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UNCP TODAY

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As the 2019-2020 academic year comes to a close, it has certainly proven to be unlike any other we've experienced before. COVID-19 forced us to dig deep, to respond to the challenge, and to do things a little different than planned.

Faculty transitioned more than 1,800 classes online in just one week, staff adapted to a new way of continuing business remotely and students adjusted to a different way of learning. Though COVID-19 brought an unexpected end to our year, our dedicated faculty and staff, resilient students, and an outpouring of support from alumni, donors and friends of the university, allowed us to maintain the continuity of our university and provide the uncompromisingly exceptional UNCP experience our students deserve. In a time of such uncertainty, like always, BraveNation came together. I've never been prouder to serve as the chancellor of this great university.

If you've visited campus lately, you know great things are happening at UNCP. In the fall, for the second year in a row, we had a record-breaking enrollment. As more students than ever are choosing UNCP as their university, the campus is growing to meet the needs of each one with new residence halls and buildings, renovated spaces and some serious upgrades to technology (see pages 10-11).

Growth is something everyone can see, and we're proud of ours, but it takes a walk within campus to see what makes UNCP truly special. Talk with a current student or alumni about their UNCP experience. They'll tell you about a professor, like Dr. Sivanadane Mandjiny (see pages 8-9), who inspired them, or a staff member who helped them, or a coach who encouraged them, and how their education and experience at UNCP shaped them into who they are today.

In this issue, we've added a new section, "On the Quad" (see pages 16-19), highlighting just a

few people on our campus whose service to others has an immeasurable impact. Read how Dr. Tamara Savage's ASPIRE program is helping students who face homelessness and about UNCP staff member Sandy Jacobs' journey as a foster parent.

You'll read about the generosity of our alumni and community members, like Larry and Loleta Chavis (see pages 28-29) and David and Kathy Edge (see page 33), who are committed to ensuring UNCP reaches its full potential. And no issue of UNCP Today would be complete without celebrating the stories of achievement of our incredible alumni, like Ryan Blackwell (see pages 38-39) and Dr. Jada Brooks (see page 41).

These are just a few of the great stories and information filling the pages that follow. You'll read about milestone victories in athletics, remarkable students, successful alumni and much more. Like me, I know as you flip through, you'll feel immense pride for UNCP and the incredible people who make up BraveNation.

Despite all of the uncertainty in the world around us today, I assure you your university is still here and still strong.

As always, thank you for your support. I look forward to seeing you on campus soon.

GO BRAVES!

Robin Gary Cummings, M.D.



REMEMBERING

MARGARET JONES

WIFE, MOTHER AND FIRST LADY

1922-2019

By David Hibbard

Randall Jones remembers his dad being busy a lot during his childhood. As president and later chancellor of Pembroke State College from 1962 until 1979, English Jones didn't have much choice.

"There were a lot of capital needs at the school during that time," says Randall Jones. "The demand for funds required a lot of Dad's time, and he put in a lot of work to get the legislators to approve the capital that would help the school continue to grow."

The job may have been hectic, but English Jones had an important ally and partner in his wife, Margaret, who died in May 2019 at age 96. Randall Jones says his mother provided a tremendous sense of balance for the entire family, which included Randall's brother, Steve, and sister, Judy.

"She helped keep things on an even keel and normal for us," Randall Jones says. "We never got to a position where we felt like we were better than other kids or other people because of Dad's job. She was the perfect mom and looked after her family."

Judy Revels remembers her mother having an eye for detail and a sense of style that served her well in her dual role as a mom and UNCP's first lady.

"She was a classy, elegant lady," Judy Revels says. "She was always neat in her dress and the home, and she wanted things neat and organized."

Revels says her mother provided invaluable support to her father throughout his years in the top job at UNCP. "She loved the university and loved

being the first lady. Daddy forever brought out blueprints and sketches of things he wanted to see done at the university, and she would look at those with him," Revels says.

English and Margaret Jones frequently opened their home on campus for a variety of events, and Randall Jones says his mother proved to be the consummate hostess.

"Mom did a lot of the work for the dinners, parties and receptions they had at the house," says Randall. "Depending on the function, she prepared food and made sure all the details were taken care of."

Judy Revels remembers that in those years, the town of Pembroke didn't have a hotel. When her father hosted university guests, they frequently stayed in a guest house adjacent to the chancellor's residence. Her mother made sure guests were well taken care of and came away with the very best impression of the university.

"There were plenty of times Mom made food or snacks for people staying in the guest house, and it was my job to take it out there to them," Revels recalls.

That hospitality extended to students. In addition to the usual functions that brought students to their home, Revels also remembers a severe ice storm that knocked out power to campus for nearly a week. "Mom opened up our house and let lots of students come in and warm up by the fire," Revels said. "She enjoyed doing things like that."

Showing care and concern for others came naturally to Margaret Jones, especially

children. "She had a love for children, especially babies," says Randall. "At church, she was always reaching out to hold children. She truly had a love for small children." Revels says her mother enjoyed working with the youth at church. "It was a way for her to combine her faith with the love she had for kids," Revels says.

She also had a sense of humor. "If she heard a joke she liked, it didn't take long for her to share it with everyone else," Randall recalls. "She had that little humorous side that would come out every so often."

You could often find that sense of humor on display at Linda's Restaurant in Pembroke, where Margaret Jones frequently went for lunch. "She enjoyed going there and socializing with her friends," Revels says. "She maintained a lot of friendships over the years and enjoyed staying in touch with people."

After retiring as chancellor in 1979, English and Margaret returned to a nearby home they had built in 1957. English Jones died in 1981, and Margaret continued to live there until her death last year.

"Her mother and father were still living when my dad died, so she was very active helping my grandparents during that time," Randall says.

"Family was always very, very important to her, and she made sure it was important to all of us."

For both Chancellor English Jones and First Lady Margaret, UNCP was part of their family. And today, this university family continues to honor their legacy. ■



Dr. Cherry Beasley

UNCP Department of Nursing Chair and Anne R. Belk Endowed Professor



COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES SUPPORTS ROBESON COUNTY WELLNESS INITIATIVE

By Eleanor Johnson

The Robeson County Health Department (RCHD) and UNCP's College of Health Sciences (CHS) have joined forces to collaborate on addressing the growing problem of obesity in rural populations.

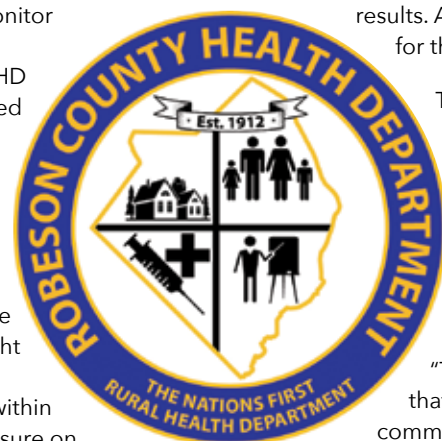
The collaboration is being spearheaded by Dr. Cherry Maynor Beasley, chair of the nursing department at UNCP. She is leading faculty and staff in efforts to monitor weight, blood pressure, height and waist circumference of volunteers from the RCHD to establish a baseline of factors associated with obesity that contribute to other health problems.

Dr. Beasley noted, "We are looking at blood pressure because of the impact it has on your heart. And, of course, we are looking at weight and waist circumference because where you're carrying your weight matters. If you're carrying your weight on your waist, even if your overall weight is within a normal range, you're putting more pressure on your internal organs, which increases your susceptibility to a host of chronic diseases."

The first round of screening has been completed but the collaboration between UNCP and RCHD is just beginning. Additional screenings are anticipated for September. Individuals taking part in the wellness initiative were given a weight loss

goal at the time of initial screening. RCHD has established an incentive program to keep volunteers on track. A final evaluation of the program outcomes is slated for November.

"We are thrilled to be working with the county health department," says Dr. Beasley. "They have worked hard and put a lot of effort into creating a program that should produce positive results. As an employer, the health department has set the bar for the rest of the county."



This collaboration is supported by a grant provided to UNCP from the Blue Cross/Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation in 2019. The grant supports several initiatives, including the Coalition for Health, which provides funding for faculty and staff to collaborate with community-based partners to develop enhanced outreach services to our rural community.

"This is the first initiative from the BCBS grant that supports faculty across CHS to reach out to our community. I think it's a great first step for building long-term coalitions in Robeson County," said Dr. Todd Telemeco, dean of the College of Health Sciences.

Other initiatives supported by the BCBS grant include a collaboration to address mental health in Robeson County, service-learning opportunities unique to CHS, collaborative efforts to create a life skills development curriculum for Robeson County high schools, a makerspace studio environment and careers in the wellness experience program to engage local students in junior and senior high schools.

MELLON FOUNDATION GRANT SEEKS TO INCREASE DIVERSITY AMONG COLLEGE PROFESSORS THROUGH UNCP

By Mark Locklear

The number of underrepresented minorities who hold faculty positions in colleges and universities nationwide is staggeringly low. Thanks to a \$950,000 grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, UNCP seeks to increase that number, diversifying the professoriate.

The funds—spread over three years—will be used to establish the REACH (Research Engagement Action Community Humanities) program supporting students from underrepresented backgrounds as they work toward a career in academia.

REACH will have several key initiatives focused on undergraduate humanities research and mentoring, attracting American Indian, African American, Hispanic and other minority students into the humanities.

University officials hope this will directly lead to an increase in the number of minorities and other underrepresented groups in graduate, doctoral or terminal degree programs—effectively creating a pipeline of qualified instructors and faculty members in the humanities.

"We are grateful for the support, collaboration and trust of the Mellon Foundation," said Dr. Jeff Frederick, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. "Thanks to the foundation and the great work of UNCP experts, we have put together a wonderful opportunity for students to take part in a multidimensional research experience that will prepare them for advanced study in the humanities. We believe



in the importance of the humanities at UNCP and are excited by the opportunity to help grow the next generation of teacher-scholars."

The program is based on a pathway to the professoriate program, allowing participants, or Pembroke Mellon Fellows, to explore the humanities with focused research and action plans that directly engage them with indigenous, underrepresented communities and other students.

Program leaders will identify an annual cohort of up to 18 Pembroke Mellon Fellows, who, over three years, will have an immersive, primary-source research experience culminating in presentations, publications and conference opportunities.

We believe in the importance of the humanities at UNCP and are excited by the opportunity to help grow the next generation of teacher-scholars.



DR. SIVANADANE MANDJINY: A LIFE WELL INVESTED

By Eleanor Johnson

New to campus and tasked with writing a profile piece on beloved chemistry and physics professor, Dr. Sivanadane Mandjiny, was daunting—a personal Everest. What to learn? Who to talk with? What were people going to say? Would it be as wonderful and great as everyone thought? Spoiler alert, it is.

Very quickly in our first conversation, I realized why this story was important, and why Dr. Mandjiny is often credited with so many UNCP alumni success stories. He has the unique ability to make you feel immediately comfortable in his presence and as though you can conquer the highest peak. It's no wonder that the mere mention of his name brings a smile to the faces of peers, students and alumni.

Recruited by Dr. Leonard Holmes while in France for research, Mandjiny came to the U.S. to join UNCP in 1996. He began teaching as a lab associate, but on a more substantial level was brought on board to help create and grow a biotechnology program. And grow it, he did.

"We worked very hard to recruit students—creating experiments, going into high schools, bringing students to campus to show them the experimental process and from nothing to 100 some odd students over a couple of years."

After success with the biotechnology program, Dr. Mandjiny became an associate professor on the tenure track, eventually becoming a professor and now chair of the chemistry and physics department.

It's safe to say he's been busy impacting lives around campus ever since—students and nonstudents alike. When I asked a friend who graduated from UNCP if he had Dr. Mandjiny as a professor, his face immediately lit up with recognition. "I know exactly who you're talking about, I never had him, kind of wish I did, because I always heard the best things."

In his more than 23 years teaching at UNCP, it's hard to tell just how many students Dr. Mandjiny has influenced and inspired along the way both in the classroom and around campus. But what we do know is his passion for the work he does is deeper than just teaching principles of chemistry and science.

With zero hesitation, it is safe to say advising is by far Dr. Mandjiny's favorite part of the job. He is fiercely passionate about helping his students achieve their full potential. It is that opportunity to be involved in a student's future success where you see him light up.

"Some students take five minutes, others half an hour and others an hour, but while talking with them, I get to know them, understand their goals, and from there we write out a plan with exactly what they need to do."

His students and colleagues alike would agree.

Dr. Meredith Storms, associate professor of chemistry and physics, offers a unique perspective. A Lumberton native, Storms attended UNCP and had the opportunity to work on undergraduate research with Mandjiny.



Whether in the classroom, on the Quad or in the hallways of Oxendine, Dr. Mandjiny's influence is evident in the countless students he has impacted over the years.

As chair, he works hard to make everyone feel good about what they are doing, always keeping the students as our main focus, which is evident when you see students lining up outside of his office to talk with him.

"It was the mid-90s, I was probably one of his first students in the lab and he pushed me—made me realize that maybe I should think bigger." Storms went on to pursue her Ph.D. in pharmaceutical sciences, returning to our campus in 2002 as a faculty member and has had an opportunity to learn and grow alongside Dr. Mandjiny in her many roles here on campus as professor, department chair and interim dean.

Storms adds, "As chair, he works hard to make everyone feel good about what they are doing, always keeping the students as our main focus, which is evident when you see students lining up outside of his office to talk with him. His students value what he has to say, he's personable and I think that goes a long way."

Mandjiny's impact is wide-reaching. In our brief time together, he recalled several stories about running into or hearing from former students who are pursuing careers in medicine, pharmacology and academia. This fall, a student introduced herself as the daughter of one of Mandjiny's former students, who is now a physician's assistant working locally. The student herself is planning to attend medical school.

"I feel like I'm a granddaddy for everyone," he quips.

While discussing student successes, I was curious if Dr. Mandjiny could recall one of his first student success stories. All too quickly, he pointed to a plaque on the wall in his office with a photograph dated

2001. He identified a woman at the end, Lisa Cowan. As he recalls, he was teaching an 8 a.m. chemistry lecture, he would arrive at 7:30 a.m. and she would always be waiting in the hallway—arriving early to ask questions. And after class she'd come into his office to follow up on the morning's lecture. Cowan was a nontraditional student who was older than her peers and already working a full-time job as a CAT scan tech. But she dreamed of being a physician and as he loves to do, Dr. Mandjiny helped Cowan make a plan, a step-by-step guide, for her future success.

Cowan did go on to become a physician, graduating from the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University in 2007, specializing in emergency medicine. It wasn't until several years later that Dr. Mandjiny realized her accomplishments. It was the day after Christmas and his mother wasn't feeling well, so he took her to a convenient care facility in Raeford. While in the waiting room, Dr. Mandjiny began looking around when he spotted the portrait of one of the founding physicians of the practice. It was none other than his former student, now Dr. Lisa Cowan.

Immediately, I knew I had to track her down and eventually we connected. After her residency, Dr. Cowan worked in the Emergency Room at FirstHealth Hospital when the opportunity presented itself to open a convenient care facility in Raeford—the first of its kind in Hoke County. Five years ago, Cowan and her husband moved to the beach and opened SeaSide MedSpa in Ocean Isle.

Reflecting on her time with Dr. Mandjiny, Cowan says she often thinks back to his advice, "Do as you want to do, nothing is too big." It was this advice from so many years before that resonated and enabled Cowan to push her boundaries, to take risks and got her where she is today.

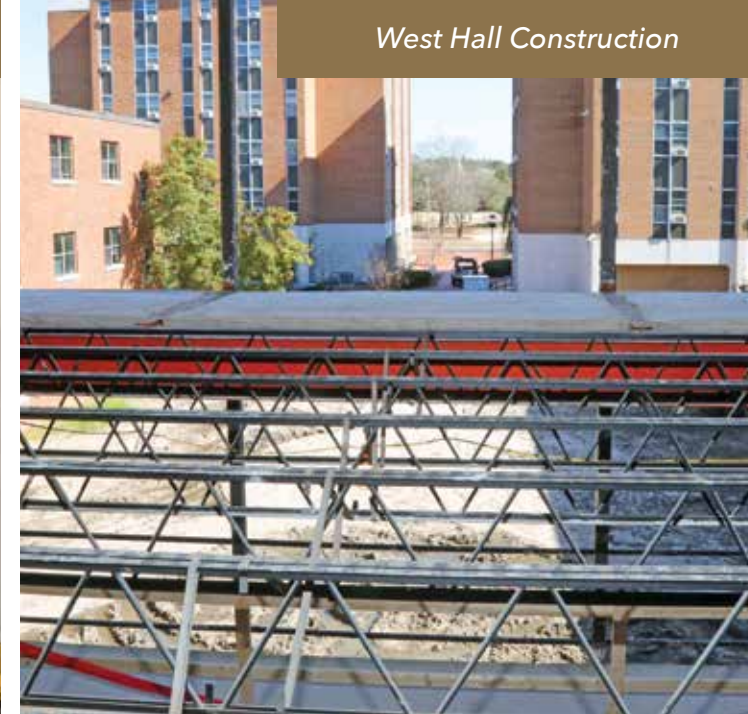
It is evident to anyone who meets Sivanadane Mandjiny that he loves what he does and tries to live by the philosophy that if you love what you do, it isn't work—something he credits learning some 20 years ago from his daughter.

He'd left his glasses upstairs at their house and asked his daughter, 7 at the time, to go get them. She replied "No, Daddy, I have to climb the stairs, walk down the hall, get the glasses, come back down, no, it's too much." A few minutes later, her friend came over and he watched them run all over the house. Confused and slightly irritated, as any father would be, he asked his daughter what the deal was, and her response was what he has leaned on ever since, "What you asked me to do is work, what we did is play."

