

saint francis

A Magazine for Alumni and Friends of the University of Saint Francis



LETTER FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR



Dear Alumni and Friends,

Serving as chair of the University of Saint Francis Board of Trustees is a tremendous honor, which comes with the huge responsibility to ensure USF maintains its high standards and reputation for excellence.

With the decision of Rev. Dr. Eric Albert Zimmer to step down as president at the end of the academic year, the board is working closely with the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration to discern God's direction in the search for our next president. We offer our thanks and appreciation to Fr. Zimmer for his dedicated service during his three years here, as he guided USF successfully through the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and fostered growth of the university on numerous fronts, including academic, athletics and student life. Fr. Zimmer truly had a passion for the university and her mission. For this we are tremendously grateful. We wish Fr. Zimmer all the best as he pursues other opportunities within the Church and academia.

We also appreciate Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Lance Richey assuming day-to-day presidential responsibilities as we move forward. Dr. Richey has faithfully served USF for 12 years. Our next president can rest assured USF will be running smoothly as he or she takes office. We are confident we will find another gifted president to carry on the legacy of strong USF leadership.

I always look forward to reading, cover to cover, the Saint Francis Magazine, which highlights so many bright and selfless alumni. This spring issue contains many inspiring stories, including USF's longest-tenured employee, Sr. Mary Govert, who has spent 45 years shining Jesus' light on campus. I'm sure you will also enjoy reading about the many influential roles Antoine Taylor has undertaken since playing quarterback in the early days of the football program; he's now helping others embark on their football (and life) journeys.

Rachel Nelson, executive director of NeighborLink Indianapolis, and Amy Vanover, community nutritionist, demonstrate compassion at the forefront of their drive to help those in need. Married high school teachers Eric and Ashley Toy share a heart for guiding students in the right direction.

This issue celebrates relationships, too, exploring stories of several football players and volleyball players marrying each other after their time as student-athletes. Many other stories in this issue highlight influential alumni who have taken flight in various endeavors.

The University of Saint Francis continues to be a light in the higher education community, and I look forward to seeing how the university can make an even bigger impact in the future.

God bless,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Poinatte', written in a cursive style.

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2022-2023 FRANCISCAN VALUE
SERVE ONE ANOTHER, SOCIETY,
AND THE CHURCH

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Help is on the way. Rachel Nelson's work with NeighborLink Indianapolis helps residents who need a hand with their homes. She finds a way to make a difference.

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Sports and Marriage. Love is often in the air when football and volleyball players get together. Couples such as Zeke and Tara Lockwood and Nick and Maria Lucas are part of a larger trend.



Home sweet home. After trying out life in the big city, Jasmine Bejar returned to her Fort Wayne home. She also found a welcome mat to finish what she started with creative agency One Lucky Guitar.



Embracing Franciscan values. Sr. Mary Govert is USF's longest-running staff member with 45 years on campus. She embraces change while standing firm in promoting USF's Catholic identity.



Sound advice. TJ Bechill helps musicians reach optimal live performances through his audio company, NEAT. His passion for live music keeps him hopping 24/7.

On the cover: Antoine Taylor trains quarterbacks from grade school to the NFL, but his Matrix QB Training business covers more than football. Taylor teaches his students to make a positive impact off the field, too.

The Move ALWAYS ON

IN KEEPING WITH HIS VERSATILITY AND IMPROVISATIONAL SKILLS AS A QUARTERBACK, ANTOINE TAYLOR (BSW '02) STAYS IN MOTION LOOKING FOR WAYS TO GROW HIS QUARTERBACK TRAINING BUSINESS. HIS GOAL IS TO GUIDE YOUNG ATHLETES INTO THE RIGHT PLAYS FOR LIFE.





Antoine Taylor (BSW '02) could always shift directions, improvise, spot an opening and make the big play. That was his trademark style as a quarterback at the University of Saint Francis. It's still his trademark style today as an entrepreneur.

To catch Taylor standing still is as likely as spotting a snowflake in Fort Wayne on the 4th of July—so rare as to be almost unimaginable.

Taylor has worked as a professional football player, a case manager with Allen County Community Corrections, a manager with Lincoln Financial, a program director with The Mentor Network, a private client relationship/business banker with JP Morgan Chase, a private wholesale semi-truck tire distributor, a used car dealership representative, and—always skilled with a side hustle—a barber. (His barber skills? Honed as a USF undergraduate trying to make ends meet.)

Today, Taylor owns and operates Matrix QB Training, helping young football players through professionals learn how to play quarterback on the field and in life.

"I feel like I've been called, and I've discovered my purpose where I can have the greatest impact," Taylor said. "God has given me a special gift to see the game of football a certain way. In explaining that to people, I think they feel it, and it's genuinely what I was called to do."

Taylor helps players improve their throwing mechanics, play-calling skills and body development approaches through Matrix QB Training. But the biggest difference in his business lies in the broader nature of how he's leading players. He's guiding young players to move, shift and see the bigger picture beyond the lines.

"Our mantra is that quarterback is not a position, it's a lifestyle," Taylor said. "It's who you are on the field, off the field, in the classroom, in the cafeteria, at home, in your community. If you embody that mantra, you have a different perspective on your responsibilities and your role in your community. Our idea is creating entrepreneurs using the platform of quarterbacking."

Taylor first considered the idea for Matrix QB Training years ago when his friend and fellow USF football alumnus, Michael Ledo (BS '06), started a training business which grew into the

highly respected and successful Athletes With Purpose (AWP). Ledo is now owner and CEO of Rise Sports Advisors.

When the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown eventually sidelined Taylor's wholesale tire distribution company, he invested in some soul searching and revisited his idea for training quarterbacks in the game—and the game of life.

"Our goal for 2023 is to have 120 quarterbacks in our program consistently, across all ages," Taylor said. "Last year, we had just over 50 we were working with as part of our membership packages, but we touched over 700 quarterbacks in the country through camps and showcases. We have put together a model and a plan over the next four to five years where we dramatically expand to be national. We expect to be national, then soon after we will be worldwide."

Taylor guides all ages—he recently worked with potential pros prepping for the NFL Combine and other opportunities—and says an ideal "sweet spot" for young athletes to realize they have the desire and skills to be a quarterback is sixth or seventh grade. He talks with parents about their child's potential. Perhaps most importantly, he lets the young athlete know "you may be good, but you gotta earn it every year, day in and day out," and he has the means to take their skills and vision to a higher level.

Now as a John C. Maxwell Leadership Certified Team Member, Taylor seeks to "holistically develop the human, that plays the position of quarterback" in tandem with teaching the essential quarterback skills.

"Most of these kids are not going to end up playing in the NFL. One percent of the 1% get a shot at the NFL. But they are going to be in their communities. They are going to be business owners and CEOs and husbands and fathers and we can help them grow in the right ways."

Taylor credits his wife, Lavina, with encouraging him to stay on the move, develop his business model and use his calling to help others. Taylor's son, Duce, is a quarterback at Morgan State University, and his daughter, Jordyn, the family's young chef, is in middle school.

"I may not be as young as in my playing days, but I don't feel old," Taylor said. "I feel young and energized. My mission is to build this thing and impact the world."

MEET A FRIENDLY NEIGHBOR

IN HER ROLE AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBORLINK INDIANAPOLIS, RACHEL (WILSON) NELSON (BA '05) FINDS WAYS TO IMPROVE THE HOME LIVES OF PEOPLE IN NEED. LOOKING OUT FOR OTHERS COMES NATURALLY.

Rachel (Wilson) Nelson (BA '05) loves to help. It's that simple. She sees people in need, sees how she can be of service and feels compelled to do something. Her caring nature spreads welcome warmth like a freshly cleaned furnace in a 100-year-old home.

Nelson's professional title says, "Executive Director, NeighborLink Indianapolis."

Her everyday actions say, "A Friend, Indeed."

"The rewarding part of what I do is seeing needs within the community being met," Nelson said. "We focus on seniors and individuals with disabilities living at very low income levels. We're helping with a critical, stabilizing need, whether that's plumbing, replacing handrails, or making sure entries are safe and secure. Our goal is to improve the quality of life for aging in place."

Born in Texas, Nelson moved to Indiana when her father took a pastor's position in Fort Wayne. She graduated from New Haven High School, then studied art (fine and commercial) and communications at the University of Saint Francis. She met her husband, Josh, during their freshman year at USF, and four years of friendship paved the way to love and marriage. Josh is the manager at the IU Health Comprehensive Wound Center; the couple have a 3-year-old daughter, Isla, with another child on the way.

Rachel experienced a deep connection at USF through the Assisi pilgrimage program. Although not a Catholic, she loved traveling to Assisi and helping others of various faith traditions walk in the footsteps of Francis of Assisi. "I found it incredibly enlightening," Nelson said. "I enjoyed meeting others who were on the pilgrimage, many of them connected to a Saint Francis-type school. It was very impactful in my faith, and in the service arena as well."



“YOU SHALL LOVE
YOUR NEIGHBOR
AS YOURSELF.”

MARK 12:31 (NABRE)



USF’s emphasis on service and respecting the unique dignity of each individual matched Nelson’s nature and strong sense of service as an act of faith in God’s direction. She found her aspirations connected best with nonprofit work. “I dipped my toe in the for-profit space, but it wasn’t necessarily for me,” she said.

Nelson spent nearly 10 years working with Goodwill of Central & Southern Indiana as director of online marketing. She has worked with NeighborLink Indianapolis for nearly three years, rising to executive director, a position she didn’t envision at first, but has embraced with enthusiasm. She started with the organization in 2015 as a volunteer board member.

“My main focus is finding outlets to diversify our funding, whether that’s writing a grant proposal to a foundation, making proposals to the city or thinking outside the box about other ways to serve our mission,” she said. “Because we are a small team, I try to assist with operational processes on how to be more efficient and I always work on our marketing channels.”

Whenever she has the opportunity, Nelson enjoys participating in the work projects. Often, she’s an empathetic listener to the homeowners who have reached out to NeighborLink Indianapolis for help with their home repair.

“We live in an older home, so I understand the maintenance that goes with it,” Nelson said. “We’re often working with an older community that has gone through neighborhood transitions over time and I know the neighbors and individuals don’t have a lot of resources. We’re trying to improve their quality of life, and help them stay in the communities they’ve helped build.”

Nelson plans to continue to serve others and make a positive impact in the organization in the years ahead. She credits her professors and peers at USF with helping mold her into the person she is today. She smiles as she remembers opportunities outside the classroom, too, such as helping classmates Don Clemmer (BA ’05) and Brooke (Sprunger) Littell (BA ’02) write the first murder mystery event held at Brookside.

