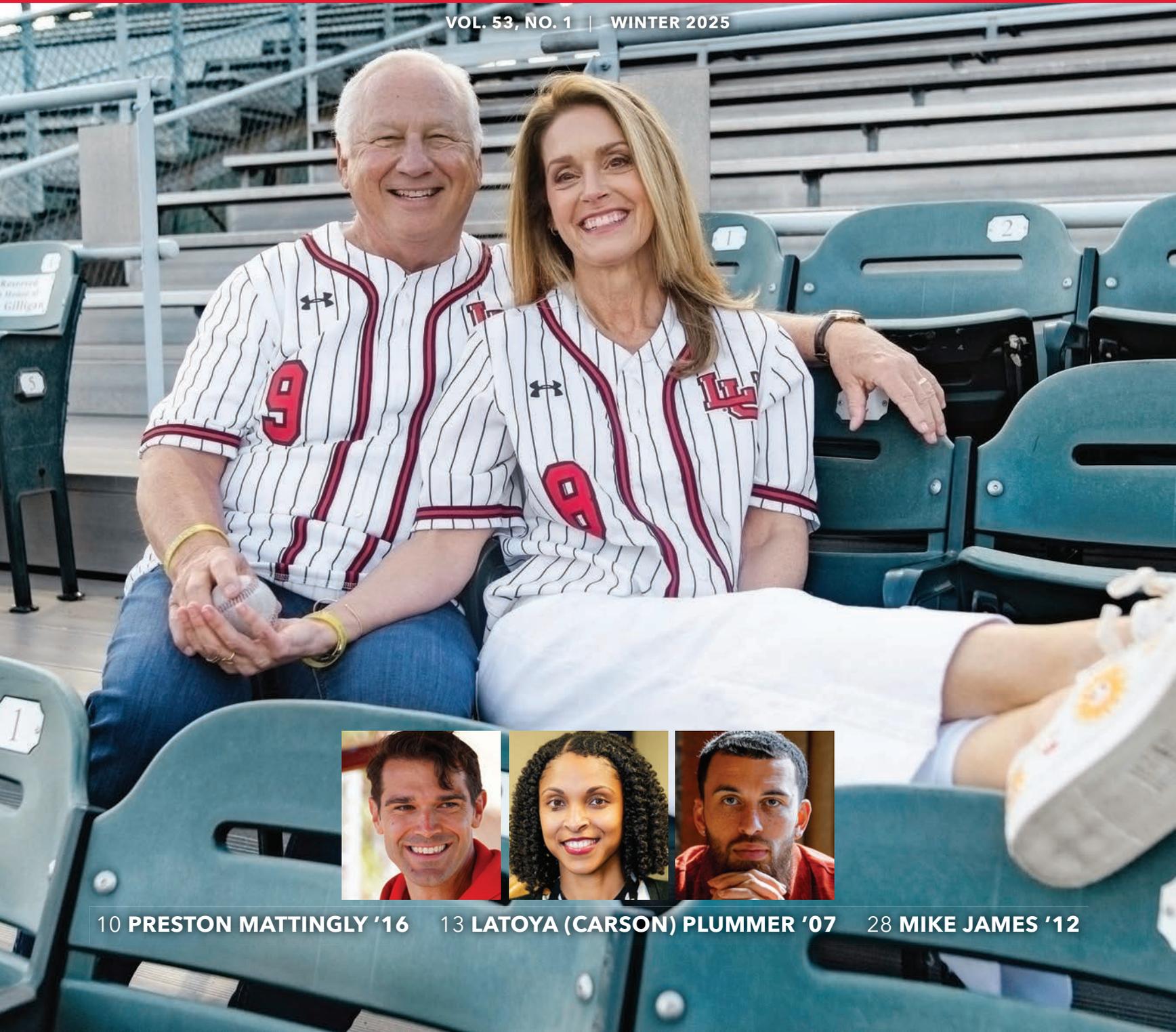


CARDINAL

# CADENCE

THE MAGAZINE OF LAMAR UNIVERSITY

VOL. 53, NO. 1 | WINTER 2025



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## | FROM THE **PRESIDENT** |



2016 Distinguished Alumnus Glen Morgan '75, left, with Cardinal baseball Coach Will Davis, President Jaime Taylor and Jeff O'Malley, director of athletics

**S**eeing teamwork in action has always fascinated me. Done well, authentic collaboration is a “force multiplier,” where the combined effort isn’t just greater, it’s transformative. From my early days as a computational physicist to my extensive experience in university administration, I’ve learned that the best work happens when people with different skills and perspectives come together to solve a problem. It’s kind of like a team sport, where everyone has their own role to play, but it’s the combined effort that leads to victory.

This same spirit of teamwork is also woven into the fabric of Lamar University, and nowhere is it more evident than in our athletics programs, which foster personal growth and teach valuable collaboration and leadership skills. That’s why I value athletics at Lamar University so much. And it’s why we’re investing in our facilities, supporting our coaches and reaching out to our community, alumni and donors—folks like you—to help us take each program to the next level.

In this issue of *Cadence*, we celebrate the many ways our alumni continue to embody this spirit, both on and off the field. You’ll meet Cardinals who traded their jerseys for scrubs, suits and everything in between. We’ve got doctors, entrepreneurs, engineers, financial advisors, broadcasters, physical therapists and even professional athletes who are still using those teamwork skills they honed on the field and court to achieve success at the highest levels. These stories really drive home the point that the things you learn in athletics—collaboration, discipline, resilience—will serve you well, no matter what you end up doing.

I really hope you’ll take a look at our feature story. When I think about the lasting impact of Lamar University athletics, I can’t help but think of Glen and Teri Morgan, two alumni whose lifelong connection began during a chance encounter right here at a baseball game. Their romance ignited a partnership that has enriched their community and everyone around them. And the Morgans clearly haven’t forgotten their roots. In this issue of *Cadence*, we celebrate the new Ter and Glen Morgan Baseball Complex. This state-of-the-art facility will provide our student-athletes with the very best resources to train, compete, and excel.

The Morgans’ story also reminds us that we all have a role to play in supporting Lamar University and our amazing student-athletes. Whether you’re cheering on the Cardinals from the stands, mentoring a current student, or investing in the future of our university, your contributions make a world of difference.

So, take a look inside *Cadence* and get inspired by the stories of our amazing Cardinals. I’m excited to see what we can accomplish together in the years to come.

With Cardinal Pride,

  
Jaime R. Taylor, President



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# GIVING BACK TO THE BALLPARK

Glen and Teri Morgan's continued  
commitment to Lamar University

by Brooke Barnett

**F**or Teri (Tammen) '85 and Glen Morgan '75, it all began at the ballpark. On a beautiful summer day in 1983, the Beaumont Golden Gators minor league baseball team was playing at Lamar's Vincent-Beck Stadium. Glen regularly attended the games with some of his law partners. Teri, a student at Lamar at the time, was working a shift in the clubhouse for season ticket holders. Glen went in to place his order. This interaction would begin a love story that would span more than four decades and keep the couple connected to Lamar long after graduation.

"Teri was initially a little reluctant to go on a lunch date. But, after the right amount of persuasion, she agreed to go," Glen laughed. Teri agreed that Glen was certainly persuasive, but she added, "It was that smile I couldn't resist."

"Since Glen graduated a few years ahead of me and we were not usually on campus together, I am profoundly grateful that he and I were in the same place at the same time that day at the baseball game." That was 42 years, three children and three grandchildren ago.

Lamar has played a significant role in the Morgans' life since their decision to pursue their undergraduate education in Beaumont.

"Coming from working-class families, we didn't have a lot of choices as to where we would go to college," Glen recollected. "Teri's family were hard-working rice farmers. My dad was a union ironworker, and my family didn't have the financial wherewithal to afford the room,

board and tuition at some of the larger universities in Texas. The fact that Lamar was local, affordable and had a great reputation for education made it the best choice for both of us."

Glen graduated in 1975 with a Bachelor of Business Administration. He then attended South Texas College of Law, earning his law degree in 1978. He is a partner at Reaud, Morgan and Quinn in Beaumont. Teri graduated in 1985 with a Bachelor of Science in Communication Disorders, focusing on speech pathology and audiology.

"I went to a small high school, and I wanted to stay close to family," Teri recalled. "At that time, the Speech and Hearing Department was nationally recognized and I was fortunate to have extraordinary professors. We began our family shortly after my graduation so I never put my degree into practice except with our own children. They became my full-time focus and still are today, along with their families and our grandchildren."

As an alumnus, Glen served on the Lamar University Foundation Board of Trustees from 1987-1997, as well as on the College of Education's Advisory Council. He was also honored as an LU Distinguished Alumnus in 2016. Currently, he serves as the head of the NIL Collective that supports Lamar University Athletics.

"Serving in those capacities has allowed me to see the financial, academics and athletics side of the University. That, in turn, has allowed me to understand past projects and future plans that allow Lamar to reach students that may not otherwise be reached, so their lives can

be enriched," Glen said.

The couple has searched for a way to acknowledge the special place where their story began. The opportunity presented itself this past year, when Teri and Glen presented the University with a gift to construct a new state-of-the-art, multi-purpose structure at Vincent-Beck stadium. Groundbreaking for the new Teri and Glen Morgan Baseball Complex will begin in February 2025.

"Lamar baseball has always been capable of competing on a national level," Glen explained. "The leadership of legendary Coach Jim Gilligan put Lamar baseball on the map. Will Davis, our current Southland Conference Coach of the Year, is continuing those winning ways by leading the Cardinals to the conference championship last year. No one will have better facilities, and we're hopeful that this expansion will allow Lamar University to recruit the best athletes in the nation. We hope to go beyond the clubhouse project and make the entire facility state of the art."

Athletics and involvement with Lamar have long been a priority for the Morgan family. As an undergraduate, Teri received a music scholarship and participated in the LU marching and concert bands. The couple's grandchildren have attended Lamar's summer baseball camps, so deciding to support LU's baseball team and strengthening the Cardinal community was a natural decision for the couple.

Their recent gift is only one of the many ways that they have supported LU as alumni. The couple also established the Donald E. Morgan Endowed Scholarship in memory of Glen's father. In recognition



of their 2010 gift to Lamar University, the football suites were named the Morgan Luxury Suites in their honor. They also played a key role in raising funds for improvements of the tennis facility in 2012.

“It’s an absolute privilege to use the God given-blessings to enrich the life of a student that might not otherwise be able to afford a college education,” Glen said. “We hope that by giving, we change the course of someone’s life, allowing them to get a degree and go on to do great things to make this

world a better place.”

As they reflect back on their involvement with Lamar, the couple hopes that their story can act as a catalyst for other alumni and supporters to step up for the University that means so much to them.

“Because we met there, we have always had a special connection to Lamar,” Glen concluded. “It is an honor to be able to serve and to give back to such a wonderful institution. We hope that others will consider joining us and supporting Lamar in

any aspect of the University, whether it be athletics, academics or financially. We also hope that by our service others will decide to participate and create their own special relationship with Lamar University.”

“I’m excited to see that after all these years, we will have come full circle when we stand side by side to break ground on this new project,” Teri said. “Hopefully, this will be a place that is also the beginning of something wonderful for many other baseball fans, young and old.”



# Team transition: Court *to* OR

by Shane Price

**G**rowing up, Kevin Smith '06 had a passion for academics, specifically the math and science fields, and basketball. Smith, a native of Humble, Texas, was a basketball star at Humble High School. As a senior, he averaged 24.8 points and 5.4 rebounds per game. That earned Smith first-team all-region and all-state honors. While he was shining on the court, Smith was also excelling in the classroom. He was in advanced placement classes and graduated fifth in a class of 860, which earned him *summa cum laude* honors.

As early as his junior year of high school, it became clear to Smith that he had a chance to play college basketball. He was recruited by a number of schools, including The Citadel and Niagara, but eventually he decided to attend LU after meeting with then-President Jimmy Simmons and the engineering faculty.

"They saw the academic background that I had and thought, 'He'd be a fine basketball player, but really has the potential to do great things from an educational standpoint,'" Smith said. "I spoke with many athletes on the recruiting trail, but I'm not sure how many of them actually had the ability to sit down and have a conversation with the president of the university. That really went a long way for me, personally."



COURTESY SMITH

At the time, Smith's planned a career in engineering and felt LU was the right fit, not only because Beaumont was convenient for his parents when it came to travel and watching his games, but he also was impressed with the school's chemical engineering program.

Smith, a men's basketball letterman, played three seasons for LU between 2003 and 2006 under former head coach Billy Tubbs. His passion for academics continued at LU, too. Smith compiled a perfect 4.0 grade point average, received academic all-conference honors and received LU's Otho Plummer Award, which Smith said is one of his proudest accomplishments.

"The Plummer Award was special because that was a university award and not a high school-level award. That really embodied, for me, at least, the process of excelling academically while also being a student-athlete," Smith said. "It's mostly the competitive nature. I just wanted to be good. I wanted to put my

full effort and focus on whatever it was I doing at the time."

Smith's passion for academics started at a young age and he's never backed down from a challenge. In fact, his decision to major in chemical engineering came from a simple Google search. "The way I chose chemical engineering is I literally Googled, 'What's the hardest engineering major?' and chemical engineering was number one," Smith said. "So, I said, 'Well, that's what I'm going to do.'"

Life is full of twists and turns, though. After working in some of the oil refineries in Port Arthur, Smith came to the realization that engineering wasn't for him and that the medical field might be more his calling. Unfortunately, at this point, he was 30 credits from graduating and it was too late to switch majors.

"I was able to get first-hand an idea

of what it would be like as a process engineer to work within a chemical plant or refinery area. That wasn't something that I felt was my calling. I wasn't sure that was the right environment for me," Smith said. "I finished out my engineering degree. Before I graduated and started work at ExxonMobil, I actually stayed on campus and took some biology courses during the summertime. I graduated in May and then started working in September. At that point, I was pretty set on a pivot."

Smith was able to get exposed to the medical field through his former Amateur Athletic Union coach George Schudy, who was a practicing orthodontist at the time and served as a mentor to Smith. With Schudy's help, Smith was able to travel around the country and shadow certain people to help him get a better understanding of what he'd like to do in the medical field.

"I did not have anyone in my family that are physicians or in the medical field. So, I had to rely on people that I knew," Smith said. "I wasn't quite sure [this was what I wanted to do] without being able to get hands on and really understand what that would be like day in and day out."

Smith eventually enrolled at the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston, with the help of a letter of recommendation from Simmons. While originally intending to become an orthodontist, it wasn't too long before he discovered a passion for orthopedic surgery.

"I shadowed a few orthopedic surgeons and felt like as an athlete and having that athletic background it seemed like a natural fit. I'm so glad that I made that decision," Smith said. "There were some gut-wrenching times of trying to figure out what the right avenue was for me."

Smith graduated with his medical degree and completed his residency at Houston Methodist Hospital in Texas Medical Center in Houston. He went on to work as an assistant team physician for Stanford's football program in Stanford, Calif., where he also assisted the team physicians for the San Francisco 49ers, San Francisco Giants and Golden State Warriors, before eventually making his way back to the Houston area.

Smith's expertise is performing minimally invasive shoulder and knee surgeries or reconstruction—rotator cuffs, shoulder dislocations and ACL tears are among his specialties. He also does hip and knee replacements.

"With orthopedic surgery, the best thing that we can do is take a problem and fix it. If it's a broken bone, we can put metal plates, or screws or rods in and fix it," Smith said. "A lot of areas of medicine, as great as they are, are chronic conditions that you can manage and control, but it's sometimes hard to fix things and make them completely go away."

"For me, having the opportunity to be able to take an acute problem...that we can repair is key, and get them back to doing their normal lifestyle and things that are important to them. That was the thing that made me notice that this is a tremendous profession. We can make a dramatic difference in people."

Smith credits his days as an athlete for preparing him to be a successful orthopedic surgeon. "With sports, you perform, you prepare and then, ultimately, you have to compete. With surgery, everything seems predetermined on television, but every surgery is different. Even when you've done surgeries hundreds or thousands of times, sometimes you may encounter something that's different," Smith said. "I think you have to be quick on your feet to be able to pivot and change direction if you need to. Take the lessons that you've learned from previous surgeries and apply them to what you're doing in the future."

"There's also a pretty big teamwork component. The operating room is not just a surgeon that does everything. You have scrub techs that help me and implant reps that are there, too. It really is a team environment."

Smith's research has been published numerous times, all furthering the fields of stem cell research, joint replacements, hip arthroscopic procedures and progressive surgery. He's worked with team physicians for the Houston Texans and Houston Astros. Smith currently works at The Woodlands Sports Medicine Centre in The Woodlands, Texas, and has privileges at a number of medical centers in the Houston area.

# Turning almost into success

by Marilyn Tennissen

**F**or professional football wide receiver Reggie Begelton '15, it's all about drive, not just making the catch and driving the ball down the field but maintaining focus and drive in all aspects of his life. The 2015 LU graduate has faced a few setbacks in his professional football career, but Begelton has found a way to turn several "almosts" into success. His most recent accolade was being named a West Division all-star on the 2024 Canadian Football League All-CFL Team.

"The secret is to put God first," Begelton said. "God is always at the top of the totem, in the forefront of everything you do."

The 31-year-old has always loved football. His father played high school football at Central High School in Beaumont, and as a kid Begelton looked up to the NFL players. "We played football in our neighborhood [in Beaumont], and everyone dreamed of playing for the NFL," he said.

As a senior at Beaumont's West Brook High School, Begelton made first-team All District; however, no colleges were offering scholarships.

But Begelton knew his stats were solid, so he accepted an invitation as a walk-on player for Lamar. "Coach [Ray] Woodard said to me 'Don't make me regret this,' and I took that as a challenge," said the 6-foot, 208-pound Begelton.

He met the challenge by breaking school records in catches and receiving yards, and he ended his Cardinal career just one end-zone trip shy of the University's touchdown record. But Begelton knows how to make the most out of an "almost" and he will tell his story with the enthusiasm of a motivational speaker.

"There will always be pain in life, but it can be the pain of discipline or it can be the pain of regret. You have to make the choice. The only thing you can control is your attitude and your actions," he said.

He had several memorable games with more than 150 receiving yards, including performances of 192 yards against the University of Central Arkansas and 165 yards against Stephen F. Austin State University.

