Defining Excellence

Distinguished Alumnae
Leading the Way
Seniors (from left) Jaden Reed and Kennedy Jones reigned supreme as Homecoming royalty at S.B. Ballard Stadium in September 2023. Reed and Jones are studying exercise science and psychology, respectively. Rough weather canceled the Homecoming parade but not the fun. The weekend was topped off with the Monarchs beating Texas A&M-Commerce 10-9.
FEATURES

14 SLIP, SLIP, SLIP AND SLIDE!
For 18 years, fans have been singing and dancing along to “Ice Cream and Cake.” It all started at a cheerleading camp in New Jersey.

16 A COMMANDING PRESENCE IN THE NAVY
Capt. Janet Days ’99 in 2023 became the first Black woman to serve as commanding officer at the Navy’s largest base. “I want to let ladies know, ‘You can do it,’” she says.

24 HE FINISHED A MONUMENTAL PROJECT
With 6,000 plants and trees, Earl Gary ’08 relandscaped the circle that used to feature Robert E. Lee’s statue on Richmond’s Monument Avenue.

30 HER VISION IS TO END TRACHOMA
The disease, which can cause blindness, still threatens millions of Africans. Angelia Sanders (M.A. ’12) works with the Carter Center to stop its spread and reverse its effects.

38 FISHING FOR ANSWERS IN ASIA
Biologist Kent Carpenter just began his second Fulbright fellowship. This time, he’s studying the effects of modernization on the biodiversity of fish in Vietnam.

42 ACING IT IN CLASS, TOO
The women’s tennis team, led by such players as Yuliia Starodubtseva ’22, has won three conference titles in a row. It has also recorded a 100% graduation rate in the last dozen years.

SECTIONS

16 ALUMNI
38 FACULTY/STAFF
42 ATHLETICS
44 CLASS NOTES
54 IN MEMORIAM
66 LAST LOOK

ON THE COVER
Capt. Janet Days ’99 and Ticha Penicheiro ’98 have established legacies worth celebrating.
Photos by Kristen Zeis and Scott McIntyre
Greetings, Monarch Nation!

As we have officially celebrated another successful year in the storied history of Old Dominion University, I am pleased to share the Spring 2024 issue of Monarch magazine, which showcases the individual stories and transformational journeys of our fellow Monarchs. From our talented students, world-class faculty, dedicated staff, passionate alumni and generous supporters, Monarchs are making a significant difference and leaving a lasting impact on our campus, in our community, across the Commonwealth and beyond. This magazine cover, which prominently and proudly features history-making Captain Janet Days and WNBA great Ticha Penicheiro, is a clear example of the life-changing nature of the Monarch experience. I encourage you to read – with passion, pride and purpose – the amazing stories that fill the pages of our latest issue!

Without question, 2024 will be a defining year for Old Dominion University as we welcome Eastern Virginia Medical School into Monarch Nation. As of July 1, 2024, Old Dominion University will officially serve as the academic, clinical and research home to the people, programs, progress and promise that have defined Eastern Virginia Medical School for the past 50 years. Please join me in extending a warm Monarch welcome to our EVMS friends as they become part of the ODU family. Together, as a direct result of our powerful partnership, we will increase access and opportunity and improve the quality of life for area residents through robust educational opportunities, expanded patient care and enhanced research outcomes. GO MONARCHS!

With Monarch Pride,

Brian O. Hemphill, Ph.D.
President

@BrianOHemphill
CELEBRATING MONARCHS
ONE LAST TIME

Philip Walzer
Monarch Magazine & University Editor

In this issue, you’ll follow me to two capitals – Washington and Richmond – and the nation’s largest naval base to meet alumni making their marks from government to military service.

The magazine profiles four graduates, two from each party, on Capitol Hill. Jen Kiggans ’11 is a member of the U.S. House. The rest work for other representatives from Virginia and North Carolina. Congress, they say, gets a bad rap. “The majority of the people are here because they want to serve their communities, and they take their jobs seriously,” says Bronwyn Lance (M.P.A. ’01), chief of staff to Rep. Chuck Edwards.

In Richmond, I walked through the circle that once held the Robert E. Lee statue with Earl Gary ’08, whose business relandscaped the site. Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer Ryan Kelly provides a panoramic look at the project, which used 6,000 plants and trees.

At Naval Station Norfolk, I spoke with Capt. Janet Days ’99, the first Black woman to serve as its commanding officer. A communication graduate whose engaging persona came through in an appearance on the “TODAY” show, Days says, “I use the tools that I learned at Old Dominion every single day.”

On a lighter note, we retrace the origins of ODU’s liveliest tradition, “Ice Cream and Cake.” Speaking of light notes, if you’re wondering why I’m in a Hawaiian shirt, it’s because I’ll be wearing them a lot more. I retired at the end of January.

Eight years ago, I didn’t anticipate how much fun I’d have in this job. I drank a fine bottle of cabernet with Michael Lê ’80 in his Raleigh, North Carolina, mansion as he recounted his dramatic escape from Vietnam. In Virginia Beach, Reese Lukei ’70, known as the “raptor whisperer,” interrupted an interview at Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge to point out an osprey overhead. I had two great meals at Centrolina, a D.C. restaurant owned by Amy Brandwein ’93 that seats the power elite – and she shared her gnocchi recipe.

I’ve gotten to know many more of you through interviews, emails or events. Your Monarch pride shines brightly. As it should. The University is standing taller – from research to student support to increasing synergy with Eastern Virginia Medical School.

I hope these issues have enlightened you and strengthened your connection to Old Dominion. Please continue supporting ODU. I know I will.
The new three-story Health Sciences building, now located on Monarch Way, offers expanded and modernized spaces benefiting both community members and ODU students who will learn there.

The 126,000-square-foot building houses the Sofia and David Konikoff Dental Hygiene Care Facility, with 36 dental chairs (up from 30) and a new simulation lab. The additional chairs will accommodate six additional students who each see about 55 to 60 patients annually.

Monarch Physical Therapy has been transformed into the 11,000-square-foot Faschini Wallach Center for Restorative Therapies, which will feature the CHKD Pediatric Treatment Area, a robotics-equipped gym and a space for patients to learn how to maneuver in a bus, car and grocery store on the first floor. An active daily living apartment on the second floor that includes a bedroom, kitchen and bathroom with a zero-entry shower will help patients learn to negotiate daily tasks in a home environment.

“Just imagine the interactions and exposures that our students will have with patients on a daily basis in this new building,” said Bonnie Van Lunen, dean of the College of Health Sciences. “We will be fortunate to see firsthand how people are serviced in an environment that specifically addresses their needs.”

DID YOU KNOW?
ODU’s dental hygiene clinic has provided oral preventive care services to over 1,860 patients totaling approximately $80,000 in services on average annually. And since its opening in 2014, ODU’s physical therapy clinic has provided rehabilitative care to more than 2,300 new patients in over 35,000 appointments.
FROM EVMS TO THE BARRY

Two institutions, one vision

Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin and the Virginia General Assembly last summer approved an amended state budget, including funding to support the merger of Old Dominion University and Eastern Virginia Medical School (EVMS). The two institutions plan to integrate by July 1 to create the Eastern Virginia Health Sciences Center at Old Dominion University, offering the largest portfolio of health sciences degrees in the commonwealth.

In a joint statement, ODU President Brian O. Hemphill, Ph.D., and EVMS President, Provost and Dean Alfred Abuhamad, M.D., said, “We are excited about the future and all it has to offer through the joining of our two institutions, especially our collective insights, expertise and resources.”

Tour Old Dominion on Amazon

ODU is on “The College Tour,” a show that spotlights campuses across the country. Ten students were filmed on campus last September. You can see them and hear what they have to say on thecollegetour.com. The episode drops on May 28 on Amazon.

Building on a maritime legacy

Old Dominion launched its School of Supply Chain, Logistics and Maritime Operations last fall. The school, building on the University’s legacy of maritime initiatives, aims to coordinate ODU’s maritime programs and interdisciplinary research and strengthen economic development in the supply chain and maritime industry.

“The establishment of this school is another significant step forward in our efforts to be not just a regional leader, but a national and even a global trailblazer in this critical area,” President Brian O. Hemphill, Ph.D., said. “The school will prepare our students to enter the workforce ready to take on the jobs that are vital for our national defense and our regional economy.”

Video highlights dangers of fentanyl

ODU’s Center for Implementation and Evaluation of Education Systems created a video last year to help school personnel inform parents and students about the dangers of fentanyl and other opioids. The center, part of the Darden College of Education and Professional Studies, received a $180,000 grant from the Virginia Department of Education.
Hi, Barbie!

Barbie’s still being celebrated at Old Dominion University, and the Barry Art Museum has a special one.

Museum co-founder Carolyn Barry purchased one of the first hand-painted Barbies, initially released in 1959, for a record $42,000. The doll, which had been intended as a display item at a toy store, is wearing a wedding dress. Arranged at her feet are such accessories as a black purse, pink comb, makeup case and garter.

The wedding-bound Barbie made her debut at the museum last year in its “Fashioning Innovation: Madame Alexander at 100” exhibition, celebrating a 20th century pioneer in the industry. The doll was accompanied by three friends – vintage Barbies previously acquired by the museum attired in swimsuit, business attire and evening gown.

Cheers to Big Blue’s beer

ODU has its first official beer, ODU Golden Ale, produced by New Realm Brewing in Virginia Beach. New Realm describes ODU Golden Ale as having “a light, citrusy and piney hop aroma.” The beer, released last August, is available in grocery and convenience stores, bars and restaurants across Hampton Roads. All the proceeds go toward scholarships at Old Dominion.

“We are thrilled to join forces with New Realm Brewing Co. to create and deliver our first-ever branded craft beer for our passionate ODU community,” said Brian Eubank, Old Dominion’s executive director of licensing.

There’s more on tap. Eubank says the multiyear partnership promises additional custom ODU beers.

Connecting art and ROI

Richmond artist Noah Scalin is serving as the first artist-in-residence for the Strome College of Business this year. His portrait of Pharrell Williams, made of pieces of clothing, including shirts, shorts, pants and ties, was displayed in the atrium of Constant Hall last September.

Scalin’s firm, Another Limited Rebellion, seeks to expand businesses’ creative potential. Its clients have included GE and Coca-Cola.

“Noah Scalin is distinguished from other artists in that he has ample experience working with business,” said Strome’s dean, Kenneth Kahn. “Such experience is invaluable to helping our students think critically and differently when addressing the various problems that can exist in today’s business environment.”
A bigger Barry

On its fifth anniversary, the Barry Art Museum announced last fall that it would add a three-story wing to double its gallery space.

The expansion is funded by Carolyn and Richard Barry, the founders of the museum; the Leah and Richard Waitzer Foundation; the Brock Foundation; the Susan and David Goode Foundation; and Oriana McKinnon. The Waitzer Foundation donated 165 glass works to the museum in 2022.

The new Waitzer Wing will include a video gallery, a space for local artists and community exhibitions, an educational lab, expanded storage for rotating artwork, a conference room, an administrative suite and a catering kitchen.

RANKINGS & CITATIONS

Old Dominion rose from No. 299 to 280 among “national universities” in U.S. News & World Report’s 2023-24 College Rankings.

Eighteen graduate programs or specialties and two colleges – the Darden College of Education and Professional Studies and the Strome College of Business – were cited by U.S. News in its Best Graduate Schools for 2024 rankings.

ODU’s numbers went up as a world leader for addressing inequality in the 2023 Times Higher Education Impact Rankings. Old Dominion ranked fourth among U.S. institutions, up from No. 5, and 58th internationally, up from 65. It also was ranked No. 1 in Virginia.

Old Dominion earned a Gold ranking as a Military Friendly® School for 2024-2025 from militaryfriendly.com.

Drones deliver medicines

A pilot project involving Old Dominion’s Virginia Institute for Spaceflight Autonomy (VISA) began delivering hypertension medicines using drones to residents of the Eastern Shore. Partners include Riverside Health System, DroneUp and the Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission. The project is funded by a U.S. Department of Transportation grant.

“Delivering hypertension medications is just the beginning of what we envision for the future of healthcare and drones,” DroneUp CEO Tom Walker said.

VISA also teamed with the Hampton Roads Biomedical Research Consortium – a partnership that includes ODU – to provide healthcare data analytics, and modeling and simulation for the project.
Starting strong

Old Dominion University continues to raise the bar in both academic standards and adaptability to modern educational needs.

With a record 22 valedictorians and salutatorians joining the freshman class, ODU has become a first choice for a growing number of the commonwealth’s brightest students.

The freshman academic profile also rose last fall. The average high school GPA increased to 3.46 from 3.4, and the average SAT score rose to 1198 from 1124.

In addition, about 100 students entered the new TCC-ODU Monarch Ready program. Under the program, people who don’t meet Old Dominion’s admission requirements will be automatically accepted after completing 24 credits at Tidewater Community College with a minimum 2.5 GPA. The students receive individualized attention from both TCC and ODU academic advisers.

“We believe ODU has a dual commitment to fostering academic excellence while also ensuring every aspiring student has a pathway to success,” President Brian O. Hemphill, Ph.D., said.

The University also reported enrollment increases in on-campus and online graduate programs.

Old Dominion offered the LEO (Latine Experience Onboarding) orientation for the first time to Latine freshmen and transfer students last fall.

$3 million from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association to Margaret Mulholland, professor of earth and ocean sciences, and other institutions to calibrate the dangers of algal blooms in Hampton Roads waterways.

$2.6 million from the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration to the School of Nursing to increase the number and diversity of advanced practice registered nurses to treat rural, underserved and disadvantaged populations in Virginia.

$1 million from the National Science Foundation to increase the recruitment, hiring and promotion of female faculty members in STEM disciplines.

$1 million from the U.S. Small Business Administration to help small businesses in Virginia strengthen cybersecurity infrastructure and reduce threats.

Weller headlines Lit Fest

A familiar face headlined last fall’s Literary Festival – actor/director Peter Weller. Weller, who played the lead in the films “RoboCop” and “The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8th Dimension,” gave a lecture that traced his process of translating ideas into images. Weller’s talk was followed by a screening of his movie “The New Age.”

This wasn’t Weller’s first time at Old Dominion. He visited in 2019 to give two talks, “Why the Renaissance Matters” and “Why School? My Ph.D. and Me.”

Other writers at last year’s Literary Festival included novelist S.A. Cosby, poet Brian Turner and Michael Pearson, University Professor Emeritus of English.
Brandi Hephner LaBanc joined ODU as vice president for student engagement and enrollment services (SEES) last June. She had served as vice chancellor for student affairs at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and the University of Mississippi.

Last semester, she launched a strategic planning process to align SEES’ work with Old Dominion University’s strategic plan. SEES also worked with the provost’s office to create a Student Success Innovation Team to help increase ODU’s retention and graduation rates. “As a first-generation student, I am truly passionate about the access and opportunity that Old Dominion University has provided for nearly a century,” Hephner LaBanc said.

Barbara Blake was named the executive director of ODU’s new Monarch Internship and Co-op Office last summer. She was previously the chief administrative officer of the Dragas Center for Economic Analysis and Policy.

Building on the Experience Guaranteed initiative, the office promises to provide all ODU students with some form of work-based learning to gain practical knowledge and skills while collaborating with faculty members and industry professionals to prepare the next generation for the labor market. “In our first 60 days, we met with over three dozen companies or organizations that would like to employ ODU students for the first time ever,” Blake said.

Sarah Jane Kirkland assumed the new position of associate vice president for corporate partnerships last March. Kirkland had served as president and chief executive officer of the CIVIC Leadership Institute.

“I’m focused on identifying and cultivating relationships and collaborations with external partners both within the region and beyond,” Kirkland said. “It is my vision that by intentionally engaging business and industry, we will develop a strong educational ecosystem that will not only support the talent development of our students but will also attract businesses to the region, providing more economic opportunity for everyone in our community.”
Kevin Leslie was appointed the University’s first associate vice president for innovation and commercialization last year.

“We work closely with faculty, staff and small businesses to protect and develop their ideas, explore pathways for bringing those ideas to the marketplace and connect them to resources and opportunities,” he said. “Companies and organizations from the regional ecosystem are critical partners, and we’re grateful to have so many. The result is a strengthened research enterprise that enables ODU to address important societal challenges and enable a more resilient regional economy. It’s exciting work!”

Leslie previously served as the inaugural executive director of the Hampton Roads Biomedical Research Consortium.

In September, Frank Liu became the inaugural director of the University’s School of Data Science, which opened last year. Liu’s top responsibilities are to set the strategic direction for the school and strengthen partnerships with federal research labs in the region. “My goal is to build a School of Data Science that can be the locus of research and academic excellence, while remaining mindful of the urgent needs of our rapidly changing world,” Liu said.

His specialties include machine learning and AI for material sciences. Liu is a fellow of the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers and has written more than 120 papers. He previously served as a distinguished research scientist and research manager at Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee.

Frank Liu, Ph.D.

In September, Frank Liu became the inaugural director of the University’s School of Data Science, which opened last year. Liu’s top responsibilities are to set the strategic direction for the school and strengthen partnerships with federal research labs in the region. “My goal is to build a School of Data Science that can be the locus of research and academic excellence, while remaining mindful of the urgent needs of our rapidly changing world,” Liu said.

His specialties include machine learning and AI for material sciences. Liu is a fellow of the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers and has written more than 120 papers. He previously served as a distinguished research scientist and research manager at Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee.

Frank Liu, Ph.D.

