

REFLECTIONS

THE MAGAZINE OF SVSU

SUMMER 2018



Designs for a master plan

Ideas driving a \$25M business school expansion go beyond education.
SVSU has its sights set on boosting **the entire regional economy.**



The names of SVSU: A legacy of leadership

College and university campuses across the country contain facilities named for individuals who have made a lasting impression on the campus community through service or philanthropy. At SVSU, we are proud to honor service and philanthropy in this way, because we know that such generosity defines our institution.

The Wickes, Dow, Doan, Arbury and Curtiss families make up an impressive list of people who have guided our institution through its most formative years. We continue to grow and reach new milestones, and while times change, one thing remains constant: SVSU is a community asset because of the stewardship from people in this region.

With the expansion of our College of Business & Management, the Carmona family name will join the list of those who continue to impact the course of SVSU's future. They have been devoted supporters of our university for many years and recently pledged the lead gift for the fundraising campaign to support construction of a 38,500-square-foot addition for our business school, which is now named the Scott L. Carmona College of Business & Management.

Carmona and his family join a list of distinguished faculty, staff, donors, community leaders and institutional champions whose names are permanently connected to our university by way of the physical spaces and academic colleges named in their honor. These men and women showed themselves to be supportive and selfless advocates for students, resilient in achieving goals in the face of adversity, and inspiring and enthusiastic in equipping students for their lives and careers.

What makes the addition of the Carmona name to this legacy especially significant is that Scott is an SVSU alumnus, making him both a product and supporter of our institutional influence. Scott's legacy at the university dates back to his time as a student in the 1970s, extends to his role as a successful business leader in our region, and includes his work in campus leadership roles, including service on the SVSU Board of Control.

Scott's entrepreneurial acumen, philanthropic vigor and tireless work ethic are a shining example for our students. His family has demonstrated great determination and creative thinking to build successful businesses. Their story resonates with so many of our students who are driven to complete their degrees, even as they juggle work and family demands themselves. I hope our students find inspiration in the Carmona family's story, and I hope alumni take pride in this gift coming from one of our own.

I will forever be grateful for the philanthropy of the Carmona family and so many others who have had faith in our university and have invested in its growth over the years. SVSU's founding 55 years ago was made possible by individuals like Carmona, whose foresight and financial commitment create opportunity for others in the region. Now, we are laying the foundation for future generations of Cardinals to build successful business careers, thanks to the continual votes of confidence we receive from individuals whose names we should always remember.

Sincerely,
Don Bachand





\$1,000 SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

**TUITION & FEES PLUS
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The Nesbitt family truly is building a legacy at SVSU. Brendan is a freshman distance runner on the SVSU track & field team. As a recipient of the Legacy Scholarship, he is taking the baton from his parents, Mike and Deanna, two alumni who were Cardinal track & field athletes in the 1990s.

Mike works as an English Language Arts teacher at Bay City Western High School. He also is the head boys and girls cross-country coach and head boys track & field coach. Deanna is an occupational therapist at Bay County Medical Care Facility.

The SVSU Legacy Scholarship is for incoming freshmen who are children or stepchildren of SVSU graduates.

**989.964.4196 • legacy@svsu.edu
alumni.svsu.edu/legacy**





Political Science, Bachelor of Arts (BA), 2006

Professional and Technical Writing, Bachelor of Arts (BA), 2006

Political Science Public Administration, Master of Administrative Science (MAS), 2011

see Randy B's site


@ contact via email



Some of the data in this profile is from this user's LinkedIn profile

Randy B. Painter

Policy Analyst at U.S. Department of Labor
United States of America
Government Administration

 **Willing to help**
See more
  **Follow Randy B.**

SUMMARY

I graduated from SVSU with a Bachelor of Arts in 2006 as a double major in Political Science and Professional and Technical Writing. Upon graduation I worked for four years at SVSU in the Office of Adjunct Faculty Support Programs. I simultaneously earned a Master of Arts in Administrative Science. During my nearly 12 years in the Saginaw Valley, I also was involved in state and local politics, highlighted by serving as a campaign manager for a State House race in the 95th House District. After relocating to the DC area, I decided to return to graduate school to pursue a Master of Public Policy at George Mason University. GMU provided me great opportunities to gain significant international experience and to be selected as a Presidential Management Fellow. I have now worked for 2.5 years at the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration, where I conduct legislative and policy analysis in support of the U.S. public workforce development system. I specialize in executive-legislative affairs, including liaising with and responding to requests from Congress. Much of my professional development has focused on learning about the budget and appropriations process, the highlight of which has been writing testimony for the Secretary of Labor and helping to develop the President's Budget.





Connect on: 

RECENT WORK EXPERIENCE

- WORKFORCE ANALYST**
 at U.S. Department of Labor , Government Administration
 Sep 2015 - present
- BUDGET ANALYST**
 at U.S. Department of Labor , Government Administration
 Jan 2017 - Jul 2017
- INTERN**
 at U.S. Department of State , International Affairs
 Aug 2014 - Dec 2014
- DEPUTY FIELD ORGANIZER**
 at Aneesh Chopra for Lt. Governor of Virginia , Political Organization
 May 2013 - Jun 2013
- RESEARCH FELLOW**
 at New Organizing Institute , Research
 Jul 2012 - Nov 2012
- EXECUTIVE COORDINATOR**
 at School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University , Higher Education
 Apr 2012 - Jul 2012
- ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT**
 at George Washington University , Higher Education
 Nov 2011 - Dec 2011
- ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY**
 at Office of Adjunct Faculty Support Programs , Higher Education
 Aug 2007 - Oct 2011
- CAMPAIGN MANAGER**
 at Andy Coulouris for State Representative , Political Organization
 May 2008 - Aug 2008
- STUDENT EMPLOYEE**
 at SVSU Information Technology Services
 Jun 2003 - Dec 2006
- STAFF WRITER**
 at Valley Vanguard , Writing and Editing
 Sep 2004 - Dec 2006

EDUCATION

- Public Policy, Master's degree, George Mason University

GET
CONNECTED
TODAY!

Join Today: svsuconnect.com

The SVSU Connect network has grown to more than 4,000 members who have built 1,800 unique networking relationships. That network includes alumni such as Randy Painter, a budget analyst for the U.S. Department of Labor in Washington, D.C. Randy serves as a mentor and networking connection for current students and alumni through SVSU Connect.

Alumni, thank you for all the different ways you get connected and give back to SVSU!



BRANDING

David Kowalski, who earned a bachelor's degree in business administration in 1979, has remained engaged with SVSU as a member and past president of the Alumni Board of Directors. His latest gift back to the university: funding of blazers that will be worn by fellow alumni at special SVSU functions, such as commencement.



INTERNSHIPS

John Stadwick, who earned a bachelor's degree from SVSU's College of Business & Management in 1983, today serves as executive director of global customer experience for General Motors.



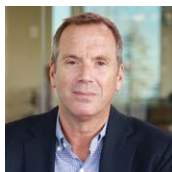
Rebecca Harris-Burns, who received a bachelor's degree in communication from SVSU in 1990, now leads GM's Social Center of Expertise, which oversees all of the automotive giant's social media accounts.

Rebecca and John helped create a new paid internship program exclusively for SVSU students. Each year, two Cardinals will work in downtown Detroit's Renaissance Center, helping to maintain GM's many social media channels as contractors to Morley Companies Inc.



MENTORING

Jessica Bentoski, who earned her bachelor's degree in biology in 2003, now operates Saginaw Pediatric Dentistry. She remains active with her alma mater, providing guidance, financial support and professional networking for students pursuing a dental school education.



SCHOLARSHIPS

Fred Harrington, who earned a bachelor's degree in political science in 1984, joined with his former classmate and track teammate John Stadwick to provide a \$20,000 match during SVSU's 2/2 For SVSU fundraising campaign this year. Fred's generosity — and the \$55,000 campaign — helped establish 55 new scholarships.



PUBLIC SPEAKING

Katrina Murrell, who earned a bachelor's degree in graphic design in 2013 and a master's degree in communication and digital media in 2016, now works as an assistant director for SVSU Admissions. Murrell offered outstanding advice to students during a Cardinal Talks event.

There are many more alumni giving back to SVSU in many more ways. If you are a member of the SVSU family willing to help the students of today and tomorrow, your talent and time are always welcomed. To get re-engaged with SVSU, contact the Alumni Relations office at (989) 964-4196 or alumni@svsu.edu or join SVSU Connect.

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SCORECARD OF LIFE

James Peoples' childhood has been defined by a struggle for health and happiness. Count SVSU's baseball team among his biggest supporters.

ON THE COVER

DESIGNS FOR A MASTER PLAN

With the help of supporters such as Scott Carmona, a \$25 million building expansion project is aimed at boosting the region's economic standing — starting with SVSU's business education programs.

The cover photo, by Michael Randolph, features Danielle Slonac, a triple academic major (finance, management and supply chain management) from St. Clair who received the 2018 YWCA Emerging Leader award, and Kevin Finley, who earned a bachelor's degree in professional accountancy in 2017 before being immediately hired by Dow Chemical Co. To read a profile on both, visit svsureflections.com.

REMEMBERING EVAN

One year after the tragic death of Evan Willman, a tight-knit group of students honored their fallen friend while a university granted his mother's wish.

THE DREAMMAKERS

Two education alumnae are applying lessons learned at SVSU to a children's book series that is taking them — and their readers — to exciting new places.

ORIGINAL SINS

After humble beginnings, over the decades a student publication blossomed into one of the nation's most distinguished campus literary-art magazines.

SHARED VALUES

As SVSU and Garber Management Group become more engaged with the community, both are discovering commonalities leading them to combine resources and join forces.

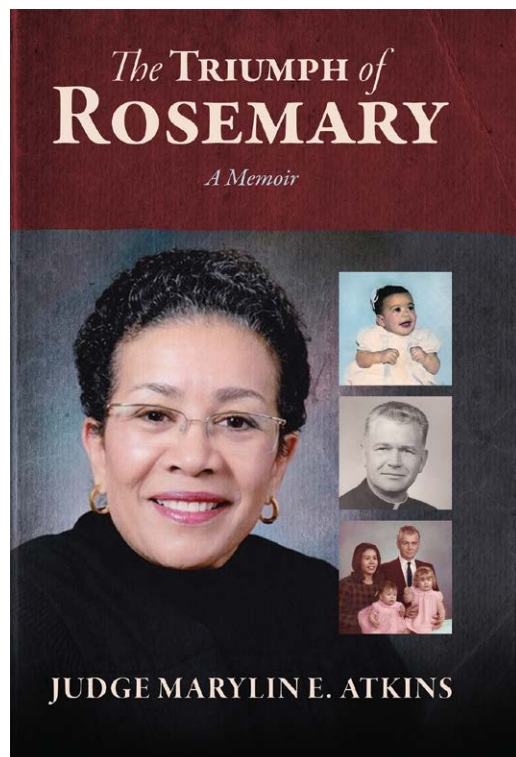
photo by Michael Randolph

AT SVSU'S COMMENCEMENT CEREMONIES IN DECEMBER 2017, REBECCA WILLMAN ACCEPTS A POSTHUMOUS DEGREE ON BEHALF OF HER SON, EVAN WILLMAN, WHO DIED ONE YEAR EARLIER. FULL STORY ON PAGE 22.



REFLECTIONS: SUMMER 2018 | EXECUTIVE EDITOR: Linda Sims | EDITOR: Justin Engel | MANAGING EDITOR: Tim Inman | WRITERS: Lauren Bell, Jim Dwyer, Justin Engel, Megan Wagner, Pamela Wegener, Jason Wolverton, Ashley Youngstrom | GRAPHIC DESIGNERS: Jill Allardyce, Justin Engel, Michael Randolph
PHOTOGRAPHERS: Michael Randolph, Tim Inman | ADVISORY BOARD: Don Bachand, president; Deborah Huntley, provost and vice president for Academic Affairs; and Alumni Relations staff Jim Dwyer, Kevin Schultz and Pamela Wegener | REFLECTIONS magazine is published twice a year. For comments and inquiries, contact: Justin Engel at Saginaw Valley State University • Wickes 389 • 7400 Bay Road, University Center, MI 48710 | jlengel@svsu.edu • (989) 964-4883

Memoir reflects on hardships, triumphs



Thrust from one harrowing home to another as a child, Marylin E. Atkins fit the profile of many who struggle to escape terrible circumstances as an adult. But she bucked that scenario, instead building a loving family, pursuing a successful career as a district judge — and writing a book about it.

Atkins, who earned a bachelor's degree in psychology at SVSU in 1973, returned to her alma mater in 2018 to discuss her life and new memoir, "The Triumph of Rosemary." She was a featured guest during Black History Month in February at SVSU and later served as the keynote speaker at the commencement ceremonies in May.

"I want people of every age to read my story and believe that no matter how difficult their life circumstances might be, they can beat the odds like I did," Atkins said.