His lasting impact on UNCP makes it clear that Dr. Mandjiny is living his passion, investing his life well and making our world a better place every day. ■



Renderings for West Hall



West Hall Construction



Cyber Lab



Courtyard Expansion Interior



EXPANDING OUR CAMPUS AND COMMUNITY

This year marks milestone growth on our campus. From the new School of Business to new residence hall buildings to technology upgrades, there is a lot to be proud of happening at UNCP.



Gateway Entrance



Dial Classroom



Rendering for new School of Business



Dial Lobby



Courtyard Expansion Exterior



School of Business Construction



Livemore Library

Dr. Courtney Carroll:

A PASSION FOR UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

By Eleanor Johnson

Every 65 seconds, someone in the U.S. develops Alzheimer's disease. Today, more than 5.8 million Americans are living with AD. With numbers as staggering as these, chances are most of us know someone affected. For UNCP professor Dr. Courtney Carroll, it's personal.

As a middle schooler in Massachusetts, Carroll's grandmother was diagnosed with the disease and lived with her family until her needs became too great, requiring around-the-clock care.

Frustratingly for many, Alzheimer's is not a linear progression disease—patients have good days and they have bad days. Most people focus on memory loss, but the disease also robs its patients of so much more—affecting decision-making, spatial awareness and other cognitive processes.

"It was tough, really tough," shared Carroll when asked about watching her grandmother suffer. "There were days she was cognizant of what was happening to her and she'd be really upset by it and other days when she had no idea who we were or where she was."

It should come as no surprise that Carroll would go on to earn her Ph.D. in neuroscience with a focus on Alzheimer's. Knowing she wanted to teach and focus on research, following her doctoral studies at Cornell University, Carroll received an Institutional Research and Academic Career Development Award (IRACDA) from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), which took her to Hispanic-serving institutions in San Antonio, Texas. The IRACDA fellowship focuses on teaching while having a research component. For Carroll, it was the best of both worlds.

She is passionate about getting undergraduate students involved with scientific research so they can experience firsthand the difference between the classroom instruction and real-world application in a lab.

"In a classroom, students come in, follow the prescribed steps, everything works out and we move on to the next. It's a very different process from how we conduct research today, where most of the time it fails. But you get to figure it out by yourself; it's like a puzzle where there is no picture."

Finding her way to UNCP last spring, Carroll dove right into teaching and research—wanting to understand what happens to our brains as we age, specifically, our neurons, as age is the number one risk factor for developing Alzheimer's.

When working with undergraduate students and working in the field of aging research, the preferred organism is nematodes or *C. elegans* (microscopic worms) because of size and a fully sequenced genome. Due to their microscopic size, the *C. elegans* age rapidly—their lifespan is approximately 20 days—so results appear quickly.

Carroll isn't the only faculty member in the biology department at UNCP inspiring undergraduates to go into research. Dr. Ben Bahr has been studying Alzheimer's alongside undergraduate research assistants at the Biotechnology Center since his arrival in 2009, and Carroll along with Drs. Conner Sandefur and Crystal Walline challenge students in the Biomedical Research Lab.

Dr. Sandefur, who has been researching native plants the Lumbee Tribe has been using for centuries for anti-inflammatory effects, discovered that the plant, *Pseudognaphalium obtusifolium* (rabbit tobacco) killed some strains of bacteria. Wanting to see how the rabbit tobacco might affect her worm models, Carroll and Sandefur teamed up to concoct a tea with the plant. Subsequently, they noticed when healthy worms drank the tea, specifically after stressors, their lifespan seemed to expand.

A classic stressor for worms, like humans, is heat. When exposed to warming temperatures, bodies of both humans and worms begin to create a stress response.



"We warm the worms, so their bodies start to turn on these pathways to try to cool down. If we give them the tea right after the heat exposure, we found it increases their survival rates and their lifespan."

For the spring 2020 semester, Carroll and her research students worked with the rabbit tobacco tea and diseased worms. They are looking to discover if it works, what an appropriate dose looks like, and to gain a general understanding of its effects on the worms.

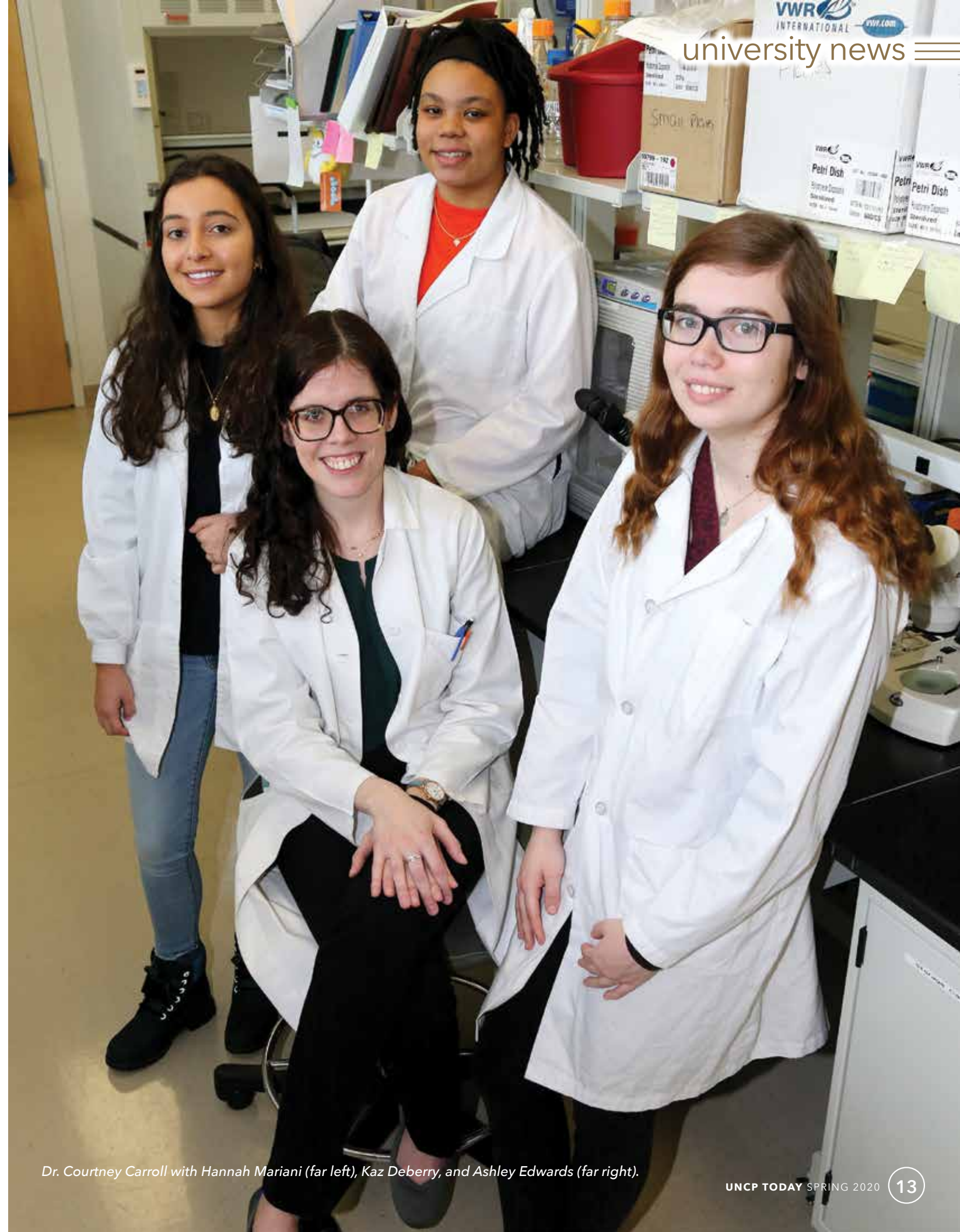
Although the potential for failure exists, Carroll is quick to remind us that even if this particular tea doesn't pan out, there is always something to be gained from a seemingly failed model jump.

By understanding what the tea is doing to the model's cells, you can learn something about what's happening in the cells of humans.

And her students learn a great deal about the research process in turn, perhaps inspiring their own motivation. And perhaps one of the greatest lessons Carroll is teaching her students is that everything is an opportunity—even failure presents its own discoveries. ■



Dr. Conner Sandefur is an assistant professor in the biology department and operates the Sandefur Lab for his many research interests.



Dr. Courtney Carroll with Hannah Mariani (far left), Kaz Deberry, and Ashley Edwards (far right).

ORLANDO ALVAREZ MAKES GLOBAL EXPERIENCE FULL CIRCLE

By Eleanor Johnson

Orlando Alvarez hasn't always seen himself as an English Language Institute (ELI) instructor, but that's where his path has led him and, for now, it seems to be a pretty good fit.

Arriving on campus as a junior from Randolph Early College High School, Alvarez dove headfirst into pursuing a degree in mass communication.

Around the time a friend introduced Alvarez to Korean culture and K-pop (Korean pop music), he began to see flyers around campus about a faculty-led study abroad opportunity to South Korea through the Office of Global Engagement. For him the timing was perfect. Alvarez wasted no time gathering all of the information he could to make a pitch to his parents whose permission was required for him to travel across the world.

Though initially hesitant, Alvarez made his case that not only would this be an investment in his education but also his future, and his parents agreed. With the official go-ahead and a new passport in hand, he was off to South Korea for five weeks with a group of students and faculty members from UNCP.

In South Korea, students were in class Monday through Friday with others from all over the world. While learning in a new environment with a group of culturally diverse students was exciting, it was the opportunity for exploration that had the most significant impact on Alvarez.

"There were organized weekend excursions to several cultural sites, but we also had plenty of time to explore on our own."

The experience was a transformative one for Alvarez. His parents are immigrants from a tiny village in Mexico, and he quickly came to understand the value of his time in South Korea. For him, it was the opportunity of a lifetime.

"One day, I stood there in awe, realizing I was in a place where no one in my family has ever been or dreamed of going. I am so grateful for that experience."

Back on campus, not wanting to lose his global mindset, Alvarez jumped at the opportunity to intern with the Office of Global Engagement. During his time in the office, Alvarez had a chance to learn more about its role and mission.

Led by Dr. Cathy Lee Arcuino, Global Engagement works with international students interested in studying at UNCP, current students who would like to study abroad and international students interested in enrolling in the ELI. Global Engagement also seeks to provide engaging global learning opportunities in everyday experiences on campus.

Alvarez graduated in December and saw an opportunity to remain involved with Global Engagement as an ELI instructor.

The ELI offers intensive English instruction to non-native speakers. After completion of the ELI program, students can continue their studies at UNCP.

In the classroom, it's clear Alvarez is passionate about not only helping his students improve their English language skills, but also their entire experience as students at UNCP. His manner in the classroom puts his students at ease providing an environment in which they are comfortable enough to ask questions not only about their work but solicit life advice as well.

Alvarez looks for unique ways to collaborate and create shared experiences for international and domestic students that enrich both parties' education.



Alvarez is passionate about ensuring his students have a robust, enriching experience in the U.S. and at UNCP both in and out of the classroom.

In the spring, Alvarez, with the help of lecturer Hannah Anderson, organized a group outing of his students and her composition students to attend a basketball game together.

"Both students—international and domestic—have admitted being intimidated by each other. This partnership allows us to break barriers," says Anderson.

Alvarez, recalling his experience in South Korea, knows this immersive experience creates true cultural understanding and a desire for all students to learn more about each other, going past what they see at first sight.

ELI student Haochen Shi, known as Simon, agrees, "I want to know more and see the culture through American eyes."

The world today is a global community and the Office of Global Engagement strives to prepare UNCP students for the complexities of such. While Alvarez doesn't know where this experience will lead, it is clear he's dedicated to his students and enjoying the opportunity to be part of something bigger. ■

One day, I stood there in awe, realizing I was in a place where no one in my family has ever been or dreamed of going. I am so grateful for that experience.

PREPARING OUR REGION'S HIGH SCHOOL LEADERS

By Eleanor Johnson

Originally established as a school to train American Indian teachers, UNCP has a rich history of contributing to K-12 education. Today, the School of Education works diligently to prepare not only teachers for the classroom but school administrators as well.

The School of Education is fortunate to work with 13 partner school districts in Anson, Bladen, Columbus, Cumberland, Harnett, Hoke, Lee, Montgomery, Moore, Robeson, Richmond and Scotland counties and Whiteville City, in addition to Ft. Bragg schools for internship placements for both undergraduate and graduate educators alike.

"When I look at our partner school districts, I'm overwhelmed by the sheer volume of leadership that UNCP has helped produce. Within the regional high schools alone, 22 principals chose to study and earn their MSA (Master of School Administration) at UNCP. That speaks highly to the positive impact we're having in our service region," says Dr. Zoe Locklear, interim dean, School of Education.

The MSA program is delivered by Drs. Camille Goins, Gerald Neal and Olivia Oxendine. Goins directs the First Americans' Educational Leadership Program (FAEL)—a grant-funded program to support American Indian educators pursuing careers in administration. Neal brings expertise in trauma-sensitive instruction and school leadership techniques. Oxendine offers experience from a lengthy career in public education with a broad knowledge base.



Stefanie Phillips
Pinecrest High Principal



Chris Pearson
Overhills High Principal

Stefanie Phillips, principal at Pinecrest High School in Southern Pines, earned her MSA from UNCP in 2013. Having spent several years teaching high school sciences, it was after a move to the Moore County school system that the idea of school administration started to blossom.

"I was looking for a way to make a greater impact. I'd had some great principals along the way and I wanted to be like them. My principal at North Moore High School was no different. He pushed me not only to pursue my MSA but to stick with it," said Phillips.

Going back to school is often a sacrifice taking not only determination but dedication. At the time, Phillips was teaching and had a family with young children. She would commute to campus attending classes in the evenings and spend her Sundays at the dining room table tackling coursework.

While UNCP was a no-brainer for Phillips given her history—earning both her undergraduate and master's degrees in science education here—it was the faculty's open-door policies and personal connections that drew her back.

"I can't imagine I would have been as successful somewhere else."

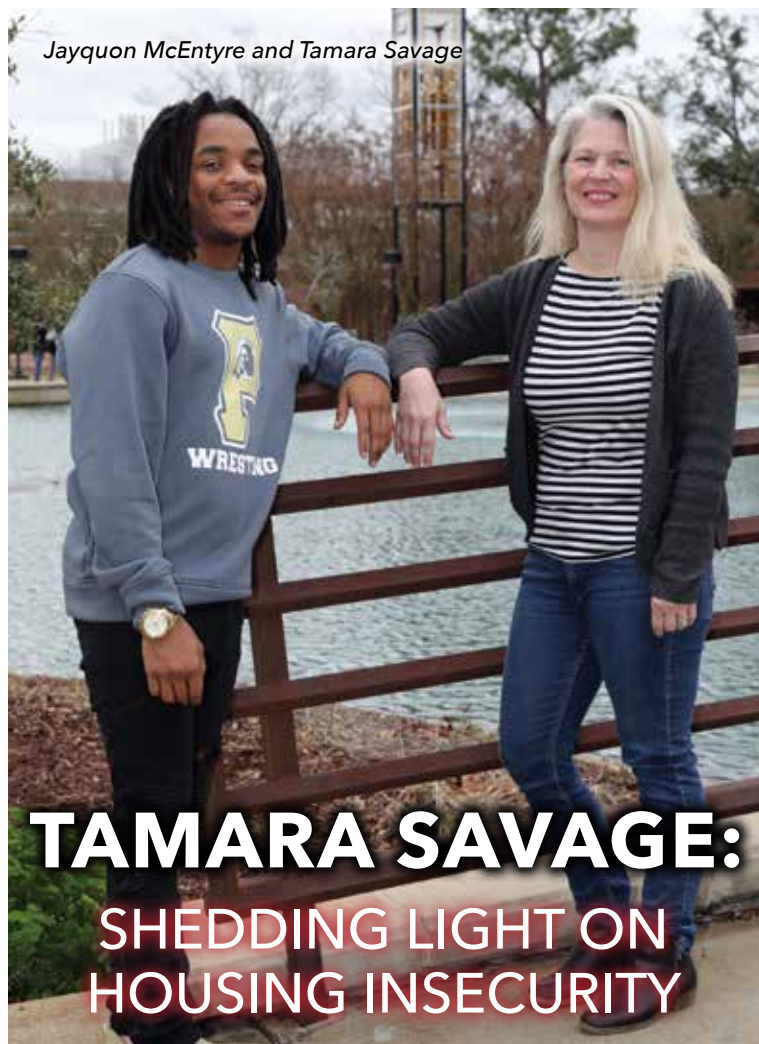
Much like Phillips, Chris Pearson, principal at Overhills High School in Harnett County, was encouraged to pursue his MSA by colleagues who thought he could have a positive impact as a school administrator. Originally an engineering student at North Carolina State University, Pearson quickly realized that he had a passion for working with and mentoring young people, so he switched gears pursuing a degree in science education. Pearson found himself in the unique position of high school principal before completing his MSA. For him, it was UNCP's flexibility in both the sequence and location of courses that were attractive.

"I had a year to complete my course requirements to maintain my position and UNCP's program allowed me to do that."

The university's MSA program is long established in the region. Zoe Locklear, for one, is proud of the program faculty and the entire School of Education faculty and staff for all they do daily to serve public schools of North Carolina. ■

22 MSA graduates hold principal roles in UNCP's partner school districts.

ON THE QUAD



Jayquon McEntyre and Tamara Savage

TAMARA SAVAGE: SHEDDING LIGHT ON HOUSING INSECURITY

By Mark Locklear

They are impossible to point out on campus. Often indistinguishable from their peers, these students purposefully fly under the radar. Students who are experiencing homelessness, for the most part, prefer to go undetected.

But this poses a challenge for Tamara Savage.

Savage, a social work professor, has made it her mission to get these students the help they need.

In fall 2018, Savage started ASPIRE, a mentoring service for students experiencing homelessness. She helps students with textbooks and other school supplies, snacks and hygiene products. She also acts as an academic advisor and hosts monthly dinners.

