

CARDINAL CADENCE

THE MAGAZINE OF LAMAR UNIVERSITY

VOL. 53, NO. 2 | SUMMER 2025



6

HARMONY:

LU and Symphony of
Southeast Texas

10

CONVERGENCE:

LU and Southeast
Texas Stages

14

COMPLEMENTARY:

LU and Art Museum of
Southeast Texas

26

MAJOR MAKEOVER:

Mary and John
Gray Library

| FROM THE **PRESIDENT** |



From left, President Jaime Taylor with Michael Lee, son of Regent Stephen Lee '89 and Jami (Archer) Lee '97, center; Chancellor Brian McCall and Juan Zabala '07, vice president of university advancement and CEO, Lamar University Foundation Inc.

Did you know that an individual water molecule isn't wet? By itself, it can't coat a surface, slide around, or even stick to itself. Instead, the property of wetness emerges only as millions of water molecules come into contact and start acting as a system. Each molecule in the system reacts to the movement of nearby molecules,

leading to a chain reaction that creates something as big as an ocean wave or as small as a bead of sweat running down the back of your neck. This is what we call an emergent property or behavior: a phenomenon where the whole takes on a new characteristic and thus becomes greater than the sum of its parts.

To put it another way, wetness isn't a trait; it's a relationship.

You've seen emergent behavior plenty of times: a flock of birds acting as one, swarms of bees, crowds of people, schools of fish, traffic patterns. No single leader directs all the individuals, yet countless decentralized interactions give rise to a collective that behaves as one.

This principle of emergence is as vital in human endeavors as it is in fluid mechanics. Institutions like Lamar University may appear fixed, but they are as organic as an ocean wave. A university's true and most unique power emerges when individuals at all margins begin to connect and collaborate with those around them. Once the chain reaction starts, the wave will ripple through the whole, and the institution can move forward in ways one could never have imagined.

I'm really excited about this issue of *Cadence*. Our cover story features **Gisela Houseman**, a remarkable individual who embodies the very essence of emergent leadership. While remarkably resilient as an individual, her genius lies in believing that lasting progress is born in relationship. She has spent her life cultivating environments where the initial sparks of multiple individual efforts are able to evolve into self-sustaining legacies through collective participation. Her approach is to clear the way, build the scaffolding and provide the resources that will enable individuals to interact. For example, Houseman has founded several community organizations, including Leadership Southeast Texas and the Orange CASA program. She also played a key role in bringing a new hospital back to Orange by donating 20 acres. Her many endeavors have profoundly shaped and elevated both Lamar University and Southeast Texas communities, truly unlocking the power of a collective.

Houseman's impact also highlights this issue's broader theme: the deep partnerships between Lamar University and our community. We are more than just a loose collection of cities, classes, faculty, buildings, citizens and students. We are a powerful, interconnected system whose collective behavior surpasses what any of us could achieve alone. Our town-and-gown connections generate and amplify impact that would otherwise be impossible in isolation.

Whether you are a proud alum or a valued supporter of our mission in Southeast Texas, we invite you to dig into this issue of *Cadence*. Discover the many ways individuals and groups are connecting, collaborating and creating something truly remarkable together. Your engagement and support, in any form, are vital to this ongoing story of emergent strength and shared success. We are excited to see the collaborative greatness we will continue to achieve, together.

With Cardinal Pride,

Jaime R. Taylor
Jaime R. Taylor, President



THE TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM BOARD OF REGENTS

Brian McCall, Chancellor | Austin

Alan L. Tinsley, Chairman | Madisonville
Stephen Lee, Vice Chairman | Bastrop
Charlie Amato | San Antonio
Duke Austin | Houston
Sheila Faske | Rose City

Dionicio (Don) Flores | El Paso
Russell Gordy | Houston
Tom Long | Frisco
William F. Scott | Nederland
Olivia Discon, Student Regent | Huntsville

CARDINAL CADENCE THE MAGAZINE OF LAMAR UNIVERSITY

VOL. 53, NO. 2 | SUMMER 2025

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

Juan J. Zabala, '07, Vice President of University Advancement

Cynthia Hicks '89, '93, Editor

CONTRIBUTORS

Writing

Brooke Barnett; Evie Clifton; Darragh Doiron '87; Shannon (Copeland) Figueroa '02, '03, '07; Cassandra Jenkins '19; Jasmin Landry '12; Luis Lemmen; Allison Lennartz '14; Stephan Malick '95, '18; Sarah Parker '07; Sherril Smith; April Thompson '19, '22; Kensi MacCammond Williams '24

Photography

Dawn Battiest '15; Jacob Breaux '23; Evie Clifton; Justin DeYoung; Shannon (Copeland) Figueroa '02, '03, '07; Brandon Gouthier '96; Bill Hudson; Jim LaBove '70; LU Department of Art and Design; Lynn Lane; Morgan Miller '11, '18; Leo Weeks Photographers; Sarah Parker '07; Southeast Texas Stages; Symphony of Southeast Texas

Design

Mike Rhodes, Rhodes Design

Circulation includes more than 94,000 copies distributed to alumni, faculty, staff and friends of Lamar University. If you have received more than one copy of this publication, please let us know.

Changes of address may be sent to:

University Advancement
P.O. Box 10011 | Beaumont, Texas 77710
or alumni@lamar.edu

DIVISION OF UNIVERSITY ADVANCEMENT

Juan J. Zabala '07, Vice President

Uliana Trylowsky, Interim Associate Vice President

Shannon Copeland Figueroa '02, '03, '07,
Director of Alumni Affairs and Advancement Services
P.O. Box 10011 | Beaumont, Texas 77710
(409) 880-8419 or fax (409) 880-8409

LAMAR UNIVERSITY ALUMNI OFFICE

When visiting campus, you're invited to stop by the Alumni Office at the John Gray Center, Rudy C. Williams Building, Suite 102, 855 Jim Gilligan Way.

P.O. Box 10005 | Beaumont, Texas 77710
(409) 880-8921, or (800) 298-4839
alumni@lamar.edu | lamar.edu/alumni

LAMAR UNIVERSITY FOUNDATION

Juan J. Zabala '07, CEO

Karen Nichols '83, COO

P.O. Box 11500 | Beaumont, Texas 77710
(409) 880-2117
foundation@lamar.edu | lamar.edu/foundation

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

CONNECT WITH US!



Share your LU experience by tagging **#WeAreLU** or **@LamarUniversity** in your photos, tweets and posts.

| IN THIS ISSUE |

4

From climbing mountains
to building dreams:
Gisela Houseman



6

Partners in harmony

10

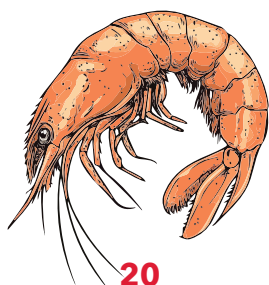
When worlds collide

14

Creating a
perfect partnership

17

The pre-law feather in
LU's excellence cap



20

Poor ol' Cajuns
have to eat shrimp

ON THE COVER:

Gisela Houseman

Photo by **Morgan Miller**,
Leo Weeks Photography



4

Karen Nichols '83, chief operating officer, LU Foundation Inc., left,
with Gisela Houseman and Peggy and Juan Zabala '07, vice presi-
dent for university advancement and CEO of the LU Foundation

26

50-year-old
library receives
\$90 million renovation

42

A mission of the heart

44

Holmes endowment
creates limitless potential



14

13

Champions of Education:
Press Club of Southeast
Texas Scholarship

24

Cardinal Views

28

Dream Makers

30

Cardinal Love Stories

32


Class Notes



42



30



From climbing mountains to building dreams:

Gisela Houseman's legacy in Southeast Texas

by Sarah Parker

Sitting across from local businesswoman and philanthropist Gisela Houseman, it's difficult to believe she's an octogenarian who recently welcomed her first great-grandchild.

As she recounts her many extraordinary adventures—climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, taking a polar plunge amidst the glistening glaciers of Antarctica, and riding alongside a famous musher during the pre-game activities of the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race in Alaska—it's clear her passion for life has not diminished through the years.

Even at an early age, Houseman was courageous when facing new horizons. While immigrating with her family to the U.S. from their native Germany in 1950, a six-year-old Gisela stood fearlessly at the back of the ship taking them across the rough waters of the Atlantic because “that’s where all the motion was.”

“None of us spoke English,” Houseman, owner and CEO of The Houseman Companies, a land development firm based in Orange, and a longtime supporter of Lamar University, said. “[My sister and I] were put in a school, and they didn’t provide us a German teacher.”

For around six years, Houseman’s family labored on a dirt farm in the dusty Oklahoma panhandle before moving to north Texas. In 1956, she became a U.S. citizen.

“On the farm, we were milking [cows] and had chickens, so I learned the farm life and realized I didn’t want to do that my whole life,” Houseman said.

Houseman married her first husband not long after graduating high school, and her two daughters, Debi and Julie, came quickly thereafter. While in north Texas, Houseman worked as an insurance professional specializing in estate planning. Although she never attended a four-year university, Houseman knew the value of higher education and earned her chartered life underwriter and financial

consultant designations from American College.

Following a divorce, Houseman faced the challenges of being a single mother with her trademark fearlessness, taking on multiple jobs to provide for her daughters.

“I had two and three jobs at a time. It taught me that no matter what you do in life, you learn something and you take it with you.”

Houseman’s daughters thrived under her unwavering love and steadfast work ethic. Both girls earned academic scholarships to Texas universities, a blessing that Houseman would have been unable to provide otherwise. Debbie went on to become an attorney and Julie a speech therapist.

Always one to care about those in need, Houseman took time to give back to the community through volunteer work, particularly with organizations that supported children. It was through her charity work that she met her match in both philanthropy and adventure—Tony Houseman.

The couple found they made a dynamic team in all aspects of life and married in 1983, spending their honeymoon as two dauntless adventurers would—on an African safari. In 1987, they returned to Tony’s native Southeast Texas and took over his father’s business, The Houseman Companies, turning it into a leading land development firm.

Houseman recalls the initial move from Dallas’ metroplex to the Orange area feeling like a “culture shock,” but she quickly “fell in love” with the welcoming people and wonderful places that make Southeast Texas unique.

To become better acquainted with the community, Houseman immersed herself in area activities and organizations. As a graduate of Leadership Texas and Leadership America, she helped found Leadership Southeast Texas, an organization that is still “going strong” today thanks to her efforts.

“I had never had the college experience, and my focus had always been on business and finance. Leadership Texas gave me the opportunity to interact with women of all different interests and gave me a new appreciation of the arts. I realized the advantage of people getting together and just how much you could learn from each other. It just broadens your horizons.”

For two decades, the Houseman couple worked together to grow The Houseman Companies into a powerhouse, overseeing countless land development and residential construction projects throughout Southeast Texas and Southwest Louisiana. When Tony passed away in 2007, Houseman took on sole leadership of the business, managing homebuilding operations for another decade after Tony’s passing.

Despite the success she and Tony achieved, Houseman never forgot her years of financial hardships as a single mother. To help others in financial need achieve their dreams of a college education, she has made significant contributions to establish scholarships at Lamar University, Lamar State College-Orange (LSCO) and Lamar Institute of Technology (LIT).

“My girls would not have been able to go to college if they had not gotten scholarships, and that really started me on the quest with [establishing local] scholarships,” Houseman said. “I think because [at one time] I had no money, sometimes you have \$10 left before the next paycheck, it really taught me a lot, and that’s why I’m so passionate about helping people that don’t have the resources they need. I hope [the scholarships] give [students] a chance to pursue their passions. I’m happy to share what I have.”

At Lamar University, she has made significant contributions to establish the Gisela R. Houseman Scholarship in Business and Tony Houseman Memorial Scholarship in Speech and Hearing.

A steadfast supporter of Lamar through the years, Houseman will soon begin a third term of service on the Lamar University Foundation Board of Trustees, where she has previously served as secretary. Through her decades of generous donations, Houseman is a member of LU’s President’s Circle and Mirabeau Society with 26 years of giving to LU. She also sits on the foundation boards of LSCO and LIT.

Houseman is a regular at countless campus fundraisers and events such as Le Grand Bal and is a football season ticket holder. One of her favorite ways to show her love for Lamar is cheering on the Cards in as many football games as possible.

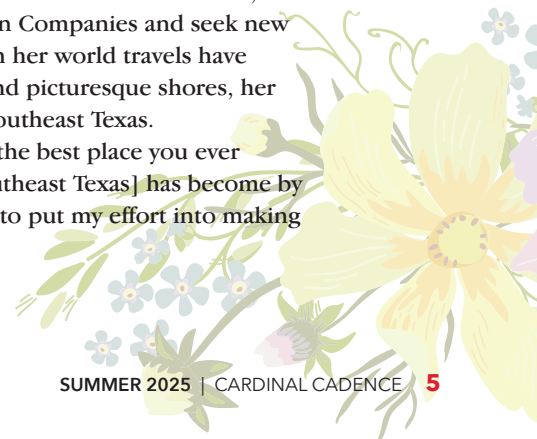
In addition to her contributions to higher education, Houseman has dedicated substantial resources to improving the welfare of Southeast Texans through numerous charitable works. With supporting children always a top priority, Houseman played a vital role in establishing the CASA program in Orange and the surrounding counties.

After the closing of Baptist Hospital’s Orange campus in 2017, Houseman became a key player in bringing a full-service hospital back to the area, donating a 20-acre plot of land for a new facility in 2022. Last year, CHRISTUS Hospital-Orange opened the Gisela Houseman Medial Campus, a state-of-the-art hospital offering 24/7 emergency services, an extended-stay unit, full diagnostic imaging and lab services and a dedicated women’s center.

Throughout the years, Houseman has received countless honors, including the Southeast Texan of the Year Award and Citizen of the Year by the Greater Orange Area Chamber of Commerce.

Today, Houseman has no plans to slow down or retire, continuing to run The Houseman Companies and seek new adventures far and wide. Though her world travels have taken her to sky high summits and picturesque shores, her heart and her home remain in Southeast Texas.

“People constantly ask what’s the best place you ever went, and it’s always home. [Southeast Texas] has become my home, and I think I always want to put my effort into making this the best place it can be.”





Partners in *harmony*

by Sarah Parker



Jennifer Iles



James Simmons, president emeritas



President Jaime Taylor



Symphony and Chorus

PARKER



Pres. Jaime Taylor,
Maestro Chelsea Tipton

Wild winds whipped through the branches of the stately live oaks that welcome the way into the Julie Rogers Theatre on the evening of the Symphony of Southeast Texas' (SOST) final concert of the 2024-25 season April 5, and the promise of forecasted storms hung heavy in the air.

As the crowd rushed into the safety of the iconic theatre's gilded walls, the excitement in the air felt electric. The symphony's season finale always promises the SOST Chorus, which includes the Lamar University Choir performing with the orchestra, and for the many music lovers willing to brave the blustery weather, *Ode to Joy!* did not disappoint.

From the first rise and fall of each glorious note of Strauss' *Die Fledermaus Overture* to the phenomenal choral finale of Beethoven's legendary Ninth Symphony, thoughts of rain were far away as the magnificent music resounded around the enraptured audience and into the very soul of each listener.

SOST Maestro Chelsea Tipton II says the final movement of Beethoven's Ninth is all about "the joy of life and the joy of people coming together." With so many Lamar faculty, alumni and students among the incredible voices and musicians performing with the orchestra that night, it's clear exactly how much joy can be created by a partnership as harmonious as the one between the symphony and Lamar University.

"Lamar and the Symphony of Southeast Texas have forged a very close relationship," Maestro Tipton, SOST conductor since 2009, said. "It's a symbiotic relationship because we both benefit from it. We both could live without each other, but we're more powerful together."

SOST executive director and principal percussionist James Strawther '01, couldn't agree more. With more than 25 years of involvement with the symphony, Strawther is a prime example of the tight bonds between Lamar alumni and the symphony. He's played as a core member since 2001, has worked as stage manager and personnel manager, and is now serving as executive director.

"The partnership has been very deep for a long time," Strawther said. "Not only do we have the chorus and several of the Lamar faculty who play with the symphony, we have professors like Golden Wright [dean of the College of Fine Arts and Communication] who are very supportive. We're constantly looking for ways to collaborate together and support each other."

The Symphony of Southeast Texas, originally named the Beaumont Symphony Orchestra, was formed in 1953 by the Beaumont Symphony Society with a mission to "advance and promote a further appreciation of symphonic music and to present student concerts to further the musical education of the region," making it a natural fit for involvement with Lamar's growing music department.



Jacob Hollier '15, Justin Collazo '02

PHOTOS COURTESY SYMPHONY OF SOUTHEAST TEXAS



Under the leadership of the symphony's third conductor Joseph Carlucci (1971-90), an ongoing, mutually beneficial partnership between the symphony and Lamar was formed. Carlucci, who was also a Lamar music professor, used his dual roles to recruit Lamar faculty and students to play in the orchestra and established a bond that continued to grow stronger over the next 50 years.