"My life shows that vision, determination and hard work — plus family teamwork — are the keys to success."

Born to an Italian teen and a married black man in Detroit in 1946, Atkins — then named Marilyn Bowman — was placed in a foster home. She was eventually adopted by an abusive mother, she said.

At age 19, she sparked a racial and religious scandal by marrying former Roman Catholic priest Thomas Lee Atkins, who was white and 25 years her senior. The couple raised two biracial daughters. The parents worked full time, and in a reversal of traditional gender roles, Marylin Atkins attended college at night while her husband took their high-achieving daughters to lessons for swimming, piano and skiing.

After graduating from SVSU, Atkins completed a law degree at the University of Detroit School of Law. She became a lawyer and then was appointed the chief judge in Detroit's 36th District Court, where she remained for 12 years until her retirement in 2012. Today, she lives in Detroit.

National recognition

Housing ranked No. 2 for public universities

The website Niche ranked SVSU's residential facilities No. 2 in the U.S. among the 512 public universities included in the site's annual "Best Dorms" rankings.

Niche calculates its rankings using a weighted formula where 70 percent of a school's score comes from students' satisfaction with their housing, as well as data from the U.S. Department of Education.

"For me, SVSU's different housing options give students more independence on campus that make you feel at home," said Lindsey Briolat, who lived on campus from her freshman year until she graduated with a bachelor's degree in health science in May 2018.

She said she stayed on campus because of the inclusive atmosphere.

"SVSU creates a family," she said. "The way our university connects with its students just makes us feel at home."

For Hannah Waslusk, an accounting major from Breckenridge, living on SVSU's campus brought her more than just friends; it provided her a community.

Waslusk said the close-knit living quarters during her freshman year gave her ample opportunities to make friends. She

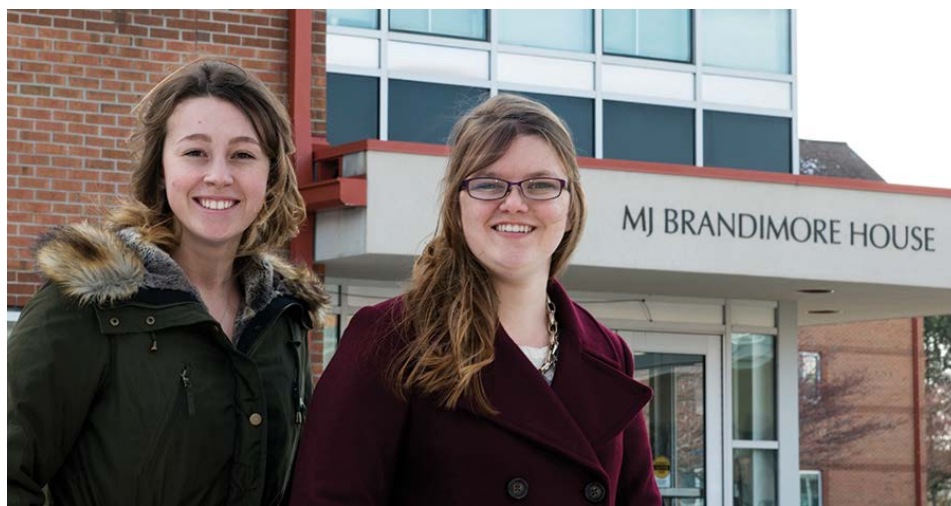


photo by Tim Inman

FROM LEFT, HANNAH WASLUSKY AND LINDSEY BRIOLAT WERE AMONG THE 2,400 STUDENTS LIVING AT SVSU IN 2018.

knew that all it took to find someone to hang out with was a shout across the courtyard.

"Some of the best friends I ever made started that way," Waslusk said.

Waslusk has lived on campus for the three years that she has attended SVSU. She came for the convenience of living on campus but stayed for the quiet and per-

sonal environment SVSU's housing offers.

"My apartment is set right in the middle of nature. I get to see deer and rabbits hop by my apartment every day. I couldn't imagine a better place to live."

More than 2,400 students live on SVSU's campus. For the past nine years, at least 70 percent of freshmen chose to live in SVSU's residence halls.



photos by Michael Randolph

BULLOCK CREEK HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS BRENT KROTZER AND MASON KENNEDY, MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL'S FIRST ROBOTICS TEAM, COMPETE AT SVSU'S RYDER CENTER DURING THE STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS IN APRIL. MEANWHILE, THE TEAM'S ADVISER, JOHN LEONARD (BELOW), WATCHES THE COMPETITION FROM THE STANDS.

SVSU staffer an 'inspiration' to Robotics team

There is life in the machinery for John Leonard.

The SVSU laboratory support coordinator has enjoyed working with electronics in machine shop environments for as long as he can remember. What really brings him joy, though, is working with — and teaching — others who share the sentiment.

The Midland resident was recognized this spring for his work leading a group of high school students who competed as one of 160 teams that qualified for the FIRST Robotics state championships hosted by SVSU in April 2018. Leonard was a finalist for the Woodie Flowers Award given annually to one outstanding mentor advising a team involved in the worldwide competition.

"I was surprised but honored when I heard about that," said Leonard, an adviser to the Bullock Creek High School FIRST Robotics team, BlitzCreek Robotics.

Eden Hackett, a Bullock Creek High School student and member of BlitzCreek Robotics, wrote a letter to nominate Leonard on behalf of the team.

"He brings smiles, laughs, and innovation to our team," she wrote. "Being with-



out Mr. Leonard would be like having a heart without arteries. He is an inspiration, a teacher, a friend, but most importantly, a mentor that keeps our team strong and on their toes."

That mentorship was on display during the state championship at SVSU. There, the team members were among the 5,000 high school students from 160 teams that gathered for the competition in which student-built robots face off in multi-faceted

game challenges.

During the matches, Leonard was supportive from the stands in Ryder Center's O'Neill Arena. Between games, he provided coaching and guidance as the team prepared for the next round.

"These are all students who want to be there," Leonard said.

"They're willing to spend as much time as is necessary because they're having fun doing it."

National physics group honors educator

The American Association of Physics Teachers (AAPT) recognized Laurie Reed, a physics lecturer retiring in June 2018, for her commitment to undergraduate teaching.

A long-time member of the association, Reed was named an AAPT Fellow for 2018.

Criteria for selection include contributions to the enhancement and appreciation of physics through teaching.

Reed said she takes pride in being honored for teaching a discipline that did not always come easily to her.

"During my undergraduate years, I had qualified faculty, but they did not always explain the material in ways I could best understand. It was when I was in graduate school for astronomy and I began teaching physics that many of the con-

cepts truly became clearer to me."

At that point, Reed said, she realized how much she enjoyed the process of teaching physics to others.

"Helping a student learn a tough concept and having that person say, 'I understand that,' is very satisfying to me."

Rarely does Reed have a physics major in her classes. Most of her students are pursuing careers in the health professions. Over the years, many have thanked her for helping them prepare for the physics portions of medical or veterinary school entrance exams.

"In my teaching, I try to give a lot of examples and demonstrations that have direct application to everyday life and to the human body," Reed said.

"In class recently, I described



photo by Michael Randolph

Laurie Reed was honored by a national organization of physics teachers.

how the elbow joint rotates and how the bones and muscles respond. I want students to understand that physics affects their lives."

AAPT has about 8,000

university and college faculty members, as well as high school teachers.

Typically, the association chooses about 10 AAPT Fellows per year.

Professor of nursing earns Fulbright award

Sally Decker, professor of nursing, was selected as a Fulbright Scholar to support her teaching and research in Ireland.

Decker will work with inter-professional teams at the Royal College of Surgeons in Dublin. She also will teach health education courses and work with faculty members on simulation.

Decker plans to design and create an interactive workshop on simulation with faculty members. She also plans to work with students in groups or individually related to the pedagogy of education in health care, and help create, facilitate and evaluate an inter-professional simulation with both students and faculty members.

She is familiar with educational settings overseas. She led SVSU students on study abroad experiences in England, Australia and Nepal.

Those experiences focused on the differences in health care in different nations and cultures.

"These experiences — in addition to my personal travel experiences — have increased my sensitivity to cultural competence and the need to review evidence with consideration for the context from which it was created," she said. "Context relates to cultural, envi-



SALLY DECKER

ronmental, genetics and health care system differences."

Her interest in the topic started when she served with the U.S. Army Nurse Corps.

"The system of health care and specifics of interventions in the military setting — followed by the transition to civilian health care — created a striking awareness for me of the importance of contextual understand-

ing and teamwork."

The Fulbright Program aims to increase understanding between the U.S. and people of other countries.

SVSU adds public health bachelor's, master's degrees

SVSU will meet a need for more public health professionals in the region.

In May 2018, the university's Board of Control approved the addition of a bachelor's degree in public health and a master's degree in public health to the curriculum.

"We expect both the bachelor's and the master's degree programs to be very popular with students," said Deborah Huntley,

provost and vice president for academic affairs.

"Many of our students have a genuine interest to serve others and serve their communities, and these degrees will provide additional avenues for them to do so."

Huntley said the addition to the curriculum was in response to appeals from community partners.

"Regional employers have told us that there is considerable demand in the public health field," she said, "so we expect good job prospects for graduates of these programs."

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects nationwide job growth of 16 percent for health educators and 9 percent job growth for epidemiologists through 2026.

Suicide prevention goal of Active Minds

The sight brought some to tears. For others, it sparked conversation.

Few, if any, ignored the overwhelming optics of it all — and that was mostly the point.

In the fall, the registered student organization Active Minds and its national affiliate generated buzz on SVSU's campus — and beyond — with an exhibition that involved members placing more than 1,000 backpacks in the campus courtyard for one day. Each backpack was meant to serve as a visual representation of individuals lost to suicide. Attached to some of the items were photos, letters and stories related to those individuals.

"It's about the visual representation," said Bonny Rye, an SVSU adjunct faculty member who until recently served as the adviser for SVSU's Active Minds chapter.

"People don't really talk about the statistics of suicide very much and to actually see it physically laid out on campus makes a pretty moving statement."

Rye and students involved in Active Minds set up tables in the courtyard during the event, which was part of the national affiliate's "Send Silence Packing" program.

The awareness-raising campaign involved displaying the backpacks and accompanying stories on campuses across the U.S. SVSU was one of 12 stops on the tour nationally and one of two destinations in the state.

Becca Sharp, a Cadillac native pursuing a master's degree in occupational therapy, said the initiative accomplished the group's goal of raising awareness about suicide prevention. Several local media outlets visited the campus to cover the event.

"A lot of people were talking about what they saw," said Sharp, who at the time served as the SVSU chapter's president.

Rye, Sharp and members of SVSU's Active Minds chapter were on hand to talk to students and visitors who became emotional at the sight.

"Those feelings are entirely valid," Rye said. "We want to welcome students to talk about current or past struggles and encourage them to ask for help if they think they need it."

Active Minds is an international organization with more than 400 chapters on campuses from California to Australia. In an effort to promote suicide awareness, SVSU's chapter was established in 2013.

Active Minds engages with students on



photo courtesy Active Minds

THE NATIONAL AFFILIATE OF ACTIVE MINDS, A GROUP AIMED AT RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT SUICIDE PREVENTION, VISITED SVSU'S CAMPUS TO DISPLAY MORE THAN 1,000 BACKPACKS — MEANT TO REPRESENT LIVES LOST TO SUICIDE — ACROSS THE COURTYARD. ATTACHED TO THE BACKPACKS WERE PHOTOS, LETTERS AND STORIES OF LIVES LOST.

campus through many different events. One of the most popular is a tie-dye event aptly titled "All Tied Up." Students congregate in the courtyard to tie-dye Active Minds T-shirts each fall semester. The T-shirt features the Active Minds logo and the number for the suicide prevention hotline on the back.

"There are a lot of resources here for talking about suicide and depression or even helping a friend," Rye said.

Programs such as this are geared toward starting a positive conversation about mental health and wellness, she said.

Active Minds student representatives use these opportunities to convey one important message:

It's okay to talk about mental health.

"Positive conversation reminds people that it's not shameful," Rye said.

Sharp, who remains a member of the SVSU chapter, said the "Send Silence Packing" event was the most impactful initiative during her time with the group. She hopes Active Minds can continue similar high-profile, awareness-raising national programs at SVSU.

"I've seen people in my own life struggling with mental health," Sharp said.

"Knowing that we are helping to raise awareness on these issues is huge, and it needs to keep happening. Helping even one person on this campus makes it all worth it."

Former Olympian played role in '18 Games

Michelle Knous has never forgotten the excitement in her father's voice when she called to tell him she qualified for the 2010 U.S. Winter Olympics women's bobsled team. She was in a hotel in St. Moritz, Switzerland, that January. Hours earlier, her determined performance during an international bobsled competition has helped the selection committee choose her to represent her nation one month later during the Winter Olympics in Vancouver.