"I owe a lot to Coach [Kevin] Barbay, our receivers and special teams coach at the time. He was a really good guy," Begelton said. "When I had some financial problems, he vouched for me and helped me get financial aid so I could stay in school and keep playing football."

With so many successes on the college gridiron behind him, Begelton thought that the NFL was within his grasp. But when no scouts came knocking, it was another "almost" moment. "I got very depressed," he said. "I tried to forget about football for a while."

He considered becoming a game warden, indulging his lifelong love of fishing, wildlife and the outdoors. He got a job at Universal Coin and Bullion in Beaumont as a junior broker selling rare coins, bullion and investment-grade precious metals. Not exactly the NFL, but the things he learned there eventually helped him get back to the game he loves.

"We had hours of mental training. Learning how to deal with people, learning how to deal with rejection. And it taught me that life isn't always a straight path, there's not just one way to achieve your goal," he said.

With a renewed confidence, Begelton started training again, but this time not limiting his goals to playing football for the NFL. In 2017 he tried out for the Canadian Football League.

"It's a tough, three-step process," he said. "You have area tryouts first, then regional. I made it through the first step and had about a week to get ready for the regionals in Florida when I started not feeling well. It turned out I was having kidney problems and was almost in renal failure. "I had overworked my body in training and caused my upper body to fill with fluid. I gained 25 pounds of fluid."

After a week in the hospital the swelling went down and Begelton went right back to the tryouts. "My upper body was completely useless. But my legs still worked!" he said.

He stormed through the second round and on to the main camp try-outs for the Calgary Stampeders of the Canadian Football League. In 2017 he signed a three-year contract and headed for Alberta, Canada.

"Canadian football is a little different from American football. There are 12 players versus 11, and three downs instead of four. The playing field is larger too, it's the size of a soccer field. It's a faster game, but my job is the same, make the running catch and keep the drive alive," he said.

In 2018, things were going well, and Begelton was enjoying the fresh, clean air and dry summers of the Canadian Rockies. But fate stepped in again when he broke his arm halfway through his second season.



“I was out for the rest of the 2018 season, but the team won the championship that year, so even though I wasn’t able to play I was still happy to be a part of it,” he said.

But he was back at it in 2019, playing until his contract with Calgary ran out.

With pro experience under his belt, Beigelton felt hopeful that this might be his chance with the NFL. “After the long tryout process again and workout camps, I was picked up by the Green Bay Packers for the 2020 season,” he said.

It was thrilling, but after only one season he was cut from the Packers.

“I decided to go back to Canada, and I’ve never looked back. I’m committed,” Beigelton said. “This is where I want to be.”

For the Stampeders in the 2024 season, Beigelton started in all 18 games as slotback, tied for second in the CFL with 92 receptions, including four touchdown catches, and was fifth in the league in receiving yards with 1,150. Pro football career milestones include 5,000 receiving yards and 400 catches.

“I would tell young athletes that with persistence you can reach many goals, but it’s with consistency that you will keep them,” he said.

Near the end of the 2024 season, Beigelton was honored as that season’s winner of the Presidents’ Ring award, presented annually since 1967 to the Stampeders player who best demonstrates excellence on and off the field as voted by the players.

COURTESY BEIGELTON

*From Cardinal courts to the Philly diamond:*

## Preston Mattingly's ascent to the

# Big Show

by Casey Ford

Lamar University has been the launchpad for countless professional success stories; our alumni shine in every corner of the world. Among our East Coast stars is Preston Mattingly '16, a former student-athlete whose journey from the classrooms and courts of Lamar to his leadership role within the Philadelphia Phillies organization is nothing short of inspiring.

Son of former star first baseman and manager Don Mattingly, and recently arrived from his own early career with the Los Angeles Dodgers, at 25 years old, Mattingly embarked on a unique academic journey at Lamar University, initially diving into the world of business before switching to corporate communications. "I thought that would be really good with the career path I was looking to go down—speaking to people, being in sports and being able to communicate in different ways," he explains. Graduating cum laude in just three years, despite starting later than most, showcased the baseball letterman's determination and drive.

After graduation in 2016, a connection from his baseball days with the Dodgers opened a door to the San Diego Padres organization. "The gentleman who recruited me in L.A. stayed in contact with me throughout my time at Lamar, and when I finished, he had a job for me," Mattingly recalls. This opportunity led him to Arizona, where he met with A.J. Preller, president of the Padres. Just a week later, Mattingly was working with the team, marking the beginning of his professional journey in baseball operations.

From about 2017 to 2021, his role evolved within the Padres organization, where he took on various positions in baseball operations and pro-scouting. "Not going to bore you with the details," he jokes, "but it's been all baseball, all the time." Despite the challenges of the COVID-19

pandemic in 2020, his dedication never wavered.

In 2021, he was offered the role of director of player development with the Philadelphia Phillies, responsible for overseeing 175 minor league players and staff. "It's a pretty daunting job, but I was very eager and wanted to take on leadership opportunities," he says. His rise within the Phillies organization has been rapid, culminating in his very recent promotion from assistant GM to general manager, a testament to his hard work and passion for the sport and for players.

Mattingly speaks poignantly about his role in the Phillies organization, one that many athletes might call a dream job, but one that has as many challenges as it does "pinch-me" moments. After all, players' careers rest in his hands, a formidable responsibility. He says, "It's all about building relationships—I get to know players on a personal level, what makes them tick, what motivates them. I know how they grew up. It can make trading decisions hard, but at the end of the day, they are professionals who understand our business. If they trust that I care about them, then they can believe we are doing what's best for their career and the success of the organization."

He says the "pinch-me" moments are good, too. "It's sometimes a little bit surreal to be around perfect, professional athletes I grew up idolizing. I am in awe at times, but heroes become human quickly. They're public and well-compensated, but they have lives and families and errands to run. They just also happen to have some weird abilities."

Reflecting on his time at Lamar University, Mattingly emphasizes the importance of relationships and experiences. "What stands out the most to me are the moments with my teammates—sharing bus rides, staying in hotels, and the unforgettable memories we created

together,” he fondly recalls. These relationships have had a lasting influence on his life, shaping his approach to leadership and teamwork. He especially noted his friendship with Marcus Owens, a teammate who was in the same year at school but was five or six years younger than Mattingly. They stay in touch even now because of the strong bonds they made on and off the basketball court. Mattingly says that friendship is one of the reasons he stuck it out on hard days. That kind of relational approach to his business is something that drives Mattingly as a leader, something he says is key to leadership success.

When asked about advice for current students and student-athletes, he offers wisdom from his own journey: “Be where your feet are. Enjoy the time you have in college, and appreciate the friendships you’ll build that will last a lifetime. And if you want something in life, keep working for it. Great things happen to those who put their heads down and work hard.”

As an alumnus, he is passionate about giving back to Lamar University and encourages others to do the same. “Lamar felt like home. It was a welcoming place that treated people with respect. If I had to choose again, I would choose Lamar over and over,” he says with conviction. His gratitude for his time at LU underscores the importance of supporting the University and its future generations.

While a move to Pennsylvania was imminent as of the new year, Mattingly currently lives in Tampa, Fla., with his wife, Ellie, and their three-month-old daughter, Nora. They have an English Bulldog named Rooney, and when Mattingly isn’t traveling up and down the Atlantic coast, they all love to watch baseball together. He points out they have an LU ornament on their Christmas tree each year.

In closing, Mattingly reflects on the unifying power of sports and athletics programs in higher education. “Sports bring people together from all walks of life. It’s something we should all cherish and embrace because it helps bring people together,” he shares. His story is a testament to the impact of sports, education and the enduring bonds formed at Lamar University.



KENNEDY



COURTESY KIRCHHOFFER

## From LU sports to Louisiana Sportscaster of the Year

by Sarah Parker

**T**he sports world has always felt like home to Brooke Kirchhofer '17.

From the time she was in high school, Kirchhofer knew she wanted a career in sports that extended beyond college athletics. When she made the decision to attend Lamar to play women's soccer for the Cardinals, she found the perfect university to immerse herself in college sports and launch her career in sports broadcasting.

"When I was a senior in high school, I really started to think about what I wanted to do professionally," Kirchhofer said. "I wanted to continue being around sports, but I didn't know what that looked like. From talking with people in the [Lamar] Communications Department, I decided I wanted to tell stories, and I wanted to be a storyteller for athletes."

While pursuing her bachelor's degree in communication with an emphasis in broadcasting, Kirchhofer hit the soccer field for Lamar all four years and received invaluable real-world career training through LUTV, ESPN3 and the Big Red Sports Network, earning scholarships for her academic and athletic achievements. The letter winner and summa cum laude graduate credits mentors and Lamar communication faculty Gordon Williams and Shenid Bhayroo with much of her future career success.

"I can never repay [Williams and Bhayroo] for what they were able to do to get me started," Kirchhofer said. "They were the perfect teachers to send students out to the journalism world. The opportunities were truly endless. It got me ready for what I could expect in the real world of working in local TV and the hours you put in."

After graduating, Kirchhofer seized every opportunity to hone her craft in different areas of the field, working as a sports anchor/reporter for local TV stations based in Columbus, Ga., Baton Rouge and New Orleans, La.; as a host/reporter for NewOrleans.Football; and as a freelance host/reporter for ESPN+ and the American Athletic Conference.

She has covered everything from high school games and college sports at the University of Alabama, University of Georgia, Auburn University and Louisiana State University to the NFL. Bringing her passion for the sports world to every story, Kirchhofer had the rare privilege to report on some of the biggest sporting events in the nation, including the 2023 Super Bowl (Eagles vs. Chiefs), 2019 NCAA Men's Basketball Final Four, 2017 and 2018 Southeastern Conference Championships, and 2018 College Football Playoff National Championship.

"I've wanted to be a part of every different aspect of what you would call sports broadcasting," Kirchhofer said. "I did local TV as a sports anchor/reporter – loved it. I worked in new media, which is streaming [and] podcasts, doing a show just based on one team, and I loved that. Now it's being on the actual game broadcast [where] you report on the game and you're part of this fun rollercoaster for however long the game is."

Kirchhofer was recognized as the 2022 Louisiana Sportscaster of the Year by the National Sports Media Association. "When I was voted Louisiana Sportscaster of the Year, which is determined by your peers, it was such a special honor and really just a surprise to be given that honor," Kirchhofer said.

This summer, Kirchhofer returned home to the Houston area to take on a new challenge in broadcasting with a position as a freelance color analyst/sideline reporter for ESPN+.

"I'm excited to hone this other craft of the industry and see where it takes me," Kirchhofer said. "The goal for me is always to be in a position where I can tell stories."

# Home away from home

by Marilyn Tennissen

**T**o this day, Mississippi native Latoya (Carson) Plummer '07 has no idea how she ended up playing basketball for Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas. The 5'9" guard from Long Beach High School in Mississippi was a four-year letter winner and voted Best All Around and Most Athletic. She was getting a lot of attention from colleges close to home, but Lamar wasn't on her radar.

"I had never even heard of Lamar," Plummer said. "I was being recruited by Southern Mississippi, Southeastern Louisiana, Alcorn State and (University of) Memphis. But somehow, someone at Lamar had a video tape of my game highlights from high school. No one ever told me who sent it. I wasn't even really interested when I went to make an official visit. But wow, they really pulled out all the bells and whistles to make me feel welcome."

In addition to the full-ride scholarship the University was offering, Plummer said the Montagne Center made a big impression on her. "What a great facility, the biggest in the conference!" she commented.

She even had dinner with legendary men's basketball coach Billy Tubbs and his wife, even though she admits now that she didn't really know what a "big deal" that was at the time.

But it was sitting in the student affairs office of Norman Bellard '79—himself an LU basketball star in the 1970s—that something clicked for Plummer. "All of a sudden I just burst into tears! Poor Mr. Bellard thought it was something he said, but it wasn't at all. I'm usually not a very emotional person, but it hit me that Lamar is where I'm supposed to be!" she said.

So Plummer chose Lamar and never looked back. Playing for the Lady Cardinals from 2003 to 2006, the letter winner was named first-team All-Southland Conference and first-team Academic All-Conference.

She recalls one exciting game playing against the University of Oklahoma at the Montagne Center. "We were up against the Paris twins [Ashley and Courtney], they were huge, nationally ranked players! It was really exciting, even though we didn't win. I entered the 1,000 Point Club in that game," she said.

In addition to basketball, Plummer received a bachelor's degree in exercise science and fitness management from Lamar



DANIELS

in 2007, then went on to physical therapy school in Florida at the University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences.

An experience she had her junior year in high school led to her career as a physical therapist. After she injured her knee, she had to go through five to six months of rehab before her senior year so she could join her teammates. It was a very difficult time, but a wonderful physical therapist helped her get through it. That memory stayed with her, and Plummer is now the clinical director of Encore Rehab in Biloxi, Miss.

"Athletes facing injury should remember to give yourself time to fully recover," she said. "Have faith in yourself that you will put in the work you need to get back to where you need to be."

But of all her experiences at Lamar, one in particular told her that she had made the right choice when she chose the Cardinals.

Plummer's father passed away during her senior year, and she had to rush from Beaumont to attend the funeral in Gulfport, Miss.

"When I looked back in the church, there were my teammates and coaches! They had chartered a bus and drove for hours in the middle of a weekday, during preseason. That was huge! I will never forget it.

"I try to carry that kind of love in my profession. I care about my current working 'team' the same way," she said.

# A bigger

# plan

by Allison Lennartz

**D**r. Kollin Kahler '15 grew up in Waco, Texas, where he says he spent his time “playing every sport under the sun.” His parents worked hard to ensure that he and his brothers were able to attend a private school and made many sacrifices to help their children succeed in their academic and athletic pursuits. Eventually, his participation in sports would play a significant role in his decision to pursue a career in medicine.

When one of his high school football teammates sustained an injury, Kahler had the opportunity to observe as orthopedic specialists helped his teammate with his rehabilitation and recovery. He described this experience as “fascinating” and said that it inspired him “to pursue a career where (he) could make a similar impact on people’s lives.” Around the same time that he witnessed his teammate’s injury and recovery, he was also introduced to a class that furthered his interest in a career as a medical professional. Unfamiliar with Lamar University until he was recruited there as a football player, Kahler explored more about the University and learned that Lamar boasted high acceptance rates for undergraduates who went on to medical school, so he believed it was the “right fit” when it came to choosing which college he would attend.

As it turns out, his decision to attend Lamar paid off: he was the Cardinals’ primary punter for the 2010 to 2014 football seasons, was a football letterman and the recipient of multiple awards and academic scholarships, and helped to establish campus events

such as Food Fest and “Lamar’s Got Talent.” Yet he still managed to volunteer some of his time to his church’s children’s ministry throughout his time as a student and spent the spring of 2015 volunteering in St. Elizabeth’s emergency room. Kahler’s ability to engage with and unite those around him played a role in his being selected as the homecoming king during his senior year of college. He was also named as a recipient of the David J. Beck Fellowship in 2013, a highly competitive scholarship that is awarded to students who display outstanding academic achievements and potential. In May of 2015, Kahler graduated with his bachelor’s degree in exercise science with minors in biology and chemistry and went on to pursue his medical degree at the American University of the Caribbean School of Medicine.

Kahler currently works as a resident at the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC) in Jackson, Miss. Upon finishing his fellowship at UMMC in June of 2026, he hopes to specialize in rheumatology. He is open to a career in academic medicine and said that he eventually would like to start a scholarship for future LU students who are pursuing careers in health-related professions.

Kahler said that, when he reflects on his decision to attend Lamar University, he sees that this decision was “part of a bigger plan for [his] life.” He recalled that his time as a Cardinal provided him with many opportunities for intellectual, spiritual and professional growth. His faith in God was strengthened through his collegiate experiences, but he also believes that his character and professionalism grew in unique ways during his time at LU. He is quick to express how Lamar positively impacted his own life, but he made sure to “give back” to the Cardinal community during his time as a student. “My central mission has always been to love God and love others,” Kahler explained

when asked about the reasons he sought to improve the student life at Lamar while he was there. His time as an undergraduate also enabled him to build relationships “with people from all walks of life,” he said, which better prepared him to connect with patients he sees on a daily basis in clinical settings.

Kahler shared that his faith prompts him to “approach everything with purpose and intentionality.” What drove him to pursue excellence in his time as a student at Lamar continues to motivate him in his work as a doctor. He strives to connect with his patients by establishing a sincere relationship and speaking in terms he knows they can understand. He recognizes that many people are already stressed and disheartened when they have to seek or receive medical treatment, so he tries his best to encourage them and to facilitate an uplifting and healing environment around them. When asked what advice he would give to current college students, Kahler said he would tell them to “see it through.” He elaborated, “It’s easy not to push through the tough moments, but it helps to surround yourself with people who believe in you and will lift you up.” He advises students to find mentors who can offer wisdom and counsel to them regarding the decisions they must make. “Hold on to faith in something bigger than yourself,” he said. He also believes that writing down one’s reasons for pursuing a given career or goal can help “keep [students] grounded and moving forward.”



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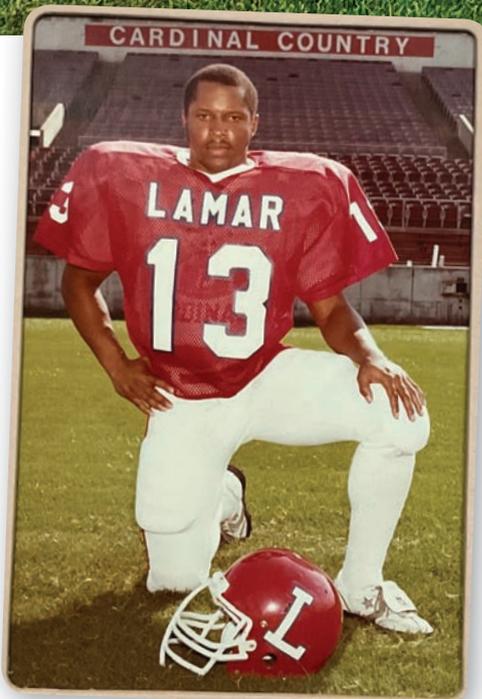
After reflecting on his time at Lamar and his personal and professional success, Kahler expresses gratitude that he never stopped pursuing his dreams “even when the journey felt overwhelming.” He credits his parents, his friends and multiple mentors for the important and various ways they have supported him and contributed to his academic, professional and spiritual development. As he continues to work toward completing his residency and achieving his goals, he will also spend time doing what he loves: enjoying the outdoors, working out and keeping up with whatever is happening in the world of sports. He also continues to volunteer his time to others through children’s ministry and remains committed to service in his local church. No matter what stage of his life or career in which you may find him, you can be sure that Dr. Kahler will always be seeking to give back to those around him.