Daniel Takabi took over as director of the School of Cybersecurity last summer. He previously was founding director of Georgia State’s Center for Research in Information Security and Privacy. Takabi, who is also the Batten Endowed Chair of Cybersecurity and a professor of electrical and computer engineering, will work to increase the school’s research capacity and collaborate on cybersecurity projects across the University. Vice Provost Brian Payne said Takabi “brings together a passion for teaching and an arsenal of research skills.”

His research looks at the intersection of artificial intelligence and data science with cybersecurity and privacy. Takabi has served as principal investigator for more than 25 projects with total funding exceeding $10 million.
embers of Monarch Nation have been waving their arms, slapping their palms and shimmying their hips during games for more than 18 years. What began as a lark to pump up the crowd became a strange yet irresistible dance that gets fans jumping out of their seats. Here’s more about this unique tradition.

When and why did ODU start playing “Ice Cream and Cake”? The ODU Dynasty Dance Team heard it during a break at a camp at Rutgers University in 2005. “The song was just hilarious to us,” recalled Sylvia Wyche-Hicaro ’06. “On the way home, we said, ‘We should dance to this song and run onto the court like it’s a serious routine.’ It was the melody, the silliness of the lyrics.”

ODU debuted “Ice Cream and Cake” during a timeout at a basketball game that fall. “It was like crickets,” Wyche-Hicaro said. “The reaction was: What is this?” After a while, “It started catching on with the fans. Just seeing the crowd get into it was pretty cool. I sit back and laugh about it sometimes.”

How many times are “ice cream” and “cake” mentioned in the song? Forty-six.

When do freshmen learn it? They get an early start. “On Admitted Students Day in April each year, students are taught “Ice Cream and Cake” step by step from Campus Ambassadors before doing it all together with their class, the Marching Band, Big Blue and the Spirit Squad, according to the Office of Admissions.


Did ODU change the song? Yes! ODU Dynasty added “Eat it” at the end, Wyche-Hicaro said.

When is it played? Fans hear it during the second half of men’s and women’s basketball games and at the end of halftime football games.

SLIP ’N’ SLIDING FOR NEARLY TWO DECADES – AND LOVIN’ IT

By Philip Walzer
What’s it like performing for the crowd?
“Cheerleaders love to do it,” said Courtney Abston, a senior who’s captain of the Spirit Squad. “It’s something that gets all the students involved. And it’s tradition. Only ODU does it.”

Miles King, a three-year veteran of the Spirit Squad, said, “When the crowd gets pumped up, the team gets excited. It’s sort of a refresh button for the second half.”

His favorite: “When the little kids do it. They even know the whole song and all the movements.”

What do students think of it?
Junior Emily Orrock called it “a cool little tradition,” Baylee Agagas, a senior, agreed. “It makes games fun, even when you lose,” she said. “Everybody has spirit and can sing along together.” Aniyah Rajab, a sophomore, does the dance even when she’s not at games. “When somebody says, ‘Ice Cream and Cake,’ I go like this” – she lifted her hands – “and they go like that,” Rajab said, lowering them.

GET THE SCOOP
ODU and Hampton Roads-based Lolly’s Creamery launched a signature Ice Cream and Cake flavor last February. It has a sweet cream base swirled with ODU blue-tinted ooey gooey butter cake.

Follow @lollyscreamery on Instagram to see when the flavor is available in stores.
he blends a commanding presence with a wide-open demeanor. It’s little wonder the “TODAY” show interviewed Capt. Janet Days ’99 in March 2023, one month after she became the first Black woman to run the country’s largest naval base. And no surprise after watching the segment that she majored in communication at Old Dominion University.

“I think the assumption is, it’s media, it’s television and it’s video,” Days said in a video coproduced by the Office of Alumni Relations and WHRO. “It’s more than that. It was strategic communication. It was how to think, problem-solve, research, analyze and be comfortable with public speaking.

“I use the tools that I learned at Old Dominion every single day,” Days said.

She uses them to oversee Naval Station Norfolk, a 6,200-acre base with 77,000 people – Navy personnel, civilian employees and contractors – 18 squadrons and 75 ships. It’s the people who count most to Days. “We are warfighters,” she said on the “TODAY” show, “but we cannot do our mission if we do not understand and know what every individual brings to the table.”

Days acknowledged in an interview in her office that it was easier to apply a personal touch when she supervised a ship. Now, she said, “I do my best to get out, but I have to be very deliberate.” She relies on such “touchpoints” as occasional visits to departments and video calls, like one she had held the day before with the base’s 350 E-4 petty officers.
“My responsibility is to create an environment where people love their jobs and want to come to work,” she said in a speech at the Town-N-Gown annual dinner last June. With the number of recruits declining, “we have to ask ourselves some tough questions: How come young people do not want to serve?”

To “reintroduce the community” to the Navy, last fall Days revived Fleet Fest, which drew nearly 13,000 people to the base. “We also want to be good partners and encourage the people who come to the military to stay in the community,” she told Town-N-Gown.

On the base, “I mentor and counsel all the time. We have to make sure people are comfortable saying, ‘I have a problem. I need help.’ We’re trying to provide more resources for them.”

Days is the 51st person but the first Black woman to serve as commanding officer of the 107-year-old Naval Station Norfolk. She shrugged off the attention at first but now appreciates the power of the milestone: “It means I’m not the last …. Women will come up and shake your hand, hold your hand and won’t let it go. I want to let ladies know, ‘You can do it.’”

Days’ previous positions include commanding officer and executive officer of the destroyer USS McFaul. She was also executive officer of Naval Station Norfolk and Surface Warfare Schools Command in Newport, Rhode Island.

She and her three siblings were raised by their father, George Hanks, a Vietnam veteran who served in the Army for 25 years, six of them in Germany. “That’s where I get the desire to serve,” Days said.

At ODU, she shouldered a heavy academic load – 21 credit hours a semester—and graduated summa cum laude. Two faculty members in communication made a big impact on her.

Fran Hassencahl’s “Communication Between the Sexes” course still comes in handy for Days. She also recalled Tom Socha’s ability to captivate students. “You know a professor is winning when they have the entirety of the class involved – when it’s interactive, they’re not preachy and they’re not just talking at you, but everyone has something that they want to add, and the class goes really fast,” Days said in the alumni video.

Outside class, she participated in the Hampton Roads Naval ROTC, which she called a “fantastic program.”

“In addition to the military training, it was a great opportunity to get exposure to senior-level leaders,” Days said.

She was first stationed in Norfolk in 1999, living in Saratoga Hall and working aboard the USS Mahan. “Not much has changed when I look at it,” she said.

But her title and duties have. Days emphasized it hasn’t been a solo mission.

“You don’t just get there overnight,” she said on “TODAY.” “You have advocates who are rooting for you and an amazing team that works with you.”

EXPANDING ARMY ROTC

Lt. Col. Brandon Shah ’07 achieved a first on the Army side. In 2022, he became the first alumnus to lead ODU’s Army ROTC. Shah, who was named to the Alumni Association’s 2023 Class of 40 Under 40, has been in the Army since 2003.

A professor of military science and department chair, Shah has overseen an increase in enrollment and expects a rise in commissions this May. He’s taken steps to raise interest in Army ROTC, including reinstituting the rappelling exercise and staffing tables at student events.

‘SIT IN THE FRONT’

During the “TODAY” show interview, Days advised young girls to “always sit in the front row.”

“I was a front-row sitter,” she added. “I knew I did not want to be distracted. I wanted to look the instructor in the eye and engage with them.”

When the military issued a report acknowledging, “We have let our people down,” the former Navy helicopter pilot got even madder.

“It infuriated me that the number of sailors who died by suicide continues to rise,” Kiggans recalled in an interview in her Virginia Beach office. “That’s unacceptable. We must do better for those serving our great nation.”

But she didn’t wait for the report. Two weeks before it was issued, Kiggans introduced the Sailor Standard of Care Act to improve mental health services for people in the Navy.

Her bill quickly gained steam. Last June, the House Armed Services Committee added five provisions to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which determines the Pentagon’s policies and annual budget. One provision, for instance, requires the Navy to study whether to increase TRICARE reimbursement rates for mental health providers.

“I’m incredibly proud to have secured several wins in this year’s NDAA that will directly improve the healthcare and quality of life for service members and military families in Hampton Roads,” said Kiggans, who sits on the House Armed Services, Veterans’ Affairs and Natural Resources committees.

Kiggans, a Republican, was elected in 2022 to represent Virginia’s 2nd Congressional District, which stretches from the Eastern Shore to Southampton County. Six months into her first year in the House, she was still frustrated by the partisan edge in Washington.

“I’ll be having a lovely talk with someone across the aisle and then I’ll hear them say the worst things about the other side,” Kiggans said. “I don’t think it’s necessary, and it’s not in the best interest of the country.”

Kiggans, who became a geriatric nurse practitioner after she left the Navy, has focused on military and healthcare issues. There, she’s found consensus.
“I can speak to a roomful of Democrats about nursing home reform, and everyone will agree. That’s the way it should be.”

With Democratic co-sponsors, she has introduced bills that would, for example, expand Medicare coverage for telehealth.

Kiggans, the first nurse practitioner in Congress, also helped resurrect the Congressional Nursing Caucus, of which she is co-vice chair. “We need more nurses, and nurses need a voice.

“We don’t have a lot of voices in government.”

She’d like to make it easier for nurse practitioners to provide care, particularly in rural areas. “Let us practice to the full scope of our abilities, so we can fill the gaps in healthcare. I don’t want to do open-heart surgery, but I can certainly provide really good patient care.”

As a young girl, Kiggans awoke to the sounds of “The Marines’ Hymn” every Saturday morning. Her father was a Green Beret who had served in the Vietnam War. “I grew up with that love of country,” she said.

She was an international relations student at Boston University in 1993, the year women were first allowed to fly combat missions. Her naval ROTC instructor told her, “You should think about this.”

Two years later, she began piloting H46 and H3 helicopters, serving twice in the Persian Gulf. Kiggans describes that time as “10 of the best years of my life.”

Her husband, Steve, was an F18 pilot. With four young children, they decided it would be best for the family if one of them left the service.

Kiggans’ family experience shaped her decision to become a geriatric nurse practitioner. Her mother was a nurse, and her father later worked in pain management at a VA hospital. Kiggans also recalled watching in pain as her grandfather, suffering from Alzheimer’s, received substandard care in a nursing home.

“There are so many older adults out there who are so wise. But they’re not a group of people who can advocate for themselves. It was a no-brainer for me to go back to school to help that group of people.”

At Old Dominion University, “I had wonderful clinical instructors,” Kiggans said. “It provided a great foundation, but it was hard. I had four little kids, and my husband was deployed, so I did most of my homework between 10 at night and two in the morning.”

As a nurse practitioner, she worked for Eastern Virginia Medical School and in private practice. “I miss it every day,” she said.

She’s also been an adjunct instructor in Old Dominion’s nurse practitioner program. “I owe a lot to ODU. The great nursing degree and the education I received set me up for success in healthcare and politics. It’s a great honor to represent my school now.”

Kiggans’ children are continuing the military tradition. Her older son graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy last year and began flight school. Her younger son is at Virginia Military Institute. Kiggans’ older daughter, who is in high school, hopes to join Virginia Tech’s Corps of Cadets. But it’s not unanimous. Her youngest says she’s “going to be a literature professor.”

Photos courtesy of Rep. Jen Kiggans
SHE MOVED FROM SENATE TO HOUSE TO HELP HER HOME DISTRICT

By Philip Walzer

Ronwyn Lance (M.P.A. ’01) has worked in Congress for 18 years, but 2022 marked a homecoming of sorts for her. Lance became chief of staff to Rep. Chuck Edwards, a Republican who’d just been elected to represent the 11th District in North Carolina. That’s where she grew up (outside Asheville) and where her family has lived for seven generations.

“It was such a great opportunity to come back to work for my home district congressman and help western North Carolina, which is my community, my family and my friends.”

As chief of staff for a freshman House member, she said, “We had to set up everything from scratch,” including office drapes and furniture. Lance describes the job as “everything everywhere all at once” – from working with Edwards to decide what legislation to prioritize to managing a $2 million budget.

“I’m thrilled she is our team quarterback,” Edwards said, “and the people of our district will benefit from her skill set.”

Before she came to Capitol Hill, Lance’s jobs included English teacher in Portugal, NATO consultant on humanitarian issues and columnnist and editorial writer for The Virginian-Pilot, based in Norfolk.

At the newspaper, Lance got to know then-Virginia Sen. John Warner, who hired her as his communications director and speechwriter in 2007.

In the next 15 years, she’d serve in the same role for four other senators: Saxby Chambliss (R-Ga.), Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.), John Barrasso (R-Wyo.) and Cynthia Lummis (R-Wyo.). “They’re all very different, and they’re all very good at what they do,” she said.

Her previous experience helped. “A speech is just a column in verbal form,” Lance said. Her international knowledge also benefited her when Warner chaired the Senate Armed Services Committee, and Chambliss led the Select Committee on Intelligence.

In the House, the pace is quicker. “You have a little bit more luxury of time in the Senate to delve into issues” because senators have longer terms, Lance said. Another difference is a minority of senators can stop a bill, “but the House is a simple majority, although there’s nothing simple about that.”

She said she’s grateful to have played a role in major laws like the overhaul of the GI Bill. More recently, she helped Edwards acquire a van, which logs up to 1,300 miles a month, ensuring strong constituent services. “It functions as his other district office,” Lance said, “and it gets a great reception with people.”

“I was struck by the practicality of ODU’s M.P.A. program. I still find myself going to things I learned in the classes on budgeting and personnel.”
‘Andre Henderson ’18 was determined to work for a member of the Congressional Black Caucus.

"It was important to me as a Black man and growing up with Barack (Obama) as president," said Henderson, who majored in communication.

Since 2021, he’s worked for three caucus members, now as communications director for Rep. Don Davis, a freshman Democrat who represents the 1st Congressional District in rural eastern North Carolina. Each experience, Henderson said, has introduced him to a different slice of Congress.

First, he was digital manager for the U.S. House Education and Labor Committee, then led by Democratic Rep. Bobby Scott, whose district includes Old Dominion University. His duties included livestreaming hearings, managing digital content and sending news releases and media advisories.

"I had to learn the D.C. jargon," Henderson said. "I also learned to focus on what’s important to the person and take myself out of the picture."

He moved to a higher-profile role in April 2022 – digital manager for Georgia Democratic Sen. Raphael Warnock, who won re-election that December in a highly publicized race. "It was a time to be alive," Henderson recalled.

He handled Warnock’s official accounts on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. Though they were separate from the campaign, "I had to dot every ‘i’ and cross every ‘t.’ You had to be right. A mistake could sway one person’s vote."

Henderson joined Davis in January 2023. "This office is communications-first," he said. Davis aims to deliver one speech a day on the floor. Some might run only a couple of minutes, but Henderson writes them all, as well as a couple of releases every day. He also handles inquiries from national media.

Henderson counts Davis’ “telephone town hall,” which he organized last July, as one of his biggest successes. It attracted nearly 9,000 listeners.

Because Davis is the vice chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, Henderson checks Agri-Pulse.com daily and Politico’s agriculture newsletter weekly. "This job has made me a lot more knowledgeable on agriculture," he said.

Davis’ bills – usually introduced with “a Republican co-lead,” Henderson said – range from cybersecurity in agriculture to cracking down on counterfeit drugs. Another, co-sponsored with U.S. Rep. Jen Kiggans ’11 (R-Va.), would increase support for caregivers of veterans.

Henderson said Warnock’s enthusiastic support of his job switch typifies the attitude of all his bosses in Congress, “Nobody wants you to feel stuck. You’re here to grow.”
The biggest challenge Tara Rountree '11 has endured in three years as a chief of staff in Congress wasn’t a government shutdown or media controversy.

It was the death of her boss, U.S. Rep. Donald McEachin (D-Va.), in November 2022. She learned about it at a staff retreat that McEachin had been expected to attend, though he was facing complications from his treatment for cancer in 2013.

"I had to tell them at dinner," she said. "I had worked for him for seven years. He was a friend. It was the hardest thing I’d ever dealt with in my life."

She and her staff of 16 continued performing constituent services during the interim. "There wasn’t a lot of time to process," Rountree said.

In February 2023, Jennifer McClellan, a Democratic state senator, was elected to the 4th District seat, which extends from Richmond to the North Carolina border. McClellan, who became the first Black woman from Virginia in Congress, asked Rountree to stay on.

"I’m carving out a niche for her," Rountree said, "and trying to find ways for her to stand out" as the most junior member of the minority party in the House.

McClellan and McEachin "care a lot about the same things – healthcare, the environment and education," Rountree said. "But she has little kids. That’s a new dynamic for me, scheduling her in a way that respects her life as a mother."

Rountree’s multiple responsibilities include managing the staff, setting the strategy for legislation, constituent services and communications and serving as McClellan’s top adviser and confidante. "I’m also making sure she is who she wants to be. Maybe she saw an article and says, ‘Can we do something about this?’"

She is proud of "getting all of our community projects funded two years in a row with no issues." The office also was a finalist in 2022 for the Congressional Management Foundation’s workplace environment award.

"Tara leads with compassion and humor, and she has helped cultivate an inclusive and constructive work environment where my staff feels supported and valued," McClellan said.

Rountree credits her easy transition to Washington partly to her student internships with U.S. Sen. Mark Warner and then-state Sen. Ralph Northam. At Old Dominion University, "I felt super-supported," said Rountree, who majored in political science.

She also speaks positively of her Capitol Hill colleagues. "The people in Washington get a bad rap. They are genuine public servants and are here for the right reasons."
They’re three siblings with different majors and ages. But they shared a graduation.

The Alkaifis (from left) – Seena, Sana and Fozi – fled the fighting in Yemen with their mother in 2015. At ODU, all three tutored in the College of Sciences.