“I made some truly dear friends that I still hold dear today,” Nelson said. “I have so many fond memories from my time at Saint Francis.”

CREATIVE DISCOVERY

JASMINE BEJAR (BA '15) FOUND HER CAREER PATH AT USF, TURNING HER WRITING TALENTS INTO A CREATIVE OUTLET WITH ONE LUCKY GUITAR. HER STORY PROVES A LITTLE UNCERTAINTY CAN LEAD TO ROCK-SOLID SUCCESS.

As the first person in her family to go to college, Jasmine Bejar (BA '15) took the advice of many people and chose a major she thought would guarantee employment upon graduation.

A certified nursing assistant (CNA) while in high school in Whiting, Indiana, she thought the nursing program at the University of Saint Francis would be a perfect fit. The queasiness she felt as a CNA would subside, she figured.

It did not subside.

"I was a nursing major for about two weeks when they said, 'We're going to dissect a cat' in Anatomy. I said, 'No, I'm not. I'm going to see myself out of this course—and this major. There's got to be something else I could do,'" Bejar said.

Bejar's tale is an instructive one for new college students, complete with a happy ending. Freshmen don't always know what they want to do with their lives, and it can take some time to figure that out. There's no need to panic. Bejar's backup plan was teaching, and that still wasn't her thing. Finally, she took a communications course with Professor Jane Martin.

"I met Jane Martin and immediately felt a connection with her," Bejar said. "I met with her and cried my eyes out because I felt aimless and unsure and she validated that it was OK to feel that way, it doesn't mean anything about you. After that, I switched my major to communications."

Good call? Indeed. Bejar thrived as a writer and was recently promoted to Content Strategist in her second stint working with the creative agency One Lucky Guitar. She loves Fort Wayne and believes the creative talent in the city can stand alongside the best in the country. More than anything else, her ongoing journey should inspire others to keep pushing until they find their calling.

Bejar grew up in East Chicago, Indiana, the oldest of four children. Her parents welcomed Jasmine when they were just 18 and 16 years of age. "I had very different, interesting upbringing, but they always wanted the best for me," Bejar said. By the time she reached her high school graduation in 2011, most of her peers were heading to the nursing profession or the local refinery or steel mill. "I didn't really understand all the opportunities that were available out there," Bejar said.



After she settled into the communications program at USF, she excelled in internships and took the advice of mentors such as Martin, former USF Creative Arts Executive Director Colleen Huddleson and former USF professor Kristin Miller. They all stressed the need for connections and even convinced Bejar to attend 7 a.m. networking breakfasts where she was one of the few students among many professionals. The move paid off. An internship led to a job with Arts United, which kickstarted her career as communications and community relations manager. A brief stopover with the School of Creative Arts at USF was followed by an opportunity at One Lucky Guitar. “It was a chance to work at my dream agency,” she said.

Bejar made an impact at One Lucky Guitar for 18 months until—in another one of those crossroads moments young people encounter—she caught a case of curiosity about greener grass or, more accurately, a bigger city. She calls it a “quarterlife crisis.” Bejar decided to move to Indianapolis but wanted her dream job to move with her. This was prior to the pandemic explosion of remote work. Her offer to work remotely did not materialize. So she left One Lucky Guitar. “I wanted to experience a bigger city and it was now or never since I don’t have kids, I’m not married, those sorts of things.”

She worked as a freelancer and then landed a job with the Indiana Arts Commission. She started to hit her stride when the pandemic hit, leaving her alone in a city where she didn’t know many people. “Indy was interesting, but it did reaffirm my love for Fort Wayne,” she said. “Fort Wayne is just the right size for me. You don’t know that until you find out.”

Bejar returned to Fort Wayne and, in a fortuitous turn of events, her old job at One Lucky Guitar reopened. They liked her so much they hired her back. She still loves the work.

“I feel embraced,” Bejar said. “Dreaming big and pushing boundaries is welcome and our clients expect that from us. It is a uniquely creative place to work. There are no limits to what we can do.”



USF WELCOMES COMMUNITY TO JIM DINE EXHIBITION



“Vocabulary of Metaphors” served as the title of the exhibition which displayed a broad history of Jim Dine’s prints—spanning more than six decades. Many of Dine’s displayed prints related to the Heart, the Robe, Pinocchio, Tools and other symbols. Dine often explores the theme of personal identity.



IBIT

University of Saint Francis Gallery Director Justin Johnson (BA '99, MA '12) secured an exhibition celebrating the work of renowned American artist Jim Dine this past fall. The exhibition featured art loaned to USF from Kennedy Museum of Art (Ohio University), Fort Wayne Museum of Art and the Midwest Museum of American Art.

Dine, 87, rose to prominence as a performance artist with the “Happenings,” which also linked him to the establishment of pop art. Since the 1970s, he has defied categorization and created a body of work that includes drawings, paintings, photographs, assemblages and sculpture. He has collaborated with master printmakers and created over 3,000 unique prints.

“He is one of the most prolific artists working today,” Johnson said in a WANE-TV interview. “I compare him a lot to Picasso in terms of how prolific he is. The size and scale of his work made this a unique opportunity for the community.”

Study of Dine’s work has been part of the USF students’ curriculum in preparation for the exhibition. Students studied Dine’s practice of self-portraiture as part of their curriculum and created dozens of their own interpretative portraits that were displayed in the hallway gallery.

“Dine’s biggest influence on art is that his drawing style is very unique and expressive. With this printmaking practice, he has experimented with multiple processes,” Johnson said.



The exhibition drew many visitors to USF’s Mimi and Ian Rolland Art and Visual Communication Center. On Sept. 10, the USF President’s Art Gala, presented by USF President Rev. Dr. Eric Albert Zimmer and USF Creative Arts, celebrated the work of Dine with a festive event at the Rolland Center. Johnson presented a gallery talk about Dine prior to the gala, which was free and open to the public, featuring live music, hors d’oeuvres and a cash bar.

Dr. Andria Derstine, the John G. W. Cowles Director of the Allen Memorial Art Museum at Oberlin College in Oberlin, Ohio, presented a lecture on Dine’s artistic practice on Sept. 28 at the North Campus Auditorium. Dine presented his first solo exhibition in 1965 at the Allen, and he has continued to partner with the institution—including a retrospective exhibition of drawings in 2005 and a residency and installation in 2015.

3Rivers Federal Credit Union served as sponsor for the events.

Eric and Ashley (Scare) Toy ran in different circles as Carroll High School students.

“We kind of knew each other,” Ashley said, “but we didn’t hang out at all.”

“She was out of my league,” Eric said.

Eric remembers handling school announcements at Carroll and repeatedly reading Ashley’s name as an arts award winner. “I was in intro art class; she was the renowned artist in the advanced-advanced class,” Eric said.

When they were freshmen at the University of Saint Francis, Eric started showing up to hang out with Ashley’s roommate. Those casual interactions with each other lit a spark. “I remember ‘Friends’ was on once in the background and Ross or Joey or Chandler—I forget which one—was talking about backups,” Eric said. “They were saying, ‘If we don’t get married by 40, we can be each other’s backups.’ I turned to Ashley and said, ‘We should be each other’s backups.’ Then, the more I entertained the thought, the more I knew I wanted her to be Plan A.”

By the end of their senior year at USF in 2011, love reached full bloom. Eric proposed shortly after they started their first teaching jobs—Eric at New Tech Academy at Wayne High School and Ashley alternating between Bloomingdale and South Wayne elementary schools.

Eric staged an old-school proposal. Literally, he staged it at their old school. He told Ashley he needed a book that was only available locally at USF’s Lee and Jim Vann Library. When they went to pick it up, there was another book waiting: “The DIY Bride.” Eric took the ring his father had placed for him on a nearby bookshelf, dropped to one knee and proposed. Once Ashley said yes, both families came out of hiding to celebrate. The couple married on Nov. 10, 2012, at St. Mary’s Catholic Church, their home parish.

Enjoying life today as parents to Sadie, 4, and Everett, 1, the Toys teach at New Tech Academy with their classrooms next door to each other. Eric teaches social studies and computer science, and Ashley teaches art. Because Ashley first taught at the elementary level and then at Towles Intermediate School, she has instructed some of the same students for multiple years.

“I love that there’s a broad spectrum of what I can teach, and I enjoy the creativity involved in seeing students in a different light,” Ashley said.

Ashley also indirectly influenced Eric to enter the teaching field.

“I changed my major five times,” Eric said. “I took an aptitude test with the Office of Career and Professional Development, and it said I should start teaching. Ashley was already in the program, so that convinced me to try it.”

Ashley figured out her path significantly sooner. “As long as I as I can remember,” she said, “I wanted to be an art teacher.”

Twelve years into their teaching career, the Toys still value making a difference with students, no matter how challenging. They commute to work together, making it easy to debrief about their days on the way home. During the peak of the COVID-19 precautions, they even taught out of the same room. “It’s so important to provide a safe and positive environment for students to become who they are,” Eric said.

The Toys look back fondly on their time at USF. Eric served as Student Government Association president and founded the Tour de Francis Cycling Club, rescuing about 30 bikes that were sitting idle in a shed on campus. “Being good Franciscans, they didn’t throw them away, so we asked to fix them up and started a bike loan program, where students could rent a bike for a semester,” Eric said. He rode so often he knew exactly when he could stop pedaling and coast across campus. “I was known as the bike guy.”

Ashley served as Art Education Club president and spent countless hours in the Mimi and Ian Rolland Art and Visual Communication Center, often late into the night. Since then, she has taught several summer arts courses at USF.

“We love Saint Francis and come back whenever we have a chance,” Ashley said.

There’s one more touching USF connection: Their daughter Sadie’s middle name is Reagan, named after Reagan Swinford, daughter of alumni Adam (BS ’99) and Jessica (Meyer) Swinford (BA ’98, MBA ’10). Reagan, who was one of Eric’s students at New Tech Academy, passed away from cancer in 2018 shortly before Sadie Reagan Toy was born.

“Reagan really liked elephants and her sister Peyton gave Sadie two little elephants that were Reagan’s,” Eric said. “Sadie recognizes how special they are.”

Toy Story

Eric (BS '11) and Ashley (Scare) Toy (BS '11) became friends and fell in love as University of Saint Francis students. Married for a decade now, they teach alongside each other and influence young students at New Tech Academy at Wayne High School.





a healthy

curiosity

BY LAUREN CAGGIANO

Amy Vanover doesn't run away from challenges —she tackles them head-on. The 2021 University of Saint Francis graduate worked full time while pursuing her degree as a non-traditional student. However, her Bachelor of Science degree in Nutrition represents just the tip of the iceberg.