Since the partnership began, countless Lamar faculty and alumni have worked in tandem with the symphony to bring beautiful music to the community and broaden music education opportunities. Many alumni serve, and have served, on the symphony's board of directors and executive committee.

The executive committee always includes a seat reserved for the chair of the Mary Morgan Moore Department of Music, a key role currently held by Michael Bartnik. He says the exposure to the symphony's live professional concerts is invaluable to students.

"To be able to see live music is not something that every town has available," Bartnik said. "Giving our students the opportunity to see live music, professional live music, is really important."

Each year, the two organizations collaborate on a variety of concerts and special events, share rehearsal and performance spaces, and work together to promote and enhance music education at both the collegiate and grade school levels.

Jeannette Fresne, associate dean of the College of Fine Arts and Communication, says during her career, she's never seen a partnership between a symphony and a university like the one here.

"We love working with the symphony," Fresne said. "It always feels like a win-win situation. The symphony benefits because, if they need a player at the last minute, they can call on [a Lamar professor]. We have a phenomenal music faculty that the symphony can depend on. SOST benefits us because they give our singers, not just our instrumentalists, the chance to perform with a symphony."

For instrumentalists, numerous Lamar faculty, alumni and students have played in the orchestra as core members or as guest players, and countless vocalists have sung with the SOST Chorus over the years.

Currently, several Lamar music professors are among the approximately 70 musicians who make up the orchestra's core membership, including

associate professor of trombone Timothy Dueppen, principal trombonist; assistant professor of clarinet Jennifer Iles, clarinetist; and adjunct instructor of tuba and euphonium Victor Gomez, principal tubist. Additional Lamar faculty, as well as students, are called upon to play in the orchestra as needed, and many other music professors, such as director of choral activities James Han, are heavily involved in symphony activities.

As the longest-serving faculty member currently in the orchestra, Dueppen has seen firsthand the many benefits the partnership provides.

"There's a really good bilateral relationship going on," Dueppen said. "Both groups work in tandem and help each other out. It has become a resonant partnership, something that has life. It's constantly growing and evolving. It's not something that is stagnant."

Dueppen also uses his symphony experience in the classroom, a great example of the many ways the close ties between the two organizations directly benefit Lamar students.

"I'll take what we're doing at the orchestra and teach [my students] about it," Dueppen said. "And then I teach them how to play it. So when they go to hear it, it all comes together. It's a good

teaching moment.”

The partnership also provides a plethora of opportunities for Lamar students to get real-world training in a professional environment. From practicing and playing with the orchestra and singing alongside the SOST Chorus to taking master classes with world-renowned performers brought in by the symphony to participating in internships and mentoring, students are reaping the benefits of having a professional symphony so closely tied with the university.

While working on her bachelor's degree in music education at Lamar, Catarina Tran '22, developed a passion for conducting. A chance meeting with Maestro Tipton at a university concert led to a life-changing mentorship which helped prepare her to seize the future of her dreams after graduation.

“I hadn't given much thought to conducting until I took my first conducting course, but once I stepped onto the podium with a baton in hand, I realized how much I enjoyed it,” Tran said. “The experience gave me a sense of purpose and direction, and it quickly became clear that conducting was something I wanted to pursue. [Maestro Tipton] trained me in preparation for my graduate school auditions, which led to success with acceptance to Kent State University.”

Tran completed her master's in conducting at Kent State in May 2024 and is now working as a personnel manager for the Canton Symphony Orchestra in Canton, Ohio, well on her way to accomplishing her dream of conducting. “I am thankful for the opportunity, experience and time Maestro Tipton has dedicated to my life,” Tran said.

Going forward, both the Symphony of Southeast Texas and Lamar are eager to see the partnership grow and take off in new directions, better preparing the next generation of music makers and educators for bright futures and sharing the gift of music with greater audiences.

With soul-lifting performances like *Ode to Joy!* this past April, there seems to be no limit to what these partners in harmony can do.

JUDGE MICHAEL TRUNCALC:

Serving the community and supporting the arts

by Sarah Parker



U.S. District Judge Michael Truncalc's unwavering love of Lamar University and passion for symphonic music began at a young age. With both parents—Ruth and Joseph Truncalc—serving as key faculty members in Lamar's music department, he spent his childhood on campus, immersed in the university's flourishing music and arts programming.

“Music has been a big, big part of my life,” Truncalc '78 said. “My mother was one of the first professors of piano at Lamar, starting in '47, and then my dad came along, and he became a professor of voice and opera. I really grew up in the music department.”

A gifted musician himself, Truncalc learned to play the cello as a child, often practicing in Lamar's music building. Years later during his tenure as a regent for the Texas State University System (2007-2011), Truncalc made a motion to have the music building updated and expanded, driven by the “love [he] had for Lamar growing up in [the] music school.”

“I'm proud to say I made that motion to remodel the music building,” Truncalc said. “My father had worked in that building his entire career from the 50s, and it's a better complex now.”

Truncalc continued to pursue his musical passions throughout his college years, playing his cello in the Beaumont Symphony (later the Symphony of Southeast Texas), the Lamar Philharmonic orchestra and during many of his father's opera productions on campus. After graduating with his B.B.A. from Lamar, he went on to earn his M.B.A. from the University of North Texas and his law degree from Southern Methodist University School of Law.

For more than three decades, Truncalc practiced law as a partner and associate at Orgain, Bell & Tucker in Beaumont. In 2019, he was appointed to serve as U.S. district judge for the Eastern District of Texas.

“I'm proud to be the first and only Article III federal judge in the history of Lamar [alumni],” Truncalc said. “My experience at Lamar was a tremendous asset to me in developing the skills I would need.”

His passion for music has never faded, and Truncalc continues to be a steadfast supporter of Lamar and the Symphony of Southeast Texas, where he is a former board member and past board president. He continues to play the cello at church events with his wife Denise Truncalc accompanying him on the piano and organ.

“I felt it was very important to support the symphony,” Truncalc said. “During [my time on the board], we saw significant growth in the support for the symphony, the mission of the symphony and the offerings of the symphony.”

Above all, Truncalc believes music, and music education, can change lives and enhance communities.

“You wouldn't have much culture, profound culture, in this community without Lamar University. It's really enhanced the quality of life,” Truncalc said. “What's the value of one life that's inspired because they're turned on to good music? They took a music appreciation class at Lamar or they went to a symphony concert, and it's an eye-opening experience. Their lives are forever changed.”

When worlds collide

Southeast Texas Stages & Lamar University foster love for performing arts throughout the decades

by Cassandra Jenkins

Lamar University and Southeast Texas Stages have been fostering a love for performing arts since their founding in the early to mid-1900s. Founded in 1923, Lamar University

added a formal Department of Theatre and Dance to the college 38 years later in 1961. Southeast Texas Stages, known initially as Beaumont Community Players, followed a little over a decade later in 1978.

Once both small institutions, Lamar and Southeast Texas Stages grew over the decades to become permanent fixtures in the region.

John Manfredi, executive director of Southeast Texas Stages, said it was only a matter of time before the two worlds collided.

“Lamar is a big part of the Southeast Texas community, especially in the Beaumont area, so we were naturally going to collide with each other,” he said.

While the university and nonprofit do not share a formal partnership, the two organizations often share resources, students, staff and a love for the theatre.

“We have a good relationship

with the university,” Manfredi said. “We share ads with the theater department. We get a lot of their kids who come down and work with us. We borrow equipment from them and they borrow costumes from us. That’s a relationship that is ongoing.”

Manfredi said Stages also tends to see Lamar University students all the time at the theatre, whether they are involved in the programs, as volunteers, watching in the audience, or as performers.

Remi Kate Kimball is one such student. A current graduate student of speech language pathology at LU, Kimball received her undergraduate degree in theatre, and has performed at Southeast Texas Stages for the last several years.

“I spent my entire childhood on stage and performing with [Stages] every summer with their KIDmunity program, and that really changed my life,” Kimball said.

KIDmunity is a children’s theatre summer camp hosted by Southeast Texas Stages that teaches young thespians how to develop their acting, singing and dancing skills.

Kimball said the experience helped her grow out of her shell and played a pivotal role in shaping who she is.

Renee Celeste '11
9 to 5 the Musical



Bryleigh Myers '19
Constellations



"I regard the theater as the greatest of all art forms, the most immediate way in which a human being can share with another the sense of what it is to be a human being."

— OSCAR WILDE



Emma Grace Nelson,
interdisciplinary studies
major, right | Mean Girls

PHOTOS COURTESY SOUTHEAST TEXAS STAGES

However, as she grew up, she realized she had another love alongside the performing arts—speech language pathology.

Now, she is learning how to combine those two passions and aims to start a nonprofit organization that focuses on helping children learn social communication and speech skills through

theatre arts.

"To be a part of both Lamar and Southeast Texas Stages at the same time, it feels like my two homes are being combined," Kimball said. "Like my two worlds are colliding."

Bryleigh Myers '19 shared a similar sentiment.

Myers earned a B.F.A. in graphic design from LU and moved away from Southeast Texas for a short time after graduation. She returned to the Golden Triangle in 2024 and found herself working for her alma mater as a graphic designer in the Office of Marketing Communications.

One day, while browsing for a new hobby after work and a way to expel some pent-up energy, Myers said she stumbled upon Southeast Texas Stages. "I happened to tell a friend I went to school with that I like theatre and she shared a post on Facebook for an audition notice for one of Stages' fall shows called 'Constellations,'" she said. "I decided to take a step out of my comfort zone, and I went and auditioned—I was actually cast in the show. Now, the joke is that I'm just a permanent fixture."

Tying it back to her job at Lamar, Myers said she had several of her coworkers attend her first show in the fall. Myers said for many of them, it was their first live theatre performance to watch. Now they attend shows together regularly.

"By way of me being this one person doing this thing, both of my worlds are colliding, and now other people are also getting to find the joy of attending shows at the theatre," said Myers.

Looking back on it, Myers said

she feels an extreme sense of "right place, right time."

Renee Celeste '11, another LU alumna who briefly left the Golden Triangle before returning to Beaumont, also found herself in a similar situation in 2015. She graduated with an undergraduate degree in history and then returned in 2015 to



Camp Interact with Remi Kimball, bottom row second from right.

become an academic advisor for the online nursing program while completing her master's degree in English.

She performed her first show at Stages the same year she graduated from Lamar the first time in 2011.

"I've always been in friend groups who are kind of artsy and creative," she said, "but one of the first people who introduced me to any sort of plays at the theatre was an old dance teacher of mine—Tiffany Maloney."

Maloney at the time created choreography at Stages and had reached out to ask Celeste to fill in to teach a class for a show called "Gypsy." Celeste said while teaching, she decided to also fill out a form to audition for a part in the show herself. She immediately got a call back and later, a main role.

"The theatre bug kind of bites you," she said. "When you get that high from the theatre, you want to keep going back and back." That is exactly what Celeste did.

Gaining bigger and bigger production roles, Celeste soon became an assistant director for two shows, "The Wizard of Oz" in 2024 and the recent production of "Avenue Q" in early 2025. This December, she will be directing her first show solo.

Throughout the auditioning and directing process, Celeste said she has seen local Lamar students and staff come in and out of Stages.

"You connect with those people who are in that art scene," she said. "Maybe they teach at Lamar, and on the weekends, they volunteer at [Stages]. It's a local sort of feeling that Lamar has. You're working at a big university, but you are also working with people who are embedded in Beaumont and want the best for Beaumont.

"People here want Southeast Texas Stages to succeed and Lamar University to succeed. It's a matter of meeting people

who are all in the theatre, dance and art scene, and they have ties to everything in the community," Celeste said.

Debra Howell '06, a theatre teacher at West Brook High School in Beaumont and a 2006 graduate of LU, said she often encourages her students to get involved at Southeast Texas Stages before going to college at Lamar.

Sometimes, Stages members and Lamar University staff will also assist Howell with theatre production at her campus.

"The theatre community here is really supportive," she said. "If you need an extra eye on the kids, you want somebody to come watch and give feedback, if you need technical advice—if you need anything in the world, you have those two groups that are always willing and ready to help."

Howell said it has been beneficial to her students to have both organizations help foster a love and workmanship for the performing arts.

"Lamar has a great theatre program, and it's getting better and better as the years go on," she said. "Joel [Grothe] and Golden [Wright] '21 are just so welcoming. On the other hand, if you are a beginner or a seasoned veteran, I think Southeast Texas Stages is a great place to get your foot in the door and be able to do what you love."

Golden Wright is the dean of the College of Fine Arts and Communication at Lamar, and Joel Grothe is the department chair of theatre and dance.

Grothe has worked at the university for 15 years and says he has seen many students do shows at Southeast Texas Stages, whether as a hobby or as an extracurricular activity.

"We are always finding ways to support each other," he said. "They come through us to figure things out, and we try to support them in whatever ways we can. We want to continue that support, and I think for anyone who has a real love for theatre and wants to stay in this area—Stages is a great opportunity for that."

Zach Stiles '15, an incoming board member for Southeast Texas Stages, said one thing he wants to push for during his two-year term is to continue growing the relationship between Lamar University and Southeast Texas Stages.

Stiles is a sales manager for the Roy West Team at Guild Mortgage and an alumnus. Although he's never set foot on a formal stage, he's had an appreciation for the arts since he was young. Now, he watches his young children perform at Stages.

When he was approached to ask if he wanted to serve on the Stages board, he said it was an easy yes.

"Theatre brings the community together in a way that other things can't," Stiles said. "It's about the community. Everyone is willing and ready to help. I've been seeing it, but to be a part of it—that's something else."



Press Club of Southeast Texas supports future communicators through scholarships

by Stephan Malick

For more than 30 years, the Press Club of Southeast Texas has been dedicated to supporting aspiring communication professionals through scholarships at Lamar University. This long-standing commitment is part of the club's broader mission to foster high-quality journalism and communication within the region.

The scholarship, available to students in the Department of Communication and Media, is more than just financial assistance. According to Debbie Bridgeman, longtime board member and past president, the Press Club scholarship is part of a larger effort to cultivate talent and encourage young professionals.

"We would love to see more students get into the communication field and hopefully stay in Southeast Texas," Bridgeman said. "It's not just about the scholarship—it's also about networking and the opportunity to build relationships with media professionals in the region."

The scholarship's roots trace back at least to 1994, and what is evident is the impact the Press Club has had on students for decades, providing both financial support and mentorship opportunities.

Current Press Club president Andy Coughlan '01, '05, who also is director of the University Press at LU, said the importance of the scholarship is that it gives students options to develop their career aspirations.

"Number one, I think it gives the students something to strive for, because it's a fairly good amount of money," he said. "But most importantly, it enables a student who would have to devote their time to working off campus to be able to use that money to subsidize their time at the University Press, LUTV or KVLU radio. It gives them the freedom to be able to pursue the skills that they're going to use in their future career."

Bridgeman emphasized the growing importance of strong communication skills, especially in the digital era. With the rise of social media and misinformation, trained communication professionals play a crucial role in ensuring accurate and ethical reporting.

"Communications is the backbone to everything that you do," she said. "No matter what industry you're in, strong communication is key. In a world where information is everywhere, it's critical to have professionals who can verify the truth and communicate effectively."

Coughlan echoed the sentiment, discussing the broader impact of journalism and communication skills saying that students from the department have gone to work in many diverse careers.

"We have a lot of former students who are lawyers, doctors. There are students in the communication department who maybe had no intention of becoming journalists, but that skill set really helps

them to be able to develop critical thinking. That's the most important thing," he said.

In addition to scholarships, the Press Club of Southeast Texas provides students with networking opportunities that set them apart from other organizations. Membership in the club isn't just a line on a resume—it's an interactive experience that connects students directly with professionals in their field.

"Being part of the Press Club means meeting professionals in your community who support Lamar University and media in the area," Bridgeman said. "We're providing financial backing through scholarships, but we're also offering relationship-building opportunities that can lead to career growth."

The club sponsors students' membership at no cost, making them eligible for scholarships, and introduces them to professional development events, mixers and meetings.

As the Press Club continues its mission of supporting aspiring communicators, it remains a vital force in strengthening the media landscape of Southeast Texas. The scholarship program, along with professional mentorship and networking opportunities, ensures that Lamar's next generation of journalists and communication professionals is well-prepared for the evolving challenges of the industry.



Public relations coordinator Hilary Deville '13, left, and Hannah Danielson '22, development associate, both with the Art Museum of Southeast Texas

Creating a *perfect* partnership:

Lamar University and the Art Museum of Southeast Texas

by Brooke Barnett

For over 75 years, the Art Museum of Southeast Texas (AMSET) has served as a cornerstone of cultural enrichment, education and creative inspiration for Southeast Texas. Dedicated to fostering an appreciation for the visual arts, AMSET works to enhance the local community through high-quality arts education, engaging public programming and hosting exhibitions throughout the year.