In addition, Seena worked as an undergraduate assistant for two faculty members, founded the Pre-Dental Committee and was secretary of the Muslim Student Association. Fozi conducted research with two professors and was co-author of a paper in the scientific journal Cell Reports. Sana had a photography business focusing on senior portraits.

All graduated last May. Fozi, a data analytics major, joined Capital One in Richmond as a data analyst. Sana is a teacher’s assistant at The Barry Robinson Center, a residential treatment facility for children in Norfolk. She plans to pursue a master’s degree in psychology this year. Seena, who studied public health, is working as a self-taught artist in Norfolk, specializing in Arabic and Islamic calligraphy, and hopes to enroll in a master’s program in child life development.

The family has even more Monarchs – their brothers, Magdi and Ramzi. Magdi hopes to graduate in December with a degree in information systems and technology. Ramzi began as a freshman last fall. His major is finance.

Nakoma Littledove Austin (right) won certification as a submarine test director during an internship last summer at Newport News Shipbuilding. Now the December graduate is doing that for a living with the Newport News-based shipbuilder.

A mechanical and aerospace engineering major, Austin maintained a 3.9 GPA while commuting an hour and a half each way from her home in New Kent County. At Old Dominion, Austin helped design a CubeSat, or miniature satellite, and was a tutor and teaching assistant in the Calculus Lab. She did all that while holding a part-time job as enrollment director of the Chickahominy Indian Tribe Eastern Division, conducting genealogy research for potential members and maintaining tribal records.
Photos by Ryan M. Kelly
GARY'S GREEN VISION FOR MONUMENT AVENUE
You’ve got 6,000 personalities...
It was the biggest project yet for YME Landscape, the firm Earl Gary ’08 has run for 17 years – covering nearly an acre and demanding more than 6,000 plants and trees.

It was also the most visible, in multiple ways. Last summer, Gary’s crew relandscaped the circle on Richmond’s Monument Avenue that used to feature a statue of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee, which had been taken down in September 2021 after public protests.

Based on a design by engineering firm VHB, the project features redbud, magnolia and wax myrtle trees, as well as purple asters, coneflowers and milkweed. “You’ve got 6,000 personalities,” Gary said. “Hopefully I can get all of them to join up and flourish.”

The inner circle has seven differently shaped “zones.” The outer circle is ringed by 12 trees that are spaced apart like numbers on a clock.

‘THE STRUGGLE FOR CHANGE’

Marvin Chiles, assistant professor of African American history, says that Richmond has come to embrace its diversity and acknowledge its racial history. His book, “The Struggle for Change: Race and the Politics of Reconciliation in Modern Richmond,” was recently published by the University of Virginia Press.
Gary said the history of the site – the Lee statue was erected in 1890 – didn’t factor into his decision to pursue the project. “To have the ability – physically, educationally and mentally – to transform the place, I thought it would show my capabilities and help me go after bigger things.”

An electrical engineering technology graduate, Gary launched YME in Richmond after holding engineering jobs with such companies as Cox Cable and Courtyard by Marriott. In 2016, he and Jermaine Jackson ’00 also started Fulcrum Engineering Solutions, which has worked on storm drainage improvements and culvert designs.

In previous engineering jobs, “I did not see a lot of people like myself or owners like myself.” He plans to change that, in part by employing interns from Old Dominion University and other schools. “I want to provide them with the opportunities that I was given to go even higher,” Gary said.

_read more about Gary at odu.edu/monarchmag._
ALUMNI

SANDERS’ MISSION: RESTORING EYESIGHT IN AFRICA

Angelia Sanders (M.A. '12) has worked for nearly two decades to stop diseases that afflict millions of people in the world’s poorest countries. For the last 10 years, she’s been associate director of the program fighting trachoma, an eye disease, for The Carter Center, the nonprofit founded by former President Jimmy and First Lady Rosalynn Carter. Here’s what Sanders does in her own words.
Former President Carter remembered his mom treating people for trachoma when he was growing up in Georgia. Since then, the United States has eliminated the disease, but more than 100 million people are still at risk, mostly in Africa.

Trachoma is a bacterial infection that causes your eyelids to turn inward and your eyelashes to scratch the cornea, which can lead to blindness if left untreated. It is spread by direct person-to-person contact, as well as flies and shared clothes or towels. Children ages 1 to 9 and women are most likely to contract it.

I work to stop the spread of this ancient disease and treat people who have it through interventions and health education. I collaborate with the health ministries in Sudan and South Sudan. We know the strategies that work – surgery to correct in-turned eyelashes, antibiotics to treat infection, access to clean water and adequate sanitation to stop the recurring cycle of transmission. As a result of country buy-in, strong partnerships and hard work, we’ve seen a 92% reduction in people impacted by trachoma in the past 20 years. However, 125 million people remain at risk.

The reason we haven’t had more success is the lack of funds to do more and the lack of security preventing us from accessing certain areas. On one of my most recent trips, we planned to do an impact survey in a district in South Sudan. The night before, we got word that one tribe stole the cows from another tribe; there was shooting and people died. It changed everything.

Sometimes incidences of insecurity are really hard to see on the horizon. I have had colleagues who were severely injured or killed by violence. You constantly dread that text message. We’ve had some close calls. You just hope you get lucky, and you keep moving forward.

Zithromax is this amazing drug that’s being provided to areas that have nothing. The fact that Pfizer is willing to donate hundreds of millions of doses every year is huge. If people have trachoma, it treats that infection. Zithro also has been shown to reduce respiratory infections and infant mortality.

We treat everyone in a district once a year with Zithromax. While I was in South Sudan, we completed research to look at whether we should change that to every six months. During that trip, I was also able to negotiate a partnership with another NGO (nongovernmental organization) to provide cataract and general eye care in the state of Eastern Equatoria. We’re expanding the footprint of where we work, and we’re trying to do more in the countries where we are already.

The rest of the time, I worked with the team to train people in how to go out and measure in a scientific way whether trachoma is still prevalent. In a typical year, I spend more than three months working in-country. Every time I go on these trips, I’m physically tired but emotionally recharged. The most gratifying part is seeing people better off than they were before.

"I had my first entry into international development going to Kenya with the Peace Corps after my bachelor’s degree. It took the abstract of helping people and humanized it to actual relationships. I received my master’s degree in international studies from Old Dominion and my master’s and doctoral degrees in public health from the University of South Florida. The different degrees give me the big picture and the little picture. I can look at health programs and also understand the political and economic factors under which they operate."

Sanders recently ended a two-year term as chair of the International Coalition for Trachoma Control. The group consists of more than 50 nongovernmental organizations, academic institutions and philanthropists.

"President Carter is just a good person. He genuinely cares. Other people’s suffering bothers him. When he was at a meeting, he actually read the reports, and he didn’t let you get away with glossing over the bad news. He’d ask you about it."

Photos courtesy of Carter Center
As president of the Public Library Association, Sonia Alcántara-Antoine (M.P.A. ’21) stands among the nation’s leading advocates of libraries. “Public libraries have evolved beyond books,” offering social services and laptops, she said. Librarians have evolved, too, from “gatekeepers to knowledge” to “facilitators to transformation.”

During a Zoom interview, Alcántara-Antoine, the CEO of the Baltimore County Public Library, also spoke about book bans, the function of libraries in maintaining a “healthy democracy” and her role as president.

Did you go to the library a lot as a little girl?

My parents emigrated from the Dominican Republic. They were avid readers, but they didn’t have public libraries, so I was never taken to one growing up. In elementary school, I started going to the school library and checking out books, and I loved the experience. I didn’t learn about public libraries until I was a teenager. It was a game-changer for me. There were so many books and so many resources.

When did you decide to become a librarian?

My first job in high school was as a shelver. I always had libraries in the back of my mind, but I never fully considered it a career option until the last month of my senior year of college. I began to look at libraries again. The field was so much more expansive than I had realized. Once I did that research, it was full speed ahead, and no looking back.

What did you learn from your first few jobs?

As special assistant to the CEO at Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore, Maryland, I got a bird’s-eye view of what it’s like to be the CEO of a major urban library. In Virginia Beach, I was the public services manager, focusing on how to provide relevant and impactful services to the community. I was director of the Newport Beyond

BOOK REVIEWS

Sonia Alcántara-Antoine (M.P.A. ’21) recommends these two books:

“An all-time favorite”: “The Warmth of Other Suns,” by Isabel Wilkerson. “This book is powerfully written and provides a sobering look at what life was like for African Americans before, during and after the Great Migration.”

“A recent favorite”: “All Boys Aren’t Blue,” by George M. Johnson. “It is an eloquent and hopeful examination of the intersectionality between being Black, gay and male in the U.S.”
ODU was the natural choice. I was able to immediately apply it to the work I was doing—budgeting, personnel management and community engagement. It was what I needed to take me to a new level.”

News Public Library, where I really got to stretch my legs and learned how to lead an organization. Those three experiences were key in helping me get where I am today.

What’s the biggest misconception people have about libraries?

It’s that we’re all about books. Yes, we’ve got lots of books, but public libraries have evolved beyond books. We are serving the needs of the community more directly than ever before. In Baltimore County, we have social workers at the library. We connect people with the resources that they need. Another thing we do is distribute meals to kids during the summer and after school. Kids can’t read a book if they’re hungry.

You’ve called the public library a “very democratic institution.” Describe what you meant.

We serve everyone, and not every institution can say that. You can be experiencing homelessness or you could be a millionaire, and you will have access to the same resources and will be treated the same. And we are integral to a healthy democracy. Public libraries help inform engaged citizens about the issues that matter most.

How has the role of librarians changed?

When I started in the early ’90s, librarians were very much the gatekeepers to knowledge. If you had a question, you would go to the desk, and the librarian would go through the reference books to answer your question. Now librarians are more like facilitators to transformation. Our job is to help you get where you need to be. It’s meeting people where they are, sometimes in the branch, sometimes out in the communities.

Librarians also have a unique role providing access not only to internet, but also to emerging tech, and addressing digital inequity within our communities. During the pandemic, we began circulating Wi-Fi hot spots and Chromebooks. Long-term, we want to provide people with permanent access to affordable and reliable internet.

What does the Public Library Association do? What is your role as president?

The Public Library Association represents over 9,000 public libraries nationwide. My role is to provide direct and indirect support to public library workers and advocate for them on the national stage so that they have the resources they need to serve their communities.

How do you respond to the increasing campaigns to ban books?

The frequency of book bans and challenges is alarming. It’s crucial for us to build collections and programs that reflect the needs of the communities we serve and provide access to diverse perspectives. Parents 100% have the right to determine what their children can and cannot read, but they don’t have the right to tell other parents what their children can read. It’s not a library’s job to censor.
David McFarland ’84, a former college swimmer who was closeted until his early 30s, has become an LGBTQ+ advocate whose multihyphenated work reaches national and international stages. Its power, he says, lies simply in “leveraging stories.”

He’s been CEO and board chair of The Trevor Project, which seeks to prevent suicide among LGBTQ+ youths. During his tenure, the nonprofit was named a “Champion of Change” by President Obama’s administration.

In the international arena, McFarland has pushed for “incremental change” in countries that criminalize LGBTQ+ activity, advocating with the United Nations and FIFA to bolster equality and inclusion in the 2014 Winter Olympics in Russia and 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

His Los Angeles-based entertainment and sports company, DLM Impact Partners, seeks to empower such athletes as Josh Cavallo and R.K. Russell, the first out professional soccer and football players, and CeCe Telfer, the first openly transgender athlete to win an NCAA national championship.

McFarland’s goal: getting them a seat at the table on global playing fields – and beyond. “And if we don’t have a seat, I’ll get my own chair, pull it up and sit at the table,” he says. He seeks to find outlets for them to speak “not just to LGBTQ constituents, but the world.”

McFarland, who received Old Dominion’s Distinguished Alumni Award in 2005, is also pursuing distribution options to gain a wider audience for his own documentary feature, “Alone in the Game,” an exposé on homophobia in global sports. The film, which premiered in 2018, was a commercial success on AT&T’s Audience Network and DirecTV. It headlined Virginia’s first Queer Film Festival, held last June at Old Dominion University, and has been featured on other campuses and in partnership with sports venues and leagues worldwide.

In contrast to some of the athletes in the movie, McFarland says his coming-out story was mostly an angst-free process of self-discovery.

Raised in a “protective family environment” in suburban Kensington, Maryland, he says he knew he was gay as a young athlete. But “being gay at that time was not accepted,” he says, “so I made the conscious decision to remain closeted to my friends.”

When he arrived at ODU as a competitive swimmer, he was still in the closet. “As an athlete in college, you deal with that toxic masculinity around you and conforming to the normal of sport,” he says.

But he also found strong role models.

By Janice Rhoshalle Littlejohn
McFarland, who majored in sports medicine, received support from an upperclassman on the swim team who looked out for him when he was a freshman. “He was an incredible human being,” McFarland says.

At Old Dominion, he began “experimenting” while also dating women. Years later, when he was in his 30s, living and working in Virginia Beach, “I had this wake-up call,” he says. “I’m not going to do this anymore.” I ended the relationship with my girlfriend, and there was a period of about a year that I just sat in silence.”

Those silences can be difficult for LGBTQ+ youths to navigate. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people ages 10 to 24, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning youth are at significantly increased risk. That’s why at the onset of the pandemic, McFarland formulated the Mental Health & Suicide Prevention National Response to COVID-19 for the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention.

“I knew in February, at the beginning of COVID, we were going to have a worse epidemic on our hands around mental health and suicide than with the epidemic itself,” says McFarland, who lives in West Hollywood, California.

As co-chair of the alliance’s LGBTQ+ Task Force, McFarland also played a leading role in revising the national suicide prevention plan, adding the LGBTQ+ population for the first time.

Next on his agenda is ending bans on transgender women athletes in national and global competitions. For McFarland, it’s a matter of protecting human rights – and mental health.

“It’s giving voice to the voiceless – and the many that live in silence in one of the last closets in the world. The community has to deal with that.”

Call 988 to reach a counselor if you are experiencing a mental health or substance abuse crisis.

Janice Rhoshalle Littlejohn, a career journalist, curates programming for the Los Angeles Institute for the Humanities at the University of Southern California and is an adjunct instructor at the Annenberg School for Communications and Journalism. She previously served on the board of APLA Health, advocating for LGBTQ+ healthcare and other resources in Southern California.
Krista Harrell ’01 (M.S.Ed. ’03, Ph.D. ’12)

HARRELL’S JOURNEY: FROM ODU AND BACK AGAIN

By Philip Walzer

Krista Harrell achieved the triple crown in Old Dominion University education – a bachelor’s in counseling in 2001 and a master’s and doctorate in higher education administration in 2003 and 2012, respectively. She spent 10 years at the University of South Alabama, rising to assistant vice president for student affairs. In December 2022, Harrell returned to her alma mater as associate vice president for alumni relations.

In an interview, Harrell recalled highlights of her Monarch years, including being named to the Homecoming court, and fast-forwarded to her work now to energize more than 170,000 Old Dominion graduates. “I feel I have a responsibility to care for people’s memories of the institution and help them form new ones,” she said.

Tell us a couple of your most vivid memories as a student at Old Dominion.

I remember being named to the Homecoming court on the floor of Scope during halftime in 2001. I was wearing this big red dress. It was particularly special for me because I had been part of the Student Senate that worked hard to bring back Homecoming. I didn’t care that I didn’t get queen. I was so happy to be part of that moment.

Another exceptional time was when I was runner-up for the Kaufman Award. I felt that it was the culmination of all my hard work, and that all the things I did really mattered.
I was here morning, noon and night between being president of Zeta Tau Alpha Sorority and vice president of the Student Senate. I already knew I was going into higher education, but I realized then that I wanted to help students have the same experience.

You’ve served in several roles in higher education in the South. What appealed to you about alumni relations?

It’s an honor to serve my alma mater after serving other institutions for 20 years. I came from student engagement. This is almost the same thing, but with a different set of people with connections to the institution. I want to foster a sense of belonging, build community and help instill points of pride. A lot of people love this place. I want to help you find a way to contribute that makes sense to you. It’s not just financial. There are a lot of opportunities to get involved: You can serve on boards or come to events. You can impact the trajectory of a student by making them more career ready. Or maybe it’s doing good in the community. We need alumni to support other alumni finding jobs and connecting with internships. And it’s fun to get involved. Don’t you want to meet new people and have some pretty amazing experiences?

How has being a three-time ODU graduate helped you in your job?

First and foremost, the foundation of my love for the institution is what drives me. It’s authentic. It’s a point where I can start a conversation from: “I remember when we used to watch women’s basketball games at the Fieldhouse and men’s games at Scope before the Ted.” I feel I have a responsibility to care for people’s memories of the institution and help them form new ones.

What’s a fun part of Krista Harrell’s life that few people know about?

I was “Queen of the Audience” at a Jimmy Kimmel show in 2016. They said I was the most excited audience member, which is a surprise to nobody. I got to wear a crown. It was pretty cool. I can also sing the names of the states in alphabetical order.
A DEEP DIVE INTO GENETIC DIVERSITY OF FISH IN VIETNAM

By Philip Walzer

A 22-year-old fresh out of Florida Institute of Technology, Kent Carpenter, Ph.D., landed what he calls "the best job there ever was or ever will be in the Peace Corps.

Carpenter was placed in charge of coral reef research at the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources in the Philippines. He scuba-dived around the Philippine archipelago and saw how pollution and destructive fishing methods had degraded the reefs.

That experience shaped Carpenter's career, which focuses on the environmental challenges to fish in Asia. This semester, he's in Vietnam for his second Fulbright fellowship to determine whether, in its rush to modernize, the country has significantly reduced the diversity of fish species in its waters.