Vanover has worked as a self-employed cosmetologist and esthetician for more than 25 years. While she found the work fulfilling, she yearned to do something more intellectually stimulating. Her academic career would ultimately scratch that itch while expanding her horizons.

"I've always enjoyed working with people and sometimes my own personal knowledge would spill over," she said. "And it just made sense for me in that I was ready to make a change. I've always wanted to go back to college and it was the right timing. When I found out that Saint Francis had the undergraduate nutrition degree program available, I decided to go back to school."

It was a wild ride with many highs and lows over the years, but Vanover rose to the occasion and maintained exemplary grades and a positive attitude. Both served her in her work after she graduated, though she's quick to give credit when it's due. For example, the high caliber of professors and peers at USF shaped her trajectory.

"My professors and some of my classmates were really significant in keeping me motivated," she said. "Some of my clients at the salon were helpful as well because of their feedback and encouragement."

Vanover still operates her business Amy's Beauty Salon on Sherman Boulevard part time, but her focus and attention are on her day job as a community nutritionist with Neighborhood Health's WIC (Women, Infants and Children) program in Fort Wayne. This voluntary nutrition education initiative offers healthy foods and other services free of charge. WIC staff promote a healthier lifestyle by providing education, nutritional assessments and access to nutritious foods. WIC EBT cards can be used to at WIC-approved vendors for foods such as cereal, milk, juice, cheese, peanut butter, formula, vegetables, eggs, whole grains and beans.

Vanover is empathetic by nature and enjoys connecting with women and families on a deeper level. In this way, her work is more than a job. It's a calling and a chance to impact the community and its future.

"We go through each stage of the parent and child's life," she said. "For instance, we consult with the mother about key development milestones and recommendations. We do that along with nutrition education."

Helping mothers and their children lead healthier lives makes for a rewarding way to translate her coursework theory to real-world applications. At the same time, Vanover says it's necessary to maintain humility and sensitivity. For this reason, her advice to aspiring nutritionists is to be mindful of keeping yourself in check.

"Always remember the patient is the one in charge," she said. "Sometimes we think with our education or expertise that we're the expert in the room. But in general, we have to remember that they're technically the expert of their life."

This champion of health equity has found a way to apply universal lessons from her decades-long career in the beauty industry to her current career path. Educating and forming a rapport with people is the same, no matter the setting. In her words, "I think one of the crossovers is that my career at the salon has helped me learn how to talk to a diverse group of people with different backgrounds and mindsets."

Speaking of mindset, Vanover has an innate sense of curiosity that's accompanied by a thirst for knowledge. She fills her time with reading for pleasure and professional development. Being a lifelong learner is what inspired her to continue her educational journey and most recently earned a master's degree in psychology with an emphasis on health from Grand Canyon University in December 2022. Though she's unsure what lies ahead for her after this impressive milestone, she's confident that one theme will continue to show up in her life.

"My growth mindset is probably a big part of what helped me get through my education, because that's who I am," she said. "I'm always learning. I have a huge thirst for knowledge. And the more knowledge I gained, the more I wanted. So that is part of my success."

WIDE-ANGLE
View



MATT THOMAS (BA '13) TOOK A LEAP OF FAITH IN HIS LONGTIME PASSION AND STARTED HIS OWN BUSINESS, UPPER VALLEY FILM CO. HE KEEPS HIS EYES ON LONG-TERM ASPIRATIONS TO BUILD A SUSTAINABLE, FULFILLING AND CREATIVE COMMUNITY.

Upper Valley Film Co., founded and operated by Matt Thomas (BA '13), features a fascinating family origin story, one that helped inspire Thomas to fully follow his creative dreams.

“My great-grandfather and his brother were fly fishermen in the 1930s in Amarillo, Texas,” Thomas said. “They wanted to go someplace where they could fish, and they found the Upper Valley area in the southern Rocky Mountains near this tiny coalmine town in New Mexico. They built a cabin, and it turned into a gathering place where family would go out and spend time there, and it became a special place to me.”

Thomas used the name Upper Valley for his USF senior graphic design project, then carried it into his side photography business. He excelled in a variety of positions in the photography, film, advertising and marketing fields. Finally, with the right mix of confidence and courage, he stepped out on his own, making Upper Valley Film Co. his top priority.

Today, Thomas conveys a clear vision and direction for Upper Valley Film Co. He’s exploring his adventurous nature as a photographer and filmmaker, and he has his sights set to build a creative community of like-minded people.

“I had a high school driving instructor who said to pick a good spot way down the highway and drive toward that so you’re not swerving all over the place in the meantime,” Thomas said. “When I think about the goals and aspirations of Upper Valley—in the ‘way-down-the-highway’ view—I want to have a warehouse studio office, packed full of amazing creatives doing their thing, working really hard for the good of the creative culture.”

Thomas is in his fifth year of running Upper Valley Film Co. full time, and recently moved his business from his home into a studio adjacent to Fort Wayne Fire Station No. 5, near Electric Works. That space is where everything coalesces, from the creative fun of brainstorming ideas for clients to the more mundane necessities of handling the financial aspects of Upper Valley Film Co.

Thomas originally developed a love for photography as a junior high school skateboarder, marveling at awe-inspiring skateboard magazine photos. However, he put photography aside, nudged by high school advisors to choose a major with a more predictable paycheck. He worked hard in graphic

design and earned his USF degree but did not find joy or purpose in the field. A photography course, along with an internship with BFA Commercial Photography during his senior year, reignited his passion for photography and he returned to his first love.

“A floodgate opened in my motivation; I forgot how much I loved it,” Thomas said. “I thought, ‘Let’s chase this with my head down with everything I’ve got.’”

After graduating, Thomas worked at various points with BFA, Heritage Food Service, Aptera Software and creative agency One Lucky Guitar before diving into Upper Valley full time. “To be self-employed requires an insane leap of faith, and you need to enjoy it or else you’ll crumble pretty quickly,” he said.

Thomas’ time at USF set the tone for the necessary work ethic. He played soccer for the Cougars and kept a series of part-time jobs while a student, from valet to liquor store clerk to landscaper, before landing some paid internships. “Being a student-athlete taught me how to manage my time and taught me how feeling competitive is valuable in the professional sense, giving you that extra fire,” he said.

The challenges for Thomas in running his own businesses are considerable, including the sometimes conflicting goals of efficiently operating a business and creatively producing projects. The rewards arrive when a client’s vision and Upper Valley’s vision align, and everyone loves the result.

Thomas and his wife, Leah (Schoenle), have a daughter, Maude, and—despite the endless demands—Thomas makes sure to unplug and recharge often to maintain some work-life balance and keep his energy up for the high demands of Upper Valley Film Co.

“Knowing how Upper Valley got built and developed by my great-grandparents, friends and family influences how I see Upper Valley Film Co. going in the long run,” he said. “I see a gathering of community and creative individuals all chasing the same dream, that’s how the name ties back to the place.”

For examples of Upper Valley Film Co.’s work, visit up-vl.com.

THE Long Haul

“As each one has received a gift,
use it to serve one another as good
stewards of God’s varied grace.”

1 PETER 4:10 (NABRE)



Music Appreciation class,
1957. Sr. Mary sits third row, far right.

SR. MARY GOVERT'S TENURE AT USF RANKS #1 ON THE CURRENT EMPLOYEES' LIST AFTER SPENDING 45 YEARS WITH THE UNIVERSITY. SHE KEEPS MOVING AHEAD, ROLLING WITH THE INEVITABLE CHANGES AND DEMONSTRATING THE IMPORTANCE OF FRANCISCAN VALUES.

Sr. Mary Govert (BA '62) understands the need for ongoing change and growth at the University of Saint Francis. After all, she has spent 45 years working for USF (or Saint Francis College, in the earlier days), with transformation swirling around her.

Change can be challenging and not universally applauded.

"When they first mentioned football, I said, 'Over my dead body,'" Sr. Mary said, then smiled. "But now I see how football has really contributed to life on the weekends, and to enrollment. The whole growth of athletics has contributed in a positive way to the university."

The growth of athletics ranks as one of many significant changes during Sr. Mary's time as a student, teacher, mission effectiveness officer, registrar and now in a part-time role as a data entry specialist. When she arrived in Fort Wayne as a freshman in 1957—out of Bishop Noll High School in Hammond, Indiana—she entered an all-female college. Saint Francis had a small enrollment, with about 50 students living on campus.

The instructors were primarily priests or sisters, and the students followed a strict dress code and curfew.

"Our social life depended on Tri-State and Indiana Tech, which were all male at that time," Sr. Mary said of her undergraduate years. "We were always looking for dances and social events and we would invite the guys from there. Some very good marriages came out of those times."

Sr. Mary started her entry into the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration in 1959 and finished her degree in English at Saint Francis in 1962. She became a licensed biology teacher and taught at Fort Wayne's Bishop Luers High School, Mishawaka's Marian High School and a school of nursing in Memphis, Tenn. "I saw the outside of Graceland, but I wouldn't pay to go in," Sr. Mary said with a chuckle. She came back to teach philosophy and theology at Saint Francis for 18 years prior to many years as the registrar.

"The students have become more serious, in a sense, over the years," she said. "They're more job oriented. I believe a much more liberal arts background would serve them better overall. They see these commercials saying you don't have to take all 'that stuff.' I would tell students, 'I teach you *the stuff* that's going to be important for your whole life.'"

Sr. Mary said she appreciates USF's recent reemphasis on its Catholic identity, originally established when the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration founded the college in 1890.

"When I was a student and first teaching here, our Catholic identity wasn't additionally stressed because everybody here was a Catholic and identified as Catholic," she said. "It's good that we are focusing on what that means now. And it's good to hear students talking about Franciscan values and how important they are."

Sr. Mary came from a family of seven children, with four of them earning degrees from Saint Francis College. Another sister earned a degree from the University of St. Francis in Joliet, Ill. "She always said, 'I have a St. Francis sweatshirt, too,'" Sr. Mary said. Their father worked 40 years for DuPont and their mother was a stay-at-home mom.

Sr. Mary now ranks as the current employee with the most years of service to USF. Some of her former students, such as Dr. Amy Obringer, are professors now. She believes USF has done a good job of becoming recognized as part of the Fort Wayne landscape.

"Early on, even as we went coed, we were still known as the women's college on the west side of town that people didn't consider unless they were Catholic," she said. "We are viewed very differently now, in terms of education, health sciences, business and art. Most of our major programs have become an integral part of the fabric of the city."