"ASPIRE offers them ways to help navigate through the university system," she said. "They are first-generation. They didn't know much about university life, and, on top of that, they have a different experience than other students."

It's a widespread issue on college campuses. A recent study found that 10% of students at four-year universities nationwide experience homelessness.

The ASPIRE program at UNCP began with three students and it quickly grew to 15.

Senior Jayquon McEntyre, who experienced homelessness during his final two years of high school, considers the group family.

He is the first of his family to go to college. McEntyre says the bond he formed with fellow ASPIRE members is unmatched.

"The monthly family dinner gives everybody a chance to breathe," he said. "You realize these other students are just like you. We've all experienced similar situations. We can talk and get things off our chest and not have to worry about being judged."

Savage believes there are several dozen other students like McEntyre on campus, but it's nearly impossible to identify those who fall under the "invisible population."

"They have always been here, but we are just now starting to see it. It's an issue that's highly stigmatized. These are students who may have been in foster care or living from place to place."

They tend to isolate themselves, but ASPIRE helps bring them out of isolation by offering incentives for attending social events on campus.

"I'm trying to get them to advocate for themselves. I'm that person they go to when things are good and when things are not so good. I give them encouragement... like a parent would do. It's the small things that can really make a difference."

"I see my job as not only helping them through college but transitioning into the work world ... seeing them flourish. This is the best part of being here at UNCP."

The professor-mother-like figure is making a tremendous impact on students. ■



UNCP alum, Newy Scruggs '94, discusses leadership, values and success with Dallas Mavericks CEO Cynthia Marshall during UNCP's Distinguished Speaker Series.

DALLAS MAVERICKS CEO ON CAMPUS

By Mark Locklear

For two decades, the Distinguished Speaker Series has captivated audiences with dynamic guests the likes of Maya Angelou, Spike Lee, Danny Glover and Gabby Douglas.

This year's lineup featuring Dallas Mavericks CEO Cynthia Marshall, who shared not only leadership lessons but life lessons, was no exception.

Marshall chronicled how a young girl raised in the San Francisco area housing projects became one of the top 50 most powerful women in corporate America. Today, she is the NBA's only female CEO and the only black female in a leadership position in major professional sports.

"She's a groundbreaking, trailblazing woman," said event moderator Newy Scruggs, a UNCP alumna who is making waves himself as an Emmy Award-winning sportscaster in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

Marshall spent 36 years with AT&T, moving up the ranks to senior vice president. In 2018, she was enjoying retirement and starting a consulting firm in Dallas when she was hired by owner Mark Cuban to lead the \$2 billion organization.

After taking over, Marshall put in place six core values for Mavs employees: character, respect, authenticity, fairness, teamwork and safety, or CRAFTS for short. UNCP students were encouraged to adopt these values during their college years and throughout their professional careers.

"You have to have integrity. Be honest. Respect others in the workplace. You have to be fair. You have to be a team player."

Work hard. You can't just talk a good game; you have to deliver results."

She pushed them to get in touch with their passion and their purpose, then pursue it. Rather than "what keeps you up at night," she prefers students to ask themselves, "what gets you up in the morning?"

"What are the things you are passionate about? When you discover it, be the best at it."

During her talk, she shared a wealth of knowledge and advice on how to be successful.

"Stay focused on your studies," she said encouraging them to put all distractions aside. She was taught at an early age that education was her ticket out.

"My mom put a math book in one hand and a Bible in the other. Keep your head in these two books and you will make it out, she told me. Later, I was embraced by the principal and three teachers at my high school and, eventually, I was offered five full scholarships. To this day, I credit those educators for literally saving my life."

As Scruggs was wrapping up the fireside chat, he asked Marshall what advice she would leave students who are trying to emulate her success.

"You don't want to be me. You're going to be better than me. You have the skills and the resources and the technology available to you here at this university to do that. All I would ask you to do is dream big dreams." ■

ON THE QUAD

FOSTERING - A LABOR OF LOVE

By Mark Locklear



CATILYN HUGHES: DESIGNING STUDENT LEADERSHIP

By Mark Locklear

When she's not in class, you can be sure to catch Catilyn Hughes at the CARE Resource Center.

She began volunteering at the campus food pantry and clothing closet after participating in a service- and advocacy-learning community during her freshman year. She quickly worked her way up to manager.

Now a senior, Hughes has transitioned into the role of student service leader for Community Outreach.

"I'm in charge of keeping all our student workers organized and on task. I keep a record of all the visitors at the center, collect donations and plan food drives."

She also works with partners to address food insecurity on campus and in the community, in addition to assisting local agencies with Point-in-Time (PIT) counts for people experiencing homelessness.

Throughout her time at UNCP, Hughes has participated in several alternative fall break trips in Boston, Asheboro and Fayetteville. She is a familiar face with folks at UNCP's Office for Community and Civic Engagement, which lines up volunteer opportunities for students.

In partnership with the local jail, Hughes, a criminal justice major, created "Second Chances," a program focused on literacy and life skills development for incarcerated adults. She also finds time to volunteer with Growing Change, a nonprofit that helps at-risk youth in Scotland County.

For her outstanding leadership and service, North Carolina Campus Compact presented her with the Community Impact Student Award. The Red Springs native was among 22 students across the state to receive the award.

Christie Poteet, director of Community and Civic Engagement, nominated Hughes for the award.

"Catilyn has grown significantly as a leader on our campus and demonstrates what all students should strive to be—dedicated, ambitious and focused on creating change." ■



Sandy Jacobs (top left), his wife, Jordan, and children, Jude and Jeremiah

Like all foster parents, Sandy Jacobs knows he can't help them all. But if he and his wife, Jordan, can impact the lives of a few, they know they are helping change generations.

In 2017, the Pembroke couple opened their door and hearts to children in need. With a desire to serve others and better his community, Jacobs, the associate director of Service-Learning, is a shining example of the selfless and civic-minded attitudes shared by so many UNCP staff members.

Little Jeremiah was a 22-month-old bundle of joy when he was placed into the Jacobs home. Jude, a newborn at the time, soon followed. What started as a mission to change the lives of foster kids quickly evolved into something greater. The couple soon realized it was their world being impacted by these innocent children.

Today, Jeremiah is 5 and Jude, 3. Both share their new parents' last name—they were adopted a month apart. The Jacobses are continuing to foster other kids as well.

"It's great!" Sandy said with a smile. "My wife and I joke quite a bit that we became parents really quickly. All of a sudden, there was a 22-month-old and a newborn in our house, and during that same time we were fostering other kids ranging from 3 months to 8 months. We had kids everywhere!"

Since becoming licensed foster parents, Sandy '05, '09, and Jordan, a nurse with Scotland Health, have immersed themselves in the foster care process in the county. He serves on a foster care committee through the Robeson County Department of Social Services and offers advice to new applicants. For his work, Jacobs was named 2019 Foster Father of the Year.

Those closest to Sandy and Jordan were not the least surprised to see them become model foster parents. Both their parents fostered children.

"Growing up, our home was a place for someone who may have needed help," Sandy said. "Even when my parents weren't fostering, my father took in kids. My wife has three siblings who were fostered, then adopted. She also had other children who

came through their home and lived for a period of time."

When he's not at home with his family, you can catch the UNCP alumnus on the baseball field where he's served as youth coach for eight years. He's been around the sport most his life. He was a standout pitcher for the Braves from 2002 to 2005 and later served as an assistant on the UNCP coaching staff. Today, he runs Next Level Sports Academy, which instructs area youth in baseball and softball.

Whether it's on the diamond or with UNCP's Office of Community and Civic Engagement, Jacobs is on a mission to serve his fellow man. Above all else, there's no greater calling than that of being a parent.

"It was great becoming a father. I often tell others, I needed them just as much as they needed me. It's a privilege to be their parent. I believe wholeheartedly that God sent them my way, to not only help them, but to help me and my wife." ■

STRIKE AT THE WIND! RETURNS TO ITS ROOTS

By Eleanor Johnson

The beloved outdoor drama "Strike at the Wind!" returned to its roots last summer—performed under the stars at the historic Adolph Dial Amphitheater at the Lumbee Tribe Cultural Center. First performed in 1976 and running for 20 years, "Strike at the Wind!" tells the story of the Lowrie War in 1865. The drama chronicles the life of Henry Berry Lowrie, who led a band of men in a seven-year battle against those he believed killed his father and brother.

The play returned in 1999 and 2007 and was again revived in 2017 and staged at Givens Performing Arts Center, thanks to the collaborative efforts of UNCP, the Lumbee Tribe and the local community. Dr. Jonathan Drahos, the play's director, was thrilled to see the play return outdoors. "Although I have adapted the play for two consecutive years as an indoor experiment, it belongs outdoors." All three shows in 2019 were sellout crowds and plans to return to the Dial Amphitheater again are already underway. ■





SWIMMING

WRESTLING

2020 BRAVES TAKE OVER



BASKETBALL

TRACK & FIELD

Twenty-nine days. That is all the month of February offered in 2020, but it turned out to be one of the biggest months in school history for UNCP Athletics.

The Braves took the Mountain East Conference by storm on the way to picking up three conference titles, the men's basketball team raked in its third Peach Belt Conference crown in four years, and the wrestling team put an emphatic cap on the calendar year's shortest month with just the second region team title in the 28-year NCAA Division II history of the athletics department.

"After 22 years in college athletics, I know how rare it is to be a part of something like this and I know our coaches and staff do not take it for granted," said Director of Athletics Dick Christy. "To see our student-athletes challenging each other, pushing each other and having friendly competitions among teams about who is going to win the next ring—that is special. That is the culture that you just can't buy, and it's so meaningful to be able to see it up close. I couldn't be more proud of everyone involved."

UNCP needed less than 24 hours in the month of February to

just their fourth year of existence, the Braves rallied on the final day of the Great Midwest Athletic Conference/Mountain East Conference Championships in Canton, Ohio, to finish first among the six MEC teams competing at the event.

The swimming team needed just four days to collect four event titles, including three individual championships, while also tallying 24 school records, three NCAA-qualifying times (B Standard) and 28 all-conference honors. The Braves, under second-year head coach Oscar Roverato, finished 67 points ahead of Fairmont State in the final standings despite the Fighting Falcons holding a slight lead in the early session of final-day action.

A week later, the indoor track & field teams took their turn on the MEC's biggest stage inside Marshall University's Chris Cline Athletic Complex. The women's team dominated second-day action and would ultimately come out on top of the nine-team field—61-1/2 points ahead of second-place finishing West Virginia Wesleyan, while the men would be forced to settle for the runner-up position. The women's squad would collect four event titles

MOUNTAIN EAST CONFERENCE CHAMPIONS PEACH BELT CONFERENCE

lock up their first league crown as an associate member of the MEC. The wrestling team outpaced the rest of the six-team field—one that included the likes of 16th-ranked West Liberty, as well as fifth-ranked and two-time national champion Notre Dame—by 7-1/2 points on the way to hoisting the trophy. It was the second conference title in three seasons for the Black & Gold, who captured the regular season title in the last year of its membership in the Eastern College Athletic Conference in 2017-18.

Five wrestlers climbed to the top of the podium after breezing through their respective weight class's tournament, while three others finished second or third. Ninth-year head coach Othello "O.T." Johnson would inevitably lead his squad to even greater heights on the last day of the month when the Braves dominated the 11-team field at the UNCP-hosted NCAA Super Region II Championships—an event the squad won by 47 points.

Just less than two weeks later, it was the swimming team's turn to put their stamp on its associate membership in the MEC. In

along the way, including a pair of standout performances by newcomer Erman Jepleting, while also combining to rake in 18 all-conference honors.

The men's team claimed top honors in four events while also being decorated with 14 all-conference laurels. Dr. Peter Ormsby, the director of cross country and track & field for the Braves, would take home the women's coach of the year honor as well.

No stranger to conference titles itself, the men's basketball team joined in on the fun as the days of February wound down. The Braves captured at least a share of the PBC regular season championship with a dominating win at Francis Marion on February 26. It was UNCP's first win in Florence, South Carolina, since the 2014-15 campaign and the third conference regular season title in the last four years. Four days later, UNCP won the PBC championship outright for the first time in school history with a 23-point win over North Georgia in front of more than 1,700 spectators at Lumbee Guaranty Bank Court. ■

..... By Todd Anderson

HARDY GIRLS

Black & Gold Run Through Their Veins



Alecia Hardy (top left), Dee Hardy, Avaé Hardy (top right), Marlon Hardy, Jackson Hardy

You may never find a family that bleeds Black & Gold more than the one you will find in the home of Latanya and Marlon Hardy these days.

This story starts with Mom. Latanya “Dee” Major Hardy borders on legendary status in Pembroke—a label that seems only fitting as you walk through the halls of the English E. Jones Center. A three-sport prep star at Fayetteville’s E.E. Smith High School from 1978-81, Dee became a multisport star for the Braves and on her way to eventually being inducted into the UNCP Athletics Hall of Fame in 1995. A two-time all-conference and all-district pick as a basketball player, as well as a 1984-85 NAIA all-America honoree, she scored more than 1,550 points from 1981-85 and helped lead the Braves to a 97-21 record, including three consecutive 27-win campaigns.

But, it seems that Mom’s calling was on the volleyball court, where she was a two-time Conference Carolinas Player of the Year selection under then-head coach Tommy Thompson. A three-time all-conference and two-time all-district honoree as well, she is the only player in the 46-year history of the volleyball program in Pembroke to have her uniform retired—an honor that still conjures up feelings of extreme pride even today.

“I am still amazed,” she said. “I was always taught to work hard, and I always tried to instill that in my family as well. There were so many great players that came through Pembroke, so it was a real honor to have my uniform retired. When I was inducted into the Hall of Fame, for me, it was an honor to even be considered and I kept asking myself ‘Was I really that good?’”

Nowadays, you will find Dee and her daughters, Avaé and Alecia, living within a short drive of each other. Dee is in her 34th year as the head coach of the girls’ varsity basketball team at E.E. Smith High School in Fayetteville. Alecia, the second youngest member of the Hardy family, is the social media coordinator at E.E. Smith, serves as the head coach of the junior varsity volleyball team, and patrols the sideline as an assistant coach for her mother. Avaé recently moved back to Fayetteville from Atlanta and is currently employed in the Harnett County School System.

But, they did not always want to be a stone’s throw away from Mom. Although Pembroke was a common word uttered in the household as the girls grew up, both daughters decided that maybe they did not want to venture to Pembroke to try to fill the big shoes that their mother had left there.

Avaé was the first daughter to venture off to college, but went in an opposite direction from Pembroke, at least at first. She played in 53 games across two seasons at Queens University of Charlotte where she averaged 5.5 points and 3.1 rebounds a game for the Royals before succumbing to the call to don the Black & Gold for her final two seasons of collegiate competition. While with the Braves during both the 2013-14 and 2014-15 campaigns, Avaé played in all 52 games (47 starts) and averaged 5.7 points, 2.3 rebounds, 2.0 assists and 1.0 steals per game. She turned in more than 28 minutes per game on the hardwood of the English E. Jones Center and helped the Black & Gold register nearly 20 victories as well.

“I didn’t want to go to UNCP at first because my mom had gone there,” she said. “But, once I got the opportunity, it made me feel at home to be there because there were people there that knew me. The one thing that I learned at UNCP was that your impression on people is important. Anytime I needed someone, there were people at UNCP that I met along the way who were happy to stand in my corner. That still means a lot to me.”

Amid her older sister’s senior season in Pembroke, Alecia was making an individual name for herself on the college level as well, just not in Robeson County. A three-sport start at E.E. Smith High School where she played for her mother, the youngest Hardy girl was offered a scholarship to play at Charleston Southern, where she saw action in 61 games (14 starts) for the Buccaneers beginning with the 2014-15 season.

But, like it happened with her sister, the pull of UNCP won out again. Alecia finished out her collegiate career with the Braves, averaging 7.0 points, 2.3 rebounds, 2.2 assists and 1.4 steals during the 2017-18 and 2018-19 campaigns. She played in 52 games (51 starts) for the Braves while also turning in 28.6 minutes of playing time an outing as well.

By Todd Anderson

“UNCP was always my first choice growing up,” Alecia said. “I am still really not sure why I chose to go somewhere else at first. Being there was a blessing, though. I was able to follow in the footsteps of both my mom and sister, and I was able to walk past daily reminders of them on the walls of the gym.”

To promote the connection even further, Dee recently had the basketball court at E.E. Smith High School named in her honor, and Alecia put together a highlight video that eventually went viral using skills she had picked up as a mass communication major at UNCP. No, it does not bother Dee that her daughter initially chose not to follow in her footsteps. She would have been proud of them regardless.

“They didn’t want to go where a parent or relative had stood out,” Dee said. “They both chose different universities, but UNCP is where they were meant to be. When they got there, I just wanted them to have the opportunities that I had. A parent is always going to be proud of their children no matter what. I also wanted to be able to give back to UNCP, and what better way is there than to have your daughters play there also.” ■



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UNCP BRAVES ATHLETICS ONLINE STORE

KENYANS:

FINDING BIGGER FAMILY AT UNCP



Erman Jepleting



Tirus Kirwa



Valary Samoei



Silus Kipkoech



Joshua Chepkisir

If you ask Silus Kipkoech what his favorite American food is, the answer is, really, quite simple. He is not picky. He likes everything.

"When Silus first got here, he would let members of the team take turns ordering for him at restaurants just so that he could try something new all of the time," said Dr. Peter Ormsby, UNCP's director of Cross Country/Track & Field. "We stopped at a Wendy's on the way back from a meet his freshman year, and (former teammate) Kristin Cain ordered him a Baconator. It was quite interesting to see his reaction."

Despite the onslaught of a diet he was not used to, Kipkoech was not deterred from his athletic goals in America. The product of Eldoret, Kenya, burst onto the collegiate scene quite quickly. As a freshman, he captured both the Peach Belt Conference Freshman and Athlete of the Year laurels during the outdoor track & field season. As a sophomore, he repeated his honors in outdoor track & field, but also won the league's cross country championship as well, while also qualifying for the NCAA Division II Cross Country Championships.