The Mekong River, which flows through Vietnam and five other countries, has more fish species than any river other than the Amazon, said Carpenter, a professor and Eminent Scholar of biological sciences who has taught at Old Dominion University since 1996.

Fish have swum hundreds of miles to interbreed, but the construction of hydroelectric dams has stunted their journeys.

"If they lose genetic diversity, they lose the ability to adapt to a changing world," said Carpenter, who in 2020 received the Outstanding Faculty Award from the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia.

Carpenter visited Vietnam previously to collect tissue samples. During his Fulbright fellowship, from January to June, he will analyze the results. Carpenter's first Fulbright, in 2011, allowed him to study the diversity of fish in the Philippines.

This semester, Carpenter also will teach his online Marine Conservation Biology Course to undergraduates and graduate students at both Old Dominion and Nha Trang University.

They will view class sessions at different times, but they will interact in discussions online. Carpenter also plans to meet in person with the Nha Trang students every week. "I want them to understand what the challenges are to biodiversity," he said. "As an educator, I always aspire to inspire students."

Carpenter has received more than $12 million in funding for his work. In a project financed by a $4.6 million grant from the National Science Foundation, he compared recent tissue samples from fish in the Philippines with those collected by a U.S. research expedition in 1908. "We found a decrease in genetic diversity after more than a century of extreme exploitation and habitat destruction," Carpenter said.

He's mastered the Filipino language of Tagalog, but he wasn't as hopeful about Vietnamese. "I'm not good at tonal languages," he said. "I was a bass guitarist in rock bands, and that ruined my hearing a little bit."
IN KENYA, MEDIATION KEEPS THE PEACE

By Victoria Time

Victoria Time, Ph.D., a University Professor and professor of sociology and criminal justice, spent the 2022-23 academic year in Kenya on a Fulbright fellowship to study mediation. Time says the approach could benefit other countries.

The core idea of mediation in Kenya is to create harmony in society. The 2010 constitution stipulates that Kenyans should consider alternative forms of justice to handle disputes. Kenya’s President William Ruto even sent a tweet last year in support of pursuing mediation before going to the courts.

A mediator could be a family member, a chief, an elder or a pastor. The mediator encourages all the parties to engage in dialogue and then leaves it to them to decide the resolution.

I interviewed 52 chiefs, elders and religious leaders and sat in on 31 hearings. I saw a 12-year-old take her father to mediation because of child neglect. Whenever he got paid, he disappeared for weeks. The girl was an A student, with aspirations to become a doctor, but she had not attended classes for a month because he hadn’t paid the school.

The man said he didn’t have any money. The mediator said, “I am going to call the headmaster and ask him for a meeting tomorrow. You have to arrange a payment plan to enable your girl to go to school.” After they scheduled the meeting, she returned to class that day.

Even after a defendant is found guilty of murder and sentenced in court, the case can be sent to a mediator to establish reconciliation in that community. The parties sit down – the parents of the deceased and the perpetrator. If you kill a man, you give the victim’s family a certain number of cows. They shake hands and let bygones be bygones. It’s amazing how it works.

I also interviewed 10 judges, law professors, defense attorneys and prosecutors. They want people to mediate. I asked them, “Aren’t you worried about losing your jobs?” They said, “No, because there are certain cases that must be litigated in court.”

I plan to write at least three articles and one book. I believe many cases here could be handled through mediation as opposed to overwhelming the court system. We can gradually inculcate people that it is not only through the courts that you can experience justice.

Time taught online classes at the University of Nairobi School of Law’s three campuses, as well as at the University of Cape Coast in Ghana and Nelson Mandela University in South Africa.

“They were very good students, and we had excellent discussions. Some were doctors and civil servants who were aspiring to be politicians.”
Mike Robinson, Ph.D., knows how to make an exit. Or, more precisely, how long it takes to make an exit.

Robinson, a research professor at Old Dominion University’s Virginia Modeling, Analysis and Simulation Center (VMASC), develops models for emergencies that trigger evacuations, such as weather disasters and terrorist attacks.

“I wouldn’t say I’m always scanning for an exit,” he said, “but I look to see, ‘Could people get out of here?’”

After the Camp Fire, which killed 85 people in California in 2018, Robinson joined a team of evacuation experts to assess wildfire evacuation plans in the state for Pacific Gas and Electric Co.

“So many of these communities did not have what we would believe to be acceptable evacuation plans,” said Robinson, who is also VMASC’s chief operations officer. So he and the modeling team at VMASC created a tool for these vulnerable areas.

The Fast Local Emergency Evacuation Times (FLEET) model uses U.S. Census Bureau data and road networks. On a page that looks like Google Maps, users select the area they want to leave, and within minutes, FLEET delivers an estimated evacuation time.

“FLEET filled a void,” Robinson said, “and I’m happy to say that people are using it.” The program, free and available since August 2021, has already been used in 27 states.

Last year, Colorado Springs studied FLEET data showing that one area of the city could take five hours to evacuate during the tourist season.

“Mike’s expertise in evacuation modeling has been critical to educating our community and leadership,” said Dana Duggan, board member for Westside Watch, a coalition of neighborhoods in Colorado Springs. “We may not be able to stop the fires, but we sure can use cutting-edge tools like FLEET to ensure that people get out in advance of these fires.”

Robinson’s goal: “People will wake up and say, ‘We need to plan for this.’”

Jonah Grinkewitz ’17 is the assistant director of news and media relations at Old Dominion University.
COURSE DESCRIPTION

HLSC 320 – Health Equity and Disability Culture

Who takes it:
Undergraduates majoring in such health sciences programs as recreational therapy and health services administration take the course. Twenty-one students were enrolled in the fall.

The goal: “As we train our students to be recreational therapists and health administrators, I want them to have insight into key factors influencing the disability experience,” said Shelly Beaver, a senior lecturer in the School of Rehabilitation Sciences. “That will help them demonstrate empathy and prepare them to meet the unique needs of their clients.”

“We talk about how people respond to the onset of disability, as well as what types of prejudice they may face.”

The class also examines the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and “conceptual disability models,” such as the ‘social model,’ where “the person isn’t viewed as the problem. It’s society that has created barriers impeding their full participation.”

“The Wheelchair Experience”:
“Students are given a wheelchair for 24 hours. They go to a class, preferably not in their major, in the wheelchair, and participate in an active recreational activity. It could be racquetball, basketball or a dance class. They have to go to a public place they don’t frequent – a retail store, a grocery store or a restaurant. They have to stay in the wheelchair for four consecutive hours, following their daily routine both in and out of their home.”

Students’ reactions: “You really got to see the barriers that people with disabilities face every day, even something so tiny as the angle of a sidewalk,” senior Olivia Cheskey said. “That made me more aware of my environment and architecture and how it could be more accessible.” Beaver said, “It challenges their biases. They’ll say, ‘I never realized the social stigma of having a visible disability, but now I understand it from a different perspective.’”

The ADA: “The Americans with Disabilities Act added legal protection against discrimination against people with disabilities. Accessibility and awareness have increased. Some of the stigma and prejudice have decreased – it’s not as overt as it once was – but it’s still there.”

Student course evaluation: “Shelly Beaver is, honestly, the best professor that I’ve ever had,” Cheskey said. “This will help me understand my clients and advocate for them and help them advocate for themselves. I never thought I would be as passionate about this issue as I am now.”

Photo by Chuck Thomas ’90

Olivia Cheskey
T MAY NOT BE THE TEAM THAT DRAWS THE MOST FAN OR MEDIA ATTENTION, BUT THE WOMEN’S TENNIS PROGRAM HAS IN RECENT YEARS BEEN THE MOST SUCCESSFUL AT OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY.

The team won conference titles three seasons in a row – Conference USA in 2021 and 2022 and the Sun Belt in 2023. Last season, the Monarchs claimed straight-set wins in all four Sun Belt tournament matches and then defeated No. 31 South Carolina, 4-2, in the NCAA Tournament before losing to the eventual national champion, North Carolina.

ODU also hit a ranking high last year, coming in at No. 16. All 15 schools ahead of the Monarchs were in Power Five conferences, which have far greater resources.

The team aced it academically, too. It has a 100% graduation rate for the last dozen years and ranks among the top three of ODU’s 18 athletic teams in average GPA.

Its coaching staff is perhaps the major reason for that success, said Bruce Stewart, deputy athletic director and chief operating officer.

Dominic Manilla ’07, who played tennis at ODU, is entering his 13th year as head coach – an unusually long tenure. Because he’s an alumnus, “it’s not just any job for Dom,” Stewart said.

Manilla has an elite background. His father, Ron, a legendary tennis coach in the Charlottesville area, led the Special Olympics national team. Manilla came to ODU from the John McEnroe Tennis Academy, where he worked closely with McEnroe.

Associate head coach Yana Sokolenko arrived in 2018 after six seasons as the head coach at Miami University of Ohio. Both Sokolenko, a native of Belarus, and Manilla have deep recruiting ties in Eastern Europe.

ODU’s last two conference singles champions hail from Belarus and Ukraine, respectively, and the roster is loaded with Central Europeans.

Yulia Starodubtseva ’22, who came to ODU from Kakhovka, Ukraine, won the Conference USA title in 2022 and is now a pro in New York. "I would not be where I am today without Dom," she said. "He is so committed to his players. He is so devoted to ODU tennis. I could not have had a better coach.”

Manilla said, "We sell kids on a dream that mirrors ODU’s commitment to social mobility here. We tell them that whatever your goal is, we can make it come true. Whether you want to be a doctor or a teacher or play professionally, we paint the path for you to get there.”
hen Harry Minium, our senior writer for athletics, suggested that I compile a list of Old Dominion’s greatest athletes, coaches and administrators of all time, I made that the subject of my column for Monarch magazine’s summer 2023 edition. Little did I realize I was on a fool’s errand. I came up with more than 50 people, but because of space limitations, we had to trim that list considerably. I asked ODU alumni and fans to email me if they felt that I had left anyone out. My inbox quickly filled up with worthy suggestions. The name most often mentioned was former women’s basketball coach Wendy Larry, who was on the original list. She won 17 Colonial Athletic Association championships and took our 1997 team to the national championship game. Here are some other notable all-stars—

- **Matt Quatraro ’96**: Now manager of the Kansas City Royals, Quatraro is the first Monarch alumnus to manage a Major League Baseball team.
- **Pete Robinson**: In 26 years as ODU’s head wrestling coach, Robinson had 12 Division II All-Americans and four in Division I. He also coached golf at ODU for 13 seasons.
- **Samantha Salvia ’96**: ODU’s first Rhodes Scholar, Salvia starred in both field hockey and lacrosse. She was a finalist for the NCAA Woman of the Year Award and went on to graduate from the University of Oxford and Stanford University.
- **Kenny Gattison ’86**: A former ODU men’s basketball star, Gattison later played for four teams in the NBA. He also coached in the NBA and was an assistant coach at ODU.
- **Cal Bowdler ’99**: In 1999, Bowdler became ODU’s first player to be selected in the first round of the NBA draft.
- **Mark Newman**: A former baseball coach, Newman built the foundation for the Monarchs’ successful Division I program in nine seasons.
- **Anna Tunnicliffe ’05**: An Olympic gold medalist sailor, Tunnicliffe won three national championships at ODU and was named the National Collegiate Sailor of the Year.

Even this extended list can’t contain everyone who is worthy of mention. It’s a credit to our fan base that so many responded with enthusiasm and passion for their all-time great nominees. We’re lucky to have such an engaged and supportive community at ODU.
Dear Fellow Monarchs,

It is with great pride that I bring greetings from the Old Dominion University Alumni Association. What a privilege it has been to return to my alma mater to serve as the associate vice president for alumni relations. Since I joined this outstanding team in December 2022, the Alumni Association has worked to engage our more than 170,000 alumni, reconnecting them back to campus and our Monarch community. What a joy it has been to meet hundreds of future alumni, reunite with many of my Monarch friends and get to know so many graduates.

The ODU Alumni Association is dedicated to building community and reigniting excitement for our alma mater. From developing new chapters to recognizing the remarkable accomplishments of our alumni and students to helping students network with Monarch mentors, we are forward focused in engaging our graduates.

The Office of Alumni Relations staff supports the mission of the ODU Alumni Association. Our team is dedicated and energetic and understands that our work is essential to the success of our alumni and the University.

I am so thankful to work with colleagues who are outstanding practitioners and understand their roles in helping our alumni have wonderful, lifelong experiences. They love to get to know our alumni, so be sure to introduce yourself at one of our 80-plus events annually. Our staff is here to help you reconnect and get more involved!

We are Monarchs much longer than our collegiate careers. On behalf of the Alumni Association, I challenge you to consider the shape of your alumni legacy. Find ways to connect your interests and love of ODU with the Alumni Association in our efforts to support fellow Monarchs and our community. These are the ties that bind us together.

Hail to thee our Alma Mater. Blue and Silver, hail!

With ODU Pride,

Krista Harrell ’01 (M.S.Ed. ’03, Ph.D. ’12)
Associate Vice President for Alumni Relations
**ALUMNI AUTHORS**

“The Book of Stolen Images” by Laura Lee Washburn ’87 (Meadowlark Poetry Press). Washburn, the director of creative writing at Pittsburg State University in Kansas, compiles “personal yet relatable ordinary and existential experiences” while touching on cultural and political themes.


“Glitter Road” by January Gill O’Neil ’90 (CavanKerry Press). O’Neil’s fourth collection of poetry interweaves personal milestones with the history and legacy of Emmett Till.

“To the Real: Poems for a New Reality” by Angelo J. Letizia (M.A. ’09) (In Case of Emergency Press). Letizia, associate professor of education and department head of initial teaching programs at Notre Dame of Maryland University in Baltimore, explores questions of reality, love, death and the volatile times we find ourselves in.

“The Quality of Mercy” by Kerry McNamara (M.F.A. ’18) (Mosaic Press). McNamara recounts her father’s life as a Catholic missionary and priest and his decision to leave the church to marry the woman who would become her mother.


**Milestones**

1970s

Stephanie M. Saunders ’75, a shareholder with Saunders & Saunders in Virginia Beach, became vice chair of the Board of Directors of the National Association of State Boards of Accountancy in 2022. She’s a former president of the Virginia Society of CPAs and the Virginia Board of Accountancy.

Charles Skipper ‘80 last summer was named interim president of Athol Murray College of Notre Dame, a boarding school in Saskatchewan, Canada. Skipper has also led the Field School of Charlottesville, and TASIS, formerly known as The American School, in Switzerland.

Jonathan Guion (M.B.A. ’81) was appointed president of Mid Atlantic Real Estate, based in Yorktown. Guion was managing broker of Mid Atlantic’s Hampton Roads office. He’s also a member of the advisory board for ODU’s E.V. Williams Center for Real Estate.

1980s

Charles R. Armstrong ’82 was named chief information officer for the Federal Emergency Management Agency last year. He previously served as assistant commissioner and chief information officer for the federal Office of Information and Technology and U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

Cathy J. Bradley ’83 was appointed the first female dean of the Colorado School of Public Health, a collaboration among three universities. She had been the school’s associate dean for research and deputy director of the University of Colorado Cancer Center.

Donald P. Loren (M.S.Ed. ’83) added two honors to his resume in 2022: Loren was inducted into the National Defense University Joint Forces Staff College Hall of Fame, and he was named a Distinguished Professor at the university. Loren, who received the ODU Distinguished Alumni Award in 2007, has been a senior fellow at the university for 15 years. He previously served as deputy assistant U.S. secretary of defense for Presidents George W. Bush and Donald Trump.

Ted Hand ’81 was elected president of the Society of Broadcast Engineers last August. Hand has been director of engineering/operations for Cox Media Group in Charlotte, N.C., for 17 years and held a similar position with WTKR-TV in Norfolk.
[CLASS NOTES]

WANT 'BLACK PANTHER' CAR SEATS? CALL ROJAS

Karín Rojas ’12, who grew up knitting and crocheting in Peru, became the talk of her Virginia Beach neighborhood in 2018 after she reupholstered the seats of her 1994 Isuzu Amigo in black and yellow leather.

She found a job at an upholstery store to improve her skills. Soon, nearly every room of her house was filled with friends’ and neighbors’ car seats waiting to be reupholstered.

Rojas, who majored in fashion merchandising, opened her own shop, Zulema Custom Interiors, near Old Dominion University in 2020. Her first job: reupholstering helicopter seats. She moved her business to Virginia Beach in 2021.

**Thomasina Wright ’89** was promoted to vice president of fleet support programs at Newport News Shipbuilding last July. Wright, the first Black female to become a program director at the company, has been with the Virginia shipbuilder for 40 years.

**Dawn Hassan ’84** is now a VP and stockholder at GuernseyTingle, an architectural, interior design and planning firm based in Williamsburg. Hassan has served as financial manager and controller for more than 11 years.

All money questions at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs now go to **Kathy Kaoudis ’85**, who became vice chancellor for administration and finance in April. Kaoudis served in a similar role at the Community College of Denver for five years.

**Robert King (M.B.A. ’86)** took over last May as chairman of the board of Harvey Lindsay Commercial Real Estate in Norfolk. Lindsay, his father, died last April. King, who’s been with the firm for 45 years, continues as president, a position he’s held since 1999.

**Gene C. Fant Jr. (M.A. ’87)**, president of North Greenville University, was appointed last summer to the South Carolina Higher Education Commission, the coordinating board for the state’s public institutions. He’s also a regular columnist for The Chronicle of Higher Education.

