 2020, to expire Sept. 26, 2025. Sina is the first engineer from Southeast Texas appointed to the Board of Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors, which he considers to be a great honor. There are more than 65,000 practicing engineers in the state of Texas and out of those, only six engineers serve on the board. Sina, who founded Sigma Engineers in Beaumont 27 years ago, serves as president of Sigma Engineers and chair of the board. He is a structural engineer licensed to practice in Texas and the Province of Alberta, Canada, and an excepted engineer approved to practice architecture in Texas, one of only 20 in the state. He serves on the College of Engineering Foundation and the college’s advisory board. Sina’s wife, Soheila, serves as the chief financial officer of Sigma Engineers. They have two adult children, Amir and Layla, and live in Beaumont.

**Jimmy Sciarillo** '80, B.B.A. accounting, retired after serving as an accountant at ExxonMobil Corp. in Spring. He lives with his wife, Tammy, in Spring.

**Randy Still** '80, B.S. mechanical engineering, retired in 2019 after working as an account executive at Entergy Texas. His wife, **Maridale (Adams)** '79, B.B.A. marketing, '12, M.Ed. educational technology leadership, '17, Ed.D. educational leadership, is a distance learning adjunct professor in educational leadership at LU. They live in Beaumont.

**Kenny Birkes** '81, B.S. criminal justice, is a technical information

services-digital documentation manager for operations and strategic initiatives at Texas Instruments in Dallas. He and his wife, **Judy (Henderson)** '78, B.S. art, live in Plano.

**Rick Lemanski** -81, is president of RJL Senior Services, and he lives in Saint Clair Shores, Mich.

**Mel Wright Jr.** '81, B.B.A. management, is president of Wright’s Scrap Metals and served on the board of directors of the Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries for the 2018-2019 term. He lives in Beaumont with his wife, Neysa.

**Marc Keith** '82, B.S. health and physical education, '09, Ed.D. educational leadership, is superintendent of Tarkington school district in Cleveland. He and his wife, **Kim (Cameron)** '85, B.S. kinesiology, live in Cleveland.

**Billie Jean (Foster) Wallace** '82, B.B.A. finance, is the banking center manager II at Texas First Bank in Kemah. She lives in Bacliff with her husband, Bill.

**Steve Solis** '83, B.S. chemical engineering, is owner and CEO of SDS Solutions, which offers consultation services to the petrochemical industry. He has more than 36 years of experience in the chemicals industry in areas that include project management, process design, construction, operations, maintenance/reliability, and environmental health and safety compliance. He and his wife, **Lisa (Drago)** '83, B.S. elementary education, live in Lake Jackson.

**Rudy Land** '84, kinesiology, is a coach and physical education teacher at Lake Belton Middle School in Temple. His wife, Jennifer, is chief financial officer of the school district. They live in Nolanville and have two daughters, Gracelyn and Allena.

**Maria (Villegas) Mercado** '84, B.S. graphic design, holds an M.Ed. in special education, and is a real estate agent for NB Elite Realty in Houston. She lives in Beaumont with her husband, Marc.

**Michael Walker** '84, B.S. electrical engineering, retired after a career in engineering, most of which was spent at Lockheed Martin in Grand Prairie. He lives in Burleson with his wife, Regina.

**Teresa “Teri” (Waldrop) Nunez** '85, B.S. elementary education, retired after teaching in Fort Bend school

district for 28 years. She is now a kindergarten teacher at Logos Preparatory Academy in Sugar Land. Teri and her husband, Chester, have two grandchildren, and they live in Richmond.

**Johnny Spell** '85, B.S. chemical engineering, is plant manager at Motiva Enterprises and lives in Nederland with his wife, Lorrie.

**Doneane Beckcom** '86, B.M. music education, '09, M.Ed. administration, is an attorney and has been the program director for the Paralegal Studies Program at Lamar State College Port Arthur since 2017. She teaches classes that lead to the Associate of Science in paralegal studies degree and teaches classes in the General Education Department in the Criminal Justice Program that lead to the Associate of Applied Science degree in criminal justice. Doneane also practices law part time in and around Jefferson County. She and her husband, Randy, live in Port Arthur.

**Cindy (Wall) Carlin** '86, B.S. elementary education, is a certified tumor registrar at Baylor St. Luke’s Medical Center in Houston. She lives in League City.

The Smyrna Business Association (SBA) awarded the 2018 Small Business Person of the Year to **Joseph Malbrough** '86, B.S. communication, where he has owned a Smyrna, Ga., UPS store since 2004. The award recognizes Joseph for his leadership and volunteer service in the Smyrna community. He founded the Smyrna Business Expo, which supports the SBA’s annual Scholarship Awards program. Joseph has also served as an ambassador for the Cobb Chamber of Commerce and a team captain for the Atlanta Super Bowl 53 volunteer program. He and his wife, Cara, live in Smyrna with their two sons, Evan and Jared.

**John Via III** '86, M.Eng. engineering science, holds an Eng.D. in engineering, and is a teaching professor in the Department of Engineering Management at Drexel University in Drexel, Pa. He was named to the Circle of Distinction of the College of Engineering at Drexel, an award that recognizes distinguished alumni for their significant contributions to the field of engineering and exemplary support for the college and the university. John also serves as a trustee for the University of Virginia’s School of Engineering, where he received a B.S. in chemical engineering. He lives in Drexel, Pa.,



and has two grown children, Laura and Jason.

**Tracy Cormier** '87, B.B.A. general business, is the managing director of financial services for the City of Desoto. He lives in Grand Prairie with his wife, Romona.

**Eileen (Hall) Law Cure** '87, B.B.A. accounting, married her husband, John, in 2018. She is president of Cure and Associates, P.C., formerly named Eileen H. Law, CPA, P.C., and a financial advisor at Premiere Wealth & Retirement Management, LLC. She and John live in Montgomery, and she has an adult son, James.

**David Ellison** '87, B.S. industrial technology, holds an M.Ed. in administration, and is retired, having previously worked at Devil Dog Guns, also known as Perro de Dibalo. He lives in La Joya.

**Kristi (Hobson) Knauth** '87, B.S. speech, '04, M.Ed. elementary education, is a second-grade teacher at Sour Lake Elementary School in Hardin Jefferson school district. Her husband, **Pat** '87, B.A. psychology, is an attorney with the district attorney's office in Jefferson County. They live in Beaumont.

**Dana (Henderson) Kyler** '87, B.S. nursing, left her job as a NICU nurse at Christus St. Elizabeth Hospital to focus her time on her family and being a travel agent specializing in all things Disney and Universal Orlando. Dana and her husband, Price, became grandparents when her daughter, Lauren, and her husband, **Travis Miller** '17, B.S. mechanical engineering, welcomed their son, Kolson Nash. Dana lives in Groves.

**Jim Largent** '87, B.S. physical education, holds an M.Ed. in administration and an Ed.D. in educational leadership, and retired as superintendent of Granbury school district in August 2018. He now owns Largent Consulting and serves as an educational consultant. He and his wife, Jeri, who's an educational diagnostician, live in Granbury, and they have two children—Justin and Jaci.

**Gary Martel** '87, B.S. kinesiology, holds an M.Ed. in mid-management and is the superintendent of Moody school district. Throughout his 33-year tenure, Gary has served as a bus driver, taught science, coached football, been an assistant principal and principal, and worked his way to the role of superintendent. He and his wife, Susie, a fellow educator, have been married for 35 years, and they have two daughters, Kendal and Kayla, and two grandchildren. They live in Oglesby.