Regardless of the honors in the competitive arena, however, something was missing. Although he secured a job as an assistant in the Mary Livermore Library to occupy his time during the summer months, he was still left wanting for a regular taste of home.

"It was difficult at first being here by myself, because everybody is excited to be able to go home and see their friends and families, and I was here without anybody," Kipkoech said. "It's nice to have this group here now and hang out with people from home. That helps a lot."

Ormsby hit the recruiting trail again amid the 2017-18 season and came up with another international gem in Joshua Chepkisir who, like Kipkoech, dominated the collegiate scene immediately. Chepkisir has captured top honors in each of his first two PBC Cross Country Championship races, including this past November when he set a meet and course record at the UNCP-hosted event at Luther Britt Park in Lumberton. He has also raked in two NCAA Southeast Region Championship crowns as well.

The Kenyan connection at UNCP grew even stronger last summer when Ormsby inked three more student-athletes from the eastern Africa nation, including transfer Erman Jepleting who had already competed for two seasons at West Texas A&M University. Freshman Valary Samoei joined Jepleting as a member of UNCP's women's squad in August as well, while freshman Tirus Kirwa began running alongside Chepkisir and Kipkoech on the men's team.

"Having this group here adds something that we were missing," Ormsby said. "To have five internationals that are truly international adds a different atmosphere, and it elevates both genders. These five individuals are bringing something that we can't get from a stateside athlete as far as the aspect of a different culture and different traditions. It's kind of cool getting to see them get Americanized though with the food and everything. Having them here is great for our team, but I think it's great for the university as well."

It is not an uncommon scene in the English E. Jones Center to see the group of five walking and laughing together as the camaraderie is uncanny. There is a sense of urgency from the group, as well as the coach, though to see what the future may take them, as well as their team, in terms of athletic success.

Jepleting, who finished third at the PBC cross country championships in November and who shattered school records in three different events during the most recent indoor track & field campaign, is looking forward to finding out.

"Our group, we call ourselves family, and we are always there to give love and care for each other," Jepleting said. "I get those same things from the rest of my teammates, though. We are always there for each other." ■

By Todd Anderson

20 SAVE THE DATE 20

OCTOBER 17

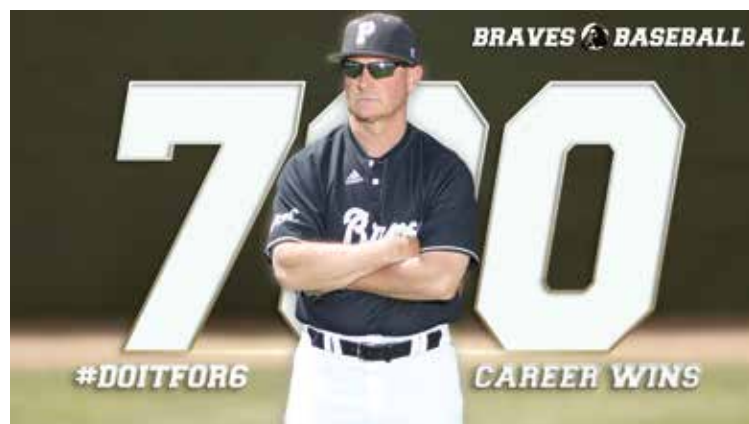
HOMECOMING



PSU Track & Field alumni reunion at Homecoming 2019.

Make your plans to join us for UNCP's 66th Annual Homecoming.

Come back home to Pembroke, enjoy visiting with your college classmates and see firsthand all the exciting things that are happening at your alma mater!



ADVANCEMENT & ALUMNI NEWS

MILESTONES WERE PLENTIFUL FOR UNCP'S COACHES IN 2019-20

Superlatives came at a premium for the coaches of UNCP's varsity athletic teams during the 2019-20 athletics season as five of them punched milestone moments into their respective coaching resumes.

Baseball skipper Paul O'Neil led the way for the Black & Gold by picking up his 700th career victory on the shoulders of UNCP's 13-3 rout of visiting Queens in early February. O'Neil, who joined the UNCP family in time for the 2001 campaign and is the program's all-time winningest coach, logged his 600th win in Pembroke in March of last season. He has led the Black & Gold to 30 or more wins in 13 of his previous 19 campaigns, as well as a trio of NCAA Tournament berths.

Women's basketball head coach John Haskins joined his profession's 300-wins club with a 77-71 triumph over USC Aiken in mid-February. Haskins has logged all 300 of his career victories with the Braves, but he amassed 105 of those wins at the reins of the men's program from 1992-2002. He took over as head coach of the women's team prior to the 2004-05 season and has led the Braves to 195 victories since.

Brittany Bennett, who entered her seventh season as UNCP's

softball head coach in 2019-20, became the program's all-time winningest coach with a win over Chowan in early February. Bennett, whose entire head coaching career has come at the helm of the Braves, notched her 154th career victory with that 3-1 triumph over the Hawks at the UNCP Softball Field.

The first and only head coach in the history of the women's soccer program in Pembroke, Lars Andersson notched his 200th victory in Pembroke on the shoulders of a 2-1 overtime thriller over perennial Peach Belt Conference Champion Columbus State in late September. Andersson, who logged time as a head coach at both Reinhardt College and Cumberland College before coming to UNCP, needs just one more win next season to join a select group of college coaches with his 300th career victory.

Volleyball's Ellen McGill, who wrapped up her fifth season in Pembroke during the fall, penciled in career victory No. 125 with a 3-0 shutout of region rival Fayetteville State in early September. The 12-year college coaching veteran, who celebrated the birth of her first child, Jackson, in February, ventured into Pembroke after racking up 96 wins as head coach of Trinidad State from 2009-14. ■

By Todd Anderson



LARRY CHAVIS: INVESTING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

By Mark Locklear

This university has meant so much to our community and the entire region. My wife and I wanted to give back because of everything UNCP has given to us and our community.



Pictured: Larry and Loleta Chavis

Larry Chavis, the longtime Lumbee Bank CEO, credits much of his success to the strong educational foundation he received at UNCP.

To pay homage to his alma mater, he and his wife, Loleta, pledged a generous gift to the future School of Business building. Once complete, the main foyer will be named in honor of the Lumberton couple.

"We wanted to do something to give back to the school that has been so beneficial to my career. It has touched so many lives, including many of my family members," Larry Chavis said.

"This university has meant so much to our community and the entire region. My wife and I wanted to give back because of everything UNCP has given to us and our community."

A trailblazer and prominent member of the banking community, Chavis is highly regarded across the region and state. The majority of his 47-year career has been spent in lead roles with Lumbee Guaranty Bank.

A Rowland native, Chavis served two years in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War before returning home to earn an accounting degree from what was then known as Pembroke State University in 1972. He went to work with Southern National Bank that same year, eventually climbing his way up to vice president of the accounting department. He would go on to earn an MBA from Campbell University.

His career with Lumbee Guaranty Bank, the first Native American owned bank in the U.S., began in 1987, when he was named president and CEO. He has remained at the helm throughout his tenure. Today, he serves as chairman of the board, and under his leadership, Lumbee Bank has expanded to 13 branches and more than 100 employees.

In April 2019, the university broke ground on the \$38 million, state-of-the-art facility that will house UNCP's accredited School of Business. In addition to 14 classrooms, the building will include a career services center, a 300-seat auditorium, an interactive market-style trading room, a video conference room, computer lab, food court and a multimedia resource room.

The future facility will face Prospect Road between Sampson Hall and Dial Humanities Building.

"With this new School of Business, it is going to make our way of life so much easier for future generations. A lot of the time, I think had our university not been here many of us may not have been exposed to those opportunities.

"For me, being a part of the business community and earning a degree from there, it is kind of fitting to be a part of this project," Chavis said.

Chancellor Robin Gary Cummings said the university is deeply honored, grateful and indebted to the Chavises for their generous gift.

"Larry and Loleta have been pillars in this community throughout their lives, and through this contribution, their influence will continue. The students of our university will benefit greatly because of their generosity and vision. It is because of donors like Larry and Loleta that UNCP will move into the future with a solid foundation." ■

DR. WARREN BAKER: CREATING A LASTING LEGACY

By Mark Locklear

No one has more admiration for Dr. Warren Baker's lifelong commitment to higher education and dedicated service to UNCP than his wife, Sue.

She has witnessed, firsthand, his burning passion for an institution where he served 24 years in senior administrative and faculty roles in Admissions, Institutional Research and Planning, and the School of Education.

Though retired, he continues to hold UNCP in high regard. He touched countless lives and helped students achieve their dreams. In the end, it was Baker's life that was forever altered.

To commemorate his 70th birthday, Sue surprised him by gifting \$7,000 to UNCP to establish a scholarship in his honor. Once fully endowed, the Dr. Warren Baker Endowed Scholarship for Teacher Education will be funded at \$25,000.

"I couldn't think of a better way to honor him for such a successful career and his love for UNCP," she said. "He has a great affinity for UNCP because of the important role it played in his life, so I thought this needs to be part of his legacy."

To be eligible, students must be enrolled in the Teacher Education program, maintain a 3.0 GPA and reside in Robeson, Bladen or Cumberland counties.

A Bladen County native, Baker began his distinguished career at UNCP as a student, earning his bachelor's degree in 1975. That same year, he was hired as an admissions counselor. He moved up the ranks to director before transitioning as director of Institutional Research and Planning and going on to lead the University-School Partnerships Program. He was named dean of the School of Education in 2003 and remained in that role until his retirement in 2007.

Baker agreed to come out of retirement in 2013 to fill the role of assistant vice chancellor for Institutional Effectiveness.

"UNCP has always meant a lot to me from the time I was a student until I retired. This is a special place," said Baker, whose son, Tommy, and stepson, Ray Sheppard, are both UNCP alumni. Tommy was a member of the golf team.

Baker was overwhelmed with joy when she revealed the special birthday surprise. A career educator herself, Sue understands the value of providing quality training to future educators. She worked in the public schools then Methodist University where she implemented the Master of Education program.

"We know the importance of teachers in the public schools," Warren said. "If we can help students get through the process and become successful teachers, it makes me feel wonderful. The fact that we can help future students gives me quite a bit of pride." ■



Jodi Phelps, interim vice chancellor for Advancement and Chief Communications & Marketing Officer, far left, is shown with Dr. Warren Baker, his wife, Dr. Sue Baker, and Jessica Bullard, assistant director of Development for American Indian Programs.

NEWLY ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIPS BENEFIT STUDENTS

BUDDY BATSON ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP IN WRESTLING

The donor, Aimee Batson, establishes this gift because "Wrestling was tremendously important to Buddy. My hope through this scholarship is that Buddy is never forgotten not just for his time at UNCP or his accomplishments both in high school and college, but for the impact he had on all the athletes he coached. He once said that his biggest accomplishment in wrestling was not the state title, medals or becoming an All-American, it was seeing the kids he coached achieve their goals."

The recipients of the **Buddy Batson Endowed Scholarship in Wrestling** will be members of the UNCP Athletics wrestling program.

DR. L. RAY BRAYBOY ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP IN EDUCATION

The donors wish to make a major contribution to students at UNCP by establishing a scholarship in honor of Dr. Ray Brayboy, a 1969 graduate of the School of Education. While attending UNCP, Dr. Brayboy was also an outstanding student-athlete, playing on the UNCP baseball team. Though he continued his education at other schools, UNCP was where it all started. The donors wish to support students studying education administration.

The recipients of the **Dr. Ray Brayboy Endowed Scholarship in Education** will be graduate students in education administration and residents of North Carolina.

STEVEN D. BOURQUIN ENDOWED MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

The Steven D. Bourquin Scholarship was created by friends, family, coaches, administrators and colleagues in honor of Dr. Steven D. Bourquin, who served UNCP as a distinguished faculty member, department chair and dean from 2003 up until his death on September 4, 2018. Dr. Bourquin was a full professor and a decorated teacher, including being the recipient of the 2016 UNC Board of Governors Teaching Excellence Award. He earned a reputation for being someone who made the study of mathematics fun. He treated it as a sport and students loved his classes. Dr. Bourquin was a lover of college football and was instrumental in bringing football to UNCP in 2007. He was one of the members of the UNCP Football Advisory Committee.

The recipient of the **Steven D. Bourquin Endowed Memorial Scholarship** will be a student-athlete who is majoring in math or teacher education, and exhibits the characteristics of Dr. Bourquin—including a strong passion for UNCP, positive attitude and a commitment to education.

ROGER FRANKLIN HARRINGTON ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP

The donor wishes to honor the memory of Roger Franklin "Frank" Harrington with a scholarship for a resident of Robeson or Brunswick counties. Mr. Harrington was the owner of Rowland Oil Company and served his community for over 48 years. He was a founding member of the Rowland Gun Club, an Army Reserve Veteran and a proud member of First Baptist Church in Rowland.

The recipient of the **Roger Franklin Harrington Endowed Scholarship** will be a full-time undergraduate student with a 3.0 QPA. The recipient can be in any year and any subject major. Financial need is not considered. The award is renewable as long as funds are available and the recipient continues to meet the criteria established. The award is given annually.

BUDDY BATSON: LEAVING A LEGACY

By Mark Locklear

Former All-American wrestler Buddy Batson dominated the heavyweight division at UNCP in the mid-1990s.

He was an imposing figure, standing 6 foot 2 and weighing 285 pounds. Off the mat, he was a gentle giant with an even bigger heart. Following his wrestling days at UNCP, Batson gave back to the sport he loved, dedicating 20 years as a high school coach.

In August 2018, Batson's life was cut short after a brief battle with cancer. But, through the Buddy Batson Wrestling Endowment, future grapplers will be afforded the opportunity to live out their dreams at UNCP.

"We are indebted to UNCP for the opportunity they gave to Buddy as a student and an athlete," said his wife, Aimee. "With this scholarship, we want to ensure his love for this wonderful sport lives on and helps future student-athletes take advantage of their goals of being educated and changing the world without worrying about how to pay for it."

Before he fell ill, the Jacksonville native set aside \$60,000 to

establish the scholarship—a generous expression of gratitude for his alma mater.

Brian Newbold was Buddy's best friend and college teammate.

"This is a great way to keep Buddy's name alive," he said. "Wrestling is a great sport and this scholarship matches a great person."

Batson collected 100 wins for the Braves and was a three-time NCAA qualifier under former longtime coach P.J. Smith. Batson is recognized among the top-20 wrestlers in program history.

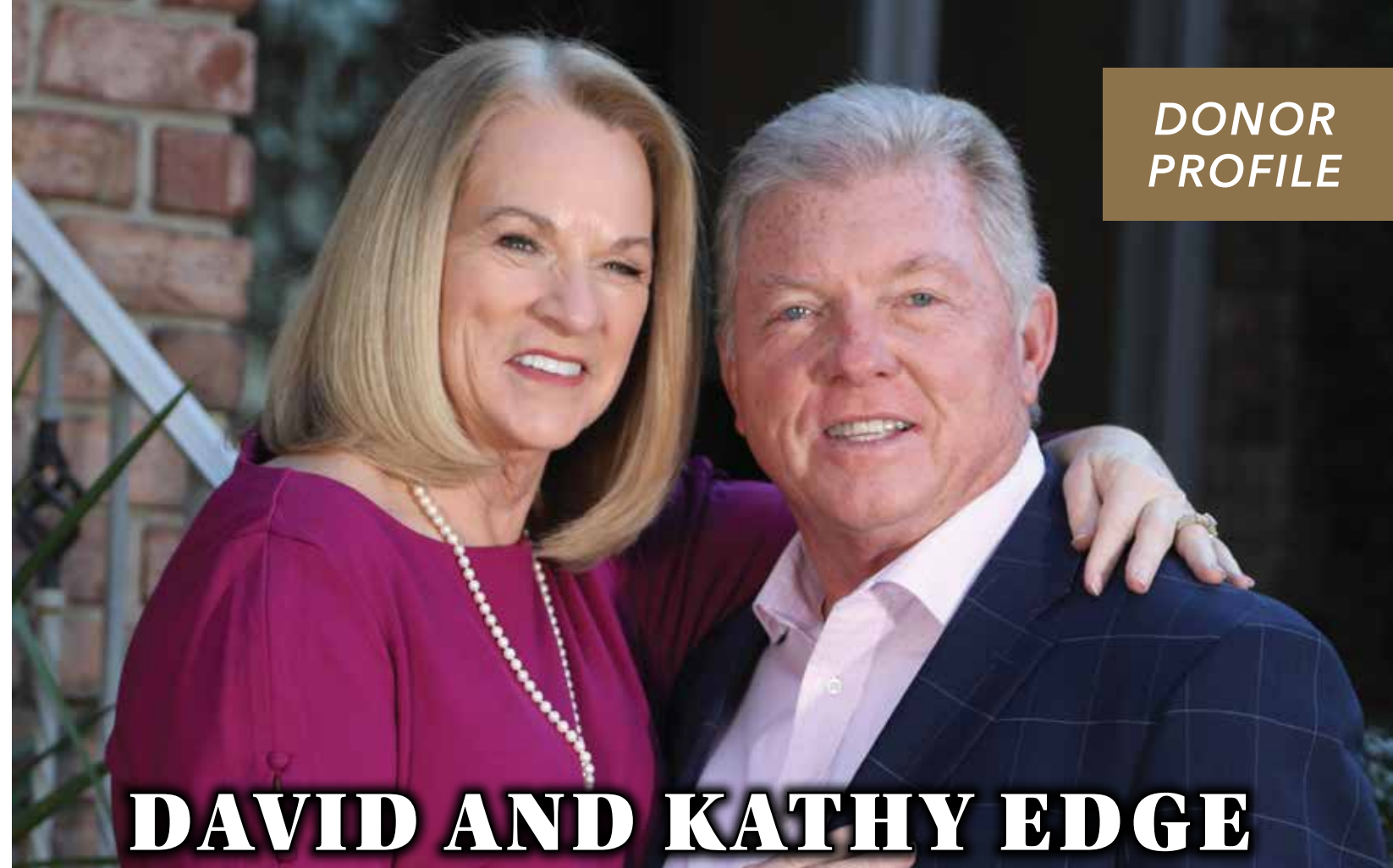
"Buddy was tough. He was focused and a joy to coach. He was just an all-around good guy. You enjoyed being around him," Coach Smith said.