# NORTHROP GRUMMAN

TRACEY CLAY:

## A leader on the field, a star in engineering

by Jason Morton



**W**hen you think of a star athlete balancing academics with the demands of training and playing, it's easy to imagine the late-night study sessions, the relentless practices and the constant juggling of priorities. For alumnus Tracey Clay '85, the challenge of being both a Division I football player and an engineering student didn't just teach him time management—it shaped the foundation for his career in mechanical engineering. Now an operations manager and manager of mechanical engineering at Northrop Grumman's Lanham, Md., facility. Clay's journey from a standout wide receiver at LU to a leader in one of the world's foremost aerospace and defense technology companies is a testament to the power of discipline, focus and the enduring value of higher education.

### **A Southeast Texas native with big dreams**

Growing up in Beaumont, Texas, Clay was always surrounded by opportunity. A graduate of Hebert High School, he was a homegrown athlete, excelling not only in football but also in



COURTESY CLAY

academics. His skills on the football field attracted the attention of powerhouse programs like Texas A&M, University of Texas, Baylor, TCU and Rice. But despite the offers from major universities, Clay had already made up his mind—he was staying home and going to Lamar University.

While other schools might have been able to offer prestigious name-brand football programs with more cachet, none could match the academic opportunity Lamar University provided, particularly in the field of mechanical engineering. Clay had known from a young age that engineering was his calling. A pivotal moment came during his sophomore year of high school when engineers visited Hebert High School for a career day. Their presentation sparked an interest that would shape the rest of his life. “From that day on, I knew I wanted to be an engineer,” Clay said, looking back on his decision.

But there was another factor that played into his choice—his elder brother, who was already studying mechanical engineering at Lamar and playing football for the Cardinals. The bond with his brother, coupled with Lamar’s strong engineering program, made the decision an easy one. The ability to play Division I football while pursuing a degree in mechanical engineering was a rare opportunity, and Tracey took full advantage of it.

### Balancing football and academics

At LU, Clay excelled both on the field and in the classroom. A three-year letterman in football, he was recognized as a member of the Blue Key Honor Society, Phi Eta Sigma National Honor Society, Phi Kappa Phi National Honor Society and several engineering honor societies, including Pi Tau Sigma and Tau Beta Pi. Graduating *cum laude* and earning a spot on the Dean’s List, Clay was as dedicated to his studies as he was to football.

One of the key elements that helped Clay succeed in both arenas was his ability to balance his time effectively. “Being a student-athlete forces you to be more organized,” he emphasized. “When you’re on a schedule with classes, workouts and games, it’s like having a built-in structure to your day. You don’t have the luxury of procrastinating.” The regimented nature of being a student-athlete helped Clay stay focused, whether it was a 110-degree August afternoon on the football field or a late-night study session.

### A mentor for future generations

Reflecting on his own journey, Clay often thinks about the challenges faced by today’s student-athletes. “I tell young athletes to find a peer mentor—someone who’s been through the same challenges, who is a few years older and already established in their field,” he shared. He believes this guidance can make a significant difference, not just in academics or sports, but in navigating the pressures of balancing multiple responsibilities.

He recommends seeking out someone who is both a former

student and athlete who is in the same industrial discipline, someone who has faced the same struggles and can offer advice on how to manage them. “It’s important to learn from others who have walked the same path,” he said. “Life as a college student-athlete can be tough, and having someone who understands your struggles can be invaluable.”

Clay stresses that, aspiring athletes should recognize that, while it’s great to dream big, the reality is that professional sports is an unlikely path to success. He urges young people to focus on developing skills and pursuing an overall well-rounded college experience and education. “As much as you want to believe you’re going to make it as a professional athlete, the odds are stacked against you. Having a plan for life beyond sports is crucial,” he said.

### From Lamar to Northrop Grumman

Clay’s time at Lamar prepared him for a career that has spanned decades. After earning his bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering, Clay went on to work for a variety of leading companies in the aerospace and defense sector, eventually landing at Northrop Grumman. In his current role, he oversees critical projects that contribute to national security and technological innovation.

The work ethic and discipline he developed as a student-athlete at Lamar has been integral to his success in the corporate world. Today, he credits his time at LU for not just shaping his technical skills but for instilling the values of leadership, teamwork and accountability that continue to serve him in his career and in life.

Clay’s success is also a reflection of his commitment to giving back. He is an active member of Lamar University’s Mirabeau Society, a prestigious group of alumni who are committed to the University’s mission through their philanthropic support. He also maintains his membership in the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE), where he continues to mentor younger professionals in the engineering field.

### A full-circle moment

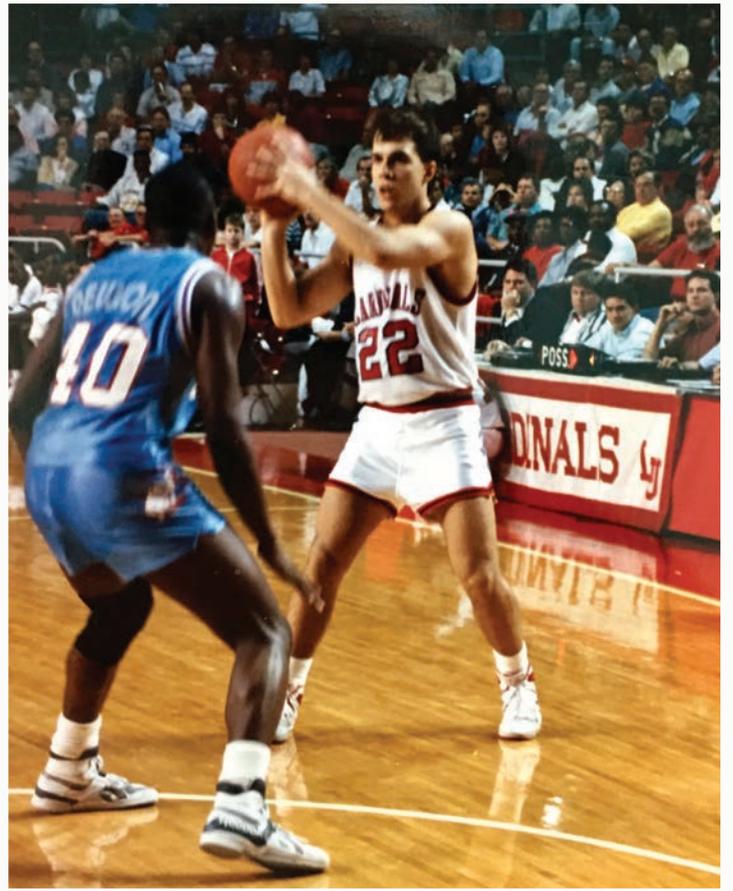
Looking back, Clay is proud of his journey—from a young boy growing up in Beaumont with a passion for football and math, to a star student-athlete at Lamar University, and now a respected leader at Northrop Grumman. He remains grateful for the opportunities Lamar provided and the lessons he learned, both on the field and in the classroom.

“I’ve always believed that success is about finding the right balance,” Clay said. “Football helped me to develop the organizational skills necessary that translated off the field and into the classroom, eventually shaping my engineering career, and that education I received at Lamar University has given me a foundation for the leadership and growth that has made me the man I am today.”

As Clay continues to make an impact at Northrop Grumman in the aerospace and mechanical engineering industry, he remains an inspiration to those who knew him at Lamar University and beyond. His story serves as a reminder that with hard work, grit, focus and the right support, anything is possible—on the field, in

# A father's *advice*

by Uliana Trylowsky





# W

hen Tim Hickman '91 visited his alma mater to speak to finance students in the fall of 2022, he asked to take a side trip over to the Montagne Center, where he stood at center court, took a deep breath and thought back to his days playing basketball.

It goes back a long way. Hickman grew up on Brandywine Street in Beaumont, just a few houses down from Billy Tubbs. He was friends with Coach Tubbs' children and played at their house often. His father would regularly take him to watch the Cardinals play "Billy Ball" in McDonald Gym. After Tubbs left LU, Pat Foster came in as coach, and Hickman was friends with his youngest son—they even played basketball together in high school. By the time the college recruiters started chasing Hickman, he knew that his loyalties were with Lamar University and his community. Foster offered him a scholarship out of high school, and he signed on with LU after graduating.

Being a student-athlete was challenging, according to Hickman, but challenge was not new for him. He had started working as a paper delivery boy at the age of 12, delivering papers every morning before school, after school and on weekends. By the age of 14, he was washing dishes at a local restaurant, and then went on to work at Wilson's Animal Clinic and for Shepherd's Laundry, putting in 12-hour shifts in the summers while still finding time to join pickup basketball games at Rogers Park. Perhaps this is why the young athlete was focused on challenging himself to be the best he could be and welcomed the 6 a.m. runs, the workouts, the training that would build him into a player that even the football coaches were wanting to recruit.

Hickman credits his father with teaching him the three most important things in life: do the right thing, tell the truth, and work hard for other people. He stresses the last part—for *other people*—because he believes that this is what makes a successful team player. You must always strive to be your best for the others on the team and for your school, even for your community.

Hickman had hopes of being recruited for professional play and was scheduled to play overseas after graduating, but his senior year ended those plans. It was late into his final season that the basketball letterman broke his knee and needed reconstructive surgery. It effectively ended his hopes of going pro.

His "claim to fame" moment came about during a game with LSU. Chris Jackson threw to Shaquille O'Neal, and Hickman jumped up and got the ball. At that very moment, he sensed a large, looming presence, bounced off O'Neal and was jettisoned into the second row of spectator seating. Shaq came over, picked up Hickman and asked if he was okay. After that game, the LSU head coach approached Hickman and told him, "You should have come here" to play.

Thankfully, after he stopped playing basketball Hickman applied himself as diligently in the classroom as he did in

the weightroom and was able to pivot to a career using his business degree. It was the same work ethic applied to stats and accounting and the same dogged perseverance that allowed Hickman to start out in banking and then move to investment advising and finally to wealth management at Merrill Lynch. His fondest academic memories are of faculty members Robert and Marlene Swerdlow, Larry Spradley, Richard Price and Charles Hawkins.

Today, with a stellar career and track record, the athlete turned wealth management advisor still has a strong competitive streak. Just a quick look at his email signature line explains: *Named to Barron's "America's Top 1200 Financial Advisors" in 2023 and 2024 and Forbes "Best-In-State Wealth Advisors" in 2023 and 2024.* Obviously, the three keys to success that Hickman's father shared with his son many years ago were taken seriously by Hickman, who continues to work hard for others, honestly and with integrity.

It would be easy to end the story here, but that would leave out a very important part of what makes Hickman so special: his family. He is married to Stephanie (Sharp) '90 who graduated with a degree in music education and was drum major of the LU Band. Stephanie is a successful recording artist, musician and educator. They are parents to twins—Hannah and Jonah, born in December of 1997. Not long after their birth, it became apparent that Jonah had a serious developmental disability and Hickman was hit with the realization that his son would face a life of adversity and challenge—greater than any challenge Hickman had ever faced either on the court or in the office. This would change the trajectory of the family but would also bring them together even closer as a team working together to nurture their children and provide for them all they could.

Having learned of an excellent resource in Houston—the Rise School—the family enrolled both children in their early intervention program for disabled children and their siblings. Stephanie moved to Houston with the kids, while Tim commuted back and forth to his job in Beaumont with UBS. After some time, he was able to transfer to UBS in Houston, and then in 2009 he joined Merrill Lynch.

Hannah and Jonah finished their program at Rise and both went on to attend regular school, the rigorous program at Rise allowing Jonah to be mainstreamed. Jonah is now flourishing—he works and participates in a national dance-ability team (which is ranked No.1 globally at this time). Hannah, an all-state champion volleyball player in high school and SMU, is now working with her father at Merrill Lynch.

Hickman, reflecting on this experience, sees a parallel with sports. Of course, the team is always only as good as every player. It takes each person to give of himself for the betterment of the team, and that is how the Hickman family have persevered throughout their lives.

# Competitive on the course and *beyond*

by Daucy Crizer



COURTESY, STROUD

**W**hen last we checked in on former Lamar golfing great Chris Stroud, he was in the middle of a successful career on the PGA Tour.

That budding professional career almost didn't get its start at Lamar University. One of the top junior golfers in the Houston area, Stroud had offers from several big universities. In fact, he took a recruiting trip to Texas A&M and was planning to sign his letter of intent to play for the Aggies.

However, on his recruiting trip to Texas A&M, some of the current players informed him that the coach was about

to retire. When discussing the issue with the coach, Stroud decided against signing with the Aggies, feeling he had been misled during the recruiting process.

That opened the door for Lamar to get involved in his recruitment. When he returned from his recruiting trip to Texas A&M, there was a message on the answering machine from then-Lamar golf coach Brad McMakin.

"That was the first time I had ever heard from him, and the message was basically, 'Sorry to hear that it didn't work out with Texas A&M and I would love to talk to you about coming to Lamar,'" recalled Stroud. "So, I met with him and went to meet the team and I was blown away. He said, 'We are currently 40th in the country and we could be No. 1 if you come to Lamar. But

the most important thing is, what do you want?'"

"I said, 'Honestly Coach, I just want to get on the PGA Tour.' He said, 'If you come here, I'll make sure you do that no matter what it takes.' I trusted him, and it was the best decision of my life."

Having turned professional in 2004, the LU golf letterman has played in over 400 PGA Tour events, posting 34 top ten finishes, 13 top five finishes, two third-place finishes, two runner-up finishes and one win, the 2017 Barracuda Championship.

A lot has changed in the last five years. Stroud suffered a back injury in 2019, a herniated L5-S1 disc. That coincided with the onset of the COVID pandemic, and his golf career suddenly was on shaky ground.



Stroud, the only golfer in Southland Conference history to earn Player of the Year honors four straight years, was trying to play through his injury, even going as far as to try stem cell treatment. As anyone would imagine, a back injury for a professional golfer is problematic.

“I’ve tried everything to get back on the course, but it’s a terrible cycle,” said Stroud, who admitted back issues run in his family. “I get ready for a golf tournament, I practice all week at home, I get to the tournament, and I feel pretty good starting the week, but usually by the weekend when you should be dialing it up and getting really sharp, my back starts getting weaker and feels worse.”

As proof of that cycle, Stroud participated in only one PGA Tour event in 2024, the Puerto Rico Open. He played really well for three rounds, entering Sunday’s final round at 8-under par and in the top 15. He woke up Sunday and could barely move as his back flared up. He shot a final round four-over par 77 and finished 71st.

Stroud came back from that tournament completely frustrated, thinking, “It’s not going to happen anymore, I’m not going to be able to play. I’m not going to waste my time trying to play golf when it’s the same cycle every time.

“The only fix for me right now would be surgery, either disc replacement or fusion. My mom, dad and three sisters have all had back surgery and the results haven’t been great. So, I’m not looking at that as an option right now. Fortunately, I’ve had some good success in the business world so I’ve had some freedom financially to do some different things.”

A chance conversation with a neighbor started Stroud thinking about diversifying and branching out into the business

world, putting to effective use the management information systems degree he earned from Lamar.

“Through all of the pro-ams I’ve played in, I’ve had many guys come to me, money market guys, money manager guys, guys doing start-ups, tons of guys asking if I would be interested in investing with them,” Stroud noted.

It wasn’t until the summer of 2016 that he seriously considered an opportunity when his neighbor, who was in the safety industry, said he was interested in going out on his own with his own company and wanted to see if Stroud would consider coming on board as an equity partner. After looking at his business model and vetting it out with some other friends in the business world, he decided to take the leap.

In six years, the company went from zero to over \$100 million. They sold the company last year with investors taking home a sizable return on their investments. That gave Stroud a taste of what life outside of golf could be.

Stroud has made other small investments, such as a couple of rental properties at Lake Sam Rayburn. He is also exploring the acquisition of some

additional coastal rental properties in the Florida coast in the panhandle over the next few years and is also working on obtaining a commercial real estate license. On top of all that he is about to dip his toes into the restaurant business.

“I’m about to start a burger franchise called Smalls Sliders,” said Stroud. “Brandon Landry, who started Walk-Ons Restaurant, is the visionary behind Smalls Sliders, and Drew Brees is also an investor. They started in Louisiana

and are looking to expand to other states.

Franchise locations are broken down into territories, and I’m involved in establishing five Smalls Sliders restaurants over the next four years in the Spring area.”

Stroud is not completely closing the door on his golf career. In seven years he will be 50 years old and able to compete on the Champions Tour.

Hopefully by then, there will be some magical breakthrough in stem cell surgery that will allow his L5-S1 disc to function normally.

“I would love to resume my career on the course,” said Stroud. “The ability, skills and drive are still there. I just need to be able to practice like I would need to in order to compete at that level.”





# Full Circle

LU head women's golf coach reminisces on time as former student athlete

by Cassandra Jenkins

**J**anel (Howland) O'Connor '00 has been the head women's golf coach at Lamar University since 2019, but before she was a coach, she was a player.

"I started playing golf when I was 15 years old," she said. "My uncle got my dad and I into it about the same time, and it just became one of those things that I picked up a knack for really quickly."

O'Connor said she fell in love with the game instantly and decided early on that she wanted to pursue a career in professional golf. After finding out that she could go to college on a golf scholarship, she really started to dig her heels in.

That journey eventually led her to Lamar University where she played two years of golf from 1998 to 2000. At the time, Lamar

was in the process of rejoining the Southland Conference after leaving the conference in 1987.

"We didn't have a conference championship so that was kind of a bummer, but we did win a couple tournaments as a team," O'Connor said. "I also won two tournaments as an individual." Both of her titles came in 1999: the NIU/Springlake Intercollegiate hosted by Northern Illinois University and the Sam Houston/Elkins Lake Women's Intercollegiate.

Despite the accolades, O'Connor said one of her favorite memories from playing golf at LU wasn't winning tournaments but spending time with her team. She said one particular memory always comes to mind.

"It was my last college event," she recalled. "We went to Oklahoma, and I came out of the hotel ready to leave. The team



MILLER

had decorated the van with things like, 'senior,' 'Janell' and 'congratulations,' but it was written in shoe polish and not just on the windows, but on the actual van.