**Wade Armer** '89, B.S. mathematical sciences, '90, B.S. secondary education, '92, M.S. mathematics, is vice president of engineering at Ohmstede Ltd. in Beaumont, and he lives in Hemphill.

**James Arnett** '89, B.S. secondary education, '01, M.Ed. educational administration, retired after serving as principal of Groves Middle School. He and his wife, **Rhonda (Kuebodeaux)** '85, A.A.S. nursing, live in Bridge City, and have two grown children, **Ashley** '04, B.S. political science, and **Christopher** '15, B.S. environmental science.

**Craig Bailey Sr.** '89, A.A.S. computer drafting technology, '97, A.A.S. process operating technology, is a production coordinator at

Invista in Orange. He and his wife, Terrilynn, live in Port Arthur.

**Rebecca Cawley** '89, B.F.A. graphic design, holds an M.S. in project management, and is a graphic design teacher at Wagner High School in San Antonio. She lives in New Braunfels.

**Charles Colvin** '89, B.S. psychology, '11, M.Ed. administration, is the interim principal of Pathways Learning Center in Beaumont, where he lives with his wife, Sakeia.

**Thomas "Greg" Hutchins** '89, B.B.A. accounting, was promoted in July 2018 to chief financial officer of Goodwill Industries of Fort Worth, where he lives. Greg has worked for Goodwill for more than 20 years, having served as CFO of Goodwill Industries of Southeast Texas and Southwest Louisiana before moving to Fort Worth.

**Charles Jameson** '89, B.S. electrical engineering, who also holds an M.B.A., is a senior project manager at McDermott International in Houston. He lives with his wife, Cindy, in Sugar Land.

**Liz (Soliz) Mayfield** '89, B.S. elementary education, is a dyslexia/reading specialist at Hamshire-Fannett Intermediate School, and she lives in Groves.

## 90s

**Chris Graham** '90, B.S. computer science, works as an engineer for ExxonMobil in Spring. Sigma Nu Fraternity awarded him with Sigma Nu's Division Commander of the Year for the 2017-2018 academic

year. This voluntary alumni position serves as a regional advisor for the Sigma Nu Collegiate Chapters. Chris has been actively involved in the fraternity ever since his time in the Zeta Psi Chapter at LU. During Hurricane Harvey, Chris went above and beyond by personally contacting chapter leaders inquiring about the health and safety of their members, despite being impacted by the flooding himself. Chris lives with his wife, Amy, in Kingwood.

**Antionette Kelly** '91, B.S. psychology, was a cast member of Hairspray at Port Arthur Little Theatre, which ran from July 27-Aug. 12, 2018. In August 2019, she was nominated for the Beaumont Community Players Sallye Awards for the Best Featured Actress in a play. Antionette is a case manager for Boys' Haven of America in Beaumont, where she lives.

**Winton "Jay" Webster** '91, B.A. history, also holds a J.D., and is a judge in the Texas Office of Court Administration Child Support Court, presiding over regions 2 and 10. He lives in Lumberton with his wife, Kelly.

**Dana (Woods) Williams** '91, B.B.A. general business, holds a J.D., and is a trial attorney at The Williams Firm, P.C. Her husband, **Theron** '93, B.B.A. marketing, is co-owner/diminished value specialist at Expert Appraisal Group. They live in Livingston.

**Mark Pierce** '92, B.S. criminal justice, was named security operations manager for the Tualatin Hills Park and Recreation District in Beaverton, Ore. The district serves a population of more than 250,000 and is the largest special parks

district in the state. Mark lives in Hillsboro, Ore., with his wife, Beverly.

**Jeff McKinnon** '93, B.A. history and B.A. Spanish, '00, M.Ed. counseling and development, is a student data manager for Nederland school district. He lives in Port Neches with his wife, Brooke.

**Shawn Oubre** '93, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, '02, M.P.A. public administration, holds a Ph.D. in public policy and public administration and is the city manager for the City of Woodway after serving as city manager of Orange for 13 years. He and his wife, Roxanne, live in Woodway.

**Kim Redmon** '93, B.S.W. social work, holds a master's degree in theology, is a licensed social worker and lives in Beaumont.

**Calvin Rice** '93, B.S. sociology, holds a master's degree, and is principal of South Park Middle School in Beaumont. His wife, **Nikisha (Colbert)** '02, B.A. psychology, is a realtor at Coldwell Banker Southern Homes Real Estate, and they live in Sour Lake.

**Theron Williams** '93, B.B.A. marketing, started his own auto appraisal business called Expert Appraisal Group. His wife, **Dana (Woods)** '91, B.B.A. general business-law, also holds a J.D. and is a trial attorney at The Williams Firm, PC. They live in Livingston.

**Randal Broxton** '94, B.B.A. finance, is an insurance inspector at Information Providers and lives in Houston with his wife, Cynthia.

**Tony Landry** '94, B.B.A. personnel administration, is a material damage

specialist at HyperQuest. He lives in Nederland and has a daughter named Macy.

**Stephanie (Hendrick) Ling** '94, B.F.A. graphic design, '07, M.Ed. school administration, is the interim principal of Fehl-Price Elementary School in Beaumont. Her husband, **Timothy** '90, B.B.A. finance, is a financial analyst at Christus Health Foundation of Southeast Texas. They live in Beaumont.

**Donna (Powell) Prudhomme** '94, B.S. criminal justice, holds an M.Ed. and E.D. and is the director of career and technical education for Beaumont school district, where she lives with her husband, Michael.

**Paula Hood** '95, M.Ed. counseling and development, is the director of the Paul Brown Learning Center of Beaumont school district, and she lives in Beaumont.

**Bryan Murley** '95, B.S. communication, holds an M.A. in communication, and has been teaching journalism and communication courses at Eastern Illinois University in Charleston, Ill., since 2007. He lives in Charleston.

**Clay Naiser** '96, B.S. mechanical engineering, also holds an M.B.A. and is a reliability and mechanical engineering manager at Shell Oil Co. in Deer Park. He and his wife, Shelley, live in Pearland.

**Angelic (Landry) Guillory** '97, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '10, M.Ed. administration, is assistant principal at Lakeview Elementary School in Port Arthur. She lives in Nederland with her husband, Charles.

**Jill (Chandler) Hazlip-Freeman** '97, B.S. psychology, holds a master's degree in professional

counseling and is a counselor at ABC Counseling in Bridge City, a private practice she opened in 2014. She and her husband, Robert, live in Bridge City.

**Sherri (Calvin) Henry** '97, B.S. health education, holds a master's degree in counseling and a doctorate in education and is assistant principal of Beasley Elementary School in Lamar consolidated school district. She and her husband, Herbert '98, B.S. communication, live in Richmond.

**Leslie Laguna** '98, B.S. family and consumer sciences, works for Child Protective Services. In 2019, she received the Ramiro Hernandez Excellence in Mentoring Award from the Department of Family and Protective Services at their annual awards ceremony in Austin. Leslie lives in Orange.

**Stoney Sanders** '98, B.B.A. finance, is a technical account manager at Abacus Technical Services in Plano, where he lives with his wife, Monica.

**Melissa Cessac** '99, B.B.A. marketing, is a nun with the Sisters of Divine Providence of Texas in San Antonio, where she lives.

**Bonnie Loiodice** '99, B.S.W. social work, holds an M.S.W., and retired in 2019 from her position as social work instructor and title IV-e coordinator at Lamar University. She lives in Beaumont with her husband, Larry.