Last summer, **Charles “Chuck” Wagner ’89** took over as superintendent of King William County Public Schools in Virginia. He’d been assistant superintendent at Gloucester Public Schools for more than a decade.

**Wayne F. Lesperance Jr. ’91 (M.A. ’96)** was elected New England College’s 16th president in December 2022, becoming its first Latine leader. Lesperance has worked at the college in Henniker, N.H., since 1999 in roles including interim president, vice president of academic affairs and dean of undergraduate programs.

**Shamina Singh ’91** (profiled in the winter 2020 Monarch magazine) has been appointed to President Biden’s Export Council, the major national advisory committee on international trade. Singh serves as the executive vice president of sustainability at Mastercard.

**Robin Cooke ’92** is still a president of TowneBank, but now she’s in charge of retail banking. Cooke, a TowneBank employee since its founding, previously was president of the bank’s Portsmouth/Suffolk region of Virginia. She oversees its first Latine leader. Lesperance has worked at the college in Henniker, N.H., since 1999 in roles including interim president, vice president of academic affairs and dean of undergraduate programs.

**Brian McRae ’90** was recently promoted to managing director at Per Scholas, a nonprofit that provides free tech training to promote economic equity. McRae oversees the growth of the Seattle, Wash. campus.

**1990s**
She’s worked on boats, but she focuses on cars, including a job last year to remake a client’s seats with a “Black Panther” theme.

“I’m proud of myself to be one person and to be doing everything,” from hoisting seats to sewing together swatches of fabric, says Rojas, who was profiled in The Virginian-Pilot last summer.

She usually works with leather, vinyl or canvas. “I try not to do cloth; it takes away from the look I want to create,” Rojas says. She also designs purses to match the seats.

In March 2023, she opened a bay, allowing her to expand to carpeting and store cars she’s working on. It takes roughly a day to refinish one seat and up to two weeks for an entire car.

“It’s very difficult to take the seats apart and put them back together,” says Rojas, who previously worked as an assistant to British fashion designer Lizzi London. “You have to disconnect the battery, the heat and the airbags, and there are so many connections underneath the car.”

Zulema Custom Interiors – named for her mother, who died when Rojas was 6 – won the Virginia Beach Award for best upholstery business in 2020 and 2022.

Johanna Pypecinsky asked Rojas to reupholster her Dodge Ram in 2022 after seeing Rojas’ work. She’s now riding in style with high-end vinyl seats in charcoal gray and latte brown.

“It’s simply beautiful,” Pypecinsky says. “She did so many cool things, and it’s such an upgrade to a Ram. It feels like pure luxury sliding into them. I think she’s going to do well in her business.”

- Philip Walzer

Scott Jackson ’93 added his voice last summer to Priority Automotive Sports Radio 94.1, owned by Max Media Hampton Roads. He’s the host of the Virginia station’s afternoon talk show. Lots of fans know Jackson: He also does play-by-play for ODU’s men’s basketball on ESPN+

Barry Lucas ’93 was promoted to assistant county manager in Forsyth County, Ga., last April. Lucas has worked for the county for 27 years, including as director and assistant director of the water and sewer department.

Zelda Lockhart (M.A. ’93) reports she has left academia to consult with universities “through their diversity and inclusion programming in conjunction with their town and city community partners.” Her latest novel, “Trinity,” relating “the impacts of colonization in the lives of three generations of Black men,” was published last summer and was chosen as a “community read” in Greensboro, N.C.

Christine Caldwell ’94 was promoted to vice president of third-party management at The Breeden Co., a Virginia Beach-based real estate development firm. Caldwell had been a regional manager with Breeden since 2016.

Tisca Dorsey ’94 oversees contracts as a director of business and finance for Jefferson Lab in Newport News – a position she took last February. Dorsey has more than 25 years of financial and operational experience.

retail strategy and branch offices to maintain strong customer service.

Sharona Ragland ’92 (M.S. ’96) has a new title this year at Virginia Union University in Richmond – acting dean for the School of Arts and Sciences. Ragland has held a variety of positions at VUU in multiple disciplines, including assistant dean for undergraduate studies, chair of mathematics and interim chair of mass communications.

Sandra Dales ’93 was appointed the executive director of the Southern Pines Land and Housing Trust in North Carolina last February. “I am really looking forward to sinking my teeth into community action,” Dales said.

Zulema Custom Interiors – named for her mother, who died when Rojas was 6 – won the Virginia Beach Award for best upholstery business in 2020 and 2022.

Johanna Pypecinsky asked Rojas to reupholster her Dodge Ram in 2022 after seeing Rojas’ work. She’s now riding in style with high-end vinyl seats in charcoal gray and latte brown.

“It’s simply beautiful,” Pypecinsky says. “She did so many cool things, and it’s such an upgrade to a Ram. It feels like pure luxury sliding into them. I think she’s going to do well in her business.”

- Philip Walzer
TowneBank appointed R. Lee Clark (M.B.A. ’95) its chief operating officer in January. Clark previously was the bank’s chief human resources officer. He supervises bank operations and continues overseeing human resources.

George Timmons (M.S.Ed. ’96) took over last summer as president of Holyoke Community College in Massachusetts. Timmons previously was provost and senior vice president of academic and student affairs at Columbia-Greene Community College in Hudson, N.Y.

Ramesh Yerraballi (Ph.D. ’96), professor of instruction in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at the University of Texas at Austin, won the University of Texas System Board of Regents Outstanding Teaching Award in 2022. “Yerraballi is a god,” one student told UT News. Another summed up his admiration in a word: “Yerraballer!”

Daniel J. Barchi (M.E.M. ’97) has moved to Chicago, Ill.-based CommonSpirit Health, where he’s the chief information officer and oversees digital innovation and IT security. He previously held the position at New York-Presbyterian, Yale New Haven Health System in Connecticut, the Yale School of Medicine and Carilion Clinic in Roanoke.

Monica Kopin ’97 became human resources director for talent acquisition and workforce development for Virginia Beach in 2023. As co-interim director of human resources for the city, Kopin helped reduce job vacancies during the pandemic and launch a new compensation plan.

Virginia Military Institute’s chief information officer, Wes Robinson ’97, retired last summer after more than 40 years at the Lexington institution. He started in 1981 as a support technician. It is, he said, “an ever-changing field.”

David Quackenbos (M.A. ’97) was appointed the Courts Redford Chair of Biblical Studies at Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Mo. “I hope to use this appointment to facilitate an ever-increasing enthusiasm and love for God’s word,” Quackenbos said.

Edgar Sevilla ’97 was named chief software architect at DTC Government Solutions in Ashburn. Sevilla was previously director of cybersecurity and cyber operations at Dark Wolf Solutions in Herndon.
Vince Fleming and his daughter, Jade, received master’s degrees from Old Dominion University – in different fields – 20 years apart. He’s a marine chemist – one of 100 certified by the National Fire Protection Association – who conducts safety inspections of ships. She’s an assistant principal of an elementary school. After 26 years in health and safety at Newport News Shipbuilding, Vince (M.S. ’93) moved in 2013 to Naval Station Norfolk’s Mid-Atlantic Regional Maintenance Center, which maintains and repairs ships. He performs safety inspections not just on base but also at other military locations and private shipyards. Fleming cites a long list of potential hazards, especially fires from welding and other “hot work.” Confined areas also pose dangers, such as falling from heights and oxygen deficiency.

“We want to make sure that all spaces throughout the vessel are safe for entry and work,” said Vince, who lives in Chesapeake. “My primary goal is to identify hazards, control them and get the repairs back on track.”

Jade (M.Ed. ’13) worked for eight years as a third-grade teacher, assistant principal and principal-in-residence at a charter elementary school in Washington, D.C. She returned to Hampton Roads in 2022 as assistant principal at Monroe Elementary in Norfolk “to apply some of the things I learned in a different space.” Among Jade’s first-year successes:

- Encouraging the use of online tools and helping create a “social-emotional wellness program,” which trains students to manage their emotions and advocate for themselves. That led to a significant decline in suspension referrals for fighting.
- “What gives me satisfaction is knowing that I’ve partnered with families to reach the goals they’ve set for their kids and that I’ve helped our scholars grow into the type of person they’d like to be,” Jade said.
- Both Flemings praise their education at ODU. “The teachers were very supportive and very, very smart,” said Jade, who lives in Norfolk. Vince, who received a master’s in occupational health, said, “ODU was critical in putting us where we wanted to be.” Each also speaks highly of the other. “I’m proud of her intelligence and skills,” Vince said, “but most importantly for the care and sincerity she has for the kids.”
- “I love that my dad is uniquely himself in all areas of his life – his job and his family,” Jade said. “He’s always ready for the challenge, whatever it may be.”
- Plus, he never stops thinking about safety. He even gives fire extinguishers as Christmas gifts.

- Philip Walzer

Michael Trest ’97 oversees buildings as associate vice president for facilities management at The University of Texas of the Permian Basin in Odessa. A former Navy shipboard electrician, he has 15 years of experience in facilities management in the military.

Last January, Tameka Gunn ’98 took over as CEO of the Charlotte-based Community Link, a nonprofit that helps people find and keep affordable housing in North Carolina. Gunn hopes to expand efforts to help first-time veteran homeowners and aid in filing income tax returns.

Ken Earley ’99 got a promotion last March at the South Carolina treasurer’s office. He’s now the director of information technology. Earley had been the assistant IT director since 2017.

David Huisenga ’99 (M.E.M. ’07) has spent more than 20 years providing communications technologies for the military and government sectors. Now he’s doing it for Domo Tactical Communications, based in Ashburn, as EVP and general manager.

Angela Napier (M.S.Ed. ’99) returned home last fall as the new principal of Western Branch Primary School in Chesapeake. Napier traces her love of education to her time interning at Western Branch when she was in high school. She’s also pursuing her doctorate in educational leadership at ODU.

Angela Passanesi ’99 is now senior vice president of business development at Freedom Graphic Systems, based in Milton, Wis. In her off-hours, she is active in Kevin’s Miracles, named after her late brother, which provides computers and software to people with disabilities.

James Phillips ’00 last year joined the Arc Central Chesapeake Region, a nonprofit based in Severn, Md., that advocates for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, as vice president for people and culture. Phillips has more than 20 years of human resources experience.

Rayanne Darenbourg (M.P.A. ’01) became chief executive officer of Children’s Museum in Houston, Texas, in February. Darenbourg vowed that the museum would remain “innovative and forever curious.”

SPRING 2024

2000s

Photo by Chuck Thomas ’90
Jim Redick (M.P.A. ’09) spent four years in the Navy and six more in the Army National Guard. He saw a career in emergency management as “another way to serve out of uniform.” He’s been in the field for 20 years, most recently as Norfolk’s director of emergency preparedness and response and now as manager of business continuity and emergency management for Sentara Health. In recognition of Redick’s expertise, he was appointed to the National Advisory Council of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in 2022. Redick serves on the council’s working group on climate change, a subject of major concern in Norfolk. “We’ve evolved from fighting water to adapting and living with it,” Redick said. With FEMA money, the city has elevated houses and bought others, creating wetlands and green space. Some people may think the city only responds to disasters, Redick said. But emergency managers need to “anticipate, train, plan and exercise for disasters, such as hurricanes, storms, acts of terrorism and the impact of climate change.” Meeting people where they are is another major goal, he said. “Not everybody has the wherewithal or the resources to prepare for a disaster,” Redick said. “They might be experiencing disasters on a daily basis. For some people, a power outage might be an inconvenience. For others, it might be the loss of their major food source. “We have to find out who they are and where they are,” Redick said. One way is by going out in the community and connecting with civic and faith leaders. Religious communities play a large role in post-disaster help, he said, but it’s important to build a relationship with them beforehand, so they can be incorporated into planning and training. “The crucial thing is building trust.” Redick, who is serving a three-year term on the FEMA council, also is a member of Virginia’s Secure and Resilient Commonwealth Panel. He said his master’s degree in public administration helped prepare him to be a jack-of-all-trades. “It allowed me to be successful working with different parts of government.” Redick is a regular adjunct instructor in the M.P.A. program. Last semester, he taught Local Government Management. “The quality of the students is fantastic,” Redick said. “I present the information, observe their critical thinking skills and enjoy the conversation.”

- Philip Walzer

2000s

Mode5 last year was named the 17th best small company to work for in the state by Virginia Business magazine and Best Companies Group. The 22-year-old Norfolk-based business, which specializes in managed IT and cloud solutions, is led by Luke Downing ’01, president of sales and finance, and Matt Bakey ’01, president of service.

A double honor for Dru Riddle (M.S.N. ’02): Riddle last year became president of the American Association of Nurse Anesthesiology. He also was appointed to the Texas Board of Nursing. Riddle is associate professor of professional practice and director of clinical education at Texas Christian University School of Nurse Anesthesia in Fort Worth, Texas. Christopher Johnson (Ed.S. ’04) took over as principal of Warren County Middle School in Virginia in July. Johnson, a longtime assistant principal who’s been in education for 25 years, started his career teaching high school history in Chesapeake.

Kenbridge Construction Co. in Virginia has promoted Michael R. Bender ’05 to vice president. Bender had been working in project management for Kenbridge since 2016.

Meghan Bernier ’06 was promoted this year to clinical supervisor at Recovery Centers of America (RCA) Capital Region. She previously helped develop the Healing Arts Program for Wounded Warriors on the Peninsula in Virginia.

Gina Clayton ’08 was named both Surry High School Teacher of the Year and Surry County’s Teacher of the Year. Clayton, an English teacher who grew up in Surry County, says, “Learning is a treasure that will follow its owner everywhere.”

Seth Seaman ’08 was ordained a deacon last May in Richmond, a milestone on his way toward entering the priesthood. In an interview in The Catholic Virginian, Seaman said he looked forward to preaching, proclaiming the gospel and ministering to families during funerals and baptisms.

Crissy Lynn (M.Ed. ’10) was named Teacher of the Year for Henrico County Public Schools in Virginia. “My heart of hearts is right here in the kindergarten classroom, starting these students off with a love of learning,” said Lynn, who teaches at Shady Grove Elementary School.

Matthew Osborn (M.E.M. ’10) was appointed president and CEO of
TOWN-N-GOWN CONNECTS COMMUNITIES

“Town” represents local residents. “Gown” refers to the members of Old Dominion University. The “N” in between? That’s for “national defense forces.”

For nearly 60 years, Town-N-Gown has connected these groups to benefit all.

“It’s a joy to bring other people into the ODU community and to get to hobnob with all walks of life,” says Wilma Robinson (M.S.Ed. ’70), a member for more than 45 years and former treasurer.

Town-N-Gown, which began in 1965 as a committee of the Faculty Wives Club, annually provides a scholarship to an ODU student and grants of about $5,000 to University projects. Activities for members include outings to the Virginia International Tattoo, women's basketball games and picnics at the baseball stadium.

The club's president, retired Navy Cmdr. Pamela McNaught, hopes to strengthen connections with the military. “Twenty-five percent of our campus is military-affiliated,” she says. “I don’t think we capitalize on that as much as we should.”

Membership costs $25 a year for a single person or a couple.

For more information, email townngownodu@yahoo.com or call 757-683-5759.

CHRISTIAN LITWILLER ’09, an attorney and former Navy helicopter pilot, and his brother, Jonathan, an attorney and former Secret Service agent, launched Huntsman Security Group last April. Huntsman, based in Norfolk, and Central, Colo., specializes in residential and commercial security. “Our passion is bringing our professional no-fail experiences to our communities,” Christian says.

NICKOLE R. KINT ’11 was promoted to partner and shareholder at Wall, Einhorn, & Chernitzer in Norfolk. She is co-leader of the firm’s recruitment team. Kint also serves on the board of Susan G. Komen, Central and Eastern Virginia.

NOURA ALLEN (M.S.Ed. ’12) was a residence hall director at Syracuse University in New York a decade ago. Allen returned to Syracuse last April as director of diversity and inclusive excellence.

REBECCA DOUGLAS ’12 was named the Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command (NAVFAC) Atlantic Supervisor of the Year for 2022. Since 2021, she’s been supervisory contract specialist and manager of the design and construction/asset management contracts branch.

CHIKITA PETERSON ’12 was named Teacher of the Year at Riverdale Elementary School in Southampton County. Peterson, who teaches reading in the third grade, has been in front of the classroom for 10 years.

Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command Mid-Atlantic named CHARLES STANTON JR. (M.E.M. ’12) its Civilian Engineer of the Year for 2023. Stanton, a construction engineer there since 2009, serves as the supervisory civil engineer in project management.

CMDR. JAMES STEELE (M.E.M. ’12) took over as commanding officer of Navy Talent Acquisition Group (NTAG) Portland in January 2022. He was previously executive officer of USS Kansas City and NTAG Portland.
Patrick Tompkins (Ph.D. ’13) was chosen last year to lead NHTI, a community college in Concord, N.H. Tompkins previously served as a vice president at Eastern Shore Community College and dean at Thomas Nelson Community College, now known as Virginia Peninsula Community College.

Raymond Haynes (Ph.D. ’14) became superintendent of Hampton City Schools in Virginia last July. Haynes, who has been with the school system for nearly 30 years, previously served as chief of secondary school leadership.

Meredith Keating White (M.S.Ed. ’16) was promoted to executive director of campus life and student involvement at Mercer University in Georgia last summer. Keating White previously was interim coordinator for engagement with ODU’s Office of Leadership and Student Involvement.

Jude Brenya ’17 last spring became a voice for the Virginia Beach Police Department as its new public information officer. Brenya told ODUSports in 2012: “I want to help people and help my community, so I would like to become a police officer or a federal agent.”

If you want to find out more about historical Black entertainment spots in Gloucester, talk to Randall Hazard ’17. They were the focal point of his research last year as one of the first African American Fellows at Preservation Virginia, a private organization seeking to promote and support historic sites.