"I was freaking out thinking it wasn't going to come off this big, white van. It eventually did, but to know that they thought that much of me to do that, to express their gratitude for helping elevate the program, it was really fun. I enjoyed that."

O'Connor said she returned to that same tournament in Oklahoma as a coach in 2010.

"It was kind of that full circle moment," she said. "My first year in coaching we went back to that tournament and it was so fun to see the golf course from a coach's perspective and help players through some of those situations that I myself was in 10 years before."



O'Connor graduated from Lamar in 2000 and played her rookie season in 2005 for the Ladies Professional Golf Association. She went on to play golf professionally for nine more years, but she said there has been nothing she's loved more than being a coach.

When she was offered the job at Lamar in 2019, after serving as an assistant coach for Ole Miss and a head coach at UNC Greensboro, she said it was the easiest decision she ever made.

"I stepped foot on campus and it was like all of these memories just flooded back," she said. "It felt like I was home, and now coaching just brings me so much joy watching these girls go through this vital part of their life."

During her tenure, the women's golf team has won the highest team GPA award for several years and won their home golf tournament three years in a row. The Cardinals also finished Top 10 in all but two tournaments in the 2022-23 season.

O'Connor said her favorite thing about being a coach is watching the young women grow on and off the golf course.

"Not everyone is going to play golf after college, so I want to make sure that they are enjoying their major, that they're graduating and that they have the opportunity, if they want, to play golf," she said. "On the golf course, my favorite thing is that 'aha' moment when they've been working so hard on something, and all of a sudden they get it and you just see it click in their brains—those little moments are everything."

Looking forward, O'Connor said she wants to continue to develop a competitive team, recruit new players and win some conference championships. Looking back, she said she's grateful for her journey and where life brought her.

"I feel like everywhere you go, you find your own family," she said. "Here is where I found mine."



Lamar University's own: **Trey Clark**

# Investing in what really *matters*

by Brooke Barnett

**F**or Warren “Trey” Clark III ’93, the secret to his success is all about relationships. Clark has served as Lamar University’s director of track and field and cross country for more than 25 years and has enjoyed unprecedented success during his time at the helm. With 20 team titles as the head coach, 147 individual Southland Conference champions, 22 league Athletes of the Year and nine All-Americans to his credit, Clark’s storied career is a result of the relationships that he has built and maintained over the last three decades. Despite his impressive success, Clark stands firm that good coaching isn’t about winning; it is about investing in people.

Growing up, Clark dreamed of becoming a Division I athlete, though he always thought his opportunity would come on the baseball field. As he finished his senior year of high school, he was given the opportunity to walk on to baseball and football teams at two other universities. Ultimately, it was the advice of his father, Warren Clark Jr. ’65, that set the course of his future.

“During my senior year, I was on the track team and I ran well enough to get the attention of Lamar, which led to a scholarship offer,” Clark recalls. “I had originally intended to go to Baylor, but my dad told me to go to a university that was willing to invest in me. He said that the scholarship showed that they believed in me.”

When Clark accepted a spot on the Lamar track team in 1988, he carried on a family tradition. His father had played football at Rice before transferring to Lamar in 1962. His mother, Cynthia (Brown) Clark ’65 grew up in Beaumont and attended Lamar, where she met his father.

“Mom and Dad met in the library in 1962, and the rest is history. Other family members followed suit on both sides of our family tree. Aunts, uncles, sisters, cousins, you name it! My family has

earned 13 degrees from Lamar over the years. We have a monopoly on the variety of degrees that you can get here,” he laughs.

Carrying on the tradition of Cardinal couples, Clark met his wife Laura (Hughes) ’95 during their time at Lamar. In addition to lettering in men’s track, Clark earned a bachelor’s degree in health and kinesiology in 1993 and a master’s degree in the same discipline in 1995.

While Clark describes himself as having been a dedicated student-athlete, he says that he was never the team superstar—a fact which he says helps him relate to many of the athletes he coaches today. Clark recalls many positive memories of traveling with the team, as well as the friendships that he formed with older teammates, who served as mentors. He proudly recalls Lamar’s notable performance in the 1990 Southland Conference Outdoor Track and Field Championships.

“At that championship, Lamar’s team had a significant number of injuries but came very close to pulling out a victory. The resilience of the team, even with all the injuries, was just incredible. I made the finals in the 400-meter hurdles and ended up with a lifetime best score. Assistant Coach Kymond Guiton ran across the field and gave me a big hug. I maybe scored two points that day. But the way he celebrated with me, you would have thought I won it all,” he recalls. “That experience had a huge impact on the way that I coach today. I try to extend that same enthusiasm and support to my athletes.”

Despite being accepted into graduate school at the University of Texas, Clark chose to stay at Lamar. He began volunteering with the track team and became the assistant coach. He spent five years as assistant coach, before accepting the head coach position in August of 1999.

“Laura and I were married a year later,” Clark adds. “It was definitely in the cards for me to stay at Lamar. I spent time

figuring out who I wanted to be as the head coach. I ultimately discovered that I have to be the best version of myself in order to be the best coach I can be.”

Reflecting back, he remembers the 2023 Southland Conference Women’s Outdoor Championship as a career highlight. Lamar was not favored to win, but his athletes committed to winning and took home the title. This past year, Lamar has had two Olympic-trial qualifiers, including the first female Olympic qualifier in the school’s history.

“These incredible accomplishments are not my accomplishments,” he said. “Their success is about them. My job is to put them in a position to be successful, wind them up and cheer them on.”

After more than three decades with the program, Clark said that his continued success is deeply rooted in the time he has spent investing in what matters most.

“My philosophy is that I can learn something from everyone; I am constantly learning,” he said. “The day I stop learning as a coach and am unwilling to change is the day I stop coaching. I always have to be open to change.”

Having now spent more than 35 years on Lamar’s campus as both a student and a coach, Clark reflects that he couldn’t have accomplished what he has without the people in his life.

“For some coaches, Lamar has been a place to go on the way to larger schools. For me, I wanted to carve out a successful career in an institution that I care about, and one that has meant a lot to me and my family,” he adds. “Staying in Beaumont has allowed Laura and I to stay close to our family. It has allowed my children to grow up in the same town as their cousins and grandparents. My opportunity to be on his journey is not possible without my wife and family.”

At the end of the day, Clark believes his story with Lamar is far from finished.

“LU has believed in me for more than 30 years and allowed me to have a successful collegiate career, as well as be successful as a son, husband and father. It’s been the right thing for me every step of the way,” he concludes. “I still enjoy going to work every day. I still have challenges every day. I have no intention of going anywhere. I look forward to seeing what the future will bring.”



MILLER

# A different direction

*by* Cassandra Jenkins



BAUMAN

**M**atthew Sundblad '00 used to be a college basketball player. Now, he's Dr. Sundblad. The former Lamar University athlete graduated in 2000 with a bachelor's degree in psychology and a dream of playing basketball and learning how the human mind thinks, works and functions. However, somewhere in the chaos of life his vision shifted in a different direction.

"I was born and raised in Iowa, and as a kid, I wanted to play basketball. That was kind of my main focus," he said. "Coming out of high school, all I wanted was to go play basketball in college and Coach [Grey] Giovanine at the time recruited me. He had some connections with one of the assistants up in Iowa who had seen me play, so I decided to come down to Beaumont to play basketball."

At the time, Sundblad said his plan was to attend a university with a good environment where he could get a degree and earn a chance to play in the NCAA tournament. Lamar, he said, fit the bill and by his sophomore year the team started getting Top 25 votes.

"That was kind of a big deal for us at the time," he said. "The season didn't end up going like we wanted it to. We definitely had some talent, but it's difficult putting it all together with the right people at the right time."

Although LU never went on to win the Sun Belt Conference in which they played at the time, Sundblad said he still holds fond memories of his time playing college ball.

"I remember the people that I was with," the basketball letterman and *summa cum laude* graduate said. "I remember working really hard at basketball, working really hard in the classroom and just having the opportunity to go out and compete against some of the best players in the country. It was a really fun time."

Sundblad never did go on to play basketball after college. However he did spend a year in Venezuela coaching basketball and teaching English to local students. After that, he returned to the U.S. where he took a job as a benefits counselor, which he said ended up pushing him in the direction of medicine.

Returning to his home state, he enrolled in the University of Iowa as a medical student in 2002 and graduated four years later. After completing four years of residency and a year in a dedicated fellowship, he became a certified cardiothoracic anesthesiologist.

A cardiothoracic anesthesiologist is a physician who specializes in distributing anesthesia to patients undergoing heart surgery. According to the National Library of Medicine, there are only 1,667 anesthesiologists in the United States who specialize in cardiac anesthesia as a subspecialty.

Sundblad said his time spent as a student-athlete played a huge role in helping him prepare for medical school and life beyond it.

"It was a great advantage for me," he said. "When I left Lamar University and I was applying to medical school, and even residency applications, when people saw that I played Division I college athletics and still maintained high academic standards, they didn't question whether or not I'd be able to handle the rigor of medical school or residency."

The Iowa native said it was his leg up. Sundblad said he and his wife now encourage their children to play team sports.

"You learn so much about hard work, putting in hours of practice to be the best you can be, and you also learn about failing and succeeding," he said. "Sometimes you go out and you play really well and your team wins and you celebrate. Sometimes you go out and you play your best and you don't win, but you have to get right back up and keep going."

Looking back, Sundblad said one thing he misses about playing college basketball the most was the relationship he had with his teammates. During his four years at LU as a student, athlete and LU Ambassador, he said he met friends from all over the U.S.

"In college, you have certain freedoms, right? You're just kind of on your own, responsible for yourself, and you rarely have plans more than a few days in advance, but looking back on it what I miss most is the relationship with my teammates and spending time with them. When you go through something intense and difficult together, you really grow closer. That's something I remember the most about it even though we've all kind of moved on in life."

Sundblad recalled that a few years ago he and some of his former LU teammates got together for a brief visit. "There's a saying that goes, 'You can't make old friends,'" he said. "You just have the friends that you have and you have the experiences and the people in your life that you have and getting back together with old teammates—it felt just like it was 25 years ago."

So, although Matthew Sundblad did not become an NBA star or work in the field of psychology, he became a physician who, with his wife, Lakshmi, has three children—Sohan, Avani and Kiran. However, he said he will still always look back on his college days fondly.

If he could give his former self one piece of advice, it would be to work harder, he said.

"I worked pretty hard while I was in college and even later in life I worked pretty hard, too," he said. "But I feel like there is always more I could have done when I look back. So, I would tell myself to work hard and take more risks. To not be afraid of failure, to go for it and let the chips fall where they may."

Sundblad said he is looking forward to visiting the Cardinal Nest again soon and catching a Lamar University men's basketball game with his family.

# For the *love* of the game

by Sarah Parker



Professional basketball player Mike James '12 has devoted almost 30 years, thousands of days and countless hours to the sport for one simple reason: he loves it.

"I just love it. I love playing," James said. "I love working on my skill and paying attention to detail and being able to get better no matter how long you have to work at it."

James' fascination with the game developed at a young age, and his dreams of going pro began long before he stepped on the court to the roar of a crowd in the EuroLeague and NBA.

"When you're little, you always have outlandish dreams of being in the NBA or being in the NFL or being a fireman or being president, and I think I always dreamed I could play professional basketball," James said. "Like with anything, the more you play, [the more] you evolve and grow and mature, and my game did that as I got older."

From the beginning of his college basketball career at Eastern Arizona College, James was a high-scoring player and received numerous accolades for his skills on the court. In

2010, James transferred to Lamar to play for the Cardinals.

"Lamar came along, and it seemed like the right place, right time," James said.

And what a right time it turned out to be. Playing under Coach Steve Roccaforte in the 2010–11 season during his junior year, James quickly became an asset to the Cards, racking up double-digit points in game after game and leading the team in scoring. During James' first season, he broke Lamar's single-game scoring record with an impressive 52 points in a 114-62 win over Louisiana College.

Continuing the momentum into his senior year under coach Pat Knight in the 2011–12 season, James helped clinch victory for Lamar in the Southland Conference Championship and take the team all the way to the 2012 NCAA Tournament—a feat the University hadn't achieved in more than a decade. By the end of the season, the basketball letterman was named Southland Conference player of the week multiple times, All-Southland First Team and Southland Conference Championship MVP.

James said the "on-the-job training" he received playing for an NCAA Division I team like Lamar was a "big step" on his way to going pro.

"Being able to play at another level really helped me

prepare for what happened after. Going to the NCAA Tournament was probably my biggest [accomplishment at Lamar]. Just being able to bring the school back there was something to be proud of,” James said.

After graduating from LU with his bachelor’s degree in general studies in 2012, James stepped straight into the pros and began his career in the EuroLeague, the top-tier men’s professional basketball league in Europe, second only to the NBA worldwide. A high-scoring guard with nimble ball-handling skills and a sleek shot, he’s had season after season of success in the EuroLeague over the past 12 years.

James has traversed the European landscape to play for teams in Croatia, Israel, Italy, Greece, Spain, Russia and France and has won numerous championships, including LNB Pro A Champion 2023 and 2024, Russian League Champion 2021, VTB United League Champion 2021, Gomelsky Cup Champion 2020 and Greek League Champion 2017 and 2018. He currently plays for AS Monaco Basket of the French LNB Pro A where he signed a generous three-year contract extension in June 2024.

“Each country gave me a different perspective and gave me different life experiences. I think that I needed each country to mold me into the kind of person and player I am today.”

Racking up double-digit points in countless games, James has been recognized as EuroLeague MVP 2024, All-EuroLeague First Team 2022 and 2024, LNB Pro A Finals MVP 2024, LNB All-Star/LNB All-Star Game MVP 2023, Greek League Finals MVP 2017 and 2018 and Greek League Most Spectacular Player 2017. In 2023, he became the fastest player in EuroLeague history to reach 4,000 career points, hitting the milestone in 248 games, and earlier this year broke the record to become the EuroLeague’s all-time leading scorer with 4,464 points.

“I didn’t realize [I had broken the record] until it happened,” James said. “It feels good to be recognized for your hard work and to contribute to being a good basketball player [for my team]. It’s reassurance you’re moving in the right direction.”

In addition to his EuroLeague success, James has brought his skills stateside, with stints playing for the NBA’s Phoenix Suns and New Orleans Pelicans during the 2017-18 season. He also played for the Brooklyn Nets in the 2020-21 season, making it all the way to the conference semifinals in the 2021 NBA Playoffs.

“It was a blessing to be able to play in [the NBA]. I’m glad I got the experience. Playing in the playoffs with Brooklyn is probably my most memorable time. The playoffs [are] different from your everyday experience because it’s the highest form of basketball being played. Everything mattered, and everybody was watching. It was fun to be able to contribute to that.”

No matter the country, the game remains the same. James estimates he’s played 1,000 basketball games in the last 12

years since going pro.

“Every game presents its different struggles and is basically a chess match. Every team is not going to do the same thing. Every coach is not going to guard things the same way. You gotta try to navigate that for 40 minutes and come out at the other end with a victory.”

For his long-term goals, James plans to return home to Portland, Ore., after retirement to focus on Base 55, a foundation he started to give back to the community through projects like basketball camps, backpack giveaways and coat drives.

“I felt like if you’re successful and have the opportunity to [give back], you should. I felt a responsibility, too. I enjoy doing it and being around the younger kids that are coming up in my community.”

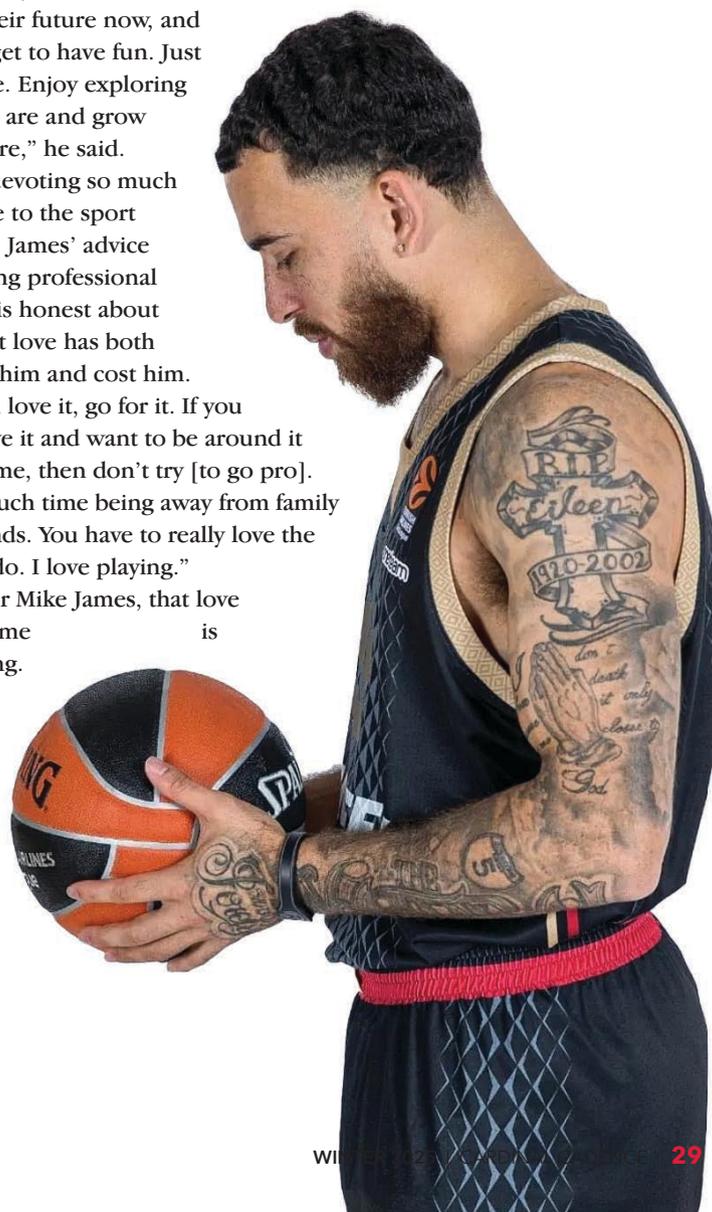
With so many hours on the court behind him and wisdom gained from his world travels, James is happy to give advice to the younger generation. His key piece of advice for kids is “just to have fun.”