One fundamental way that AMSET works to achieve its mission is by investing in its ongoing partnership with Lamar University. This relationship highlights the strength, innovations and influence of both the museum and the university and creates a collaboration that allows both entities to maximize their impact on the region's artistic and educational landscape.

"AMSET is an important asset in our community, but we certainly can't do it alone," explains alumna Marcia Stevens '84, vice president and president-elect of AMSET's board of trustees. "Part of our strategic plan is to look at how we support the arts in our community. All of our goals and objectives are to support this mission and what better way to accomplish this than our partnership with Lamar."

Lamar University faculty member and director of student publications Andrew Coughlan '01, '05, an artist and LU alumnus himself, concurs.

"Having Lamar professors in front of an audience can only help the institution. We are not just academics sitting in an ivory tower," he laughs. "We are members of the community, and it's nice to be able to engage with people outside of the classroom setting. I love interacting with people, and any chance I get to talk about art is enjoyable."

By collaborating on programs such as art exhibitions, thought-provoking speaker series, scholarship programs, hands-on educational workshops and outreach programs, AMSET and Lamar University create opportunities that reach far beyond campus and the museum's walls. The collaborations below are examples of some of the programs that provide enrichment opportunities for Lamar students, exhibition opportunities for local artists, and engaging programs for museum members and the art aficionados alike.

Protégé Competition and Exhibition

"Education is a serious goal of the museum," Stevens says. "We begin educating students at the youngest age, starting as young as preK and work to continue engaging them through college and beyond. We hope to foster a love of and interest in art that builds throughout their whole lives. Lamar has many strengths that it brings to the museum, and the museum brings strengths to Lamar."

One of the most visible partnerships is the museum's Protégé Competition and Exhibition. Now in its 38th year, this art contest was created to encourage graduating high school seniors to become actively engaged in the world of art. Open to students in Chambers, Hardin, Jasper, Jefferson, Liberty, Newton, Orange and Tyler counties, the program is offered in partnership with Lamar University Friends of the Arts, a group established in 1973 to enhance educational opportunities in fine arts at LU. Students submit a piece of original art, and prizes are awarded to first-, second- and third-place winners. In addition, the first-place winner can also receive a scholarship if they are a committed Lamar University art major.

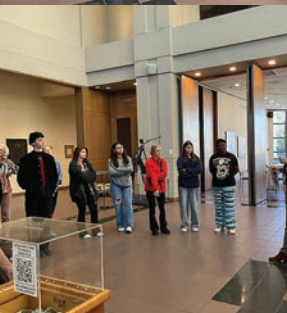
The 2025 Protégé winner is Alleigh Rios, a senior at Hampshire Fannett High School. She learned about the competitions through her high school art teacher, who encouraged her to submit a piece for consideration.

"I was so surprised to be selected as the winner," she reflects. "The amount of talent I saw [in the contest] was honestly unbelievable. I'm shocked and so thankful I was chosen. It made me feel extremely accomplished and gave me the confidence I need to continue pursuing art."

Rios plans to pursue her undergraduate education in art at Lamar and hopes to become a forensic artist. She intends to use her artistic skill to combine her passion for art with her interest in criminal justice.

"After I toured at Lamar, I fell in love with the campus and am extremely excited to attend next fall," she said. "Receiving this scholarship will allow me to afford the supplies I need during college to continue my studies and broaden my skills."

The winning pieces from the Protégé Competition are also



displayed at the Dishman Art Museum on the Lamar University campus.

Taste of the Arts Speaker Series

AMSET has a special focus on fine and folk arts of the 19th-21st centuries and focuses on the conservation, preservation and exhibition of its collections. Programming includes docent-led tours, publications, symposia, film lectures and interdisciplinary programs. The museum's Taste of the Arts series combines the expertise of LU faculty with exhibitions and artists on display at AMSET. This quarterly lunchtime gathering includes a brief lecture from a Lamar faculty member, followed by lunch in the café. Faculty share expertise, provide insight and engage the general public in opportunities for discussion and reflection.

"The university should be a cultural hub for the community, and the relationship with AMSET is an important part of that," Coughlan, who has served as a speaker for the Taste of the Arts series, adds. "The lecture series is a great way to expand on the ideas the artists are putting forward and helps people understand the art in a broader way. Sometimes, people are intimidated by exhibitions. They think they don't know enough about art to have a valid opinion. I try to offer some ideas so they know their opinions are valid, whether they like the art or not, and that the most important thing is to engage with the work."

Café Arts Series

The Café Arts series spotlights the work of local artists from the southeast Texas area, who are often exhibiting for the first time. The series allows museum members and guests the opportunity to explore work from new and upcoming artists, as well as purchase pieces through the AMSET gift shop. Lamar alumna Amy Tolbert-Faggard '94, '13, was one of the artists featured in 2024.

"To be selected to exhibit in the Café Arts exhibit area was an honor and a privilege," Tolbert-Faggard explains. "There is an incredible amount of traffic that goes through AMSET to see the exhibits in the main gallery. Having your artwork displayed in the Café Arts area helps promote you as an artist and gives viewers a close look at what you create."

After earning her master's degree in visual arts from LU, Tolbert-Faggard focused her career on ways to get her art into the public eye and used what she learned at Lamar to guide her creativity.

"LU and AMSET both do a great deal to contribute to a thriving art community," she adds. "Many LU art alumni who have become prominent in the art world have exhibited in the main gallery. The worlds of academia and professional art are deeply intertwined. Many Lamar art alumni work, volunteer,

create art or are art patrons. Partnerships like Café Arts are positive endeavors for both parties."

Opportunities for Lamar students

In addition, the partnership between AMSET and LU provides a variety of educational experiences for Lamar students. The museum offers behind-the-scenes tours and other learning opportunities that allow students to have access to the museum's collections and gain insights into daily operations. This allows art students to experience real-world applications of the topics that they study in class, including seeing first-hand how exhibitions are curated, the process of art preservation and the importance of collection management. It can also open doors for future involvement with the museum.

Gonzalo Alvarez, who graduated from Lamar in 2017 with a B.F.A. in drawing, continued his association with the museum after graduation. He currently serves on the museum's acquisitions committee.

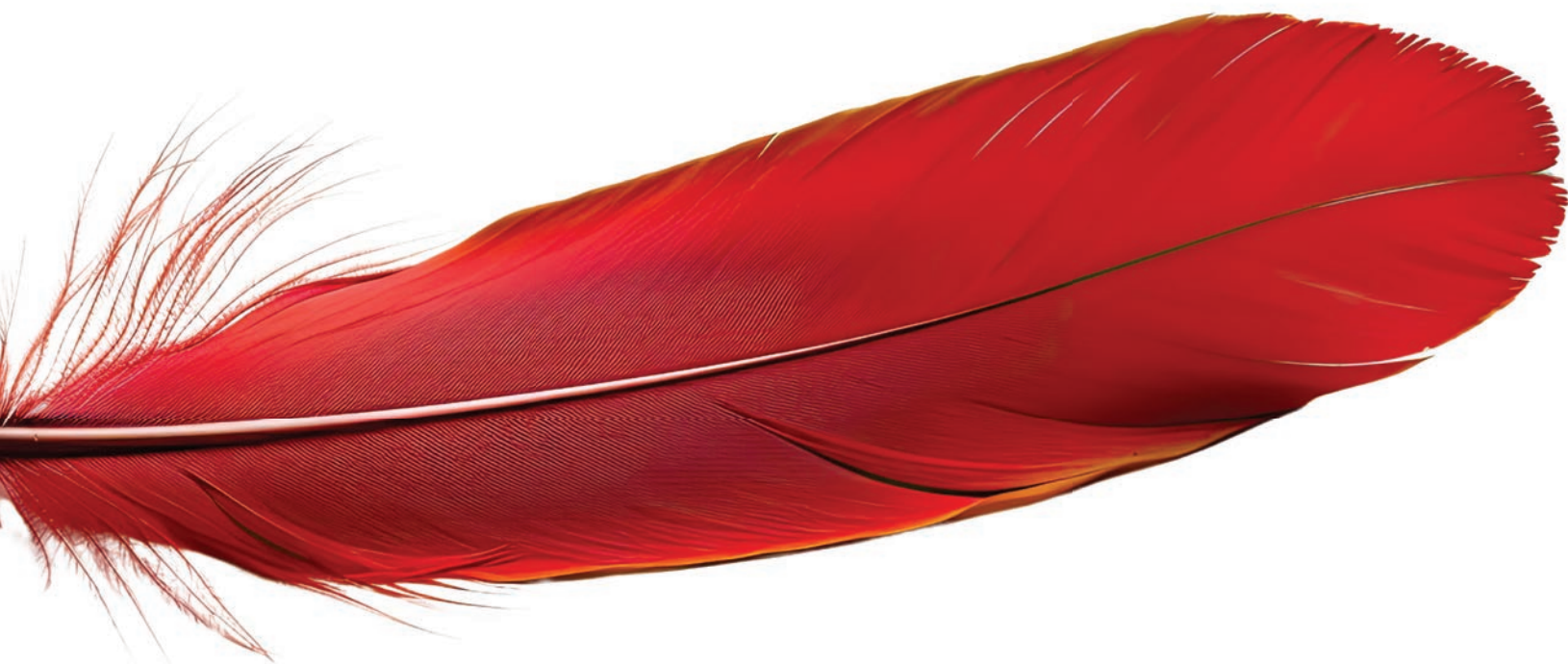
"LU and AMSET share a strong relationship that provides students with a clear path after graduation through internship opportunities and exhibitions. This partnership not only introduces upcoming LU artists to the broader art community but also highlights the exceptional training and opportunities available within the art department," Alvarez says.

Serving on the acquisitions committee has given Alvarez a deeper appreciation of the process that goes into acquiring and preserving artwork. It has also allowed him to discover artists and pieces that he might not have otherwise encountered, which has inspired him in his personal art career.

"During my undergraduate research and projects, I frequently visited AMSET to study exhibitions. Given the close relationship between the museum and LU, AMSET naturally became an integral part of my life as an artist, both before and after graduation," he said. "The museum offers LU students access to unique exhibitions and events beyond the university, broadening their exposure to diverse forms of art, which is an essential aspect of artistic growth. Additionally, LU shares AMSET's programming with students and faculty, supporting the museum's key goal of providing for the communities that AMSET is designed to serve."

As Marcia Stevens prepares to step into her role as president of AMSET's board of trustees, she reflects on the true value of the long-standing relationship between Lamar and AMSET.

"There are just so many things we have done together over the years, both at the museum and in the schools. It is such a powerful collaboration," she concludes. "We are perfectly aligned to work together. It is truly a perfect partnership."



The pre-law feather in LU's excellence cap

by Kensi MacCammond Williams

While Lamar University is already very well known for the success and excellence of many of its academic programs, another discipline is shining brighter every day and demands just as much attention for its thriving faculty and students. The pre-law program of the Department of Political Science is a path open to students planning to pursue academic and professional careers in law after receiving their bachelor's degree, and it is the outstanding faculty and alumni that breathe life into this part of Lamar's community.

Meeting students' needs is the goal of faculty and recognizing the need for more structured study resulted in a focused minor championed by Terri Davis, associate professor of political science. The department established a minor in legal studies in 2013 during her time as chair. In doing so, Lamar's pre-law students have a stronger foundation that has them excelling both inside and outside the classroom. The true heart of this success, Davis praises, is the continual involvement of pre-law alumni who return to Lamar and become vital contributors either by joining the faculty or by inspiring current students through fellowships, awards and internships. Such dedication is integral to maintaining the excellence of the pre-law program, allowing for the continued growth of a robust pre-professional community.



David J. Beck '61

Founder, Beck Redden LLP; named one of the top ten trial lawyers in the U.S., National Law Journal

When it comes to LU's pre-law path, David J. Beck '61 recalls the great amount of support he received during his academic career. He speaks very highly of Irving Dawson, praising his former professor for helping him get to where he is today. Beck shared, "As a faculty member, you have

certain obligations, but you really don't have to go out of your way unless you really want to, unless you really care. And Dr. Dawson really fell into that category." To honor the professor who so greatly influenced his life, Beck established the Dawson Award for Best Undergraduate Political Science Student in 1988, recognizing that incoming students need support as he did during his undergraduate study. Just as Dawson cared about his students receiving the support and foundation they needed to flourish in their lives and careers, so too has David Beck paid it forward for the students of the Department of Political Science. Lamar University is all the better for the indelible impression professors like Dawson made—and make—on students and the inspiration alumni like Beck provide that spurs students to excellence.



Robert Ehrlich '16

Associate, Morgan Lewis; intellectual property practice focusing on litigation, post-grant and prosecution; technology expertise: process engineering, control and safety in the chemical, petrochemical and pulp-and-paper manufacturing industries

Although Robert Ehrlich '16 earned his bachelor's degree in chemical engineering, he pursued a future in law

after studying at Lamar University, gravitating, he says, to patent law after developing a technical background. When speaking of the mentoring Sara Gubala and Clare Burns, instructors of political science and accounting respectively, provided during his time at LU, Ehrlich said, "I do believe the encouragement by Lamar instructors...gave me the confidence I still use to pick up and learn new things quickly, especially in new technology

areas," a unique foundation that helps him represent and advise clients in a wide range of areas. His interests outside of the classroom greatly benefitted him, too, as he credits his community and extra-curricular involvement in LU's Student Government Association and tennis club as opportunities that helped him grow both academically and professionally, keeping him from "getting stuck in his books." Through the inspiration from his courses and instructors and the community the department is able to create, Ehrlich's undergraduate success attests to the wonderful shared experiences and faculty influence for which the university is known.

Victoria LaFleur '19

Junior corporate counsel, Dickey's Barbecue Restaurants Inc. supporting domestic and international franchising operations; certified, environmental and energy law and policy

Victoria LaFleur '19 credits her time at Lamar University as especially inspiring, with her undergraduate studies offering what she needed to learn and the opportunity to develop the skills she uses daily as a licensed Texas attorney.

Although LaFleur knew she wanted to pursue law by the time she attended LU, she was still greatly encouraged by many of the university's faculty during her course of study. In particular, she names her first accounting professor, Delvin Seawright, as one who really helped her establish a great foundation to build upon. "Dr. Seawright demonstrated by example the importance of a strong work ethic and supported me to reach my fullest potential both in and outside of his classroom, which included surprising me with his attendance at my law school graduation," she said. She also highlights some of her more unique extra-curricular courses she completed through the Reaud Honors College, one of which took her to Belize to learn about the environment and sustainability. The diversity of thought and collaboration she enjoyed broadened her life experiences and developed a confidence expected in her profession, shaping her into an accomplished advocate for her clients.





Katey McCall '21

Attorney, Orange County District Attorney's Office; adjunct instructor, LU Department of Political Science; 2023-2024 chair, Texas Tech Law School Board of Barristers



As a political science major during her undergraduate studies, Katey McCall '21 says the whole department was a huge part of her success: "Every single person in that department knew me personally, knew me as a student, was invested in me and my career goals and my future, and how I was doing as a person," she shared, naming associate professors Thomas Sowers and Terri Davis and instructor Sara Gubala among the many who helped her feel prepared to study law. She flourished at LU as a pre-law student and was appointed Lamar's student regent in 2019, allowing her to serve on the Texas State University System Board of Regents. Later she earned the Bess Gentry Award. She continues in her success today as a prosecutor for Orange County and pays the support she received as a student forward as she is also an adjunct instructor for the Department of Political Science, leading students to success just faculty did for her. Both students and the university benefit from having her as a member of its community.

Matthew Minick '11

County Attorney, Hardin County; member, LU Alumni Advisory Board; 2021 Ignite Award recipient from Crimes Against Women Organization



For Matthew Minick '11, there is no hesitation when it comes to who impacted him the most during his time at Lamar: "Dr. Terri Davis was instrumental in my legal journey, and if it wasn't for her, I would have never become a lawyer...I am eternally grateful for her support over the years." After high school, Minick originally planned to attend Texas Tech, but after visiting Lamar University and meeting with Davis, he left

campus enrolled at LU instead as a student of the Department of Political Science, his sights set on law school. During his time as an undergraduate, he received the Dr. Irving Dawson Scholarship in Political Science, and he still fondly recalls his history course with Rebecca Boone as vital preparation for his professional career. Now, as a rural prosecutor and elected official for Hardin County, Minick not only recognizes the benefit of, but also finds comfort in, working for the rural communities in which he grew up, attended school and completed his higher education, and it is this sense of community and interconnection that keeps him grounded in his professional efforts and gives greater meaning to his work in helping his communities thrive.