**Amy (Ellender) Moore** '99, B.S. chemical engineering, '02, M.B.A., is a polyethylene business manager at Westlake Chemical in Houston, where she lives with her husband, Mike, and their daughter, Lauren.

**After School Special: The Lamar University Second Juried Alumni Art Exhibition**—Lamar University showcased original works of art of its alumni at the Disbman Art Museum in an exhibition last June.

1. Gonzalo Alvarez '17, Cathy Spence '98, Clint Willour (Juror), Audra LaCour '16, Elizabeth Fontenot '13 and Ken Mazzu '92

**Art of Transitions in Leadership**—LU partnered with the Greater Beaumont Chamber of Commerce to offer a professional development event for alumni and area business professionals last July.

2. Pam Young, Heather Champion '10 and Jeff Spoeri, associate vice president of University Advancement

**Class of 1969 Reunion**—Lamar State College of Technology graduates of the Class of 1969 gathered last November to celebrate the 50th anniversary of their graduation.

3. Paula (Tate) O'Neal '69, '79, and Linda (Tipton) Matcek '69

**LU Alumni Homecoming Pre-Game Party**—Alumni gathered to celebrate homecoming during a pre-game party before the LU vs. SFA football game last September.

4. Jacquelyn Foreman '80, Glenn Foreman, C.L. Ross '83, Annette Beard '84 and current student Shane Foreman

**Earl Morrison** '99, B.S. criminal justice, holds a master's degree in criminal justice and lives with his wife, Penny, and their four children in Ada, Okla. He is a compliance manager for CLEET-Council on Law Enforcement Education and Training.

## CLASS NOTES

**Gina (Blinkenberg) Tilker** '99, B.B.A. marketing, is a development coordinator in the College of Business at UT Arlington. She lives in Arlington with her husband, Mark.

## 00s

**Brenda (Bowling) Bedair** '01, B.B.A. accounting, retired after serving as director of accounting at Lamar State College Orange. She and her husband, Michael, live in Orangefield.

**Alex Eppes** '01, B.S. industrial technology, is president of Trade Winds Energy Partners in Lumberton, where he lives.

**Elizabeth Ford** '01, B.B.A. general business, is assistant director of human resources-support services for Cypress Fairbanks school district, and she lives in Manvel.

**Joel Foxworth** '01, B.B.A. finance, '03, M.B.A., is the regional president for the Beaumont market of Third Coast Bank. In 2018, he was recognized as part of Banking Exchange's 20 Under 40 Awards of up-and-coming leaders in banking. He and his wife, **Michelle (Wolfe)** '04, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, live in Sour Lake with their children.

**Leslie (Prejean) Solis** '01, B.S. chemistry, works as a chemist for Valero Energy Corp. at the Port Arthur Refinery. In 2018, she was named the Valero Volunteer of the Year in which she received \$1,000 to donate to a charity. She donated the funds to St. Jude in memory of Austyn Halter. She and her husband, **Steve** '00, B.G.S. general studies, live in Port Neches.

**Trent Stelly** '01, B.S. mechanical engineering, is a control systems engineer at Fluor for various clients on energy and chemical projects around the world, a position he began in January 2002 shortly after graduation. He has had several assignments abroad including two years in Qatar, United Arab Emirates, and he is currently working on an assignment in Kazakhstan. When he is not traveling for work, he lives in Houston with his wife.

**Lila (Creamer) Stevens** '01, B.A. psychology, also has an M.S.W. in social work and is a patient care navigator in the Smart Health Clinic at Baptist Hospitals of Southeast Texas. In 2019, she was nominated as Baptist Hospitals' Employee of the Year. Lila and her husband, Mark, live in Beaumont.

**Dottie (McIntyre) LeBlanc** '02, B.S. communication, is an associate at IDLife and founder and CEO of Element 4 Fitness, an online health, fitness and nutrition company. She coaches women through exercise and nutrition. Dottie and her husband, Matt, live in New Braunfels.

**Carmen Morgan** '02, B.S. criminal justice, is a second-grade teacher at Sallie Curtis Elementary School in Beaumont. She lives in Lumberton.

**Santosh Tiruvan** '02, M.S. computer science, '03, M.Ed. secondary education, is associate vice president of enterprise automation at U.S. Bank in Denver, Colo. He lives in Aurora, Colo., with his wife, Zareena.

**Amber (Clark) Arcana** '03, B.S. family and consumer sciences–family studies, holds an M.S.W. in social work and works in business development at the STI Group. She and her husband, John, live in Lumberton.

**Jody (Jeffus) Luedde** '03, B.G.S. general studies, '13, M.Ed. school counseling, is a school counselor at Decker Prairie Elementary School in Tomball. She and her husband, Todd, live in Pinehurst.

**Karl Nowotny** '03, B.S. physics, is an exercise planner at General Dynamics Information Technology and lives in San Antonio with his wife, **Christy (Harper)** '02, B.A. English.

**Wayne Talbot** '03, B.B.A. finance, is a CPA working for CARBO Ceramics in New Iberia, La., after having spent most of his career in the banking industry. He lives in Erath, La.

**Austin Williams** '03, B.B.A. finance, is president of 5 Under Golf Center. He and his wife, **Nicole (Lajudes)** '13, live in Beaumont.

**Jay Wise** '03, B.S. physics, holds an M.S. in health physics and a Ph.D. in soil science and is a client project manager at Montrose Air Quality Services in Deer Park. He lives in Pasadena.

**Lance Baird** '04, B.B.A. marketing, is senior manager of environmental health and safety at The Wonderful Co., headquartered in Los Angeles, Calif. He and his wife, Brooke, live in Bakersfield, Calif.

**Eli Clark** '04, B.S. mechanical engineering, works as a reliability engineer at LyondellBasell in La Porte, and he lives in Liberty.

**Melissa (Huynh) Conrad** '04, B.S. industrial engineering, is a web developer at Mor Furniture and lives in Frisco with her husband, Nathaniel.

**Michael Crawford** '04, B.B.A. management information systems, is a project controls manager at B&E Resources in Buna and lives in Lumberton with his wife, Audrey.

**Arthur Ferris** '04, B.M. music education, is a teacher at Bridge City Middle School and lives in Bridge City.

**Clayton Harrell** '04, B.S. kinesiology, is the associate director of business development at ACE Sports of ACE Sign Co. in Little Rock, Ark., and he lives in Springdale, Ark.

**Daphne Jones** '04, B.A. psychology, '13, M.Ed. counseling and development, is a licensed professional therapist at Spindletop Center and lives in Beaumont.

**Rachell Jones** '04, B.S. psychology, '08, M.S. community psychology, holds a Ph.D. in psychology, is a research psychologist and lives in Killeen.

**Rene (Slott) Latiolais** '04, B.S. corporate communication, is the director communication/partners in education in the Nederland school district. She was named a Paul Harris Fellow by the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International in 2018, nominated by the Spindletop Rotary Club in appreciation of tangible and significant assistance given for the furtherance of better understanding and friendly relations among peoples of the world. Her husband, **Toby** '10, M.Ed. administration, is principal of Langham Elementary School in Nederland. Rene and Toby live in Port Neches with their two daughters, Ella and Macy.

**Todd Patterson** '04, B.M. music education, is the director of bands at Silsbee High School in Silsbee, where he lives with his wife, Carol.

**Melanie (Bryant) Pharis** '04, B.A. history, is the principal of Beaumont Early College High School in Beaumont where she lives.