After UNCP, Batson found coaching success at Dixon and Topsail high schools. He coached Dixon High's Kevin Cagle to a state title in 2015. Batson touched the lives of countless student-athletes and was considered one of the most respected coaches in Pender and Onslow counties.

Aside from his family—Batson was a loving husband of 22 years and father of two—wrestling was his life. He would often share stories about the bonds he forged with his college teammates and the impact UNCP had on his life. And with this new scholarship, future students will benefit, as Batson did, from the life-changing experiences as a student-athlete at UNCP. ■



Buddy and Aimee Batson always knew UNCP would be part of Buddy's lasting legacy.



DONOR PROFILE

DAVID AND KATHY EDGE

EMPOWERING FUTURE BUSINESS LEADERS

By Mark Locklear

With more than four decades of experience in the business industry, David Edge can spot a good investment. Not long after catching wind of UNCP's plans to construct a \$38 million facility to house the School of Business, he jumped on board. For Edge, it was an opportunity to invest in the lives of future generations of business leaders.

Edge, a Lumberton businessman, understands the economic impact a state-of-the-art facility will have on the region and how it will transform an ever-growing campus.

For Edge and his wife, Kathy, the decision to generously donate \$50,000 to the School of Business was personal. David went to work right out of high school. Business-minded from a young age, he began his own chemical and janitorial supply company from scratch at 23.

In hindsight, he wished he would have chosen to further his education.

"As successful as I have been I know that if I had taken the opportunity to be part of a business school such as here at UNCP, I could have accomplished so much more and built a larger company. With this new school being built here it will attract more local and regional students to participate in the opportunity it offers."

Once completed, the university will honor the Lumberton couple with the naming of two rooms—The David and Kathy Edge Writing Center and The David and Kathy Edge Testing Center.

University officials anticipate the new building will be ready for students in 2021.

"I believe it will have a tremendous impact on the county and the region. Anytime you attract students here, you have an opportunity to retain them after they graduate, and they will stay in the area and help grow businesses in Robeson and surrounding counties."

Edge, the owner of Image Supply Inc., has been a prominent member of the business community since 1976. The company manufactures 50 specialty chemicals, serving businesses in North Carolina, South Carolina, the Midwest and Canada. Their products are sold to businesses, janitorial and cleaning supply companies, as well as the automotive industry.

In addition to his support of the School of Business, Edge serves UNCP on the Thomas Entrepreneurship Hub Advisory Board. A Robeson County commissioner, he is a longtime member of the Lumberton Chamber of Commerce and Rotary Club.

Edge is energized by the growth of UNCP's campus and its programs, which continue to produce the labor force for local business owners.

"I've been in business all my life and the School of Business is near and dear to my heart," he said. "UNCP has a great program, but it has needed a new facility for some time. Chancellor [Robin] Cummings has been an inspiration to the university and me since he's been here, so when he began asking for local support, we were motivated to give." ■

AN ESTATE PLANNING TIP From BraveHawk

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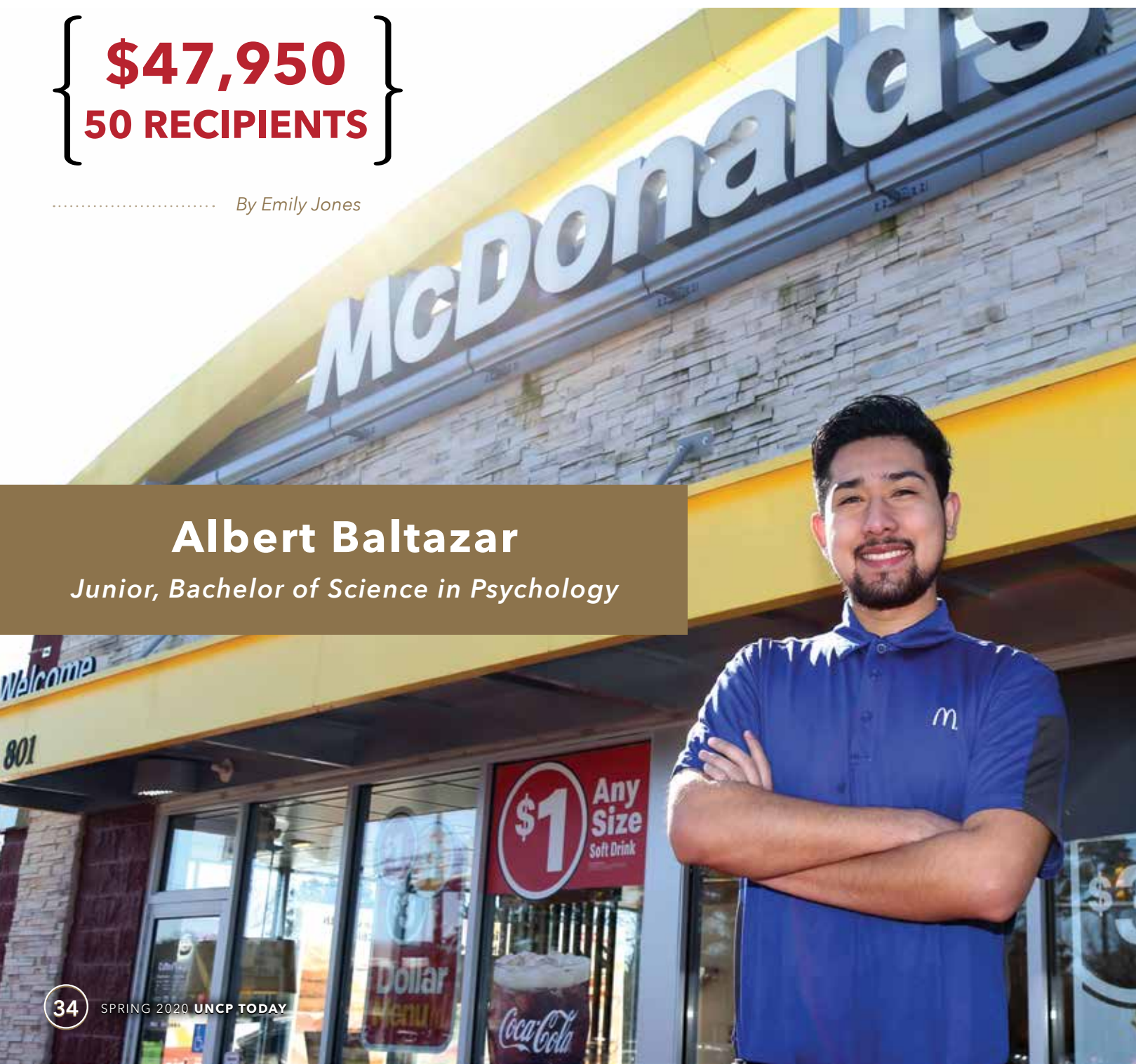
McDonald's:

HELPING UNCP STUDENTS

ACHIEVE DREAMS

\$47,950
50 RECIPIENTS

By Emily Jones



Albert Baltazar

Junior, Bachelor of Science in Psychology

Q&A: ARCHWAYS TO OPPORTUNITY

Rust Enterprises, the owner of several McDonald's restaurants in the region, has been investing in the lives of UNCP students for more than 20 years. We sat down with the owners Kenneth and Lisa Rust to learn more about the Archways to Opportunity program and their dedication to higher education.

Tell us about the Archways to Opportunity program and how students can become eligible.

Rust Enterprises, Inc. owns and operates nine McDonald's restaurants in southeastern North Carolina (Robeson, Bladen and Columbus counties), including the restaurant in Pembroke across from the UNCP campus. In an effort to support our student employees, a scholarship program was begun more than 20 years ago by our family-owned business for the benefit of our part-time student employees. Those employees working with us for at least three months and averaging 24 hours per week are eligible for our tuition scholarships, assuming they also meet the university's requirements for progress toward graduation. The \$500 tuition scholarship is awarded on a semester basis and can be renewed each semester. Currently, \$5,000 is available each school year for our eligible employees.

Over the last two years, we have broadened our tuition scholarships to include Robeson, Bladen and Southeastern community colleges. In addition to our local scholarships, McDonald's Corporation offers education assistance to employees up to \$2,500 per year. This program, branded Archways to Opportunity, is in its fifth year nationwide. Students are eligible for this funding in addition to our local scholarships.

How many scholarships have been awarded since its inception? How many this year?

The scholarship was first established in the mid-1990s. To date, a total of \$47,950 has been given to fund the scholarship, which has been awarded to more than 50 recipients. We awarded five scholarships for the 2019-2020 academic year.

How has this scholarship helped the community and the growth of UNCP?

Kenneth: It's actually good for both our business and our customers for us to have long-term employees. Imagine an employee who began their career with us in high school and continued on to earn their degree at UNCP partly because of our scholarship. We benefit from the stability of a six-year employee and the skills and leadership role that develops within our team from that longevity. Our employee has received some financial help toward achieving their life goals, all while holding down a part-time job. It truly is a win-win for both our employee and us.

Lisa: In a close-knit community like Pembroke, relationships matter. When students are able to obtain an education while making connections with others on and off campus, everyone benefits. UNCP alumni are loyal to the school and community and contribute in many ways that improve the overall strength of the community.

Why is this scholarship so important to you?

Kenneth: Higher education is important to both Lisa and me. We were fortunate to have had the opportunity to attend college. I've got a B.S. and M.S. degree in computer engineering from NC State and Lisa received a B.A. degree in communication from Furman University. Encouraging our employees to seek additional education to develop their "whole" person is the right thing to do. We recognize that for many students, McDonald's employment is often a first job or a part-time job while they prepare for a future career. McDonald's is committed to being "America's Best First Job."

Lisa: So many times, the only thing keeping someone from their greatest dream is education. Whether it is vocational training or higher-level education, assisting our employees to achieve their goals is a way to pass on our company's core values. The student has a way to earn an income while pursuing their education, and we have a committed employee who is growing personally and in their skill set as a member of our team.

UNCP sophomore Albert Baltazar reflects on how the scholarship has impacted his college experience. He is a shift manager at the North Whiteville location and has been employed with McDonald's since he was 16.

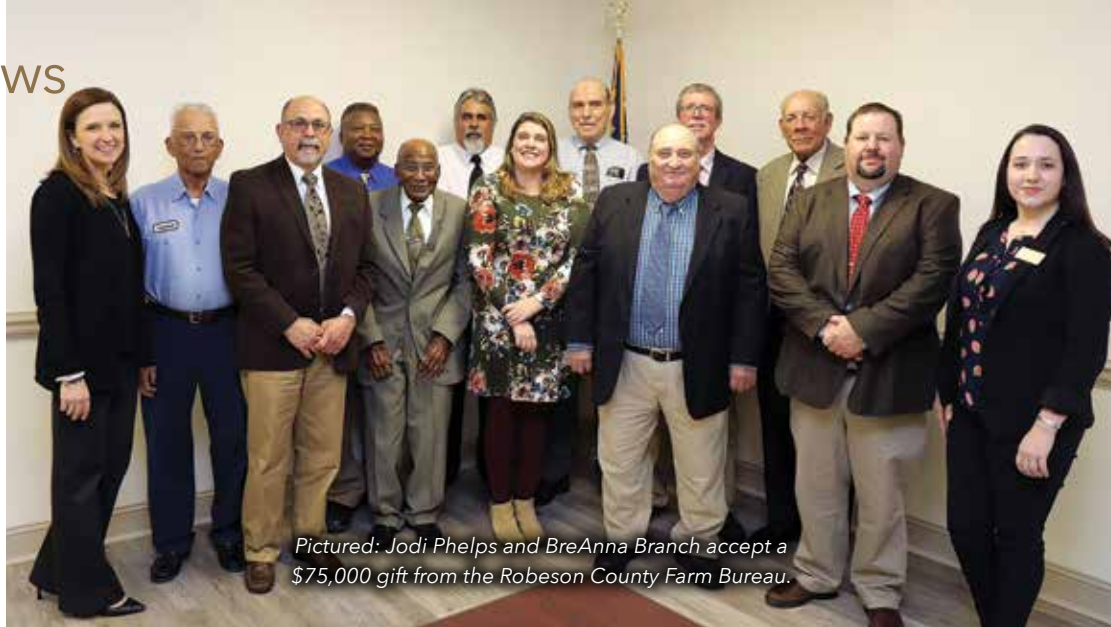
Baltazar, who is studying psychology, was able to purchase textbooks and pay toward his tuition with the McDonald's scholarship.

"Thankfully, UNCP doesn't have high tuition, but the extra \$500 helps pay down some of the costs. I think it's great! It helps students who couldn't pay any other way. Mr. Rust is a very kind person. By offering this money to help me further my education, I will thank him every day."

Farm Bureau Gift Supports AgriScience Program

By Mark Locklear

UNCP's emerging Agriculture Science program received a boost courtesy of a generous \$75,000 gift from Robeson County Farm Bureau.



The gift to the College of Arts and Sciences will be spread over five years and provide infrastructure and equipment needed to advance the new degree program.

Launched during the 2019-2020 academic year, the Bachelor of Science in Biology with an emphasis in Agriculture Science offers courses in biology and environmental science, mathematics and chemistry.

The gift will support student research, equipment and opportunities for students to apply their knowledge in real agricultural settings. Modern equipment and facilities allow students and faculty to conduct research to provide innovative solutions for the complex challenges faced by agriculture producers in our region.

The first installment was used to construct a high tunnel, a critical piece of infrastructure for research and practical training. This structure, completed in March, is located in the campus garden area which offers relevant research and practical skill application in the biology department.

The Bureau's support for the agriculture science program will promote strategic agricultural and economic development in our region and change the lives of deserving students—the next generation of North Carolina's workforce. ■

Inaugural Steven Bourquin Golf Tournament

By Mark Locklear

The inaugural Steven Bourquin Scholarship Golf Tournament was a huge success, raising \$3,700 to support a special scholarship honoring the late math professor.

Cherished memories of "Dr. B" were exchanged among friends and colleagues between rounds at Pinecrest Country Club in September. The Contempora Fabrics team walked away with the top trophy. Still, the true winners will be the future recipients of the Steven D. Bourquin Endowed Memorial Scholarship, which will benefit student-athletes majoring in math education.

A former athlete himself, Bourquin gravitated toward UNCP's student-athletes and those who were the first in their family to attend college. Though he left us way too soon, this scholarship will continue to impact the lives of countless students who share his passion.

To make a contribution or to receive more information about the Steven D. Bourquin Endowed Memorial Scholarship, call the Office of Advancement at 910.521.6252 or go online to uncp.edu/give. ■



The winning team from Contempora Fabrics pose with Stephanie Bourquin at the Steven Bourquin memorial golf tournament. From left to right are: Carey Read, vice president of finance; Chase Johnson, sales representative; Stephanie Bourquin, Ron Roach, president and Alex Whitley, vice president of sales.



BraveNation:

On behalf of the Alumni Association Board of Directors, it is a pleasure to serve as your president. With your help, we have strengthened our beloved University of North Carolina at Pembroke and are far from being done.

In recent years, I've heard a particular phrase used at UNCP: You can get there from here.

What does this mean? For prospective and current students, it is meant to encourage and inspire. To assure them that regardless of their dreams and goals, they are achievable when they start at UNCP and work hard.

And each of our more than 28,000 alumni all over the world are proof in action that you can get there from UNCP.

We all owe our achievements and successes, at least in part, to the role the faculty and staff of this fine university played in our lives. For many of us, they inspired, transformed, motivated and instilled in us the passions we still pursue today.

To me, as a proud alumnus and president of the Alumni Association Board of Directors, it means something deeper. You see, I think it goes beyond the individual student and is the aspiration of us as BraveNation. Over the last several years, we have witnessed incredible change at our alma mater—a \$38 million new School of Business building, the transformation of West Hall, the makeover of Prospect Road, a beautiful new campus gateway, interior updates to Dial Hall, Livermore Library and Brave Central. And more people than ever before are seeing the value in a UNCP education with record enrollment for two consecutive years.

Yet, despite all of this, UNCP has weathered its share of challenges. Two devastating hurricanes disrupted the academic year twice within 24 months and now the university is facing drastic changes as a result of COVID-19.

And through both the success and the challenges, I see a university that stands strong, supports its students and embraces its alumni and community. I see a university agile enough to adapt but strong enough to not break. I am immensely proud, now more than ever, of where we got our start in life. And I think how fitting the saying, "you can get there from here."

You see, the future of UNCP is just like our own lives. We change and grow, and sometimes we face obstacles. But, we never give in and always remember both where we came from and where we are headed.

UNCP is growing, becoming a model regional university. I like to think the rest of the world is finally catching on to the gem we all knew existed in UNCP and what it truly means to be a Brave, and it is our responsibility to be part of that movement.

So I ask you today to think about the many gifts UNCP has given to you over the years, and how you can repay that debt.

It may be your time. It may be your talent. Or it may be your treasure. However you can, in whatever way possible, please join me and the entire Alumni Board of Directors as we help our university get there from here.

Sincerely,
Caleb A. Malcolm
President, UNCP Alumni Association

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Ryan Blackwell and wife, Carly

RYAN BLACKWELL:

AN AMERICAN HERO

By Mark Locklear

Immediately after hearing the sound of loud, rapid gunfire down the hall, Navy Airman Ryan Blackwell sprang into action. With adrenaline rushing through his veins, the UNCP alumnus and former wrestler, along with two of his colleagues, took cover behind desks in his office.