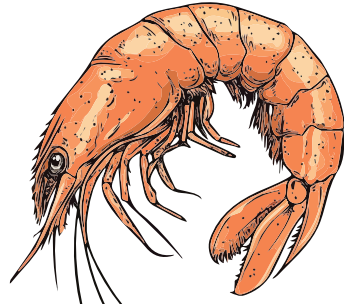
Ronnie Turner Jr.

Counsel, Baton Rouge Manufacturing Complex, ExxonMobil Corp.; 2022 Young Baylor Lawyer of the Year; admitted to practice, Supreme Court of the United States



Ronnie Turner Jr. '07 is very grateful to LU. He stated that his time on campus "was the perfect recipe for success for me...the community aspect of it, the camaraderie aspect of it, not only among my fellow students but also among the faculty and staff as well, making those friendships, making those connections." Earning his degree in psychology, Turner minored in political science, and he credits the communication skills and sense of responsibility he gained from his classes, especially from his philosophy courses and extracurricular activities, as helping him navigate his current corporate life and handle the interface between different rules and regulations he and his clients face. He noted how working within the structure of LU's Student Government Association added even more to his framework and serving within the student body organization gave him key insight into organizational hierarchy. Later in his career, his excellence was highlighted when he was listed among the 2019 Texas Rising Stars of top young attorneys. Through the experiences LU provided as he focused on pre-law, Turner was able to build a background that has allowed him to better develop the professional skills he relies on to achieve the success he has enjoyed to date.





POOR OL' CAJUNS HAVE TO EAT SHRIMP

by Darragh Doiron



iving off the land in Sabine Pass, Cajun historian Jim LaBove's family figured they were "poor."

All they had to eat was shrimp and crab and such. Oysters, frog legs and fish are top-dollar restaurant treats these days. LaBove '70 helped

his dad harvest and sell these culinary treasures from Port Arthur-area waters. They fed the family and sold the extra to Granger's Seafood. It was hard work, and if you "broke" an oyster shell cluster on the boat, you had to eat it.

"Food was all we had," LaBove said. Waste not or go hungry.

LaBove is an artist, author, storyteller and cook working to keep Cajun culture alive. He supported the city of Port Arthur's mission to become the official Cajun Capital of Texas in 2023 and helped Port Arthur Convention and Visitors Bureau collect the background.

In 2024, he presented an interactive program at the Center for History and Culture of Southeast Texas and the Upper Gulf Coast at Lamar University. Attendees were served a fusion variation of his family's recipes, prepared by chefs Casey Gates, Traci Gates and Ashley Fisher, along with Gates' culinary students. Between servings of chicken

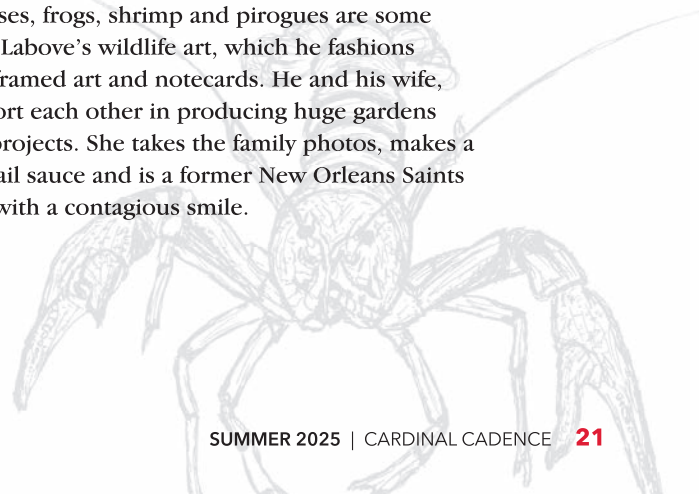
and oyster gumbo with crawfish french bread, LaBove discussed roux, gardening and the noble profession of bootlegging, a family tradition. Also on the menu was redfish courtbouillion served over cajun fried rice and peach ice cream with fruit cobbler.

As a child, LaBove said his sisters wanted nothing to do with him so he hung out with his mother in the kitchen. Washtubs past their prime became planters for green onions and parsley. The family gathered and dried sassafras leaves for filé. They bartered for rice and flour for baking bread.

Cajuns, he said, love Mardi Gras, gumbo and a good fais do do. "The big, scary thing is making roux, but you can't learn unless you burn it one time," he recalled his mother preaching.

"Food evolves. Make it your own," the family advocates.

Birds, grasses, frogs, shrimp and pirogues are some highlights of Labove's wildlife art, which he fashions into matted framed art and notecards. He and his wife, Dodie, support each other in producing huge gardens and myriad projects. She takes the family photos, makes a kickin' cocktail sauce and is a former New Orleans Saints cheerleader with a contagious smile.





LABOVE ON CAJUN COOKING: YOU HAVE TO BURN IT JUST RIGHT

LaBove says his Mama's advice sums up the simplicity of Cajun cooking. "Mama always said that you 'hav' to burn it jus' rite' when you are making bayou Cajun roux," he said. His interpretation of that caution is "exercise care when and how you use the few ingredients you have and be mindful of their contribution and limitations in the creation of any dish."

"I want to enlighten the audience with the absolute simplicity of Cajun cooking that has been completely lost with the explosion of the popularity of the cooking channels on current television, cable and other streaming services," LaBove said. "Mama and the other Cajun families and relatives I knew cooked only with the ingredients that they could grow, harvest in the wild or trade for at a very limited general store that was the only place anything could be secured from the "outside world" [the marshes of 1940s-50s Sabine Pass]. A further limitation was the fact that there was little or no money with which to buy things



anyway. These challenges caused the emphasis to be more on careful execution of any dish that you were trying to prepare."

CAJUN CHECKLIST: ACCORDING TO JIM

"Taken on the whole, Cajuns are good, loving and honest people," LaBove said. I was raised to believe that you took care of the people that took care of you. My experiences show that both me and my Cajun people are good people who take care of themselves and do not ask anything of others—actually often to the extreme. My Mama and Dad would not take anything from anybody who tried to give or offer something because they did not want anyone to have any say in what they considered as their business or how they conducted their family life.

"The more that I research, write and think about my Cajun heritage, the more proud I am of being a Cajun. I find myself being somewhat proud, for lack of a more suitable word, of the fact that my grandfather was a 'bootlegger.' When I discuss and show pictures of the poverty in which I lived during my early life and relate the stories of my grandfather's whiskey being hailed as 'the best rye and corn whiskey in Jefferson County,' I kinda' swell with a bit more pride than I had in my youth. I guess we all have



to have ‘maturing moments’ about how our parents lived. My parents were a product of the Great Depression of ‘29. They got married in the early 30s in the height of the depression with all of its associated agony for the common people of the times. In looking back, I think they did pretty good, all things considered.

“Mama said, ‘We might be poor, but we eat good.’ Thanks to my parents and their superior parenting skills under the existing circumstances, we always had plenty of food to eat, a place to sleep (not the fanciest), clothes to wear (not the most fashionable) and two excellent parents that put us first, regardless of what was happening at the time. Mama was omnipresent for us growing up, and Daddy was not a ‘rake and ramblin’ boy.’ He did not drink, smoke or ‘carouse’ around. All he did was work hard and continuously to take care of us. Daddy’s biggest fault was perhaps his proclivity with expletives but in Cajun circles, that usually is not considered a fault.”

LU CONNECTIONS

At LU, LaBove discovered some professors who he says changed his way of thinking. “Chief among the professors that made a lasting impression on me was Dr. Ralph Wooster who at the time was dean of the History Department,” LaBove said. “I was so taken with Dr. Wooster and the way he taught history that I took five of his classes. I also found some very impressive professors while taking upper-level English courses. I will never forget 331 and 332 American Lit taught by Dr. George de Schweinitz and 439 Romantic Period by Prof. James DeGeorge.”

LaBove’s eldest son, James LaBove II, graduated from LU in 2009 with a double major in English and philosophy. His youngest son, Garret, graduated from Lamar in 2011, with a Bachelor of Science in electrical engineering and a

Bachelor of Science in mathematics. In what has become a family business, Jim writes his books and illustrates, while James edits the work, writes introductions, designs the covers and typesets the text.

CAJUN LIFE ON PAPER

LaBove has written six books: *Cotton’s Seafood*, *Sketches of My Cajun Life Vol. I*, *Sunrise over Keith Lake*, *Sketches of My Cajun Life Vol. II*, *Splendor in the Salt Grass*, and *The (Real) Gumbo Book*. He is completing illustrations for a cookbook with the working title *Traditional Cajun Recipes of My Mama, Cora LaBove*. LaBove has two other works in progress as yet untitled. One is a book on the history and effect that Cajun music, superstitions and home remedies have had on the Cajun people, and the other is set in the period of his teen years (1960s), describing his work on shrimp boats offshore and exploring what it was like to work and live in such an environment and the extreme dangers involved in the occupation.

ON BEING CAJUN

“Being a Cajun to me means being proud of your French-American heritage,” LaBove said. “It also means that such pride in who and what you are motivates you to seek out and learn about the past endured by your family and the other people with your same heritage. As a child, my sisters and I were not allowed to speak French because at the time, doing so meant being relegated to lower-tiered jobs (or no job at all). I am now attempting to re-learn the Cajun French dialect that was the language of my family, my people and my past, and I find myself swelling with pride a bit when I successfully pronounce a Cajun French phrase.”



Labove’s books about growing up in Cajun culture, wildlife art and other works may be found at cottons-seafood.com.

PHOTOS AND ILLUSTRATIONS COURTESY OF JIM LABOVE



1

As You Like It

Cast and crew delivered a memorably delightful performance of Shakespeare's *As You Like It* before audiences cooled by a spring breeze ruffling the leaves of the towering oaks that bounded the staging area for the outdoor performance, which followed *Rosalind and Orlando* as they navigated love, disguises and family feuds in the forest of Arden.

1 The full cast of *As You Like It* take the stage in the final scene.

2 Texas Academy student Malory Craigen shines as "Phebe" while Cameron Durso (Silvius) pines for her affection.

3 Graduating senior Juliana McManus portrays Rosalind, who falls in love with Orlando (Bailey Jenkins).

4 Porter Lapray as the witty fool Touchstone questions Nic Lopez's William.

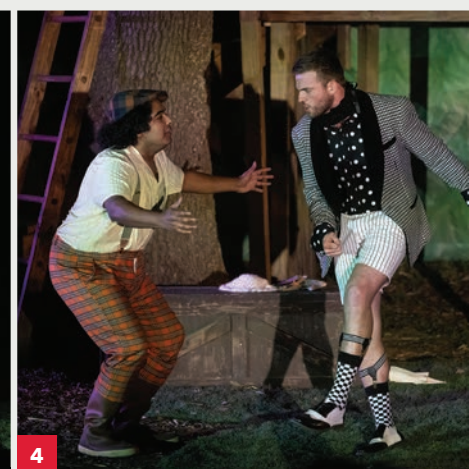
LANE



2



3



4

College of Business Legends Luncheon

At the March 24 College of Business Hall of Fame Luncheon, the college inducted Craig Fecel '66, senior vice president of investments for Merrill Lynch and Company Foundation Inc., into its Hall of Fame in recognition of his continued commitment to student success, his generous support in establishing the Fecel Center in the Galloway Business Building, his ongoing contributions to the College of Business, and his enduring impact on the future of business education.

From left, Provost Brett Welch, Dean Joby John, Craig Fecel and Pres. Jaime Taylor





Terry Long '83, Darrel Jones, Ike Mills '77, Odis Booker '68 and Greg Giles Sr. '78

Former Basketball Players Reunion

Basketball alumni attended the Former Players Reunion Feb. 8. Ja'Sean Jackson made the buzzer-beating goal that won the Cardinals the game against the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. That game-winning shot went viral and appeared on ESPN highlights.



B.B. Davis Jr. '81, Terry Long '83 and Clarence Kea '86



Ike Mills '77, Odis Booker '78, Greg Giles Sr. '78, Homer Taylor '77, J.T. Timmons '80, B.B. Davis Jr. '81



James Gullely Jr. '03



Bob McClure '69, Jim Davis '65, Kenneth Minkins '78, Norman Bellard '79, Ron Jackson '95



Calvin Rice '93 and Clarence Kea '86

HUDSON

50-year-old library receives \$90 million renovation

by April Thompson and Luis Lemmen

Lamar University officially launched the \$90 million renovation of the Mary and John Gray Library Oct. 15, 2024, marking the first major update to the iconic building since it opened nearly five decades ago.

Faculty, staff, students, alumni and community members gathered during the groundbreaking ceremony to celebrate the transformation of the library, which will soon serve as a state-of-the-art learning common for students.

"Today marks a significant milestone as we kick off the first major renovation of the Mary and John Gray Library since its dedication in 1976," Pres. Jaime Taylor said at the ceremony. "We're modernizing the library's interior with a clear focus on aligning this project with one of Lamar University's core guiding principles: student success."

Completion of the renovation project is scheduled for the end of 2026, and all eight floors will be completely renovated and redesigned, Kirk Smith, library manager, said. The renovation will feature modern technology, collaborative spaces, quiet study areas, and updated physical and virtual resources. The library's exterior will undergo a transformation, with much of the brick facade replaced by glass to create a more open and inviting atmosphere.





Brett Welch, provost and vice president of academic affairs, highlighted the importance of the renovation in maintaining Lamar University's competitiveness and attractiveness to students. "The library is the heart of our campus, and this renovation ensures it will remain a centerpiece for academic excellence," he said. "The modernized facility will be a place where students can collaborate, innovate and thrive."

Texas State University System Chancellor Brian McCall emphasized the broader impact of the renovation as part of a larger investment in Southeast Texas' educational infrastructure. "Since 2010, Lamar University has invested \$351 million to renovate and construct 47 buildings," McCall said. "This project received nearly \$50 million in state funding, and Lamar University is a shining example of what a university can be when the state invests appropriately in its higher education institutions."

SGA President Ethan Ellis emphasized the library's role in students' academic journeys. "The library is where students come to study, to connect with others and to grow," Ellis said. "This renovation is more than a building upgrade—it's a commitment to future generations of Cardinals. The new design will give students access to cutting-edge resources and a space that will inspire creativity and innovation."

Smith said the goal is to keep the library as functional as possible while the construction is happening. With work being carried out first on levels five to eight, the books from the higher floors were moved to the lower floors. "I did not want the books to leave the building,"

Smith said. There are more than a million physical books on the library shelves, he said. Each of these books had to be moved individually. The library hired more than 40 part-time student assistants for the work. "We moved basically one shelf, one cart at a time," Smith said. "First, we compacted the third floor. Then we got the fourth floor moved down, and then we moved the fifth floor down to the fourth floor, and then that cleared off the fifth floor. We took all that shelving down and that's stored now on the fourth floor. We had to utilize every bit of space."

Alumna Hetty Brown '76 reflected on the library's significance during her college years. "Visiting the groundbreaking for the renovation of the John Gray Library brought back a flood of heartfelt memories from my time at Lamar University in 1976," Brown said. "The library was a central part of my college experience, where I spent countless hours studying and connecting with friends. Seeing it evolve for future generations is a meaningful reminder of how the university continues to grow and provide valuable resources for our students."

The renovation will include enhanced technological resources, study spaces tailored to various student needs, and a focus on incorporating natural light throughout the building. "We'll be replacing brick on three sides with glass, which will completely transform the look and feel of the building," Taylor said. "Natural light will flood the interior, creating a more open and energizing environment for students, faculty and staff."

Dream Makers

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

by Jasmin Landry

Joseph “Joe” A. Baj III’s connection to Lamar is through his deceased father Joseph A. Baj II, a Lamar professor of mathematics who retired in 1998. After endowing a scholarship in memory of his father in 2011, Joe then endowed his own scholarship in the form of **Joseph A. Baj III Endowed Presidential Scholarship**, which is open to all majors.

Anne Shepherd Nelson graduated from Lamar University in 1962 with a B.S. in secondary education. After graduation, Anne began a teaching career that spanned 32 years. She married John Nelson in 1966 and moved with him to Beirut, Lebanon, where she taught at the American Community School. The couple later moved to Tehran, Iran, with their then young sons. In Lebanon and Iran, Anne proved culturally adept, easily learning Arabic and Farsi. She loved taking camping trips to historical sites of both countries and became skilled in both cultures’ cuisines. Following a short but fast-rising career with GTE-Government System as a database and test specialist in Taunton, Mass., she returned to Beaumont in 1991. Anne Shepherd Nelson excelled in the multiple roles of wife, mother, teacher, administrator, friend, adventurer and community servant. Her husband established the **Anne Shepherd Nelson Scholarship in Computer Science**, which is open to students whose degrees are managed through the Department of Computer Science.