"I ended up losing my dad in 2011, so I was happy I was able to share that excitement with him," Knous said.

That shared elation was one of the memories that came flooding back to Knous in January 2018. That's when she returned for the first time to that same St. Moritz hotel, this time as a member of the selection committee that chose the men's and women's bobsled teams that competed at the Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea, in February.

Knous, a clinical coordinator for exercise science students at SVSU, said it was "eerie" returning to the site. Still, she was proud to represent her country for the Olympic Games, albeit in a different role.

"Being an Olympic athlete once, I feel that connection with other athletes already, but this Olympics was even more meaningful because I had a hand in who was competing," she said. "It feels great to give back to the sport that gave me so many memories of a lifetime."

For Knous, those memories included



photo courtesy Michelle Knous

MICHELLE KNOUS, PICTURED RIGHT, HELPED SELECT THE U.S. BOBSLED TEAMS FOR THE 2018 WINTER OLYMPICS. KNOUS IS SHOWN HERE WITH SELECTION COMMITTEE MEMBER CURT TOMASEVICZ IN ST. MORITZ, SWITZERLAND.

earning a spot as a pusher for the top U.S. women's bobsled team in the 2010 Olympic Games, where she and her teammate, Shauna Rohbock, finished sixth.

Her story as one of the world's best bobsledders began on a pole vault track. As a member of Michigan State University's track and field team in the mid-2000s, Knous, then known as Michelle Rzepka, impressed bobsled team recruiters.

For two years, Knous, a Novi native, trained at the Olympic Village camp in Lake Placid, New York, while competing on the international bobsled circuit. By January 2010 in St. Moritz, where the U.S. selection committee was set to finalize the

Winter Olympics bobsled team, Knous already was considered a frontrunner.

Immediately, she called her parents, David and Holly Rzepka, to share the news. They already were planning their trip to watch their daughter in Vancouver.

After selecting the bobsled teams for the 2018 Olympic Games, Knous returned stateside to watch the women's team collect a silver medal. This time, she watched the competition in the comfort of her Free-land home, alongside the family she built after her bobsled career: her husband, Jeremy Knous, an associate professor of kinesiology at SVSU; and two sons, Barrett and Drake.

Theodore Roethke Poetry and Arts Festival

Poet probing racial issues earns Roethke Prize



photo courtesy Rafael Hernandez

DOUGLAS KEARNEY, AUTHOR OF "BUCK STUDIES," WAS THE RECIPIENT OF THE 2018 THEODORE ROETHKE MEMORIAL POETRY PRIZE.

Douglas Kearney was awarded the 14th triennial Saginaw Valley State University Theodore Roethke Memorial Poetry Prize for his 2016 poetry collection, "Buck Studies."

Kearney — the interim faculty co-director for equity and diversity at the CalArts School of Critical Studies in Valencia, California — accepted the award during the Theodore Roethke Poetry and Arts Festival in March 2018. The week-long celebration of the late Pulitzer Prize-winning poet from Saginaw is sponsored by SVSU. The U.S. poet laureate appoints the panel that selects the recipient.

Kearney's "Buck Studies" uses po-

etry to explore pain and grief as each relates to racial injustices.

His published collections of poetry include "Mess and Mess and," which was a Small Press Distribution Hand-picked Selection. His collection, "Patter," was a finalist for the California Book Award in Poetry.

His work has also appeared in several anthologies, such as "Best American Poetry."

Kearney's work has appeared in three operas and his published collection, "Someone Took They Tongues," offers a series of librettos, including one written in an invented Afro-diasporic language.



photo by Michael Randolph

LILIAN AND WILHELMINA FRANCISCO COMPETED TOGETHER ON SVSU'S SWIMMING AND DIVING TEAM IN 2017-18 BEFORE WILHELMINA GRADUATED IN MAY 2018.

For divers, SVSU strengthened sisterly bond

Although many siblings attend SVSU, rarely do they participate in a collegiate sport together. Wilhelmina and Lilian Francisco competed together on SVSU's swimming and diving team.

Long before they graduated from Chelsea High School and enrolled at SVSU, they began training as competitive divers at summer camp. Wilhelmina was 14 and Lilian was 11 during that initial camp experience. Ever since, diving has been an important aspect of their lives and another way they found a connection with each other.

During Wilhelmina's senior year of high school, she realized she could — and wanted to — continue competitive diving at the collegiate level. And when she chose SVSU as her destination in 2014, it was unique timing: She became a member of the university's inau-

gural women's swimming and diving team.

"It was terrifying," she said. "There were only 13 or 14 of us. There were high expectations."

By most standards, Wilhelmina met those high expectations during her four years on the team. She advanced to the NCAA Division II nationals three times, including in 2018, when she was named the GLIAC Women's Diver of the Year.

During Wilhelmina's first three years with the team, her younger sister was a regular attendee at competitions, cheering from the stands. Meanwhile, Lilian was carving out her own spot as a top-notch diver at the high school level. During her junior year in 2015, she competed in the state fi-

nals.

In 2017, Lilian enrolled at SVSU and joined her sister on the swimming and diving team. Both said they were thankful for

the opportunity to compete on the same team. The experience brought them closer together, even during the moments when their competitive spirit turned them into temporary rivals.

"Depending on the day, we sometimes fought," Lilian said. "Other times, we would be as close as ever."

Lilian's career on the swimming and diving team ended in January 2018 when she landed hard on the water, sustaining a concussion that forced her out of competition.

Although she left the team, she didn't lose her competitive spirit. She then joined SVSU's track and field team in the shot put and hammer throw competitions.

Her older sister supports Lilian's new challenge — with one condition.

"I told her to participate in track and continue to have fun," Wilhelmina said. "If there is no fun, there is no point in doing it."

The younger sibling plans to continue following in her sister's footsteps in at least one way: by one day becoming an SVSU alumna. Wilhelmina received her bachelor's degree in marketing in May 2018. Lilian, meanwhile, is on track to earn her bachelor's degree in nursing in 2021.

“ Depending on the day, we sometimes fought. Other times, we would be as close as ever.”

— Lilian Francisco, on her rivalry with her sister on the SVSU swimming and diving team

Scorecard of Life

Life tossed James Peoples a curveball at the age of 3, when he was diagnosed with cancer. Now SVSU's baseball team is helping him swing back.

by Justin Engel



For three years now, Sheree Peoples has watched her 6-year-old son James in pain. Antibody therapy and chemo can take a heavy toll on an adult body suffering from cancer, and so the effect of the treatments on a child is unimaginably brutal to watch, she said — especially when the child suffering from cancer is your son.

For Sheree Peoples, such glum circumstances make any moment of joy for her boy cause to celebrate. Ever since the student-athletes on SVSU's baseball team stepped into James' life, there has been a cause to celebrate.

"James loves them," Peoples says of her son's affection for his new friends. "He honestly means it. He said to me the other day, 'Mom, I love them.' They're building this awesome bond with James that I can't put into words."

That bond began forming in fall 2017 when baseball coach Chris Elbright received an email from TEAM Impact, a Boston-based nonprofit that connects athletic teams with chronically ill children in an effort to brighten their spirits. Elbright's team was matched with James, a Flint boy suffering from neuroblastoma, a rare cancer most often diagnosed in children.

On Christmas Eve, two members of the team — Derrek Clyde and Z Westley — visited James and his family for the first time.

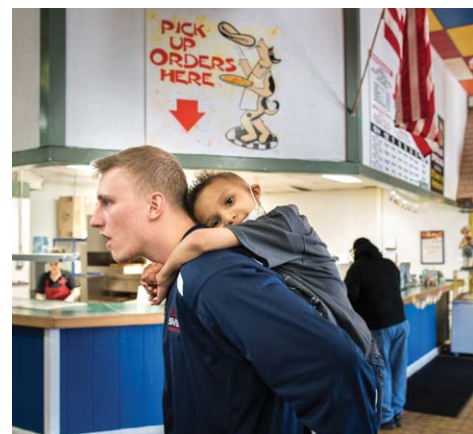
Doctors first diagnosed James with neuroblastoma at the age of 3 when a tumor was discovered in his chest, his mother says. Since then, James has undergone 12 cycles of radiation therapy, eight rounds of chemotherapy, as well as antibody therapy. While tests suggest the treatment is working, James' outlook remains uncertain, and more treatment is likely.

In the meantime, cancer defines his everyday life. With an immune system weakened by the treatments, James is especially vulnerable to germs, and so he wears a medical face mask when in public. A kindergartner at Pinehurst Elementary School in Mount Morris, James is provided with material so his parents can educate him at home when he is in a medical facility or unable to leave the house. When at school, teachers provide him with space in the corner of the class where he is less exposed to potential germs from classmates. All of those activities are in stark contrast to the life of his twin brother, LeRoyal, who is healthy.

While LeRoyal enjoys a friendship with members of SVSU's baseball team, James' friendship is unmistakably special, his mother says.

"It's so genuine," she says. "You have to see them together."

That friendship was on display in late March during James' 6th birthday party on a Sunday afternoon at Huckleberry Junction



photos by Michael Randolph

DURING HIS BIRTHDAY PARTY, 6-YEAR-OLD JAMES PEOPLES ENJOYED TIME SPENT WITH Z WESTLEY, AN SVSU BASEBALL PLAYER WHO BEFRIENDED THE CANCER-STRICKEN BOY.

"I remember he was quiet at first," says Clyde, a history education major from Bay City. "His mom made us ribs and Polish sausage. After we ate, we started playing video games with James. I remember he beat us at a Spider-Man game. You could see him start to break out of his shell. When he decided to talk, you could see him smile. That was a great feeling."

Clyde and Westley departed the Peoples household, leaving with leftover ribs and a budding friendship. Ever since, the relationship has grown and expanded to other players, coaches and staff.

In March 2018, the team "drafted" James during a ceremonial press conference meant to mimic the pomp and circumstance of a professional sports league player signing. While James was not going to swing at opposing teams' pitches, his status with the team meant he was invited to visit during practices and watch home games in the dugout alongside the student-athletes.

"Our players may lose on the baseball field, but in the grand scheme of things, there are people in the world with much bigger challenges," Elbright says. "This is a kid who is only 6 years old, but has been going through chemotherapy almost his entire life. That really puts things in perspective."

Playhouse Theater in Genesee Township. The occasion came one day before James began a week-long antibody therapy treatment stay at C.S. Mott Children's Hospital in Ann Arbor, where he spent his actual birthday. The party was meant to lift James' spirits for the tough week ahead. Family and loved ones showed up in force. For a while, at least, James' attention was focused on one guest in particular: Westley, who was able to miss the Cardinals' road game scheduled that day.

"I couldn't miss the birthday party," says Westley, a communication and business double major from Midland. "I wouldn't want to miss that."

Westley and his young friend played with his new toys and enjoyed Huckleberry Junction's playscape together. To save James some energy, Westley became de facto transportation for James, who clung to the 6-foot-3 outfielder's back while being carried from one ride to the next. A few times, the child's medical mask slipped beneath his mouth, revealing a smile often hidden when Westley and his teammates are nearby.

"This relationship is so special," Westley says. "This is a connection that will last longer than a baseball season or career for most of us. This is a lifelong friendship." ■

DESIGNS FOR A MASTER PLAN



photo by Michael Randolph

GEORGE PUJA, TONY BOWRIN, DOMINIC MONASTIERE, STACIE KRUPP AND CASS FERRIS ARE AMONG THE INTELLECTUAL ARCHITECTS OF A PLAN TO STRENGTHEN SVSU'S BUSINESS EDUCATION OFFERINGS.

Leaders say a \$25M expansion project at SVSU is more than an investment in the business college. It's a shot in the arm for the region's economy.

by Justin Engel





Last year, 40 SVSU students gathered for an all-day workshop organized by the university's business college known today as the Scott L. Carmona College of Business & Management.

Their objective: work in teams to design business plan proposals. It was an academic exercise but simulated real-world elements faced by entrepreneurs, including a panel of local business leaders playing the role of potential investors.

Thirty days later, professors tested the impact of the activity. Surveying participants and non-participants majoring in the same programs — accounting, economics, management, marketing, general business and international business, among them — showed those in attendance has acquired a new skill.

"Confidence," said George Puia, the internationally recognized business educator from SVSU who organized the workshop. "Those students who participated had built this feeling that, absolutely, in real life, they could do this and function in the business world."

The program also exposed a weakness.

"We had to host that event off-site," said Puia, who retired this spring. "This was a high-impact experience, and we were not able to find adequate space all in one place on campus. We need that kind of space for the business college."

Soon, Puia said, that space will arrive.

A long-planned \$25 million, 38,500-square-foot building expansion that recently received state support is expected to open in January 2020. In addition to solving capacity issues for the College of Business & Management — which lacks an all-encompassing hub on campus today — planners say the expansion will deliver students state-of-the-art technology

used by Fortune 500 companies, deepen connections between the business community and the talent pool developed at the university, and establish a business degree from SVSU as an industry gold standard.