Courtney Wooley (M.S.Ed. ’17) was selected Teacher of the Year for Isle of Wight County and Windsor Elementary School. She is an Isle of Wight native and has taught special education for 10 years.

Mary Bell (Ph.D. ’18) last year joined Dakota State University in South Dakota as dean of The Beacom College of Computer and Cyber Sciences. Bell, who served in the Army for 20 years, previously was professor and faculty department head of Operational Art and Campaign Planning at the National Defense University at Joint Forces Staff College.
Cats are everywhere at Cups & Claws Cat Café in Newport News – nestled in nooks, perched in laps, slinking along the floor and walking across tables. One climbed on my shoulder as I spoke with owner Kim C. Zettel (M.L.I.S. ’15), a former teacher and librarian who opened the café in August 2022.

“Our mission, honestly, is two words: community and cats,” Zettel said.

For the felines, who come from local shelters and rescue organizations, the café is “a magical place where they can roam without being in a cage, feel safe again and learn to love.”

The humans, she said, benefit from a “cage-free experience” with the cats, as well as through interactions with other people. Café visits can help fill an emotional gap for students and military personnel missing their pets.

Matchmaking is Zettel’s ultimate goal. In the café’s first year, more than 300 cats were adopted. The day I visited, Rudolph, Clarice and Terry – Zettel is on a first-name basis with all of them – moved to what she calls “fur-ever homes.”

Twenty-six cats remained, wandering through the shop. Noelle – the one who used me as a steppingstone – was found in a hotel room with 16 other cats. “At first, she would jump at every noise she heard,” Zettel said. “But she’s gotten more comfortable being around people.”

The others included Besley, a recent arrival, and Pumpkin, the youngest, at 10 weeks old. Security cameras monitor them 24 hours a day.

Zettel’s husband, Philip, a retired Navy Seabee, designed many of the cat amenities, including a ladder that stretches horizontally near the ceiling. The café hosts cat yoga, open mic nights and “paws and paint” nights. Individual visits cost $5 to $10. An annual $395 membership offers unlimited visits, as well as discounts on food and drinks.

Lauren Grochmal has an annual membership and visits twice a week. “Sometimes I just go to decompress, lie on the couch, let the kittens run all over me and talk to Kim,” she said. “It’s got a very lounge-y, retro feel, which I like. You can’t be unhappy there.”

To learn more, go to cupsandclaws.com or the café’s social media pages.

- Philip Walzer

2020s

As VP of nursing, Dixie Aune (Ph.D. ’20) oversees hundreds of nurses at HealthFirst’s Holmes Regional Medical Center, the largest hospital in Brevard County, Fla. Aune is a former labor and delivery nurse in the Navy.

Benjamin M. Diggs (Ed.S. ’20), an assistant principal at Stafford High School, was named Virginia’s 2023 Outstanding Secondary School Assistant Principal. He’s “an exceptional leader and sincere role model for students and staff,” Stafford Superintendent Thomas W. Taylor said. Diggs even subbed for a sick bus driver to take students on a field trip.

Ethan Crouson (M.B.A. ’21) gathers data and provides analysis on the region’s business environment in his new role as director of business intelligence for the Hampton Roads Alliance in Virginia. At ODU, Crouson served as a graduate assistant for the Dragas Center for Economic Analysis and Policy.

Melvin Roy ’22 was appointed by Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin in September to the State Executive Council for Children’s Services. Roy, an advocate for foster children and young adults, is the founder and CEO of Foster-U. He works as a customer success associate for Prolegis in Washington, which provides tools and resources targeted to public policy.

Jasmine Tutt ’22 received the Homer L. Ferguson Award at the March 2023 commencement ceremony at Newport News Shipbuilding’s Apprentice School in Virginia. The award goes to the apprentice with the highest combined average in academics and crafts. She’s the first Black woman to receive the honor.

Jessica Woodyard (M.P.A. ’22) was promoted to development director at Make-A-Wish Greater Virginia, where she had been regional development officer. Woodyard was previously at Girl Scouts of the Colonial Coast and the Virginia Air & Space Center.
IN MEMORIAM

Received May 1, 2022 – July 11, 2023

Mary C. Meade '40 of Norfolk, Va., 5/14/23
Hyman Brooke '42 of Norfolk, Va., 10/9/22
Paul N. Lesner '42 of Norfolk, Va., 4/18/23
Joseph Segal '42 of Norfolk, Va., 6/28/22
Hyman Cohen '43 of Virginia Beach, Va., 10/2/22
Robert J. Ewald '46 of Suffolk, Va., 4/18/22
Dr. John A. Morris '46 of Norfolk, Va., 9/17/22
Dorothy B. Kelly '47 of Winston-Salem, N.C., 11/1/22
Lawrence I. Brenner '48 of Norfolk, Va., 8/3/22
Josephine M. West '48 of Moyock, N.C., 3/25/23
W. Curtis Estes Jr. '49 of Virginia Beach, Va., 1/11/23
Charles H. “Sonny” Legum '49 of Suffolk, Va., 3/25/23
Phyllis H. Eggleston '50 of Norfolk, Va., 3/11/23
Leonard “Lenny” Laiibstain '50 of Norfolk, Va., 4/26/23
Natalie M. Aron '51 of Norfolk, Va., 6/2/22
Burnley R. Doxey Jr. '51 of Newport News, Va., 11/6/22
Virginia C. Zau '51 of Virginia Beach, Va., 8/13/22
Floyd W. Craig Jr. '52 of Soddy-Daisy, Tenn., 1/26/23
Billie D. Merritt '52 of Virginia Beach, Va., 12/6/22
Charles H. Walker Jr. '52 of Atlantic Beach, Fla., 6/4/22
Frank L. Hawkins '53 of Portsmouth, Va., 4/18/22
Daniel G. Fleming '54 of Portsmouth, Va., 8/17/22
Ronald “Buddy” Cline '55 of Suffolk, Va., 6/25/23
Rev. Lewis H. Morgan '55 of Newport News, Va., 2/5/23
Morris H. Bell Jr. '56 of Virginia Beach, Va., 2/2/23
Randall D. Gibson '56 of Rockville, Md., 6/24/22
Dr. Harry E. Ramsey Jr. '56 of Norfolk, Va., 3/4/23
Clarence Swanner Jr. '56 of Alexandria, Va., 12/23/22
Corlett W. Burrus Jr. '57 of Virginia Beach, Va., 6/25/23
Barbara F. Copeland '57 of Grafton, Va., 3/10/23
George R. Webb '57 of Norfolk, Va., 10/19/22
Edward S. Crowson '58 of Suffolk, Va., 1/21/23
Leonard J. Deryder Jr. '58 of Hampton, Va., 4/3/23
Ruth J. Griffith '58 of Roswell, Ga., 4/9/23
Nancy Midgette '58 of Glen Allen, Va., 4/26/23
Donald M. Oglesby '58 of Virginia Beach, Va., 7/24/22
Coulbourn H. Tyler '58 of Gloucester, Va., 5/27/23
Ida F. Barrett '59 of Tomball, Texas, 3/1/23
Patricia DeHart '59 of Virginia Beach, Va., 5/10/22
Col. Gerald W. Musselman, USAF (Ret) '59 of Summerville, S.C., 4/2/23
Rupert G. Owens '59 of Virginia Beach, Va., 12/24/22
Norman “Tony” A. South Sr. '59 (M.S.Ed. '70) of Virginia Beach, Va., 5/27/23
William T. Waff '59 of Norfolk, Va., 2/8/23
Dabney B. Hawkins Jr. '60 of Norfolk, Va., 2/17/23
Raymond J. Mattes Jr. '60 of Norfolk, Va., 12/10/22
Carolyn D. Sanders '60 of Fort Pierce, Fla., 6/14/23
Carol A. Williams '60 of Virginia Beach, Va., 9/16/22
Richard E. Abbott '61 of Norfolk, Va., 2/6/23
James T. Baker '61 (M.A. '83) of Norfolk, Va., 6/4/23
Carolyn H. LeDuc '61 of Hampton, Va., 4/15/22
William G. Ray '61 of Richmond, Va., 2/10/23
Martha E. Ryals '61 (M.S.Ed. '71) of Suffolk, Va., 1/6/23
Gypsy J. Savvides '61 of Virginia Beach, Va., 5/26/23
Robert A. Scellato (A.A.S. '61) of Bargersville, Ind., 3/3/23
Kathleen F. Williamson '61 (M.S.Ed. '77) of Norfolk, Va., 2/15/23
Gail G. Anthony '62 of Norfolk, Va., 4/22/22
Edward F. Dozier Jr. '62 of Chesapeake, Va., 11/11/22
Ernest M. Ellis Jr. '62 (M.S.Ed. '69) of Suffolk, Va., 8/28/22
Bette A. Haste '62 (M.Ed. '70) of Virginia Beach, Va., 8/26/22
Bess L. Melvin '62 of Norfolk, Va., 10/6/22
Nelson R. Arnold '63 of Norfolk, Va., 7/6/22
Robert L. Bunting '63 (M.S.Ed. '73) of Chesapeake, Va., 7/16/22
Richard W. Calfee '63 of Portsmouth, Va., 6/6/22
Philip T. Garrett '63 of Newport News, Va., 6/6/22
Wanda W. Hare '63 (M.S. '76) of Norfolk, Va., 2/16/23
Robert J. Mancuso '63 of Raleigh, N.C., 12/18/22
Linwood L. Nelms Jr. '63 of Chesapeake, Va., 1/8/23
Marie Cockrell '64 of Norfolk, Va., 1/12/23
Richard J. Garris '64 (M.S.Ed. '72) of Virginia Beach, Va., 4/18/22
Thomas N. Hartz '64 of Norfolk, Va., 7/14/22
Karl W. Stevens Jr. '64 of Norfolk, Va., 1/25/23
Anita Z. Unger '64 of Norfolk, Va., 8/14/22
Merrill P. Ablowich '65 of Virginia Beach, Va., 7/27/22
E. Richard Bowler III '65 of Scottsdale, Ariz., 10/19/22
Mildred B. Doehrer '65 of Fort Wayne, Ind., 8/20/22
Errol J. Donohue '65 of Aubrey, Texas, 5/8/22
Libbie B. Kaplan '65 (M.S.Ed. '71) of Sarasota, Fla., 1/25/23
Gary E. Knapp (M.S.Ed. '65 of Canton, N.C., 12/8/22
Drucilla U. Powell '65 of Norfolk, Va., 12/17/22
June B. Rayle '65 of Midland, Mich., 5/10/22
Louise M. White '65 of Virginia Beach, Va., 5/27/22
Janet L. Winslow '65 of Norfolk, Va., 10/21/22
Arthur H. Cleghorn '66 of Norfolk, Va., 10/13/22
Sherry B. Hatfield '66 of Virginia Beach, Va., 10/10/22
Elizabeth L. Percefull '66 of Suffolk, Va., 10/28/22
W. Daniel Burton Jr. '67 of Virginia Beach, Va., 2/13/23
Herbert B. Alcox Jr. '67 of Yorktown, Va., 4/14/22
Robert D. Craft (M.B.A. '67) of Johnson City, Tenn., 8/30/22
Nancy E. Christian '67 of Richmond, Va., 11/30/22
Carol B. Cutchins '67 (M.S.Ed. '82, Ph.D. '95) of Yorktown, Va., 5/15/22
Linda W. Eggleston '67 (M.S.Ed. '86, C.A.S. '96) of Virginia Beach, Va., 5/31/23
Raymond R. Everett '67 of Charlotte, N.C., 9/3/22
Gerald W. Hackett (C.A.S. '67) of Virginia Beach, Va., 1/26/23
A wise soul who ‘put people first,’ at home and at work

On their last date, days before he died, Naudra-Rowel Britt and her husband talked in their car for three hours after going out to dinner. That wasn't unusual.

“We would talk every day at length,” Rowel-Britt said. “He was one of the most intelligent people I have ever been blessed with knowing.”

Rowel-Britt described her husband, who majored in philosophy at Old Dominion University, as a “deep thinker” fluent in the Bible, history and international events. “He was also interested in how money played a part in the U.S. and how the banking system operated.”

Britt, who initially planned to major in music, learned to play the piano when he was 8. When Rowel-Britt first heard him at his family's home in Suffolk, Va., “he played full-on classical music. I was like, ‘Whoa! OK, I found my husband.’” They began dating in 1997 when both were at ODU. They married in 2000 and moved to Annapolis, Md., where Britt worked in teaching and social service jobs, including as middle school music teacher and director of the Boys & Girls Club. “He especially connected with teenagers,” Rowel-Britt said. “A lot of them were drawn to him, and he gave them amazing advice.”

His last job was at an alternative school for teenagers with disabilities. Britt helped craft individualized lesson plans. “Parents begged to work with him,” said Rowel-Britt, who is a special-education teacher.

“He cared almost to a fault about things,” she said. “If he had a student who wasn’t doing well or one of his children was struggling with something, he’d carry that very heavy on his spirit.” Rowel-Britt called him “an amazing husband and father” to four children. In 2009, the Britts took in three nieces after their mother died. “He didn’t even think twice about it,” Rowel-Britt said. “Of course they can live here,” he said. And we raised them and got them through college.

“He put people first. He led with love. He believed in living in a way that pleased the most high God,’ as he would say.”

- Philip Walzer
A ‘Renaissance man’ who loved a good book and wide-open skies

From flying to fly-fishing, Gary Harney’s life was a movable feast he was keen to share with friends and family.

“He was a worldwide traveler and met lots of interesting people,” Kathleen “Leeny” Hoyle said of her husband, a career pilot and avid outdoorsman who died on May 6, 2023.

“The knowledge Gary shared was invaluable as was his friendship,” wrote a fly-fishing friend from Florida in an online tribute. “Blue skies and tailwinds, my friend,” wrote another. “It was always a pleasure to talk with you.”

Harney got his bachelor’s in history from Old Dominion University in 1975 but found his career in the skies, following the contrails of his father, who was also a professional pilot, according to Hoyle.

He flew cargo, charter and regional aircraft and for airlines such as Idaho’s Gem State and California’s Golden Gate from the late 1970s to early 80s. In 1982, he signed with Piedmont Airlines, which became part of American Airlines. Harney rose to senior captain and spent the last five years of his career flying transatlantic routes until his retirement in 2017.

Overseas flights enabled him to reconnect with his familial roots in Ireland, splurge on Powers whiskey and attend The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo in Scotland, Hoyle said.

Aerial firefighting was an early passion that Harney returned to after retirement. From the pilot seat of the lead air attack plane or a tanker, Harney dropped fire retardant on wildfires across the country, including California, Oregon and Alaska, Hoyle said. A grove of memorial trees is to be planted in the Sequoia National Forest in his name.

Since the early 1990s, Harney had lived in Cody, Wyoming, which gave him proximity to many wild places where he hunted elk and upland game birds and fly-fished. Friends called him “the Renaissance man,” Hoyle said. A voracious reader of Jim Harrison, Cormac McCarthy and Rick Bass, Harney resembled another of his favorite writers: Ernest Hemingway.

And as a devoted Deadhead, Harney rarely missed an opportunity to see his favorite band: The Grateful Dead. “He even framed the tickets from the last concert (in 1995 at Soldier Field in Chicago),” Hoyle said.

Music was a love they shared. The last concert they attended was an intimate, outdoor performance in Montana by a Virginia native, Bruce Hornsby, in August 2022 – a birthday gift from Hoyle to Harney.