At the heart of USF, then and now, is the Franciscan spirit.

"We're doing a better job now of being explicit about it," she said. "There's a gentleness—politeness might be a better word—that people contrast with larger colleges where it can feel cold. I think the smallness of this place contributes to that gentility or collegiality you feel here."

Sr. Mary has no plans for full retirement and continues to play the organ and piano and participate in the Cathedral Choir.

"I like music. I loved to play tennis and volleyball when I had a body that could do that," she said. "I will stay here and work for as long as I'm able to contribute. At my age, that might not be too much longer."



FOOTBALL + VOLLEYBALL = LOVE

MARRIAGES SEEM TO BLOSSOM WHEN USF FOOTBALL PLAYERS AND VOLLEYBALL PLAYERS BECOME FRIENDS. IS IT A TREND OR A COINCIDENCE? WHICHEVER THE CASE, THERE'S NO DENYING LOVE WINS.

The possible puns to headline this story are nearly endless:

Love at First Down.

The Ace of Hearts.

Game, Set and Perfect Match.

At least six recent marriages of University of Saint Francis alumni involved football players tying the knot with volleyball players. A half dozen is enough to be a trend, isn't it? There must be something extra compatible going on between the field and the court, between the tackles and the spikes.

"I think you see some of the same qualities in each other," said football player Lucas Sparks (BBA '16), who married volleyball player Cassidy Rammel (BS '19). "It's a small-school atmosphere and athletes naturally meet athletes."

Football player Nick Lucas (BS '21), who married volleyball player Maria Pelak (BS '21), agrees.

"You can relate to each other well, both being competitive, both being part of a team," Lucas said. "You know the other person is a hard worker, dedicated, and I think those are some traits that pull people together."

Volleyball player Tara (Heald) Lockwood (BS '17) married football player Zeke Lockwood (BA '18). She wants to agree with the logical reasons for the fall sports love stories, the reasons why football + volleyball = love. But she has some natural skepticism.

"Why are football players and volleyball players so compatible? It could be a coincidence," she said. "I think maybe that's what it is."

Love connection trend or cute coincidence? It depends on who you ask. The husbands seem to think a sports-related attraction lit the flame. The wives are more prone to wonder whether it's just a fun sidenote to love.

There's no doubt, however, that these football/volleyball unions produced some great couples:



LUCAS (BBA '16) AND CASSIDY (RAMMEL) SPARKS (BS '19)

“(Football player) Ryan Nix was dating one of my friends so I actually met Lucas in my hometown before I met him at Saint Francis,” Cassidy said. “We were at a party in Fort Recovery, Ohio; we started talking more after that and the rest is history. We started dating in March 2017 and three or four months later, we were pretty much inseparable.”

Since Lucas graduated in 2016 and took a job in Springfield, Ohio, the couple navigated a long-distance relationship for about a year while Cassidy finished her degree.

Lucas finally popped the question while they were vacationing in Gatlinburg, Tennessee. “We had a little cabin down there and I think she hoped it was coming,” Lucas said, “but I did a good job of hiding the ring and what I had in mind going down there.”

They planned a March 2020 wedding and—as you might guess—those fanciful plans hit a major

roadblock due to the restrictions of COVID-19. “We just had the ceremony with our parents and few siblings who could make it,” Cassidy said. “But we had a renewal of vows and a reception in November 2020. It all turned out really nice.”

The Sparks family now includes nearly 2-year-old Archer. Lucas works for Speedway’s corporate office and Cassidy is a nurse in the Dayton, Ohio, area. They returned to USF for a football game last fall.

“It was fun to see everyone who was there,” Cassidy said. “It’s definitely a family atmosphere and we picked up right where we left off.”



ZEKE (BA '18) AND TARA (HEALD) LOCKWOOD (BS '17)

Like many couples, the Lockwoods first connected while hanging out with a group of friends. “I was a senior and he was a junior,” Tara said. “We became friends and about a month before I graduated, we started dating. We both like sports and I would

say that kind of drew us together. We both got along well, personality-wise, and we work well together.”

Zeke’s proposal was charming, heartfelt and undeniably sweet. They shared an apartment, and he brought out a brownie with frosting featuring the words, “Will you marry me?”

Tara said yes to the proposal treat and the couple were married in September 2021 at the Bay Pointe Golf Club in West Bloomfield, Michigan, near Ann Arbor.

Zeke leans toward a natural sports connection as a significant basis for the strength of their relationship.

“I really think sports-minded people have a lot of similarities and there are a lot of things that we both like,” he said. “I wouldn’t say sports was the center of our life, but we valued those strong team concepts and those kinds of things. Tara was very passionate and always tried her best in everything and that’s similar to me.”

Zeke works as an area coordinator for the quality control department of IMI and Tara works as a special education teacher at Haley Elementary School. They are also parents to a French bulldog named Chip.

NICK (BS '21) AND MARIA (PELAK) LUCAS (BS '21)

It all started with ping pong in the Bonzel Hall basement, so, technically, that's another sports connection.

"Every single day I was in the Bonzel basement, she'd reach out to me and I would beat her in ping pong," Nick said.

"Not true," Maria said. "I can beat him with my left hand."

They had a couple of classes together and friendship blossomed. Football players and volleyball players would hang out and it became obvious that Nick and Maria were an item. After they were dating, Nick went on a trip with Maria and her family—she has 10 siblings—to Arizona. "The first time he met my family, he was wearing an American flag bandana, American flag socks and American flag tank top. One of my sisters said, 'This guy is patriotic,' and everyone busted out laughing."

Nick's fun-loving nature gave way to a sensitive side for his proposal. He's a singer-songwriter and he performed a song he wrote for Maria, "While We're Still Young," at a party, then

sat down and proposed to her. They were married this past June in St. Patrick's Church in Chesterton, Indiana. Maria is a native of Mattawan, Michigan, and Nick is from Schererville, Indiana.

Their roots are in Fort Wayne now, where Maria teaches kindergarten at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic School and Nick works as a financial advisor by day and as a musician with Midnight Writers by night.

"Whenever I first saw him at Saint Francis, he'd say hi and I'd ask him how he was doing," Maria said. "Nick always said, 'Living the dream.' We had first-year communication together. One of his speeches was how to live the dream. He loves to live the dream."



JAKE (BBA '13) AND KRISTIN (BALL) ALLEN (BBA '15, BS '15)

Jake was too shy, at first, to approach Kristin. They knew each other and eventually texted back and forth. He accepted an invitation to visit her at her residence hall. "We talked for a while and it was terrifying for me because she had no TV

in her room, so we had to talk the whole time. I did a lot of listening," he said. "We went to the basement of Bonzel and played ping pong and I found out how competitive she is."

"I first saw him and some other football players walking through the gym. He was with one of his roommates and I was with my roommates," Kristin said. "That was the start of a

good love story. But I was annoyed when he let me win at ping pong."

"Her freshman year, my sophomore year, we were always together," Jake said. "Now, whenever I think about my college years, it's always with her."

They talked about getting married and Jake occasionally joked about proposing. During a trip to French Lick, Indiana, he stopped and dropped to one knee. "He had faked it so many times, I didn't realize he was serious," Kristin said. "I thought it was never going to happen."

They married in September 2015. Seven years later, they have three children, ages 4, 2 and 1, a boy and two girls. Kristin is a stay-at-home mom and Jake is co-owner of a construction company in Pendleton, Indiana.



WILMER AND NIKKI (MARSHALL) COLE (BSW '20)

“We have differing stories,” Nikki said. “He has a story and I have the real story. We met in speech class my freshman year, his sophomore year, and I knew who he was because he played football. I tried sitting by him in class, but he moved to go sit by Rocky James.”

“She gave my spot away!” Wilmer protested.

They started hanging out casually and Nikki’s friends started asking her if she liked Wilmer, whose friends call him Willy. “I’ve always called him Wilmer; that’s his name,” Nikki said. “He moved me into my dorms and my mom said, as soon as she met him, ‘He’s sweet. He likes you.’ I said, ‘No, he doesn’t.’ She brought it up at our wedding that she knew we were going to start dating.”

“She gave me a kiss on the cheek after the Northwestern (playoff game) and that caught me by surprise,” Wilmer said.

“That’s just ‘cause you had a good game,” Nikki insists.

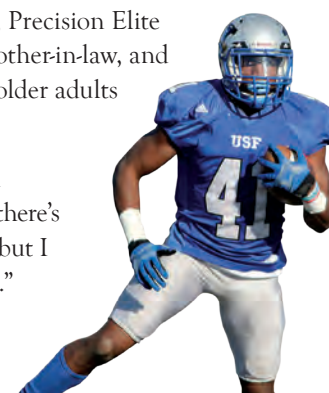
Wilmer visited Nikki’s family’s home on Christmas early on in their friendship, a sign of something more

serious to come, and they gradually became a couple. They dated two years before Wilmer threw Nikki a surprise birthday party, at which he proposed.

“He had been telling me from the time we first started dating, ‘I’m going to marry you,’ so him proposing didn’t surprise me,” Nikki said. “He had given the ring to my mom to hold onto, which was probably a good thing since he can’t hold secrets.”

The couple married in October 2021 at the Crystal Coop Reception & Event Center in Anderson, Indiana. Wilmer is starting a business, Precision Elite Trucking LLC., with his father and brother-in-law, and Nikki is a social worker working with older adults with disabilities.

She’s not sure why football players and volleyball players are so compatible, but there’s no denying they are. “It is interesting, but I don’t know why it’s happened so often.”



CAMERON (BBA '15) AND CARRIE (CLARK) SMITH (BS '16)

Once Cameron Smith bought the engagement ring, he couldn’t wait to get it on Carrie Clark’s finger. Literally, he couldn’t wait. They were living in Charleston, South Carolina, at the time—already a solid couple—and he planned to propose during a trip to Hilton Head Island. “I got the ring and I thought, ‘I just can’t wait to do this,’” Cameron said.

Since they were going to a concert on the water that night with his friend and former USF football teammate Cody Appenzeller in town, he told Appenzeller to have his camera ready.

“We pretended to take a picture and I got down on one knee,” Cameron said. “She was pretty shocked. She gave me a little shove. She didn’t think I was being serious.”

“I don’t know if I even said yes,” Carrie said.

“Yes” was communicated somehow and the couple—who met when Cameron was a sophomore and Carrie a freshman—were married in her hometown of Valparaiso, Indiana, in May of 2018. “We had a good party afterward,” Carrie said.