Temple Emanuel began as a permanent religious organization in December of 1895, with its first Temple, a wooden building of Byzantine design erected in 1901. Since its construction, the current Temple Emanuel has been in continuous use, serving the greater Beaumont and Golden Triangle area. In 2004, following a successful fundraising campaign, the beautiful Temple Emanuel was rededicated and named The Gale Foundation Sanctuary to honor local Jewish philanthropists Rebecca and Edwin Gale. The Temple Emanuel congregation created the Love Thy Neighbor Initiative, an annual series of programs that seeks to move the

region toward the kind of community children deserve. In recognition of Lamar University’s legacy since 1923 of honor, integrity and service in providing education to the students of all backgrounds of Beaumont, Southeast Texas and beyond and the subsequent benefits in leadership to the area, Temple Emanuel endowed the **Temple Emanuel Love Thy Neighbor Scholarship**. It is Temple Emanuel’s commitment to the Love Thy Neighbor Initiative that was the catalyst for the scholarship benefitting LU students in support of their future efforts to embrace the core values of love thy neighbor.

Kim and Roy Steinhagen have been advocates of and donors to Lamar University for over 20 years. As art collectors and benefactors, they have been supportive of the advancement of art appreciation throughout Southeast Texas. Roy is chairman of the board and chief executive officer of Steinhagen Oil Company Inc. He served as a trustee on the Lamar University Foundation Board from 1999 to 2019, holding leadership positions as board president, chairman of the Trusteeship and Governance Committee and treasurer. Kim is a major gifts officer with Lamar University in addition to her role as curator of LU’s Public Art Collection. Her extensive background in art includes a degree in art history, work with a Dallas art gallery and involvement with the Art Museum of Southeast Texas since the early 1990s. Kim and Roy established the **Conservation and Maintenance of the Lamar University Public Art Collection** endowment in memory of Nancy Evans, LU first lady from 2013 to 2018.

The Booker family has a long history with Lamar University as alumni, donors and supporters of the arts, as well as of so many other initiatives that benefit LU students. The family has endowed several scholarships in memory and in honor of Booker family members. Sherrie (Booker) Branick ’81 and her husband, The Honorable Judge Jeff Branick -81, who directed the endowment of this gift, are longtime supporters of the arts at Lamar.

Sherrie was a fine arts major at LU who earned a degree in art, and the Branicks have been Friends of the Arts board members since 2018 and underwriters for Le Grand Bal for many years. They were selected as honorees for the 2024 Le Grand Bal and are also avid patrons of the Pairings wine dinner benefiting the Dishman Art Museum. The Branicks other contributions to Lamar University include support of Spindletop Gladys City, women’s basketball, the Investing in the Future Strategic Initiatives Fund and the Alumni Advisory Board of which Sherrie is a past board member. **The Booker Endowment for Art and Design** will allow students of Lamar to explore retail art venues such as Texas Art Supply to see the wide variety of art supplies available in one setting. This type of experience is invaluable to Lamar art students by familiarizing them with the broader art world.

Scott ’81 and Jamie (Kunetka) McCauley ’84 created the **Lindsay Randolph Excellence in Nursing Scholarship** because they believe the world can use more nurses. They have experienced care from wonderful nurses throughout their lives and want to contribute to the success of future nurses so others may have their same experience. This scholarship is the fourth endowed by the McCauleys, and Scott was instrumental in the endowment of at least two others. Scott holds a B.S. in electrical and computer engineering, and Jamie holds a B.B.A. in accounting.

Valero Energy Corp. created the **Valero Fund for the College of Engineering** to support the upgrade of the Process Control Lab and Unit Operations Lab in the Department of Chemical Engineering. This gift will provide innovative equipment and infrastructure improvements to enhance student training in critical industry skills. This commitment builds on Valero’s longstanding partnership with Lamar University that has included co-op and internship opportunities to students and investing heavily in their education through the endowment of an engineering scholarship in 2009.

CARDINAL love stories

#matchmadeatlu

Mariah McCoy '20 and Darien Phillips '20

High school sweethearts, we continued our love story at Lamar University where we both earned our B.B.A.s in accounting. Darien went on to earn his master's degree in accounting. During our academic journey, we were highly involved, sharing unique experiences together. We both served the university as LU Ambassadors and Cardinal Community peer mentors. Today, we reside in Houston where I am an accountant at NRG Energy and Darien is a senior associate at PWC.



Kennedy (Kieschnick) '22 and Nathan Tran '21

We met at our very first tailgate, and we both joined Greek life!!

Carol (Taeuber) '84 and Chuck Hughes '00

We met at Lamar at a Pi Kappa Alpha "Pink Passion Party" in 1983 and were married in 1984. Carol graduated in 1984 in general business, and I graduated in 2000 in applied arts and science. We both had careers in Beaumont. Carol had a 25-year career with the State of Texas Health and Human Services group. She retired as the regional director in 2017. I had a 40-year career with Gulf States Utilities/Entergy and for 10 of those years, I was the manager of industrial accounts for Texas. I retired in 2021. We are living in Port Charlotte, Fla.



Adrienne (Bernard) '00 and James Darden II '00

Jai and I met in December 1996 after initiation into Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc. and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc., respectively. It is so crazy that we lived two miles away from each other for most of our lives but did not meet until we were both at Lamar University. We began dating in December 1998, and the rest is history. I graduated from Lamar with a B.S. in chemical engineering in May 2000, and Jai graduated with a B.B.A. in management information systems in August 2000. We both moved to Houston and were married in November 2001. We have two amazing boys, James III, 21, and Jeffrey-Todd, 17. James III graduated from Lamar in the Reaud Honors College with a





full presidential scholarship and a B.S. in communications—advertising and a minor in business administration in August 2024. Jeffrey-Todd will be a senior at Cypress Woods High School in the fall and has been playing baseball since he was 5 years old. He has officially committed to playing college baseball at Oklahoma State University once he graduates from high school in May 2026. I currently work in global operations for a valve manufacturer, and Jai is vice president of operations for a financial consulting firm while also serving as pastor of Christ Fellowship Church of Beaumont. We absolutely loved our time spent at Lamar University and are truly blessed to have found each other there.



Erica (Edgerly) '16 and Jacob Rone '17, '23

The first time I saw Jacob was in 2014 at his first brotherhood event at a local bowling alley for his fraternity Alpha Tau Omega, which at the time was a brand new fraternity on campus. A few of my Zeta Tau Alpha sorority sisters stopped by to introduce ourselves and welcome them to Greek life, although I had a different motive in mind. I was on the search for a date to my sorority's casual coming up in a couple weeks. I ended up asking Jacob to be my date to our casual, just as friends, but after the event Jacob asked me on an official date, and, as they say, the rest is history. Jacob asked me to marry him in December of 2018. We finally tied the knot in June of 2020 and soon will be celebrating our eight-year wedding anniversary. We welcomed our daughter into this world in 2023. Jacob and I are so thankful that Lamar University and greek life brought us together 11 years ago. We could not imagine what our college experience would have been like without each other and are proud to have Lamar University as part of our love story.



Lauren (Moore) '13 and Casey Stringer '16

We met in 2010 when I was a freshman and she was a sophomore. Spending most of my time at the rec center to try and bulk up, I'll never forget the day I looked up and saw Lauren walking up the stairs to the track in the Sheila Humphrey. We soon became close friends, but our friend group dwindled, and it was then that our passion for each other grew from friendship to love. Lauren graduated in 2013 with a B.F.A. in studio art, and I graduated in 2016 with a B.S. in exercise science and fitness management. Lauren is vice president at a financial institution, and I am a teacher and coach. We were married in 2017 and have a beautiful daughter and son!



Submit your Cardinal Love Story at
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.

SEND US YOUR NEWS:

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

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

YOU & LU A lifelong relationship.

The Office of Alumni Affairs is your connection.

Update your information so we can keep you up-to-date on what's happening at the university, invite you to special events and make sure you get access to all of the perks of being a Cardinal.

60s

Searcy Johnson Jr. '64, B.B.A. accounting, is retired and lives in Sugar Land.

Colonel Charles Thrash '67, B.B.A. management, who earned his master's degree in 1969, was inducted into the Myrtle Beach Golf Hall of Fame. He and his wife, Donnita, live in Colorado Springs, Colo.

Robert Wall '67, B.S. music, is artistic director and conductor of the Clear Lake Symphony for the 2024-2025 season. He and his wife, **Betty (Andrews)** '67, B.S. music, who is general manager of the Clear Lake Symphony, live in Pearlland.

Stanford University and Elsevier named **David Cocke** '69, M.S. chemistry, among the world's most-cited scientists in the latest edition of the World's Top 2% of Scientists List, which recognizes researchers whose work has had significant global impact based on citations across their careers. He retired as professor and Gill Chair in Chemistry and Chemical Engineering at Lamar University and lives in Temple.

70s

Harry Morgan '70, secondary education, '76, M.Ed. secondary education, is an adjunct instructor in allied health at Lamar Institute of Technology where he teaches biology and anatomy and physiology and was named 2024 Outstanding Adjunct Faculty Member. He lives in Vidor.

Nannette (Devoti) Samson '70, B.S. elementary education, retired from Clear Creek school district as a member of the Autism Team and is co-author of 10 Critical Components for Success in the Special Education Classroom. She and her husband, **Thomas** '73, B.S. environmental science, who earned his master's degree in environmental management in 1978 and retired as manager of health, safety and environmental at Wyle Life Sciences and Engineering Group, live in Pearlland. Thomas was an American Board of Industrial Hygiene Certified Industrial Hygienist from 1986 to 2014.

Congratulations to **David Bernsen** '73, B.B.A. management, on receiving the 2024 AV Preeminent Award, voted by his peers as having the highest possible rating in both legal ability and ethical standards. He and his wife, Dinah, live in Beaumont.

Gary Phillips '73, B.B.A. general business, retired as procurement manager at Chevron U.S.A. He and his wife, Sandra, live in Houston.

Gerald Bailey '74 is chairman of Bailey Energy, director and executive vice president of PetroSun, chief operating officer of Eaglesledge Energy and

director of Cavitation Technologies. He lives in Houston.

Southeast Texas Stages honored longtime technical director **Jerry McMillan** '74 for nearly 40 years with the organization. He retired in October, and he and his wife, Nancy, live in Beaumont.

Sharon (Hatcher) Smalley '74, B.S. speech, retired from Hardin-Jefferson school district with 20 years of service. She taught special education at China Elementary School. She and her husband, Gregory, live in Nome.

Maria (Cokinos) Pappas '76, B.B.A. office administration, is chair of the UTHHealth Houston Development Board. She and her husband, Chris, live in Houston.

The Art Museum of Southeast Texas recognized **Mike Cacioppo** '77, B.S. art, as one of its 2024 Artist Honorees. He is an active watercolor artist and traveler and lives in Beaumont.

Orange County AgriLife named **Dale Parish** '77, applied arts and sciences, '90, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, '96, B.S. information technology, Male Volunteer of the Year and 2024 marked Dale's 50th consecutive year as a student at Lamar University. He lives in Orange.

Mike Schofield '77, B.B.A. management, is chief executive officer at MiniCo Insurance Agency and chief revenue officer at Jencap. He and his wife, Kimberly, live in Cave Creek, Ariz.

Dianne (Smith) Timberlake '78, B.S. elementary education, '07, M.Ed. administration, retired as principal of China Elementary School and has 40 years of service with Hardin-Jefferson school district. She and her husband, **Glenn** '86, B.S. secondary education, live in Beaumont.

Tom Long '79, B.B.A. accounting, serves on the board of directors for Texas Capital Bancshares Inc. and Texas Stock Exchange. Long is also co-chief executive officer and director of Energy Transfer Partners. He and his wife, **Meg (Price)** '79, B.S. elementary education, live in Dallas.

80s

Tommy Fain Jr. '80, B.M. music education, who earned his master's degree in music education in 1985 and his doctorate in education in 2008, leads and manages The Brass Touch Professional Brass Quintet, which has been active since 1988. He lives in Granbury.

Lamar Institute of Technology named **David Thornhill** '81, A.A.S. mid-management, 2024 Outstanding Volunteer of the Year. He is president of Southwest Building Systems, and he and his wife, **Sherrie (Scoggins)** '84, B.S. elementary education, live in Silsbee.



Brenda (Long) Jackson '68, Clint Lacy '75 and Annette (Parigi) Fehrenbacher '72



Bethany Powell, Dwight Wagner '73, '96 and Marianne (Kovacevich) Powell '69



Joanne Brown '81, retired development officer and Sarah (Sims) Matheny '61, Distinguished Assistant Professor Emerita of Education



Bobbie and Herman Wilson '63



Ronnie '59 and Bonnie White



Hester (Briscoe) Bell '61, Gene Arnold '61, '80, and Velma (Dailey) Martin '63, '77



Ruth VanNoord '72 and Susan Smith '73



Velma (Dailey) Martin '63, '77, and Hester (Briscoe) Bell '61



Class of 1974: From left back row, John Willis '74, Tommy Martin '74, Bill Carpenter '74, Abbas Isfahani '73, '74, Leonard Brown '74, Charles Weber '74, Purvis Harper '74; front row, Anita (Goodman) Berry '74, Rose Oltremari '74, '93, Regina Myers '74, '82, Joyce (Thibodeaux) Compton '74, '91

Golden Circle and Class of 1975 Reunion

Lamar University graduates of the classes between 1924 and 1974 met Nov. 9, 2024, for a special Golden Circle luncheon honoring 50-year or more graduates and the Class of 1974. The Class of 1974 also celebrated their 50-year reunion in the Dr. Richard W. Setzer Student Center.



LU Ambassador Jordan Nelson, Claudia and Roy Kreitz '65, and LU Ambassador Peyton McLaurin '25



Ron Legnion '70, Susan (Blanco) Legnion '69, Paula (Tate) O'Neal '69, '79, George Kemp and Patsy (McDonald) Kemp '73



John '71 and Beverly Parigi with Annette (Parigi) Fehrenbacher '72



George and Patsy (McDonald) Kemp '73 with Jocelyn West '73



Shannon (Copeland) Figueroa '02, '03, '07, with Bob and Annette (Parigi) Fehrenbacher '72



Ruth VanNoord '72, Susan Smith '73, Regina Myers '74, '82



Marilyn (Rogers) '76 and Rocco Morrell '73



Freddie Titus '83, '86, vice president for student affairs and strategic initiatives; Dwight Wagner '73, '96; Claud Sibert '59, '72; Alice Sibert



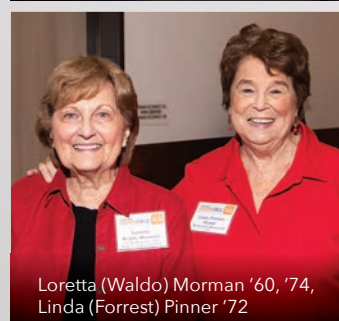
Dave Kirksey '73, Bob Floyd '70, Terry Barrett '68, Claudia Kreitz and Roy Kreitz '65



Gale and Dave Evans '71



Milton and Myrna (Pirnack) Dunnam '67



Loretta (Waldo) Morman '60, '74, Linda (Forrest) Pinner '72



Freddie Titus '83, '86, Dwight Wagner '73, '96, Tommy Martin '74



Lynn and Purvis Harper '74



Sydney and Helen Roy with Levoris Roy '67, '85

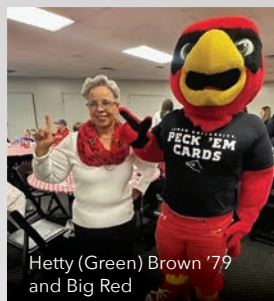
CLASS NOTES



Evie Clifton, coordinator of alumni affairs; Christine (Lindsey) Darby '91; Shannon (Copeland) Figueroa '02, '03, '07, director of alumni affairs and advancement services



Andrew Lakich, Cheryl (Boyd) Linscomb '79, '84, Amy (Linscomb) Lakich '13, Valerie Lakich, Jennifer Linscomb



Hetty (Green) Brown '79 and Big Red

Alumni Between-the-Games Basketball Party

Alumni and friends joined Cardinal Athletic Fund donors for a between-the-games party Jan. 25 and cheered the victory of the Lady Cardinals and Cardinals over the East Texas A&M Lions.