- Victoria Bourne
IN MEMORIAM

Thomas M. Gengler ’73 of Virginia Beach, Va., 4/25/22
Michael D. Goulet ’73 of St. Marys, Ga., 11/29/22
Vergie B. Huggins ’73 of Fairhope, Ala., 6/21/23
Raymond H. Kerlin Jr. ’73 of Winchester, Va., 11/6/22
Donald W. Nienkirk ’73 of Suffolk, Va., 5/1/22
Sherman R. Roser (M.B.A. ’73) of Waite Park, Minn., 1/13/23
Sylvia L. Roughton ’73 (M.A. ’87) of Spokane, Wash., 4/11/23
Joseph L. Shutz ’73 of Clinton, Md., 3/16/23
Lucy Z. Sizemore ’73 of Virginia Beach, Va., 9/16/22
Early W. Spiers ’73 of College Station, Texas, 4/6/23
Sandra B. Spivey ’73 (M.S.Ed. ’82) of Windsor, Va., 7/17/22
Pauline M. Wagner (M.S. ’73) of Reston, Va., 3/16/23
Mary L. Artis (M.S.Ed. ’74) of Chesapeake, Va., 4/20/22
Marian B. Benn (M.S.Ed. ’74) of Sun City West, Ariz., 5/17/22
Brenda E. Berry ’74 of Norfolk, Va., 1/16/22
Lynn M. Blevins ’74 of Chesapeake, Va., 6/7/22
Curtiss A. Breland ’74 (M.S.Ed. ’95) of Virginia Beach, Va., 9/22/22
Albert H. Burlamacchi ’74 of Virginia Beach, Va., 11/12/22
James M. Culliton Jr. (M.B.A. ’74) of Suffolk, Va., 5/1/22
Michael W. Dunstan ’74 of Virginia Beach, Va., 5/3/22
Eugene E. Echols II ’74 of Saltillo, Miss., 5/10/22
Wallace Green Jr. ’74 of Norfolk, Va., 8/10/22
Donald L. Griffin ’74 of West Palm Beach, Fla., 8/9/22
William H. “Billy” Halprin ’74 of Norfolk, Va., 6/4/23
Toni R. Harbage ’74 (M.S.Ed. ’82) of Newport News, Va., 8/6/22
Karim E. Klenke-Hamel ’74 (M.S. ’77, Ph.D. ’82) of Richmond, Va., 11/22
John R. Krezel (M.E. ’74) of Moseley, Va., 4/26/23
Col. Edward L. Lieland Jr., USMC (Ret) ’74 of Virginia Beach, Va., 6/13/22
Stephen C. Schemering ’74 of Wilmington, N.C., 12/24/22
William J. Shukis Sr. (M.S.Ed. ’74) of Virginia Beach, Va., 5/30/23
Thomas C. Shuman ’74 of Charlottesville, Va., 1/8/23
Deborah L. Smith ’74 of Virginia Beach, Va., 1/30/23
William V. Torbert (M.S.Ed. ’74) of Portsmouth, Va., 12/31/22
Robert W. Baird III ’75 of Rising Sun, Md., 6/8/22
Herman W. Bates Jr. ’75 of Portsmouth, Va., 5/8/23
Elizabeth B. Bennett ’75 of Vero Beach, Fla., 5/13/22
Susan T. Beverly (M.S.Ed. ’75) of Virginia Beach, Va., 3/14/23
Michael Callow ’75 of Tacoma, Wash., 9/21/22
Bobby C. Crowder (A.A. ’75) of Norfolk, Va., 5/1/23
Cmndr. M. Kenneth Geros, USN (Ret) ’75 (M.U.S. ’78) of Virginia Beach, Va., 1/7/23
Charles L. Gibson II ’75 of Norfolk, Va., 10/10/22
Winston R. Goodenwell ’75 of Hampton, Va., 10/14/22
Charles M. Honour III ’75 of Springfield, Va., 12/31/22
Harvey E. Jones ’75 of Norfolk, Va., 2/5/23
Gloria B. Kincaid ’75 (M.S.Ed. ’79) of Portsmouth, Va., 2/27/23
Capt. James A. Mulligan Jr., USN (Ret) (M.P.A. ’75) of Chesapeake, Va., 1/18/23
Billy B. Ricks ’75 (M.S.Ed. ’81) of Fairfax, Va., 2/10/23
David E. Thiel ’75 of Williamsburg, Va., 7/5/22
Donald L. Van Hoose ’75 of Marion, Ind., 7/16/22
David J. Walker Sr. ’75 of Virginia Beach, Va., 5/20/23
Frank W. Backs Jr. ’76 of Williamsburg, Va., 1/25/23
Barbara A. Blount ’76 of Virginia Beach, Va., 3/2/23
Gary L. Britton ’76 of Virginia Beach, Va., 7/13/22
Susan N. Brown ’76 of Rock Hill, S.C., 6/9/22
Judith H. Darden (M.Ed. ’76) of Yorktown, Va., 1/19/23
Elizabeth B. Fountain ’76 of Arlington, Va., 3/29/23
Joseph W. Goy (M.S. ’76) of Potsdam, N.Y., 6/14/23
Charles M. Greenhood ’76 of Portsmouth, Va., 8/30/22
Jeanette B. Hilton ’76 of Virginia Beach, Va., 9/26/22
Cmdr. Andrew J. Minkowski, USN (Ret) (M.S.Ed. ’76) of Virginia Beach, Va., 11/12/22
Danny W. Williamson (M.B.A. ’76) of Franklin, Tenn., 11/10/22
Ann R. Blood ’77 (M.S.Ed. ’76) of Virginia Beach, Va., 12/16/22
Mary L. Dealy ’77 (M.S.Ed. ’97) of Lexington, Va., 12/16/22
Elizabeth R. Dunlap (M.S.Ed. ’77) of West Point, Va., 4/21/23
Jack W. Hensley ’77 of Scottsboro, Ala., 8/3/22
Earl J. Kirby III ’77 of Maui, Hawaii, 12/29/21
Stephan E. Knott ’77 (Ph.D. ’16) of Arden, N.C., 8/4/22
Hugh E. Mauldin Jr. (M.S.Ed. ’77) of Williamsburg, Va., 6/14/22
John T. McLaughlin ’77 of Virginia Beach, Va., 8/5/22
Cecelia S. Rochevot ’77 of Chesapeake, Va., 5/28/22
Hugh E. Spivey ’77 of Portsmouth, Va., 1/6/23
Jerome E. Stephens ’77 of Virginia Beach, Va., 7/30/22
AnnaMarie Tarr (M.A. ’77) of Virginia Beach, Va., 7/27/22
Doris W. Unser (M.S.Ed. ’77) of Chesapeake, Va., 8/26/22
Nancy S. Wilkinson ’77 of Odenton, Md., 2/7/23
Margaret G. Williams ’77 of Hampton Va., 5/28/23
Ann W. Worley ’77 of Norfolk, Va., 1/19/23
Doris D. Crocker (M.S.Ed. ’78) of Newport News, Va., 7/5/22
Elizabeth E. Fuller ’78 of Orange, Va., 5/28/22
Neal H. McCaskill Jr. ’78 of Suffolk, Va., 7/9/22
Mary Ann D. Pate ’78 of Williamsburg, Va., 6/18/22
Hilda K. Pool ’78 of Alexandria, Va., 10/8/22
William S. Thornton ’78 of Chesapeake, Va., 12/24/22
R. John Bartley ’79 (M.B.A. ’82) of Suffolk, Va., 8/24/22
Patricia A. Bellay (M.S.Ed. ’79) of McLean, Va., 4/28/23
Rosa A. Blanco (M.S.Ed. ’79) of Virginia Beach, Va., 8/22/22
Edmund M. Blanks Jr. ’79 of Hampton, Va., 1/2/23
Edward L. Cabaniss (M.B.A. ’79) of Daytona Beach, Fla., 8/28/22
Ruth L. Campau (M.S.N. ’79) of Norfolk, Va., 10/12/22
Vivian B. Clements (M.S.Ed. ’79) of Portsmouth, Va., 3/26/23
Steven G. Dodge (M.U.S. ’79) of Richmond, Va., 5/19/22
Pamela P. Ford ’79 of Virginia Beach, Va., 7/22/22
Richard L. Gillerlain ’79 of Carrollton, Va., 6/8/22
Tammie R. Grayson ’79 (M.S.Ed. ’89) of Fredericksburg, Va., 6/9/22
IN MEMORIAM

Thomas E. Hilton Jr. '79 of Suffolk, Va., 11/24/22
Carolyn H. Josey (M.S.Ed. '79) of Virginia Beach, Va., 3/22/23
Steven R. Linton '79 of Williamsburg, Va., 7/25/22
Alf J. Mapp III '79 (M.A. '89) of Portsmouth, Va., 8/12/22
Carol A. Miller '79 of Levittown, Pa., 11/28/22
Jo Ann L. Rawls '79 of Lawrenceville, Ga., 5/5/23
Sylvia S. Redding (M.S.Ed. '79) of Macon, Ga., 1/14/23
Robert P. Russell '79 of Cape May, N.J., 5/24/22
Lisa F. Saunders '79 of Shutesbury, Mass., 5/13/22
James R. Spacek (M.B.A. '79, M.E. '82) of Portsmouth, Va., 2/1/23
Robert D. Squires '79 of Midlothian, Va., 6/17/22
William H. Stickles '79 of Butler, Pa., 12/31/22
Harry M. Townsend '79 of Chesapeake, Va., 1/25/23
Sally W. Foraker '80 of Norfolk, Va., 5/28/33
Jane B. Hosay (M.A. '80) of Norfolk, Va., 7/8/22
Phyllis J. Jackson '80 of Virginia Beach, Va., 3/28/23
Karen P. Jones '80 (M.S.Ed. '85) of Chesapeake, Va., 2/5/23
Steven F. Kauder '80 of Chesapeake, Va., 1/4/23
Margaret L. Lassiter '80 of Ravenswood, W.Va., 1/14/23
Elizabeth S. Lyon '80 of Emporia, Va., 6/20/22
Phyllis O. Munford (M.L.S. '80) of Norfolk, Va., 8/1/2021
Susan M. O'Brien '80 of Asheville, N.C., 5/30/23
Cynthia J. Pine '80 of Norfolk, Va., 6/14/22
Douglas W. Smith '80 of Alexandria, Va., 3/11/23
Robert J. Trammell (M.A. '80) of Middlesex, N.C., 9/4/22
Ronald H. Wirt Jr. '80 of Hampton, Va., 12/6/22
Alexander A. Beiro Jr. '81 of Alexandria, Va., 11/19/22
Alvene W. Buckley (M.U.S. '81) of Chesapeake, Va., 5/1/22
Beverly A. Cuva '81 of Cohoes, N.Y., 1/9/23
Douglas C. DeHority '81 of Norfolk, Va., 3/23/22
Dr. Peter A. Drew (M.S. '81) of Gainesville, Fla., 1/8/23
John J. Hollowed Sr. (M.S. '81) of Arlington Heights, Ill., 2/21/23
Claudia Holt (M.S.Ed. '81) of Virginia Beach, Va., 4/17/23
Nancy L. McAdoo '81 of Virginia Beach, Va., 8/19/22
Lynn A. Sulyma '81 of Hurnell, N.Y., 5/19/23
Anita L. Turner '81 of Chesapeake, Va., 8/15/22
George H. Murray Sr. '81 of Virginia Beach, Va., 11/17/22
Ernestine White (M.S.Ed. '81) of Gretna, Va., 4/22/23
Cmdr. Andrew L. Andre, USN (Ret) (M.B.A. '82) of Williamsburg, Va., 7/27/22
Glenman B. Eaton '82 of Cantonment, Fla., 6/28/22
Capt. James R. Fuqua Jr., USN (Ret) (M.B.A. '82) of Virginia Beach, Va., 7/10/22
Delwyn D. Hutto (M.S.Ed. '82) of Chesapeake, Va., 1/27/23
Ruth T. Johnson (M.S.Ed. '82) of Portsmouth, Va., 12/23/22
Harold A. Ostrum '82 of Camp Hill, Pa., 8/22/22
Dolores A. Peirsol '82 of Norfolk, Va., 7/7/22
Irene K. Perkins '82 of Chesapeake, Va., 5/18/23
Leo J. Pfeiffer '82 of Springfield, Fla., 4/9/22
Martha A. Quandt '82 of Carmel, Ind., 7/31/22
Andrew R. Sebacher '82 of Machipongo, Va., 10/11/22
Mary E. Silvia (M.S.N. '82) of Virginia Beach, Va., 4/16/22
Eva C. Towell '82 of Newport News, Va., 1/31/23
Michael K. Wang '82 of Norfolk, Va., 10/17/22
Maj. Ronald W. Adams, USA (Ret) '83 of Cambridge, Md., 2/7/23
Nancy L. Ashby (M.S.Ed. '83) of Onancock, Va., 11/17/22
Faith D. Atkinson (M.S.Ed. '83) of Franklin, Va., 12/4/22
John F. Dixon (M.S.Ed. '83) of Abingdon, Va., 5/7/22
Nancy S. Flippen (M.A. '83) of Norfolk, Va., 2/11/23
Waverly G. Hampton Jr. '83 (M.E. '99, Ph.D. '20) of Norfolk, Va., 5/8/22
James R. Lawson '83 of Potomac Falls, Va., 9/7/22
Alfred W. "Pete" Magee '83 of Alamosa, Colo., 5/15/23
Christy P. Moore '83 of McKinney, Texas, 7/13/22
Cynthia H. White '83 of Hampton, Va., 11/14/22
Beverly R. Brooks '84 of Columbia, S.C., 10/22/22
Charles F. Clay '84 of Williamsburg, Va., 6/12/22
Maria J. Griffin (M.P.A. '84) of Greensboro, N.C., 2/9/23
Suzanne Hassell (M.S. '84) of Greensboro, N.C., 10/25/22
Rosemarie C. McCadden (M.S.Ed. '84) of Chesapeake, Va., 2/28/23
Eleanor L. Miller '84 of Portsmouth, Va., 1/10/23
Kiran C. Parekh '84 of Uncasville, Conn., 8/22/22
Inger B. Pincus (M.F.A. '84) of Chesapeake, Va., 2/7/23
Elaina A. Day '85 of Hampton, Va., 4/29/23
Lisa D. Facemire (M.S.Ed. '85) of Virginia Beach, Va., 10/18/22
Jean C. Gulick (M.A. '85) of Virginia Beach, Va., 12/14/22
Gregory L. Mahan '85 of Norfolk, Va., 9/4/22
Annette J. Marable '85 of Cleveland, Ohio, 10/7/22
Roland McLendon Jr. '85 (M.B.A. '87) of Virginia Beach, Va., 11/1/22
Jeffrey J. Bliemel '86 (M.S. '90) of Deltaville, Va., 11/16/22
Sean S. Coughlin '86 of Edmonds, Wash., 11/1/22
Sara B. Mallory (M.S.Ed. '86) of Norfolk, Va., 4/14/23
Angela C. Morgan '86 of McKenney, Va., 2/8/23
Philip J. Murphy '86 of Chesapeake, Va., 4/14/23
Daniel R. Smith '86 (M.S.Ed. '90, Ph.D. '02) of Beaufort, N.C., 10/22/22
Peter J. Stabel '86 of Virginia Beach, Va., 3/26/23
James E. Althouse '87 of Bluefield, W.Va., 6/26/22
Joseph A. Anderson II '87, '97 of Virginia Beach, Va., 3/26/23
Thomas J. Berger (Ph.D. '87) of Raleigh, N.C., 11/16/22
Edgar J. Bjarnason '87 of Vienna, Va., 2/15/23
Diana C. Elks '87 of Rural Retreat, Va., 7/14/22
Larry W. Foilwell '87 of Newport News, Va., 6/24/23
Cmdr. Michael F. Guyer, USN (Ret) '87 of Wells, Maine, 4/29/23
Elaina A. Day '87 of Newport News, Va., 1/9/24
Wendell N. Harding '87 of Spotsylvania County, Va., 5/24/22
Edna R. King '87 of Newport News, Va., 10/21/22
Eva L. Stephenson '87 of Verona, Va., 5/24/22
DJ Nancy Travers loved music and people

Nancy Travers '86 held multiple titles at WKWI: programming director, DJ, morning host and marketing director. “She cued up the tracks, worked the boards, sold the ads,” said her son, Travers Eubank. “You’d have an easier time listing the things she didn’t do.”

For 18 years, Travers worked at the radio station in Kilmarnock, on Virginia’s Northern Neck. “She embraced everyone and everything in our community,” her daughter, AnnGardner Eubank, said. “She considered her listeners her friends, and many of her clients also became her friends.”

Travers died of lung cancer on Jan. 25, 2022. She was 58. She retired in 2021 after receiving her diagnosis. But until the last week of her life, “she was still in communication with them every single day about ads or helping new people learn how to sell them,” her son said.

After graduating from Old Dominion University, where she double majored in English and communication, Travers worked at North Carolina stations, including Beach FM, Dixie 105.7 and 102.5 The Shark.

At WKWI, Travers announced the news headlines every morning. After a while, “she felt she was starting everyone’s day off on a negative note,” AnnGardner Eubank said. “So she came up with the idea of ‘the good news story of the day.’

That spirit also guided Travers’ final year. “She became even more grateful every single day,” her daughter said. “She could spend that year agonizing over what was to come, but she chose to enjoy it. Her positivity was unmatched.”

“One of her biggest gifts to us,” her son said, “was the ability to appreciate a ton of different music.” He recalled riding in the car as a young boy, his mother “playing (rapper) Trick Daddy so loud that the car shook.”

Travers was “incredibly patient and accepting, and she grew more so as time went on,” her son said. “She grew to understand us and our eccentricities more, and she didn’t miss a beat.”

Travers’ daughter added: “She had two kids, but she was a mom to a whole lot more. She was a lot of people’s safe space, a lot of people’s comfort and voice of reason. She was there for everyone.”