**Jessica (Bres) Prince** '04, B.G.S. general studies, also holds a master's degree in public administration and works as the economic resiliency planner at the South East Texas Regional Planning Commission. She also co-owns Gulf Coast Injection with her husband, **Jay** '19, B.A. chemistry and B.S. mechanical engineering. They live in Beaumont.

**Marcus Ray** '04, B.S. computer and information sciences, is a cloud operations engineer at OVHS US in Dallas, and he lives in Little Elm.

**Maura Sullivan** '04, B.G.S. general studies, holds an M.S. in medicine–physician assistant, and works as a physician's assistant at Ascension Health Care/Borgess Medical Center in Kalamazoo, Mich. She lives in Portage, Mich., with her husband, Dennis.

**Michael Andrews** '05, is a battery/project engineer at NASA, and he lives in League City.

**Curtis Fitts** '05, B.B.A. management information systems, is a server systems manager for Zachry Industrial. His wife, **Kathrin (Nikitina)** '05, B.B.A. management information systems, works as a programmer/SharePoint developer for Ohmstede Ltd. They live in Beaumont.

**Shannon Holmes** '05, M.Ed. school administration, '11, Ed.D. educational leadership, is the executive director at the Association of Texas Professional Educators based out of Austin. His wife, **Melissa (Baker)** '95, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, is co-owner of The Gourmet Cupboard, and they live in Sour Lake.

**Brian Shajari** '05, B.S. criminal justice, is the director of business development for the American Bureau of Shipping, Beaumont/Port Arthur area, working with maritime cybersecurity engineering. He also serves on the board of directors for the Beaumont Heritage Society and lives in Beaumont.

**Cody Tunstall** '05, B.S. kinesiology, '10, M.Ed. educational administration, is assistant principal of Southside Elementary School in Palestine school district where he lives with his wife, Charlie.

**Tina (Corfield) Dierschke** '06, B.B.A. accounting, is the director of finance for the City of San Angelo, where she lives with her husband, Kevin.

**Kimberly Doucet** '06, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, '14, M.Ed. educational technology leadership, works for Texas Health & Human Services in the Health and Human Resources Department. She lives in Austin.

**Amanda (Cherry) Fry** '06, B.S. chemical engineering, is a project manager at Coastal Automation Services in Beaumont. She and her husband, Wesley, live in Orange.

**Katie Holmes** '06, B.B.A. marketing and B.B.A. human resource management, '11, B.S. nursing, earned her M.S. in nursing to serve as a family nurse practitioner. She works in outpatient surgery at Baptist Hospitals of Southeast Texas. She lives in Orange.

**Brenda (Morgan) Richmond** '06, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, is the director of management information systems for Austin school district. Since 1996, she has worked in education technology, and in March 2019, she received a Commitment to Excellence finalist award from the Texas Association of School Business Officials. The award is one of the highest honors for those working in school business. Brenda and her husband, **Roger** '85, B.B.A. finance, live in Austin. Their daughter, **Kaylea (Richmond) Deason** '11, A.A.S. nursing, son-in-law, **Gus** '09, B.B.A. accounting, and Roger's parents, **Bettye (Dawson)** '46, A.A. general studies, and **Earl** '53, B.S. health and physical education, are all LU alumni. Brenda credits their LU education for preparing them all for successful futures.

**Rachel (Martinez) Sexton** '06, is a preschool teacher at Learning Hands Preschool in Nederland at Hillcrest Baptist Church. She and her husband, Cody, live in Port Neches.

**Chris Araj** '07, B.S. communication disorders, holds an Au.D., and was named a 2018 Jerger Future Leader of Audiology by the American Academy of Audiology. Chris is the founder and owner of Pearlant Hearing Aids & Audiology, an independent private audiology practice in the Houston area. He is also a past president of the Texas Academy of Audiology. He lives in Friendswood with his wife, Rund, and their son, Andrew.

**Judy (Alvarado) Brodeur** '07, B.S. health education, is a certified teacher's aide and her husband, Norman '07, B.S. industrial technology, is an account manager at Pump Energy in Stafford. They live in League City. Their son, **Kyle** '12, B.S. communication, is a digital media producer and owns VisualsAffect in Austin, where he lives.

**Catherine (Stewart) Purser** '07, B.S.W. social work, holds an M.S.W. and is the mental health director at Jefferson County Correctional Facility. She lives in Silsbee with her husband, Delmar.

**Jerry Wallace Jr.** '07, B.F.A. graphic design, '10, M.Ed. educational

technology leadership, '14, Ed.D. educational leadership, works at the University of Houston-Downtown as the assistant dean of the College of Public Service in advising, recruitment and retention. His wife, **Belashia (Johnson)** '08, B.S. communication, holds a J.D. and is a principal injury attorney and certified mediator at The Wallace Law Firm, PLLC. They live in Humble.

**Chris Bates** '08, B.G.S. general studies, and **Ariana (Jones)** '17, B.S. communication-broadcasting, married in July 2019. Chris is the constable for Precinct 2, where he oversees civil and criminal law enforcement. Ariana is a second-grade teacher at Travis Elementary School in the Port Arthur school district. In February 2020, she was named the school's "Rookie of the Year." They live in Port Arthur.

**Amber (Barnes) Elrod** '08, B.A. music education, is the director of bands at Lincoln Middle School in El Paso, where she lives with her husband, Cullen.

**Kyle Leyendecker** '08, B.M. music education, is a teacher and band director at Lakeview Elementary School in Port Arthur. He lives in Nederland.

**Michelle (Dodson) Messina** '08, B.A. history, and her husband, Mark, have one-year-old twin girls, Charlie Mae and Mary Lois. They live in Spring.

**Edgar Thompson** '08, B.S. management information systems, is an IT support specialist for the Jefferson County District Attorney's Office. He lives in Beaumont.

**Laura Terry-Brown** '09, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, holds an M.Ed. in educational leadership and is the seventh-grade assistant principal at Ridgeview Middle School in Round Rock school district. She and her husband, Rob, live in Round Rock with their one-year-old son, Griffin.

**Nathella Collins** '09, B.S. health education, is a physical education teacher at Lincoln Middle School in Port Arthur. She also works as a tax specialist for NC Tax Services in Beaumont, where she lives.

**Cody Dishon** '09, B.B.A. general business, is an attorney and partner at Ferguson Law Firm in Beaumont. He also owns Dishon Investments, a real estate business, with his father, Josh Dishon. In January 2019, Cody became one of the youngest in Texas history to become board

certified in Personal Injury Trial Law by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization, a certification only 1% of attorneys licensed to practice law in the State of Texas hold. Cody and his wife, **Julia (Tran)** '11, B.S. nursing, live in Beaumont.

**Tamara (Hobbles) Grumbles** '09, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, is a training coordinator at Controlled Fluids in Beaumont. She lives in Nederland with her husband, Scott.

**Pinkee (Patel) Harley** '09, B.B.A. finance and economics, '10, M.B.A., is a financial advisor trainee at Edward Jones. Her husband, **Devin** '10, B.S. industrial engineering, '11, M.B.A., is a financial advisor at Edward Jones in Port Neches. They live in Nederland.

**Felicia McAdams** '09, B.S. psychology, '11, M.Ed. counseling and development, holds an Ed.D. in developmental educational administration and is the director of advising and counseling in the College of Pharmacy and Health Science at Texas Southern University. She previously served as director of academic advising and retention at Lamar State College Port Arthur. Felicia lives in Houston.