C.H. Colvin '89, '90, '11, Aalayah Watts, Sekeia Colvin



Robert Lyons '93, Keith Henke '91, Logan Henke



From left front row, Emily Sterling '20, associate director of broadcasting Big Red Productions; Callie (Sterling) Rouly '22; back row, Lisa (Warner) Sterling '00, '04; James Warner '64, '71; Julie (Mooneyham) Guidry '07; Big Red; Linda (Solly) Warner '67, '75



First Lady Stacy Taylor and President Jaime Taylor



LU Alumni Advisory Board President Emily (Everett) Allen '98, '04, presents the game ball



Hetty (Green) '79 and L.C. Brown



Kerry Hadley, Terry Savoy-Hadley '95, Laura Welch, Dedra Richardson



Marques Dunham, Naomi Dunham, Jo'el Jackson, Elohor (Okene) Jackson '20, Shelby Graham '23



Jaxson Jones and Elise Becker '05, '12



Parker Guidry, Julie (Mooneyham) Guidry '07, Andrew Guidry



Misty (Davis) Dantin '17, '23, A.J. Dantin, Adam Dantin



Brett and Julie (Turner) Weldy '98 with Cindy (Dinkins) '97, '99, and Chris Partin



From left, front row, Tanya Westerkom; Tamerla Chavis '83; back row, Jeff Spoeri, former associate vice president for university advancement; Juan Zabala '07, vice president for university advancement and CEO of the Lamar University Foundation Inc.; Peggy Zabala; Uliana Trylowsky, major gifts officer and interim associate vice president of university advancement



Christine (Lindsey) '91 and Jeff Darby '88

Melanie (LeDoux) Touns '82, B.S. speech, '01, M.Ed. counseling and development, is an educational diagnostician at Bob Hope Schools. She and her husband, Jerry, live in Orange.

Governor Abbott re-appointed **Terrie (Fontenot) Breeden** '83, B.S. elementary education, '85, M.Ed. special education, to the Early Childhood Intervention Advisory Committee. Breeden is a program specialist and coordinator for the Texas Education Agency. She and her husband, Cal, live in Wimberley.

Kenny Litvik '84 retired as director of maintenance and transportation for Nederland school district. He and his wife, Amie, live in Nederland.

Todd Sheppard '85, A.A.S. diesel mechanics, teaches agriculture and welding at Orangefield High School. He and his wife, Francisca, live in Port Arthur.

Congratulations to **Yolanda (Johnson) Avery** '86, B.S. health and kinesiology, '91, M.Ed. counseling and development, on her nomination for the Community Impact Leader Award by the Black Business Professionals of Southeast Texas. She teaches at Woodrow Wilson Early College High School in Port Arthur school district, and she and her husband, Alton, live in Beaumont.

Lee Brown '88, A.S. law enforcement, B.S. criminal justice, owns Brown Insurance, and he and his wife, Melissa, live in Beaumont.

Big Red mascot in 1985 **Jeff Gann** '88, B.S. speech, is a special claims representative for Farmers Insurance, Richardson. He and his wife, **Jan (Johnson)** '88, B.S. sociology, live in Durango, Colo.

Kent Bernard '89, B.B.A. general business-law, is senior program manager with Percipient Inc. He lives in Missouri City.

Andrea Brown '89, B.A. psychology, '92, M.S. psychology, who earned her Ph.D. in 1999, is school psychologist for Maple Run Unified School District. She lives in Saint Albans, Vt.

Darren Washburn '89, A.S. law enforcement, is a school resource officer with the Nederland Police Department for Central Middle School. He lives in Nederland.

90s

Octavia Brown-Reed '90, B.S. secondary education, '97, M.Ed. secondary education, teaches seventh-grade English, language arts and reading at Abraham Lincoln Fine Arts Academy in Port Arthur school district, and the Texas Education Agency recognized her as an exemplary teacher. She and her husband, **Travis** '06, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, who is a truck driver with Swift Transportation, live in Beaumont.

Dale Busbee '90, B.B.A. finance, is vice president of business development at Encore Funding. He and his wife, Kelli, live in Slidell, La.

DeMonica Gladney '90, A.S. law enforcement, B.S. criminal justice, who earned her law degree in 1993, is senior counsel at ExxonMobil Corp. She and her husband, Judge Robert Johnson, live in Houston.

Tonya (Dorsey) Goree '91, B.S. elementary education, is chief academic officer for Cypress-Fairbanks school district. She and her husband, Kelton, live in Cypress.

Antionette Kelly '91, B.S. psychology, is a case manager for Therapeutic Family Life. She lives in Beaumont.

Brad McEachern '91, B.S. kinesiology, '02, M.Ed. administration, is superintendent of Hardin-Jefferson school district. He and his wife, Jana, live in Kountze.

Michele McKinley '91, B.S. secondary education, earned a master's degree in education in 2004 and is chief of special education for Bridgeport Public Schools. She lives in Stratford, Conn.

Tim McMurray '92, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, is vice president of collegiate sales for Game One. He and his wife, Victoria, live in Horseshoe Bay.

Cynthia Parra '92, B.A. history, B.A. political science, '17, M.Ed. teacher leadership, is assistant director of the Basic Needs Center at University of Houston-Downtown. She lives in Houston.

Srinu Dasari '94, M.S. civil and environmental engineering, patented systems and methods for universal data ingestion. He is senior vice president of cloud operations and engineering with Wells Fargo and lives in Euless.

Sean Duffy '94, B.B.A. accounting, is senior vice president and principal accounting officer at Insperity. He and his wife, **Jill (Cavett)** '94, B.B.A. accounting, live in Kingwood.

Alison (Yennie) Kiker '94, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '02, M.Ed. administration, is superintendent of Catholic schools for the diocese of Beaumont. She lives in Beaumont.

Kristina Massey '94, B.S. criminal justice, '04, M.S. applied criminology, earned her law degree in 2008 and is county attorney for Houston County. She lives in Crockett.

Sachin Nijhawan '94, M.E.S. engineering science, is chief executive officer of ThyssenKrupp Nucera. He and his wife, Shimona, live in Houston.

Jodi (Trahan) Orta '94, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, teaches fifth grade at Tyrrell Elementary in Port Arthur school district. She and her husband, Manuel, live in Groves.

Theresa (Carouthers) Hall '95, B.S. home economics, '23, M.Ed. applied

digital learning, teaches second grade gifted and talented students at Dr. Antonio Banuelos Elementary School, where she was named 2024 Teacher of the Year by Goose Creek school district. She is also an author of Christian suspense, and she and her husband, John, live in Baytown.

Kenneth Mason '95, B.S. criminal justice, '15, M.S. criminal justice, received the 2024 Presidential Award from Lamar Institute of Technology and is dean of strategic initiatives and accreditation. He and his wife, **Christina (Romeo)** '00, B.S. criminal justice, live in Lumberton.

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

Josh Seymour '97, B.S. health education, is special territory manager for Eli Lilly and Company. He and his wife, Jordan, live in Nederland.

Molly Villarreal '97, B.S. civil engineering, is public works director for the City of Beaumont. She lives in Port Arthur.

Jamie Lee '98, B.S. mathematics, teaches math at Hardin-Jefferson High School. She and her husband, **Jeffrey** '92, B.A. history, who also teaches at Hardin-Jefferson High School, live in Sour Lake.

Casey (Savage) Ochoa '98, B.F.A. studio art, is the art and yearbook teacher at Hardin-Jefferson High School. She and her husband, Steven, live in Nome.

Timothy Raffield '98, B.S. biology, owns and is managing partner of Alpha Clinical Engineering. He and his wife, **Danielle (Fox)** '94, B.S.W. social work, live in Katy.

Dee Ann (Goldman) Smith '98, B.S.W. social work, published her audiobook *Saga of The Kings Book 1* and *Nymphs of The Forest Book 2*, a fantasy novel taking listeners through a quest of self-discovery and destiny. She and her husband, Lindsey, live in Victoria.

Rupert "Lin" Ellis '99, B.A. history, '14, M.Ed. administration, is head girls basketball coach at Lumberton High School. He and his wife, **Amanda (Ellis)** '24, B.B.A. finance, who is assistant vice president and Beaumont business banker of Hancock Whitney Bank Trust and Asset Management, live in Lumberton.

00s

Aimee (English) Daigle '00, B.S. communication, is a financial advisor at Edward Jones. She and her husband, Dwight, live in Fannett.

Tammi Halliburton '00, B.G.S. general studies, earned a master's degree in library science in 2024 and is librarian

for Little Cypress Elementary School. She lives in Orange.

Tamieka Patterson '00, B.S. dance, earned a master's degree in coaching and athletic administration and is dance educator and drill team director for Beaumont United High School. She lives in Beaumont.

Jay Quebedeaux '00, B.B.A. marketing, is president of regional hospitals for Baptist Health in Little Rock, Ark. He and his wife, Barbara, live in Hot Springs National Park, Ark.

Carey (Tisdale) West '01, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, teaches first grade at Orangefield Elementary School. She and her husband, Robert, live in Bridge City.

Brandon Allison '02, B.G.S. general studies, earned a master's in educational leadership in 2011 and is assistant principal at Thomas Jefferson Middle School in Port Arthur school district. He and his wife, **Shawntelle (Hillman)** '16, B.B.A. human resource management, '24, M.Ed. education, who teaches at Phillis Wheatley School of Early Childhood Program in Port Arthur school district, live in Beaumont.

Christy (Blanchard) Bean '02, B.S. chemistry, '07, M.S. chemistry, teaches chemistry at Hardin-Jefferson High School. She and her husband, **Kenneth** '00, B.S. biology, '15, M.E. chemical engineering, who is president of Science Solutions, live in Sour Lake.

Mary Goodwin '02, B.S. nursing, '07, M.S. nursing, '08, M.B.A. health care administration, is director of quality at Christus St. Elizabeth Hospital. During her 22 years in nursing, she led efforts in patient safety and quality improvement. She and her husband, **Mark** '99, B.B.A. marketing, who is a reserve police officer for the Port Neches Police Department, live in Port Neches.

Amanda (Gagneux) James '02, B.S. biology, '12, M.Ed. administration, earned her doctorate in curriculum and instruction in 2019 and is principal of Bridge City High School. She and her husband, Derek, live in Orange.

Benjamin Barrington '03, B.B.A. general business, teaches an introductory course to unmanned aerial vehicles at Kountze Middle School. He lives in Silsbee.

Linda Esch '03, B.S. nursing, '16, M.P.H. public health, is a registered nurse with CHCS. She lives in Beaumont.

Belinda (Richardson) George '03, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '08, M.Ed. administration, '15, Ed.D. educational leadership, owns Tucked in Tuesdays Consulting, which collaborates with local organizations to foster financial literacy and economic growth through leadership development and the delivery of tools to enhance productivity. She is director of Spindletop Boomtown Museum, and she and her husband, Melvin, live in Beaumont.

College of Business Breakfast with the Dean

The College of Business in partnership with the Office of Alumni Affairs hosted "Breakfast with the Dean" sponsored by Rao's Bakery Dec. 4, 2024, at Rao's Bakery on Dowlen Road in Beaumont. Attendees had the opportunity to meet Dean Joby John and network with fellow Cardinals.



Amy (Babineaux) Tarver '99; J. Donald Warren Jr. '63, professor and director of the School of Accounting, Finance and Economics; and Uliana Trylowsky, major gifts officer and interim associate vice president of university advancement



Professor and chair of information systems Kakoli Bandyopadhyay and instructor of business Rebekah Maxwell '11



Natalia Hebert '22, '23; Candice (Cormier) Moore '05, '13, director of sponsored grant management; and Rebekah Maxwell '11, instructor of business



From left, front row, Mike Wood '85; Kakoli Bandyopadhyay, professor and chair of information systems; Paul Howell '12, '16, instructor of business; Amy (Babineaux) Tarver '99; and Dean Joby John; back row, Chad Powell '07; J. Donald Warren Jr. '63, professor and director of the School of Accounting, Finance and Economics; Erik Angelle '01, '07; Rebekah Maxwell '11, instructor of business; Uliana Trylowsky, major gifts officer and interim associate vice president of university advancement; Candice (Cormier) Moore '05, '13, director of sponsored grant management; Natalia Hebert '22, '23; Stephenie (Talbot) Martinez '06, '22; Keith Doucet '97

Deborah (Gould) Silverberg '03, B.M. music, is choir director at Baytown Junior High School. Goose Creek school district named her the school's Teacher of the Year for 2024. She and her husband, Von, live in Baytown.

Timothy Skinner '03, B.S. civil engineering, teaches algebra and geometry at Hardin-Jefferson High School. He lives in Sour Lake.

Lori (Johnson) Threats '03, B.A.A.S. applied arts and science, '05, M.Ed. special education, earned a doctorate in education in 2012 and is principal of the Career and Technical Education Center for Beaumont school district. She and her husband, Joseph, live in Beaumont.

Mildred Harmon '04, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, is a school counselor at Thomas Jefferson Middle School in Port Arthur school district. She lives in China.

Trazarra (Chargois) Stelly '04, B.S.W. social work, earned a master's degree in criminal justice leadership and management in 2014 and is director and instructor of the criminal justice program at Lamar Institute of Technology. She lives in Beaumont.

Jennifer (Gates) Weeren '04, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '18, M.Ed. special education, is a special education diagnostician at Hardin-Jefferson Junior

High School. She and her husband, Jeremy live in Sour Lake.

Brandy (Smith) Antill '05, M.Ed. administration, is director of curriculum and the gifted and talented program for Vidor school district. She and her husband, Nelson, live in Beaumont.

Holly (Killingsworth) Guidry '05, B.B.A. human resource management, is a human resources and civil service director at the Texas Municipal League Intergovernmental Risk Pool. She and her husband, Cody, live in Nederland.

Cory Harrison '05, B.S. kinesiology, teaches special education and is a coach at Silsbee High School. He lives in Silsbee.

Amanda (Steeves) Hebert '05, B.B.A. finance, works for First National Bankers Bank. She and her husband, **Joseph** '03, B.A. English, live in Denham Springs, La.

Daphne Jones '05, B.A. psychology, '13, M.Ed., counseling and development, is a licensed professional counselor and supervisor and owns Gardenia Thorn Therapeutic Alternatives. She lives in Beaumont.

Tresha (Blincoe) Malone '05, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, is a CATE technology teacher at Hardin-Jefferson High School. She and her husband, Perry, live in Kountze.

Darrell Westfall '05, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '09, M.Ed. administration, has 25 years of service with Hardin-Jefferson school district and is director of human resources and student services. He and his wife, **Hillary (Hansen)** '20, B.G.S. general studies, who teaches at China Elementary in Hardin-Jefferson school district, live in Sour Lake.

Patrick Patterson '06, B.S. communication, is a photographer with William Patrick Photography. He and his wife, Abigail, live in Portsmouth, N.H.

Angie Potter '06, B.B.A. accounting, is a professional accountant with Mazur and Vernon. She lives in Nederland.

Stephen Brentlinger '07, B.B.A. management, achieved the milestone of 25 years of service with Ritter Lumber where he is vice president. He and his wife, **Jandy (Emmett)** '07, B.S. family and consumer sciences, who teaches at Port Neches Primary, live in Port Neches.

Brandon Granger '07, B.S. kinesiology, '09, M.S. kinesiology, is a teacher and coach at Vidor High School. He and his wife, **Brittany (Bourque)** '10, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '14, M.Ed. administration, who teaches and coaches at Hardin-Jefferson Junior High School, live in Beaumont.

Alanna (Ajay) Jacobs '07, B.A. English, is an AI trainer at Data Annotation. She lives in Seabrook.

Clinton McNair II '07, B.B.A. marketing, who earned his master's degree in community development in 2009 and his doctorate in political science in 2024, is assistant professor in the department of public policy and administration at Rutgers University-Camden. He lives in Camden, N.J.

Erin (Lovelady) Lemoine '08, B.S. health and kinesiology, is research administrator at Colorado State University. She and her wife, Jessica, live in Nederland.

Stacey (Gunter-Noel) Southerland '08, B.S.W. social work, owns Fit30 Fitness Studio, which focuses on both group fitness and personalized coaching. She and her husband, Marcus, live in Beaumont.

Arokiaaraj Alphones '09, M.E.S. chemical engineering science, '18, Ph.D. chemical engineering, is director of environmental compliance for K-Solv and a leader in the fields of air pollution control, water discharge management and environmental safety. He lives in Katy.

Marcus Cooper '09, B.S. electrical engineering, is an electrical maintenance engineer at Indorama Ventures and

works part-time at Lamar Institute of Technology where he was named 2024 Outstanding Part-Time Employee. He and his wife, Tyson, live in Beaumont.

Haley (Dickerson) John '09, B.S. family and consumer sciences, '13, M.S. family and consumer sciences, is founder and managing principal of RH Capital Partners and has co-authored *The Wealth Wise Woman's Playbook: Investing for Legacy and Impact: Inspiring Women to Create Wealth that Changes Lives*. She and her husband, Reji, live in Houston.

Congratulations to **Brian Roberson II** '09, B.S. communication and media, '10, M.Ed. education technology leadership, and his wife, Jocquelyn, on the birth of their daughter Savannah. He is executive director and consultant with Educational Leadership Advisors, and they live in Rosharon.

Charles Stewart Jr. '09, Ed.D. educational leadership, is the dean of the College of Science, Engineering and Mathematics at McNeese State University. He lives in Lake Charles, La.