- Philip Walzer
IN MEMORIAM

Jill B. Sarver (M.Ed. '93) of Virginia Beach, Va., 9/6/22
Brian K. Wall '93 of Virginia Beach, Va., 2/16/23
Linda A. Walski '93 of Portsmouth, Va., 9/15/22
Fred R. Warren '93 (M.A. '96) of Newport News, Va., 9/19/22
Brandon P. Witcher '93 (M.S.Ed. '95) of Hampton, Va., 3/15/23
Kimberly A. Davis '96 of Virginia Beach, Va., 6/13/23
Gary D. Shulenburgh (M.S.Ed. '96) of Yorktown, Va., 10/20/22
Frank H. Thorn '96 of Hampton, Va., 3/15/23
Kelly A. Woods '96 of Ephratah, N.Y., 9/18/22

Russell E. Sypolt Jr. (M.S.Ed. '97) of Hampton, Va., 6/7/22
Alexander C. Then '97 of Virginia Beach, Va., 5/4/23
Billy W. Godair (M.A.L.S. '98, Ph.D. '01) of Rutland, Vt., 3/20/23
Shelley H. Lanum '98 of Staunton, Va., 6/2/23
Diane M. Perry '98 of Barton, N.Y., 7/9/22
J. David Laudenslager '99 of Norfolk, Va., 1/19/23
Elsie P. Welsted '99 of Norfolk, Va., 4/28/23
Marcus C. Williams (M.S.Ed. '99) of Anniston, Ala., 5/21/23
Ann L. Ball '00, '12 (M.S. '14) of Virginia Beach, Va., 1/4/23
Michael P. Dulinauskas Sr. (M.S.Ed. '00), USAF (Ret) of Virginia Beach, Va., 5/23/22
James C. Robinson Jr. '00 of Norfolk, Va., 6/18/22
Sally A. Sledge (Ph.D. '00) of Virginia Beach and Richmond, Va., 4/29/23
Sheila M. Brady '01 of Virginia Beach, Va., 6/14/22
Richard A. Jones '01 of Newport News, Va., 3/11/23
John O. Little Jr. (M.S.Ed. '01) of Newport News, Va., 2/5/23
Janet Phillips (M.B.A. '01) of Davenport, Fla., 3/29/23
Craig D. Arendt (M.E.M. '02) of Eau Claire, Wis., 10/16/22
George H. Augustus III '02 of Hampton, Va., 5/24/23
NCC William A. Cushing (M.B.A. '02), USN (Ret) of Colorado Springs, Colo., 4/23/22
Cynthia M. Griffith '02 of Stuart, Va., 6/18/22
Crawley O. Hawkins (M.S.Ed. '02) of Lawrenceville, Va., 5/3/23
Robert K. Lewis (M.S.Ed. '02) of Newport News, Va., 9/3/22
Caril J. Neal (M.S.Ed. '02) of Norfolk, Va., 4/15/23
April A. Perry (M.S. '02) of Virginia Beach, Va., 4/13/23
Patricia Zechini '02 of Virginia Beach, Va., 9/17/22
Craig A. Byl '03 of Virginia Beach, Va., 1/31/23
Jeffrey A. Carroll (M.E.M. '03) of Leesburg, Va., 9/7/22
Lakhenia M. Gould '03 (M.A. '06) of Hampton, Va., 12/1/22
Zakkiyah S. Shabazz (M.S.Ed. '03) of Windsor, N.C., 12/5/22
Linda Williams '03 of Virginia Beach, Va., 5/6/22
Aaron Brown Sr. '04 of Chesapeake, Va., 6/25/22
Elizabeth A. Dame '04 of Eufaula, Ala., 5/16/22
Lori L. Jones '04 of Norfolk, Va., 11/6/22
Melinda M. Vooss '04 of Norfolk, Va., 10/23/22
Norman L. Warren Jr. '04 of Norfolk, Va., 5/16/22
Robert H. Anderson '05, '17 of Portsmouth, Va., 6/7/22
Deborah E. Kelley '05 of San Antonio, Texas, 4/28/22
Erin M. Scanlon '05 of Manassas, Va., 6/1/22
Troy A. Decker '06 of Norfolk, Va., 5/8/23
Patricia A. Blessinger '07 of Elkwood, Va., 8/19/22
Tyler N. Haverty '07 of Virginia Beach, Va., 6/28/22
James E. Livingston Sr. '07 (M.S. '12) of Virginia Beach, Va., 2/4/23
Richard A. Thompson '07 of Chesterfield, Va., 11/16/22
Ann M. Wallace '07 of Virginia Beach, Va., 6/7/22
Leslie D. Young II (M.S.N. '07) of Suffolk, Va., 12/12/22
Eufaula, Ala., 5/16/22
Erin M. Scanlon '05 of Virginia Beach, Va., 6/28/22
Taylor C. Klug '12 of Virginia Beach, Va., 5/18/23
Kathleen M. Zechini '12 of Virginia Beach, Va., 5/18/23
Leslie A. Pristas '20 (M.S.Ed. '20) of Glen Allen, Va., 6/1/23
Ashley N. Damron '09 of Glen Allen, Va., 6/1/23
Blair F. Fisher '09 of Virginia Beach, Va., 6/1/23
Tyreice L. Parker '09 of Newport News, Va., 10/1/22
Jennifer M. Gibson '10 of Newport News, Va., 9/26/22

IN MEMORIAM

M.Sgt. Ezra M. Hill Sr., USA (Ret) (HON '08) of Hampton, Va., 5/11/22
Jonathan T. Bowers '13 of Virginia Beach, Va., 6/4/22
Jonathan S. Honey '13 of Alexandria, Va., 3/31/23
Kelley P. Midgett '14 of Norfolk, Va., 7/9/22
Robert F. DeDominick '15 of Virginia Beach, Va., 5/1/23
Aaron van de Graaf '15 of Portsmouth, Va., 4/19/23
Hannah K. Watkins '15 of Virginia Beach, Va., 11/3/22
Jessalyn M. Gallimore '16 of Christiansburg, Va., 12/23/22
James B. McRoy '17 of Williamsburg, Va., 1/9/23
Justin P. Mills '17 of Orlando, Fla., 7/1/22
T. Ladson Webb III '17 (M.E. '18) of Virginia Beach, Va., 6/30/22
Sadie E. Awofeso '18 of Moss Point, Miss., 6/8/23
Charneal E. Cunningham '18 of Norfolk, Va., 5/14/23
Wesley J. Hill '20 of Abingdon, Va., 3/22/23
Taylor C. Klug '20 of Locust Grove, Va., 5/15/22
Lesia L. Pristas '20 (M.S.Ed. '20) of Riner, Va., 6/25/23
Tony Sawyer '20 of Norfolk, Va., 5/9/23

IN MEMORIAM

IN MEMORIAM
Colin E. Box, professor emeritus of community and environmental health, died March 18, 2023. He was 82. Box taught at ODU from 1976 until his retirement in 2007. He served as assistant dean, department chair and graduate program director. Box’s specialty was drug and alcohol treatment and alternative therapies.

His widow, Navy Cmdr. Suzanne J. Wood ’00 (M.S. ’01, Ph.D. ’06), said, “He challenged students’ philosophies of life, and he let students guide his teaching, allowing the ebb and flow of learning to dictate class content. His counsel was often sought by people who told him things they would never have said to anyone else.”

Edward M. Cross, professor emeritus of information systems and decision sciences, died Dec. 8, 2022. He was 88.

Cross taught at Old Dominion from 1969 to 1999. “He served as the department chair several times and left a substantial legacy,” said Ling Li, professor and current chair of the department. “He was instrumental in building the information technology and decision sciences programs. In addition, he recruited and mentored several core faculty members.” Cross, she said, “was a wonderful and an excellent man with a high sense of right and wrong, and he stood up for it. The students loved him and would flock to his classes.”

Leonard E. Dobrin, who helped build Old Dominion’s criminal justice program, died May 26, 2023. He was 86. Dobrin, an associate professor emeritus of sociology and criminal justice, taught at ODU from 1972 until his retirement in 1999.

Mona J.E. Danner, former chair of the Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice, described him as “extremely supportive of junior faculty. He stopped by regularly to ask how we were doing and if there was anything we needed. He often said, ‘You’re the future.’” Among students, Danner said, “he earned rave reviews for his depth of knowledge, attention to organization and detail, and kindness.”

John S. Eck, a former associate vice president for research and graduate studies who laid the groundwork for Old Dominion’s partnership with Jefferson Lab in Newport News, Va., died Dec. 22, 2022. He was 81.

James L. Cox Jr., professor emeritus and former chair of the physics department, said Eck had “great academic instincts and excellent judgment. He was honest, dependable and thoroughly honorable.”

Eck, who worked at ODU from 1989 to 1995, was a physicist who designed a patented baseball bat. As a teacher, “he wanted to engage students in the amazement of the physical world and all of its contradictions,” said his daughter Karen Eck, ODU’s assistant vice president for research.

Gail C. Grisetti, who took a wholistic view of physical therapy and led study abroad trips to improve healthcare in the Dominican Republic, died March 14, 2023. She was 76.

“Gail was so great at teaching us not just the physical therapy piece but how to navigate a therapeutic relationship and build rapport with a patient,” said Britanny Samulski (D.P.T. ’11), a former student who is an assistant professor of rehabilitation sciences.

Grisetti, an associate professor emerita of physical therapy and athletic training, taught at ODU from 1986 until her retirement in 2019 and received the ODU Provost’s Award for Leadership in International Education.

Carol F. Hines, an associate professor of art emerita who brought animation classes to Old Dominion, died March 4, 2023. She was 80.

“Her students really appreciated her and felt like they learned from her,” said David E. Johnson, an associate professor emeritus of art.

Hines, an associate professor of art emerita, worked at ODU from 1968 until her retirement in 2002. Hines served as chair of the department and pioneered anatomy courses, too, said Johnson’s wife, Anne Bousquet ’83, a former adjunct professor of art.

Hines’ husband, Samuel P. Hines Jr., a professor emeritus of English, died in 2020 at the age of 96.

Gilbert R. Hoy, an Eminent Scholar Emeritus and former chair of the physics department, died Jan. 15, 2023. He was 90.

“Gil Hoy was passionate about everything he did,” said Charles Sukenik, professor of physics. “He loved teaching, he loved his research, he was...”
**OBITUARIES**

fanatical about physical fitness, and later in life he pursued his musical interests. He also possessed a wealth of institutional knowledge and was always happy to provide guidance to younger faculty.” Hoy joined ODU in 1980. He retired in 2007 and taught as an adjunct professor until 2011. He was considered a pioneer in Mossbauer spectroscopy.

Vernon “Wes” Lewis Jr. ‘68 (M.S. ’75), an early proponent of online learning in civil engineering technology, died Feb. 6, 2023. “Wes Lewis always put student learning first,” said Carol Considine, a professor of engineering technology. “He was the first person in the department who took a lab class and put it in a distance-learning format. He was an advocate for teaching students the skills they were going to use in their daily careers.”

Lewis served as an assistant professor and senior lecturer at ODU from 1994 until his retirement in 2010. He was director of the civil engineering technology program from 1999 to 2007.

Linda Mihalasky, a former administrative assistant in the provost’s and vice provost’s offices, died June 23, 2023. She was 78. Mihalasky worked at ODU from 1993 to 2008. “She was a conscientious and hard-working employee who was always willing to help with whatever was needed,” Provost Austin Agho’s office said in a statement. Mihalasky also was a Sunday school teacher at Talbot Park Baptist Church in Norfolk, Va.

Kneeland Nesius, who taught in the Department of Biological Sciences for 45 years, died June 2, 2023. He was 81. “Kneeland Nesius was the heart and soul of the biology department,” said Deborah Waller, associate professor of biological sciences. Nesius, who retired in 2018, served as chief department adviser from 1988 to 2005. “He loved teaching biology, and he always had time for students,” said Lytton John Musselman, professor emeritus. Musselman noted that the department established the Kneeland Nesius Most Supportive Colleague Award. “Dr. Nesius was the best teacher there ever was, not to mention one of the kindest,” former student Shannon Dupre wrote in a memorial post.

Reiko SchWab, a former faculty member in counseling who specialized in bereavement and grief support, died May 5, 2023. She was 91. SchWab, an associate professor emerita of educational leadership and counseling, worked at Old Dominion from 1973 until her retirement in 1997. She facilitated a bereaved parents group in Virginia Beach and was active in several counseling associations.

“She was a compassionate, wonderful human being and was so essential to our counseling program,” said Ed Neukrug, a professor of counseling and human services and the Batten Endowed Chair of Counseling.

Gail Stenberg ’94, a former office manager and budget specialist for the Department of Biological Sciences, died July 12, 2023. She was 82. “She was a wonderful supervisor, and the office staff she hired loved her,” said Deborah Waller, associate professor of biological sciences. “She was deeply loved by her many friends for her compassion and the way she pursued a life of integrity with a sense of fun.”

Stenberg also worked for the dean’s office in the College of Sciences, Waller said, and housed international students. “She enjoyed learning about them, their countries and customs, and she loved introducing them to her world.”

William H. Thornton ’47 (M.E. ’72), an associate professor emeritus of engineering technology who taught until he was 92, died March 3, 2023. He was 98.

“I wanted to teach the way Bill did,” said John Hackworth, an associate professor emeritus of engineering technology and a former student of Thornton’s. “Bill had the unique ability to blend the math, theory and practical applications together so that it made perfect sense.”

Steve Hsiung, professor of electrical engineering technology, said Thornton was especially adept at teaching students the art of troubleshooting. Thornton retired in 1999 and continued teaching as an adjunct professor until 2016.

Garland F. White III, who was named Most Inspirational Teacher four times by students, died April 17, 2023. He was 82. White, an associate professor emeritus of sociology and criminal justice, taught at Old Dominion from 1973 until his retirement in 2021. He also served as the department’s chair and graduate program.

Ruth Tripplett, chair and professor of sociology and criminal justice, first experienced his teaching skills when she was an undergraduate in the ’80s. “Garland was an inspiration to me because he maintained his commitment to teaching over a long career and was popular with the students, with whom he created a strong connection,” she said.

Donald J. Zeigler, who established a national reputation among geographers, died March 4, 2023. He was 71. Zeigler, a professor emeritus of geography, taught at ODU from 1980 until his retirement in 2016. From 1990 to 1994, he was chair of the Department of Political Science and Geography.

“He was one of the kindest, most selfless people I’ve ever met – and one of the smartest,” said Jonathan Leib, the chair of the department. Tom Allen, a geography professor at Old Dominion, called him “an icon among human-cultural geographers.”

Zeigler received the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia’s Outstanding Faculty Award and helped create the Advanced Placement human geography program.

**OTHER NOTABLES**

Jim Babcock, a bank executive who served as rector of the Board of Visitors in 1997 and 1998, died Sept. 2, 2022. He was 89. Babcock, a board member from 1994 to 1998, was the local CEO of First Virginia Bank. Later in life, he championed the Hampton Roads flag and devised puzzles.

Babcock was a “memorable, productive rector,” President Emeritus James V. Koch said. “Jim was an irrepressible optimist about life, Hampton Roads and Old Dominion University. He focused on positives rather than negatives, and we soon learned that his enthusiasm was contagious.”

Harvey L. Lindsay Jr., whose family endowed Old Dominion’s Harvey Lindsay School of Real Estate, died April 19, 2023, at the age of 93. His company, Harvey Lindsay Commercial Real Estate, oversaw several major construction projects in Norfolk, including Waterside, Dominion Tower and Military Circle Mall. He also was active in civil rights efforts, opposing the Massive Resistance movement, which closed schools to avoid integration, and helping establish the Urban League of Hampton Roads. “ODU has lost a champion of its cross-disciplinary real estate program,” said Simon Stevenson, director of the Harvey Lindsay School of Real Estate. Stevenson noted Lindsay’s “desire to support and nurture the next generation of real estate professionals.”

Former women’s basketball coach Nikki McCray-Penson died July 6, 2023. She was 51. McCray-Penson led Old Dominion’s team from 2017 to 2020, compiling a 53-40 record. “From the day I met Nikki, I knew she would experience the same success as a coach that she experienced as an athlete,” Athletic Director Wood Selig said. “Her drive, passion, enthusiasm and love for the game motivated everyone to achieve the high standard of excellence that Nikki always expected.”

Her successor, De.Lisha Milton-Jones, said, “Nikki courageously fought hard for others on and off the court. She was a tremendous person, teammate, coach and mentor to me and hundreds of other women in the game of basketball.”
AROUND CAMPUS IN 1974

Photos provided by Steven M. Bookman, University Archivist, Old Dominion University.
Do you have a plan for your future?
For over 90 years, Old Dominion University has built a legacy of togetherness, academic rigor, and active civic engagement. As we honor our past and advance this work in the future, we’ve partnered with FreeWill, a free online estate planning resource, to help you consider your own impact and legacy.

FreeWill’s secure, user-friendly tool guides you through the process of making a will in as little as 20 minutes to protect the people and causes you care about most.

Get started today at FreeWill.com/ODU or scan the QR code to learn more!

To learn more about how you can support ODU, contact the Office of Development.
give.odu.edu 757-683-3090

THANK YOU TO OUR LOYAL DONORS AND FANS

ODA F
BECAUSE OF YOU
Take your career to the next level and explore our rigorous graduate programs designed for working professionals. Join us as we combine research, education, and industry to push boundaries and reach new heights.

EXPLORE GRADUATE PROGRAM AREAS IN:

- Teaching & Educational Leadership
- Counseling & Human Services
- Tourism & Sport Sciences
- Workforce Development
- Learning & Information Sciences

LEARN MORE:
757.683.6004 | DCEPSconnect@odu.edu | odu.edu/eps
Ticha Penicheiro ’98 came to Old Dominion University from Portugal nearly three decades ago and became a basketball superstar, still holding the University’s steals record. She later played for 15 years in the WNBA and was inducted into the Women’s Basketball Hall of Fame in 2019. Now she’s a top agent with Sports International Group, representing college and NBA basketball players and coaches. “I’m trying to pay it forward as I work with young players,” Penicheiro said.
Thank you, Monarchs! Because of you, we are excited to announce that we have raised over $315 million towards our ambitious $500 million goal for the Forward Focused: For Dreams and Beyond campaign.

Supporting Student Success
Everything we do comes back to improving the success of our students. Even with Old Dominion University’s affordable tuition, our students still face challenges financing their education.

Ensuring Academic Excellence
To provide our students with outstanding professors and extend the breadth of our research, we must attract more world-class faculty.

A Gameplan for Success
The landscape of college athletics has shifted dramatically in recent years. To gain a competitive edge, we need to offer new athletic scholarships and the best facilities possible.

Defining the Path Forward for Research
Our designation as an R1 research institution by The Carnegie Foundation is a clear signal that ODU ranks among the top institutions in the country. To remain an R1 institution, we must continue to invest in ODU’s research capabilities.

Accelerating Advances in Healthcare
Together with our partner institutions, we are seeking to improve the level of care offered to the Hampton Roads region while reducing disparities that have existed for far too long.

Special Projects
Special projects put ODU on the map and make us a destination for further development.

To learn more about how you can support ODU, contact the Office of Development today.
give.odu.edu | 757-683-3090
Save the Date!

The Monarch Cobia Classic is Back for 2024!

JULY 11-13, 2024

www.odualumni.org/mcc2024

Or Scan Code to Register!