“So many kids are worried about their future now, and they forget to have fun. Just enjoy life. Enjoy exploring who you are and grow from there,” he said.

After devoting so much of his life to the sport he loves, James’ advice to aspiring professional athletes is honest about what that love has both brought him and cost him.

“If you love it, go for it. If you don’t love it and want to be around it all the time, then don’t try [to go pro]. It’s so much time being away from family and friends. You have to really love the game. I do. I love playing.”

And for Mike James, that love of the game is everything.




 CARDINAL  
*love stories*  
 #matchmadeatlu



**Zoia (Carr) '16 and Reginald "Reggie" Taylor '16**

We met at FCA [Fellowship of Christian Athletes]. I was speaking that day, and I invited her from Instagram to come out to FCA. She showed up, and I went up to her to thank her for coming. From that moment on, we continued to communicate. She was a supervisor for intramurals, so I would come and hang out with her while she was at work. A year later, we got engaged. Two years later, we got married. We have been married for seven years and have two kids.



HATTON

**Jasmine (Reese) '17 and Nicholas Collins -15**

Our first encounter was in Morris Hall when I was studying in my room and my neighbors were being too loud, so I went over there to tell them to keep it down. A guy answered the door, and I told him they were being too loud. He apologized and invited me in to meet his roommate (first time I met my future husband). Once meeting him, I realized that we had biology class together and I saw him playing basketball in the Rec a few times I was there. We began studying together and one thing led to another. We started dating in 2012. Nick ended up enlisting in the Army in 2015, and we were married in 2016. We now have been married for eight years and share two beautiful children.



COLLINS

**Marisa (Kiser) '23 and R.J. Carver '24**

Me and RJ met almost four years ago in the parking lot at Combs hall. I usually never parked there before class, but I was running late and there were no other parking spots available. After class when I was walking back to my car, I heard him yelling from across the parking lot that I was pretty. I didn't listen to him and proceeded to get into my car. His friend told him "she could be your wife" and sped up in their car so he could come talk to me. RJ knocked on my window and I barely rolled it down because I thought it was awkward. He told me I was beautiful and asked me for my number, and here we are all this time later.



KELM



CARVER

**Amanda '04, '10, and Michael Hatton '04, '18**

We dated throughout college and Michael proposed to me on one knee in the Education Building. We got married in 1999 and had our daughter in 2000 and our son in 2002. We graduated together in 2004 and we are currently serving in principal roles at different schools. Michael is director of dual credit at Lamar Institute of Technology, and I am coordinator of career and technology education and counselors for Region 5 Education Service Center.

**Taryn '18, '20, and Matthew Kelm '17**

I met Matt through my best friend and roommate, Hannah Carlson. She knew him from the Baptist Student Ministry and told me she kind of had a little crush on him! I didn't know what she saw in him, but we ended up hanging out with him and his friend pretty regularly. Matt was our RA in Campbell so we hung out and played cards in his room. Over time, Matt and I started going grocery shopping and to Wednesday nights at Calvary together, just the two of us. Eventually, Hannah sat me down and said that she didn't have a crush on Matt but that she was pretty sure he had a crush on me!! I told her she was very wrong, and that's when she told me that she already talked to Matt and that he for sure did. Because of Hannah we ended up going on a date, and because of Lamar our first date was at the symphony #freetickets. Matt and I have been together ever since! We were married in August 2019 and live in Webster with our son, Stephen. Matt works at NASA, and I'm a speech-language pathologist for Clear Creek ISD. Lamar added so many blessings to our lives.



GUTIERREZ

**Aylin Galvan '23, '24, and Rafael Gutierrez '25 (anticipated)**

In October 2020, I was studying for an exam with one of my best friends in a study room at the STEM building. She was procrastinating and people-watching at whoever walked past our study room. She was saying little blurbs here and there, but then she said, 'Oh, he's cute!' I looked up to see a guy walking past our study room, and I agreed that he was really cute! I was not able to focus on my work anymore because I had an extreme urge to make a move on him. I made my friend check to see if he was still studying down the hall because I was this super shy 18-year-old. When she told me he was still there, I went over to him and could barely speak as I handed him a sticky note that read, 'Hi, I saw you walking past my study room and I thought you were really cute. \*my phone number\*.' He texted me that night, and we went on our first date three days later. We hit it off and were glued at the hip for three weeks until he asked me to be his girlfriend. We just celebrated our four-year anniversary. Still going strong!



TAYLOR

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



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

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**60s**

**Ronn Haddox** '64, B.B.A. management, who earned his law degree in 1970, and his wife, **Anna (Dunn)** '64, B.S. home economics, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary July 31, 2024. Ronn is an attorney with Haddox & Associates and a board member of the Lee College Board of Regents, and Anna is a retired teacher. They live in Baytown.

**Jim Davis** '65, B.S. government, '67, M.B.A. business administration, is retired and lives in Houston.

**Suzanne (Weldon) Dirr** '67, B.S. speech, is retired and lives in Waynesboro, Penn.

**Catherine (French) Schmersahl** '67, B.A. history, is a retired educator. She and her husband, Dennis, live in Fort Worth.

**70s**

**Judy (Wahrmund) Chamberlain** '71, B.S. mathematics, retired from teaching for Irving school district. She and her husband, William, live in Little Elm.

**Patsy (Chesnutt) Magee** '73, B.S. secondary education, '81, M.Ed. supervision, retired from Beaumont school district in 2023 as science curriculum supervisor. She and her husband, Ernest, live in Sour Lake.

After a 44-year career in computer programming and information technology, **Woodrow Bishop** '75, A.A.S. business data processing, retired in 2020. He and his wife, Kay, live in Roysce City.

Christus Southeast Texas St. Elizabeth Hospital named **Carolyn (Lee) Tullis** '76, certif. of completion vocational nursing, '93, A.A.S. nursing, the 2024 Nurse of the Year. She lives in Port Neches.

**Morgan (Colburn) Chambellan** '78, B.M. music, retired from Pasadena school district as a physical education teacher after 40 years of service and lives in La Porte.

**Greg Jackson** '78, B.S. biology, retired as an insurance agent. He and his wife, Lynn, live in Port Arthur.

**Oscar Polk** '78, B.S. industrial engineering, retired from Eastman Chemical Co. He and his wife **Emogene (Jones)** '76, B.S. home economics, who is a retired educator, live in Longview.

**Jan (Hill) Booker** '79, B.B.A. management, '86, M.B.A. business administration, is a senior financial manager with Aetna Health Care. She lives in Westerville, Ohio.

**Mike Oszczakiewicz** '79, B.S. biology, who earned his doctorate in 1983, is chief of thoracic and vascular surgery at Baptist Hospitals of Southeast Texas.

**In Memoriam  
Mike Aldredge**



The Lamar University community is saddened by the passing of Distinguished Alumnus Mike Aldredge '65 Dec. 15, 2024. Aldredge, 84, was past president of the Lamar University Alumni Association and the Lamar University Foundation Inc. and a former member of the College of Engineering Advisory Board and Industrial Engineering

Advisory Board. Lamar University extends its deepest condolences to the Aldredge family and honors his long-term dedication to his alma mater and profound impact on the institution.

The Gilmer, Texas, native graduated with a bachelor's degree in industrial engineering in 1965. While at LU, he was an active member of Pi Kappa Alpha Fraternity, and he also met his wife and love of his life, Patricia (Peterson) '61. He served in the U.S. Army. Mike and Pat endowed three scholarships at Lamar University and endowed a chair in engineering. They are members of the Lamar University Spindletop Society and Presidents Circle and helped lead the 2006-2013 Investing in the Future Campaign. Aldredge enjoyed a 40-year career at Puffer Sweiven, working his way from clerk, service man and sales engineer to vice president, board member and finally chairman of the board and CEO before retiring in 2000.

**80s**

**Craig Fisch** '80, B.S. communication, is owner of and wealth advisor for RPR Financial Advisors. He and his wife **Gina** '84, A.S. nursing, who is retired, live in Lenexa, Kan.

**Blaney Guillory** '81, A.A.S. business data processing, earned a B.A. in business management in 1990 and is operations manager for TCL Insurance Agency. He and his wife, Katie, live in Nacogdoches.

**Yvette Scheiber** '82, B.S. communication disorders, '90, B.B.A. general business, earned a master's degree in strategic communication in 2017 and a doctorate in organizational leadership in 2021. A former business columnist for a New York Times affiliate, she is working on her first book and lives in Houston.

**Todd Landry** '85, B.S. chemistry, earned a doctorate in educational leadership in 2018 and an M.B.A. and is senior director of Early Matters San Antonio. He and his wife, Kari, live in San Antonio.

**Joseph Malbrough** '86, B.S. communication, retired as owner of The UPS Store on Cumberland Boulevard. He and his wife, Cara, live in Smyrna, Ga.

**Larry Brown** '87, B.M. music education, is head band director for Arkadelphia Public Schools. He and his wife, Denise, live in Rison, Ark.

**Linda (Ingham) Tait** '87, B.B.A. accounting, '02, M.B.A. business administration, is a certified public accountant. She and her husband, Lynn, live in Port Neches.

**Cynthia (Ebanks) Wade** '87, B.B.A. general business—advertising, is director of Reynolds & Reynolds, the leading U.S. provider of automobile dealership software. She and her husband, Phil, live in College Station.

**Steve Abalos** '88, B.B.A. finance, is chief financial officer of Vortech Contracting Inc. He lives in Mont Belvieu.

**Jeff Gann** '88, B.S. speech, and his wife, **Jan (Johnson)** '88, B.S. sociology, who is retired, live in Durango, Colo.

**Vanessa (Hadnot) Moore** '88, B.B.A. general business—industrial engineering, earned a master's degree in human resources management and is enterprise customer operations business group lead—USA and Canada for 3M Company. She and her husband, Jimmy, live in Cedar Park.

**C.H. Colvin** '89, B.S. psychology, '90, B.S. sociology, '11, M.Ed. administration, is an assistant principal in Beaumont school district. He lives in Beaumont.

**90s**

**Bonnie (Zoch) Albright** '90, B.B.A. accounting, is associate vice president for finance and operations at the Alpine campus of Sul Ross State University. She lives in Alpine.

The National Bar Association granted **DeMonica Gladney** '90, A.S. law enforcement, B.S. criminal justice, who earned her law degree in 1993, the 2024 Presidential Award. She is senior counsel for ExxonMobil Corp. and lives in Houston.

**Alumni Homecoming  
Pre-Game Party**

LU alumni and friends celebrated 2024 Homecoming as they watched the Cardinals take on the Stephen F. Austin State University Lumberjacks Oct. 12, 2024.



Jami (Archer) Lee '97 and TSUS Regent Stephen Lee '89



Maegan Collins '16, '18, '23, and Brandi (Scharber) Verdine '18, '24



Bekah (Gonzales) Guedry '18 and future Cardinal Valerie Lakich



Lloyd Sutton and Danielle (Hudson) Sutton '08



J Bienvenu '11, future Cardinal Harper Bienvenu and Tayrn (Robinson) Bienvenu



Charlee (Chelette) Fitzgerald '18, '19, and Jordan Hebert '16



Sharita Gardner '12, Alumni Advisory Board past president and Chris Graham '90, Alumni Advisory Board president-elect



Jeff Allen and Linda (Seay) Allen '02



Members of the CARDS, Techsans and Lambda Tau reunited at Homecoming: Patrick Bardwell '92, Sarah (Atwood) Bardwell '79, Julius Albonetti '76, Craig Stelly '78, Amy (Gauthier) Walla '76, Lynn Sembera '74 and Peggy (Franklin) Sembera '74



Edwin Vallery '79, Hetty (Green) Brown '79, L.C. Brown



Cody Glenn '03, '24, Ashley (Yentzen) Glen '08, '24, and future Cardinal Zoey Glenn



Usha (Balaratnam) Beckman '87, future Cardinal Sloane Rooney, Elsa (Beckman) Rooney '14 and future Cardinals Ava and Hazel Rooney



Antoinette (Espritt) Mays '07, '12, '16, Valarie Daniels, Loyce Sinegal, LaShanda James '02, Wilma (Stewart) Gibbs '67, '75, Darrell Stewart and Tony Stewart '72



Jeff Spoeri, Milton Dunnam, Myrna (Pirnack) Dunnam '67, Peggy Zabala, Juan Zabala '07, vice president for university advancement



Lawrence Getwood, Terry Savoy-Hadley '95 and Kerry Hadley



David Thompson '07, Caralee (McDonald) Thompson '95, Thomas Davis '15, Josh Davis '11, '15, '19



Kristen (Still) Davidson '11, future Cardinal Roman Davidson and Drew Davidson '11



Chris Allen, Emily (Everett) Allen '98, '04, LU Alumni Advisory Board president; future Cardinal Andrew Allen; and Ron Everett



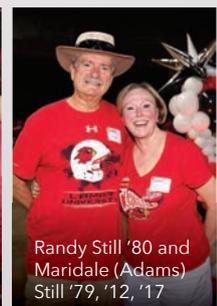
City of Beaumont Mayor Roy West '83, Olivia Malick '21, Stephan Malick '95, '18



IMG\_0282 - Larry Johnson '65, Jerry Mask '74, Beth Ann (Ingram) Mask '64 and Carol (Ingram) Johnson '67



Traci (Maines) Warner '01; Lizzie Drago, LU Ambassador; Mallary Warner, LU Ambassador; and Jesse Warner



Randy Still '80 and Maridale (Adams) Still '79, '12, '17



Cheryl (Spencer) Fuller '82; Phillip Fuller '81; Juan Zabala '07, vice president for university advancement, and Peggy Zabala

GOUTHIER

# CLASS NOTES

**Michele (Morrow) Harrington** '90, B.S. communication, owns The Belly Dance Studio. She and her husband **Bill** '90, B.B.A. management, who is president of Gulfspan Industrial, live in Beaumont.

**Tamra (Boyett) Simon** '90, B.S. elementary education, has taught for 34 years in Kountze school district. She lives in Kountze.

**Wanda (Mikeska) Andrus** '91, A.A.S. nursing, '02, B.S. nursing, is a retired nurse and lives in Vidor.

**Melissa (Lyons) Diaz** '91, B.S. criminal justice, owns Beaumont Plumbing. She and her husband, Damian, live in Beaumont.

**Keith Henke** '91, B.S. kinesiology, is district sales manager for Southern Glazers Wine and Spirits. He and his wife **Denise (Wenner)** '94, A.A.S. dental hygiene, live in Beaumont.

**Robin (Slott) McCutcheon** '91, B.S. elementary education, is executive director of Samaritan Counseling Center of Southeast Texas for United Way. She lives in Nederland.

**Karen (Buenik) Puckett** '91, B.B.A. marketing, is director of the Center for Environmental Excellence at the University of Texas at Arlington. She and her husband **Matthew** '89, B.S. kinesiology, '94, B.A.A.S. applied arts

and sciences, '96, A.A.S. nursing, who is the nursing supervisor at Austin Regional Clinic, live in Round Rock.

**Kellie (Dale) Rogers** '91, B.A. English, '18, M.Ed. school counseling, retired from a 27-year career in education and is a licensed professional counselor who owns HOPE Services Mental Wellness and Life Coaching. She and her husband, Duane, live in Winnie.

**Kelly (Suttle) Coleman** '92, B.S. psychology, earned her M.B.A. in 2023 and is an account manager with USI Insurance Services. She and her husband, Todd, live in Manvel.

**Clarence Driver** '93, B.S. communication, is an insurance claims adjuster with Buckwild Entertainment. He lives in Houston.

**Tahwanda Lambert** '93, B.B.A. accounting, '99, M.B.A. business administration, is a budget director for the U.S. Department of State's office for Near Eastern Affairs in the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs. She and her husband live in Lufkin.

**Trina (Hendrix) Gore** '93, B.B.A. accounting, '19, M.Ed. administration, is assistant principal at Fall Creek Elementary School. She and her husband, Marcus, live in Huffman.

**Glenn Preisler** '93, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, is a DOT compliance specialist with Airgas. He and his wife, Lori, live in Montgomery.

**Jon Williams** '93, B.B.A. general business, is a financial advisor and wealth manager who owns LPL Financial. He and his wife **Jill (Benoit)** '81, B.S. nursing, who is a registered nurse with the Medical Center of Southeast Texas, live in Nederland.

**Christie (Hodges) LeBlanc** '94 earned her bachelor's degree in 1995 and is a senior registered nurse at University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio. She lives in San Antonio.

**Kathryn (Lusignan) McKeenan** '94, B.M. music, is director of choirs for Silsbee school district. She and her husband, John, live in Silsbee.

**Michele (Laughlin) Moss** '94, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '06, M.Ed. administration, teaches fourth grade at Pine Forest Elementary. She and her husband, Tracy, live in Buna.

**Kelli Scofield** '94, B.G.S. liberal arts, teaches third grade at Oak Forest Elementary School. She lives in Beaumont.

**Rick Dearing** '95, B.S. criminal justice, owns The Justice Claims Group. He and his wife, Marla, live in Bridge City.

**Valerie (Williams) Polk** '95, B.S. health education, is the breast and cervical cancer services coordinator for Jasper Newton County Public Health District. She and her husband, Gene, live in Pineland.

**Todd Senters** '96, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, earned a master's degree in healthcare administration in 2002 and is vice president of Graduate Medical Education for HCA Healthcare. He and his wife **Dawn (Shuler)** '95, A.A.S. nursing, who is a registered nurse with the Julie Rogers Gift of Life Program, live in Beaumont.

**Jennifer (Dobbs) Shaw** '96, B.B.A. management, is chief financial officer of Wathen, DeShong and Juncker. She and her husband, Daniel, live in Beaumont.

**Lisa (Nelson Harris) Smith** '96, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, teaches reading at Deweyville Junior High School. She and her husband, Gregory, live in Orange.

**Stephanie (Torres) Vanskike** '96, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '11, M.Ed. administration, is regional clinical coordinator for Southeast Texas at Sam Houston State University. She and her husband, Lanny, live in Beaumont.



JT Beckman '82, '87 and Usha Beckman '87



Judy (Walker) Linsley '67, '77, Meg (Baertl) Brown '15, Hetty (Green) Brown '79



Emily (Everett) Allen '88, '04 and Aaron Allen



Jeff Darby '88, and Christine (Lindsey) Darby '91

**President Suite Reception**  
LU Alumni Board members, along with special guests, were invited to attend a reception in President Taylor's suite to cheer the Cardinals during the Sept. 14 football game.