"The more we can create a context here at the university that is similar to what students will experience as professionals, the more quickly they will be able to hit the ground running after graduation," said Puia, who served as SVSU's Dow Chemical Company Centennial Chair in Global Business before his retirement.

With this expansion, he said, "Our students are going to hit the ground running."

The addition will be "more like a workplace than classroom space," said Anthony Bowrin, dean of the Scott L. Carmona College of Business & Management.

"This will prepare students for what comes next," he said, "and it will encourage the business community to engage with the university."

When the expansion is built next to the existing Performing Arts Center near Groening Commons, the tools expected to be added in this makeshift "workplace" include the following:

- a Bloomberg Trading Room, which will feature real-time stock data flashing across a digital panel similar to those used on Wall Street,
- an innovation lab will offer a cross-disciplinary space where students can develop products and market solutions,
- a communications and big data analytics lab will allow students to manage diverse sources of unstructured data and cloud-based computing,
- a consumer behavior lab, complete with observation rooms to study what influences consumers' decisions, will allow faculty and students to conduct applied qualitative research,
- video teleconferencing tools will allow students to interact with their counterparts in SVSU's sister institutions across the globe and
- office space will house operations for SVSU's business-themed programs, such as The Stevens Center for Family Business, the Dow Entrepreneurship Institute, the Michigan Manufacturing Technology Center-Northeast, the Office of Continuing Education and Professional Development, and the Vitito Global Leadership Institute

Bowrin, Puia and the expansion's other intellectual architects developed plans for the addition in part by consulting the local business community.

Among those who offered feedback was Cass Ferris, the director of business process outsourcing for Morley Companies Inc. The Saginaw Township-based business provides a variety of services for companies across the globe and has cultivated one of the fastest-growing workforces in the region in recent years.

With SVSU co-op and internship programs providing students with roles at Morley before their studies are complete, the institutions already enjoy a healthy relationship. The building expansion will deepen that network, Ferris said.

"The Great Lakes Bay Region offers a number of opportunities that may not be as apparent to the students as the local business community would like them to be," he said.

"By offering additional meeting forums and venues in the



DRAWINGS OF THE \$25 MILLION BUILDING EXPANSION SHOW THE PLANNED SPACE THAT WILL HOUSE SVSU'S COLLEGE OF BUSINESS & MANAGEMENT BEGINNING IN 2020.

new facility, there is an opportunity to bridge this perception gap through interactive experiences between students and local business leaders. This approach can be a win-win for the students and our local community."

That amped-up interaction, in turn, will connect business leaders with talented, largely home-grown employee prospects, he said. Those kinds of relationships could solve some local industries' struggle to recruit top-level talent with roots in the region, a characteristic that often makes it more likely employees will build a long-lasting career with one company.

"Our local business community has a vested interest in connecting with SVSU to strategically develop a local resource pool," Ferris said.

"As business leaders engage with students on a regular basis, we have the potential to provide directional support by highlighting opportunities that currently exist in our community and the lack of qualified resources to meet these employment needs."

Ferris knows the value of an SVSU education. He earned a bachelor's degree in accounting in 1989 and a master's degree in business administration in 2006 from SVSU. The planned building space — and the amenities it brings — will add considerable value to that education for the next generation of graduates, he said.

"Students will have the opportunity to find personal value and perspective through these interactions, as well as an awareness of local options as they consider their career choices and employment alternatives," Ferris said.

Stacie Krupp, SVSU's acting assistant dean for the business college, said the new space will provide a versatile field of play for students.

"The flexible learning spaces will allow students to experience traditional lectures, group work and hands-on projects, possibly all within the same class period," she said. "The more exposure our students have to a variety of experiences, the better they will be able to adapt to new situations throughout their careers."

Today, business-related courses are taught in classrooms scattered across SVSU. Organizers say concentrating those activities in one corner of campus will encourage the sort of like-minded discourse and engagement experienced by, for example, mechanical engineering majors in the mechanical engineering program-gear Pioneer Hall and education majors in the education program-gear Gilbertson Hall.

"Sometimes, the most important lessons you learn are from fellow students," said Bill Zehnder, president of Frankenmuth-based Bavarian Inn.

"When you can pick the brains of your fellow classmates, you are sharing experiences in a way that can be educational outside of the classroom."

Dominic Monastiere has more than one perspective on the expansion's benefits.

As SVSU's Boutell/First Merit Bank Executive in Residence, he understands how the addition will strengthen the way faculty teach business-related subjects. As a retired Chemical Bank executive of more than two decades, he can imagine how the region's business leaders will become more engaged than ever with the university and its students.

"In today's business world, employers are looking for the soft skills and the ability of their employees to work as teams to attack problems from 360 degrees," he said.

"So, while you might be working in operations, you need to be able to engage people in marketing, in accounting, in purchasing. In order to prepare our students for those types of environments, we need to provide a more collaborative environment on campus."

Puia said a collaborative environment was one of the strengths of the successful all-day workshop he hosted off-campus last year. He hopes, among other things, to recreate that fruitful, educational climate on SVSU's campus.

"We want to create an environment where it's easy and natural to form relationships with others," Puia said. "This is the way to do that." ■



photo by Tim Inman

Scott Carmona and his family made a name for themselves as entrepreneurs and philanthropists. Now that name will be associated with SVSU's business education.

RYAN, SCOTT, NANCY AND ERIC CARMONA STAND OUTSIDE THE GROENING COMMONS, NEAR WHERE A \$25 MILLION BUILDING EXPANSION IS EXPECTED TO HOUSE THE SCOTT L. CARMONA COLLEGE OF BUSINESS & MANAGEMENT BEGINNING IN 2020. THE FAMILY HAS OWNED AND OPERATED BUSINESSES FROM MICHIGAN TO FLORIDA.

Late nights, early mornings, a determined spirit and a supportive family carried Scott Carmona to success as a businessman starting in the late 1970s. Back then, the Bay City native — who married his wife Nancy at age 19 — was pursuing an education at Saginaw Valley State University, using wages earned operating small business ventures built with sweat and equity.

Forty years later, some things have changed for Carmona. Other things have not. His tenacious work ethic turned fledgling entrepreneurial experiments into prosperous business enterprises that grew along the I-75 corridor, even as far south as Florida. Despite his far-reaching interests, though, he never forgot his roots in the Great Lakes Bay

Region or the role his alma mater played in providing an educational foundation for his success.

Carmona and his family have pledged the lead gift for the fundraising campaign for SVSU's business school. The SVSU Board of Control approved naming the college the Scott L. Carmona College of Business & Management at a May 11 meeting.

"I am thrilled to have this academic college named in honor of my family," Carmona said. "This is an honor, since my family is from the Great Lakes Bay Region, and we have SVSU alumni in our family and businesses, and we embrace that entrepreneurial spirit."

Carmona is the owner of Sunrise National Distributors



Inc., a Bay City-based distributor of automotive aftermarket products. He owns and manages several real estate developments in Michigan and Florida. He also has remained active in community organizations, including the Bay County Growth Alliance, the Dow Bay Area Family YMCA and the McLaren Bay Special Care Hospital Board of Directors. A member of the SVSU Board of Control since 2011, Carmona and his family have contributed financially to SVSU scholarship funds and academic ventures.

While the College of Business & Management has been a part of SVSU since 1972, the legacy of Carmona and his family is being attached during a turning point in its history. A \$25 million, 38,500-square-foot building expansion —

expected to open in January 2020 — will house the academic college's classrooms, faculty offices and business programs. Those elements are spread across SVSU's campus today.

The new space will include state-of-the-art technology such as analytics labs and a Bloomberg Trading Room, which tracks stock data in real time. Planners say the upgrades will provide hands-on learning opportunities for students while also encouraging members of the business community to visit campus and engage with students.

Carmona said his family is excited to invest in the project.

"With the success of this university's alumni and how they have spread SVSU's influence across the world, we decided we wanted to support the continued success of future generations of students from here," he said. "This expansion will give students a leg up in the business world. We want to help future generations find success."

Carmona knows the value of an SVSU education. He completed a bachelor's degree in engineering in 1981, and his son, Ryan, received a bachelor's degree in finance in 2008. Shannan Weston, the current president of Sunrise National Distributors Inc., started with the company as an intern, completing a bachelor's degree and an M.B.A. at SVSU as she climbed the ranks.

Carmona learned persistence from his father, who emigrated to the U.S. from Egypt at age 17.

While attending SVSU in the late 1970s, the just-married Carmona made ends meet at first by developing a swimming pool maintenance company. It was a gritty job that required him start his days early. During his senior year, he was contracted to perform service work for Coca-Cola USA. The new opportunity led him to create a small business that specialized in repairing and remanufacturing dispensing equipment used in restaurants across the country.

"I would show up at Coca-Cola's office in Dearborn — with my shirt still dirty from working on pools — to pick up equipment to work on," he said. "I was driving all over the place, sometimes waking up at 4 in the morning and working throughout the night."

Carmona's company, National Equipment Refurbishers Inc., flourished, employing up to 50 people at one point. After 15 years, he sold the business to create and develop other companies, largely in the commercial real estate and automotive aftermarket distribution industries. Over the decades, he also pursued business interests outside of Michigan, including Texas, New Hampshire and Florida, where he developed an industrial park in the 2000s.

The entrepreneurial spirit remains strong in Carmona, who would rather talk about new opportunities than reflect on past accomplishments.

"It's hard for me to look back, because I'm always looking forward and asking, 'What are we going to do tomorrow?,'" he said. "It's the same with education. The exploration for education is endless. Let's always look ahead and learn something new." ■

Remembering Evan

One year after the tragic death of Evan Willman, a tight-knit group of students honored their fallen friend, and a university granted his mother's wish

by Justin Engel

One year after Evan Willman's funeral, family and friends gathered for a different kind of ceremony where they honored his legacy as a beloved classmate and dedicated student.

During SVSU's commencement ceremony in December 2017, Willman's mother accepted an Honorary Master of Science in Occupational Therapy degree on her son's behalf.

Before he died following a fall from a moving vehicle in December 2016, Willman was on schedule to graduate alongside a close-knit cohort of 58 classmates enrolled in the master's program. SVSU's occupational therapy program teams the same group of students in courses and activities from their first semester in the program until their graduation.

"I hope that he would have been proud of himself for accomplishing enough to receive this degree," said his mother, Rebecca Willman. "I know I'm proud of what he accomplished."

Her son was a standout member of the December 2017 class, classmates and faculty said. His outgoing personality and radiant charm won him friends, impacted lives and influenced wardrobe choices.

"He originated something we called 'Flannel Fridays,'" said Cody Zietz, a classmate who befriended Willman.

Willman and his classmates followed the program's dress code: khakis and polo shirts, as is typically worn by professionals in occupational therapy. But Willman convinced faculty members to allow the group to don flannel attire on Fridays as a way to express camaraderie. The weekly tradition also involved bringing pancake ingredients to campus and cooking breakfast for the group.

"He wanted you to be personable like that," Zietz said, "because he was personable like that. He was the kind of person where, if you were walking in the hallway and he knew you, he was going to stop you and make you smile."

The 23-year-old's death devastated many on campus who knew him. Weeks later, when Willman's parents visited campus to close their son's affairs with the university, they were met by students, faculty, staff and administrators who encouraged them to request a posthumous degree.

Receiving such an honor is a relatively rare occurrence. Academic committees, administrators and registrar officials must review each request to determine the student's eligibility based on several factors. Willman's honorary degree was approved in time for the university's May 2017 commencement, but his parents asked to postpone

the recognition until he could be honored along with his classmates months later.

Ellen Herlache-Pretzer, an SVSU assistant professor of occupational therapy who worked with Willman's group, said the honorary degree was a fitting tribute to her former student and a solemn comfort for his classmates.

"A lot of people looked up to Evan," she said. "They were happy to see him have a chance to finish with them, in a way."

Willman's journey to SVSU began long before his freshman year, his mother said. When his grandmother suffered a stroke in 2006, the family's involvement in the recovery process exposed the then-middle school student to occupational therapy.

"He was fascinated by her therapy sessions," his mother said. "That's where he figured out what he wanted to be. He had a strong desire to help people."

Willman's other interests included athletics. He was a member of all-area football and baseball teams while at Breckenridge High School, where he graduated in 2011. When he enrolled at SVSU, he joined the men's rugby club team, eventually becoming a team captain.

Classmates also were aware of his love for the outdoors. When Willman befriended Zietz, the two became hunting and fishing buddies.

At SVSU, Willman also met Mary Iott, a student in the M.S.O.T. cohort one year ahead of Willman's group. The couple fell in love and were engaged to be married in August 2017. She graduated from SVSU days before his death.

In the wake of that tragedy, Willman's classmates organized a GoFundMe webpage, raising more than \$10,000 to pay for their classmate's funeral. Because of that support, his family was able to use Willman's life insurance to create The 3-Cent Scholarship in honor of Willman and the amount of money left behind in his bank account.