Since then, they’ve had quite a life upheaval. Near the end of 2022—now parents of a daughter, Margaret—they moved to Salt Lake City, Utah, where Carrie’s twin sister, Sara Paul, lives. Cameron works for a consulting company and Carrie works with Boston Scientific as a medical device clinical specialist.

They agree with others who think the football-volleyball couples were drawn by similar schedules, competitive natures and the closeness of a small school. As one of the first couples to continue to marriage, they were the trailblazers of sorts.

“One thing the guys all have in common is that they are all good guys,” Carrie said. “Kevin (Donley, USF football coach) did a lot of good recruiting.”





TourDeForce

AS FOUNDER OF NEAT AUDIO, TJ BECHILL (BS '11) WORKS WITH MORE THAN 100 POP-ROCK ARTISTS IN MAKING THEIR LIVE SOUND THRILL FANS. HIS LIFELONG DREAM OF WORKING IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY IS A 24/7 REALITY.



TJ Bechill (BS '11) hits the daily grind like so many young professionals, but with a much sweeter soundtrack. He represents Fender by day and runs his audio company, NEAT (Next Era Audio Technologies), mostly by night. He's married with three children, travels to work at concerts on weekends and sleeps occasionally.

Bechill lives his dream—turned up to 10.

"I've only been in a band for two weeks in my life; I have no albums to show," Bechill said. "But I found something I felt I could do in the music industry, and I ran with it."

Bechill's story starts at USF as part of the first class pursuing a Music Technology degree, steered to campus thanks to a tip about the program from his brother Michael, a USF biology professor. TJ's sister, Stacie, and girlfriend (now wife) Kimber both earned nursing degrees at USF. The stars clearly aligned to point him in USF's direction. While Music Technology wasn't yet blessed with the deluxe recording studios now located in downtown Fort Wayne, it effectively launched Bechill into his career.

"Some of the hungriest people you ever met came out of that program," Bechill said.

Bechill's love of music dates to childhood. His father, Thomas, a talented guitar player, used to take the kids to music stores, one of which happened to be a Sweetwater Sound location, then on Bass Road. Amazed by the inventory, TJ told his family he would work at Sweetwater someday. Sweetwater's guidance with USF's new Music Tech program sealed the deal in TJ's college choice. He interned at Sweetwater as a student—both in the recording studio and in sales—and made a lasting impression. "I graduated college on Saturday and started working at Sweetwater on Monday," Bechill said.

Bechill flourished as a Sweetwater sales engineer for eight years, focusing on the touring side of music. As part of his interest in audio, he built playback redundancy systems (systems that provide artists with prerecorded backing vocals or instrumental tracks, lighting effects, pyrotechnics, etc.).

"A pivotal moment came in 2018 when the band Twenty One Pilots reached out needing a rig," Bechill said. "They needed me to be at rehearsals for their upcoming tour—for a month.

Unfortunately, I didn't have vacation time and we had just had our second child. Long story short, a couple of investors gave me an opportunity to leave Sweetwater and create NEAT."

Starting with his work with Twenty One Pilots, Bechill built and programmed playback redundancy systems, trained touring crews to use them and emphasized he was available 24/7 for consultation—or a shoulder to cry on. "Call me on Christmas eve, 3 o'clock in the morning, I'm picking up on the first ring."

Bechill asked Twenty One Pilots—then a regional act, now a Grammy winner—to introduce him to other artists on their tour. He asked those other artists to do the same, and referrals multiplied. Bechill maintains a client list of more than 100 artists, including Post Malone, Ariana Grande and Carly Rae Jepsen.

NEAT was flying high when COVID-19 hit in March 2020. The live music world shut down for nearly 18 months and much of Bechill's livelihood turned silent. While he connected with artists on some studio recording projects, NEAT's workload decreased. Bechill took a position as a PreSonus rep, with an office in the Sweetwater complex, site of his first professional home. Fender later acquired PreSonus.

Touring came back to life in 2022, and NEAT took off again. "The last 12 months have been the most successful NEAT has ever been," Bechill said. Bechill's passion surrounds him. He and Kimber's home includes at least 20 guitars, a drum set and a piano. Their children Weston, 8, Nolan, 5, and Emrie, 2, seem likely to love music. "Hopefully, it's something they'll want to do," Bechill said. "They'll have a lot of toys at their disposal. They have no idea how lucky they are if they go down that path."

NEAT recently added another employee, providing the business with a younger audio expert to go on the road for months at a time. However, Bechill still expects to attend and work at NEAT client concerts about every other weekend.

"What is my work-life balance? There is not one," Bechill said. "I've started to take the kids out with me and they've been welcomed by the bands. I'm always finding ways to work on shows and watch the things I'm working on come alive right in front of me."

BACK WHERE IT All Began

RACHEL DAY (AS '13) RETURNED LAST FALL TO THE LAUNCHING PAD OF A SUCCESSFUL NURSING CAREER — USF CROWN POINT. SHE NOW GUIDES YOUNG STUDENTS ON THEIR JOURNEYS TO PROFESSIONAL HEALTHCARE SUCCESS.

Rachel Day's nursing journey came full circle as she walked into the University of Saint Francis Crown Point for her first day as a professor in August. Nearly 10 years ago, Day was a USF Crown Point student finding her way—dealing with a move from Kentucky with her husband and a toddler—and embarking on the infancy of her career.

Her oldest child is 12 now, she has two more children, and Day has gone from wide-eyed student to mature mentor as the first USF Crown Point graduate to return to the site as a professor.

"I really love it," she said. "USF Crown Point has grown a lot since I've been here and it's nice to see the progression between then and now. I'm working with faculty who were here when I was a student, so the change from them being my professors to my colleagues is also interesting."

Prior to becoming an assistant professor, Day earned a bachelor's degree in nursing and a master's degree in nursing, leadership and management through Western Governors University. She recently served as regional director of nursing for APAC Surgery Center, a position she held after several years working for Northwest

Health-Porter, in Valparaiso, Indiana. During her time with Northwest Health-Porter, she worked as nursing house supervisor, clinical nurse manager and clinical nurse director.

Her career first started at Franciscan Health in Crown Point.

"I'm a very huge supporter of Franciscan beliefs. It's very much how I model my life," Day said. "So, finding USF Crown Point not only allowed me to pursue nursing, but it coincided with how I modeled my life."

Day always had an ambition to become a teacher and was pleasantly surprised to land the opportunity at the university she called home from 2011 to 2013.

"It's good that I have a working knowledge of the program itself," she said. "It's helpful that I've been there, and I can relate to the students on that level—I've experienced what they're going through."

"Things change, but they don't change that much. We have some tried-and-true procedures that work well. I understand the frustrations that students feel while they are handling a lot of schoolwork and other obligations, and I can assure them that people do come out on the other side and become very successful."

During her time working with Northwest Health-Porter, Day said she was able to grow as a leader with significant responsibility to ensure the nurses under her supervision provided quality care for patients. She especially enjoys the fresh perspective of the students she now teaches who are so eager to learn. She recognizes the importance of preparing them to join the work force and provide quality patient care.

"USF Crown Point addresses all areas of healthcare," Day said. "People think of nursing and they think, 'OK, they're giving meds, they're changing beds.' But we are taking care of people in more ways than



“USF CROWN POINT HAS GROWN A LOT SINCE I’VE BEEN HERE AND IT’S NICE TO SEE THE PROGRESSION BETWEEN THEN AND NOW. I’M WORKING WITH FACULTY WHO WERE HERE WHEN I WAS A STUDENT, SO THE CHANGE FROM THEM BEING MY PROFESSORS TO MY COLLEAGUES IS ALSO INTERESTING.”

just the medical diagnosis. We’re providing support, such as the times when they weren’t able to have visitors (during COVID-19 precautions).

“Nursing is so holistic, and this program does a good job of bringing it all together, all areas of nursing,” she said. “In addition to clinical work, emotional support is so important for patients, and nurses provide that.”

With three children—ages 1, 7 and 12—Day understates her situation when she says she “stays pretty busy.” She teaches a first-year course in pharmacology and is a medical-surgical clinical instructor.

“My schedule works well for my family,” she said. “I’ve had other jobs where the schedule left my family a little short and I didn’t get the fulfillment and enjoyment that I am getting through working here at USF Crown Point.”

THE SCORERS!

HE SHOOTS,



CUSHINGBERRY FINISHES SAINT FRANCIS CAREER AS MEN'S BASKETBALL'S GREATEST SCORER

Antwaan Cushingberry arrived on the University of Saint Francis men's basketball team as an underrated, overlooked freshman with a lot to prove. He exits the program holding the most heralded record in the USF books: Most career points.

The proof of Cushingberry's hoops skills poured out in his performance on the court.

"We haven't had anybody here who worked harder than Antwaan," coach Chad LaCross said. "He's so passionate and so competitive. To see him break that record was pretty special."

Cushingberry, a 5-foot-8 guard from Indianapolis, finished his USF career with 2,400 points, breaking the mark of 2,280 sent by Brent Norris in 1992.

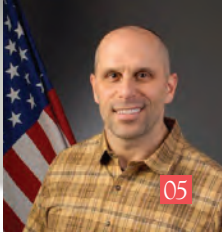
"It was definitely a special moment for me," Cushingberry said. "The things that got me here were God and hard work and the coaches putting me in a position to show my talents. I gained confidence being in the gym and putting in the work and my teammates trusted me. Without my teammates and coaches trusting me, I wouldn't have been able to score the way I did here at Saint Francis."

After briefly entering the transfer portal last year while considering pursuing a fifth year of eligibility elsewhere, Cushingberry returned to USF and finished his career on the upswing. He averaged 17.8 points, 3.4 assists and 3.5 rebounds per game while helping the Cougars to 14-15 record. The wins weren't as plentiful as they were at other times in his career—such as the 2020-21 trip to the NAIA Final Four—but Cushingberry's effort and production remained high.

"Coach LaCross and Coach (Luke) Cummings took a chance on me and believed in me, and I wanted to be loyal to the program," Cushingberry said of returning for a fifth year. "I experienced every single high and low while I was here, and I wouldn't be the man I am today without going through the things I did. I had a great experience and I'm so appreciative of everybody at Saint Francis supporting us."

Cushingberry earned his bachelor's degree in Business Management and will complete his Master of Business Administration degree in August. He hopes to continue his basketball career overseas. "I want to thank God, my parents, my coaches, (Athletic Director) Mike McCaffrey and everyone else—janitors, security guards, everyone who helped me be me," Cushingberry said.





class notes

keeping connected with alumni and friends

1960s

Rick Krider (BA '68, ME '72) has been park superintendent at Churubusco Community Park for the last 28 years. He taught school and coached a variety of sports for 20 years previously. He is a 2002 USF Hall of Fame inductee.