**Brian Roberson II** '09, B.S. communication, '10, M.Ed. educational technology leadership, was named the Texas Council of Alpha Chapters district secretary in 2019. In Jan. 2020, he was named the Houston Area Alliance of Black School Educators Assistant Principal of the Year. Brian is the ninth-grade assistant principal at Furr High School in Houston. He and his wife, Jocquelyn, live in Houston with their two sons, Brian and William.

**Jake Truncale** '09, B.S. computer science, and **Joanna (Morgan)** '11, B.S. communication, had a son, Fox Ronan, in August 2018. Jake is an electrical engineer at Total refinery. The family lives in Beaumont.

## 10s

**Kristen Haynes** '10, M.Ed. administration, is assistant principal at Argyle Intermediate School in Argyle, where she lives.

**Gerardo Leal** '10, M.Ed. administration, holds an Ed.D. and is the principal of Park Place Elementary School in Houston, where he lives.

**Gary Lucius** '10, M.Ed. administration, is a teacher and coach at A&M Consolidated High

School in College Station school district, and he lives in College Station.

**Ginger (Childree) Lumpkin** '10, B.A. history, is a distance learning Spanish teacher for Region 5 Education Service Center in Beaumont. She and her husband, Caleb, live in Port Neches.

**Ashli Stinnett** '10, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, is a paralegal at Reid Collins & Tsai LLP in Austin, where she lives with her husband, Adam Durke.

**Bo Beaudry** '11, M.B.A. business administration, is the CEO of Cedar Park Regional Medical Center in Cedar Park. He lives in Houston with his wife, Jessica, and their daughter, Kendall, who was born in summer 2019.

**China Burks** '11, B.S. biology, holds an M.L.S., is a public services librarian at Lamar State College Orange, and lives in Orange.

**Briana (Gattis)** '11, B.S. family and consumer science–food nutrition, works as a health coach for CareHere. Her husband, **Trace Baker** '13, B.S. exercise science and fitness management, is a recruiter training specialist for Outsource. They live in Red Oak with their son, Holden.

**Scott Doring** '11, M.Ed. administration, is the principal of Collins Intermediate School in Corsicana school district, where he lives with his wife, Evelyn. They have two sons, Brett and Bray.

**Katelyn Hartman** '11, B.S. nursing, also has an M.S.N. nursing and is an RN at Baptist Hospitals of Southeast Texas in the Emergency Services Department. She was recognized in 2019 as a Baptist Way Award recipient. Katelyn lives in Silsbee.

**April (Parnell) Hughes** '11, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, is a sixth-grade reading teacher at South Elementary School of Breckenridge school district. She and her husband, John, live in Moran.

**Caleb Lackey** '11, B.S. industrial engineering, is a staff industrial engineer at Bell Helicopter in Fort Worth. He lives in Arlington with his wife, Courtney.

**Jeffrey Mann** '11, M.Ed. administration, is the director of instruction and leadership development for College Station school district, where he lives.

## CLASS NOTES

**Shannon (Young) Marsh** '11, B.S. nursing, '18, M.S.N. nursing education, is an instructor in LU's Joanne Gay Dishman School of Nursing and an ICU RN at Baptist Hospitals of Southeast Texas. She and her husband, Samuel, live in Bridge City.

**Tad Miguez** '11, B.G.S. general studies, is a salesperson for Nitro-Life Technologies. He married his wife, Lynli, in July 2019, and they live in Hamshire.

**Andy Morris** '11, B.B.A. management information systems, is a senior solutions lead-strategic initiatives at Oracle in Austin, where he lives with his wife, Emily.

**Marcus Myers** '11, Ed.D. deaf studies/deaf education, is retired from teaching at Del Mar College in Corpus Christi after 16 years as an assistant professor of American Sign Language and interpreting. He now lives in Austin.

**Heather (DeBord)** '11, B.S. nursing, and **Will Sanderson** '12, B.S. physics, and '12, B.S. electrical engineering, have a one-year-old, Landry Anne, born in January 2019. They have two other daughters as well. Heather is a nurse at Memorial Hermann Memorial City Medical Center, and Will is an engineer at BP Corp. They live in Katy.

**Wesley Smith** '11, B.S. chemistry, holds a doctor of osteopathic medicine degree and completed his residency in pediatrics at LeBonheur Children's Hospital/St Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tenn. He is a clinical fellow in pediatrics, hematology and oncology at Baylor College of Medicine at Texas Children's Hospital. He lives in Houston.

**Lori (Wenner) Stratton** '11, M.S. nursing education, is a nursing instructor in the Lamar University JoAnne Gay Dishman School of Nursing. She married her husband, **Kyle** '83, B.B.A. general business-law, in August 2018. He is the owner of Bayou Ventures. She has three daughters, Caitlyn, Jillian and Zoe, and they live in Beaumont.

**Chris Whitmeyer** '11, B.B.A. general business, is the CFO of Whitmeyer's Distilling Co. in Houston, where he lives with his wife, Monica.

**Aaron Barnes** '12, B.M. music, '16, M.Ed. administration, and **Hillary (Brown)** '13, B.M. music, welcomed a baby girl in 2019, and they live in Humble.

**Hillary (Dean)** '12, B.B.A. general business, and '12, B.B.A. entrepreneurship, and **Jarrold Daigle** '14, B.S. nursing, have a one-year-old son, Elliot Thomas, and they live in Apple Springs.

**Jonathan Durr** '12, B.A. history, and **Trifeena (Siga)** '15, M.S. chemistry, married in Oct. 2018. Jonathan is a financial advisor at Fine Future Financial, and they live in Beaumont.

**Wendy Hickman** '12, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, '14, M.Ed. educational technology leadership, is an IT support associate at Lamar University, and she lives in Beaumont.

**John Large** '12, B.B.A. finance, '14, M.S. accounting, is a professor of accounting/general business at San Jacinto College and lives in League City with his wife, Katy.

**Monica (Wenzel) Roberson** '12, B.S. exercise science and fitness management, and her husband, Thomas, had their second child, Maisie Kat, in Feb. 2019. They live in Beaumont.

**Le'Toria (Webb) Trahan** '12, B.S. psychology, is an academic specialist at Lamar University, responsible for providing comprehensive academic support for students. She works with students individually and in groups to help them build the necessary skills to succeed at LU. She and her husband, **Treyvon** '15, B.A. history, live in Beaumont.

**Haden Vyoral** '12, B.S. mechanical engineering, is an applications engineer at Flowserve and lives in Silsbee with his wife, Halee.

**Bailey Wingate** '12, B.S. political science, is an attorney at Wingate Law, PLLC, in Beaumont, and partners with Dean Brinkley of the Brinkley Law Firm, P.C. He lives in Beaumont.

**Stephen Babin** '13, B.S. psychology, is a manager at GNC in Broomfield, Colo., and lives in Broomfield with his wife, Samantha. The couple were married in 2018.

**Lachell (Williams) Bradley** '13 B.B.A. management information systems, '15, M.B.A., is an ERP specialist at BASF Agricultural Products Group in Beaumont. She married her husband, **Leonard** '14, B.S. exercise science and fitness management, in May 2019, and he is an exercise physiologist at St. Luke's Medical Center in Houston. They live in Beaumont.

**Alex Edgerly** '13, B.S. biology, holds a D.D.S. and married his wife, Mallory, in October 2018. He is a dentist at Edgerly Dentistry in Bridge City. They live in Orange.