City of Beaumont Mayor Roy West '83, Travis Walker '24, and Kim (Bost) Walker '01



Thomas Davis '15 and Josh Davis '11, '15, '19



Elise Becker '05, '12, and Sarah Black



J Bienvenu '11, Future Cardinal Harper Bienvenu, Caralee (McDonald) Thompson '95, David Thompson '07



Marc Owens '18, and Tatiana Morales Owens '93, '07, '14

**Dawn (Stark) White** '96, B.S. nursing, is a registered nurse and case manager at Texas Children's Health Plan. She and her husband, Greg, live in Lumberton.

**Lori (Swan) Wright** '96, B.S.W. social work, earned a master's degree in social work in 1997 and is director of the Lamar University social work program and field director. She and her husband, Joel, live in Beaumont.

**Tamara (Saveat) Long** '97, B.G.S. general studies, is principal of Beaumont United High School. She and her husband, Cory, live in Beaumont.

**Timothy Ocnaschek** '97, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, is chief of police for the city of Beaumont. He and his wife, Teri, live in Beaumont.

**Marie (Alvarado) Tucker** '97, B.S. communication, '09, M.Ed. administration, is an assistant principal in Alvin school district. She and her husband, Hans, live in Rosharon.

**Emily (Everett) Allen** '98, B.S. political science, '04, M.Ed. educational supervision, is assistant principal of Lumberton Intermediate School. She and her husband, Chris, live in Sour Lake.

**Paula (Hlavinka) Hussey** '98, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '09, M.Ed. educational leadership, teaches in Nederland school district, where she and her husband, Paul, live.

**Cherry Moore** '98, B.S. communication, is founder and CEO of My Bella Vita Travel, which specializes in ancestry tours and custom vacations in Italy. She, her husband, Giuseppe, and their son Max divide their time between Lumberton and Catanzaro, Italy.

**Belinda (Hogan) Taylor** '98, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, is principal of Charlton Pollard Elementary School in Beaumont school district. She lives in Beaumont.

**Sharon (Smith) Williams** '98, B.S. nursing, '04, M.S. nursing administration, earned a doctorate in nursing practice in 2017 and is retired. She and her husband, Homer, live in Hillister.

**Billie Dorman** '99, B.S. communication, is copy editor and page designer for Hearst Corp. She lives in Beaumont.

**Kathy (Depwe) Hebert** '99, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, retired from Lakeview Elementary School in Port Arthur school district. She lives in Nederland.

## 00s

**Sandy (Simmons) Eaves** '00, B.A. English, is the administrator for Calvert Eaves Clarke & Stelly. Her husband **Michael** '89, B.B.A. general business-industrial engineering, earned his law degree in 1993 and is managing partner of the same firm. They live in Beaumont.

**Keri (Hutchins) Curd** '00, B.B.A. accounting, is a certified public accountant with her own firm, Keri Michutka CPA. She and her husband, **John Curd** '20, M.S. accounting, live in Orange.

**Tamieka Patterson** '00, B.S. dance, earned her master's degree in coaching and athletic administration and is director of student activities for Beaumont school district. She lives in Beaumont.

**Lori (Kolander) Slocum** '01, B.B.A. management, earned her law degree in 2004 and is an attorney. She and her husband, Reginald, live in Sour Lake.

**Tami Goss** '02, B.M. music, '11, M.M. music education, is band director at Bridge City High School. She and her wife, Lauren, live in Orange.

**Octavia (Saavedra) Guzman** '02, B.B.A. marketing, is tax assessor collector of Orange County. She lives in Orange.

**Jeremy Loukas** '02, B.S. mathematics, is senior pricing analyst for Hiscox USA. He lives in San Antonio.

Vidor school district promoted **James McDowell** '02, B.S. political science, '10, M.Ed. administration, to executive director of human resources. He and his wife, **Christa (Miller)** '04, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, live in Vidor.

**Karen (Cochrum) Pilgrim** '02, B.B.A. general business-industrial engineering, '17, M.B.A. business administration, is a subcontract program manager for Collins Aerospace. She lives in Hamshire.

**Jennifer (Williamson) Reeves** '02, B.S. criminal justice, is chief security officer for Jefferson County Adult Probation. She and her husband, Jason, live in Silsbee.

**Kara (Hammonds) Smith** '02, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, is a teacher, and her husband **Colt** '04, B.S. kinesiology, is an engineer. They live in Nederland.

**Brent Fabriguze** '03, B.S. family and consumer science-family studies, is a corporate electrical safety specialist with Energy Transfer Partners. He and his wife, Jennifer, live in Lumberton.

**Jolie (Arceneaux) Hartwick** '03, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, teaches in Hardin-Jefferson school district. She and her husband, Justin, live in Beaumont.

**Natasha (Digges) Holden** '03, B.S. mathematics, '10 M.Ed. administration, is director of curriculum and program integration for Barbers Hill school district. She and her husband, Charles, live in Mont Belvieu.

**Ariane Moore** '03, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '09, M.Ed. administration, is principal of Pietzsch-McArthur PreK-8th Grade Center. She lives in Beaumont.

**Jacqueline (Bennight) Wenske** '03, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, teaches in Pearland school district. She and her husband, Travis, live in Pearland.

**Lenzi (Childress) Belcher** '04, B.S. criminal justice, owns and is director of Kidz World Learning Center in Bridge City. She and her husband, Lamar, live in Orange.

**Wilda (Hill) Provo** '04, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, retired as a human resources business consultant. She lives in Beaumont.

**Johnny Alfred III** '05, B.S. electrical engineering, who earned his law degree in 2012, is an attorney with his own firm, The Alfred Firm. He and his wife, Amber, live in Sugar Land.

**Wendy (Taylor) Beall** '05, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, teaches second grade at Oak Forest Elementary School. She and her husband, Larry, live in Orange.

**Andrew Brooks** '05, B.S. political science, '22, M.Ed. administration, is complex supervisor of education for the U.S. Dept. of Justice Federal Bureau of Prisons. He and his wife, Candace, live in Sour Lake.

**Whitney (Evans) Campbell** '05, B.S. communication, is a special education facilitator for East Central school district. She and her husband, Myles, live in Saint Hedwig.

**Nicole (Harlan) Feldkamp** '05, B.B.A. accounting, '06, M.B.A. business administration, is chief financial officer of Apartment Management Professionals. She and her husband, Jacob, live in Leander.

**Wesley Lee** '05, B.S. political science, '20, M.Ed. administration, teaches in Port Arthur school district. He and his wife **Melissa (Sarao)** '06, B.B.A. finance, '12, M.B.A. business administration, who is also an educator, live in Nederland.

**Elonda (Teems) Mathues** '05, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, teaches response to intervention at Oak Forest Elementary School. She and her husband, Joe, live in Vidor.

**Jason Ramsey** '05, B.S. communication, is field operations engineer at Fox Robotics. He lives in Midlothian.

**Lindsay Simon** '05, B.S. communication, who earned her law degree in 2012, held a reception for her first solo art show, "Flights of Fancy: Defying Gravity," at the Texas Artists Museum. She is managing assistant attorney general for the Texas Office of the Attorney General and lives in Orange.

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

**Amy (Taylor) Collazo** '06, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '17, M.Ed. special education, '20, M.Ed. educational administration, is an educational diagnostician for Nederland school district and director of the Lamar University Color Guard. She and her

husband **Justin** '02, B.M. music, who is band director for C.O. Wilson Middle School in Nederland school district, live in Port Neches.

**Carolyn Cross** '06, B.S. communication, earned master's degrees in education (2009) and speech communication (2013) and is director of the Honors College at Houston Community College. She lives in Houston.

**Jason Ebarb** '06, B.A. history, is owner and head instructor of TPC Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, offering classes to both children and adults. He lives in Beaumont.

**Joseph Hannan** '06, B.B.A. marketing, is a human resources business partner for MD Anderson. He and his wife **Tiffany (Hall)** '24, B.S. university studies multidisciplinary, who teaches in Bridge City school district, live in Bridge City.

**Matt Kimball** '06, B.S. chemical engineering, is vice president of sales and marketing for Union Tech. He and his wife **Candice** '04, B.B.A. accounting, '06, M.B.A. business administration, live in Katy.

**James Parsley** '06, B.M. music education, '13, M.Ed. educational administration, is principal of Pine Forest Elementary in Vidor school district. He and his wife, Elizabeth, live in Silsbee.

Hamshire-Fannett High School promoted **Diana (Breaux) Sims** '06, B.S. kinesiology, '23, M.Ed. administration, to assistant principal. She is also the head softball coach and lives with her husband, Seth, in Beaumont.

**Stephanie (White) Tillery** '06, B.A. history, teaches in Alvin school district and is head cheer coach and senior sponsor. She and her husband, Jody, live in Alvin.

**Lindsey Cauthen** '07, B.A. music, B.S. biology, earned her Ph.D. in genes and development from M.D. Anderson Cancer Center's UTHealth Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences in 2014 and is principal for career development at Baylor College of Medicine. She lives in Houston.

**Quin (Andrus) Arceneaux** '08, B.S. criminal justice, '15, M.Ed. school counseling, who earned her certificate in mental health counseling in 2023, is counselor at Sallie Curtis Elementary School. She and her husband, Vincent, live in Beaumont.

**Wesley Biddle** '08, B.S. chemical engineering, is a PSM engineer with ChevronPhillips Chemical Co. He and his wife, Sherri, live in Groves.

**Adam Brown** '08, B.S. industrial technology, who earned his master's degree in safety management in 2015, is environmental health, safety and security manager at Golden Triangle Polymers. He and his wife, **Jennifer (Jordan)** '08, B.B.A. marketing, live in Port Neches.

**Heather (Watson) East** '08, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '11, M.Ed. administration, is principal of Oak Forest Elementary and owns Watson



Jeff O'Malley, athletics director; Pres. Jaime Taylor; and Dennis Moncla '89, '94



Yolanda (Johnson) Avery '86, '91, Shannon (Copeland) Figueroa '02, '03, '07, Hetty (Green) Brown '79, Kennetha (Robinson) Alvarez '09, '12, and Elise Becker '05, '12

**Alumni Advisory Board Fall Board Meeting**  
 Members of the LU Alumni Advisory Board gathered for their fall board meeting Sept. 12, 2024, at the Neches Federal Credit Union Arena at the Montagne Center. They toured the President Suite and Billy Tubbs Basketball Court before a business meeting in the Cardinal Room.



Jeff Darby '88 and Pres. Jaime Taylor



Shannon (Copeland) Figueroa '02, '03, '07, director of alumni affairs, and Celena (Green) Champagne '99



Travis Walker '24 and J Bienvenu '11



J Bienvenu '11; Dennis Moncla '89, '94; Thomas Davis '15; Chris Graham '90, Alumni Advisory Board president-elect; John Rollins '12; Caralee (McDonald) Thompson '95; Evie Clifton, coordinator of alumni affairs; and Sam Blanda '08



Emily (Everett) Allen '98, Alumni Advisory Board president, and Sharita Gardner '12, Alumni Advisory Board past president



Usha (Balaratnam) Beckman '87, Shawn Webb Locke '03, '12, Sharita Gardner '12, Danielle (Hudson) Sutton '08 and Celine Do '18, '22

MAULDIN

Works Education. She and her husband, **Brian** '98, B.M. music, '10, M.Ed. administration, who is a real estate agent with Coldwell Banker Southern Homes Real Estate, live in Beaumont.

**Casie (Carter) Harris** '08, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, is associate director of development for the American Cancer Society. She and her husband, Sean, live in Beaumont.

**Kayla (Smith) Kanak** '08, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, teaches kindergarten at Jessieville Elementary School. She and her husband, Kevin, live in Hot Springs Village, Ark.

**Rasesh Patel** '08, M.E. chemical engineering, is a project manager for the state of Indiana. He and his wife **Neha (Sharma)** '09, M.S. kinesiology, who is a physical therapist with Kindred Hospital Indianapolis North, live in Carmel, Ind.

**Johnny Plasencia** '08, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, is regional operations

manager for Boxer Property. He and his wife, Erin, live in Atascocita.

**Veronica (Ramsey) Redmon** '08, B.G.S. general studies, '14, M.Ed. administration, '16 M.Ed. special education, is an inclusive services specialist with Beaumont school district. She and her husband, Donald, live in Beaumont.

**Danielle (Hudson) Sutton** '08, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, is owner and outreach director of 409 Family and kindergarten prep teacher with Veritas Classical Academy. She and her husband, Lloyd, live in Beaumont.

**Catherine (Seidman) Warmack** '08, B.M. music, is a private music teacher and lives in Grand Prairie.

**Jaitra Anand** '09, M.E. electrical engineering, is a senior developer for Alpha Omega Integration. He and his wife, Rashmi, live in Chantilly, Va.

**Michael Brady** '09, B.B.A. marketing, is an ethane cracker operator for TotalEnergies Petrochemicals and Refining USA Inc. He and his wife, Megan, live in Nederland.

**Stacy Hall Jr.** '09, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, is assistant principal of Dr. Ronald McNair Junior High School in Alvin school district. He lives in Angleton.

**William "Cody" Heironimus** '09, B.S. mechanical engineering, owns William Heironimus Insurance Agency. He and his wife **Amanda (Manshack)** '10, B.S. communication, who is a sales representative with GSK, live in Beaumont.

**Chad Helton** '09, B.S. civil engineering, is a construction manager for Dow Chemical. He and his wife, Ashleigh, live in Orange.

**Diana (Davis) Miles** '09, B.S. nursing, is director of quality for Baptist Hospitals of Southeast Texas. She and

her husband, Rodney, live in Beaumont.

Oak Forest Elementary School promoted **Sydney (Sonnier) Theriot** '09, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '19, M.Ed. administration, to assistant principal. She and her husband, Bryan, live in Vidor.

**Jason VanMetre** '09, Ed.D. educational leadership, is the superintendent in the Calcasieu Parish School Board. He and his wife, Amanda, live in Sulphur, La.

**Tiffany West** '09, B.B.A. human resources management, is senior global total rewards analyst for Westlake Chemicals. She lives in Magnolia.

**Heather (Richard) Wiggins** '09, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, '10, A.A.S. nursing, '11, B.S. nursing, is a registered nurse and teaches health science in Silsbee school district. She and her husband, James, live in Silsbee.

# 10s

**Kendal Clayton** '10, B.B.A. marketing, earned a master's degree in divinity in 2020 and is a pastor with One Church-Calvary Campus. He and his wife, Rebekah, live in Murfreesboro, Tenn.

**Brian Gustin** '10, B.S. electrical engineering, is an automation engineer with Covestro. He and his wife **Misty (Coyle)** '20, M.B.A. business administration, live in Dayton.

**Ashley (Jeffero) Haynes** '10, B.G.S. general studies, '22, M.Ed. school counseling, is a school counselor for Pasadena school district. She and her husband **Corey** '05, B.F.A. graphic design, who is a working artist and educator, live in Humble.

**Lori (Klandrud) Hendy** '10, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, teaches in Temple school district. She and her husband, Sean, live in Salado.

**Justin Hidalgo** '10, B.S. criminal justice, is a senior enterprise information technology project manager for Harris County. He and his wife **Megan (Bienvenu)** '12, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, who teaches at Veritas Classical Academy, live in Beaumont.

**Jay Prigmore** '10, B.S. electrical engineering, earned a Ph.D. in 2013 and is a senior electrical quality engineer and technical program manager with Google. He lives in Oswego, Ill.

**Codi (Neichoy) Richardson** '10, B.G.S. general studies, '20, M.Ed. special education—diagnostician, is a diagnostician for Kountze school district. She and her husband, Jason, live in Kountze.

**Helen (Lopez) Saldana** '10, B.S. communication disorders, earned a master's degree in communication disorders in 2015 and is a speech-language pathologist with Funetics Speech. She and her husband **Albert** '11, B.S. psychology, '13, M.B.A. business administration, who is senior executive director of Wellsential Health, live in New Braunfels.

**Tommy Tanner** '10, B.A. English, '13, M.A. English, earned his master's degree in industrial distribution in 2018 and is project procurement advisor for ExxonMobil. He and his wife **Shannon (Tait)** '05, B.S. political science, who earned her master's degree in public administration and is an instructor for Lamar Institute of Technology, live in Port Neches.

**Kristen (Murty) Voivedich** '10, B.S. nursing, earned her master's degree in 2017 and is a family nurse practitioner with Steward Medical Group. She and her husband, Kolton, live in Nederland.

**Lindsey (Lanclos) Wright** '10, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, is a computer lab aide at Helena Park Elementary School in Nederland school district. She and her husband, William, live in Nederland.

**Jamie (Salter) Blankenship** '11, B.S. family and consumer science—food and nutrition, works for Motiva. She and her husband **Wil** '23, B.S. industrial technology, live in Port Neches.

**Amanda (Ginn) Braxton** '11, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, owns Happily Ever Magical Vacations Travel Agency. She lives in Orange.

**Robert Godinez** '11, B.S. civil engineering, earned a master's degree in civil and environmental engineering in 2015 and an M.B.A. in 2021. He is project manager for carbon capture and storage with Tallgrass Energy. He and his wife, Jessica, live in Arvada, Co.

**Thaddeus Green** '11, B.S. communication, earned a master's degree in city and regional planning in 2016 and is vice president of development for Fort Worth Housing Solutions. He lives in Fort Worth.

**Valerie Hairston** '11, M.Ed. administration, is principal of Del Valle High School and education consultant at Solution Tree. She and her husband, Orlando, live in El Paso.

**April Hughes** '11, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, teaches English in Breckenridge school district. She and her husband, John, live in Moran.

**Dustin Jones** '11, B.S. mechanical engineering, is an engineer with Charlie Mike Precision. He and his wife **Taylor (Cox)** '14, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '23, M.Ed. administration, who teaches in Leon school district, live in Montgomery.

**Bonnye (Seitzler) Kath** '11, M.Ed. administration, is the assistant principal at Floyd Elementary School. She lives in Mesquite.

**Annie (De La Puente) Kovatch** '11, B.S. nursing, is director of nurses at Golden Triangle Emergency Center. She and her husband, Jared, live in Orange.