As the gunman approached, Blackwell shielded a female coworker with his body. The gunman shot the glass portion of the door, then unloaded multiple rounds inside. Seconds later, the gunman was gone.

All three were shot, but Blackwell suffered the worst injuries. He was shot six times during the mass shooting at Naval Air Station Pensacola in the early morning hours of December 6. Three of Blackwell's fellow Navy sailors died that day.

"I didn't know at the time that I was hit six times," he said. "After the chaos settled, I jumped up and went to a window to pull the AC out, but my right hand wasn't functioning."

A bullet ripped through his arm, severing a nerve. They escaped through the window. Blackwell called his supervisor, who picked them up in his truck and drove them to the main gate. He used his belt as a tourniquet on his arm to stop the bleeding.

It wasn't until he reached the hospital that he realized the severity of his injuries. He suffered gunshot wounds to his arm, right leg, left foot, pelvis and twice in his back—missing his spine by an inch.

He spent a week in the hospital, where he received a special visit from former UNCP wrestler Mike Williams. Since the incident, he's



Ryan received a special visit from former UNCP wrestling standout Mike Williams



Ryan poses with his friend Kevin Lacz, a former Navy seal who starred as himself in the Oscar-winning biopic "American Sniper"

That goes to show the strong family bond that was built at UNCP.

gotten an outpouring of support from former teammates and coaches.

"That goes to show the strong family bond that was built at UNCP."

A 2014 graduate, Blackwell was a two-time Academic All-American wrestler. As a sophomore, he was named Strength and Conditioning Department's Student-Athlete of the Year.

He credits, in part, the wrestling skills he learned at a young age and while at UNCP with helping him survive that fateful day.

"How I reacted that day has a lot to do with the skills I was taught when I wrestled for my father, Coach O.T. Johnson and Jamie Gibbs. This sport teaches you mental toughness and discipline.

To stay calm under pressure. To stay focused and always to be aware of your surroundings. The training all my life led me up to that point. I didn't have time to think. It was fight or flight and I was fighting 100%."

For his actions, he was awarded the purple heart during a ceremony at the Naval Air Station Pensacola on March 16.

In a press conference, U.S. Attorney William Barr praised Blackwell, saying his heroic acts saved countless lives. Despite the national attention, Blackwell doesn't consider himself a hero.

"This is my job. I was well aware of what I signed up for. I am just thankful to be here still." ■

NYGEL ROBINSON:

Multitalented Actor and Musician

By David Hibbard

Broadway might be the ultimate goal for Nygel Robinson '15, but he's not necessarily in a hurry to reach the world's biggest stage. For now, the multitalented actor and musician is excited about developing his craft and making a name for himself in New York.

"I'd like to get to the point where people are consistently calling me rather than me knocking on their doors all the time," says Robinson. "But I'd be fine if I could work consistently and make a good living. I don't have to be famous."

Robinson's many talents have helped him land roles that play to his performing strengths. He can do a little bit of everything: He plays the piano, trumpet, drums and three types of guitar. His versatility as a singer makes him comfortable performing in a variety of musical roles. Robinson credits UNCP's music theatre program, and faculty mentors such as the late Hal Davis, Tracy Thomas and Nathan Thomas, with honing those skills.

"They helped me map out my life," says Robinson. "Not only did they teach me so many of the technical things about being an actor, like how to use my voice in different ways or analyzing a sheet of music, they also taught me so much about the business side of the industry."

Music has been part of Robinson's life for as long as he can remember. As a child in LaGrange, North Carolina, Robinson's mother would often play music to soothe him when he was agitated or upset. "She noticed that music would calm me down, that it was something I liked," Robinson says. "I was always into music."

By age 11, he was playing the piano at his church. "Early on, music was something I knew I wanted to do. I just didn't know how." He took opportunities as they came along, auditioning for "Cinderella" at his high school and gaining the attention of his music teacher, Marian Kennedy. She identified Robinson's talent and, aware of UNCP's music theatre program, encouraged him to apply and audition.

"I was so green when I first got to UNCP," Robinson says, "but I grew so much while I was there." In addition to what he was learning in the classroom and performances at UNCP, Robinson was also gaining other opportunities to explore his passion for acting and singing. For three summers during his UNCP years, Robinson went to Wilmington, where he performed in a variety of roles and shows. "I won some awards for my role in "Oklahoma" the summer between my sophomore and junior year, and that boosted my confidence. I began to believe, hey, maybe I can do this for a living."

After graduating in December 2015, Robinson went back to Wilmington briefly before moving to New York in March 2016. He did what so many other aspiring actors and performers do in New York City daily, he competed against the best.

"I would get up every morning and go to open calls—there would be 400-500 people there. People get there and camp out for audition spots. I'd try to get seen at as many things as possible. I would go up to people and ask if I could audition, even if they were appointment-only auditions."

Flexibility is important in the business, Robinson says. "You have to go where people are going to pay you and worry about the rest later. I haven't had a steady apartment the last four years," says Robinson. "We naturally want to have a home, but in this career, especially starting out, you have to be willing to be uncomfortable and go where the work is." His career has taken him south to perform in "Blue Suede Shoes" with the Florida Studio Theatre and to the Midwest, where he landed a role in "The All Night Strut" with the Milwaukee Repertory Theatre.

He's also found his share of work in New York, where his credits include "Freedom Riders" with the New York Musical Festival and another run in "The Full Monty" at the John W. Engeman Theater. "I'm getting more to the point where I want to stay in New York because I feel like I'm getting closer and closer to bigger things," Robinson says.

Those bigger things are possible, Robinson says, in no small measure because of the music theatre program at UNCP. He says he was encouraged to follow his dreams, and he wants the next generation of students in the program to chase theirs.

"I would tell them to lose your mind and go crazy over what you are doing in school, in theatre," Robinson says. "I think the people who are working in this business, who are succeeding in this business, are obsessive about it. They wake up thinking about the business and they can't go to sleep for thinking about it. Apply pressure to yourself and then lose your mind in it. If you love it, then you're not going to take 'no' for an answer." ■



DR. JADA BROOKS:

CREATING CHANGE THROUGH NURSING RESEARCH

By Mark Locklear



Already with health-related degrees from UNCP, UNC-Chapel Hill and Duke, Brooks returned to the classroom, this time completing the Ph.D. program in nursing at Duke University. It was there Brooks reignited her passion for research. The type of research that would enable her to not only make a difference, but also a change at the population level. Today, Brooks conducts health disparities research as an assistant professor at UNC School of Nursing. She has spent the better part of two decades examining how health inequities among American Indians are shaped by social determinants of health.

Over the past 19 years, Brooks has worked on numerous projects exploring how various aspects of the environment impact the health of American Indians. Currently, she leads an interdisciplinary team of fellow researchers at UNC-Chapel Hill in a five-year study on the environmental effects on heart health in American Indian women in Robeson County. More specifically, the team is examining how air pollutants and psychological well-being are related to inflammation associated with heart disease.

"My ultimate goal is to increase community awareness about factors within the environment that negatively influence American Indian health. Sometimes those factors are invisible to us. I hope that the findings from my research will be used to raise awareness about environmental adversities that will result in a better-informed community that feels empowered to protect themselves."

A Pembroke native, Brooks didn't originally envision a research career while completing her biology degree at UNCP in 2001. She went on to earn an epidemiology degree from UNC, then a nursing degree from Duke. She worked for less than a year as a public health and neonatal nurse in Robeson and Moore counties, respectively, before being recruited to Duke's Ph.D. program in nursing. She describes her decision to enter the program as a leap of faith—transitioning from patient care to research.

For the past six years, she's held a faculty position in the UNC School of Nursing. She has written and been awarded more than \$1 million in research grants and was named a UNC Thorp Faculty Engaged Scholar in 2018. Last year, she co-developed a nursing course on health equity. Although higher education has always been her calling, the in-depth

research opportunities through UNC-Chapel Hill have led her down a path never imagined.

Looking back, making the professional career change from patient care to scientist has brought ultimate gratification. She's among an elite group of nurses with a doctoral degree who are making an impact in the field through research.

"Research has been rewarding in so many ways. It has opened doors and allowed me to raise awareness about the health issues in my community. Illuminating the problems within tribal communities and showcasing them on a national scale is important because we often get overlooked or ignored."

Brooks isn't only interested in environmental pollutants, but other stressors in the environment, like psychosocial stressors. Based on emerging science, Brooks believes that increased positive well-being could protect against stressors and lower the risk of developing heart disease.

"As a Native nurse researcher, I advocate for the health and well-being of Native communities. The more we can uncover about the adversities in the environment, the better prepared we are to become environmental activists who can fight for better environments and opportunities to improve our health."

"My vision is for Native communities to reclaim their health. If we can better prevent and treat disease in this population, then we can start to narrow the racial disparities gap that exists." ■



FROM DREAM TO REALITY

By David Hibbard

He was just 3 when his family came to the U.S. from Italy, but the Old Country's influence had a profound impact on Alfredo DiPinto '88 as he grew up in South Bend, Indiana. In the DiPinto household, as in many Italian families, mealtime was family time.

"We spent a lot of hours together around the table," DiPinto says of his formative years with his parents and three siblings. "Those are really some of my best memories from childhood, those times together as a family."

Those memories and more live on at Alfredo's, the restaurant DiPinto and his wife, Samantha '88, opened 10 years ago in Clinton, North Carolina. It's become a labor of love for DiPinto, who also has an investment and estate planning business. "We wanted to introduce people to authentic Italian cuisine, and slowly but surely, the restaurant got their attention."

The chain of events that led to Alfredo's started on the streets and playgrounds of South Bend, where DiPinto was introduced to the game of basketball. As a player at St. Joe's South Bend High School, DiPinto caught the eye of several college coaches while playing in an AAU event in Indianapolis, including Pembroke State head coach Billy Lee. It only took a campus visit to convince DiPinto that Pembroke was the right place for him.

"There was something about Pembroke that made me decide then and there to take their scholarship offer," says DiPinto, who played for Lee his freshman year before playing his final three seasons under Dan Kenney after Lee moved on to Campbell University. "When Dan came in, my style of play fit his coaching philosophy, and I played a lot my last three years," says DiPinto.

As he grew into his role on the basketball team, DiPinto also flourished as a student, earning GTE COSIDA Academic All-America honors his junior and senior years.

"My professors spent a lot of one-on-one time with me, and it was a good way for a kid a thousand miles from home to make the transition to college life," DiPinto says. "They paid great attention to me and helped me succeed as a student."

It was also during his time at Pembroke that DiPinto met Samantha Monroe, an education major from White Oak in Bladen County. They began dating during his senior year and graduated a semester apart in 1988. After earning his degree in business management with a minor in French in May that year, DiPinto accepted a job offer with an investment firm, and he and Samantha were married the following April. They have a son, Graham, now married in Knoxville, Tennessee, and attending veterinary school.

The couple's first introduction to the restaurant business came in the months leading up to their wedding. Together with her parents, Samantha opened Southern Style in March 1989, a popular spot to this day in Clinton that she still owns and runs. But the idea for Alfredo's wasn't born until 20 years later, as DiPinto, Samantha, Graham, and Samantha's parents celebrated Christmas 2009 at Kiawah Island in South Carolina.



"We were having dinner at a small Italian restaurant that probably seated about 40 people," says DiPinto. "I nudged Samantha and said, wouldn't it be cool to have an Italian restaurant in Clinton?"

Alfredo DiPinto '88, with wife, Samantha '88, launched their successful business together.

"We were having dinner at a small Italian restaurant that probably seated about 40 people," says DiPinto. "I nudged Samantha and said, wouldn't it be cool to have an Italian restaurant in Clinton?"

Less than five months later, Alfredo's opened in its original location, a rented space that had formerly housed a restaurant. DiPinto later purchased the building across the street, renovated it and Alfredo's moved to its current location in April 2016.

DiPinto is committed to serving authentic Italian cuisine, and his parents' influence can be found in several Alfredo's recipes. The restaurant's marinara sauce uses the same recipe DiPinto's parents went by—Roma tomatoes, garlic, olive oil, basil, salt and pepper—and he strives to ensure every dish meets his high standards for taste and quality.

"Nothing comes out of a box at Alfredo's. Everything is touched by us, and everything is fresh," says DiPinto, who makes many of the desserts himself. He says the restaurant's success wouldn't be possible without a committed staff. "We have incredible people who work with us. I've been blessed because of them." DiPinto entrusts the restaurant to his staff while he operates his financial services firm, Legacy Asset Management Partners. "They've bought into the idea that we don't want to be normal, we don't want to be common."

Alfredo's has been featured in Our State magazine and WRAL-TV, giving the restaurant exposure outside Sampson County. "We've been supported very, very well by people here in Clinton and the county; they've kept us going," says DiPinto. "Because of them, and

the publicity we've gotten, we're getting customers from Goldsboro, Raleigh, Fayetteville and other places," DiPinto says. "It's become more of a regional clientele."

He is also quick to credit Samantha for her insights and wisdom. "She is the heart and soul of my life. We're an incredible team together. I wouldn't be where I am today without her." DiPinto says Alfredo's has tried to follow advice Samantha and her family were given years earlier about the restaurant business. "We were told, if you want to be successful, don't chase fads. Stick with our recipes, do what we do and do it well. I think that's had a lot to do with our success." ■

ALUMNI AWARDS AND HALL OF FAME



From L to R: Roger Carr, Ray Nixon, Iris Bethea, Tommy Thompson and Chancellor Cummings. Not pictured is Richard Thompson.



From L to R: Alumni Association President Caleb Malcolm, Barry Burch Jr., James Ayars, Mac Campbell and Chancellor Cummings.

2019 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

Iris Bethea was a two-sport student-athlete, playing softball and basketball for the Braves from 1991 to 1997. She currently ranks fourth on the women's basketball program's all-time scoring list with 1,759 points. She earned All-Peach Belt Conference honors following both the 1992-93 and 1993-94 campaigns while also picking up PBC Player of the Week laurels during the 1993-94 campaign.

Roger Carr was a two-time all-American for the Braves from 1979 to 1983. He tallied 1,508 points over that stretch and helped pace UNCP to more than 60 victories. A two-time All-Carolinas Conference pick as well, he picked up the first of his two all-American awards as a junior in 1981-82 after averaging 20.8 points and 58.5% field goal shooting.

Richard Thompson was a member of the baseball team from 1962-66, earning both NAIA All-District honors as a senior in 1966 after posting a team-best eight home runs in leading the Braves to a 28-4 record. He still ranks as the highest Major League Baseball draft pick in program history after being selected in the third round (59th pick) of the 1966 MLB Draft.

Ray Nixon starred on the baseball diamond from 1965-68 and made nine appearances as a senior and registered a perfect 8-0 record with a 1.12 ERA and 70 strikeouts. He registered eight wins as a junior and helped lead then-Pembroke State to nearly 100 victories over his four-year collegiate career.

Tommy Thompson is the winningest coach in the history of the UNCP Volleyball program. He led the Braves to a 186-81 (.697) record from 1981-88 and earned both NAIA District and Carolinas Conference Coach of the Year accolades following a 1983 campaign that watched the Braves register a 29-9 clip and claim their second-straight conference crown. He led the women's tennis team to 34 wins from 1988-92 before serving more than two decades as the chair of the Health, Physical Education and Recreation Department. ■

By Mark Locklear

ALUMNI AWARD RECIPIENTS, 2019 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

Barry Burch Jr., Mac Campbell and **James Ayars** were presented with the highest honor for alumni during Homecoming 2019. Burch received the Young Alumnus of the Year. Campbell earned the Distinguished Service Award and Ayars, Outstanding Alumnus Award.

Each year, the Alumni Association recognizes the significant contributions of our alumni to their alma mater, profession and community.

Burch serves as senior advisor for Federal Affairs and Government Relations for the mayor's office in Denver, Colorado. Since moving to Denver in 2012, he has worked as a public school teacher, a fellow in the office of City Councilman Albus Brooks and special aide to Denver Mayor Michael Hancock.

At UNCP, Burch served as student body president, Kappa Alpha Psi president and resident advisor. After earning his degree in political science in 1999, he was selected by Organizing for America to increase voter turnout.

After earning his degree in business in 1968, Mac Campbell began working alongside his father, Mac Sr., at Campbell Oil Company. After his father's death, Campbell took over the family business and worked until his retirement in 2011. Over the years, he has been heavily involved in his community, serving on several boards, including the Bladen We Care Foundation, UNCP Board of Trustees, Elizabethtown Airport Board, N.C. Department of Transportation, UNCP Foundation Board and UNCP Football Advisory Board.

Ayars, a 1986 graduate, and his wife, Jennifer, have been owners of Sandhills Gymnastics in Aberdeen since 1991. A lifetime and founding member of the UNCP Chancellor's Club, his philanthropy extends to the classroom as he established the Ayars Family Scholarship in Chemistry, Physics, Math or Psychology.

After earning his degree in chemistry, he worked as a high school teacher. He taught school for 27 years. He is a member of the Southern Pines Rotary and a judge for USA Gymnastics. Most recently, he was appointed to the UNCP Board of Visitors. ■

DR. BRAD TANNER: THE VISION THING

By David Hibbard

Whether busy in his Chapel Hill office, enjoying a run or taking on the ski slopes of Utah, chances are good you'll find UNCP MBA graduate Dr. Brad Tanner, soaking up the moment but always looking to the future. "I like the vision thing," says Tanner.

The founder and president of Clinical Tools, Inc., a company that creates online tools for patients, medical students and physicians, Tanner embraces the power of technology. And in a world where it can seem like we are never unplugged, Tanner sees it quite differently. "The internet lets you work and have a life," says Tanner, who frequently reads articles and dictates blogs while on a run.