Laura Terry-Brown '09, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, is principal of Canyon Vista Middle School in Round Rock school district. She and her husband, Rob, live in Round Rock.

Blue Balloon Books published a book authored by **Kristin (King) Winzer** '09, B.S. communication, '23, M.Ed. applied digital learning, *Have You Met a Doodle Yet?* She is director of communication and community partnership for Lumberton school district, and she and her husband, Eric, live in Lumberton.

10s

Hillary (Mills) Bricker '10, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, '23, M.Ed. administration, is a dyslexia interventionist at The Woodlands Park High School and assistant director of the dance/drill team in Conroe school district. She and her husband, David, live in Spring.

Marie (Grigsby) Denson '10, M.Ed. educational technology and leadership, is assistant principal at Holland High School. She and her husband, Brandon, live in Salado.

Amy Murphy '10, B.S. communication, '16, M.Ed. educational technology leadership, teaches fifth grade at Tyrrell Elementary in Port Arthur school district. She lives in Port Neches.

Larry Gregory Jr. '10, B.S. chemical engineering, teaches math and physics at Sabine Pass High School. He lives in Port Arthur.

Gerardo Rodriguez '10, B.S. mathematics, is a development and operations engineer at Lamar Institute of Technology and was named 2024 Outstanding Full-Time Staff Member. He lives in Beaumont.

Austin Greenway '11, B.G.S. general studies, '17, B.S. industrial technology, is head girls soccer coach and a science inclusion teacher at West Brook High School in Beaumont school district. He and his wife, **Morgan (McClain)** '16, B.S. nursing, who is a nurse with CHRISTUS Southeast Texas–St. Elizabeth, live in Beaumont.

Congratulations to **Jasmyne Isaac-Hill** '12, B.S. criminal justice, '15, M.S. criminal justice, and her husband, Jermaine, on the birth of their son in December 2024. She is an adjunct professor at Brazosport College, and they live in Manvel.

Garfield County Bar Association honored **Amanda Lilley** '11, B.A. political science, with its 2024 Outstanding Young Lawyer Award. She is lead attorney for Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma and lives in Enid, Okla.

Monique (Hebert) Orrenmaa '11, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, teaches kindergarten at China Elementary School in Hardin-Jefferson school district. She and her husband, Scott, live in China.

Brittney Bratcher-Rasmus '12, B.S. health education, '14, M.S. health promotion, earned her doctorate in health studies in 2022 and is an assistant professor in the Health and Kinesiology Department at Lamar University. She and her husband, Reginald, live in Manvel.

Amy (Bernard) Crew '12, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, earned a master's in criminology in 2014 and an M.Ed. in curriculum and instruction in 2016 and in educational administration in 2017. She is assistant principal of Vidor Junior High School and lives in Orange.

Matt Hicks '12, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, is chief of the crime records division at the Texas Department of Public Safety. He and his wife, Sarah, live in Cedar Park.

Chelsea (Barnard) Major '12, B.A. English, owns Oldspeak Bar in Garden City, Idaho. She and her husband, Chase, live in Meridian, Idaho.

Jeni Neatherlin '12, M.Ed. administration, is superintendent of Hutto school district. She lives in Hutto.

Hardin-Jefferson school district named **Ana (Rocha Molina) Parra** '12, B.A. Spanish, Hardin-Jefferson High School 2024 Teacher of the Year. She teaches Spanish and lives in Beaumont.

Ciera Bates-Chamberlain '13, B.S.W. social work, earned master's degrees in social work and in theological studies and is founder and executive director of Live Free Chicago–Live Free Illinois. She is one of 34 leaders selected to join the Obama Foundation Leaders–U.S. program and lives in Chicago.

Kyle Gillam '13, B.B.A. human resource management, '14, M.B.A. business administration, owns Mauriceville Feed. He and his wife, **Julianne (Viator)** '14, B.G.S. general studies, who is a realtor with RE/Max, live in Vidor.

Congratulations to **Shelby (West)** '13, B.S. graphic design, '19, M.Ed. administration, '23, M.Ed. school counseling, and **Alex Ibarra** '15, B.S. industrial technology, on the birth of their daughter, Ellie. She is a counselor at Kountze High School and he works at ARLANXEO Corp. They live in Lumberton.

Cristina (Siguentes) Ayala '14, B.S. family and consumer sciences–nutrition, dietetic, hospitality, '15, M.S. family and consumer sciences, earned her master's degree in physician assistant studies in 2024. She is a NICU dietician for the Medical Center of Southeast Texas, and she and her husband, Angel, live in Beaumont.

Matthew Cordell '14, B.S. criminal justice, was included in Marquis Who's Who in recognition of his multifaceted career as a distinguished professional. Cordell is the owner and chief investigator at Greyman Investigations as well as a claims investigator at CoventBridge Group. He lives in El Paso.

Noe Diaz Jr. '14, M.S. criminal justice, is chief of police for the City of Houston. He lives in Katy.

Casey (Clement) Granger '14, B.S. nursing, is a registered nurse with Christus Southeast Texas and received a DAISY Award for excellence. She and her husband, Justin, live in Orange.

Brad Kinney '14, M.Ed. administration, is the assistant superintendent for Blanco school district. He lives in Helotes.

Kiara (Mumphrey) Martin '14, B.S. criminal justice, is assistant principal at Wessendorff Middle School in Lamar consolidated school district. She and her husband, Martin, live in Richmond.

Krissy (Peoples) Melancon '14, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, is program facilitator for RTI/ESL in Vidor school district. She and her husband, Dana, live in Lumberton.

Congratulations to **Trent** '14, B.A. English, and Angie Nobles on the birth of their daughter, Mabel. They live in Houston.

Cammie (Price) Schwing '14, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, teaches in Brownwood school district. She lives in Brownwood.

Ashley Thompson '14, B.S. graphic design, and **Dareas Gipson-Scott** '15, B.S. communication film studies, who owns Dareas Scott Photography/Nightfall Motion Pictures, were married in December 2024. They live in Houston.

Rachel (Wells) Benham '15, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, is senior financial aid specialist at Lamar University. She and her husband, Fred, live in Beaumont.

Kaila (Spoonemore) Jackson '15, B.M. music, '17, M.M. music, is a behavior technician with Action Behavior Centers–ABA Therapy for Autism. She and her husband, Anthony, live in Magnolia.

Shelly Lee '15, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, '22, M.B.A. business administration, has published her book *Let Me Encourage You to Pray, Believe, and Wait*. She lives in Beaumont.

Lillian (Burleson) Stallworth '15, B.B.A. management, '24, M.Ed. administration, is an instructional coach for Port Arthur school district. She and her husband, Darius, live in Port Neches.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board selected **Maegan Collins** '16, B.S. political science, M.P.A. public administration, '23, Ed.D. educational leadership, as one out of 10 Texas higher education leaders to be a founding fellow of the Open Education Resource Fellowship. She is chair of general education and developmental studies at Lamar Institute of Technology and lives in Nederland.

Jamie (Salinas) Cormier '16, B.S. speech and hearing sciences, is consumer technical support specialist at ReSound. She and her husband, **Kevin** '23, B.S. university studies multidisciplinary, who is chemical operator at Honeywell, live in Orange.

Coty Davis '16, B.S. communication, is the Pistons beat writer for Detroit News. He lives in Houston.

Cassandra Eldridge '16, B.G.S. general studies, is an instructional coach at William B. Travis Elementary in Port Arthur school district. She lives in Beaumont.

Alayna Jacobs '16, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '20, M.Ed. administration, is assistant principal of Orangefield Elementary School. She lives in Orange.

Matthew McBride '16, M.B.A. business administration, is senior project manager of Westwood Contractors. He lives in Waxahachie.

LaDonna (Raney) Waters '16, B.S. civil engineering, '21, M.B.A. business administration, is a procurement engineer for the Texas Department of Transportation. She lives in Sherman.

Brynn Baca '17, B.B.A. general business, '17, B.B.A. entrepreneurship, earned a master's degree in kinesiology and exercise science in 2019. She is head softball coach at Tallahassee State College and lives in Tallahassee.

Ariana (Jones) Bates '17, B.S. communication broadcasting, '21, M.Ed. administration, is an instructional coach at Port Acres Elementary School in Port Arthur school district. She and her husband, **Constable Chris Bates** '08, B.G.S. general studies, live in Port Arthur.

Jamarcus Corks '17, B.S. communication–broadcasting, is graduation manager for Lamar University. He lives in Beaumont.

Brandi (Screws) Fuller '17, B.A. history, teaches history at Hardin-Jefferson Junior High School. She and her husband, Thomas, live in Sour Lake.

Jamie (Corder) Goebel '17, M.Ed. special education, is a special education

College of Education and Human Development attend TASA Conference

College of Education and Human Development faculty, staff and students attended the Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA) Midwinter Conference in Austin Jan. 26-29, 2025. They enjoyed meeting alumni who are school administrators across Texas.



Johnny O'Connor, interim dean of the College of Education and Human Development; Marla (Dale) Gilmore '05, '16, Dwaine Augustine '95, '97, '01, '09, Byron Miller '04



Matt Wadyka '12, Thomas Harvey '77, assistant professor and chair of educational leadership



Brenda Dearmon '09



Kathryn (Walker) Washington '91, assistant professor of educational leadership; Joni Mohr '09; Thomas Harvey '77



Philip Wade '15



Marcy Shackelford '22



Kayren (McCarty) Gray '16



Chris Enriquez '22



Claudia (Escamilla) Sanchez '13



Byron Terrier '93, '03, '10



Amanda Traylor '11, Thomas Harvey '77



David Bettencourt '21



Terry Callaway '17



Greg Bower '18, Thomas Harvey '77



Jessica (Ramirez) Milam '07, '11, '2



Don Beck '02, '11, Thomas Harvey '77



Kathryn (Walker) Washington '91, Brian Clancy '09, Thomas Harvey '77

diagnostician at Hardin-Jefferson High School. She and her husband, **Paul** '15, M.Ed. administration, who is assistant principal at Henderson Middle School in Hardin-Jefferson school district, live in Sour Lake.

Hector Limon '17, M.Ed. administration, is principal of Odessa High School in Ector County school district. He and his wife, Erin, live in Crane.

Morgan (LeBlanc) Sumrall '17, is a registered nurse at Texas Children's Hospital in pediatric hematology/oncology at the Outpatient Infusions Center and earned her master's degree in nursing as an acute care pediatric nurse practitioner Aug. 10, 2024. She and her husband, **Tyler** '16, B.S. communication, who is senior external communications specialist with Honeywell, live in Houston.

Elizabeth (Montalvo) Carter '18, B.A. American Sign Language, owns Lil' Kickers of Southeast Texas, a child development program that uses soccer to develop a child's physical, emotional, cognitive and social wellbeing. She and her husband, Jalen, live in New Caney.

The Lamar State College of Port Arthur Small Business Development Center named Cruz Events, owned by **Daniel Cruz** '18, B.G.S. general studies, 2024 Hispanic Business of the Year. He and his life partner, Adam, live in Nederland.

Michael Gibson '18, M.Ed. administration, is principal of Jane Long Intermediate School in Bryan school district. He and his wife, **Brandy (Thompson)** '17, M.Ed. administration, live in Bryan.

Scott Kay '18, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, is a coach and teacher at Warren Junior High School. He lives in Silsbee.

Heather Low '18, B.S. environmental science, is an environmental specialist for Phillips 66. She lives in Nederland.

Congratulations to **Riquerra (Broadnax)** '18, B.A. American Sign Language, and **Robert Salazar** '19, B.B.A. management, B.B.A. management information systems, on their marriage in April 2024. They have a YouTube channel that features their comic book hunting and live in Spring.

Kadi Casey '19, M.Ed. administration, is principal of Needville Elementary School. She lives in Damon.

Darby Reed-Pilant '19, B.S. psychology, '22, M.S. applied psychology, is director of adult mental health at Spindletop Center and owns Resilient Minds as a licensed psychological associate. She and her husband, Caleb, live in Vidor.

David Schultz '19, B.G.S. general studies, is a career and technology teacher at Kountze High School. He and his wife, Kathlynn, live in Village Mills.

Matthew Sheehan '19, M.B.A. business administration, is a sales executive at ADP. He lives in Tampa, Fla.

Allison (Lonadier) Shirley '19, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, teaches advanced plant and soil and anatomy and physiology at Kountze High School. She and her husband, John, live in Lumberton.

Morgan Takach '19, B.B.A. finance, is transition support partner at LPL Financial and married Trey Nicar in March. They live in Charlotte, N.C.

20s

Clarence Anderson '20, B.S. communication, earned his M.B.A. in organizational leadership. He is systems administrator for Orrick, Herrington and Sutcliffe, co-owns Moments, Memories N Such party supply and rental shop and lives in Houston.

Seth Barrow '20, B.S. kinesiology, teaches math and coaches for Nederland school district. He lives in Nederland.

Julia Barton '20, B.B.A. marketing, B.B.A. management, '21, M.B.A. business administration, is social media and digital marketing manager for Lamar University. She lives in Orange.

David Clubb Jr. '20, M.S. management information systems, owns Innovative Data Tools, which offers business intelligence solutions including Excel training and database setup. He lives in Winnie.

Makenzie (Sattler) Coplen '20, B.B.A. human resource management, '23, M.B.A. business administration, is director of human resources at G&G Enterprises. She and her husband, Caden, live in Kountze.

Brant Dykes '20, B.S. mechanical engineering, is maintenance reliability engineer at LyondellBasell Industries. He and his wife, Payton, live in Orange.

Yubitz Estrada '20, B.S. criminal justice, is a school resource officer with the Nederland Police Department for Hillcrest Elementary School. She lives in Port Arthur.

Sarah (Truncali) Gilbreath '20, B.S. mathematics, teaches at Bridge City High School. She and her husband, **Gavin** '20, B.S. electrical engineering, who is a control system engineer at Motiva Enterprises, live in Orange.

Shelby (Harris) Quinn '20, B.S. nutrition-dietetics, is a workforce development coordinator with Bechtel Corp. She and her husband, Connor, live in Beaumont.

Congratulations to **Chase** '20, B.B.A. marketing, '24, M.B.A. business administration, M.S. management information systems, and Briana Hughes on the birth of their daughter Ivy. They live in Port Neches.

Congratulations to **Elohor (Okene) Jackson** '20, B.S. chemical engineering, and her husband, Alphonso, on the birth of their son, Jo'el. She is high

pressure copolymer improvement engineer for Dow Chemical Co., and they live in Groves.

Thanh (Nguyen) Le '20, B.B.A. management information systems, and her husband, Thomas, welcomed their son in December 2024. They live in Orange.

Ke'Undra Mumphrey '20, M.Ed. school counseling, is a school counselor. She lives in Tyler.

Jacob Raley '20, M.Ed. administration, is principal of Blanco High School. He lives in Blanco.

Alfredo Jimenez Sanchez '20, M.Ed. education technology leadership, is principal of Sgt. Lucian Adams Elementary School in Port Arthur school district. He lives in Port Neches.

Garrison Spring '20, B.B.A. management, is an associate account executive with Amazon Web Services. He lives in Austin.

Makenzie (Callender) Jones '21, B.S. nursing, earned a master's degree in family nurse practitioner in 2024 and is an intensive care unit nurse at Baptist Hospitals of Southeast Texas. She and **Dane** '21, B. S. environmental sciences, were married May 17, 2025. They live in Buna.

Hope (Riley) Etheridge '21, B.S. university studies multidisciplinary, earned her certification as a technology education teacher for grades six through 12. She teaches at Henderson Middle School in Hardin-Jefferson school district, and she and her husband, Andy, live in Sour Lake.

Will Foster IV '21, M.Ed. administration, teaches at Forney High School. He lives in Wills Point.

Ana (Trujillo) Ortiz '21, M.Ed. school counseling, is an elementary school counselor for PSJA school district. She and her husband, Victor, live in Hidalgo.

Jacquelyn (Bell) Smith '21, M.Ed. Administration, earned her doctorate in 2024 and is assistant principal at Texas High School in Texarkana school district, where she and her husband, Jerry, live.

Kevin Arias '22, M.B.A. business administration, is a procurement specialist for The Metis Foundation. He and his wife, Andrea, live in Cibolo.

Taliah Belcher '22, B.B.A. accounting, B.B.A. finance, earned her M.B.A. in 2024 and is a budget analyst at NASA Johnson Space Center. She lives in Houston.

Dennis Doiron '22, B.M. music performance, earned his master's degree in music performance in May and was named one of the winners of the University of Nevada-Reno Symphony Orchestra Concerto Competition. He lives in Reno, Nev.

Emily Glover '22, B.S. nutrition dietetics, earned her master's degree in nutrition sciences in 2024 and lives in Orange.

Alicia (Kirven) Hittle '22, M.Ed. school counseling, is counselor for IDEA Public Schools. She and her husband, Spencer, live in El Paso.