The Texas Tech School of Law Alumni Association granted **Matthew Minick** '11, B.S. political science, who earned his law degree in 2014, the G.O.L.D. Award. He is the Hardin County attorney and lives with his wife, **Kaltrina (Harbuzi)** '10, B.S. political science, '11, M.P.A. public administration, in Kountze.

Griffith Moseley Johnson and Associates promoted **Lauren (Anderson) Sexau** '11, B.B.A. accounting, '12, M.S. accounting, to controller. She and her husband, Bryson, live in Groves.

**Amie (Kendrick) Sonnier** '11, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, is executive assistant at Motiva Enterprises. She lives in Port Neches.

**Uma Tandan** '11, M.B.A. business administration, is a senior manager with Comcast. She lives in Downingtown, Penn.

**Cheryl Woodruff** '11, M.Ed. administration, as the special education department chair and special education building coordinator at Cloverdale Middle School after 43 years of service. She lives in Benton, Ark.

**Kevin Reavis** '12, B.B.A. general

business, married Taylor Pearson June 22, 2024. Kevin is a data privacy and data ethics analyst at LiveRamp, and they live in Maumelle, Ark.

**Melinda (McDuff) Thibodeaux** '12, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, teaches ABU at Oak Forest Elementary School. She and her husband, James, live in Orange.

**Corey Troxell** '12, M.B.A. business administration, teaches career and technology education in Burleson school district. He and his wife, **Allison** '19, M.Ed. digital learning and leading, live in Crowley.

**Sherry (Waldon) Wells** '12, Ed.D. educational leadership, is vice president student success at Lone Star College-Kingwood. She lives in Houston.

**Valerie (Bruce) Bailey** '13, M.Ed. administration, teaches music at Skyview Elementary. She and her husband, Ralph, live in Carrollton.

**Ryan Bearden** '13, B.S. psychology, is C.E.O. of Gulf Coast Extremity Solutions. He and his wife, Chelsea, live in New Orleans.

**Rachel (Mathews) Colvin** '13, B.A. American Sign Language, is a job placement and intake specialist with Empowered Hands and Kirby Placement. She and her husband, Thurman, live in Silsbee.

Vidor High School promoted **Devan Dart** '13, B.G.S. general studies, '17, M.Ed. administration, to principal. He and his wife, Emily, live in Vidor.

**Robert Hamilton** '13, M.S. kinesiology, married Melanie Goff June 27, 2024. Robert is an advisor in the Pre-Health Advising Center at the University of Houston, and they live in Katy.

**Shelby (West) Ibarra** '13, B.S. graphic design, '19, M.Ed. administration, '23, M.Ed. school counseling, is a school counselor for Kountze school district. She and her husband **Phillip** '15, B.S. industrial technology, who is a lead operating technician with ARLANXEO, live in Lumberton.

**Brittany (Barnard) Lopez** '13, B.B.A. management information systems, is a systems specialist with Neches Federal Credit Union. She and her husband, Armando, live in Nederland.

**Jordan (Miller) Roberts** '13, B.S.W. social work, is FYI case manager and workforce advocate for Buckner Children and Family Services. She and her husband, Stephen, live in Beaumont.

Rimkus Consulting Group promoted **Samon Tahir** '13, B.B.A. human resource management, '15, M.B.A. business administration, to talent management project manager. She also owns Digital Couture Marketing Agency and lives with her husband, Hammad, in Katy.

**Jiselle (Thomas) Wilson** '13, B.S. communication, is marketing and communications manager for the National Council of Jewish Women. She and her husband, Billy, live in Houston.

**Danielle (Sonier) Breland** '14, B.S. family and consumer science—nutrition,

dietetic, hospitality, is the school psychologist of Etoile Academy Charter School. She and her husband, Cameron, live in Katy.

**Natalie (Rhodes) Butaud** '14, B.S. dance, is associate director of outreach and customer service for Lamar University. She and her husband, Chase, live in Port Neches.

**Stephen Chapman** '14, Ed.D. educational leadership, is retired. He and his wife, Elizabeth, live in Combine.

**Cdr. Jeffrey Drury** '14, M.Ed. educational technology leadership, is a commander with the Coast Guard. He lives in Baton Rouge, La.

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

**Lauren (Anderson) Frederick** '14, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '20, M.Ed. school counseling, is a licensed professional counselor with Choices in Orange. She and her husband, **Blake** '14, B.S. mechanical engineering, live in Orange.

**Michelle (Sheppard) Green** '14, B.S. biology, teaches at Lumberton High School. She and her husband, Joseph, live in Lumberton.

**Cara (Bonner) Kettrick** '14, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, '22, M.P.A. public administration, to principal. He and his wife, Emily, live in Vidor.

She and her husband, Robert, live in Jacksonville.

**Miriam (Wyatt) Morgan** '14, B.A. political science, '16, M.P.A. public administration, is director of support operations for Lamar University. She lives in Beaumont.

**Fred Owens IV** '14, M.Ed. administration, is principal of Amelia Elementary School in Beaumont school district. He lives in Port Arthur.

**Elsa (Beckman) Rooney** '14, B.B.A. management, '21, M.B.A. business administration, is the controller at Pumpex Inc. She and her husband, Joel, live in Sour Lake.

**Ronald Sanders** '14, M.Ed. administration, is assistant principal at Heritage Middle School. He lives in Lubbock.

**Vivek Venkatesan** '14, B.S. electrical engineering, is a controls engineer for Caterpillar. He lives in Peoria, Ill.

**Abby Zernial** '14, B.B.A. general business, B.B.A. entrepreneurship, is business manager for Lumberton school district. She lives in Lumberton.

**Andy Arnold** '15, B.S. criminal justice, '20, M.S. criminal justice, is assistant chief of police for the Nederland Police Department. He and his wife **Danna (Lee)** '06, B.A. history, '24, M.Ed. counseling and development, live in Nederland.

**Amanda Austin** '15, Ed.D. educational leadership, is the 2024 Louisiana



Clara Schreck and Blaine Isom practice their b and d to know which side of the table setting their bread and drink should be placed

**Ambassador Etiquette Dinner**

The LU Ambassadors and Reaud Institute Scholars partnered for an etiquette dinner with leading etiquette expert and modern manners authority Diane Gottsman Sept. 5, 2024.



Carsen Barrett and Tilisa Thibodeaux, Reaud Honors College dean and director/principal of Texas Academy, practice passing bread



LU Ambassadors Rima Shaaban, Riley Trent and Kadence Garlington practice a toast



Diane Gottsman



Jada Thrash, Peyton McLaurin, Alyson Vu, Ryan Servantes and Michelle Lane



Spencer Cheng, Harvest Prater, Grace Roy, Jacob Smith and Jordan Nelson



Mallary Warner, Macy Ostten, Dennis Tran, Natalie Bean and Ryan Shugart

Principal of the Year. Austin reopened North Iberville High School as the first principal after over a decade of closure. She is the director of Iberville Math, Science, and Arts Academy-East and lives in Addis, La.

**Carrie (Burns) Burnett** '15, M.S. health promotion, is a case manager for Texas Health and Human Services. She and her husband, Michael, live in Lumberton.

**Ali (Gay) Corcoran** '15, B.M. music, is the choir director at Groves Middle School. She and her wife, Ashley '12, B.S. kinesiology, who is the head physical education coach at Groves Middle, live in Groves.

Bob Hope Elementary School promoted **Elizabeth Hernandez** '15, B.S.W. social work, '19, M.Ed. clinical mental health counseling, to campus director. She lives in Port Arthur.

Congratulations to **Kelsey (Patrick)** '15, B.S. family and consumer science-nutrition, dietetics and hospitality, and **Dalton Locklear** '18, B.S. mechanical engineering, on the birth of their son, Aiden. Kelsey is territory manager at Aytu BioScience, and Dalton is a mechanical engineer at Entegris. They live in Cedar Park.

**Leslie Manly** '15, M.Ed. educational technology leadership, teaches pre-k at Pumphrey Elementary School in Goose Creek school district. She lives in Crosby.

**Alicia (Scott) Morton** '15, M.Ed. administration, is the principal of Trinity Springs Middle School. She and her husband, James, live in Fort Worth.

**Sean Murphy** '15, B.S. chemical engineering, is process transformation leader for Invista. He and his wife, **Gladys (Garcia)** '13, B.S. dance, '15, M.S. speech-language pathology, who is a speech-language pathologist, live in Victoria.

**Lauren (Stafford) Richardson** '15, B.S. biology, earned a Ph.D. in cell biology and anatomy in 2019 and is co-chief scientific officer at Gravitas Women's Health Solutions. She and her husband, Alex, live in Winnie.

**John Rutherford** '15, B.A. history, '17, M.A. history, is administrative coordinator for the College of Arts and Sciences at Lamar University. He and his wife, Caitlin, live in Beaumont.

**Sherry (Guidry) Belaire** '16, B.S. communication, is a mom and her husband **Brandon** '16, B.S. civil engineering, is a civil engineer with the City of Beaumont. They live in Groves.

Lamar State College Orange promoted **Robyn (Winkle) Burdette** '16, B.S. exercise science and fitness management, who earned her master's degree in higher education administration in 2018, to dean of transfer and public service programs. She and her husband, **Christopher** '15, B.S. kinesiology, who teaches and coaches at C.O. Wilson Middle School, live in Groves.

GOUTHIER

**Maegan Collins** '16, B.S. political science, '18, M.P.A. public administration, '23, Ed.D. educational leadership, earned a Higher Education Teaching Certificate from Harvard University. Maegan is the department chair of general education and developmental studies at Lamar Institute of Technology, and she lives in Nederland.

**Melonee (Hargrave) Fife** '16, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, '24, M.Ed. administration, is student success advisor and CTE director for Kountze High School. She and her husband, Brian, live in Kountze.

**Haley (Hebert) Henson** '16, B.S. speech and hearing sciences, '18, M.S. speech-language pathology, is a speech-language pathologist with Aegis Therapies. She and her husband, Nicholas, live in Elmendorf.

**Blake Hewitt** '16, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, is an admissions advisor for San Jacinto College. He and his wife **Bria (Atkins)** '15, B.S.W. social work, who earned a master's degree in social work in 2018, live in Houston.

**Rebekah (Drummond) Hunt** '16, B.B.A. retail management, B.B.A. marketing, '17, M.B.A. business administration, is office administrator for Southwest Marine Construction. She and her husband **Matthew** '17, B.S. mechanical engineering, who is a mechanical engineer at Citadel Completions, live in Lake Charles, La.

**Joseph Jordan** '16, B.S. computer science, is senior support team leader at Sycurio. He and his wife, **Tabitha (Bishop)** -15, live in Vidor.

**Brooke Tait** '16, B.G.S. general studies, is inside sales person at Sunstate Equipment. She and her partner, Timothy, live in Friendswood.

**Tory (Hoecker) Theriot** '16, B.S. biology, earned a pharmacy doctorate in 2020 and is a pharmacy manager with Brookshire Brothers. She and her husband, Leon, live in Vidor.

**Connor Allen** '17, B.S. mechanical engineering, is senior project engineer at Valero Refinery. He lives in Beaumont.

**Ariana (Jones) Bates** '17, B.S. communication-broadcasting, '21, M.Ed. administration, is instructional coach at Port Acres Elementary School. Her husband, **Chris** '08, B.G.S. general studies, who earned his master's degree in public administration in 2017, is constable of Precinct 2 for Jefferson County. They live in Port Arthur.

**Leela (Dimperio) Batterson** '17, B.A. American Sign Language, owns B3 Interpreting Services, providing certified and qualified American Sign Language and ProTactile Language interpreters to Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind communities. She and her husband, John, live in Beaumont.

**Chelsea (Anguiano) Benedict** '17, B.B.A. marketing, teaches first grade at Main Street Elementary School. She and

her husband, Colton, live in Taylor.

**Vanissa (Low) Bertumen** '17, B.S. environmental science, is an environmental specialist with Chevron Phillips Chemical Co. She and her husband, **Arjay** -15, live in Orange.

**Jamie (Deaton) Dillon** '17, B.B.A. human resources management, is senior payroll specialist for J Solutions Inc. She and her husband, Jacob, live in Beaumont.

Congratulations to **Elisabeth (Raczko)** '17, B.S. communication-advertising, and **Brent Janak** '17, B.S. mechanical engineering, on the birth of their son, Jude. Elisabeth is marketing coordinator at McCarthy Building Companies Inc., and they live in Pearland.

**Kelsey (Burt) Love** '17, B.S. speech and hearing sciences, '19, M.S. speech-language pathology, is a speech pathologist for Groves Intermediate in Port Neches-Groves school district. She and her husband **Cameron** '21, B.S. mechanical engineering, live in Port Arthur.

**Chase Pinder** '17, B.S. chemical engineering, is small business team lead for Goodyear. He lives in Port Neches.

**Kassie (Parrish) Russell** '17, M.Ed. administration, is assistant principal at Woodland Heights Elementary. She and her husband, Sean, live in Bangs.

**Arzoo Shah** '17, M.S. computer science, is a front end engineer with Amazon. He lives in Seattle, Wash.

**Edward Brown** '18, B.S. mechanical engineering, is a water utilities designer for the City of Beaumont. He and his wife, Katrina, live in Beaumont.

**John Ellis** '18, B.S. computer information science, '19, M.B.A. business administration, is a senior program manager for Lockheed Martin Inc. He lives in Fort Worth.

Congratulations to **Leoany (Alvarez) Garcia** '18, B.S. construction management, and her husband, Raul, on the birth of their son, Lucas. Leoany is construction manager at Lennar, and they live in Houston.

**Ashley (Vanhaverbeke) Graham** '18, B.S. nursing, is the school nurse at Port Neches Primary. She and her husband, Aaron, live in Groves.

**Krysten (Harvey) Graves** '18, B.G.S. general studies, teaches English at Central Middle School. She and her husband, Ethan, live in Port Neches.

**Chris Pousson** '18, M.Ed. digital learning and leading, retired from the Air Force in 2020 and is a real estate investor. He and his wife **Shannon (McClendon)** '17, B.S. criminal justice, who is a teacher, live in Beaumont.

**Kirsten (Smith) Salazar** '18, B.S. criminal justice, is a case manager for Harris County Juvenile Probation. She and her husband, Ivan, live in Pasadena.

**Ashley Thibodeaux** '18, B.A. English, '20, M.A. English, is assistant director of academic enrichment for student tutoring and retention services at Lamar University. She lives in Beaumont.

**Dominic White** '18, M.Ed. administration, is principal of North Belton Middle School. He and his wife, Tansyl, live in Temple.

Hope City promoted **Kaela Arrington** '19, B.S. psychology, to missions coordinator. She lives in Spring, Texas.

Congratulations to **Kendra (Coleman)** '19, B.B.A. marketing, and **Colton Broussard** '19, B.S. chemical engineering, on the birth of their daughter, Kinsey. Kendra is corporate communications leader at Texas Regional Title and marketing coordinator at NavSav, and Colton is process engineer at Motiva Enterprises. They live in Port Arthur.

**Sakurah Fisher** '19, B.A. psychology, who earned a master's degree in international peace and security in 2022, is working with community members in Ecuador to implement a Peace Corps Partnership Program grant activity called "Library Without Borders (Biblioteca Sin Fronteras)." Sakurah is a youth and families development promoter for the Peace Corps and lives in Ecuador.

**Kelsey (Schwartz) Huff** '19, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, teaches at Langham Elementary School in Nederland school district. She and her husband **Tyler** '21, B.A. history, who is a teacher and coach at Hamshire-Fannett High School, live in Port Neches.

**Jie Liang** '19, M.S. computer science, '23, Eng. D. electrical engineering, is an outreach and program development specialist for Lamar University. She lives in Beaumont.

**Lenora (Holden) Malveaux** '19, B.B.A. marketing, '21, M.B.A. business administration, teaches business in Beaumont school district. She lives in Beaumont.

Congratulations to **Mackenzi (Gordon)** '19, B.G.S. general studies, who earned her associate's degree in physical therapist assistant in 2023, and **Micah McComb** '24, B.B.A. marketing, on the birth of their son, Ledger. Mackenzi is a part-time retail educator at Lululemon, and they live in Weatherford.

**Manuel Martinez** '19, B.S. industrial engineering, is a senior electrical design engineer for Entrust Solutions Group. He lives in Beaumont.

**Courtney Moran** '19, B.B.A. management, is a loan processor for Neches Federal Credit Union. She and her husband, Randall Current, live in Sour Lake.

**Jennifer Rye** '19, B.A. English, teaches first grade at Oak Forest Elementary School. She lives in Vidor.

**Harley Spence** '19, B.S. communication-advertising, teaches at

Anahuac Middle School. She and her life partner **Gunnar Bryan** '22, B.S. university studies multidisciplinary, who is assistant baseball/football coach at Anahuac High School, live in Baytown.

## 20s

**Karisma Danas** '20, B.F.A. studio art-drawing, is member coordinator for The Village Suites. She lives in Houston.

Congratulations to **Whitney (Kieschnick) Gore** '20, B.B.A. general business, and her husband, Luke, on the birth of their son, Hudson. They live in Huffman.

Congratulations to **Erina (Walden) Guidry** '20, B.A. modern languages, and her husband, Tre', on the birth of their daughter, Thérèse. Erina teaches French and Spanish at Catholic High School, and they live in Lafayette, Louisiana.

**Govin Kaggal** '20 B.S. political science, earned his law degree in 2023 and is an associate with Latham & Watkins. He lives in Houston.

**Davey Langham** '20, B.B.A. marketing, is a marketing automation specialist with Tremco CPG. He and his wife **Kristi (Barnes)** '19, B.S. speech and hearing sciences, who is an emergency medical Technician with Acadian, live in Galveston.

**Vignesh Mathiyazhagan** '20, M.E. industrial engineering, is a senior manufacturing engineer with Abbott. He lives in Tustin, Calif.

**Miranda Miller** '20, B.G.S. general studies, teaches is West Orange Cove school district. She and her husband, Alan, live in Orange.

**Michelle Shollack** '20, M.Ed. teacher leadership, retired from teaching at Dover Elementary School. She lives in Plano.

**Rutvik Sojitra** '20, M.E.M. engineering management, founded Hereford Bar and Grill. He lives in Hereford.

**Courtney Acklin** '21, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, is municipal court administrator for the City of Palestine.



Alumni and friends went on the Cardinal Adventure "Romance of the Douro River" Sept. 17-Oct. 8, 2024. Sharon (Smith) McCabe '83, '89

## CLASS NOTES

She and her husband, Donald, live in Palestine.