1980s

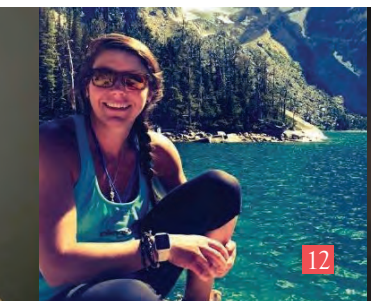
Deacon Daniel Avila (BA '80, MA '16) was ordained to the permanent diaconate for the Catholic Church on Jan. 7 by Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of the Fort Wayne-South Bend Diocese. Deacon Avila is assigned to St. Joseph Catholic Church in Roanoke, Indiana, and St. Catherine of Alexandria Church (Nix Settlement) in Whitley County, Indiana. **Dr. Rick Bragg** (BA '87) began his 16th year as a professor in the doctoral education program at Liberty University. He teaches courses in curriculum, instruction and curriculum theory. He also serves as a dissertation chair for doctoral candidates.

1990s

Dr. Teri Beam (BS '91) will serve as dean of the School of Science, Engineering and Technology at St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Texas, effective June 5, 2023.

2000s

Kimberly (Hudson) Waugh (BA '00, MS '02) is a school counselor at Northrop High School in Fort Wayne. **Andie Hines-Lagemann** (BA '01) joined Elevate Ventures as the Startup Ecosystem Manager Northeast. **Joe Klimaski** (BBA '02) became the civilian occupational safety and health manager at the Indiana Air National Guard. He moved back to Fort Wayne in December after spending the last 19 years serving in the United States Air Force on active duty (2003-2014), reserves (2014-present) and civil service (2016-present), having been stationed in North Dakota, Germany, Guam, Ohio, Illinois and multiple overseas deployment locations. Joe



WE WANT TO
HEAR FROM YOU



will retire next year (militarily) from the Air Force Reserves.

06 Rachel (Stauffer) Pritz (ASN '02) is an executive life coach who was recognized in Influence Digest as one of the “Top 15 Coaches in Indianapolis in 2022,” a select group of people who have dedicated their lives to mentoring and guiding others. ■ **Megan (Donley) Bates (BA '04)** is the vice president of sales and marketing at Solis Mammography.

07 Colleen Huddleson (MBA '05) is the Vice President and Chief Program Officer at Fort Wayne Museum of Art.

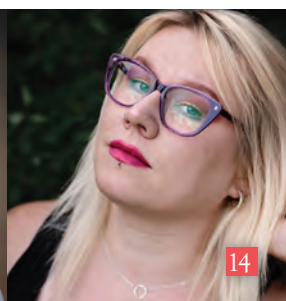
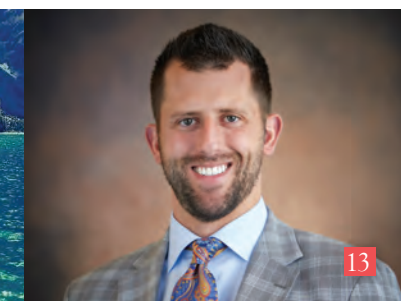
08 Dr. Tyler Johnson DO (BS '05) was sworn in as a member of the Indiana State Senate in a ceremony before the start of the upcoming legislative session. A Republican, Johnson won the seat previously held by retired Senator Dennis Kruse in Senate District 14. **09 Jason Beer (BA '07, MOL '18)** was named Southwest Allen County School’s 2022 Indiana Teacher of the Year. He is a teacher at Homestead High School.

10 Ashley (Waite) Turner (BS '07) married Kevin Turner at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in October. **11 Lindsey Keller (BS '08)** joined AWS Foundation as office coordinator and engagement assistant. ■ **Tonya Teegardin (AS '08)** became chief nursing officer at Cabinet Peaks Medical Center in Libby, Montana. ■ **Kristin Guss-Ayeni (BSW '09, MBA '15)** is the Director of Home Care at Ross Education.

■ **Andrew Fiengo (BS '15)** and Typhani Fiengo welcomed their first child, a girl (Lavender Rose), in November 2022. ■ **Carolina Flores (BA '15)** is the Acting Senior Director of Government Affairs at Denver International Airport-City

2010s

12 Eden (Lamb) Christel (BBA '10, MBA '13), a Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation Department manager, received the Indiana Parks and Recreation Association Young Professional Award for 2021. This award is presented to a current parks and recreation professional who exhibits the attributes of emerging leaders as displayed through their initiative, innovation and contributions to the park and recreation field. **13 Jonathan T. Lehman (BSE '12)**, partner and private wealth advisor at Summit Financial Group, recently earned the Chartered Financial Consultant (ChFC) designation from the American College of Financial Services. **14 Kasey Wallace (BA '12, MA '17)** was featured as the cover artist in Bold & Beautiful Magazine. ■ **Zach Baron (BS '13)** was promoted to director at the Fort Wayne office of CPA firm FORVIS LLP (formerly BKD, CPAs and Advisors), the world’s eighth-largest CPA firm by revenues. **15 Kibwe Cooper (BS '13)** is a podcast producer at Colorado Public Radio. **16 Liz Unger (MBA '14)** is a strategic project manager at USF. ■ **Katie Bell (BA '15)** is the assistant director of annual giving at USF.



HAVE A CLASS NOTE? To update information, simply go to alumni.sf.edu and click on “Stay Connected” or send information to alumni@sf.edu or mail it to the University of Saint Francis Alumni Office, 2701 Spring Street, Fort Wayne, IN 46808. Thanks for keeping in touch with your alma mater!



and County of Denver Department of Aviation. ■ **Camille Krouse** (BS '15) completed a Master of Art in Art Education from the Art of Education University. **17** **Kara (Light-Quinones) Mankey** (MSN '15) celebrated the arrival of her fifth child, Maverik Julius Mankey, born October 20, 2022. Her other children are 3, 11, 14 and 16. ■ **Grace (Geha) Potosky** (BBA '15) married Zach Potosky on Sept. 10, 2022. ■ **Cale Tabler** (BS '15) became cardiac rehab team leader at Parkview Health. **18** **Cassandra Mitchell** (BA '17, MBA '18) welcomed Wyatt Mitchell on August 7, 2022, and started a new position as a systems administrator at Circle Logistics, Inc. ■ **Ryan Nix** (BA '17) is a senior designer at Section 127 in Indianapolis. ■ **Stephanie Moreno** (AS '18) started a new position as General Laboratory Technical Supervisor at FH-Dyer/Alverno Laboratories. **19** **Craig Teetsel** (MBA '18) obtained two new certifications from the Association of International Certified Professional Accountants—Finance Transformation: Manage Disruption and Finance Transformation: Ignite Change. **20** **Nanette Ambrose** (BA '19) started a new position as administrative assistant in TRiO at USF.

2020s

MaKenna Burns (BA '20) is an admissions counselor at Northeastern University. ■ **Morgan Felkner** (MOL '20) is a professional advisor at USF. **21** **Kara Gerka** (BS '20, MS '22) is an urgent care physician assistant at Community Health Network. **22** **Samantha Rohloff** (BA '20) is a proofreader at Sweetwater. **23** **MaKenzie Barger** (BS '21) is a clinical research coordinator at Methodist Hospital. ■ **Natalya Haddix** (BA '21) joined Enzo Custom as a creative marketing specialist. ■ **Tyra Grischke** (BA '22, BS '22) and **Twyla Herron** (BA '22) contributed months of work with USF Associate Professor of Psychology Dr. Monica Heller to produce the book "Second Chances Earned," featuring first-person stories about people whose lives were changed by being graduates of the Career Academy at Blue Jacket. ■ **Jackson Long** (BS '22) is a logistics account manager at Buchanan Hauling and Rigging, Inc.



in memoriam

Friends of USF

John J. Ackerman
 Marilyn Louise Bredemeyer
 Sr. Geraldine Hartke
 Rick Miller
 Tom Rehm
 Sue (Kaufman) Seculoff

1940s

Betty (Huffman) Brown '43*

1950s

Mary (Meyers) Dannerbeck '50**
 Carol Puls '54**
 Shirley Kaeding '57**

1960s

Marguerite M. (Hartmann) Leek '62, '66
 Sara Hacker '63
 Sue Ellen Kostry '63
 Elizabeth Lomont '65
 Kathleen Schrader '66
 Dorothy (Johnson) Azevedo Anderson '67
 Clara Bracht '67
 Mary Becker '68
 Thomas Potts '68
 Rita Ann (Sartori) Turflinger '68, '71
 Carl Swander '69

1970s

Nelson Todd Hinkle '71
 Rev. Merle Holden '71
 Rev. Harry Hyde '71
 George Keifer '72
 Richard McKee '72, '78, '83, '87
 Betty Jane Layman-Keefe '73
 Judith (Sanders) Miller '73
 Aletha Bailey '74, '77
 Larry Bennett '74
 Jeffrey McCann '75
 Dale Scherman '78

1990s

Tim Murphy '95*
 Blaine E. Ulrey '96

2000s

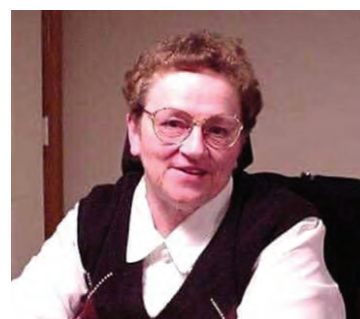
Jessica Kephart '05

*From Lutheran Hospital School of Nursing-Lutheran College of Health Professions
 **St. Joseph School of Nursing

USF community mourns

SR. GERALDINE HARTKE

Sr. Geraldine (Marilyn) Hartke of the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration, who spent 17 years with USF, died on Feb. 1 at Our Lady of Angels Convent in Mishawaka, Indiana. Sr. Geraldine worked in the USF Audiovisual department for 12 years and Campus Ministry for five years. She enjoyed working with students and they loved her. She served 72 years with the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration and was known for her lifetime of learning and connecting with others, her quick wit and her long career in education.



RICK MILLER

Richard B. “Rick” Miller, Jr., who started the Computer Science program at USF, died on Dec. 3, 2022, after a long battle with prostate cancer. Miller, 55, served as the division director of USF Computer Arts and Technology before his illness. He formerly served as the senior network engineer at his alma mater, Huntington University, and had also served as director of IS Operations at Parkview Health Systems. He was a member of Holy Cross Lutheran Church and a board member of Star 88.3 radio station.