"We have this saying about Evan," his mother said.

"We say, 'He lived life to the fullest — and a bank account to show it.'"

The scholarship is available to Breckenridge High School graduates. The award supports three \$1,000.03 scholarships to college-bound students annually.

His SVSU classmates honored Willman in more ways than one during December's commencement event. During the ceremony, members of his master's program cohort pinned flannel fabric to their commencement robes, observing Flannel Friday one last time for their friend. ■



Evan with his
Fiance, Mary Iott



Evan with his occupational therapy classmates at SVSU.



Rebecca Willman receiving her son's posthumous
degree, with Jim Dwyer, Alumni Relations director.



Evan at an SVSU rugby match



The DREAMMAKERS

Two education alumnae are applying lessons learned at SVSU to a children's book series that is taking them — and their readers — to thrilling new places

by Jason Wolverton





On the wall of an office at Corunna Public School's Nellie Reed Elementary, a painted wooden sign hangs above a desk with a simple yet powerful message:

"Dream Big."

The sign belongs to Shannon Cooper-Toma, the school's principal and budding author who displays it as a decorative discussion piece and as a symbol of the personal mantra that guides her life. By day, she is a dedicated educator; and by night, she is one half of a dynamic author duo. The other half is Tracy Foster, a fellow alumna of SVSU's Master of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.) program. The pair have been rubbing elbows with celebrities while traveling the state in search of the next adventure that could positively impact a child's education.

For a couple of Cardinals, it's a dream that all started with a turtle.

That turtle is named Benson, and he is the star of two children's books Cooper-Toma and Foster authored. "Benson's Adventures in Michigan" and "Benson's Seasonal Adventures in Michigan" take readers around the state, showcasing notable and beautiful locations. Each title follows Benson and his buddies as they unearth and uncover best-kept secrets from destinations such as Mackinac Island, Munising, Petoskey and Traverse City. It's a surreal experience both authors have sought since they were as old as the children featured in their stories.

"We've both wanted to be authors since we were little girls," said Cooper-Toma, a 2006 SVSU graduate. "We wanted to create a project that students were passionate about, inspiring them to travel with their families and provide opportunities to see what Michigan has to offer."

The idea for the books was created by happenstance. Foster, a kindergarten teacher, does photography for district marketing materials and thought it would be a good idea to take a handful of students to Saugatuck for a sea life-themed photo shoot. She and Cooper-Toma loaded up a few students and headed west.

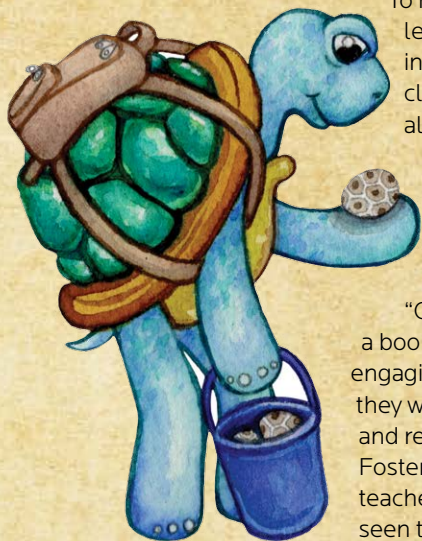
Some of the students had never seen a Great Lake. Once they arrived, the group was astounded by the sheer size and beauty of Lake Michigan. Many students thought they had arrived at the ocean. Cooper-Toma and Foster took extra time to let the kids run around and explore. On the drive home, they discussed how fun it would be to take students to places throughout Michigan in the summer.

And just like that, Benson was born — well, hatched.

"We wanted to create a project that would inspire families to explore our great state with their children," said Foster, a 2001 graduate. "Travel builds background knowledge and vocabulary and allows students to dream big."

As educators, they wanted to create a book with a purpose beyond just entertainment. So they looked at the curriculum and built in elements of social studies, math and science. They also had Benson tell his stories through postcard format, a simple yet powerful medium for young readers that encourages children to write about their own adventures.





To help enhance the learning experience inside and outside the classroom, the two also made companion parent and teacher guides that are available for free on their website.

"Our goal was to write a book that would be so engaging for students that they would want to write and read even more," Foster said. "A lot of the teachers say they haven't seen their students so engaged in writing as

they've been when they used our books. That's pretty exciting."

One teacher with first-hand experience with the books is another SVSU alumna, Melissa Princinsky, a second-grade teacher at Elsa Meyer Elementary of Corunna Public Schools. Princinsky, who earned a bachelor's degree in education in 1998 and a master's degree in teaching in 2001 at SVSU, has used the first book in her classroom since it was published. She asks her students to write Benson about their own adventures.

"The students love it because they can make a connection to the story," she said. "A lot of them have had experiences across Michigan and have traveled to the places in the story, or they know the children featured in the book. That personal connection is crucial in terms of helping students engage with the book."

The authors' focus on student engagement and their passion for literacy were honed, in part, thanks to their experiences at SVSU. As literary specialists, Cooper-Toma and Foster focused particularly on the at-risk reader, something they kept in mind while writing.

"What I loved most about my time at SVSU is that we always had that goal in mind," Cooper-Toma said. "How can we engage those at-risk readers? It's something everyone in the program is very passionate about."

One of the strategies they used throughout their books was incorporating short and interesting "Did You Know?" facts throughout because those readers respond well to informational text — something they learned while in SVSU's M.A.T. program.

"The passion SVSU gave me to help create that spark in children for reading and writing has been foundational to me," Foster said. "The professors share their passion for literacy and that gets you excited to come back and use those strategies within your classroom."

Facts

POST CARD

PLACE
POSTAGE
STAMP
HERE

FOR CORRESPONDENCE

Benson's Literacy Foundation has donated more than 4,000 books since its creation in 2016. If you wish to donate, visit bensonsliteracyfoundation.org

Benson's third book is in the works. He will step outside the Great Lakes State and visit national locations.

Cooper-Toma and Foster have traveled to 36 different locations with more than 60 students and have logged more than 11,000 miles while creating their two books.

Families who wish to see some of the great sites Michigan has to offer can do so for free through the Michigan Activity Pass Program. Admission passes to hundreds of cultural destinations and natural locations are available with a Michigan library card. More information is available by visiting the Michigan Activity Pass — MAP Facebook page.

FOR ADDRESS ONLY

"Benson's Adventures in Michigan" and "Benson's Seasonal Adventures in Michigan" are available to purchase at Schuler Books and Music in Lansing and Grand Rapids, dozens of boutiques and gift shops throughout Michigan, online at bensonsadventures.com and on Amazon. To date, more than 15,000 copies of their books have been sold.

The character of Benson the turtle was used because in 1995 a group of students from Niles, Michigan, petitioned state legislators to adopt the painted turtle as the state reptile. "We wanted to show children their voice is powerful," Cooper-Toma said, "and that they can use theirs to make a difference, too."

The authors also travel the state appearing at speaking engagements and a variety of literacy programs. They estimate they have appeared at more than 100 events since the first book was published in 2016.



TRACY FOSTER AND SHANNON COOPER-TOMA READ THEIR BOOK, "BENSON'S ADVENTURES," TO A CLASSROOM.

photo by Michael Randolph

Cooper-Toma and Foster have also applied that passion to the philanthropic sector in the creation of Benson's Literacy Foundation, a nonprofit organization they founded. The organization aims to donate its books — and many others — to Michigan classrooms, community organizations and summer camps.

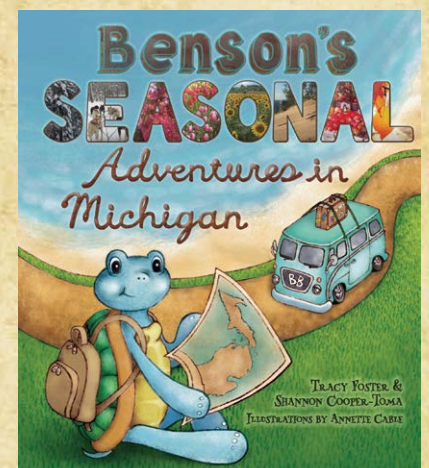
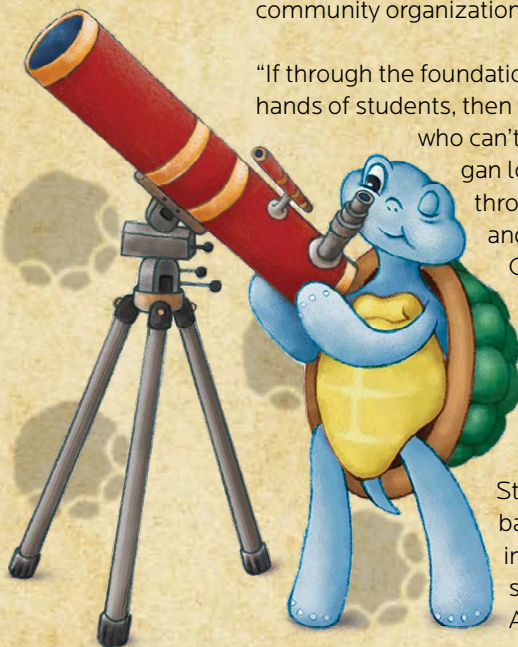
"If through the foundation we can get our books in the hands of students, then we can get those students who can't travel to these great Michigan locations to at least travel through the pages of a book and dream big while reading," Cooper-Toma said.

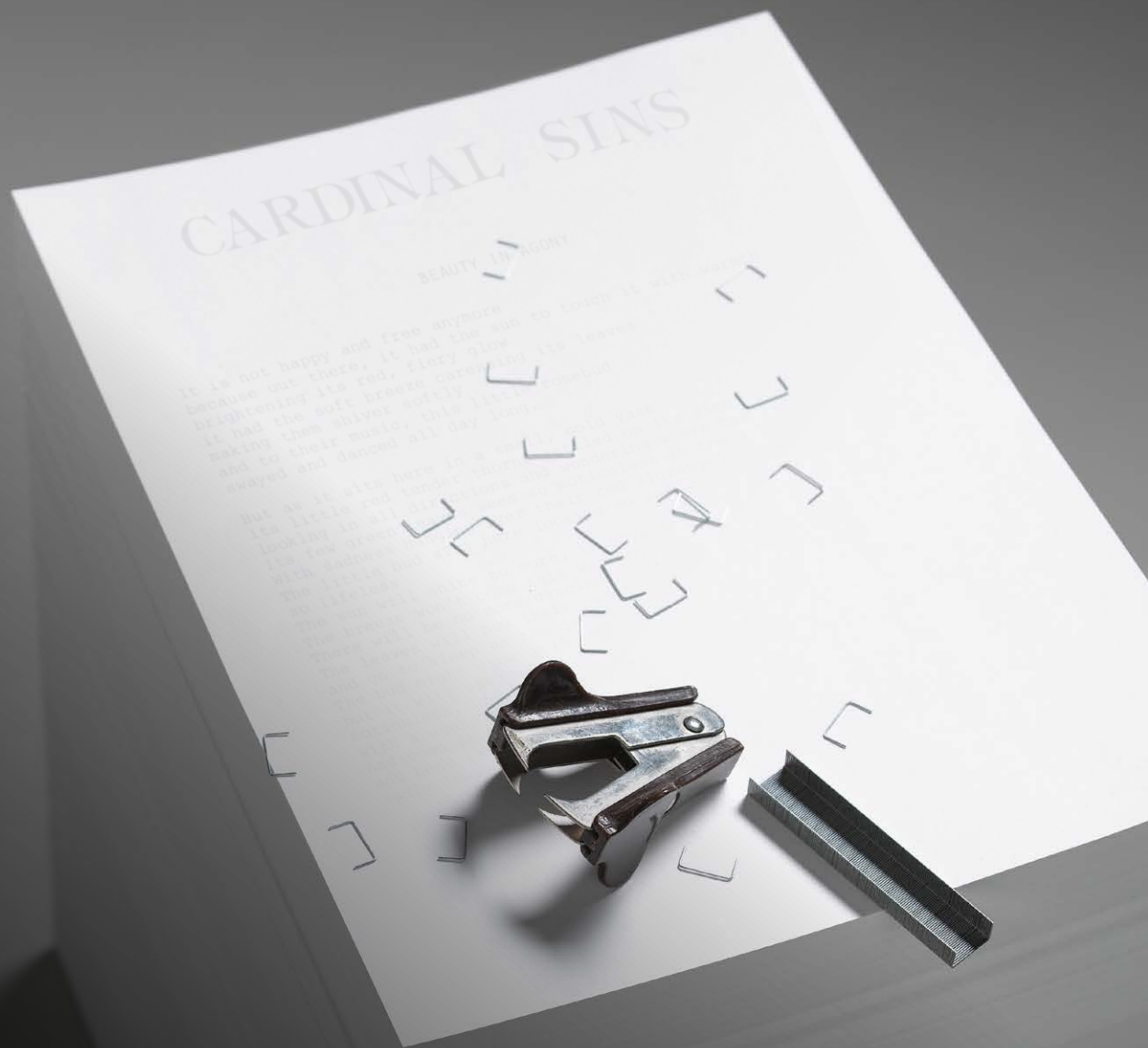
While they continue to encourage their young readers to keep dreaming, they also live that motto. The authors have met Michigan State University men's basketball coach Tom Izzo and were invited to the New York City set of ABC's "Good Morning America."