**Heidi Bouzas** '21, M.B.A. business administration, is the corporate supply planner for Ecolab. She lives in Houston.

**Jaime (Fore) Bruno** '21, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, is a dental hygienist at Smiles by Design and an adjunct instructor at Lamar Institute of Technology. She and her husband, Blake '04, B.B.A. general business, who is an ExxonMobil lead day operator, live in Beaumont.

**Harley (Jones) Guillot** '21, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '23, M.Ed. teacher leadership, teaches in Nederland school district. She and her husband, Garrett, live in Bridge City.

**Courtney Kelly** '21, M.B.A. business administration, who earned bachelor's degrees in math and civil engineering in 2012, and her master's degree in civil engineering in 2013, published *Celeste Tunnels Underground*, the second book of the Celeste Saves the City series. Courtney is the founder of Courtney Kelly Books, her own publishing company, and is project manager for McCarthy Building Companies Inc. She lives in Dallas.

**Jesus Lopez Jr.** '21, B.S. communication, is chief photographer for KFDM Fox 4 News. He and his wife **Brandi (Anderson)** '20, B.S.W. social work, who is a patient navigator for the Smart Health Clinic of Baptist Hospitals of Southeast Texas, live in Beaumont.

**James McLaughlin** '21, M.Ed. administration, is founder and C.E.O. of ITEAM Innovation. He holds five additional degrees and lives in Stafford.

**Grace (Granger) Merino** '21, B.S. mathematics, '22, M.S. mathematics, is a dual credit instructor and teaches math at The Woodlands High School. She and her husband, **Javier** '23, B.F.A. studio art-sculpture, live in Magnolia.

**Nicholas Nelson** '21, M.S. management information systems, is operations manager for ONEOK. He and his wife, Larisa, live in Baytown.

**Addie (Patin) Nowicki** '21, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, teaches in New Caney school district and her husband **Nolan** '21, B.B.A. accounting, '22, M.S. accounting, who is a certified public accountant, live in Kingwood.

**Brandon Ordoyne** '21, B.S. industrial technology, is principal design engineer with Fluor. He and his wife, Charala, live in Needville.

**Ariann Turpeau** '21, B.S.W. social work, is a lead clinician with Family Service. She lives in San Antonio.

**Rose Alincastre** '22, B.S. chemical engineering, is a production engineer with Huntsman. She lives in Beaumont.

**Akshitha Boggula** '22, M.S. computer science, is a software engineer for FiServ Financial Systems. She lives in Frisco.

PDK International, in conjunction with



### Alumni Advisory Board Welcome

New members of the Alumni Advisory Board gathered for an orientation and welcome luncheon Aug. 22, 2024. They had the opportunity to meet fellow new board members, Pres. Jaime Taylor, the board president and president-elect.

From left, Pres. Jaime Taylor, Travis Walker '24, Jeff Darby '88, Celena (Champagne) Green '99, Dr. Albert Ruiz, Judy (Walker) Linsley '67, '77, Elise Becker '05, '12, Tatiana Morales Owens '93, '07, '14, Dennis Moncla '89, '94, Sharita Gardner '12, J Bienvenu '11, Emily (Everett) Allen '98, '04, and Shannon (Copeland) Figueroa '02, '03, '07, director of alumni affairs

the Educators Rising national initiative, honored **Vanessa Buttler** '22, M.Ed. administration, as an Emerging Leader Fellow. She teaches education career preparation at Cleburne High School and lives with her husband, Tyler, in Covington.

**Kimber (Ellender) Cole** '22, B.S.W. social work, teaches in Bridge City school district. She and her husband, Anthony, live in Orange.

Congratulations to **Rebecca (Downs) Duplissey** '22, B.B.A. management, and her husband, Matthew, on the birth of their son, Jude. They live in Lumberton.

**Ian Kennard** '22, B.S. mechanical engineering, is a manufacturing engineer with Daily Thermetrics. He lives in Tomball.

**Nikita Montez** '22, M.Ed. teacher leadership, teaches fifth grade math at Snyder Intermediate School. She lives in Rotan.

**James Mulvey** '22, M.Ed. educational leadership, is assistant principal of Golden Rule Charter School. He and his wife, Elisa, live in Grand Prairie.

**T'Reah Russell** '22, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, teaches toddlers at World of Color Daycare. She lives in Beaumont.

**Afsanul Tanveer** '22, M.E. mechanical engineering, is a senior field engineer with Fuelcell Energy. He lives in Danbury, Conn.

**Jennifer (Young) Cochran** '23, M.Ed. counseling and development, is a licensed professional counselor-associate. She and her husband, Ryan, live in Midland.

**Michayla (Newsome) Davis** '23, B.B.A. management, is enterprise resources

planning analyst for the Lamar University Information Technology Department. She lives in Kountze.

**Rahul Khutal** '23, M.E. industrial engineering, is a manufacturing engineer with Intellect Inc. He lives in North Brunswick, N.J.

**Katie (Rice) Mayfield** '23, B.S. political science, '24, M.P.A. public administration, is a product development associate with Mometrix. She and her husband, Justin, live in Lumberton.

**Sarah Melancon** '23, M.Ed. clinical mental health counseling, is a professional licensed counselor with Haven Counseling and Consulting. She lives in New Iberia, La.

**Lac Nguyen** '23, B.S. industrial engineering, is process engineer at Uzin Utz North America. He lives in Hewitt.

**Ryan Smith** '23, B.S. mechanical engineering, is rotating equipment engineer at Chevron Phillips Chemical Co. He lives in Lumberton.

**Jenny Sosa** '23, B.S. public health in healthcare administration, is an onsite specialist for Stryker. She lives in Houston.

**Hailey Watts** '23, B.B.A. advertising communication, is companion animal department manager at Petco. She lives in Nederland.

Congratulations to **Courtne (Wheeler)** '23, B.S. nursing, and **Kelby Weyler** '21, B.S. exercise science and fitness management, on the birth of their son, Brooks. Courtne is a registered nurse, and Kelby teaches science at Hardin-Jefferson Junior High School. They live in Kountze.

**Christian Azalekor** '24, B.S. chemical engineering, is an improvement engineer with OLIN Corp. He lives in Nederland.

**Bianca (Brown) Bourque** '24, B.S. university studies multidisciplinary, teaches fourth grade at Oak Forest Elementary School. She and her husband, Brandon, live in Orange.

**Mindy Escobedo** '24, B.B.A. human resources management, is correspondence coordinator in the office of the Speaker in the Texas House of Representatives. She lives in Austin.

**Jocelyn Fernandez** '24, B.S. electrical engineering, is an associate electrical engineer at Lyondell Basell. She and her husband, Jaime, live in Channelview.

**Kristin Hebert** '24, B.S. exercise science, is program director for the YMCA of Port Arthur. She lives in Nederland.

**Ahmad El Merhebi** '24, M.B.A. business administration, is a planning and scheduling manager for Mortenson. He lives in Lincoln, Neb.

**Kaitlyn Sweeney** '24, B.S. studio art-education, teaches art at Little Cypress-Mauriceville High School. She lives in Nederland.

**Jacob Thompson** '24, B.S. biology, co-authored a research article entitled "Impact of socioeconomic status on cancer care in Southeast Texas: a retrospective population-based cohort study". It was published in Baylor Scott & White Health, a peer-reviewed journal. He is chief medical scribe for the emergency department at Baptist Hospitals of Southeast Texas. He lives in Beaumont.



# Explore the world with us!



The Office of Alumni Affairs travel program, **Cardinal Adventures**, has been providing alumni and friends with amazing travel experiences since 2011. If you have been thinking about taking that bucket list trip, now is the time to check out our upcoming travel offering! Our experienced travel partners take care of all of the complicated logistics for you, allowing you to sit back and make memories that will last you a lifetime.

Have you always wanted to see Morocco or Hawaii? Now is your chance! Or perhaps you are longing to visit one of Europe's most popular countries—we'll be taking trips to Ireland, Scotland and Italy's Lake District this year. Maybe you are a fan of *The Sound of Music* and want to celebrate this iconic movie's 60th anniversary in Austria with us. And we've just added a summer cruise in the Northern Adriatic aboard the five-star *Le Bougainville* to visit the charming streets of Montenegro and Split and the sun-drenched Croatian Riviera.

Cardinal Adventures trips are open to all travel enthusiasts, including alumni, faculty, staff, friends and family members who want to take part in our exciting and educational travel opportunities.



## Join Us!

*Springtime in Ireland*  
**MARCH-APRIL**

*Dutch Waterways  
River Cruise* • **APRIL**

Visit us! [lamar.edu/cardinaladventures](http://lamar.edu/cardinaladventures)

*Gems of Austria,  
celebrating the 60th  
anniversary of The Sound of  
Music* • **MAY**

*Italy's Magnificent Lake  
District* • **JUNE**

*Northern Adriatic: Gems of  
the Dalmatian Coast* • **JULY**

*Stunning Scotland and The  
Royal Edinburgh Military  
Tattoo* • **AUGUST**

*Mysteries of Morocco  
and the Canary Islands on  
Norwegian Cruiseline*  
**OCTOBER**

*Hawaii—The Ultimate  
Cruise Tour*  
**JANUARY 2026**

# CARDINAL VIEWS

## JoAnne Gay Dishman School of Nursing celebrates 50 years of excellence

The JoAnne Gay Dishman School of Nursing commemorated its 50th anniversary with a soiree and open house celebrating its enduring commitment to nursing education and community partnerships. The event highlighted the school's rich legacy, its state-of-the-art facilities, and its role as a leader in nursing education, including an awards ceremony honoring outstanding individuals for their contributions to the nursing profession.

As the first endowed school at Lamar University, it partners with over 90 clinical agencies, ensuring students receive superior and diverse learning experiences. Since its founding in 1974, the school has gained recognition for its graduates' high pass rates on the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) and their strong reputation among healthcare employers.



Award winners from left: Ruthie (Wall) Robinson '80, Excellence in Nursing Research; Denise (Smith) Sanders-Boutte '79, Excellence in Nursing Community Volunteerism; Beverly (Malley) Welch '14, '16, Excellence in Nursing Leadership; Judy Dishman, Lifetime Achievement Award; Gina (Guidry) Hale '92, '04, Excellence in Nursing Education; Kathy (Stull) Rodgers '82, '85, Excellence in Nursing Practice; Jennifer (McMullen) East '01, Excellence in Nursing Policy



Joe Tacy, director of the JoAnne Gay Dishman School of Nursing



Family members Melanie Dishman '88 and David Dishman, left, join Judy Dishman, center, Austin Dishman '78, Phoebe Dishman and Adrienne Dishman '07, '17, as Judy accepted the Lifetime Achievement Award for her dedication and support of nursing at LU.



Alexandra (Brittain) Hebert '14, '18, left, and Mary Goodwin '02, '07, '08



From left, Alexandra (Brittain) Hebert '14, '18, Tracie (Hebert) Lutz '03, '19, Kathy Gartman, Diana (Davis) Miles '09, Kimberly (Moses) Malbrough '10, '21, and Stacy Young '03



Faculty members from left Corie (Cooper) Willey '11, '16, Kelli (Cease) White '91, '12, Bethany (Williams) Steely '09, '20, Kacie (Stanley) Calloway '11, '20, Sommer Shackelford and Jenny (Reutten) Thedford '13

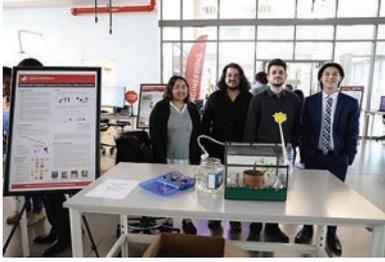


President Jaime Taylor; Joe Tacy; Juan Zabala '07, vice president of university advancement and executive director of the LU Foundation; and Judy Dishman



Dishman faculty past and present

GOUTHIER



### LU College of Engineering introduces leadership program

Eighty senior engineering students from the College of Engineering will have the opportunity to earn a leadership certificate

from CAVU through a newly introduced program. Sponsored by the college, the students can participate in CAVU's online leadership training, Leadership Pro, beginning in the 2024/2025 academic year. CAVU is a company formed from retired U.S. military personnel with leadership expertise spanning the range of military ranks. They have packaged their real-world experience into short manageable lessons in Leadership Pro with the intended audience of people working in engineering-related industries.

"I want to add a strong leadership training component to my senior design course because post-pandemic I have been seeing leadership and teamwork-related problems emerging as a bigger issue than technical challenges for my teams," said Robert K. Bradley, assistant professor of industrial engineering. "I am hearing more frequently that executives and hiring managers say they need engineers with stronger soft skills."

### Lamar University sees enrollment growth in 2024

Lamar University reported a 12% increase in freshman enrollment for the fall of 2024, marking one of the largest freshman classes in recent years. "We've seen a significant uptick in student involvement across campus," said Deidra Mayer, associate vice president for admissions and aid. "From Greek life to residence upgrades and initiatives that enhance career preparation and leadership development, these factors are making Lamar University a top choice for prospective students."

Several initiatives contributed to the growth. Mayer highlighted an increase in collaboration across campus to support recruitment efforts. Also, Mayer said, "we saw a 33% increase in enrollments from outlying counties after removing the on-campus living requirement for students within 30 to 50 miles of campus. Additionally, campus visits increased by 20%, and the enrollment rate for Cardinal View, the University's preview day, grew by 11% year-over-year."

The University also expanded its scholarship offerings by 40%, including the introduction of the Centennial Scholarship, which provides \$100,000 in local school scholarships.

### LU professors, alumni recognized as world's Top 2%

Several Lamar University faculty members have been named among the world's most-cited scientists in the latest edition of the World's Top 2% of Scientists List, released by Stanford University and Elsevier. The list, now in its seventh edition, recognizes researchers whose work has had significant global impact based on citations across their careers and during the past year. In the career-long impact category, the publication recognized these Lamar University faculty: David L. Cocke, retired, chemical engineering; Che-Jen Lin, civil and environmental engineering; Xuejun Fan, mechanical engineering; Suying Wei, chemistry; Carl L. Yaws, retired, chemical engineering; Abdelnasser Eldek, electrical engineering; Gene L. Theodori, sociology; Marjan Goodarzi '19, mechanical engineering.

### Lou receives \$1.4M grant

The Department of Energy has awarded the project titled "Midstream Critical Manufacturing Industry Cybersecurity Hub" for two universities in the Texas State University System, Sul Ross State University and Lamar University, to establish and operate a Center of



Excellence called the Hub in Cybersecurity and Cyber Forensics for the midstream industry. The LU team, led by Helen Lou, will receive \$1.44 million to enhance cybersecurity and cyber-forensic capabilities for the midstream industry segment and protect vital national infrastructure. Lou is a professor in the Dan F. Smith Department of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering, director of the Center for Data Analytics and Cybersecurity and faculty advisor for the Center for Midstream Management and Science.

### LU breaks ground on new intramural field

Lamar University officials broke ground on a new intramural field Oct.

9, a development that promises to enhance the campus community and student life. Lamar University President Jaime Taylor expressed his enthusiasm for



the project. "When we looked at this property, we saw an incredible opportunity to create a facility that not only serves our students but also strengthens our community," he said. The new intramural field will be located adjacent to the Reaud Honors College, featuring a state-of-the-art artificial turf playing surface, surrounded by a walking trail and a dedicated warm-up area for athletes. The facility will also include



lighting for nighttime activities, and space for various sports, ensuring that all students can participate in recreational activities.

### LU appoints McClendon as library dean



Lamar University has announced Vivienne J. McClendon as the new dean of the Mary and John Gray Library. McClendon, with more than 25 years of leadership experience in library and instructional services, joins Lamar from California State University in Monterey Bay, where she served as dean of the Tanimura and Antle Family Memorial Library. McClendon holds a Ph.D. in Instructional Technology from the University of Georgia, where her dissertation focused on international collaboration in virtual faculty teams. As dean, McClendon will oversee a transformative renovation of the Mary and John Gray Library, aimed at turning the space into a state-of-the-art learning center designed to meet the academic and research needs of students and faculty.



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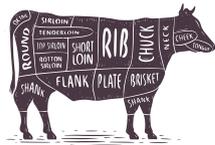
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# Entrepreneurial *spirit*

by Uliana Trylowsky



**M**any former athletes describe their sports experience as a lesson in discipline, but for letterman Bart Simmons '78, '79, football was his introduction to the world of business. During his time playing for Lamar University, Simmons viewed the team as a business, with his scholarship as his "salary" and his performance as the key to keeping his position. "I was being paid to play, so I had to perform at a high level and give back," Simmons recalls. This mindset would later define his entrepreneurial spirit.

After earning his business degree in finance in 1978 and an MBA in 1979 from LU and serving as Student Government Association president, Simmons embarked on a successful business career. He started at Texaco Corp., moved to Texas Oil & Gas in Houston, and then transferred to Dallas, where he worked under Ross Perot at Petrus Oil. Simmons

credits Perot for teaching him about entrepreneurship, and it was after this experience that he decided to forge his own path.

In 1992, Simmons founded both Tristar Producer Service Co., an oil and gas marketing firm, and Simray Oil & Gas, a production company. These family-run companies are still thriving today, with Simmons' sons now involved in their operations. In addition to oil and gas, the family has expanded into other ventures, including Neih Glass in Pflugerville and Ferrell & Hardeman Tax Services.

Simmons met his wife, Martye (Sculley) '78, in high school, and the two began dating while attending Lamar. Martye graduated with an accounting degree in 1978 and was a member of Zeta Tau Alpha sorority. Together, Bart and Martye built their businesses and eventually followed their shared passion for ranching.

In 2001, they began acquiring

ranch land while Bart pursued further education, attending TCU's Ranch Management Program at night. They started with a small herd of cattle, selling at auction, but soon shifted toward direct-to-consumer sales, rejecting the "feedlot mentality" in favor of raising grass-fed, grass-finished cattle. This led to the creation of The Provision House in Dallas, where their beef is sold nationwide to individuals, butchers and stores such as Basic Foods in Beaumont.

Bart and Martye split their time between ranch and city life, often entertaining their children and 13 grandchildren. Their connection to Lamar remains strong as Spindletop Society members, supporting the University's athletic programs and the College of Business. It seems the lessons learned on the football field provided a solid foundation for the successful legacy Simmons has built.