The ability to see technology's potential to improve the practice of medicine—and by extension, people's lives—has been the driving force behind Tanner's career as a physician and entrepreneur. Tanner, who earned an MBA from UNCP's School of Business in 2019, and his colleagues at Clinical Tools are at the forefront of developing virtual reality-based games and simulations that present medical students with scenarios they will face daily. It's a powerful way to learn, Tanner says.

"Virtual reality presents an opportunity to be immersed in a situation that is almost exactly like real life," says Tanner. "That is the real source of power. The more realistic the situation, the more likely it is a person will make a choice that matches what they would do in the real world. When they see the consequences of a choice, it reinforces the value of that choice if it worked out for them. Or, if their choice didn't work out, they are more likely to change their behavior to make a different choice in the future."

Those choices aren't limited to their interactions with patients and other practitioners, Tanner points out. "Clinical Encounters: Medical School," a virtual reality simulation Clinical Tools has produced, encourages medical students to be introspective and improve their own lives.

"The logic of 'Clinical Encounters: Medical School' is that the first person to fix is yourself," says Tanner. "If you aren't healthy, you can't help other people be healthy. You have to eat well, exercise, have anxiety under control, not be angry, be compassionate, not use substances, not be obese. As a medical provider, address the challenges to your own well-being first. Once you have that, you are in a position to help other people."

Tanner went to medical school at the University of Virginia and

eventually pursued psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh. "Psychiatry meant I could study the only part of human anatomy that we don't understand—the brain," Tanner says. As he progressed in his career, he began to see other physicians lose their fire, their enthusiasm for medicine. "Most doctors are burned out and jaded. They don't feel like they can have an impact."

As he explored the phenomenon, he found one group of physicians who had managed to avoid burnout.

"I chatted with obesity docs and they were optimistic. They recognized that the biggest health danger facing the U.S., and the world, is obesity. And they felt they could do the most good in that field." That revelation led Tanner to pursue training in obesity medicine, earning a diploma in the field from the American Board of Obesity Medicine. His company has developed online, interactive games such as Food Fight and Grocery Hunt, which require players to make quick decisions to choose between healthy and unhealthy foods.

These games attempt to address the direct correlation between the mind and obesity, Tanner says.

"Obesity and psychiatric illness are closely linked," Tanner says. "Both are driven by behavioral choices and controlled by brain mechanisms. I see them as one in the same thing. The same for addiction. The solutions for depression: exercise, quality food, motivation, support, are exactly the same for obesity and psychiatric illness."

Tanner also sees those solutions as integral for the next frontiers he and his team at Clinical Tools look to pursue. "We are pushing into vaping intervention training, and then next up is Alzheimer's disease. We want to help patients with Alzheimer's and their families have more high-quality years together," says Tanner. "And prevention and the best interventions for Alzheimer's are the same: food quality, exercise, activity, engagement and a better understanding of underlying brain mechanisms. It's the next health crisis that awaits us. We simply cannot afford to allow that problem to be ignored."

Tanner credits the MBA program and its structured curriculum with filling holes in his skill set while exposing him to aspects of business. Throughout the coursework, he communicated changes to his business with each course and the training he received at UNCP, ultimately furthering his mission of improving the practice of medicine through technology. ■



Photos courtesy of Sandhills Pediatrics: sandhillspeds.com



Melissa



Nicole



Sarah



Elizabeth

FOUR ALUMNAE ONE PRACTICE

By David Hibbard

It's not something they get a chance to talk about together very much. Still, the four UNCP alumnae who work at Sandhills Pediatrics are proud their school is so well represented at one of the region's most established medical practices.

"It's great that we're all here and taking care of children as part of the same practice," says Melissa Pierce, LCMHC-A, a 2018 graduate who earned a master's degree in clinical mental health counseling. She serves as a mental health case manager for Sandhills Pediatrics, completing two internships at the practice before joining the staff full time in February 2019. "I think it speaks highly of UNCP and the education we received."

Pierce joins Sarah Locklear Brewington, M.D., '02; Nicole Jacobs, M.D., '07; and Nurse Practitioner Elizabeth Hodgin '11 to round out the UNCP representation at Sandhills Pediatrics, which opened in 1966. The practice has locations in Southern Pines, Seven Lakes and Raeford, so the four don't always see each other regularly, but they are grateful for their UNCP bond and the opportunities the university provided them.

"I loved going to Pembroke," says Brewington, who has been with Sandhills Pediatrics the longest, joining the staff in 2009. "My classes were difficult, but my professors were so accessible." Brewington says faculty mentors like Tim Ritter in physics and Siva Mandjiny, chair of the chemistry and physics department, ensured she got the help she needed. "When I got to medical school at UNC-Chapel Hill, I was ready thanks to the education I received at UNCP."

Jacobs, like Brewington, earned bachelor's degrees in chemistry and physics with a biomedical emphasis. "The class sizes weren't too large, and that made it much easier for me to learn," says Jacobs, who went on to East Carolina's Brody School of Medicine before a residency in general psychiatry and fellowship in child and adolescent psychiatry at UNC-Chapel Hill. "I thoroughly enjoyed my time at UNCP."

Jacobs' arrival at Sandhills Pediatrics in 2018 came after Brewington contacted her. "Sarah called and said they needed another psychiatrist," says Jacobs, whose interests include educating her patients and their parents about behavioral health. "It's a wonderful opportunity to be with a practice that is so committed to its patients."

Part of that commitment is providing in-house mental health services for patients. "Integrated mental health is very unique," says Elizabeth Hodgin, a Hoke County native who earned a

bachelor's in nursing in 2011 as a working mom. "You won't find many pediatric practices across the country that have mental health, so it's a real advantage for us."

Providing mental health services for patients with anxiety, trauma, depression, PTSD and other challenges rounds out the practice's care for patients, says Pierce, the mental health case manager. "It's so uncommon to find a practice that offers this, and it's wonderful because we can really care for the entire person." The practice has two child psychiatrists (including Jacobs), a school liaison, a clinical psychologist and three mental health therapists (including Pierce). "It's great to be able to talk with a doctor, a psychiatrist or psychologist about a particular case and what we think is going on. We're able to get the care our patients need right away."

Brewington and Hodgin probably see each other the most out of the four, working together most days in the Raeford clinic. For Brewington, who remembers deciding she wanted to be a pediatrician after a job shadowing experience on her 17th birthday with Pembroke pediatrician Joey Bell, the chance to care for patients close to home is one of the most rewarding things about being at Sandhills Pediatrics.

"I feel like it's a way for me to give back to this region," says Brewington, who grew up in Pembroke. "I've never been somebody who wanted to live far away from my family, and this gives me the opportunity to be near them. It's important to me that children in our area have the best health care that's available, and I feel like we are doing that in our practice."

Hodgin echoes Brewington's sentiments about home. "Lots of people can't wait to leave home, but I've always wanted to be here," says Hodgin of Raeford and Hoke County. "People here deserve good health care like anyone else. I like making home a successful place, and I feel proud that I'm a product of this community."

Hodgin is also proud that she and her fellow alumnae have the chance to represent a little slice of UNCP while serving children and parents throughout the region.

"I think it's a great testament to our school that there are four of us here," says Hodgin. "As a whole, UNCP was such a supportive, empowering experience for me. Everyone there wanted me to succeed, and it's wonderful we have such a great school right here in our backyard." ■

TASIA RATLIFF: THE GIFT OF LIFE

By Emily Jones

Tasia Ratliff joined the national marrow donor Be The Match registry program in April 2005 at UNCP's Family Day. Fifteen years later, in July 2019, Tasia was identified as a possible match for a 21-year-old woman with sickle cell disease. After several rounds of intensive testing, Tasia was able to donate 14.4 million blood stem cells in December 2019. The entire stem cell process was able to be completed at the Duke Adult Stem Cell Transplant Clinic.

The actual donation took approximately six hours, but being able to provide the gift of life was immeasurable!

Tasia graduated from UNCP in May 2007 with a degree in mass communication and currently works as a senior lending quality control specialist with North Carolina State Employees' Credit Union. ■

Being able to provide the gift of life was immeasurable!



Beulah Mae Ransom

By Mark Locklear

CELEBRATES 100 YEARS

Beulah Ransom Kemerer was a student during the Great Depression. The year was 1939 and German troops had just invaded Poland, sparking the beginning of World War II. FDR was the leader of the free world and a gallon of gas set you back 19 pennies.

UNCP was known then as Cherokee Indian Normal School, where Conly and Cottie Lowry Ransom from nearby Hopewell community sent a young Beulah Mae to study to become a teacher.

Kemerer, among the oldest living alumni, who turned 100 in September 2019, graduated in 1939 then returned to complete a second degree in 1952. Two personalized bricks acknowledging her two degrees and honoring her as one of the university's earliest graduates is part of the Heritage Walk walkway leading to Old Main.

In between degrees, she taught school in Maxton. In the early 1950s, Kemerer and her husband, Francis, moved to Maryland where she taught another 26 years. A framed proclamation recognizing her years of service and signed by a former Maryland governor is prominently displayed at the assisted living facility where she lives in Newton Grove.

The Kemerer and Ransom family ties with the university span eight decades, beginning with Ira Pate Lowry who from 1935 to 1957 served as chair of the music department. Her brother, Dr. Andrew Ransom, was a physics professor for more than 35 years. Five of her siblings and more than a dozen of her grandchildren are UNCP alumni. ■



Beulah Mae and family celebrating her 100th birthday.



Joshua Shipman:

FROM UNCP TO THE BIG SCREEN

Joshua Shipman figures he would have been an actor, no matter what. "I always knew I wanted to be an actor," says Shipman, who got his first taste of the craft as a child and then a teenager. He's also convinced of the vital role UNCP played in his ability to earn a living in the ultra-competitive industry.



"My career would have been a lot harder without UNCP," says Shipman, a 2013 alumnus who earned a degree in broadcasting and mass communication while also finding his niche in the university's theatre program. "It prepared me for an acting career and the things you have to do to be successful."

His credits include roles in a variety of television shows, films and commercials, including his recent casting as the Philadelphia street vendor in the movie "Harriet," which profiles the life of escaped slave and American freedom fighter Harriet Tubman. That's pretty heady stuff for one of nine siblings raised by hardworking parents in the Columbus County town of Hallsboro.

"My parents didn't come from a lot, but they made sure we all had what we needed, we were never without," says Shipman. "They are proud people, and they instilled in me a hard work ethic and the confidence to go after my dreams."

Those qualities served him well and got him noticed at UNCP, where his first stage performance came in a production of

"The Crucible," which depicts the Salem witch trials. Shipman remembers it well.

"It was an amazing turnout, and everyone loved it. I had people come to me and say, 'you should pursue theatre, you're good.' To witness other people's reactions to my work, and it was all positive, was really something."

The teachers and mentors at UNCP reinforced that positive feedback, such as Sallyann Clark and Terence Dollard in the Mass Communication program, where Shipman served as the lead anchor on a news program for several semesters. "I really developed a love for TV through that work and the exposure I got doing short films in the mass comm department," Shipman says.

Another significant influence was Professor Holden Hansen in Theatre.

"I didn't know anyone who was actually in the industry until I met Holden," says Shipman. "He told me about his journey in the industry, and even though he was teaching, he was still participating in the industry as an actor. He saw that I had a gift, and I had something to offer."

After graduation, Shipman worked in Wilmington's independent film industry, networking with decision-makers and taking on several roles that raised his profile while simultaneously allowing him to develop his acting skills. That led to an open-call audition in 2015 with Evolution Talent Agency in Charlotte, where Shipman won one of four available positions with the firm, beating out 80 other actors. "It was an open tryout to be hired by them, and I'm still with them today."

His affiliation with Evolution opened more doors for Shipman, including his first commercial television and film credits. "After that, things just started to come together. As I stuck with it and prayed about it, I started to see more and more opportunities come my way," says Shipman, who has appeared in television commercials for Home Depot, Ritz Crackers and state lotteries in North Carolina and Virginia.

His big film break came in the summer of 2018 when he responded to an audition call from Erica Arcold, an executive casting director in Richmond, Virginia.

"The call was for a 'period piece,' and I almost passed it up because I had seven other auditions lined up at the time," says Shipman. "But I did the audition by phone from a friend's house in Atlanta, and a week later, I got a call from the film company asking me to come to Richmond for a callback." Shipman auditioned for five different roles in "Harriet," eventually landing the street vendor's role. In the scene, Shipman comforts a distraught Harriet, played by actress Cynthia Erivo, who has just arrived in Philadelphia. He is the first person she encounters and assures her that no one can capture her and take her back to a life of slavery.

By David Hibbard

"When I got the news that I booked Philly Vendor ['Harriet'], I immediately started to do my homework," Shipman says. "It was my first major period piece and I wanted to make sure that I grasped characteristics of a vendor in the 1800s. Needless to say, I didn't find much from my homework, but I prayed on it and just decided to trust my instincts as an actor. It came out almost perfect on the screen."

When "Harriet" was released to the public in November 2019, UNCP held a special screening of the film in Hope Mills to honor Shipman and celebrate his achievements. "I didn't expect it, so that was a wonderful thing the university did for me. It was a great turnout and we had a great reaction from students. It was a great experience."

Shipman's career continues to flourish as a result of his part in "Harriet." He will have a role in an upcoming Showtime production, "The Good Lord Bird," portraying one of 24 African Americans who received the Medal of Honor in the 1800s.

"The best part of doing what I do is going from dreaming about it to actually living it," says Shipman. "Just knowing that this is something I spoke into my life as a little kid, and now actually doing it and making a pretty decent living off of it, is incredible." He still makes his home in Columbus County, where he balances the demands of his work with his duties as a father to his 3-year-old son.

"The most challenging thing about my work is trying not to overbook myself," Shipman says. "Even though this industry can be fascinating, you have to rest, and I am mindful that I need my rest."

His success has made him appreciate the time he spent at UNCP, and most importantly, the people he met there.

"I met people who not only believed in me, they gave me a chance. I met people like Holden Hansen, who gave me opportunities to do things outside the normal curriculum. Things would probably have been really different if not for UNCP." ■



Joshua Shipman as Philly Vendor in Harriet



RESEARCH TO MED SCHOOL: KODY HEUBACH

By Mark Locklear

Kody Heubach is a first-year medical student in Campbell University's Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO) program. A member of the Maynor Honors College at UNCP, the Lumberton native graduated with a double major in chemistry and biology.

He credits many of his former UNCP professors, including professors Siva Mandjiny and Rachel Smith, with helping guide his success as a student and now as an alumnus.

"The professors are amazing," he said. "They advised me on the steps I needed to take to get into medical school. UNCP professors do not teach you to memorize the material; they teach you how to think."

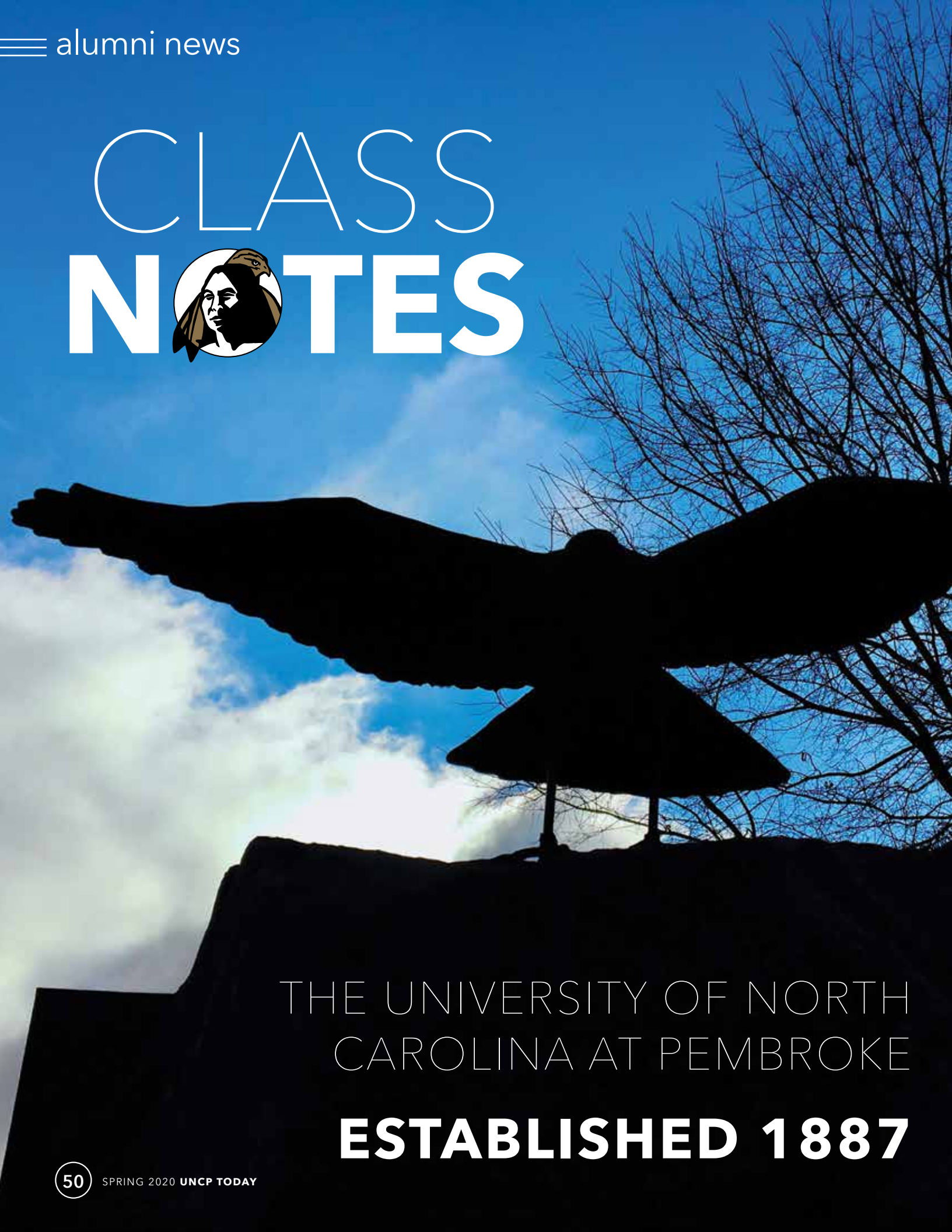
The research experience he gained while at UNCP gave him a distinct advantage over his peers at Campbell. He served as a lab assistant and research assistant as an undergrad. Since arriving at Campbell, Heubach has expanded his field experience, participating in a medical mission trip to Jamaica. During his weeklong stay, he and a team of students and physicians provided medical care to the people of Saint Mary Parish.