**Jennifer (Burriss) Gonzalez** '13, M.Ed. administration, is principal of Bonham Pre-K in San Marcos. She lives in San Marcos with her husband, **Rudy** '15, M.Ed. administration.

**Lauren Laudig** '13, B.S. biology, is a quality manager at Oxbow Calcining in Port Arthur, and she lives in Lumberton.

**Kayleigh Romero** '13, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, is an eighth-grade math teacher at Thomas Jefferson Middle School in Port Arthur school district. She lives in Beaumont.

**Tyler Thomas** '13, B.S. criminal justice, is an account manager at Manning's Office Solutions. He and his wife, Skye, have a two-year-old son, Benjamin Michael (born July 17, 2018), and they live in Silsbee.

**Cody Thompson** '13, B.B.A. management, and **Brittany (Moore)** '13, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, have a one-year-old daughter, Stella Kate. Brittany teaches first grade at Lumberton Primary School. They live in Silsbee.

**Lauren Van Gerven** '13, B.S. communication-journalism, '15, M.B.A., is a business representative and LMI analyst at Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas, and she lives in Beaumont.

**Jonathan May** '13, B.S. communication, and **Danielle (Wiggins)** '18, B.S. nutrition, dietetics and hospitality, were married in September 2018. Jonathan is a senior creative designer at Broussard's Print Shop in Beaumont, and they live in Groves.

**Cara (Shrontz) Babino** '14, B.S. nursing, '18, M.S.N. nursing administration, is an RN at Texas Children's Hospital. Her husband, **Trey** '12, B.S. nursing, is also an RN at the hospital. They live in Pearland.

**Arpit Bhatt** '14, M.S. chemical engineering, is a bioenergy process analysis engineer at National Renewable Energy Laboratory in Golden, Colo., and he lives in Arvada, Colo.

**Deneil Christian** '14, M.S. criminal justice, is a business and criminal justice teacher at Nazareth Academy

High School in Philadelphia, Pa., and he lives in Philadelphia.

**Adrian Foster** '14, M.Ed. administration, is principal of Thorp High School of Thorp school district in Wis., and he lives in Withee, Wis.

**Torey (Chevis) Grace** '14, B.B.A. marketing, married her husband, Rod, June 30, 2018. She works at Allstate as a senior unrepresented claims analyst and assistant team lead, and they live in Houston.

**Matthew Hicks** '14, B.S. industrial technology, holds a master's degree in industrial distribution and is a project and quotations specialist at Summit Electric Supply in San Antonio. He lives in San Antonio with his wife, Dana.

**Lauren (Barbeaud) Hillyer** '14, B.S. communication, is an English teacher at Anahuac High School. She and her husband, Brandon, live in Wallisville with their two-year-old daughter, Jasper.

**Taylor (Thurman) McDonald** '14, B.S. speech and hearing sciences, '18, M.Ed. school counseling, is a counselor at Van Buren Elementary School in Port Neches-Groves. She lives in Nederland with her husband, Jake.

**MariAnne Ortega** '14, B.S. psychology, is a recruiter at Imagen Technologies based out of New York City, N.Y., where she lives.

**Lee Sanchez** '14, M.Ed. educational technology leadership, is head power lifting coach and assistant football coach at Alpine High School in Alpine, where he lives.

**Breana (Lemaire) Segura** '14, B.S. dance, is a dance teacher at Thomas Jefferson Middle School in Port Arthur. She and her husband, Kane, have a two-year-old son, Jett Michael, and live in Port Neches.

**Patty Stephens** '14, B.S. biology, holds an M.S. in physician assistant studies and is a physician assistant at UT Southwestern Medical Center. She lives in Dallas.

**Eric Aguilar** '15, B.S. nursing, and **Johanna (Figlia)** '16, B.S. speech and hearing sciences, married in July 2018. Johanna is a speech language pathologist at First Steps Early Childhood Intervention of Spindletop MHMR. They live in League City.

**Reggie Begelton** '15, B.B.A. general business-industrial engineering, won the Grey Cup, the championship game for the

Canadian Football League, with his former team, the Calgary Stampeders. In January 2020, he signed a contract as a wide receiver with the Green Bay Packers in the NFL. Reggie lives in Beaumont.

**Joshua Coco** '15, D.Ed. educational leadership, is the executive director of advancement, recruitment, communications and outreach at the University of Miami and lives in Miami, Fla.

**Mohamed Elrifae** '15, M.S. mechanical engineering, is a mechanical engineer at Timken Gears and Services and lives in Houston.

**Aaron Fong** '15, M.Ed. administration, is principal of Bush Elementary School in Midland school district, where he lives.

**Floyd Hollins** '15, B.B.A. human resources management, also holds an M.B.A. He is a business specialist at FirstEnergy in Houston, and lives in Houston.

**Maritza (Aguilar) Hood** '15, B.S. biology, graduated in August 2018 from M.D. Anderson Cancer Center's radiation therapy program with the highest GPA in her program and received the Outstanding Student award. She is a radiation therapist at M.D. Anderson and her husband, **Brandon** '15, B.S. biology, is a medical student at University of Texas-Medical Branch at Galveston. They live in Houston.

**Kelsey (Patrick)** '15, B.S. family and consumer sciences-nutrition, dietetics, hospitality, and **Dalton Locklear** '18, B.S. mechanical engineering, married Jan. 4, 2020. Kelsey is a territory manager for Aytu BioScience and Dalton is a mechanical engineer at Entegris. They live in Cedar Park.

**Cassie (Hall) Lumpkin** '15, B.A. American Sign Language, '18, M.S. deaf studies/deaf education, is an American Sign Language teacher at Elkins High School in Fort Bend school district. She lives in Santa Fe with her husband, Cole.

**Lakshmi Moparthy** '15, M.S. chemistry, is a validation engineer at Alcon, and she lives in Irvine, Calif.

**Ashley Pippins** '15, M.B.A. business administration, is an HR partner at Sabine River Works, a division of DowDuPont. She and her husband, Jarvis, have two young children and live in Beaumont.

**Christopher Puga** '15, M.Ed. administration, is the principal at

Capistrano Elementary School in El Paso, where he lives.

**Hang (Nguyen) Reusch** '15, M.S. computer science, is a software engineer at Walmart Labs in Bentonville, Ark., where she lives with her husband, Justin.

**Kaila Spoonemore** '15, B.M. music, '17, M.M. music, is a teacher and assistant band director at Cleveland High School, and she lives in New Caney.

**Varun Allam** '16, M.E. industrial engineering, is a power business intelligence developer at TimePayment and lives in Burlington, Mass., with his wife, Tejaswini.

**Brett Brown** '16, B.S. kinesiology, is a teacher and coach for Nederland school district. His wife, **Mallory (Raborn)** '15, B.S. speech and hearing sciences, '18, M.S. speech-language pathology, is a speech-language pathologist for the district. They live in Nederland.

**Latridia Byrd** '16, B.G.S. general studies, and **Michael Handy** '16, B.G.S. general studies, have a son, Deuce, born in August 2018, and live in Houston.

**Pristine Carpio** '16, B.B.A. management information systems, is a trust associate at Westwood Holdings Group in Houston, where she lives.

**Maegan Collins** '16, B.S. political science, '18, M.P.A., is an instructor of political science at LU. She is pursuing a doctorate degree in educational leadership, and she lives in Nederland.

**Cameron Dennis** '16, B.B.A. accounting, holds an M.B.A. and she is an accountant at Apache Corp. She lives in Houston.