TOM REHM

Longtime assistant women’s basketball coach Tom Rehm 91, died on Jan. 25, surrounded by his loving daughters. A veteran of the U.S. Air Force, Rehm coached basketball at Bishop Luers and Canterbury high schools in Fort Wayne and spent 16 years as an assistant coach with USF women’s basketball program. He was an integral part of the Cougars’ 2014 undefeated, national championship season. Rehm was known for his kind and caring nature and extraordinary basketball teaching skills in helping players reach their potential.



YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE

At the University of Saint Francis, our dedication to serving others and “paying it forward” are part of our culture as we look outward in sharing Christ’s love. When you provide a gift to USF through the Annual Fund, you are helping deserving students learn to make the world a better place. Those students will, in turn, share our Catholic, Franciscan values in the years ahead. Your gift makes a difference. You make a difference.

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Audra Koldyke



Jason Beer

USF alumna and professor Audra Koldyke and alumnus Jason Beer named to “Forty Under 40” list

Two educators with USF ties were named to the Greater Fort Wayne Business Weekly’s list of “Forty Under 40” influential community leaders.

The honorees were Audra Koldyke (AS ’06), who serves as USF Director of Diagnostic Medical Sonography, and Jason Beer (BA ’07, MOL ’18), teacher at Homestead High School.

Koldyke joined USF full time in 2021 to initiate the Diagnostic Medical Sonography program and Echocardiography Academy. She graduated from the Radiologic Technology Department at USF in 2006 and worked in radiology for several years at Vanderbilt University before returning to Indiana. She worked clinically at Adams Memorial Hospital in areas of radiography, computed tomography, mammography and sonography. She graduated from IUPUI in 2020 with a Bachelor of Science in Medical Imaging Technology. From 2009 to 2021, she worked and volunteered in various capacities with the USF Radiologic Technology program. She is also currently employed with Fertility and Midwifery Care Center as a PRN sonographer.

Beer has inspired students at Homestead for seven years after stints as a teacher in Chicago Public Schools, Columbia City High School, Eagle Tech Academy and New Tech Academy at Wayne High School. He has instituted several classes designed to engage students in authentic learning experiences. Teaming up with Fort Wayne Magazine, he helped create Project 99, a local travel project where students compose feature articles about a downtown block or location. Beer also directed the Locaventure Project, where students create their own local travel projects and then write first-person, research-based narrative essays about their experiences.

Greater Fort Wayne Business Weekly accepts nominators for Forty Under 40 year round. The selection committee share their picks with other members based on who they feel is doing the most impressive work for their companies and their communities. The committee members then debate over who should be included in the final list. Each winner was hand-picked from a pool of 300 incredible nominees, and they have each demonstrated an inspiring commitment to improving northeast Indiana.

USF and Catholic community celebrate launch of Assisi Program

USF celebrated the launch of its new Assisi Program for Discipleship and Leadership with a special event for the Catholic community on Sept. 28.

Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend celebrated Mass at St. Francis Chapel, followed by “Catholic Leadership: A Night of Connection and Inspiration” at the Achatz Hall of Science and John and Toni Murray Research Center. About 80 people from the Fort Wayne Catholic community attended the event.

“The tenor of the evening was connection and joy,” Assisi Program Director Dr. Alex Giltner said. “We received a great response to the program.”

The Assisi Program for Discipleship and Leadership will prepare students to live their Catholic faith authentically and joyfully through mentorship, community, academic study and co-curricular activity. Students in the five-student pilot group this fall are Denise Jacome from West Lafayette; Veronica Loeffler from Columbia City; Addi Krebs and Grace Morris from Fort Wayne; and Paul Rivera from Columbus, Ohio.



USF awards Pay It Forward Scholarship to Huntington’s Audrie Bowman

USF announced Huntington North High School senior Audrie Bowman as the winner of the full-tuition Pay It Forward Scholarship for 2022. USF President Rev. Dr. Eric Albert Zimmer and WANE-TV’s Emily Dwire honored Bowman with the scholarship in a ceremony on Dec. 9 at Huntington North. USF partners with WANE-TV to annually promote the Pay It Forward Scholarship. Bowman’s mother, Julie Scher, and sister, Rylie Bowman, celebrated with her after the presentation. The full-tuition and fees scholarship to USF has a four-year value of more than \$140,000 and is awarded to an incoming USF student who represents going above and beyond to serve others and “pay it forward.” USF selected Bowman after she submitted an essay, participated in an on-campus interview and told her story in a WANE-TV feature video. Bowman will enter USF in the 2023-24 academic year.

The other Pay It Forward finalists—Brianna McConnell of Greenfield, Indiana, and Siddha Hall of Seymour, Indiana—will receive half-tuition scholarships.

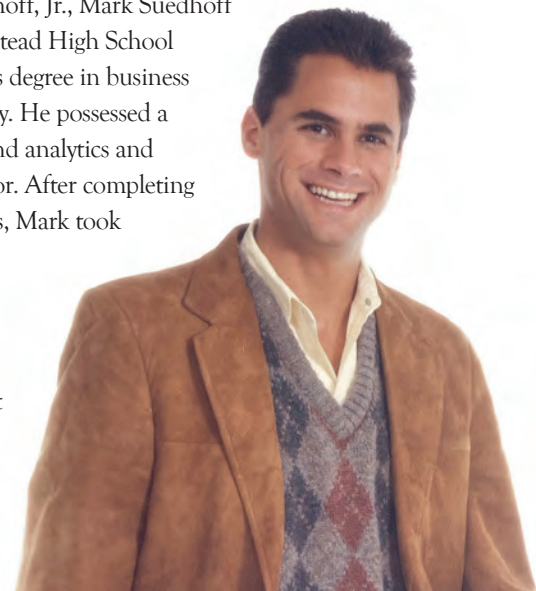
Mark M. Suedhoff estate donates \$2.1 million endowed scholarship to USF

Mark Suedhoff died after a lengthy battle with cancer in 2018, but he left his mark in the lives he touched and through the legacy of his estate. As part of his estate planning, Suedhoff gifted \$2.1 million toward an endowed scholarship at USF, the largest single scholarship donation in university history.

The Mark M. Suedhoff Scholarship will support students at the University of Saint Francis who demonstrate academic merit and/or financial need.

“Mark’s generosity will make a great impact on USF students pursuing their education and those students will serve as world-changers once they embark on their careers,” USF President Rev. Dr. Eric Albert Zimmer said. “We express our heartfelt gratitude to the entire Suedhoff family. Mark’s impact will continue here for generations.”

A Fort Wayne native and the youngest son of Carol and the late Carl Suedhoff, Jr., Mark Suedhoff graduated from Homestead High School and earned a bachelor’s degree in business from Indiana University. He possessed a love for mathematics and analytics and became a skilled investor. After completing high school in 3½ years, Mark took a semester of nursing classes at USF. In his estate planning, he left financial gifts to USF, Indiana University Fort Wayne, Ivy Tech and many nonprofits.



USF Jesters awarded \$25,000 from National Endowment for the Arts

The Jesters received a \$25,000 National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) grant as one of 1,251 Grants for Arts Projects totaling nearly \$28.8 million that were announced by the NEA as part of its first round of fiscal year 2023 grants. Jesters is the only Fort Wayne-area program offering customized, interdisciplinary performing arts opportunities to people with mild to severe intellectual/developmental disabilities (IDD), ages 8 through senior citizens. The core program meets at USF each Saturday from September to March and culminates in an original interdisciplinary performance co-created by teaching artists and participants that was presented in March.

“The Jesters program is always grateful for the support of the NEA,” Jesters Program Director Allison Ballard said. “These funds enable us to continue co-creating performance art with people with intellectual/developmental disabilities. Inviting participants and teaching artists to work together to generate ideas, concepts, storylines, musical compositions, choreography, dialogue and visual art is the key to the program’s success. It takes all of us working together to produce the magic that is the Jesters. Funding from the NEA and other sources makes that possible.”



Ronald W. Turpin, JD, CPA, CGMA



Deacon Melvin R. Tardy, Jr.

USF announces new Board of Trustees member and director

Ronald W. Turpin, JD, CPA, CGMA, returns to USF as a member of the board and Deacon Melvin R. Tardy, Jr. joins USF as a director to the Mission Integration Committee (MIC) of the board.

Turpin was initially elected to the USF Board of Trustees in 2016 and served until 2020. He served as a director on the board's Development Committee in 2015-2016. He currently works as Chief Financial Officer and Head of Civic Engagement at Ambassador Enterprises.

Turpin has been involved with over two dozen boards and commissions throughout his career and is currently the chair of the Regional Strategic Planning Commission, chair of the Fort Wayne Legacy Joint Funding Committee and a member of the East Allen County School Board. Turpin is a graduate of Indiana State University and Indiana University School of Law; he and his wife Kathleen have two children.

Ordained a permanent deacon in May 2011, Tardy serves the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend at St. Augustine Parish, as chair of the Black Catholic Advisory Board, as a Foundations of Faith instructor for educators and as a member of the Deacon Admissions and Scrutiny Board.

He also serves as president of the National Black Catholic

Clergy Caucus and on the boards of the National Black Catholic Congress, the National Association of Black Catholic Deacons and the John S. Marten Program in Homiletics & Liturgics at Notre Dame. Additional service includes the Catholic Criminal Justice Reform Network of the Lumen Christi Institute in Chicago and the African American Vocations Committee of the National Religious Vocations Conference.

Tardy earned a BA in Studio Art in 1986 and an MBA in International Finance in 1990 at the University of Notre Dame, where he serves as an Associate Advising Professor in the College of Arts & Letters.

Tardy was a contributing author for the 2014 book, "Black Domers: 70 Years at Notre Dame." His recent articles include "The Diaconal Vocation" and "The Power of the Eucharist" for Our Sunday Visitor. In 2021, Tardy received the Archbishop James P. Lyke African American Male Image Award from The Knights of Peter Claver, Ladies Auxiliary St. Felicitas, St. Ailbe Court #181 in Chicago.

Tardy and his wife, Annie, serve in the St. Vincent de Paul Society, the Tolton Ambassadors of Indiana and the Youth & Young Adult Ministry at St. Augustine Parish in South Bend, Indiana.

HOMECOMING

Save
The
Date

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 13

- Bonfire and Cookout with Live Music

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 14

- Family Fun Area, Food and Sidewalk Art
- Brookside and Chapel Tours
- Football Game, 1 p.m. vs. Lawrence Tech University
- Soccer Game, TBD

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 15

- 50-Year Class Reunion, Celebrating the Class of 1973



USF professor and students produce book highlighting work of Blue Jacket

Dr. Monica Heller remains amazed at the dedication and work her USF students (now alumnae) Tyra Grischke and Twyla Herron poured into the book, “Second Chances Earned.” Heller, USF associate professor of psychology, knew of her students’ gung-ho attitudes toward highlighting the work of Blue Jacket, Inc. But they astounded her with months of devotion to the project after they were no longer earning a grade for their work.