ABC News chief meteorologist Ginger Zee, a frequent visitor of some of the locations the book highlights, is a fan of their "Dream Big" message.

While backstage at the set, they met Robin Roberts and Harry Connick Jr., the sort of star-struck experience a principal and kindergarten teacher from rural Michigan wouldn't have expected when they were brainstorming ideas and laying out pictures on a couch.

"We never could have imagined all of our dreams would begin to come true through Benson," Foster said of their creation. "But we knew we had enough determination that we weren't going to stop until all of our dreams were met." ■

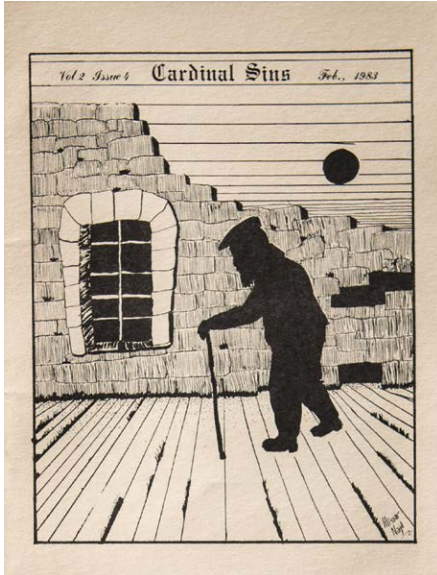




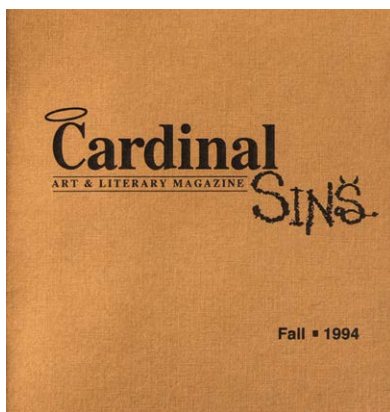
Original Sins

After humble beginnings, Cardinal Sins over the decades evolved into one of the nation's most distinguished campus literary-art magazines

by Megan Wagner

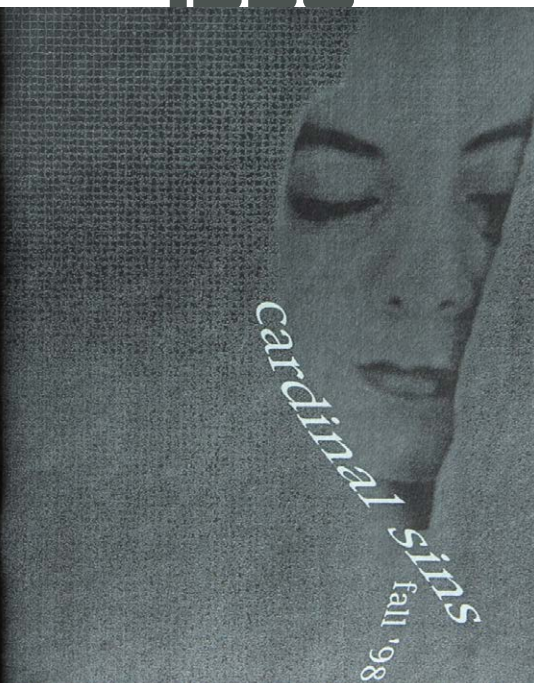


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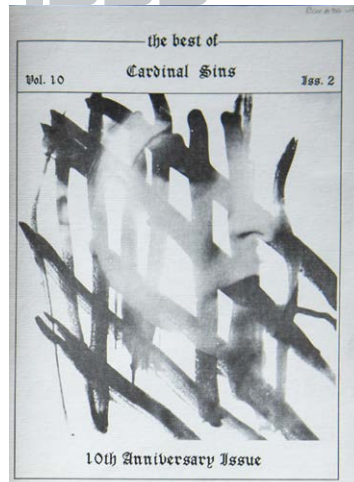


1994

1998



1993



2018

Her peers' poetry and short stories scattered across the carpet of a tiny campus office, Alissar Langworthy leafed through each piece of creative work in search of the best writing, all while trying not to step on her friends in the process. With only two pieces of furniture to seat six bodies in such close quarters, Langworthy and the rest of the inaugural student editorial staff of SVSU's literary-arts magazine were organizing the first issue of Cardinal Sins in 1981 literally from the ground-floor level. Later, typing the selected writings on legal paper, the staff created copies and bound each edition themselves. Using staples.

It was a rudimentary operation, to be sure, but it led to a final product they shared proudly with their classmates and campus — and that's what mattered most to the publication's ambitious architects.

"When you're young, there are no barriers and no obstacles," said Langworthy, who was one of Cardinal Sins' driving forces nearly 40 years ago.

"We wanted to do it, so we did."

That appetite for creation kept the publication alive during those embryonic years, allowing it to thrive in the generations since. These days, the journal is considered among the nation's elite college literary-art magazines. The American Scholastic Press Association presented Cardinal Sins with the Most Outstanding University Literary-Art Magazine award for the second consecutive year in January 2018. It was one of two magazines in the U.S. to earn such distinction.

Through the poetry, short stories, photography, graphic design and other forms of art presented on paper, over the decades Cardinal Sins has served as a canvas for hundreds of SVSU students, most of them studying within SVSU's College of Arts & Behavioral Sciences.

The evolution of the magazine has been guided by editors and advisers alike. Among the influential figures in the magazine's history were Langworthy; Melissa Seitz, a former adviser who turned the magazine's fortunes around more than a decade ago; and Victoria Phelps, a recently graduated editor who helped put the publication on



MELISSA SEITZ GUIDED CARDINAL SINS FIRST AS AN EDITOR AND LATER AS ITS FACULTY ADVISER FOR SIX YEARS.

the map nationally. Their story is the story of Cardinal Sins.



Michael Langworthy planted the seed for the magazine when he sat down with Gary Thompson — an English professor still on the faculty today — to discuss the possibilities of producing an on-campus publication featuring pieces of creative writing by fellow students.

Thompson became a mentor on the project and Langworthy's enthusiasm and drive for the publication helped launch an idea he first scribbled on a notepad in a coffee shop.

Once he acquired the \$500 grant needed to purchase resources to launch the publication, Langworthy began his search for an editorial staff. The most obvious first choice was his girlfriend (a woman he would later marry) Alissar Langworthy, then known as Alissar Fouzi Najd. Although she was an international student from Lebanon and English was not her first language, she understood its mechanisms better than anyone else Michael Langworthy knew.

And so the two began their makeshift operation along with five other students. Alissar Langworthy remembered that first production cycle as being a labor of true love.

"Everyone on the team believed in the publication," she said. "We all wanted to see it succeed."

And succeed it did. The campus community loved it, she recalled, and the staff soon saw a flood of literary submissions for the next edition. Cardinal Sins evolved quickly, adding illustrations to its written content in the second issue. The fourth issue featured the publication's first cover art — two cardinals gathering near an apple, bitten to the core — drawn by Langworthy herself. Photography and graphic design submissions appeared in later volumes.

The discussions about whether a piece should be published could get pretty lively at times, she recalled. Especially when their office space felt more like a cubby than an actual room. However, the staff used these close quarters to their advantage.

"It was all very invigorating," she said. "Everyone threw their own expressions and experiences into the mix. Even when we disagreed about certain aspects, it really was a collaborative effort."



However, love could take the publication only so far. When then-student Melissa Seitz joined the magazine's staff

in 1994, funding remained a challenge. The black-and-white magazine was still bound by staples.

Seitz recalled much of her time with the magazine as a student advocating for submissions. The success of the original staff had plateaued, and the journal was struggling to expand, she said.

After Seitz completed her bachelor's degree in English literature in 1994 and later a master's degree in creative writing at Michigan State University, she returned to SVSU as an adjunct faculty member and to Cardinal Sins as its faculty adviser. She held this role for six years, longer than any of her predecessors or successors.

"I saw Cardinal Sins — something I had been passionate about as a student — not doing anything different or new," she said, "and I sort of just fell back into it."

Seitz made it her mission to find funding to replace the staples with a proper book binding.

"People were afraid to see me coming," she said. "They knew I was going to ask for funding."

However, her father-in-law, Carl Seitz, knew how passionate she was about the magazine. When he died in 2004, a large chunk of his memorial fund was gifted to Cardinal Sins. She also founded a creative writing scholarship in his name using another portion of his donation.

This development became a turning point for the magazine. It was when the entire publication started growing and transforming, Seitz said. The budget was able to support printing costs for the publication to be bound like high-standard magazines sold in bookstores. The added funds helped purchase the resources needed to launch the magazine online.

While Cardinal Sins advanced aesthetically as a magazine, Seitz said the students' creative passion remained at the core of publication. Watching their love of creating provided some of her most cherished memories as adviser.

"At the receptions at the end of each year, students would read their work — some for the first time in front of other people," she said.

"Seeing the joy on their faces as they

read their work to their family, friends and strangers was really rewarding. Seeing that pride on their faces was my favorite part of the whole process."



The dedicated work ethic — established by the Langworthys and reinforced by Seitz — was adopted by later generations of Cardinal Sins staff members.

Victoria Phelps, who received her bachelor's degree in English literature in May 2018, is among those successors. Before graduating, she served as the magazine's editor-in-chief during its two-year run as Most Outstanding University Literary-Art Magazine.

These days, the editorial staff does not spread themselves across the floor of a cramped office space to design their next issue. Instead, most of the work is created via computer, but the process is still conducted in close quarters in the publication's office in Curtiss Hall.

However, Phelps and her team operate with the same gritty determination as the original editorial staff. The small space is used to capture the creative spirit of Cardinal Sins, just as it had back in 1981.

Phelps attributed Cardinal Sins' success to the quality of work submitted and to the current editorial staff. ■



photo by Michael Randolph

VICTORIA PHELPS SERVED AS EDITOR THE LAST TWO YEARS.

Cardinal Sins founders' ambitions span the oceans



Creating SVSU's campus literary-art magazine, Cardinal Sins, was one of the earliest accomplishments of Alissar and Michael Langworthy. But it merely marked the beginning of their adventures together.

One year after the couple graduated from SVSU in 1984, they married. Their family has grown since. Today, they are raising their two daughters in Mattapoisett, Massachusetts — all while pursuing professions supporting modern medicine.

While serving in Afghanistan in 2012 as a trauma surgeon, Michael Langworthy was chosen as a Leading Physician of the World for 2013-14 and as Leading Health Professional of the World for 2011 by the International Biographical Center. He oversees two orthopedic practices located in Dartmouth and New Bedford. The U.S. Navy Reserve captain is also a leading adviser on arthritic joint disease to the U.S. military.

Alissar Langworthy sails the world as captain of an ocean-bound boat, the Phoenicia. Docked in New Bedford, Massachusetts, the vessel serves as a research platform for her husband's work searching for more advanced methods for treating bone fractures. The research involves examining substances found in ocean water that are similar to the make-up of human bones. They hope their findings lead to new methods for mending broken bones using substances that dissolve over time, replacing the practice of fixing bones using surgically implanted metal rods. The vessel has also become a place for students to participate in field studies along the Massachusetts and Rhode Island coasts. ■



photos by Michael Randolph

SVSU PRESIDENT DON BACHAND AND DICK GARBER, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF GARBER MANAGEMENT GROUP, SHARE A LAUGH — AND A LOT OF THE SAME COMMUNITY VALUES.

As SVSU and Garber Management Group become more engaged with the community, both are discovering commonalities leading them to share resources and join forces

by Justin Engel

SVSU and one of its community business partners are toasting a new tradition, and the celebration is expected to spill over to the next generations of Cardinal alumni.

After SVSU President Don Bachand added resources and staff to the university's Alumni Relations office, new initiatives were developed to reengage alumni while simultaneously establishing a stronger connection with graduating seniors before they leave the campus. With that in mind, the first senior toast celebration was organized in December 2016.

That first celebration featured about 125 seniors who gathered in Curtiss Hall days before their commencement ceremony. Champagne, hors d'oeuvres, a photo portrait station and good conversation punctuated an evening led by Bachand, Alumni Relations Director Jim Dwyer and the SVSU community.

"It was a good start," Dwyer said, "but it has far exceeded our expectations. A new tradition has begun."

Over the course of the four toast celebrations that has grown (one is scheduled before each December and May graduation), the guest list has grown to more than 700 people thanks to "good word of mouth," Dwyer said.