**Rebekah Drummond** '16, B.B.A. retail management and marketing, '17, M.B.A., is a solutions advisor at Function 4 for Star Graphics in Beaumont, where she lives.

**Collin Gizzi** '16, B.S. kinesiology, and **Kali (Whitlow)** '16, B.S. speech and hearing sciences, were married in August 2018. Collin is a U.S. history teacher and coaches football, basketball and track at Groves Middle School, and Kali is a speech-language pathologist at Spindletop MMR. They live in Port Neches.

**Ravi Gurugubelli** '16, M.Eng. mechanical engineering, is a supply chain analyst at 3S Business Corporation in Houston, and he lives in Houston.



**Golden Circle Luncheon**—Lamar State College of Technology graduates of the Classes between 1924-1969 gathered last November for a luncheon honoring the 50 year+ graduates.

1. Nathan Bush, Ida (Hirasaki) Bush '67, Emma (Gonzales) Isleib '67, and Bruce Isleib '70

**Alumni Past President's Council Luncheon**—Past presidents of both the former Lamar University Alumni Association and the current Lamar University Alumni Advisory Board gathered for lunch last December.

2. Jimmy Booker '55, '56, Vernon Durden '04, Jake Tortorice '76 and Tamerla Chavis '83

**Veterans Day Celebration**—Last November, Lamar University students, faculty, staff and alumni came together for a special luncheon to honor Lamar University veterans.

3. Dr. Larry Rose '65, who served as a captain in the U.S. Army Dental Corps, gave the keynote address about the value of military service today.

**Melissa Hernandez** '16, M.Ed. special education, is a member of a high school social studies instructional support team in Northside school district in San Antonio. She lives in San Antonio.

**Rebecca Higginbotham** '16, B.B.A. marketing, married **Quade Robertson** '17, B.S. mechanical engineering, in September 2019. She works as a claims supervisor for Geico in Katy and Quade is a mechanical designer for Hanson Professional Services in the Houston and Gulf Coast area. They live in Houston.

**Dalton Holly** '16, B.B.A. management, '18, M.B.A., received his M.B.A. from Lamar University in Dec. 2018. He and his wife, **Kayla (Comeaux)** '16, B.B.A. accounting, live in Post.

**Jasmine (Morris) Johnson** '16, B.B.A. management, is a senior administrative assistant in the University Testing Center at Texas Southern University. She married **Dominique** '14, B.A. chemistry, June 30, 2018, who works as a lab technician for Saybolt of Core Laboratories of Nederland. Jasmine and Dominique have a one-year-old daughter, Jana Angeline, and the family lives in Missouri City.

**Courtney Jones** '16, B.S. communication disorders, has a one-year-old daughter, Rhyann, and lives in Port Arthur.

**Sheldon Lee** '16, B.B.A. marketing, is pursuing a Master of Science in sport administration through Arkansas State University and works as a social media correspondent for the University of Arkansas Athletics Department. He lives in Fayetteville, Ark.

**LaTasha Richard** '16, B.S. exercise science and fitness management, is a logistics coordinator at Onyx M.D. Physician Staffing in Irving, and she lives in Dallas.

**Kagen Rose** '16, B.S. nursing, and **Ciara (Deharde)** '17, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, married in August 2018. Kagen is a nurse at UTMB in Galveston, and Ciara is a second-grade teacher at Heights Elementary School in Texas City. They live in La Marque.

**Kara Timberlake** '16, B.A. English, '16, B.S. communications, is public relations coordinator at the Art Museum of Southeast Texas, and she lives in Beaumont.

**Alyssa (Hancock) Wilson** '16, B.S. speech and hearing sciences, married her husband, Keene, in

October 2019. She is the store manager at Mathews Jewelers-Beaumont and Mid County, and they live in Beaumont.

**Dave Bennett** '17, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, is director of technology for La Grange school district. He and his wife, Tara, live in La Grange.

**Ryan Blanchette** '17, B.S. nursing, and **Daytona (Brown)** '17, B.S. nursing, married in July 2018. Ryan is a pediatric ICU nurse at MD Anderson and Daytona is a nurse at Houston Methodist St. John Hospital. They live in Friendswood.

**Jamie (Deaton) Dillon** '17, B.B.A. human resource management, married her husband, Jacob, in January 2019. She is a human resources staffing coordinator at Wellpath and lives in Beaumont.

**Lauren Forse** '17, B.S. computer and information sciences, is a systems analyst at Script Care in Beaumont, and she lives in Orange.

**Sahithi Gadde** '17, M.S. chemistry, is an analytical quality control chemist at Ascent Pharmaceuticals and lives in Central Islip, N.Y.

**Deanna Karlson** '17, B.S. nursing, is a school nurse for San Ramon Valley Unified School District in Danville, Calif., where she lives.

**Dani Sanders** '17, B.S. political science, is in her last year of law school at Baylor University. Her accomplishments in Waco included winning a moot court competition.

**Lisa Smith-Williams** '17, M.Ed. educational leadership, is assistant principal of operations at IDEA Public Schools in Austin, where she lives with her husband, Brandon.

**Sarah (Vanveckhoven) Stasinou** '17, B.S. nursing, is a life skills nurse at Sam Houston Elementary School in Port Arthur. She lives in Port Neches with her husband, Nick.

**Morgan (LeBlanc) Sumrall** '17, B.S. nursing, is a nurse at Memorial Hermann Hospital in Houston. Her husband, **Tyler** '16, B.S. communication, works as a public relations/external communications specialist at Academy Sports and Outdoors Headquarters in Katy. They live in Cypress.

**Kinney (Mitchell) VanDevender** '17, B.S. psychology, is a mental health professional at Spindletop Center. She and her husband, **Julian** '19, live in Beaumont.

**Lyndsey (Dumesnil) Weaver** '17, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, is a kindergarten teacher in Leander school district. Her husband, **Kade** '16, B.S. criminal justice, works for the Travis County Sheriff's Department. They live in Leander.

**Laurel (Rugg)** '17, B.S. family and consumer sciences-family studies, and **Aaron Zepeda** '19, B.S. mechanical engineering, married Jan. 4, 2020, and they live in Angleton.

**Lydia Alcalá-García** '18, B.S. nursing, is a nurse at University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston and lives in La Marque.

**Jordan Amborn** '18, M.Ed. school counseling, is a counselor at St. Aloysius High School of Vicksburg Catholic School in Vicksburg, Miss., where she lives.

**Quandra Baker** '18, M.Ed. clinical mental health counseling, is a mental health therapist at Region 8 in Madison/Hinds County in Canton, Miss. She has taken classes towards a specialist in psychometry-diagnostician at Jackson State University, and she lives in Jackson.

**Cindy Colichia** '18, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, is the administrative coordinator for the Texas Academy of Leadership in Humanities at LU. She and her husband, Kirk, live in Nederland.

**Shelby Dryden** '18, B.S. theatre and dance, is assistant director of the Beaumont Heritage Society, and she lives in Vidor.

**Shaina Escobedo** '18, B.B.A. marketing, is the marketing coordinator at Provost Umphrey Law Firm and lives in Port Arthur.

**Mark Farley** '18, M.Ed. administration, is a social studies/electives teacher at Collin County Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program, which is a cooperative effort between the Collin County Juvenile Probation Department and McKinney school district. He lives in Allen with his wife, Lisa.