“It’s a testament to these students and the hearts they have,” Heller said. “They stayed on board and continued voluntarily for another seven months to see it through to publication.”

“Second Chances Earned,” published in August and credited to Heller, Grischke and Herron, features first-person stories about people whose lives were changed by being graduates of the Career Academy at Blue Jacket.



USF completes mural on Robert Goldstine Performing Arts Center

USF celebrated the completion of a colorful composite mural which brightens the front of the USF Robert Goldstine Performing Arts Center in downtown Fort Wayne.

USF Studio Art Program Director Tim Parsley designed the mural, which combines 70 aluminum Dibond panels painted by Parsley and USF students during the spring 2022 semester. Graycraft Signs installed the cut pieces with a process designed not to damage the ornate bricks of the building at 431 W. Berry Street.

Parsley’s design reflects the mission of USF, as well as the influence of St. Francis of Assisi.

“The birds are all here in Indiana and represent the launching of our students, with the idea that we are a place that sends them out into the world, and they fly,” Parsley said. “The birds also have a kinship with the story of St. Francis. Roses are symbolic of the rose gardens at the Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi.”

The generous support of alumna Toni Murray (’71, ’72) along with the USF Division of Creative Arts, provided the funding for the project.

Students in Parsley’s Public Art and Mural Painting class who participated with the painting were Rebecca Ambrose, Skyler Charleston, Michael Easley, Lily Martin, Jennifer Meisner, Elizabeth Morgan and Sydney Spevak.



LEGACY SCHOLARSHIP

— CONTINUE THE TRADITION —

USF students can receive a \$500 yearly scholarship (up to four years) for continuing the family tradition. If a parent, sibling, grandparent, aunt, uncle or cousin graduated from Saint Francis, the student is eligible for this scholarship.

For more information on this scholarship opportunity, contact the Financial Aid office at 260-399-8003 or finaid@sf.edu.



USF names Alison Miyauchi executive director of Creative Arts

Alison Miyauchi joined USF as its new executive director for Creative Arts. Miyauchi brings a wealth of experience as an academic administrator, as well as a graphic designer, educator and artist. She previously served as vice president of Strategic Enrollment Management at Watkins College of Art and in several capacities with Alberta College of Art and Design. She first came to USF in August as interim executive director of USF Creative Arts.



USF launches Discovery Academy

USF's new Discovery Academy will provide academic-focused summer camps in a program launched after receiving a grant of \$862,346 from Lilly Endowment Inc. through its initiative, Indiana Youth Programs on Campus. Devon Bond will serve as director of youth programming. The USF Discovery Academy will consist of a series of discipline-focused camps that foster the academic interests of students. All camps will offer hands-on activities and exposure to the career options available in the discipline.



New book features USF professor Dr. Lou Weber

USF Division Director Dr. Louise “Lou” Weber is featured in the new book, “Love Your Mother: 50 States, 50 Stories, and 50 Women United for Climate Justice,” by Mallory McDuff.

McDuff’s book highlights women from every state, with Weber’s story representing Indiana.

“Mallory asked if she could include me after hearing the story of how I transformed my ecology course at USF to better reach pre-med students,” Weber said. “I struck gold with the health pre-professionals when I began addressing nature’s ability to heal self while healing Earth. Spending more time outdoors and experiencing the awe of nature has tremendous healing properties, for ourselves and the climate, if we incorporate simple practices. Filling our yards with native plant species and gardens is not only beautiful and brings more animals into our lives, the entire process of working the land heals our souls and provides climate change solutions.”

Weber began teaching nature-related courses at USF as a full-time professor in 2012. She is the Eco Club moderator and oversees the management of the tallgrass prairie and woods on campus. She has a book of her own coming out in April, “Understanding Nature: Ecology for a New Generation.” It is an ecology textbook which incorporates the ecopsychology and ecotherapy themes that McDuff describes. More about Weber can be found at louiseweber.net.

COUGAR HIGHLIGHTS

MILESTONES AND CHANGES



Kelsey Passaglia joins USF

USF Athletics welcomed Kelsey Passaglia as the inaugural Associate Athletic Director/Senior Women's Administrator.

Passaglia's duties will entail leading the USF Student-Athlete Leadership Team, working with the Academic and Career Development Center and working closely with Athletic Director Mike McCaffrey on all strategic initiatives. Passaglia will project a visible presence of a female role model for student-athletes and staff.

Passaglia comes to USF after spending three years at NCAA Division I Purdue Fort Wayne. In her most recent stint at Purdue Fort Wayne, she was promoted to Assistant Director of the Mastodon Academic Performance (MAP) Center.



USF and Fort Wayne Football Club begin partnership

USF and the Fort Wayne Football Club announced a partnership to bring the Fort Wayne FC soccer franchise to Bishop D'Arcy Stadium as its home. The partnership developed after conversations between USF President Rev. Dr. Eric Albert Zimmer and Fort Wayne FC Principal Owner Mark Music. USF and Fort Wayne FC signed a two-year agreement (with an option for another year) for the team to play its home games at Bishop D'Arcy Stadium. In addition, Music will donate a state-of-the-art video scoreboard to upgrade the current USF scoreboard.

"We are excited about partnering with the Fort Wayne Football Club," Fr. Zimmer said.

2023 ATHLETIC

Hall Of Fame

INDUCTEES

FOOTBALL

- Seth Coate, BBA '16

MEN'S BASKETBALL

- Austin Fox, BBA '15, MBA '16

SOFTBALL

- Erica Smith, BA '16

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

- Skylarr Shurn, BS '14
- 2014 Women's Basketball Team





FALL/WINTER 2022-23

COUGAR SPORTS

RECAP

BASKETBALL | MEN

Senior guard Antwaan Cushingberry broke the career scoring record, finishing with 2,400 points. Fellow senior guard Dan McKeeman, meanwhile, reached the 1,000-point club. Cushingberry (17.8 ppg), Zane Burke (14.4 ppg), McKeeman (13 ppg) and Branden Northern (10 ppg) averaged double figures in scoring for the 14-15 Cougars.

BASKETBALL | WOMEN

Senior forward Cassidy Crawford (15.7 points, 9.7 rebounds and 3.9 assists) teamed with sophomore guard Emily Parrett (14 ppg) and junior guard Reganne Pate (10.5 ppg) to lead the way for the Cougars, who finished 15-16 (11-8 Crossroads League).

CROSS COUNTRY | MEN

Sophomore brothers Spencer and Remington Carpenter led the way for the Cougars throughout the season, capped by Spencer's 36th place finish in the Crossroads League Championship. One of their regular-season highlights came when Spencer finished first and Remington third in the Great Lakes Challenge at Aquinas College in October.

CROSS COUNTRY | WOMEN

USF's most decorated distance runner, junior Alex Ebetino, capped another tremendous season with a school-record time of 17 minutes, 29.2 seconds in the 5,000 meters to finish fifth in the NAIA National Championship race. Ebetino earned her school-record seventh All-American honor. She also joined teammates senior Kelsey Peck, juniors Yami Diaz and Kayla Quimby and sophomore Lily Kissner as 2022 Daktronics NAIA Women's Cross Country Scholar-Athletes.

GOLF | MEN

The Cougars were energized by new golfers, including freshmen Bailey Marquart and Seth Roop. After playing well in the Fort Wayne City Championship, the Cougars excelled at the Taylor University invite, led by senior Bailey Clark, and finished third at the IU East Delaware Invitational.

GOLF | WOMEN

Senior Amara Eckert recorded a fall-season highlight with a first-place finish at the USF Cougars Invitational at the Noble Hawk Golf Links in September. Junior Bridget Marshall, sophomore Ava Warren and freshman Abby Pequignot turned in high-quality fall seasons alongside Eckert.

INDOOR TRACK | MEN

Sophomore Connor Jackson, sophomore Remington Carpenter, freshman Cole Sikorski and sophomore Spencer Carpenter set a school record in the 3,200-meter relay while taking third at the Crossroads League indoor championships. Junior Joe Painter took second place in the pole vault. Spencer Carpenter took fourth in the 1,000 meters in the NAIA indoor championship and set a school record.

INDOOR TRACK | WOMEN

Junior Alex Ebetino took second in the 3,000 meters at the Crossroads League championship and teamed with graduate student Kelsey Peck and juniors Yami Diaz and Kristina Baum to set a school record in the 3,200-meter relay. Sophomore Emma Kioski set a USF record in the 200 meters.

SOCCER | MEN

Sophomore defender Brayden Gillman earned Honorable Mention All-Crossroads League Team. After a strong

start to the regular season, Gillman suffered a severe injury that sidelined him for several weeks in mid-September. He made a speedy recovery and ignited the Cougars throughout the season.

SOCCER | WOMEN

Senior defender Katie Schier led the way for the Cougars, earning Honorable Mention All-Crossroads League Team as the team won four games, its most since 2016. Freshman Courtney Tobin led the team in goals, assists and points, junior goalkeeper Amber Morgan recorded four shutouts and senior forward Aubrey Vince and sophomore midfielder Carlee Biddle had two game-winning goals apiece.

FOOTBALL

Although the Cougars finished 4-6, eight players earned All-MSFA Mideast League recognition. Those earning second-team honors were senior running back Cam Peterson, junior offensive lineman Jared Almeida, junior defensive end AJ Moore, junior linebacker Nate Talhelm and senior defensive back Damon Hunter. Honorable mention honors went to senior kicker/punter Jack James, junior wide receiver Eli Patchett and senior defensive end Joey Schaufelberger. Peterson led the Cougars in rushing, Talhelm in tackles and Moore in sacks.

VOLLEYBALL

Senior libero Maile Steckelberg was named 2022 Crossroads League Libero of the Year. In 126 sets played, she compiled 39 service aces, 80 assists, 475 receptions and 609 digs. She was named First-Team All-Crossroads League honors. Sophomore outside hitter Paige Fortkamp also earned first-team honors with a team-leading 326 kills. Junior Haidyn Carrico earned second-team honors and seniors Kylie Topp and Shelby Mosier earned honorable mention.





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Donate for the Future. Help USF give students innovative learning experiences. Your annual fund contribution allows students to use cutting-edge tech, like the laboratories in the Achatz Hall of Science and John and Toni Murray Research Center.