For this tradition to continue, SVSU leaders sought a hometown partner to financially support the toast. They found one in

the Garber Management Group Inc., which has roots that run deep in the community. Along with owning car dealerships in four states and the Saginaw Spirit hockey franchise (to name a few of its business ventures) Garber Management Group Inc. invests in philanthropic work.

"It was just a natural fit to be partnered with them," Dwyer said. "SVSU and Garber share so many of the same community values. We are both committed to making the Great Lakes Bay Region a region to be proud of."

Dick Garber, president and chief executive officer of Garber Management Group Inc., echoed the sentiment.

"When my grandfather founded the company over 110 years ago, giving service to the community was a major priority," Garber said. "Today, it remains an integral part of our culture at Garber."

Those shared values in part are evidenced by Garber's workforce. Today, 39 SVSU alumni work at the company.

"As our organization has grown, we've had the privilege to recruit and work with some of the great talent SVSU has developed," Garber said. "Supporting SVSU — which shares our vision of community betterment — and its alumni is a natural partnership to make the Great Lakes Bay Region a great place to live, learn, work and play." ■



BACHAND SPEAKS AT THE APRIL 2018 SVSU SENIOR TOAST, WHICH IS SPONSORED BY GARBER MANAGEMENT GROUP INC.

Q&A

AT GARBER NISSAN
— AND IN LIFE —
MARQUIS EVANS
KNOWS THE VALUE
OF A FAST START

Marquis Evans has been a member of SVSU's family since the fourth grade. The Saginaw Township man became acquainted with the university sooner than most of his peers when his mother, LaCreta Clark, a professor of educational leadership & services, joined the faculty in 2003. Evans enrolled at SVSU in 2012.

He joined the football team as a redshirt freshman but hung up his cleats before his sophomore year when another opportunity presented itself. The finance major impressed his co-workers at Garber Management Group Inc. during a summer internship at the company's Nissan dealership two miles from campus. In fact, he was asked to join the company full time more than two years before he earned his bachelor's degree in 2017. After serving in a number of roles, the 23-year-old was named the dealership's finance manager this year, making him the youngest at the position at any of Garber's regional locations.

Evans recently sat down with REFLECTIONS for a Q&A session discussing his experience at SVSU and Garber, and how the transition from student to professional was made smoother thanks to the commonalities between the two organizations.



You were a redshirt tight end with SVSU's football team in 2012. What was that like?

My whole football experience: I loved it. It taught me a lot about discipline and hard work. It also gave me some of my best connections in life, through friends and mentors. I still go to games when I can — about two each season.

Was it hard not to play your sophomore year?

I loved playing football, but I saw an opportunity in joining Garber full time. In the long run, that would benefit me more than finishing my college football career. Any college sport is a full-time job. There weren't enough hours in the day to play football, go to class and work at Garber. I had to choose.

Are there any misconceptions about your job?

Yes. We genuinely want to help people. Many consumers are stuck with the mindset that dealers are here to profit as much as possible with no regard for the customer's financial well-being, which is the complete opposite of our end goal. We truly help people improve their lifestyle.

What was your favorite memory at SVSU?

Having my mom hand me my diploma jacket after I walked across the stage at commencement. Ever since I was young, she always told me to work hard for what you want; that an education is the most important asset you can have. It was great to see her there when I earned my degree.

Finance manager is a pretty important position. You have to finalize vehicle purchases for buyers and work with financial institutions to get sales and loans approved. There's a lot at stake for both the customer and company. How did it feel to take on that responsibility so early?

The best feeling I've had at Garber was getting the finance manager spot. I've always wanted it. I love working with people, and I love working with numbers, so it's the best of both worlds. The knowledge I gained at SVSU and the experience I had at Garber helped prepare me for it, so I was ready.

For more of Marquis Evan's interview, visit REFLECTIONS online at: svsu.edu/reflections



CLASS NOTES

1970s

Neil Murray Jr., 1978, B.S., has continued his accomplishments since graduation by working in engineering management with ZF Corporation, as well as being an adjunct professor at Lawrence Tech University. He also published a book, "Rational Process Design & Simulation Modeling with WITNESS Horizon," which is available on Amazon.

Trevor Nelson, 1977, M.A.T., was named director of the Institute for Global Studies at the University of Delaware.

David Points, 1976, B.A., hosted the program "Achievable Dream High School Summer Enrichment Program, Virginia Tech Biocomplexity Institute and the College Access Collaborative" at his Roanoke, Virginia-based radio studio, WFJX FOX Radio 910/ CBS Sports Radio, to promote STEM curriculums in radio.

1980s

Donald Haskin, 1984, B.A.; 1991, B.A.; 2006, M.Ed., was named assistant to the president at Kirtland Community College in Roscommon.

Mary (Vitany) Peterson, 1984, B.A., retired after teaching kindergarten for 30 years in Michigan. She taught for 12 years in Reed City and 18 years at Pine River Schools in LeRoy.

Raphael Shemanski, 1984, B.S., was named president of U.S. business at The Brink's Company, a security and protection company based in Richmond, Virginia.

Jim Terry, 1986, B.B.A., opened The Great Lakes Escape Game in August 2016 with the help of fellow alumnus **Joe Wisniewski**, 2014, B.B.A.; 2016, M.B.A.

Michael Tribble, 1987, B.B.A., was named Child Advocate of the Year by the Child Abuse and Neglect Council of Saginaw County.

1990s

Dena Altheide, 1996, M.A., will retire from working as director of court operations after 44 years with the 67th District Court in Genesee County.

Jennifer Attie, 1998, B.S.N., was elected to the Petoskey-Harbor Springs Area Community Foundation Board of Directors.

Jennifer Booms, 1996, B.B.A., was promoted to assistant vice president and loan administration manager at Thumb National Bank & Trust Company in Pigeon.

Jeffrey Cross, 1999, B.A., earned the rank of lieutenant in the Fenton Police Department.

Dr. Eric Eby, 1994, B.S., was recently honored with the Mastership Award by the Academy of General Dentistry. The recognition represents one of the most rigorous continuing dental education awards offered in dentistry.

Lynnette Keller, 1996, B.B.A., was named executive director of human resources at Michigan Sugar Company.

Brenda Spurbeck, 1995, B.S.N., has continued her education since graduation, earning her M.S.N., family nurse practitioner certification, two nursing subspecialties and most recently, her Doctor of Nursing Practice this year. She will now be working in the Pulmonology Subspecialty Department at Canton-Potsdam Hospital in Potsdam, New York.

Patrick Stanard, 1990, B.S., is a systems architect manager for IBM. A 34-year professional in the industry, his roles have included systems programmer, developer, manager, adjunct faculty member and director of operations. He recently published an article, "Get to Know Quantum Computing," which can be read on the website IBM Destination Z.

2000s

Ryan Anderson, 2004, B.B.A., was recognized as one of "America's Top Next-Generation Wealth Advisors" by Forbes. He serves as the first vice president-investments at Wells Fargo Advisors in Midland.

Jeffrey Bacholzky, 2004, B.A.; 2009, M.Ed., led the Almont junior varsity football team to its second consecutive undefeated season and third consecutive Blue Water Area Conference championship. Bacholzky is a mathematics teacher at Almont High School in Almont.

Ashton Bortz, 2007, B.A., was promoted to the district chief of staff for U.S. Rep. John Moolenaar's Midland office.

Amy Buben, 2000, B.B.A., was one of the 10 recipients of the 13th annual RUBY Awards, which recognizes outstanding professionals under the age of 40 in the Great Lakes Bay Region. She serves as a principal at Yeo & Yeo in Saginaw.

Travus Burton, 2003, B.A., was named director of civic learning and community engagement at Grand Valley State University.

Kile Charnes, 2007, B.A., was hired as the principal for Mesick Elementary School in Mesick.

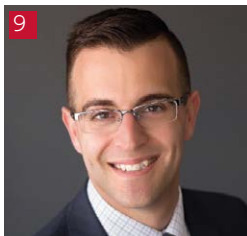
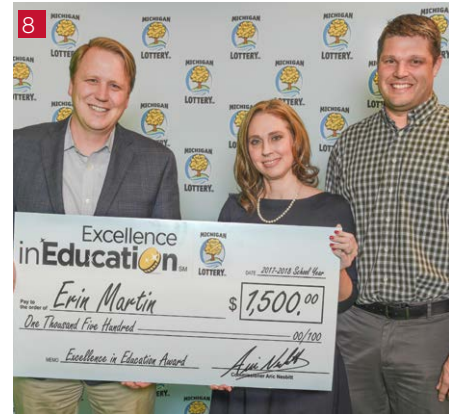
Christopher Collins, 2000, M.Ed., was selected to join the SVSU Gerstacker Fellowship program in 2018. The program provides leadership training for educators. Collins is an elementary school principal for Port Huron Schools in Port Huron.

Craig Coopersmith, 2003, B.A.; 2007, M.Ed., was named Carrollton High School's Teacher of the Year for the 2017-18 school year.

Melissa Dabrowski, 2004, B.B.A., was hired as the vice president of human resources for Great Lakes Management Services Organization, based in Grand Rapids.

Jacob Darabos, 2008, B.P.A., was hired as the chief financial officer at Fort Knox Federal Credit Union in Radcliff, Kentucky.

Shaun Dicken, 2009, B.A., was promoted to the position of head coach for the varsity lacrosse program at Northville High School in Northville.



- 1) Callen Michael is the son of Brittany (Wellman) Tibaldo, 2008, B.B.A., and Christopher Tibaldo, 2013, B.B.A.
- 2) Melanie Conrad (Dupuis), 2016, B.S.N., and her husband, David Conrad
- 3) Lynnette Keller, 1996, B.B.A.
- 4) The Almont junior varsity football team, coached by Jeffrey Bacholzky, 2004, B.A.; 2009, M.Ed.
- 5) Rollin Johnson Jr., 2009, M.B.A.
- 6) Joe Wisniewski, 2014, B.B.A.; 2016, M.B.A.
- 7) Christina Kozouz, 2006, M.Ed.
- 8) Erin Martin (center), 1999, B.S.; 2004, M.A.T.
- 9) Jacob Darabos, 2008, B.P.A.
- 10) Jeffrey Cross, 1999, B.A.
- 11) Ryan Anderson, 2004, B.B.A.
- 12) Natalie Lister is the daughter of Ashley (Buchholz) Lister, 2008, B.A.

Cristie Douglas, 2009, B.A., was hired by Andrews Hooper Pavlik PLC in Saginaw as a marketing assistant.

Kenneth Dragiewicz, 2003, M.B.A., was appointed to the Alpena Community College Foundation Board of Trustees.

Nancy Gartner, 2007, B.A., married D. Cody Gaines, and the couple now resides in Platteville, Wisconsin.

John Highstreet, 2005, M.Ed., was chosen to be the new pastor at Algonac Church of Christ.

Paula Holland, 2009, B.A., was honored with an Excellence in Education award for her dedication to her fourth- and fifth-grade students at State Street Academy in Bay City.

Rollin Johnson Jr., 2009, M.B.A., was selected as the director of Campus Compact for Virginia.

Rebekah Kilpatrick, 2009, B.P.A., was promoted to senior manager in the Saginaw office of Andrews Hooper Pavlik PLC.

Christa Klosterman, 2008, B.A., was hired as a fourth-grade teacher for Arrowwood Elementary School in Saginaw Township.

Matthew Koleszar, 2006, B.A., announced his bid to campaign for state representative as a Democratic candidate in Michigan's 20th District, which represents the cities of Northville and Plymouth, the townships of Northville and Plymouth, and a portion of Canton.

Timothy Kovacs, 2004, M.Ed., was recognized as the winner of the Mel Miller Memorial Award, which recognizes a K-12 teacher for serving as an advocate for social change. He serves as a teacher for the Warren Consolidated Schools District in southeast Michigan.

Christina Kozouz, 2006, M.Ed., was named principal at Wyandot Middle School in Clinton.

Matthew LaFleur, 2003, B.A., was hired as the offensive coordinator for the Tennessee Titans in the National Football League.

Joseph Latunski, 2006, M.B.A., was hired as controller at Napa Valley College in Napa, California.

Erin Martin, 1999, B.S.; 2004, M.A.T., received the Excellence in Education Award from the Michigan Lottery. She serves as a high school teacher for the Bullock Creek School District.

Adam McCauley, 2003, B.A., was one of the 10 recipients of the 13th annual RUBY Award. He is the owner of Sandlot Sports in Saginaw.

Jason Meisch, 2002, B.S., was selected as one of the Top 50 Golf Fitness Professionals in the United States.

Ashley (Buchholz) Lister, 2008, B.A., and Ryan Lister welcomed their daughter, Natalie Lister, into the world on Dec. 5, 2017.

Julie Phenis, 2008, B.S.W., was selected as a member of the Detroit Revitalization Fellows 2017-19 Cohort as a fellow-in-place at Focus: HOPE in Detroit, where she serves as the manager of Strategic Initiatives and Partnerships.