"The experience helped to prepare me for my medical career by allowing me early access to being able to see patients in the clinical setting and make clinical diagnoses, as well as being able to recommend treatment options for the patients."

After earning his UNCP degree, he went on to complete a graduate degree in biomedical science from Wake Forest University.

After medical school, he wants to help improve health outcomes of underserved communities in rural eastern North Carolina. He is considering opening a practice specializing in family medicine or radiation oncology. ■

CLASS NOTES



THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT PEMBROKE

ESTABLISHED 1887

1967

Matt Gwynne retired from McDonald's Corporation after 28 years of service as director of Global/Worldwide Security. Before his time with McDonald's Corporation, he worked with N.C. Department of Justice as a senior special agent for six years.

1979



Ted Ray, a music education graduate, has returned to the stage with the band BADGE after 25 years. Ted and his band members played various venues through the 1980s.



Susan Bird Reese retired in November 2019 from V.C. Summer Nuclear Plant with 37 years of service. Mrs. Reese is a current UNCP Alumni Board member.

1988

Lemark Harris retired from public service with more than 30 years with state and local government. Humanitarian Award in 2013. Allen served as a Boy Scout Troop master.

1990



Billie Graham Harrington is beginning her fifth year of service at Sherman College of Chiropractic as director of Teaching and Learning. She was conferred the rank of associate professor in 2019.

1993

Melanie Grooms-Garrett was inducted into the Fayetteville Sports Club Hall of Fame.

1994



Connie Locklear was recently appointed to the National Indian Education Association Board

of Directors, representing the Southeast. The National Indian Education Association's purpose is to advance comprehensive, culture-based educational opportunities for American Indians, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians.

1995



Dr. Paul Nelson Locklear served as an adjunct professor at UNCP from 2019-2020 and is a mentor for UNCP's First Americans Educational Leadership program. Dr. Locklear currently serves on UNCP's Alumni Board of Directors.

1996

Keats Ellis transitioned to the Office of Financial Aid as a student services specialist after working 19 years in the university bookstore.

1997



Keyla Bell was promoted to captain with the N.C. State Highway Patrol. She is the highest-ranking American Indian with the NCSHP.

1998



Charlyne Jacobs has been promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel in the North Carolina Army National Guard. Jacobs enlisted in the Army National Guard in 1999 and began her commissioned service in 2003 after graduating from Officer Candidate School. She has served in a variety of leadership positions, including platoon leader, battalion personnel officer, company executive officer, company commander, engineer plans officer and operations officer.

Trina Locklear began a doctoral program in computer science at the University of Alabama under a Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need Fellowship in cybersecurity.

1999

Natalie Brayboy currently works for N.C. Department of Health and Human Services as a child services policy consultant.

Jamie Goins Strickland completed her National Board Certification of Professional Teacher Standards. She is certified in early childhood and young adulthood in School Counseling.

2000

Billie Jo Harris was promoted to director of licensure for the Public Schools of Robeson County.

Dr. Jennifer Dawn-Jones Locklear earned her Ph.D. in nursing from East Carolina University.

2003



Amber Bright Laurence is an assistant principal at Johnson Commonwealth Middle School in Onslow County.

Engle Revels assumed the role of director of Admissions at UNCP in October 2019. Revels' extensive experience as a student, employee and community member gives her a unique perspective on what makes the university a great opportunity for prospective students who are considering UNCP as their college home.

2004

Vanessa Brown was named Clinton City School's Principal of the Year for a third time. After she graduated, she became assistant principal at East Bladen High School for a year and later taught at Clinton High School. The Faison native was offered a job as an assistant principal at Butler Avenue School in 2005, which she took to be closer to home. Three years later, she became the principal for Sunset Avenue and has been there since.

2005



Amber Bright Laurence is an assistant principal at Johnson Commonwealth Middle School in Onslow County.



Lawrence Locklear received a Ph.D. in educational studies with a concentration in higher education and a doctoral minor in educational research methodology from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro in August 2019. A 20-year UNCP employee, Dr. Locklear started as the director of UNCP's Office of Student Inclusion and Diversity in December 2019.

2006

Tracey Lightfoot-Gordfoot and husband Brandt welcomed their baby girl, Georgia, in January 2020.

2007



Othello Johnson, head coach for UNCP Wrestling, led the team to win the 2019-20 Mountain East Conference Championship. The performance marked the second conference crown in three years for the Braves, who also captured the Eastern College Athletic Conference (ECAC) regular season title in 2017-18.



Deidra Locklear-Grantham married husband Travis in October 2019.

2010



Kelsey Cummings is assistant principal at Lumberton High School in Robeson County. She is in the final stages of completing an Educational Specialist (Ed.S) degree from Appalachian State University.

Ciera Dial Locklear and **Eric Locklear** are co-owners of Credentials Social Club that opened in July 2019.



LaMorris Smith was promoted to assistant principal at Spring Hill Middle School located in Scotland County.

2011



Cedric Harrison recently won Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation First Ever All 4NC fellowship. Harrison will work toward building up Support The Port—an emerging venture that tackles important issues including gun violence, economic development, racial divisions and the impact of natural disasters.

2013

Alecia Bryant was named Southwest Middle School's teacher of the year for the 2019-2020 school year. She will move on to the next round for the title of Charlotte Mecklenburg School teacher of the year.



Jocelyn Graham received her bachelor's degree in mass communication: public relations and is now the executive assistant to the chancellor at UNCP.

2016

Erica Locklear landed a forensic chemist position in Pennsylvania after graduating from UNCP with her B.S. in general chemistry. Locklear returned to North Carolina as a fermentation scientist and recently advanced her career with Pfizer as operations specialist.

Patricia Locklear-Hardin started working as an occupational therapist with Scotland Health Care System.

2017

Andrina Colesworthy was married in December 2019 and started a new position as lead teacher at The Learning Experience in Fuquay Varina.

2018



Antonia Nelson is the new assistant director of Student and Young Alumni Engagement at Western Carolina University.



Alexis Rising-Jacobs married Joshuan Jacobs in September 2019. The couple will welcome their first baby girl in July 2020.

2019



Tabi Cain joined her alma mater as a public communication specialist shortly after graduating with a degree in mass communication.

Laurel Brewington started at Blush Bridal as a bridal consultant.

REMEMBERING GABBY

By Mark Locklear



Gabrielle Rainwater's UNCP diploma is more than the completion of a degree. It represents the strength and resilience of a young woman who overcame life's obstacles. While pursuing her degree, she dedicated her career to improving the lives of individuals with special needs. She was a champion for those with physical disabilities. Rainwater loved her students at the South Carolina School for the Deaf and Blind, where she worked for nearly a decade. She could relate to the challenges they faced because she once walked in their shoes.

Affectionately known to everyone as Gabby, she was visually impaired, having been diagnosed with macular degeneration when she was 3. A dedicated student in high school and college, she persevered in the face of life's hardships. The Rockingham native achieved her goal in December 2019, proudly walking across the commencement stage in front of friends and family.

Tragically, Gabby passed just one month later on January 19. She was 36.

"She loved education," said her father Larry Rainwater. "Gabby was serious about school. She spoke highly of UNCP. She was humble and friendly to everyone she met. She was intelligent and she loved to travel."

Before transferring to UNCP in 2017, Gabby earned two associate degrees from Richmond Community College. Although her UNCP degree was in criminal justice, she had aspirations of becoming a teacher and furthering her education at the University of North Carolina Wilmington.

"She faced obstacles with her physical disabilities and with her health, but she didn't let anything slow her down. She was truly an inspiration." ■



NEW BOARD OF TRUSTEES



Bobbi Stanley has degrees from UNCP and the UNC Chapel Hill School of Dentistry. Stanley owns Stanley Dentistry in Cary, N.C., is an adjunct professor at UNC Chapel Hill School of Dentistry and co-founder and senior instructor at Stanley Institute for Comprehensive Dentistry.



Ed Brooks earned his bachelor's degree from UNC Chapel Hill and Juris Doctor at North Carolina Central University. Brooks is the managing attorney with the Law Office of Edward Brooks in Pembroke. He began his career as a trial attorney and previously served as legal counsel to the Lumbee Tribe.



Jesse Thomas earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Illinois. He has more than 30 years of Medicaid managed care organizations experience and serves as vice president of Medicaid and CEO of Healthy Blue for Blue Cross NC.



Thomas Crowe-Allbritton is a senior social studies education major and SGA president at UNCP. With a career as a teacher ahead of him, Allbritton wants to be the source of inspiration for students, like himself, who face adversity at a young age.



Mickey Gregory is the former executive director of the Lumberton Visitors Bureau. Although retired, she remains involved in her community and UNCP. She is a former member of the UNCP Alumni Board and UNCP Foundation Board and active member of the Braves Club.



ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Submit your
Class Notes and
alumni updates at
uncp.edu/alumni.

We Remember



**GLORIA
TARA
LOWERY**

Gloria Tara Lowery will be remembered for her artistic and civic contributions in her community. Her talents as a gifted artist and art educator impacted countless lives across the region. She was a two-time graduate and huge supporter of UNCP, where she left an indelible mark as the creator of the UNCP Athletics logo (Indianhead and red-tailed hawk) and was instrumental in the design of the ceremonial mace. The logo has been part of the university's branding for three decades and continues today. Her work is featured throughout the Museum of the Southeast American Indian. Lowery's strong family ties to the university includes her daughter and alumnae Wendy Lowery, who previously served as vice chancellor for Advancement. Lowery's contributions will forever be a part of UNCP history.



**DR. HAROLD
DAVID
MAXWELL**

Colleagues remembered Dr. Maxwell for his compassion for students, dedication to his career and outstanding service to the university. He touched the lives of countless students during his 53-year tenure.

One of the longest-serving faculty members, Maxwell began his career in the Department of Biology in 1967. He served as department chair for 14 years and administered the Minority Access to Research Careers (MARC) program for more than 15 years.

A native of Smithville, Tennessee, Maxwell was 22 when he joined the UNCP faculty after earning his undergraduate and master's degree in biology and fishery science from Tennessee Technological University. He later earned a Ph.D. in vertebrate physiology from NC State University.

Maxwell will be remembered for his lifelong service to the university and its students.

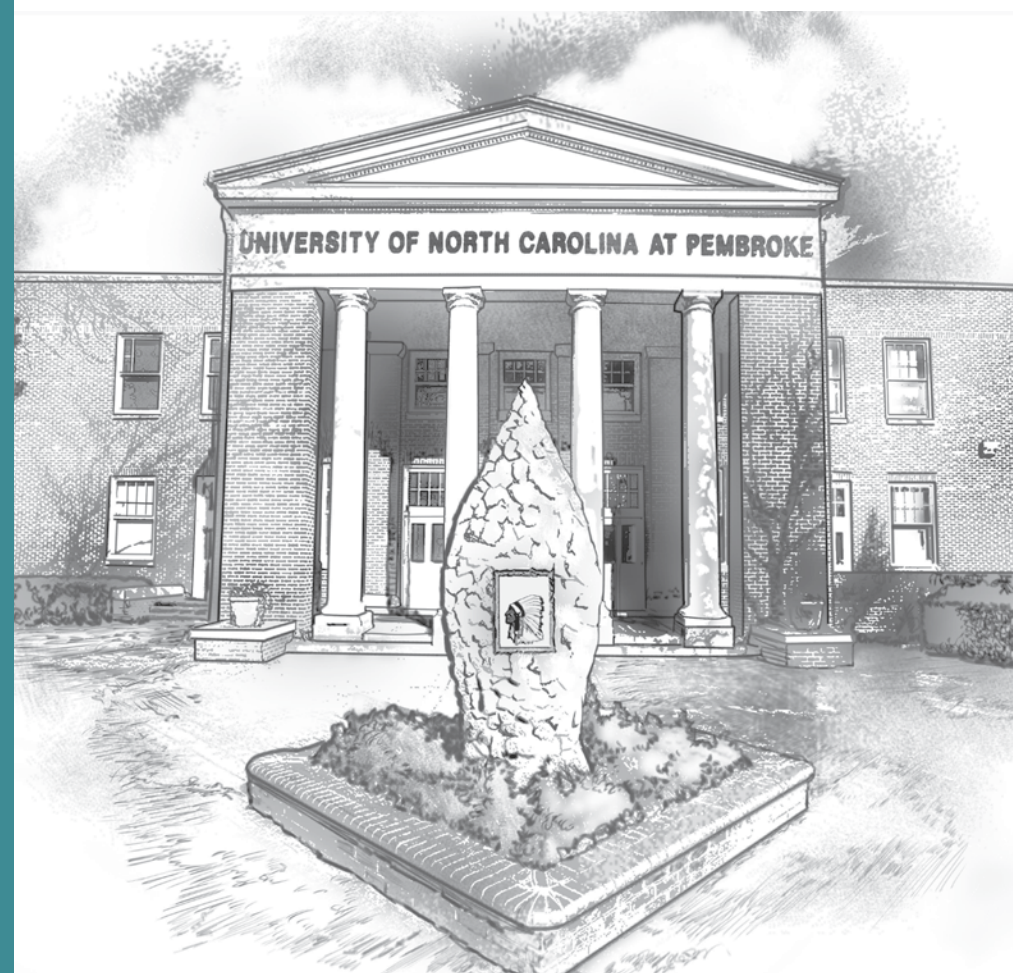
NEW SENIOR APPOINTMENTS



Dr. Todd Telemeco was named founding dean of the College of Health Sciences. He brings 22 years of academic leadership in higher education, most recently serving as dean of the School of Health Sciences at Methodist University.



Virginia Teachey assumed the role of vice chancellor for Finance and Administration. She comes to UNCP with 25 years of higher education experience, most recently at NC State University where she served as assistant dean for Finance and Business Management for the College of Engineering.



IN MEMORIAM

- Thomas Baucom '70
- Patrick Cabe
- Paul Campbell '98
- Agnes Chavis '50
- Barry Councilman '71
- Hal Davis
- Danford Dial '69
- Dr. Swannee Dickson
- Wanda Dickson
- Dr. Gibson Gray
- Cattie Hunt '41
- James Hunt '59
- Shirlene Hunt
- Margaret Jones
- Mike Lassiter
- Josephus Locklear '52
- Gloria Tara Lowery '66, '03
- Dr. Harold David Maxwell
- Grace Elizabeth McGirt
- Mary-Paige Merial
- Harry Oxendine '58
- Gabrielle Rainwater '19
- Robert Romine
- Charles Monroe Sampson
- David Shaw
- Nathan Toler
- Dr. D.E. Ward Jr.

Any omission is unintentional. This list includes all names available as of publication deadline. Any names noted beyond this date will be included in subsequent issues. If you would like to submit an item for *in memoriam* in a future edition, please email alumni@uncp.edu.

NOT ALL HEROES WEAR CAPES

THANK YOU

TO OUR FACULTY, STAFF, HEALTH CARE WORKERS AND PUBLIC SERVICE PROFESSIONALS ON THE FRONT LINES FIGHTING AGAINST THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

As this issue of UNCP Today went to press, UNCP was responding to COVID-19. Astonishingly, our campus moved more than 1,800 courses and 7,700 students online in just one week. We adjusted policies and procedures to respond to students' unique needs and stood up services offering faculty critical support. The vast majority of our staff and offices moved to a virtual work environment to protect the health of our campus community. The abrupt end to the spring semester in person was hard, but it showed us once again what this university is made of. It showed resilience, agility and a true sense of community you will find very few places.

As we continue to navigate these unprecedented times, our university's thoughts are with our many alumni on the front lines. Talented health care professionals and first responders who daily put themselves in the path of the disease in service to others. Our educators adjusting to a new way to teach remotely and enabling parents to keep learning happening in their home. Public servants who, at the heart of their many roles, know that the safety and security of the communities they serve are of the utmost importance. And to those keeping our society going despite the challenges we face, we simply say thank you. Though thank you seems inadequate for the gratitude we all feel.

There will be many stories of hope, love, accomplishment and remembrance that arise from this situation, and leading the way we are sure there will be Braves. You can look forward to some of those incredible stories in the next issue of UNCP Today, and if you have a story to share, we want to hear!

Until we can see you again this fall, stay safe, stay healthy and above all, stay strong BraveNation!

WE ARE IN THIS TOGETHER.



Holiday Drop-In



Lighting of Old Main



Star-Spangled Celebration

JOIN THE FUN AT UNCP



Holiday Drop-In



Lighting of Old Main



Holiday Drop-In



Homecoming



Star-Spangled Celebration



BraveNation Powwow



Charly Lowry, Pembroke Day





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**ALUMNI
ASSOCIATION**



CONNECT & ENGAGE

GET INVOLVED
WITH YOUR
**UNCP ALUMNI
ASSOCIATION**

HERE ARE SOME WAYS TO BECOME ACTIVE
IN THE LIFE OF YOUR ALMA MATER:

- Attend a UNCP Alumni Association event in your area, and bring a fellow Brave with you.
- Update your contact information, and learn more at uncp.edu/alumni.
- Join us on social media.
- Support UNCP athletics. Cheer loudly.
- Nominate someone you know to serve on the Alumni Assoc. Board.
- Nominate a worthy candidate for one of our many alumni awards.

Give to your favorite program at uncp.edu/give.



To learn more about getting involved, visit us online at uncp.edu/alumni or email us at alumni@uncp.edu.