**Joey Garcia** '18, M.Ed. school counseling, is a counselor at Bishop High School, and he lives in Corpus Christi.

**Isaiah Gerald** '18, B.S. industrial engineering, is a continuous improvement engineer for Dow Chemical Co. He lives in Deer Park with his wife, Tara.

**Zara (Killman) Holmes** '18, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, and her

husband, Mark, welcomed their son, Andrew Wendel, on Feb. 20, 2019. She is an English teacher and cheer coach at Port Neches-Groves High School. They live in Nederland.

**Success Iheagwam** '18, M.S. mathematics, is a sustaining engineer at Intel Corporation in Chandler, Ariz. He lives in Chandler, Ariz., where he and his wife, Oluwaseyi, live.

**Trent McGee** '18, B.M. music education, is the assistant band director in the Fine Arts Department for both Kountze Middle School and Kountze High School, and he oversees percussion instruction for the KMS and KHS Bands. Trent lives in Lumberton.

**Stephanie Messina** '18, B.S. studio art-education, is an art teacher at Fehl-Price Elementary School in the Beaumont school district, where she lives.

**Rebecca Recco** '18, M.Ed. digital learning and leading, is an art teacher at Bret Harte Middle School in Oakland, Calif., and lives in Oakland.

**Kelli (Kilchrist) Reddix** '18, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, is vice president of education and staffing at Advanced Health Education Center in Houston and lives in Richmond.

**Christin Reeves** '18, M.Ed. administration, is the principal of Emerson Elementary in the Midland school district, where she lives.

**Jessica (Koch) Salomon** '18, B.S. mechanical engineering, married her husband, Martin, in November 2019. She works as an engineer at Samsung Austin Semiconductor, and they live in Austin.

**Abel Sanchez** '18, M.S. criminal justice, is a community supervision officer for San Patricio County. He lives in Portland with his wife, Krystal.

**Amy (Carr) Saye** '18, M.Ed. administration, is a fourth-grade teacher at Spears Elementary School in Frisco, and she lives in Celina with her husband, Jarod.

**Anjuman Shrestha** '18, M.E. civil engineering, is a construction manager at Dennis Group in Springfield, Mass., and he lives in Holyoke, Mass.

**Susana Tablada** '18, M.Ed. educational technology leadership, is a teacher at Churchill High School in North East school district, and she lives in San Antonio.

# Cardinal Emergency Fund

by Daniel Houston

## stands in the gap



The 'new normal' caused by the coronavirus

pandemic is something out of a movie, a scene being played all around the world. As social caution and facemasks become the new way of life, so has struggle and hardship, which threatens to derail the plans of those who had something greater in mind for 2020. While laborers, entrepreneurs and healthcare workers are among those most affected by the pandemic, members of the Cardinal family at Lamar University are battling the economic effects of the challenge as well. But when things get tough, not only does LU always pull through; we're also there to help when our family needs us.

"Things were going great for me before the virus got serious," said Alessia Trebbi-Tindall, a sophomore student athlete from the United Kingdom. "I was playing tournaments for the LU women's golf team and my grades had improved a lot since last semester." She'd first heard of the virus in an online article and never thought about it after that, unaware that it would soon become a worldwide pandemic that would affect her and her family's lives.

"I had to quickly move all my things into storage and leave the U.S.," said Trebbi-Tindall. "It made me feel worried about what may happen in the future and how bad this could get." Trying to get home after cancelled flights and the risk of going into busy airports and

planes while surrounded by thousands of people amid the pandemic was a concern for her as well.

"The Cardinal Emergency Fund helped towards the costs that I ran into from the coronavirus," said Trebbi-Tindall. "It

helped me be able to ship most of my important belongings with me on my flight and helped with the cost of storing items I could not take with me. I feel like my situation is a lot better now that I was able to get home and be with my family and isolate instead of being stuck in the U.S. with no permanent home."

Dhruvikkumar Harshadbhai Patel, an industrial engineer who graduated in May, was doing well before the coronavirus reached its peak. "In general, my life was well established, timely functioned and fully organized," said Patel. "I was using all the facilities of Lamar University like the Setzer Student Center, Library, Rec Center and so many events on campus."

From a small village in India, Patel came to the U.S. knowing no one and knowing little about the country

to pursue his education at Lamar University. The friends he made at LU became a big part of his experience. "I was scared that I wouldn't be able to do my workouts and (would lose) so many happy moments with my university friends," said Patel. "I was scared of going into a dark place without social interaction."

The Cardinal Emergency Fund stepped in to assist Patel with his fees and some of his expenses. "From India, my father found difficulty in sending money, because banks were closed and (we had) so many other financial problems," said Patel. "We found difficulty in buying groceries from stores because we were scared of the coronavirus. So it was helpful financially as well as mentally. Thanks again to LU for helping me in the worst situations, like the Imelda flood, COVID-19 (as well as) giving me my master's degree."

Initiated after Hurricane Harvey, the Cardinal Emergency Fund exists to make sure students who face losses or distress due to unforeseen circumstances can continue their educational endeavors without interruption. Its greatest strength is the diverse range of problems it can address; students who seek assistance with clothing, computers, housing or transportation can find their needs met along with any other fees or financial issues they may have accrued. The fund helps ensure that no disaster of any magnitude will keep a student from getting their degree.

**“The Cardinal Emergency Fund helped towards the costs that I ran into from the coronavirus.”**

—Alessia Trebbi-Tindall



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## **NEW WELCOME CENTER** *under construction*

by Shelly Vitanza

**M**arch 12, Lamar University hosted a groundbreaking ceremony for its new Welcome Center to be constructed on the southeast corner of Rolfe Christopher Drive and Jim Gilligan Way. The center will be a one-story 6,300-square foot building featuring a spacious two-story lobby with comfortable seating areas for visitors, a refreshment counter and a self-service kiosk for prospective students. The lobby and a side gallery will include a variety of media to “tell the LU story.” A 40-seat theater for structured presentations will be located adjacent the lobby and designed to lead visitors to the gathering area for campus tours.

“The Welcome Center will be the first stop on campus for prospective students, family members, alumni and other visitors,” said Tracie Craig, center director. “It will be the first building people see as they approach campus on Cardinal Drive. We will provide information about the campus, LU’s history, academic programs, athletics and student activities. It also will

be the starting point for campus and housing tours.”

To ensure a holistic design for the campus, LU developed conceptual designs of the new south campus entrance and will implement site features as funding becomes available.

The building materials will be primarily brick, with cast stone elements, metal wall panels and a storefront glazing system. The storefront system will provide transparency for a visual connection between the main entrance on the east, the interior lobby and the back side on the west of the building, which will contain an outdoor event space.

The interior finishes will include porcelain floor tiles at the lobby, theater, gallery spaces and restrooms. All light fixtures will be energy efficient LEDs, and the building is planned to achieve LEED Silver accreditation.

The landscape design includes improvements to the surrounding site and landscape elements for visual connection

between the building and the site.

“We placed an emphasis on plants that have low-water requirements, quick establishment periods and manageable growth, and that require minimal long-term maintenance,” said Katherine Miller, assistant vice president, planning and construction.

An evapotranspiration-based, automated irrigation system that can be programmed to minimize water waste will be installed. The system is capable of efficiently delivering the required water needed for plant establishment and development as well as making seasonal adjustments.

Projected to be completed in one year, the site will house office space for admissions counselors and the center director, a workroom for student LU Crew members and other support spaces and will include visitor parking, bus drop-off, outdoor gathering areas, a public art sculpture by Paul Kittelson and Carter Ernst and an iconic “photo op” monument sign.