Robert Reeves, 1996, B.B.A.; 2001, M.A., was hired as the tight ends coach for the Eastern Michigan University football program.

Richard Straughen, 2007, M.Ed., was named the Top Advanced Placement Teacher in the Midwest by the College Board. He works as a high school teacher for the Utica Community School District.

Ryan Tarrant, 2000, B.A., was appointed the new president and CEO of the Bay Area Chamber of Commerce.

Levi (Jeff) Terpenning, 2003, B.A., was promoted from principal to superintendent for the Capac School District.

Brittany (Wellman) Tibaud, 2008, B.B.A. and **Christopher Tibaud**, 2013, B.B.A., welcomed their son, Callen Michael, into the world on Nov. 3, 2017.

Kimberly Vargo, 2008, B.A., was appointed by Gov. Rick Snyder to the Heritage Fund Board.

Marc White, 2009, B.B.A., celebrated 10 years of service with the Great Lakes Safety Training Center.

Aaron Wirsing, 2001, B.B.A., was hired as the senior vice president and chief financial officer at The State Bank in Mount Pleasant.

Zachary Zuzula, 2007, B.A., was selected to join the SVSU Gerstacker Fellowship program in 2018. He is a middle school teacher for Carrollton Public Schools.

2010s

Rashed Aldubayyan,

2015, B.S., accepted a job as a business system analyst at

Saudi Aramco, the world's largest crude oil exporter, based in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.

Brandon Boyle, 2013, B.A., received the Heroism Award from the Fredericksburg Regional Chamber of Commerce at its inaugural First Responders Appreciation Breakfast for his bravery in the line of duty after being shot last year as a sheriff's deputy in Stafford County, Virginia.

Justin Brouckaert, 2013, B.A., was hired as an editorial assistant and promoted to associate agent at Aevitas Creative Management, a New York City-based literary agency.

Lisa (Coffell) Brouckaert, 2012, B.A., was hired as a second-grade teacher at Empowerment Academy in Jersey City, New Jersey.

Teresa Burkhard, 2012, B.P.A., announced her engagement to **Nicholas Loberg**, 2014, B.B.A. The couple plan to marry in August 2018.

Chelsea Coffey, 2016, B.A., was hired as a special assistant to the mayor for Lansing Mayor Andy Schor.

Melanie Conrad (Dupuis), 2016, B.S.N., married David Conrad on March 17, 2018, in Freeland.

Rachel Curtis, 2011, B.S.N., was named the chief nursing officer at the Tuscola County Medical Care Facility.

Mary Ann Deschaine, 2010, S.Ed., was named the superintendent of Catholic schools for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston.

Anthony Dier, 2013, B.A., was hired by Midland as the community development planner.

Mallory Fisher, 2018, B.P.A., was hired in a full-time position at The Dow Chemical Company's Finance Development Program for Accountants in Houston.

Randy Wenzel, 2015, B.B.A., announced his engagement to **Lauren Seibert**, 2017, M.S. The couple will be married on Aug. 25, 2018.



photo by Tim Inman

James L. Mitchell — April 15, 2018

James L. "Jim" Mitchell, 90, joined SVSU in 1977 as a professor of accounting, and in 1979, he was named dean of the College of Business & Management.

He retired from the position in December 1992, retaining emeritus status.

His legacy will continue at SVSU where he and his late wife of 60 years, Barbara, established two scholarship-supporting endowments to aid students studying vocal music and academic programs in the College of Business & Management.

Mitchell was born in Franklin, West Virginia, in 1927. He was a World War II U.S. Army veteran.

After graduating from Michigan State University with a bachelor's degree in 1950, he spent nine years in Lansing engaged in land development, residential construction and real estate sales. Later, he earned master's and doctorate degrees from MSU before beginning his higher education career at SVSU.

He was active in organizations, including The Salvation Army, The Saginaw Choral Society, and SVRC Industries. He was a member of Saginaw's First Congregational Church in Saginaw.

Surviving him are three of four children, four grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

1960s

Shirley Dougherty, 1969, B.A. – Aug. 8, 2017

After working as a nurse for more than 30 years, Dougherty, 87, retired but remained a volunteer for the next 15 years. She raised and showed American Kennel Club-registered purebred dogs and led many to championship status.

John Pletzke, 1968, B.A. – Dec. 12, 2017

Pletzke, 81, worked at Dow Corning Corp., and after 19 years in various marketing-related positions, he accepted an assignment in Australia as regional marketing manager for Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia.

Marcella Scherping, 1967, B.A. – Jan. 31, 2018

Scherping, 88, was one of SVSU's first graduates. She enjoyed a career as a psychologist at the Westland Child Guidance Clinic and in private practice.

Ruth Donner (O'Hara), 1979, B.A. – Jan. 17, 2018

Donner, 94, obtained her college degree in social work from SVSU at the age of 61. She entered the Marine Corps during World War II. Donner did volunteer work for the Literacy Council and Cancer Services of Midland for many years.

Lewis Draper, 1976, B.A. – Oct. 20, 2017

Draper, 71, was a veteran of the U. S. Army, and enjoyed golfing, camping, hunting and fishing. He was retired from the Michigan State Police as a detective sergeant in the Fire Division.

Ellen Godi, 1976, M.A.T. – Dec. 25, 2017

Godi, 69, enjoyed a career as a public school teacher. She was a member of the VFW Auxiliary in Birch Run. She enjoyed reading, quilting, cross-stitch, sewing, gardening, painting and crafting.

Mary Haggerty, 1977, B.B.A. – Jan. 23, 2018

Haggerty, 63, worked as a certified public accountant.

Susan Johnson, 1979, B.A. – Nov. 26, 2017

Johnson, 76, enjoyed a diverse working career that included social work, graphic art for Seitner's and teaching. For the past 20 years, she worked as a real estate agent.

Gary Lasceski, 1972, B.A., M.A.T. – Oct. 23, 2017

Lasceski, 67, taught for 37 years at Vassar High School before he retired. He coached the junior high girls and boys track teams as well as basketball. He was the adviser for the school's Youth in Government program.

Norma Lusby, 1977, M.A.T. – Dec. 16, 2017

Lusby, 81, taught 37 years at McKinley Elementary School in Warren. She was a member of the Delta Kappa Gamma Society, Williamstown Women's Club and Grant Co. Historical Society.

Patrick McCoy, 1974, B.A. – Sept. 30, 2017

McCoy, 78, was employed at General Motors as a pattern maker for 30 years. He also practiced law for 31 years, in private practice and at Legal Service of Eastern Michigan.

1970s

Judith Braun, 1972, B.A. – Aug. 19, 2017

Braun, 67, was active in education all of her life and will be remembered for her dedication to family and generosity of spirit. She was always willing to help and care for others.

Philip Brooks, 1975, B.A. – Jan. 16, 2018

Brooks, 76, was employed as a police officer for the City of Midland for 26 years. He obtained the rank of lieutenant and retired in 1993. He also served in the U.S. Air Force.

Wanda Ciesla (Hagen), 1972, B.B.A. – Jan. 11, 2018

Ciesla, 68, was a bookkeeper for her husband's business and for the former Trippensee Company in Saginaw. She enjoyed reading, quilting and making tree skirts, and spending time up north at Lost Valley Campground.

Rose Marie McQuaid, 1973, B.A. – Sept. 4, 2017

McQuaid, 87, served for 32 years on the Midland County Board of Commissioners and worked at Ayre/Rhinehart. She was known to say, "For a healthy community, one must serve. I speak for many with little or no voice."

David H. Roche, 1970, B.A. – Dec. 18, 2017

Roche, 70, was a graduate of Michigan State University and SVSU. He started his sugar industry career as comptroller for Michigan Sugar Company in 1976, going to Savannah Foods in 1996. He then went to Minn-Dak in Wahpeton, North Dakota, in 2001 and retired in August 2013. Roche married his high school sweetheart, Rae Ann Fierstien, in 1970.

1980s

Charles Asiala, 1980, M.A.T. – Sept. 14, 2017

Asiala, 79, was raised in Kaleva, a small Finnish community in northern Michigan. He proudly served in the U.S. Army and taught computer classes at the Averill Career Center. After he retired, he became the manager of the Saginaw Harness Raceway.

Cynthia Berg (Spencer), 1987, M.Ed. – Nov. 14, 2017

Berg, 62, taught students in kindergarten through eighth grade for 32 years, retiring from Auburn Elementary School in 2014.

Louise Davis, 1980, B.A. – Feb. 16, 2018

Davis, 84, retired from Memorial Health Care. She enjoyed traveling, gardening, creating award-winning recipes, reading and spending time with family and friends.

Pamela Diener, 1987, B.S.W. – Feb. 24, 2018

Diener, 53, was a fan of Michigan State University, the Detroit Red Wings and the Seattle Seahawks. She worked as a social worker for 25 years at Ferguson's Convalescent Center.

Sally Ferriby, 1980, B.A. – Aug. 28, 2017

Ferriby, 89, was a social worker for the Saginaw County Commission on Aging until she retired in 1990.

Bridget Gakstatter, 1989, B.B.A. – Sept. 21, 2017

Gakstatter, 51, played basketball and softball at SVSU. She was successful in the food and beverage industry for more than 25 years. She held the position of food service sales manager of the Great Lakes Region at Pepsi Co. She had a very generous heart and dedicated time volunteering at Cornerstone Academy, Purple Heart, Habitat for Humanity and various other organizations.

Mary Lewis, 1980, M.A.T. – Oct. 23, 2017

Lewis, 85, was an elementary teacher in the Saginaw Public Schools until her retirement in 1993. She was involved with the U.S. Air Force Teachers.

Gary McMall, 1983, B.B.A. – Feb. 8, 2018

McMall, 57, worked for many years with Dale Carnegie Training. He retired from Berkshire Hathaway Real Estate in Saginaw. One of the highlights of his life was riding his bicycle cross-country from Virginia to the Oregon coast.

Hannah O'Toole, 1981, M.A.T. – Aug. 6, 2017

O'Toole, 64, was a devoted and talented teacher for 40 years, enriching the lives of thousands of children in the Saginaw Area Catholic Schools and Saginaw Public Schools districts.

Anant Singh, 1980, B.B.A. – Oct. 5, 2017

Singh, 74, worked for the State of Michigan as an auditor for the Employment Security Commission.

Agnes Strom, 1983, B.B.A. – Oct. 13, 2017

Strom, 85, was a master gardener, belonged to many book clubs and was a women's advocate.

Gail Vernon, 1980, M.A.T. – Feb. 17, 2018

For 40 years, Vernon, 72, was a dynamic elementary school teacher. She also was a member of the Vassar City Band.

1990s

Patrick Coe, 1991, B.B.A. – Feb. 19, 2018

Coe, 51, was employed at UPS for 30 years until his retirement. He actively participated in fundraising events for the Special Olympics in Michigan.

Cassie Cuthbert (Osborne), 1995, B.S. – Feb. 3, 2018

Cuthbert, 57, worked as a chemist for The Dow Corning Corp. She also was involved in the Prayers and Quilts group. Cuthbert was an active member of the Quilter's Squared group in Midland, where she was recognized as Quilter's Squared's Featured Quilter in 2017.

Cheryl Foster (Laurenz), 1994, B.A. – Nov. 5, 2017

Foster, 68, enjoyed a career as a social worker. She was employed by the Arnold Center and Michigan Works until her retirement in 2001.

Randy Goodman, 1992, B.A. – Sept. 5, 2017

Goodman, 48, was a "Jack of all trades." He worked in the family business as a radio personality, a salesman and a handyman. He was always helping others.

Mark Pobocik, 1999, M.Ed. – Oct. 23, 2017

Pobocik, 64, proudly served his country in the U.S. Air Force and was a teacher in Midland.

Mary Lee Roberts, 1994, B.S.W. – July 31, 2017

Roberts attended college at night, graduating magna cum laude at the age of 57. She loved her career as activities director and social worker for King's Daughters for many years.

Francis "Jack" Walraven, 1992, B.S.E.E. – Jan. 30, 2018

Walraven, 88, owned and operated Jack Walraven Contracting Company for 32 years. He also was a member of the Bay City and Saginaw Bay yacht clubs, as well as the Saginaw Bay Power Squadron.

2000s

Michael Schrocka, 2003, B.B.A. – Dec. 17, 2017

Schrocka, 36, was district manager at American Fidelity Assurance Company, overseeing operations in three states. He was a member of the SVSU's Tau Kappa Epsilon fraternity.

2010s

Michael Hoult, 2013, B.B.A. – Jan. 8, 2018

Hoult, 27, was a retail manager and enjoyed creating stained glass.

Kelsey Miller, 2017, B.A. – Aug. 3, 2017

Miller, 24, was a resident of Flint. She graduated from Kearsley High School and was a friend to many. She loved road trips, adventures and spending time with her family, friends and her cat, Zoe.