Courtney Lewis '22, M.S. criminal justice, is a commissioner of the court for the Ventura County Superior Court. She lives in Santa Clarita, Calif.

Congratulations to **Mackenzie Savage** '22, B.S. biology, on her white coat ceremony as part of the Class of 2028 at the University of New Mexico School of Medicine. She lives in Albuquerque, N.M.

Muhammad Waqas '22, M.E. industrial engineering, is a process engineer at Rio Tinto. He lives in Lancaster, Calif.

Hannah Ali '23, M.Ed. special education, teaches in Lafayette Parish. She lives in Youngsville, La.

Monica Cardenas '23, B.B.A. finance, is an accountant for Lamar State College Orange. She lives in Beaumont.

Ameer Chaulagain '23, M.E. civil engineering, is associate civil engineer at MV Engineering. He lives in Northlake.

Melbourne City Football Club signed American attacker **Cariel Ellis** '23, B.S. university studies multidisciplinary for a one-year deal for the 2024-2025 Liberty A-League season. She lives in Madison, Miss.



Congratulations to **Danielle (Chelette) Garcia** '23, B.B.A. human resources management, on her marriage to Joshua Aug. 3, 2024. She was a Houston Texans cheerleader and is a dental hygienist at Uptown Park Dental-Shawn M. Rodgers, DDS. They live in Houston.

Angelica Wilkins '23, M.B.A. business administration-marketing, is a digital sales manager for Cumulus Media. She lives in Shreveport, La.

Dorie (Ybarra) Amaya '24, M.Ed. school counseling, is a school counselor with IDEA San Benito. She and her husband, Michael, live in Harlingen.

Noah Bonnette '24, B.S. mechanical engineering, is a test engineer for Emerson Automation Solutions. He lives in McKinney.

Kimberly Cabrera '24, B.S. civil and environmental engineering, is a roadway design engineer at CONSOR Engineers. She lives in Alvin.

Tyler (Powell) Dilworth '24, B.S. university studies multidisciplinary, teaches music at Holy Cross Catholic

CLASS NOTES

School. She and her husband, Elihu, live in Nevada, Texas.

Congratulations to **Abby Gautreaux** '24, B.S. mechanical engineering, on the birth of her son, Knox. They live in Orange.

Keili Ginsel '24, B.S. chemical engineering, is a developing engineer at Arkema. She lives in Beaumont.

Melissa King-Knowles '24, Ed.D. educational leadership, is a deputy superintendent of Waco school district. She and her husband, Kelly, live in Woodway.

Mallory (Lisle) Morris '24, B.S. chemical engineering, is a press monitoring engineer with Chevron Phillips Chemical Co. She and her husband, **Trinity** '21, B.S. mathematics, B.S. mechanical engineering, who is a

machinery engineer with ExxonMobil Corp., live in Lumberton.

Mollie McLeod '24, B.B.A. general business, received the 2024 Helen and Larry Rose Dance Award. She is an instructor and apprentice with Bonnie Kokinos School of Dance and lives in Beaumont.

Kristin (Hebert) Robinson '24, B.S. exercise science, is the stewardship coordinator in the Office of Development at Lamar University. She and her husband, Gregg, live in Nederland.

Frisda Rosenbaum '24, B.S. civil and environmental engineering, is a graduate civil engineer with Dashiell Corp. She lives in Baytown.

Ruth Pena Sanchez '24, B.S. mechanical engineering, is a machinery engineer at ExxonMobil. She lives in Beaumont.

Abbygail Smart '24, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, teaches agricultural, food and natural resources classes at Kountze school district. She lives in Kountze.

Tyler Sterling '24, B.S. mechanical engineering, is a process technology engineer at INEOS Olefins and Polymers. He lives in Beaumont.

Joshua Theriac '24, B.S. mechanical engineering, is a mechanical engineer with Valero. He lives in Beaumont.

Jacob Thompson '24, B.S. biology, is chief medical scribe in the emergency department at Baptist Hospitals of Southeast Texas. He lives in Beaumont.

Armando Valderas '24, B.S. civil and environmental engineering, is a roadway engineer with Atkins Realis. He lives in Conroe.

Brandon Vela '24, B.S. electrical engineering, is an electrical engineer with CenterPoint Entergy. He lives in Orange.

Lexus Wilkerson '24, B.B.A. accounting, M.S. professional accounting, received the 2024 Pearl and Aaron Rose Award, presented to an outstanding senior business student. She is a staff auditor for Mazars and lives in Bentonville, Ark.

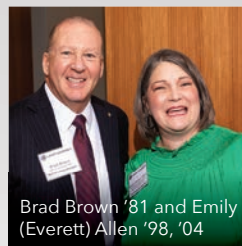
Melody Youwakim '24, B.S. chemical engineering, is a process engineer in Motiva-Port Arthur. She lives in Port Arthur.

Alumni Past President's Council Luncheon

Past presidents of both the former LU Alumni Association and the current Lamar University Alumni Advisory Board gathered Dec. 3 for lunch with President Jaime Taylor for their annual meeting and to learn more about LU's pre-professional programs from Director Molly (Todd) Crespo '17.



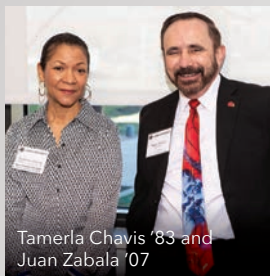
Jake Tortorice '76 and President Jaime Taylor



Brad Brown '81 and Emily (Everett) Allen '98, '04



Chris Bates '08, Sharita Gardner '12 and Tea (Nguyen) Do '08



Tamerla Chavis '83 and Juan Zabala '07



Bill Withers '76, Paula (Tate) O'Neal '69, '79, Tamerla Chavis '83, Lila (Creamer) Stevens '01



Bill Withers '76, '79, Juan Zabala '07, Tea (Nguyen) Do '08, Chris Bates '08



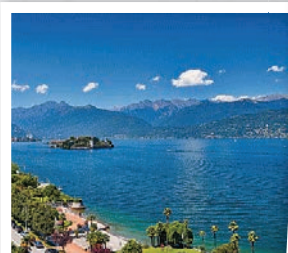
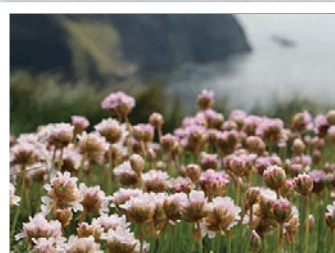
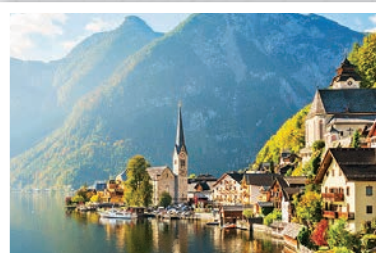
Gene Feigelson '65, President Jaime Taylor and Dan Hallmark '65



From left, front row, Evie Clifton, coordinator of alumni affairs; Tamerla Chavis '83; Lila (Creamer) Stevens '01; Sharita Gardner '12; Emily (Everett) Allen '98, '04; LU Ambassador Harvest Prater; Tea (Nguyen) Do '08; Paula (Tate) O'Neal '69, '79; Shannon (Copeland) Figueroa '02, '03, '07, director of alumni affairs and advancement services; back row, LU Ambassador Sergio Mendez; LU Ambassador Ryan Servantes; Chris Bates '08; Jake Tortorice '76; Martin Benoit '88; Dan Hallmark '65; President Jaime Taylor; J. Donald Warren Jr. '63; Bill Withers '76, '79; Brad Brown '81; Gene Feigelson '65; Molly (Todd) Crespo '17, director of pre-professional programs; Juan Zabala '07, vice president for University Advancement and CEO of Lamar University Foundation Inc.; LU Ambassador Kathy Nguyen; and LU Ambassador Jordan Nelson



Explore the world with us!



More than just a vacation, a trip with **Cardinal Adventures** combines the best in unique, out-of-this-world experiences with memories to last a lifetime. We believe travel broadens the mind and enriches our everyday life. Our trusted travel partners are experts in their fields and take care of all the heavy lifting of traveling so that you don't have to.

Visit our webpage at lamar.edu/cardinaladventures to see what we have planned for the remainder of 2025 and 2026! For anyone wanting to explore the different islands of Hawaii--our cruise tour is the perfect opportunity! An African tour by train along with safari time is a once in a lifetime adventure. We also have several domestic trips coming up for those wanting to stay close at home. And there's so much more!

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. Give us a call--we love to "talk travel." Come explore the world with us!



Join Us!

*Ultimate Hawaii
Cruise Tour*
**Jan. 22-Feb. 1,
2026**

Ottawa and French Canada
June 21-30, 2026

San Juan Islands
July 13-18, 2026

*African Expedition
by Private Train*
Aug. 30-Sept. 13, 2026

*Bordeaux and Basque
Country*
Sept. 10-20, 2026

*Umbria-The Green Heart
of Italy*
Sept. 22-30, 2026

*Italian Lakes and Swiss
Alps by Luxury Train*
Sept. 22-Oct. 2, 2026

Visit us! lamar.edu/cardinaladventures

A mission of the *heart*

by Allison Lennartz

Nutrition and Services for Seniors is a non-profit organization that strives to better the lives of senior residents who are located in Jefferson and Hardin counties. Founded in 1983, it has faithfully carried out this mission by making hot meals and basic transportation available to seniors who may be in need of physical or social support.

“Meals on Wheels” is the organization’s most recognized resource to seniors in the Southeast Texas region. This program provides seniors with hot meals every weekday at noon. But Nutrition and Services for Seniors also sponsors meals at designated congregate sites where seniors can gather to eat and socialize. Additionally, it seeks to offer seniors who are homebound or unable to drive much-needed assistance in traveling to and from dialysis appointments or follow ups with their health care providers. Just last year, its team members and volunteers were able to dish out over 430,000 meals and completed more than 50,000 one way trips.

Leading the organization is alumna and CEO Janci (Smith) Kimball '19. She describes the work as “a mission of the heart” and says it is about “so much more” than providing meals or transportation. She says that they hope to enhance each person’s overall quality of life by helping seniors stay healthy, independent and connected. Sometimes, meal deliveries and transportation trips are the only opportunity a homebound senior has for social interaction on a given day. For this reason, Nutrition and Services

for Seniors trains its team members and volunteers to recognize cognitive changes that may occur if an individual is sick and also teaches them how to screen for signs of elder abuse. Kimball says that, so long as it is up to her and her “amazing team,” seniors in the community will not go hungry or be forgotten.

Kimball, who began her work as the organization’s CEO in the fall of 2019, describes herself as a “very proud LU alumni member.” A lifelong resident of Beaumont, she married fellow Cardinal, Thad Kimball '91, in 1992. They have two children, one of whom is pursuing her master’s degree in speech pathology at Lamar. She credits the school for “playing a huge role in our lives” and attributes much of her preparation and understanding of leadership to her years as an undergraduate. As a member of the Alpha Chi sorority, she was heavily involved in recruiting other students, volunteering with her sorority and the Beaumont Heritage Society, and working as a peer advisor during her junior and senior years of college. Some of the lessons she learned through these leadership positions were the importance of staying calm when others begin to panic, remembering that every problem has a solution, and valuing the impact that philanthropic and nonprofit work can have on your community. Her time as a student well equipped her for nearly three decades worth of work in the nonprofit sector.

Kimball’s enthusiasm for her experience as a Cardinal and the positive influence she has seen Lamar have on the local community is genuine and palpable. She says that she is “passionate” about how much she loves the university and what it has to offer to the area of Southeast Texas. She believes the goal of Nutrition and Services for Seniors and that of Lamar’s are



MILLER



Provides hot meals each weekday and sponsors meals at designated congregate sites

Offers seniors unable to drive much-needed assistance in traveling to and from dialysis appointments

In 2024, team members and volunteers served over 430,000 meals and completed more than 50,000 one way trips

Volunteers complete about 75% of meal delivery routes

one and the same: both are striving to “build a better Beaumont” and to enhance the quality of life for citizens of every age and demographic. Kimball recounted just a few of the ways that LU has bolstered the organization’s work—from providing volunteers through its sports teams and clubs to sending nursing students to the congregate meal sites to offer basic wellness checks

with her team. Though Kimball and her coworkers go above and beyond to take care of their seniors, she says that “volunteers are the lifeblood” of their work. They rely on volunteers to complete approximately 75% of their routes for meal deliveries and are always in need of extra hands (or wheels). She says that she wants to invite anyone who is interested in joining or supporting their efforts to visit them or reach out to them at any time. Volunteers may offer their time or monetary gifts to help Nutrition and Services for Seniors reach as many people as they can; however, Kimball also just wants the community to be aware that this resource exists. She has been able to see the overlap between Lamar’s support for her organization and the way that Nutrition and Services for Seniors has been enabled to care for former LU staff members or elderly parents of current employees. She said, “LU continues to give back to those that have paved the way for us and we are so grateful!” In this way, Kimball is blessed to see two of her passions intertwined: paying tribute to her alma mater and making sure that some of the most vulnerable members of the local community are cared for. As long as it is up to her and with the support of organizations like Lamar, there is no doubt that Kimball will achieve her goal of building a better Southeast Texas.

for seniors to sponsoring any of its fundraisers. The university has been a constant and faithful source of support to her and her team through many years she said.

In regard to Cardinal students and athletes who have volunteered with Nutrition and Services for Seniors, Kimball says that it is “really neat to see the young people come through” and have the opportunity to “share their passions and ideas”



LAMAR UNIVERSITY

MEMBER THE TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM™

P.O. BOX 10011
BEAUMONT, TX 77710

CONNECT WITH US!



NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 502
BEAUMONT, TX

Holmes Endowment creates limitless potential for choral studies

by Sarah Parker

The Oleta Holmes Endowed Regents Scholarship in Choral Studies and the Holmes Family Endowed Professorship in Choral Activities are opening up “infinite possibilities” for choral studies at Lamar University.

Established through the generous support of the Holmes family in 2023, the endowment is named in memory of matriarch Oleta Holmes, a 30-year educator at First Baptist Church of Beaumont and a devoted mother whose unwavering passion for learning and service to others was an inspiration to all who knew her.

“[Oleta] loved helping people and was very active in the community,” said Carolyn Murphy, who served as co-trustee for the John Edgar Holmes estate with her husband, Dan. “She would have been ecstatic about [the endowment]. She always wanted people to succeed.”

Beyond service and education, Oleta’s other great love was her only son, John Edgar Holmes ’74. While earning his B.B.A. in management, John sang in Lamar’s choir, an experience that instilled a lifelong appreciation for music. Upon his passing in 2021, John established the Holmes Endowment to honor his mother’s benevolent spirit with a legacy that would benefit music education at his alma mater for generations to come.

Professor James Han, the first recipient of the Holmes Family Endowed Professorship, said he was “humbled”



Han said his gratitude to the Holmes family deepened as he learned more of their story, particularly that a former Lamar choir singer was behind such an impactful gift.

“It really touched my heart that a student [who had been] in this recital hall made this wonderful gift for the students that are following in his steps,” said Han, who serves as Lamar’s director of choral activities and conductor of both the A Cappella Choir and the Grand Chorus. “The Holmes family found the value in choral music, and they are asking me to pass that wonderful value on to others. With this endowment, we can do extraordinary things.”

Through funding provided by the endowed professorship, Han sees endless possibilities of advanced music training ahead for the students, as well as ways to enhance his own teaching, research and skills to further benefit choral music education.

“We have already been providing outstanding music education and training for our students, but with this endowment, we can offer opportunities other universities cannot,” Han said.

to receive such a distinguished honor. The only Lamar music professor to receive such a prestigious distinction in the university’s history,

“For example, this summer I’m bringing seven choral music educators to [an] international choral conducting symposium. Without the endowment, we cannot think about that opportunity.”

Since its establishment, nine students have benefitted from the Oleta Holmes Endowed Regents Scholarship in Choral Studies. Han says the scholarship, one of only two at the university designated for choral music education majors, will be invaluable in eliminating financial hurdles faced by many students and allowing them to focus more intently on their music training.

This has certainly been the case for Holmes scholarship recipients Christopher Roland and Seth Thibodeau.

“[The scholarship has] helped me in a lot of ways, and not just being able to pay for school,” said Roland, a music major with plans to pursue a graduate degree in vocal performance upon graduation and ultimately teach at the collegiate level. “It’s helped me pave the way to be able to make my mark here.”

Thibodeau, a music education major who is studying to be a choir director after graduation, said the funds have been “relieving” and have given him more time to concentrate on his studies.

“Because of donors like the Holmes family, we, as a choir, have gotten so many opportunities,” Thibodeau said. “I’m super honored to have this opportunity, and I hope I can live up to it and become like the teachers I’ve had.”